

## **REPORT OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE SCIENCE-POLICY INTERFACE (SPI) 7 - 8 MARCH 2015 IN CANCÚN, MEXICO**

**Date:** Saturday, 7 March 2015  
Sunday, 8 March 2015

**Venue:** Cancún Exhibitions and Congress Center

**Working language:** English

**Working hours:** Saturday: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:00  
Sunday: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:00

### **- DRAFT REPORT -**

#### **I. Welcoming by SPI co-Chairs**

The co-Chairs of the SPI welcomed all participants to the 2<sup>nd</sup> SPI meeting which was held back-to-back with the CST S-4 session and the 3<sup>rd</sup> UNCCD Scientific Conference. The meeting was attended by 22 SPI members as listed in Annex I to this report. One SPI member was excused due to other urgent commitments. New participants introduced themselves, and the observers to the SPI gave short statements.

#### **II. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work**

The co-Chair invited the members of the SPI to review the draft agenda for the meeting, providing comments and suggestions if deemed necessary. With regard to item III.a on the draft agenda it was agreed to reverse the sequence of presentations dealing with deliverable 1, so that 1B preceded 1A. Subsequently, the agenda was adopted (Annex II).

In the absence of the rapporteur Barron Orr, Annette Cowie accepted to be the rapporteur for this meeting.

### III. SPI work programme 2014-2015

In accordance with the SPI work programme 2014-2015 (Annex III) and the allocation of responsibilities up to COP 12, the team leaders presented progress reports on each of the deliverables and outlined the way for their further development.

a) **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

i. Report on the outcomes of the GEF-STAP meeting on agro-ecosystem resilience (1B), presented by Annette Cowie.

The GEF-STAP, responding to a request from the UNCCD secretariat, commissioned a report by CSIRO which reviews resilience concepts, with particular application to agro-ecosystem resilience, and proposes a framework approach to assessment of agro-ecosystem resilience. The Resilience, Adaptation and Transformation Assessment (RATA) framework is a structured, multi-stakeholder approach to understanding and assessing resilience, as well as adaptation need and adaptive capacity. The RATA procedure assists users to identify the critical indicators that should be measured to assess the status of that system. The results of the assessment procedure are captured in scalable indicators: a *summary action indicator* that provides broad guidance on the types of actions that may be appropriate to enhance resilience or transform it to a new system; and meta-indicators that report the coverage and quality of the assessment. The proposed framework was presented at a workshop hosted by STAP in November 2014, attended by 50 experts and staff from GEF, STAP, the Conventions, research institutions and development agencies. The workshop participants endorsed the approach, and recognized it as relevant to the three Rio Conventions, including the assessment and management of land degradation. Workshop discussions led to some refinements, and identification of elements that require further elaboration. While some further development is planned over the next 6 months, it is recognized that co-development and testing with stakeholders in an applied setting is required before the RATA framework is ready for full-scale implementation. The report on deliverable 1B will be finalized by beginning of June 2015.

ii. Report on the progress made on the recommendation on the most useful indicators to be used by each Rio convention for joint reporting on land issues (1A), presented by Graciela Metternicht.

For deliverable 1A a first draft document has been prepared which was presented and discussed. It has been agreed that the focus of this deliverable should lie more on common indicator *frameworks* for joint reporting on land issues rather than on specific indicators which might be too narrow to cater to all three conventions. One of the indicator frameworks considered will be the RATA framework (cp. deliverable 1B). From the side of the secretariat it was highlighted that deliverable 1A should also be compatible with the emerging monitoring approaches for a SDG on land degradation. Furthermore, it was discussed that agreeing on definitions and concepts will be a precondition for all common indicator frameworks. Nevertheless it was recognised that harmonising terminology is a significant challenge, considering that terminology differs between each of the three Rio Conventions, and that responsibility lies with different government agencies at domestic level. It was agreed that the draft document shall be developed further into a synthesis report on options for common indicator frameworks. According to the SPI work programme and in view of the report on the SPI for CST 12 deliverable 1A is to be finalized by beginning of June 2015.

- b) **Objective 2:** Increase the effectiveness of the UNCCD scientific conferences in delivering policy relevant information, knowledge and recommendations
- i. Report on the progress made on the assessment of the impacts of the outcomes of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> UNCCD Scientific Conferences (2B), presented by co-Chair Mariam Akhtar-Schuster.

