

**Meeting of the Bureau of the COP
Bonn, Germany
18 February 2014**

Report on the first Intersessional COP 11 Bureau Meeting

1. The first intersessional COP 11 Bureau meeting was held at the Headquarters of the UNCCD in Bonn, Germany on 18 February 2014.
2. Dr. Kalumbi Shangula, designated by the President of COP 11, H.E. Uahekua Herunga, as Chairperson, opened the meeting at 9:55 and welcomed the Bureau participants to their first meeting since the closure of COP 11 in Windhoek, Namibia. He also welcomed Mr. Alassane Touré, the National Focal Point of Burkina Faso, as a representative of the Vice Chair Mamadou Honadia, who was not able to attend the meeting. Dr. Shangula encouraged the Bureau members to continue bringing forward the commitments that had been achieved so far and wished them a productive session.
3. In her preliminary remarks, the Executive Secretary, Ms. Monique Barbut, welcomed the Bureau members to the UNCCD Headquarters and gave an introductory statement. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of reporting at the CRIC 13 session so as to enable an effective review of the implementation process. She informed that this is one of the major activities of the secretariat in 2014. She also referred to the financial challenges linked with several COP 11 decisions, which are not adequately funded.
4. Dr. Shangula concluded the opening remarks by welcoming the Executive Secretary to her first Bureau meeting and subsequently invited the Bureau members to introduce themselves to the new Executive Secretary.

I. Adoption of the agenda

5. The Bureau adopted the provisional agenda without any amendments.

II. Presentation of the final report and of the outcome of the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP11)

6. The secretariat presented the main thrusts of the final report of COP 11, which included 40 decisions and one Resolution in its totality (as contained in ICCD/COP(11)/23/Add.1). The report broke down the decisions into groupings based on bodies responsible for following them up, including CRIC, CST, Bureau of COP and the secretariat.
7. The secretariat reported on follow up actions on the priority activities of the work programme 2014-2015 and the preparations for the UNCCD core events. Beside measures taken to revise and

simplify guidelines for reporting, it was mentioned that the alignment of action programmes with the UNCCD Strategy was underlined as one of the 2014 priorities for the secretariat. The Bureau members were also updated on the ongoing consultations with the government of Turkey regarding their offer to host COP 12.

8. The secretariat further recalled the Namib Declaration, which was submitted to COP 11 for consideration on the initiative of the COP presidency. The secretariat is currently contemplating on how to assist the Presidency on efforts to promote the said Declaration and make it more visible at regional and international levels.
9. In their comments, the Bureau members thanked Namibia for the excellent organization of the COP 11 and the array of important decisions that came as a result. The Executive Secretary noted that not adequate consideration was given to budget availability when endorsing the various decisions, resulting in a gap between available resources and the number of decisions to be implemented. She stated that more effort would be put toward simplifying the budget document for the next conference of Parties for easier referencing and better consistency between the available budget and decisions made.
10. One of the Bureau members inquired about the format of the future regional meetings and whether it was possible to hold them in respective regions instead of having them back-to-back to the COP session. The Executive Secretary replied that no resources were budgeted for such an arrangement and proposed to take up this question again under item VI to discuss alternative options.

III. Work plan of the Secretariat, the Global Mechanism and the subsidiary bodies of the Convention

11. The secretariat presented an outline of the planned main outputs in the coming biennium. The Bureau members were informed that the workplan includes “targets” as a new element to guide the work of the secretariat in more concrete terms. Furthermore, the secretariat will continue improving the organization of work at future sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies in order to ensure that these sessions result in tangible outputs that bring forth the UNCCD implementation.
12. Bureau members were informed that the top priorities of the secretariat and the GM in the coming biennium will include, inter alia, support to the CRIC 13 reporting process with the aim to increase the number of reports received, and stronger emphasis on building solid evidence for further recognition of the importance of sustainable land management in major intergovernmental processes and meetings. Building synergies with other relevant conventions, including through working on common indicators is another focused area highlighted by the secretariat.

