United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

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Report on the first meeting of the 2022 – 2024 Bureau of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

(held virtually on 5 July 2022)

I. Welcoming remarks by the CRIC Chair

1. Ms. Biljana Kilibarda (Montenegro), Chair of the CRIC Bureau, welcomed the participants to the meeting by saying that she is looking forward to collaborating with the Vice Chairs and the secretariat/ Global Mechanism on issues relating to the CRIC and that the Bureau will try to continue and build on the good work that the previous Bureau had achieved during its tenure. She also greeted the colleagues from UNEP attending the meeting on invitation to provide insight into the umbrella projects for enabling activities for reporting.

II. Adoption of the agenda

2. The CRIC Chair presented to the Bureau the agenda items highlighting possible action points and called for comments and/or amendments to the tentative agenda circulated prior to the meeting. The provisional agenda of the meeting was considered and adopted without amendments by the Bureau members as contained in annex I of this report.

III. Round of introduction, followed by a brief introduction on the roles and responsibilities of the CRIC Bureau and its members

3. The CRIC Chair invited each Bureau member to introduce him/herself to the group and also invited the secretariat, the Global Mechanism (GM) and the representatives from UNEP to do the same. Following from that, the secretariat provided a brief introduction on the roles of the CRIC Bureau which are governed by the rules of procedures contained in decision 1/COP.1. Regarding roles and responsibility, it was highlighted that the CRIC Bureau is a procedural governing body mainly concerned with ensuring that the roles of procedures are enforced and maintained throughout the sessions.

4. The Bureau was further informed that the CRIC Bureau members may not serve more than two consecutive terms, and that the offices of the Chairperson and that of the rapporteur shall normally be subject to rotation among the UN regional groups, but that this has proven to be difficult at times with no nominations coming forward. Similarly, the Bureau was informed that the CRIC Chair fulfills the following functions: a) presides over the session and facilitates its work, remains impartial and cannot exercise the rights of a representative of the Party to which he/she belongs. He/She has the responsibility to declare the session open, preside over the meetings, ensure the observance of the rules of procedure, accord the right to speak to delegates, announce decisions, control the proceedings of the meeting and maintain order. Vice Chairs may assist the Chairperson and may preside over the session as acting Chairperson. The CRIC Bureau remains under the authority of the COP and its Chair serves on the COP Bureau. The rapporteur is charged with preparing the report of the session, including the draft decisions and is assisted by the secretariat.

5. The Bureau thanked the secretariat for this brief introduction and decided to move to the next agenda item.

IV. CRIC work programme for the period 2022 – 2024

6. The secretariat introduced a draft work programme for the CRIC highlighting that it does contain elements for which either the secretariat/GM or other external groups such as Intergovernmental working groups (IWGs) are responsible. Those elements were included to provide the CRIC Bureau with the substantive scope of what should be delivered until 2024 and which needs to be channelled through the CRIC.

7. The three main areas of concern for the CRIC Bureau are: i) overseeing and guiding the Convention institutions on issues relating to the 2022 UNCCD reporting process, ii) convening the intersessional and sessional sessions of CRIC (i.e., CRIC 21 and 22) and iii) ensuring that collaboration with the CST is maintained and/or strengthened. The secretariat highlighted that on some substantive issues, such as capacity building for reporting or evaluations requested by COP 15 (e.g., the midterm evaluation of the 2018—2030 UNCCD Strategy which is based on the data from the 2022 UNCCD reporting process), the CRIC Bureau may be consulted or at least kept informed on how those processes are conducted, including their findings.

8. The CRIC Chair thanked the secretariat for this briefing and opened the floor for comments from the Bureau members. One Bureau member said that the EU and its member states wanted to note for the record that there was a perceived lack of reference to the

concepts of agro-ecology and agro-forestry in the relevant decisions of COP 15 and the EU and its member states hopes that in future sessions of the CRIC those concepts will receive more visibility during plenary debates and in the decision text.

