



## **Report of the joint CRIC-CST Bureau meeting (hybrid meeting format on 5 April 2024)**

### **I. Welcoming remarks by the CRIC and CST Chairs**

1. Ms. Biljana Kilibarda, Chair of the CRIC Bureau, welcomed the participants to the meeting. She provided a brief update of what has so far been achieved as part of the work programme of the CRIC Bureau and stressed the importance of having joint meetings between the two Bureaux about collaborating on methodological activities in preparation for the 2026 UNCCD national reporting.

2. Mr. Jorge Luis Garcia Rodriguez, Chair of the CST Bureau, seconded the welcome for the participants to the meeting and briefly gave some insights on the current work of the SPI also stressing the need for collaboration between the two Bureaux in light of the forthcoming 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties COP 16.

### **II. Adoption of the agenda**

3. The CRIC Chair presented the agenda items to the two Bureaux and suggested that the CST and CRIC alternate in moderating the discussion on the agenda items. The provisional agenda of the meeting was considered and adopted as contained in annex I of this report.

### **III. Reporting timeline for the 2026 UNCCD reporting process**

4. The secretariat presented a tentative timeline of the activities in preparation for the 2026 UNCCD national reporting process as contained in annex II. The timeline takes into consideration the following four main components needed to conduct a successful reporting by Parties: a) the necessary financial means needed by Parties and Conventions institutions to initiate the reporting process, b) technical and methodological activities, c) capacity-building activities, and d) the tentative reporting milestones.

5. The secretariat highlighted that some of the activities, particularly for securing the financial resources and methodological work for reporting have already been initiated shortly after the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the CRIC (CRIC 21). For instance, a brainstorming workshop was held in February 2024 with participation of UNEP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on the components to be included in the submission of the next Global Support Programme (GSP IV) enabling activity to the GEF, which is now planned for July 2024. One of the outcomes was a consensus that the disbursement of funds to eligible Parties should begin as early as the start of 2025 and be completed by the time the 2026 UNCCD reporting process will be launched.

6. The CRIC Bureau chair raised a question of whether other implementing agencies can be involved in the disbursements of enabling funding, or if the funds will be channelled through UNEP. The secretariat responded that the modality for involving other implementing agencies should be possible, as this was also the case for the 2022 UNCCD reporting round. The



possibility for countries to directly access the funds was also mentioned. Disseminating this information as well as the procedure to be followed will be communicated transparently to the country Parties by GEF, as decided by the meeting held in February.

7. Another point raised by the CRIC Bureau chair was on the criteria for activities for which the funding can be used. For instance, if the National Action Plans (NAPs) are part of the activities that can access enabling funding. The secretariat responded that NAPs are currently not specified in the activities, but if this is important for a country, this can be addressed and discussed with UNEP and/or the GEF.

8. This idea of including NAP activities as eligible for enabling funding was seconded by one of the CST vice-chairs as this could increase the impact and the reporting turnout of Parties. The vice-chair highlighted the need to strengthen the linkage between reporting and Convention implementation in particular how UNCCD reporting can inform on achieving the NAPs and the implementation of the Convention in general.

#### **IV. Methodological work emerging from the CRIC 21 session that a) needs to be completed prior to COP 16 and b) may be conducted post-COP 16 with the aim of assisting the political discourse on a new strategic framework for the Convention**

9. On the methodological items recorded in the final report of CRIC 21, the secretariat presented a list of four main activities, contained in annex II, that would need to be started prior to COP 16 to align with the schedule of activities for the 2026 UNCCD national reporting process, as contained in the reporting timeline. Some of these activities were presented as essential to ensure a smooth 2026 reporting process, others – especially activity 2 and 3 – as optional. Two additional methodological activities, also contained in annex II, were proposed to be initiated after COP 16 as they are broader in scope and could potentially inform the development of a monitoring framework for a post-2030 UNCCD strategy. During the discussion on the methodological activities pre or post COP, one emphasis was put on how the SPI can be involved in the methodological work relating to the UNCCD reporting since contribution from the CST and/or SPI was also requested in interventions made during CRIC 21.

10. Additionally, the secretariat also elaborated on the commitments of the CST Bureau and SPI to improve its working modalities and provide scientific advice. The Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) that oversees the mid-term evaluation of the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework will provide updated findings and results on how science should be organized in the future to improve its contribution and input into decision making relevant to the Convention. Another point that was raised was on the current discussion of making SPI a permanent body of the Convention rather than a temporary one in order to improve the influence of science and research agenda within the Convention.

