

REPORT OF THE FIRST MEETING OF THE SCIENCE-POLICY INTERFACE (SPI) 24 – 26 JUNE 2014 IN BONN, GERMANY

Date: Tuesday, 24 June 2014
Wednesday, 25 June 2014
Thursday, 26 June 2014

Venue: UN Campus - Langer Eugen
Meeting Room: LEU 2705
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn, Germany

Working language: English

Working hours: Tuesday: 13:30 – 18:00;
Wednesday: 9:00 – 13:00, 14:30 – 18:30
Thursday: 9:00 – 12:00

- DRAFT REPORT -

I. Welcoming by the Executive Secretary

1. In her welcoming remarks, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD secretariat, Ms. Monique Barbut, called upon the members of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) to contribute to the goal of communicating land degradation neutrality to global decision-makers into concise and incisive political terms. Ms. Barbut also pointed out that the SPI could play an important role in 2015 with regard to the process leading to a new climate change agreement, as well as to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the post-2015 Development Agenda. She stated that adaptation should be an integral part of all countries' response to climate change and emphasized its significance as a driver to enhance synergies between the Rio Conventions. Acknowledging that land-based adaptation can be a powerful tool for positive change, she suggested that the UNCCD could take the lead in this process and call on the SPI to identify an indicator that could be used jointly for reporting across the three Rio Conventions and enable a more synergistic and effective overview of global adaptation efforts.

II. Presentation of participants

2. The Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology, Prof. Uriel Safriel, in his capacity as co-Chair of the SPI asked all participants to briefly introduce themselves. A list of participants is contained in Annex I to this report.

III. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

3. The co-Chair invited the members of the SPI to review the draft agenda for the meeting, providing comments and suggestions if deemed necessary. The draft agenda was finally adopted with no amendments (Annex II).

IV. Introduction to the SPI

4. With a view to providing all participants with information on the developments which led to the establishment of the SPI, the secretariat presented a general overview of the scientific UNCCD process, including the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), its related scientific mechanisms and all formal decisions pertaining to the provision of international scientific advice.

5. Participants exchanged views on the role and potential of the SPI. Several participants stressed on the need for the SPI to be credible, effective and operational in the short term. It emerged that the SPI should be perceived as a body able to detect the needs of the UNCCD in terms of science, identify the mechanisms to address these needs, and suggest how these mechanisms can be interfaced with policy. The significance of parallel external processes and the necessity for the SPI to be part of the international debate were also pointed out.

V. Work programme of the SPI

a. Objectives, possible elements and deliverables

6. The secretariat briefly presented the draft elements for the work programme of the SPI for the period June 2014 - October 2015 as endorsed by the CST Bureau.

7. The SPI kick-started a broad discussion covering each of the objectives proposed and, where needed, agreed on a new formulation of the objectives, related deliverables and timeline for implementation. The work programme of the SPI was then adopted as contained in Annex III.

b. Organization of SPI work and milestones

8. Working teams were formed for each deliverable. Each member chose autonomously which working team(s) to participate in based on his/her experience and/or field of expertise. All SPI members signed up for at least one working team. Team leaders, responsible for the implementation of the work of each team, were then identified.

9. Intermediate milestones and possible support to be provided by the secretariat were also agreed upon. The secretariat took note of the suggestions and requests received by the SPI, including the request to create a digital repository of documents and information needed to address one of the deliverables.

VI. Election of a scientist as co-Chair and appointment of a rapporteur

10. Prof. Barron J. Orr was appointed as rapporteur on the first day of the meeting, while the election of the co-Chair took place on the second day. As per the Terms of Reference of the SPI (Annex IV), the co-Chair was to be nominated among the 15 members of the SPI not belonging to the CST Bureau. Three nominations for the role of co-Chair were received, with the voting taking place immediately thereafter. Dr. Mariam Akhtar-Schuster was elected as co-Chair and took up the chairmanship for the second half of the meeting.

VII. Partnership

11. The secretariat circulated a note aimed at clarifying the purpose of scientific cooperation and partnership in support to the implementation of the work programme of the SPI and gave a short presentation on the matter. It was recalled that the SPI is mandated by the UNCCD Conference of the Parties (COP) to interact with existing multiple scientific mechanisms, including the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS).

12. Participants initiated talks on general strategies and practical modalities to address the issue of scientific cooperation in general, and the more formal nature of partnerships. Most members of the SPI considered the issue of partnership crucial for the SPI and the UNCCD as developing partnerships would enhance the relevance and the credibility of the convention. Members also recognized that partnerships represent a level of engagement and thus must be developed according to a set of clear guidelines. Different proposals were tabled for different levels of scientific cooperation, ranging from ideas on mechanisms to further engage the scientific community to possible ways to obtain funding and other support for initiatives that might result from scientific cooperation at any level, including partnerships.