V. Update on the 2022 UNCCD reporting process and identification of a deadline for the submission of national reports

9. The secretariat provided a briefing on the 2022 UNCCD reporting process highlighting new elements that were introduced into the reporting following decisions taken by Parties at COP 15 such as new provisionally adopted indicators and the endorsed Good Practice Guidance documents that form the methodological basis for UNCCD reporting.

10. The presentation also detailed the way the new reporting portal enables Parties using geo-spatial data to inform on *inter alia* land degradation neutrality targets and how findings from the reporting process will be captured in a data visualisation and data discovery interface that will visualize aggregated data along some predefined queries for the wider global audience.

11. The secretariat reminded the Bureau members of the urgent need for the Executive Secretary, in consultation with the CRIC Bureau, to decide on the reporting deadline. It was noted that the reporting deadline depended on the date of CRIC 21 which, in line with decision 15/COP.15, shall be held in Uzbekistan in 2023. In the event that CRIC 21 is held in May 2023, the secretariat proposed to the CRIC Bureau a tentative deadline of 31 October 2022. It was considered that such a deadline would allow another four months for Parties to finalize their respective reports while providing sufficient time to the Convention institutions to analyze the data and prepare official documentation for CRIC 21.

12. Almost all Bureau members expressed concern about the proposed deadline highlighting that more time for reporting is needed for multiple reasons (e.g., summer holidays coming up, umbrella funding not in place, difficulties in getting the data ready and national stakeholders engaged, complexity of reporting among other reasons).

13. Representatives from UNEP provided a brief update and stated that out of 122 Parties that requested funding for enabling activities, 56 have completed the process of submitting documentation to UNEP, a prerequisite for UNEP to disburse the money. They

also stated that by July those that will have successfully submitted their documentation the disbursement of the funding will be initiated.

14. It was pointed out that if the deadline was to be set by the end of the year or later, the chances for Parties to compile credible reports would be much higher and that this should be the guiding rationale for setting a reporting deadline. One Bureau member also mentioned that their region opted for COP 16 to be held in 2024 in order to have CRIC 21 in the fall of 2023. Other Bureau members also emphasized that a CRIC 21 session later in the year 2023 would probably be more suitable. The CRIC Vice Chair from Uzbekistan highlighted that a date for CRIC 21 has not yet been set and that options are still being weighed up.

15. Considering the need for the secretariat to further consult with the host country on a date for CRIC 21, it was reaffirmed that the deadline for reporting would be decided upon by the Executive Secretary in consultation with the CRIC Bureau, once a date for CRIC 21 will have been set.

VI. Collaboration with the CST Bureau, including the possibility of convening a joint back to back meeting between the two Bureaux

16. The secretariat introduced the item by stating that collaboration between the CST and CRIC has always been very fruitful on issues relating to monitoring and methodological work relating to indicators. Parties at COP 15 decided that especially during sessional sessions of the CRIC which are held in conjunction with the CST and the COP, Science and Technology Correspondents (STCs) should be more closely involved in issues on the agenda of the CRIC and to which the STCs could provide useful contributions. Considering that extending STCs' stay during a COP to the second week bears financial implications, the Bureau has asked for more time to consider different ways of how STCs can be engaged in the CRIC process, where suitable.

17. The Bureau decided to consult with their constituencies on this topic and defer the agenda item to the next Bureau meeting.

VII. Any other matters

18. The CRIC Chair verified that none of the Vice Chairs had any other issues to be tabled at the meeting. She further stated that while the Bureau needed to wait for the consultation between the secretariat and the host country of CRIC 21, a date for the next meeting will be set once information is made available by the secretariat.

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Annex I - Agenda of the meeting

I. Welcoming remarks by the CRIC Chair

II. Adoption of the Agenda

III. Round of introduction followed by a briefing session on what the roles and responsibilities of the CRIC Bureau are

IV. CRIC work programme for the period 2022 - 2024

V. Update on the 2022 UNCCD reporting process and identification of a deadline for the submission of national reports

VI. Collaboration with the CST Bureau, including the possibility of convening a joint back to back meeting between the two Bureaux

VII. Any other matter