11. One of the CST vice-chairs expressed concern over the methodological guidance prepared for the last reporting process and highlighted some inconsistencies between the



guidance documents, the tools developed for generating the indicators and the technical assistance provided to countries during the reporting. The CST Vice-chair suggested these inconsistencies could be remedied by hiring the same institution(s) that developed the tool(s) for both refining the guidance documents and providing technical assistance to Parties during the reporting process. In terms of additional indicators for the national reporting, he cautioned against adding more indicators to the current monitoring framework. Instead, he suggested that the post-2030 UNCCD strategic framework should seriously consider simplification of the reporting system and that the goal of the national reports should be aimed at informing implementation at the scales at which it occurs. As an example, the NAP issue resurfaced which had been highlighted earlier in the discussions. Strengthening the linkage between NAP and the successful implementation of the Convention will lead to improved country involvement in the national reporting process.

12. The secretariat responded to the points raised by mentioning that for the refinement of the Good Practice Guidance (GPG) for SDG indicator 15.3.1, the secretariat has engaged with the Center for Development and Environment of the University of Bern which hosts the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) and has experience in both tools development for SDG Indicator 15.3.1 and in supporting participatory activities with countries during the 2022 national reporting process. The institution will undertake a consultative process together with relevant experts and technical partners for the envisioned GPG addendum.

13. On the involvement of the SPI on methodological work relating to reporting, it was suggested to propose to COP 16 the establishment of an Advisory Group of Technical Experts (AGTE) which will focus on providing expert advice on any advances made for a post 2030 UNCCD strategic framework and more importantly, on a corresponding monitoring framework for the same. The two Bureaux were in agreement to pursue various options and bring them to the Parties' attention when negotiations on a mechanism to enable the COP to decide on a new strategic framework will be made at COP 16. It was also agreed that the various options available to Parties at COP 16 would still need to be worked out in future meetings of the two bodies.

14. One vice-chair raised another point to potentially enhance the cooperation with OECD because Rio markers are currently not included in the default data. Additionally, she raised a question on whether and how offshore territories of same countries are considered in the estimation of the proportion of degraded lands. The secretariat responded that they will forward the first point to colleagues in the GM who are responsible for the information relevant to strategic objective 5. On the issue of offshore territories, the secretariat pointed out that these should have been included in the calculations of the proportion of degraded land but are not represented in the map because of cartographic challenges in the map scale and layout which currently shows only the main-land area per country.

15. A CST vice chair seconded the point raised earlier to take caution on adding more indicators to the strategic objectives. He also pointed out that global datasets often need to be enhanced at the national level to make them more effective and meaningful. He suggested that attention needs to be paid to an adequate quality assurance of the next reporting, and if



possible, allocate funds for the review of the report with payments for this quality review be made after the adoption of the report. An improved quality assurance process would and make the reporting process more credible. He also pointed out that efforts should be made by all UNCCD country Parties and all should send their reports to get a realistic picture at the global level.

16. The secretariat raised a question about the requested simplification of the indicators used by Parties during the reporting process. She pointed out that COP 16 will be a very special session with many Parties having very high ambitions and bringing emerging new issues to the agenda of the COP. The results of the two ongoing IWGs on drought and on the mid-term evaluation of the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework will also most likely create new action items. This tendency, even though very much supported, will inevitably result in decision making with special calls for indicators to monitor impact. The two Bureaux took note of this fact and will further discuss in future meetings on how simplification could nevertheless be achieved.

17. The secretariat mentioned the process of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) who was assisted by experts in formulating indicators prior to the adoption of a new framework for this convention. He also stressed that science should be key when it comes to deciding on the next strategic framework. Apart from the idea to form an AGTE it was also suggested that an alternative option would be to request the SPI to lead the work on a monitoring framework as part of its work programme. The two Bureaux decided to further investigate different options and resume this discussion during the next joint meeting.

18. The CRIC chair also raised a question on the status of the SPI, and whether there will be a call for it to become a standing Convention body for the UNCCD. One vice-chair pointed out that there might be diverging views on this issue and that this issue would need to be further discussed with Parties prior or at the COP.