13. The SPI agreed on the need to develop a partnership policy and a related infrastructure to enable the interaction of the SPI with its partners and ensure the integrity of the partnership and the effective and productive flow of knowledge and information. **The two co-Chairs and the rapporteur were entrusted with the development of a road map document on partnership to be presented to the rest of the members for discussion.**

VIII. Communication within the SPI and with external stakeholders

14. The secretariat presented two options for the purposes of internal communication: a) using a password-secure FTP protocol to access documents hosted by the secretariat via a UNCCD server; and b) using a publicly-available file-sharing solution, like Google Drive for non-confidential documents. **A variety of other tools that could contribute to an internal SPI communication approach were discussed (e.g., Dropbox, WebX, Skype). Advantages and**

disadvantages of each option were discussed. The SPI entrusted the follow up of this issue to the two co-Chairs, the rapporteur and the secretariat. The secretariat was also requested to create a master distribution list for facilitating e-mail exchanges among the members of the SPI.

15. Regarding the communication of the SPI with external stakeholders, the secretariat illustrated the features and potential of the UNCCD website, in terms of functionality in reaching stakeholders and policy-makers, and raised the possibility of making use of social media channels. The SPI recommended that the secretariat:

- Create a section on the website to be used to communicate results of SPI activities and also be used by stakeholders to submit queries to the SPI;
- Prepare a template PowerPoint presentation that can be used by SPI members and others to communicate the main characteristics of the SPI
- Post useful tools such as this template PowerPoint and essential documents associated with the SPI on the website for easy access
- Create and maintain a secure space for SPI working documents and a permanent repository of all final SPI documents.

17. A draft note on internal rules of procedure which included provisions on external relations and communication was also circulated. The SPI agreed on the following approach:

- Members of the SPI are permitted and strongly encouraged to engage with the academic community and with external scientific experts, provided that the subject of each interaction is relevant to the SPI and that its purpose is consistent with the implementation of the work programme of the SPI;
- Official external communication shall remain sole responsibility of the two co-Chairs.

18. The secretariat was asked to finalize the draft note on internal rules of procedure and to amend it taking into account the outcome of the discussion, in particular by adding a relevant paragraph on communication with the scientific community.

IX. Creation of SPI working teams

19. Working teams were created for all SPI objectives during the discussion of agenda item V.b. The elaboration of deliverables and timeline for implementation carefully considered both within and across objectives to ensure a coordinated effort in terms of priorities and timing.

X. Other matters

20. The members of the SPI agreed to provide comments on the proposal of the CST Bureau related to the scoping of the IPBES thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration before this is finally presented to the IPBES.

XI. Next meeting

21. It was decided that the next meeting of the SPI will be held in Bonn from 3 to 5 December 2014, back-to-back with the meeting of the CST 11 Bureau.

List of Annexes:

ANNEX I – List of participants

ANNEX II – Agenda

ANNEX III – Work programme of the SPI for the period June 2014 – October 2015

ANNEX IV – Terms of Reference of the Science–Policy Interface

ANNEX I – List of participants

**1st MEETING OF THE SCIENCE-POLICY INTERFACE (SPI)
24 -26 June 2014 in Room 2705, UN CAMPUS Bonn, Germany**

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ANNEX II - Agenda

First meeting of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI)

Date: Tuesday afternoon, 24 June 2014
Wednesday, 25 June 2014
Thursday morning, 26 June 2014

Venue: UN Campus - Langer Eugen
Meeting Room: LEU 2705
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- AGENDA -

- I. Welcoming by the Executive Secretary
- II. Presentation of participants
- III. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
- IV. Introduction to the SPI
- V. Work programme of the SPI
 - a) Objectives, possible elements and deliverables
 - b) Organization of SPI work and milestones
- VI. Election of a scientist as co-Chair and appointment of a rapporteur
- VII. Partnership

- VIII. Communication within the SPI and with external stakeholders
- IX. Appointment of SPI working teams
- X. Other matters
- XI. Next meeting

ANNEX III - Work Programme of the Science-Policy Interface up to COP 12

OBJECTIVE 1

Bring to the other Rio conventions the scientific evidence for the contribution of sustainable land use and management to climate change adaptation/mitigation and to safeguarding biodiversity and ecosystem services

Deliverables:

1A) Make recommendations for the most useful indicators found to be used by each Rio convention for joint reporting on land issues – *by May 2015*

1B) Assess the outcomes of the workshop on agroecosystem resilience organized by GEF-STAP – *by March 2015*

OBJECTIVE 2

Increase the effectiveness of the UNCCD scientific conferences in delivering policy relevant information, knowledge and recommendations

Deliverables:

2A) Translate the outcomes of the UNCCD 3rd scientific conference into recommendations for the consideration of the CST – *by May 2015*

2B) Assess the impacts of the outcomes of the 1st and 2nd Scientific Conferences in supporting the UNCCD decision making process – *by May 2015*

2C) Recommendations on topics for future UNCCD Scientific Conferences – *by June 2015*

OBJECTIVE 3

Ensure that the thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration conducted by the IPBES is of relevance to the UNCCD and its Parties

Deliverables:

3A) Comments on the proposal of the CST Bureau to the IPBES on the scoping of the thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration – *by 30th June 2014*

3B) Recommendation to the CST Bureau on IPBES 3 as far as land degradation and restoration is concerned – *by January 2015*

3C) Inputs to the initial preparations of IPBES thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration – *from January 2015 onwards*

OBJECTIVE 4

Cooperate with the ITPS process in areas which are of relevance to the UNCCD and its Parties

Deliverable:

4A) A mechanism for collaboration between the SPI and the ITPS is agreed and established – *by December 2014*

OTHER DELIVERABLES (OD)

Report and recommendations to COP 12

Deliverables:

OD1A) Report of the SPI on its activities to COP 12 – *by June 2015*

OD1B) Work Programme 2016-2017, taking into account possible deliverables of 2015 (such as IWG definition on land degradation neutrality, etc) – *by June 2015*

OD2) Recommendations by the SPI to the COP12 based on its work done from June-October 2015 – *by October 2015*

ANNEX IV

TERMS OF REFERENCE of the Science–Policy Interface

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- 1) Background
- 2) Mandate
- 3) Scope and activities
- 4) Composition
- 5) Modalities of work
- 6) Role of the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
- 7) Governance

1) BACKGROUND

1. In accordance with decision 23/COP.11, paragraph 1, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to establish a Science–Policy Interface (SPI) to facilitate a two-way science–policy dialogue and ensure the delivery of policy-relevant information, knowledge and advice on desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD).

2) MANDATE

2. In accordance with decision 23/COP.11, paragraph 23, the mandate of the SPI is to:
- i. Establish the approach to deliver each task assigned to it by the Committee on Science and Technology (CST);
 - ii. Analyse, synthesize and translate relevant scientific findings and recommendations from DLDD-related scientific conferences, including upcoming UNCCD scientific conferences, the roster of independent experts, as well as from relevant stakeholders and networks into proposals to be considered by the CST for the consideration of the COP;

- iii. Interact with existing multiple scientific mechanisms, in particular the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils and other new and existing scientific networks and platforms; and
 - iv. Assist the Bureau of the CST in organizing the UNCCD scientific conferences and assessing their results.
3. The SPI will operate up to the end of the thirteenth session of the COP, at which time it will be reviewed.

3) SCOPE AND ACTIVITIES

4. The SPI shall:
- a. Identify needs for the scientific and/or technological knowledge requirements for implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and/or making it a global authority on science and technology relating to DLDD issues;
 - b. Explore and select mechanisms to address the prioritized identified needs and/or needs brought to the attention of the SPI by the CST, such as existing and/or new assessment processes, research activities and other mechanisms operated by relevant existing and/or new institutions, organizations and other relevant entities at either global, regional or national level (such as an independent consortium of scientist networks and regional science and technology platforms, among other things);
 - c. Initiate, support and follow up on the implementation of the selected mechanisms for knowledge acquisition;
 - d. Analyse, synthesize and translate the results obtained (see paragraph 4.c.) into a language that is comprehensible to policymakers and decision-makers, thus enabling, promoting and facilitating the use of the scientific and technological findings for DLDD-relevant policy-/decision making; and
 - e. Provide requested support to the Bureau of the CST.

4) COMPOSITION

5. The SPI is composed of 20 members and 3 observers. Taking into account paragraph 3 above, the duration of membership to the SPI will end at the end of the thirteenth session of the COP.

6. In accordance with decision 23/COP.11, paragraph 4, and its Corrigendum, as contained in document ICCD/COP(11)/23/Add.1/Corr.1, the membership of the SPI shall comprise: (1) members of the Bureau of the CST; (2) five scientists, one nominated by each region; (3) ten scientists selected by the Bureau of the CST through an open call taking into account regional and disciplinary balance; and (4) three observers: one from a civil society organization, one from an international organization and one from a relevant United Nations organization.
7. The SPI shall be co-chaired by the Chair of the Bureau of the CST and a scientist elected by all the members of the SPI from among the 15 scientists mentioned in paragraph 6.
8. In the case the scientist who is co-chairing the SPI resigns or is unable to perform or complete her/his assigned tasks and functions, the members of the SPI shall chose another member to replace her/him. Until a new chair is elected, the other Co-Chair serves as the only acting Chair.
9. If a scientist of the SPI resigns, s/he will be replaced by an alternate using the same procedure of appointment.
10. The Rapporteur of the SPI will be appointed at its first meeting.