13. The Managing Director Ad-Interim of the Global Mechanism (GM) also reported on planned activities to continue servicing Parties with technical advice, analysis and information, and knowledge on increasing financial flows and investments. She also referenced on arrangements being made for the impending move of the GM to Bonn.
14. One Bureau member referred to decision 3/COP.11 and inquired about the GM staff positions to be filled at the Regional Coordination Units in the LAC and Asia regions. The Executive secretary informed that this is one of those COP decisions that have been taken without advising on specific funding aspects. She reported that secondment could be considered as an option to support the staffing of the RCUs. She also invited LAC and Asia countries in position to do so to propose experts for secondment in the RCUs.
15. In other comments, one Bureau member expressed the need to include post-2015 needs other than the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a priority element in the workplan of the Secretariat. Another Bureau member requested an update on the un-filled UNCCD positions. The Executive Secretary informed that she would like to discuss this matter in a closed meeting with the Bureau Members.

IV. Activities of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST)

16. The CST Chair reported on the outcomes of the first meeting of the eleventh Bureau of the CST (CST11) held in Bonn on 4-6 February. The CST Bureau discussed in-depth matters relating to the Scientific-Policy Interface (SPI). In accordance with decision 23/COP.11, the CST Bureau endorsed the terms of reference of the SPI including its member composition; agreed on the requirements and selection criteria for the 15 scientists, and on the call for 10 independent scientists to become members of the SPI.
17. Aside from an update on CST Bureau meeting, the CST Chair also made a presentation with a comparative analysis on the level of adherence and relevance of all science-related aspects to the original text of the Convention.
18. In their discussion, Bureau members inquired about the type of outreach undertaken to inform Parties about the call for experts. A precision was also requested about the understanding of regional representation for those scientific experts to be involved in the activities of the CST. It was agreed that as far as the WEOG is concerned all communications will be channeled through their representatives in the COP Bureau. The Executive Secretary informed that, as a principle, requests to Parties relating to specific follow up on COP decisions will be sent through the COP Bureau.

V. Activities of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)

19. The CRIC Chair reported on the outcomes of the CRIC Bureau meeting held in Bonn on 3-4 February. The CRIC Bureau reviewed the 2014-2017 workplan and the related CRIC work programme for 2014-2015. The CRIC Bureau endorsed the established timeframe for the 2014 reporting exercise but requested the secretariat to increase communication to Parties on the reporting process in order to ensure engagement of National Focal Points from the outset.
20. The CRIC Bureau also considered the programme of work for CRIC 13 with stronger focus on review of implementation and reducing the number of documents to be considered by the Committee. CRIC chair informed that the CRIC Bureau will hold its next meeting sometime between 15-26 June 2014, in parallel with the meeting of the Bureau of the CST, and a second joint meeting of the two Bureaus will be held on 27 June 2014.
21. The secretariat provided additional input regarding the reporting process. The templates have been completed. They are currently available in PDF form on the UNCCD website. The templates are “PDF live” files, which mean they can be filled offline and later uploaded online. UNEP has finalized in consultation with the Secretariat and GM a project proposal for the GEF with focus on the regional workshops for the 2014 reporting process. Support through Regional Coordination Units will also be available for technical assistance to all affected Parties.
22. In the ensuing discussion, some Bureau members expressed concern about the short timeframe allocated for the reporting exercise, especially given that some countries may be engaged in several other reporting processes in parallel to each other. The need for capacity building support was also mentioned. In her reply, the Executive Secretary reminded that a communication was sent to Parties at the end of January 2014. She pointed out that the new templates would make the reporting process much lighter in comparison to the previous rounds as the requirements have been decreased, and that help desk will be provided. The GEF funds would also present an additional support that was not in place in the last reporting cycle. After deliberations among Bureau members, the President concluded that the current reporting deadline would be kept with the understanding that an assessment will be made in May to determine if countries need additional time to submit their reports.
23. Another issue discussed by the Bureau members was the date and the venue of CRIC 13. Since no formal offer by a Party to host the session has been received, preliminary arrangements to hold the meeting in Bonn have been considered. The Bureau was informed however that such arrangements would incur high costs to the budget of the Convention. No sufficient budget has been secured to organize the said conference in Bonn. Some Bureau members inquired about a possibility of postponing the CRIC 13 session to a later date to have more time to secure alternative venue.