For deliverable 2B a draft report has been prepared which was presented and discussed. Based on the analysis of COP decisions, other relevant UNCCD documents and a survey among key stakeholders the report assessed the impact of the outcomes of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> UNCCD Scientific Conferences on UNCCD decision-making processes. This analysis showed that the 1<sup>st</sup> Scientific Conference had a clear impact on COP decisions since 2009, on the activities within the scientific community and on national/international programmes on DLDD-related issues. For the 2<sup>nd</sup> Scientific Conference there was apparently less impact on decisions of COPs since 2013, and in the scientific community and in national/international programmes. Reasons might be found in the weaker formulation of the recommendations, recognising also the shorter period in which to discern impact. In summary, it was concluded that significant policy-relevant outcomes have been initiated by the recommendations of the UNCCD Scientific Conferences. Nevertheless it was determined that the UNCCD Scientific Conference may not be the most effective and efficient format to achieve this influence. In fact the analyses showed that

further institutional arrangements will be needed to strengthen the scientific basis of the UNCCD.

Thus, various conclusions from the assessment have been presented as possible proposals for COP 12. Particular attention was given to the option of decoupling future UNCCD Scientific Conferences from official CST sessions and cooperating more strongly with existing international scientific conferences.

A diagram illustrating the mechanism for information flow between the SPI, CST and COP was presented and discussed.

Next steps for the elaboration of deliverable 2B include the further development of the draft assessment report and the preparation of a summary for negotiators for COP 12 (ca. 5 pager including proposals and graph) by May 2015.

- ii & iii Strategy for translating the outcomes of the 3rd Scientific Conference into policy-oriented recommendations (2A) and for recommending topics to be addressed in future sessions of the CST (2C) & Discussion on the role of the SPI during the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference, led by Elena Abraham (2A) and Nicole Bernex (2C).

The roles of SPI members as session chairs, rapporteurs and facilitators during the conference were discussed. The co-Chairs informed the SPI members that preliminary conference outcomes in the form of scientific findings and policy-oriented implications are to be implemented at the end of the conference. Based on the preliminary conference outcomes and in accordance with deliverable 2A of the current SPI work programme, the SPI will also be responsible for the translation of the outcomes of the UNCCD 3rd scientific conference into recommended policy options for the consideration of the CST. Nicole Bernex presented suggestions of topics for future CST sessions.

- c) **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
  - i. Report on the contribution of the SPI to the full scoping for the Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment (LDRA) and recommendations on LDRA towards IPBES 3 (3A, 3B), presented by co-Chair Uriel Safriel.

A draft background document on the SPI activities under deliverable 3A and 3B was prepared and presented by the co-Chair. Given that interactions between the CST Bureau and IPBES started before the establishment of the SPI, the first task of the SPI under objective 3 consisted in commenting on the proposal of the CST Bureau to IPBES on its “initial scoping” document for the LDRA (deliverable 3A). As part of this task the CST chair adapted the IPBES conceptual framework to focus on the topic of land degradation and restoration, and prepared an adapted and revised version of the initial scoping document. Both documents were submitted by the CST Bureau to the IPBES secretariat and presented at a joint session of the Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) and the IPBES Bureau on 7-11 July 2014.

The experts for the full scoping of LDRA were selected by the MEP and IPBES Bureau in July 2014. Among the selected experts were the SPI members Uriel Safriel and Hamid Custovic (nominated by their governments) who participated in the LDRA full scoping meeting in Beijing in September 2014. The outcome of this meeting was a final scoping document on LDRA for consideration at IPBES Plenary 3 in Bonn, January 2015. Some of the comments on the initial scoping document submitted by the CST Bureau were incorporated in the final scoping document. Even though the final scoping document is more closely aligned with the needs of UNCCD than the initial scoping there still is a strong focus on the biodiversity aspects of land degradation, rather than reflecting the UNCCDs focus on productivity and rural livelihoods and their exposure to land degradation drivers and to its impact on land users.

Regarding objective 3B (recommendation on LDRA towards IPBES 3), based on his presence in MEP meetings and on his participation in LDRA full scoping process, 3B team leader Uriel Safriel provided to the UNCCD Secretariat the following suggestions for guiding the Secretariat’s participants in the IPBES 3 plenary meeting in Bonn January 2015, in their contacts with IPBES leadership:

- Highlight the engagement and the support of the newly established SPI provided to the IPBES’ LDRA process;
- Encourage LDRA to focus more on those land ecosystems that are used for their biological productivity, since it is their degradation that negatively impacts the land user’s livelihood and the local, regional, and even global food security;
- Explore the options and modalities that would enable the SPI, as a major customer/ stakeholder of LDRA, to observe and to contribute to the LDRA assessment process;

- Strongly advocate for securing LDRA's original integrity and independence as a stand alone assessment that addresses one of the most critical threats to the provision of the most critical ecosystem services to humanity, the threat of land degradation and its expression in drylands, i.e. desertification.
- ii. Discussion on how the SPI could contribute to the development of the LDRA (3C).