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## **Annex I- Agenda of the meeting**

- I. Welcoming remarks by the CRIC Chair
- II. Adoption of the Agenda
- III. Reporting timeline for the 2026 UNCCD reporting process
- IV. Methodological work emerging from the CRIC 21 session that a) needs to be completed prior to COP 16 and b) that may be conducted post COP 16 with the aim of assisting the political discourse on a new strategic framework for the Convention



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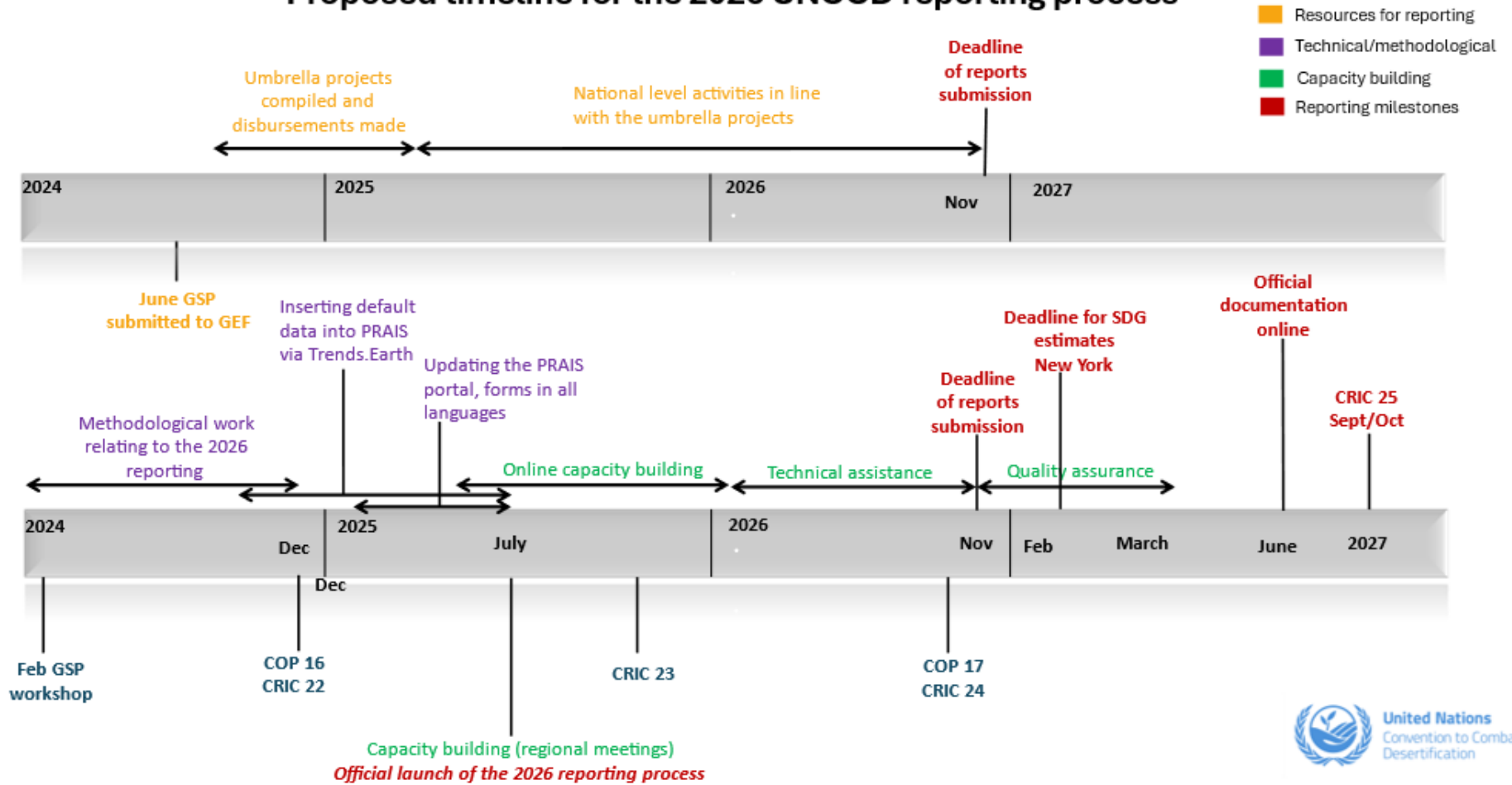
**Annex II – Presentation slides for planning of methodological activities based on the outcome of CRIC21**