24. After further deliberations, the President advised to keep November as an indicative date for CRIC 13 session but some flexibility will be provided for an assessment of the situation at the end of June, with the possibility to postpone CRIC 13 timing depending on negotiations with potential host countries.

VI. Financial requirements for facilitating the participation of eligible country representatives, CSOs and Science and Technology correspondents at CRIC 13, CST S-4 and COP 12

25. The secretariat reported on estimated requirements for participation at core events. The estimated cost for UNCCD core events in 2014-2015 has been calculated at € 2, 497. 000. This would include financial requirements for facilitating participation at CST S4, CRIC13 and COP 12. However, there has been a recurrent shortfall of at least €750,000 for the last three biennia. Given the insufficient levels of funding received from the Parties by way of voluntary contributions, the secretariat informed that a transparent approach to prioritizing participation financing should be considered.
26. Bureau members understood and appreciated the difficulties faced by the secretariat. Members welcomed the discussion and underlined that whatever prioritization method is considered by the secretariat, the process must remain clear and transparent. Bureau members stressed the need for Parties to receive assistance on fair and equitable basis taking into account the need to ensure, in particular, appropriate levels of regional representation.
27. During the general discussion, one Bureau member expressed the opinion that this matter may be for the COP to decide. The same Bureau member added that CSO representatives should not have priority over eligible country representatives. Another Bureau member inquired on a possible role of the Global Mechanism in joining efforts of the secretariat to mobilize resources for the facilitation of participation at UNCCD core events.
28. In addition, some proposals were made during the discussion including ranking countries based on their status vis-a-vis their payments to the core budget and their level of engagement in the reporting exercise; encouraging those countries that do not need DSA to put it toward the needs of other participants from the affected developing countries; and reviewing the list of eligible funded Parties with the view to assess the actual financial needs of emerging countries. There were however diverging views. Some Bureau members advised not to tie participation support to the submission of report. Other Bureau members underlined that CSO representatives should continue to get support.
29. The Executive Secretary welcomed the suggestions made by the Bureau members. She advised that guidelines are practical and administrative in nature. They are issued by the secretariat in order to ensure transparency. They do not need to be formally endorsed but nevertheless they would be reviewed prior to implementation in order to fully take into account the comments made by Bureau members.

30. The President thanked the secretariat and welcomed the effort for more transparency in financing the participation of eligible countries and CSOs at the UNCCD events.
31. On another note and based on a proposal made by the Executive Secretary, the Bureau members discussed the possibility of changing the frequency of the meetings of the established bodies. One Bureau member informed that in his group, the question has been discussed as to the need of having a COP session every three years instead of two years. He added however that this should not lead to a debate among Parties and re-opening the Convention arrangements. He concluded saying that a decision of having or not a core event should not be taken only on the basis of the availability of financial recourses.
32. The Bureau members are invited to consult with their respective region/group to assess the need to maintain the current frequency of the meetings and inquire into possible ways of reducing them. The Executive Secretary also suggested that during their June meeting, CRIC and CST Bureaus could prepare a list of outcomes they hope to accomplish by meeting prior to COP so as to make it easier for COP Bureau members to judge the necessity of the current core event frequency.

VII. Convention Budget: Status of assessed contributions

33. The secretariat presented an overview of the contributions in the core budget by Parties based on the approved indicative scale of contributions. The Bureau members were informed that 92.4% of the core contributions were received in the biennium 2012-2013 with a slight decrease from 95.2% of the previous biennium.
34. The secretariat has already sent out the notification letters for contributions in 2014 to all Parties and will continue to remind Parties of their outstanding contributions. Parties with long-outstanding contributions over two or more years are invited to make payment arrangements with the secretariat. The UNCCD website is updated regularly with the status of indicative contributions.
35. The President reminded the importance of regular follow-up regarding unpaid core contributions. COP Vice Chairs are invited to encourage Parties in their regions that have not paid their contributions to do so. In addition to the notifications sent, the secretariat is invited to continue providing countries with original invoices upon request.