The Secretariat briefed the SPI on the outcome of IPBES Plenary 3 in relation to the LDRA. UNCCD Secretariat is an observer in IPBES plenaries, the CST Chair is an observer in MEP meetings, and the UNCCD, through SPI is recognised by the IPBES as key user and key contributor to the LDRA. IPBES 3 adopted the LDRA full scoping document and decided to undertake the LDRA in a process that is going to be closely coupled with the IPBES regional assessments. Subsequently, possible options for the SPI to contribute to the development of the LDRA were discussed. The LDRA will be undertaken over the period from July 2015 to early 2018. The compilation of its 8 chapters will be led by 2 Co-Chairs, carried out by 80 authors and reviewed by 16 review editors. Persons other than the above assessment team will not be allowed to participate in the LDRA team meetings. Therefore, the only possibility for directly contributing to the LDRA is through individual SPI members, if nominated by their government or by observer organizations like UNCCD.

The UNCCD Secretariat informed the SPI members about the call for experts and review editors for the LDRA (closed end March 2015). Given the limited possibilities for direct contributions to the assessment it was concluded (a) that the SPI will focus on the review of the draft LDRA for which there will be another call by the IPBES Secretariat at a later stage, and (b) that considering the differences in terminology and focus between IPBES and UNCCD, the SPI could only play an important role in generating a UNCCD-relevant synthesis of LDRA outcome, once it is released during 2018.

**d) Objective 4:** Cooperate with the ITPS process in areas which are of relevance to the UNCCD and its Parties

- i. Joint ITPS-SPI meeting and participation of SPI at the Global Soil Week (4A) presented by Martial Bernoux.

An update was given on the collaboration of the SPI with the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS), the background and

mandate of the ITPS and the planned first joint meeting in the context of the Global Soil Week in April 2015. The joint meeting will take place as a conference dialogue session under the title “Land degradation neutrality and its contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation”. The joint meeting is expected to identify specific areas for collaboration between SPI and ITPS. The secretariat clarified that the joint session between ITPS and SPI is not a formal SPI meeting.

#### **IV. SPI work programme 2016-2017**

The co-Chairs presented the draft elements for the SPI work programme for the next biennium 2016-2017 as prepared by the co-Chairs and amended by the Secretariat (Annex IV). SPI members discussed the relevance and feasibility of the draft elements and proposed further modifications which were incorporated in the draft work programme. It was agreed that the elements of the draft work programme will be further discussed during the CST Bureau meeting and will then be sent to all SPI members for further comments. In order to prepare an advanced version of the new work programme to be presented at the twelfth session of the CST for submission to the COP for its approval/endorsement it was agreed that the work programme should be finalized by June 2015.

#### **V. Report of the SPI to COP-12**

In accordance with its Terms of Reference the SPI shall report to the CST and COP at its twelfth session that will take place in October 2015. The Secretariat outlined that SPI activities will be reported under different CST agenda items. Therefore, there will be one official document which reports on SPI activities and progress in general, including the SPI work programme 2016-2017. In addition, there will be specific official documents containing findings and policy recommendations related to objective 1 and 2 of the current SPI work programme. Furthermore, there will be the possibility to also prepare information documents on specific objectives to provide more details. Exact information on titles, timelines and format of documents will be provided by the Secretariat.

#### **VI. SPI Collaboration Policy**

The co-chairs presented the draft of a Collaboration Policy that is intended to facilitate the interaction of the SPI with external partners. The document describes proposed relationship between SPI and IPBES, IPCC, ITPS, and other emerging scientific platforms. Team leaders were encouraged to consider and propose potential science partners, and consult co-chairs prior to initiating contact, to ensure a coordinated approach. A final version of the Collaboration Policy is under development.

## VII. Other matters

SPI members were informed about the schedule for planned team meetings during the Scientific Conference.

## VIII. Next meeting

The next physical meeting of SPI members is planned to take place as a joint session with ITPS on 20 April 2015 in Berlin, Germany. However, this session will not be a formal SPI meeting as it takes place in the context of the Global Soil Week (GSW) and upon invitation of the GSW organizers. It was proposed that the next formal meeting of SPI be held in association with COP 12 in Ankara, October 2015. The Secretariat will confirm the feasibility of this proposal.