# CRIC-CST Bureaux meeting

Preparatory activities for 2026 reporting



## Proposed timeline for the 2026 UNCCD reporting process





# Methodological activities

*pre COP16*

#	Activities	Scope and Modalities
1.	Methodological refinements to the Good Practice Guidance on SDG indicator 15.3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Focus on critical aspects that were identified as problematic during the 2022 reporting process</li><li>- Aim: Provide the methodological foundation for the refinement of all reporting tools</li><li>- Consultative process led by WOCAT</li><li>- Expert workshop on 13 March 2024</li></ul>
2.	Investigating the utility of provisionally adopted indicators for SO2 and SO4 using a Theory of Change approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Aim: Inform a potential COP 16 decision on the adoption of provisionally adopted indicators as mandatory for reporting</li><li>- Consultancy</li></ul>
3.	Investigating the utility of further disaggregating the indicators on population exposure to land degradation and drought by age and geographic location, in addition to sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Aim: Inform a potential COP 16 decision</li><li>- Consultancy in close collaboration with the WorldPop project team</li></ul>
4.	Support the organization of an international workshop to address data and methodological shortcomings which lead to erroneous estimates of the extent of degraded land (SDG indicator 15.3.1) in hyper arid areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Aim: Identify an appropriate pathway and the steps necessary to enhance the monitoring methodologies for monitoring land productivity dynamics and trends in soil organic carbon stocks in hyper-arid environments.</li><li>- Expert workshop organized by Saudi Arabia, 20-22 May 2024.</li></ul>





## Methodological activities

*post COP16 and future strategic framework*

#	Activities	Scope and Modalities
4.	Investigate the utility of additional indicators to complement the adopted indicators for SO 1-4 using a Theory of Change approach, considering default data availability and ongoing initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Scope: Inform current reporting and the development of a monitoring framework for a post 2030 strategic framework</li><li>- Institutional contract?</li></ul>
5.	Review and update the Good Practice Guidance on SO 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Scope: Consideration of non meteorological drought types; Improved methodology for drought vulnerability assessment</li><li>- Institutional contract</li></ul>



## Points for discussion...

- Advice to be given on what methodological work is needed to ensure a smooth organization and facilitation of the 2026 UNCCD reporting process;
- Brainstorming on how to coordinate possible scientific advice on a monitoring framework for a post 2030 UNCCD strategic framework;
- Possible engagement of the CST and/or SPI on methodological issues pertaining to reporting (i.e. leading the path to a comprehensive monitoring framework for the upcoming post 2030 UNCCD strategic framework);



## Annex III – List of participants

### CRIC 21/22 BUREAU MEMBERS attending the meeting:

REGION	COUNTRY/ REPRESENTATIVE	CONTACT DETAILS
Annex V: Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)	<b>Montenegro</b> <b>Ms. Biljana KILIBARDA</b> Chair	Adviser Institute of Hydrometeorology and Seismology Tel: +382 20 446 238 Email: biljana.kilibarda@meteo.co.me
Annex I: Africa	<b>Cameroon</b> <b>Mr. David PAYANG</b> Vice-Chair	Sous-directeur de la Promotion et de la Restauration de la Nature Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la Nature et du Développement Durable Immeuble ministériel n° 2, porte 833 BP 320 Yaounde Tel: + 237 22226921 Fax: + 237 222236051 Email: pavidch@yahoo.fr
Annex II: Asia	<b>Uzbekistan</b> <b>Mr. Abduvokhid ZAKHADULLAEV</b> Vice-Chair	Head State Committee on Forestry of the Republic of Uzbekistan Department of International Relations, Export and Ecotourism 8-21, Qatortol Str. 100113 Tashkent Tel: + 998 71 273 29 91 Email: miyon2001uz@mail.ru
Western European and Others Group (WEOG)	<b>France</b> <b>Ms. Philippine DUTAILLY</b> Vice-Chair	Rédactrice – Désertification et dégradation des sols Sous-direction de l'environnement et du climat Direction du développement durable Ministère de l'Europe et des affaires étrangères 27, rue de la Convention CS 91533 – 75015 Paris Cedex 15 Portable: + 33 (0)7 62 09 83 70 Fax: + 33 01 43 1773 80 Email: philippine.dutailly@diplomatie.gouv.fr



**UNCCD CST16 BUREAU MEMBERS attending the meeting:**

<b>REGION</b>	<b>COUNTRY/ REPRESENTATIVE</b>	<b>CONTACT DETAILS</b>
Annex III: Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)	<b>Dr. Jorge Luis Garcia Rodriguez</b> Chair	Director de Enlace Tecnico IV Comision Nacional de las Zonas Aridas Carretera a chapala 655 El Alamo CP 45560 San Pedro Tiaquepaque. Jal Mexico Tel : +52 333-860 04 24 Email : jorgeluis.garcia@conaza.gob.mx
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Western European and Others Group (WEOG)	<b>Dr. Jeffrey E. Herrick</b> Vice-Chair	Soil Scientist and Land PKS Lead, USDA-ARS Range Management Research Unit, Jornada, Experimental Range Box 30003, NM 88003-8003 Las Cruces United States of America Tel: + 15056465194 Email: jeff.herrick@usda.gov