VIII. Governance and Institutional arrangements of the Global Mechanism

36. The secretariat reported on state of implementation of decision 6/COP11, which includes the relocation of the GM office to Bonn to co-locate with the UNCCD secretariat; establishment of a liaison office in Rome; and solving the outstanding liability of the GM. The Bureau is informed that the GM will relocate in Bonn as of 1 April 2014. The GM liaison office housed in FAO will be operational in April as well.

37. The secretariat also reported on the issue of IFAD's withholding of GM funds for legal liabilities. Following a meeting between the Executive Secretary of UNCCD and the president of IFAD in October 2013, a joint approach of addressing each pending case before the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT) has been agreed upon. Subsequently, five of the fourteen cases pending before ILOAT have been withdrawn, and the secretariat has also settled in full the GM outstanding invoices to FAO. However, IFAD has not yet released the corresponding resources currently held in the escrow account. To that extent, the Executive Secretary sent a formal request to release the money from escrow account. In this regard, the COP Bureau members were provided with a copy of the letter sent by the Executive Secretary to IFAD President on 13 February 2014.

IX. Collaboration with the Global Environment Facility

38. The Secretariat reported on the working collaboration with the GEF. Since the adoption of decision 11/COP.11, the Executive Secretary participated in the GEF Council held in Washington D.C., in November 2013. Bureau members were also informed that leftover funds from GEF 5 replenishment can still be accessible for NAP alignment support until June 2014.

39. The Secretariat further reported on the organization of a joint UNCCD/GEF brainstorming meeting convened in Bonn on 13 December 2013. On that occasion, the UNCCD Executive Secretary and the GEF CEO discussed various areas of collaboration including the amendment of the current MoU between the GEF and the UNCCD. There is now a clear indication as to where the amendment to MoU is advancing.

40. During the ensuing discussion, one Bureau member requested clarification on the process pertaining to the change of the MoU and whether the document to be submitted at the next COP will be a draft or a final to be accepted as is. The secretariat clarified that, the amended MoU would go first through GEF and will be brought to the COP for final approval. One Bureau member, referring to the harmonization of terminology in the MoU, advised that the MoU should not solely address "land degradation" but "desertification, land degradation and drought". It was reminded however that what matters is to protect the land degradation focal area and the need to continue receiving adequate support from GEF, including in the context of the current consultation on GEF 6 replenishment.

X. Follow up on the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

41. The secretariat reported on actions taken as a follow up to Rio +20. Pursuant to decision 8/COP.11, Parties set up an intergovernmental working group (IWG) to which all regional groups have nominated a maximum of five members. The IWG held its first meeting in Brussels on 10-11 February 2014. It established two task forces and set the modalities for the next three meetings (tentative second meeting scheduled in July in China, third during CRIC meeting, and fourth to be determined).

42. Some Bureau members welcomed the IWG start of activities and the outcomes of the Brussels meeting. One Bureau member requested the ToR of IWG for reference.

XI. Other Business:

43. **Meeting of the CSO Panel:** The secretariat reported on a meeting of the CSO panel that was held in Bonn during CRIC and CST Bureau meetings in early February. The CSO representatives focused on three primary topics, including the finalization of the UNCCD Business Engagement Strategy (BES); the IWG on the follow up to Rio+20; and the Science and Policy Interface. The Panel put forth their comments into the BES, which were included into the latest version of the information note tabled at the COP Bureau. The secretariat informed that the BES would now be implemented and the guidelines applied but any further comments from the COP Bureau on the BES would be welcomed.

XII. Next Meeting

44. The COP Bureau decided to meet between October and November 2014, pending the date and venue of the next CRIC meeting. Should CRIC meet as originally set in November 2014, then the Bureau would meet at the venue of the session. If not, the President and the Executive Secretary will consult on an appropriate date and venue to be communicated to Bureau members in due time.
45. **Closing of the meeting:** The President thanked the Bureau members for the important guidance provided to the Secretariat, the GM and the subsidiary bodies and also for the support to him in facilitating the consideration of the various agenda items. He also expressed thanks to the secretariat for the documentation prepared and the organization of the Bureau meeting. He declared the meeting adjourned at 17:10.