5) MODALITIES OF WORK

11. The official working language of the SPI is English only.
12. The mode (i.e. physical meeting or teleconference), dates and duration of the SPI meetings are defined by the Co-Chairs of the SPI in consultation with the UNCCD secretariat in line with the available budgetary resources. However, no more than two physical meetings should be held per year and shall take place in Bonn unless a Party/institution makes an offer to host the meeting and bear the associated costs. Physical meetings of the SPI shall also take advantage of the meetings of the Bureau of the CST or any other suitable occasion linked to the schedule of other UNCCD meetings or conferences.
13. Members of the SPI shall attend each meeting physically or electronically. If, due to circumstances beyond their control, a member is unable to attend a meeting fully or partially, s/he shall, through the secretariat, immediately inform the Co-Chairs of this fact. Input from the absent members shall be provided via electronic means.
14. Should any member fail to fulfill her/his assignments and/or to attend three consecutive meetings of the SPI, s/he will be replaced by an alternate.
15. Travel costs and the daily subsistence allowances (DSAs) will be covered for all members in accordance with United Nations rules and regulations.
16. Institutional partners or individual experts might be invited to participate in the meetings/discussions of the SPI on an ad hoc basis and based on a proposal from the Co-Chairs.

17. The Co-Chairs are responsible for coordinating the work of the group during and between meetings and for facilitating a free exchange of views and information among members and between the secretariat and members.
18. Only the Co-Chairs of the SPI are permitted to sign and send letters and other official communications from the SPI to other entities.
19. The SPI will be responsible for developing the work programme for its first biennium of operation (2014–2015). For the biennium 2016–2017, the SPI will present its draft work programme to the CST for submission to the COP for its approval/endorsement.
20. The SPI will report to the COP at each session on progress made and the status of implementation of its tasks and obligations, including precise and workable recommendations, with a view to seeking guidance for its next steps and activities.
21. The SPI will communicate updates to the process through UNCCD mechanisms.
22. The UNCCD secretariat will be the sole owner and possess all rights, titles and interest in all proprietary intellectual property, including copyrights for methodologies and products developed and delivered by the SPI and its members. The secretariat will duly acknowledge and/or share, as appropriate, any copyright with SPI members that have contributed to a particular output. No special permission from the copyright holder is required for the reproduction, distribution and/or co-sharing of the said methodologies and products, provided that the source is acknowledged and that no alterations are made to the original work. Once the secretariat authorizes the reproduction, distribution and/or co-sharing of the methodologies and products, they will be in the public domain subject to proper acknowledgement of the source and any limitation stipulated by the secretariat as appropriate.

6) ROLE OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

23. The UNCCD secretariat will provide administrative and secretariat support to the work of the SPI, including to its meetings as needed. Tasks include:
 - Inviting the members and observers to the meetings of the SPI pursuant to the date and venue of a meeting of the SPI, arranging the travel arrangements of the members and funded invitees and providing a daily subsistence allowance as required;
 - Preparing the provisional agenda in consultation with the Co-Chairs of the SPI and handling the related substantive documentation prepared by the SPI;
 - Assisting the Rapporteur in the preparation of the reports (including the list of participants) of each meeting;

- Maintaining, reviewing and continuously updating the SPI website/webpage;
- Making arrangements for meetings of the SPI;
- Providing legal support as required; and
- Communicating with other entities through official channels as required.

7) GOVERNANCE

24. The SPI will operate in accordance with COP decisions pertaining to its activities.

25. Decisions of the SPI shall be made by consensus. The Co-Chairs will moderate discussions among the SPI members and help them achieve consensus. If no consensus is reached, decisions on procedural matters shall be taken by a simple majority of the members present and voting. Decisions on matters of substance shall be decided by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. If the question arises as to whether a matter is one of a procedural or substantive nature, the decision shall be taken by a simple majority of the members present and voting. Any other matter not foreseen in this paragraph will be decided in accordance with the standard practice of the United Nations.

26. The two Co-Chairs of the SPI have the same power and will jointly ensure the compliance of all SPI members with the terms of reference. The two Co-Chairs remain, through the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology, under the authority of the COP.

27. All disputes arising out of or in connection with the work of SPI members will be settled in line with the code of conduct and the conflict of interest policy of the SPI. Compliance with the code of conduct and the conflict of interest policy and its implementation procedures is mandatory. An individual is not allowed participate in the work of the SPI if s/he has not complied with the policy and procedures.

28. The Bureau of the CST will review the terms of reference of the SPI as needed.