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### 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 – Elements for the SPI draft work programme 2016-2017 (as presented during the meeting)



## ANNEX I – List of participants

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## ANNEX II - Agenda

### Second meeting of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI)

**Date:** Saturday, 7 March 2015  
Sunday, 8 March 2015

**Venue:** Cancun Center Conventions & Exhibitions  
Room Xcaret (MET-03) 2nd Floor

**Working language:** English

**Working hours:** Saturday: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:00  
Sunday: 9:30-13:00, 14:30-18:00

#### - PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA – (AS OF 19/02/15)

#### DAY 1

- I. Welcoming by SPI co-chairs (9.30 – 9.45)
- II. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (9.45 – 10.00)
- III. SPI work programme 2014-2015
  - a. **Objective 1** (10.00 – 13.00): 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
    - i. Report on the progress made on the recommendation on the most useful indicators to be used by each Rio convention for joint reporting on land issues (1A, *Graciela Metternicht*)

- ii. Report on the outcomes of the GEF-STAP meeting on agro-ecosystem resilience (1B, *Annette Cowie*)
- b. **Objective 2** (14.30 – 18.00): Increase the effectiveness of the UNCCD scientific conferences in delivering policy relevant information, knowledge and recommendations
- i. Report on the progress made on the assessment of the impacts of the outcomes of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> UNCCD Scientific Conferences (2B *Mariam Akhtar-Schuster*)
  - ii. Strategy for translating the outcomes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Scientific Conference into policy-oriented recommendations (2A) and for recommending topics to be addressed in future sessions of the CST (2C) (*Elena Abraham, Nicole Bernex*)
  - iii. Discussion on the role of the SPI during the UNCCD 3<sup>rd</sup> Scientific Conference (*SPI co-chairs*)

SPI co-chairs will explain the role of SPI members during the Scientific Conference. Further information on the tasks of session chairs, rapporteurs and facilitators will be provided by a briefing meeting at the beginning of the conference (Monday, 9 March, 8-10am)

## DAY 2

- c. **Objective 3** (9.30 – 11.00): Ensure that the thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration (LDRA) conducted by the IPBES is of relevance to the UNCCD and its Parties
- i. Report on the contribution of the SPI to the full scoping for the LDRA and recommendations on LDRA towards IPBES3 (3A, 3B *Uriel Safriel*)
  - ii. Discussion on how the SPI contribute to the development of the LDRA (3C, *Klaus Kellner and Victor Castillo UNCCD secretariat*)
- d. **Objective 4** (11:00 – 12:00): Cooperate with the ITPS process in areas which are of relevance to the UNCCD and its Parties

- i. Joint ITPS-SPI meeting and participation of SPI at the Global Soil Week (4A, *Martial Bernoux*)

- IV. **SPI work programme 2016-2017** (*SPI co-chairs*) (12:00 – 13:00) (14:30 – 16:00)
- V. **Report of the SPI to COP-12** (*SPI co-chairs*) (16:00 – 17:00)
- VI. **SPI Collaboration Policy** (*SPI co-chairs*) (17:00 – 17:30)
- VII. **Other matters**
- VIII. **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 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Elements of a draft SPI work programme 2016-2017 (as presented during the meeting)**

### **Draft objectives and deliverables for the SPI work programme 2016-2017**

**Objective 1: Collaborate with the UNCCD secretariat and partners in operationalizing the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on land degradation in terms of a conceptual framework and monitoring approach.**

**Background:** The SDG on land degradation is expected to be adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 and will be embedded in the post-2015 development agenda.

**Deliverables:**

- A conceptual framework in order to scientifically underpin the SDG on land degradation
- Lead the development of technical guidelines for establishing baselines and monitor the SDG on land degradation based on the UNCCD progress indicators

**Objective 2: Identify management practices in the land-use sector that contribute to both climate change mitigation and adaptation and quantify their contribution.**

**Background:** Most currently prescribed measures for addressing land degradation are credited with increasing adaptive capacity and carbon stocks while reducing GHG emissions, however, with little or no scientific evidence to support these claims.

**Deliverable:**

- A comprehensive assessment of land management and restoration practices using case studies with credible data that demonstrate their contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

**Objective 3: Contribute to the IPBES land degradation and restoration assessment (LDRA) and support its utility for UNCCD and its Parties.**

**Background:** At IPBES3, the UNCCD was recognized as the key user of contributor to the land degradation and restoration assessment (LDRA) to be undertaken from 2015-2017.

**Deliverables:**

- Comprehensive reviews of the LDRA drafts to ensure its relevance for UNCCD and its Parties
- Translate relevant findings of the LDRA into policy-relevant tools to enhance its utility for implementing the UNCCD

**Objective 4: Support the development of the Global Land Outlook (GLO)**

**Background:** The UNCCD GLO will be a comprehensive outlook on the status of land and land use. It is likely to be published every four years. The theme of the first edition will focus on managing land for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

**Deliverable:**

- Participate in the steering committee of the GLO
- Review the GLO

**Objective 5: Collaborate with the ITPS in jointly addressing land and soil issues**

**Background:** A first joint meeting between the SPI and ITPS will take place in the context of the Global Soil Week in April 2015.

**Deliverable:**

- A joint item in the work program of both entities for 2016-17, based on the discussions emerging from the first joint meeting