**List of participants to the COP Bureau Meeting
Bonn, Germany
18 February 2014**

COP Bureau Members	
Country / Name	Contact Information
<p>Namibia</p> <p>Presidency of the COP 11 Bureau</p> <p>Dr. Kalumbi Shangula</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment and Tourism Troskie Building, Private Bag 13346 Windhoek, Namibia</p> <p>Fax: + 264 61 240 339 Email: fgarises@met.na</p>
<p>Armenia</p> <p>Mr. Ashot Vardevanyan</p>	<p>Ministry of Nature Protection Deputy head Bioresources Management Agency Buzandi 1/3 0010 Yerevan Armenia</p> <p>Tel: +37 410 580 633 Fax: +37410 527 952 Email: ashot_v@mail.ru</p>
<p>Brazil</p> <p>Mr. Thiago Medeiros da Cunha Cavalcanti</p>	<p>Divisão do Meio Ambiente Ministério das Relações Exteriores Brasil</p> <p>Tel: +55 61 2030 - 8453 Fax: +55 61 2030 - 8446 Email: thiago.Cavalcanti@itamaraty.gov.br dema@itamaraty.gov.br</p>

<p>Burkina Faso</p> <p>Mr. Alassane Touré (representing Mamadou Honadia)</p>	<p>01 B.P. 6486 Ouagadougou 01 Burkina Faso</p> <p>Tel: +226 70286100 +226 50316491 Email: alassanegtoure@yahoo.fr</p>
Country / Name	Contact Information
<p>Cooks Islands</p> <p>Ms. Heimata Louisa Karika</p>	<p>National Environment Service P.O.Box 371 Rarotonga Cook Islands</p> <p>Tel: +682 21256 Email: Louisa.karika@cookislands.gov.ck louisakarika@gmail.com</p>
<p>Costa Rica</p> <p>Mr. Mariano Espinoza</p>	<p>Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía/Sistema Nacional de Areas de Conservacion 1000 San José Costa Rica</p> <p>Tel : +506 2522 6500 x306 Cel : +506 8833 2093 Email: mariano.espinoza@sinac.go.cr mecamacho175@gmail.com</p>
<p>Ireland</p> <p>Mr. Thomas Tichelmann</p>	<p>Multilateral Section Irish Aid Department of Foreign Affairs 13-15 Lower Hitch Street Dublin 2 Ireland</p> <p>Tel: +353 61 774122 Cel: +353 87 139 7685 Fax: +353 1 408 2882 Email: Thomas.tichelmann@dfa.ie</p>

<p>Lithuania</p> <p>Ms. Dalia Gudaitiene Holiman</p>	<p>Chief Desk Officer, Nature Resources Division Nature Protection Department Ministry of Environment A. Jaksto St. 4/9 LT-01105 Vilnius Lithuania</p> <p>Tel: +370-5 266.3559 Fax: +370-5 266.3663 Email: d.gudaitiene@am.lt</p>
Name	Contact Information
<p>Republic of Korea</p> <p>Mr. Choi Young Tae</p>	<p>International Affairs Bureau Korea Forest Service 189 Choengsa-ro, Seo-gu, Daejeon 302-701, Republic of Korea</p> <p>Tel: +82-42 481 4176 Fax: +82-42 481 8884 Email: choiytai@gmail.com forestlove@korea.kr</p>
<p>USA</p> <p>Ms. Christine Dawson</p>	<p>Office of the Conservation and Water U.S Department of State 2201 C Street NW Washington, DC 20520 USA</p> <p>Tel: +1 202 647 4683 Email: dawsoncl@state.gov</p>
<p>CST Chair</p> <p>Prof. Uriel N. Safriel</p>	<p>Centre for Environmental Conventions The Blaustein Institute for Desert Research Ben-Gurion University 84990 Midreshet Ben-Gurion Israel</p> <p>Tel: + 972 54 725 3646 + 972 77 300 6905 Email: uriel36@gmail.com</p>

<p>CRIC Chair</p> <p>Mr. Philbert Brown</p>	<p>Ministry of Local Government and Environment 16A Half Way Tree Road Kingston 10 Jamaica</p> <p>Tel: (1-876) 754 4543 Fax: (1-876) 754 1009 Email: pbrown@mlge.gov.jm</p>
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Other Participants	
<p>Republic of Korea Mr. Utchang Kang</p>	<p>International Cooperation Division Korea Forest Service 189 Choengsa-ro, Seo-gu, Daejeon 302-701, Republic of Korea Tel: +82-42 481 8851 Fax: +82-42 481 8884 Email: ikiri@forest.go.kr ikiri@chol.com</p>
<p>Republic of Namibia Ambassador of Namibia to Germany H.E. Neville Gertze</p>	<p>Namibian Embassy in Berlin Reichsstrasse 17 14052 Berlin Germany Tel: + 49 30 254 09 50 Fax:+49 30 254 095 55 Email: nmgertze@gmail.com</p>
<p>Republic of Namibia Mr. Teofilus Nghitila,</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) Levinson Arcade, Captal Centre 6th Floor Tel: +264-61-2842704 Fax: +264-610240339 Email: tnghitila@yahoo.com</p>
<p>Republic of Namibia Mr. Petrus Muteyauli</p>	<p>Deputy Director Multilateral Agreement Ministry of Environment and Tourism Tel: +264 61 284 2701 E-mail: pmuteyauli@yahoo.co.uk</p>

UNCCD Team	
Ms. Monique Barbut Executive Secretary	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Executive Direction and Management Hermann-Ehlers-Str-10 53113 Bonn, Germany Tel: + 49 228 815-2802 Fax: + 49 228 815-2898/99 E-mail: mbarbut@unccd.int
Mr. Mohamadou Mansour N'DIAYE Chef de Cabinet	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Executive Direction and Management Hermann-Ehlers-Str-10 53113 Bonn, Germany Tel: + 49 228 815-2803 Fax: + 49 228 815-2898/99 E-mail: mndiaye@unccd.int
Ms Elisabeth Barsk-Rundquist Director of Programmes and GM Officer-in-Charge	Global Mechanism of the UNCCD at IFAD Via Paolo di Dono, 44 00142 Rome, Italy Tel: + 39 06 5459-2471 Fax: + 39 06 5459-3135 Mobile: + 39-335-193-2527 E-mail: e.barsk@global-mechanism.org
Mr. Rajeb BOULHAROUF Coordinator (CoSe)	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Conference Services Hermann-Ehlers-Str-10 53113 Bonn, Germany Tel: + 49 228 815-2810 Fax: + 49 228 815-2898/99 E-mail: rboulharouf@unccd.int
Mr. Lyndle LINDOW Coordinator (AFS)	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Administration and Finance Services Hermann-Ehlers-Str-10 53113 Bonn, Germany Tel: + 49-228 815 28 44 Fax: + 49-228 815 28 98/99 E-mail: llindow@unccd.int
Ms. Louise Baker Coordinator (Policy, Advocacy, and External Relations)	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Administration and Finance Services Hermann-Ehlers-Str-10

UNCCD Team	
	<p>53113 Bonn, Germany Tel: + 49-228 815 28 08 Fax: + 49-228 815 28 98/99 E-mail: lbaker@unccd.int</p>
<p>Ms. Elysabeth David Coordinator (KMST)</p>	<p>United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Administration and Finance Services Hermann-Ehlers-Str-10 53113 Bonn, Germany Tel: + 49-228 815 28 34 Fax: + 49-228 815 28 98/99 E-mail: edavid@unccd.int</p>
<p>Massimo Candelori Coordinator (FMP)</p>	<p>United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Administration and Finance Services Hermann-Ehlers-Str-10 53113 Bonn, Germany Tel: + 49-228 815 28 43 Fax: + 49-228 815 28 98/99 E-mail: mcandelori@unccd.int</p>
<p>Yukie Hori Communication Team Leader & UNCCD Spokesperson</p>	<p>United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Administration and Finance Services Hermann-Ehlers-Str-10 53113 Bonn, Germany Tel: + 49-228 815 28 29 Fax: + 49-228 815 28 98/99 E-mail: yhori@unccd.int</p>
<p>Ms. Satu Ravola Programme Officer (EDM)</p>	<p>United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Administration and Finance Services Hermann-Ehlers-Str-10 53113 Bonn, Germany Tel: + 49-228 815 28 05 Fax: + 49-228 815 28 98/99 Email: sravola@unccd.int</p>