



**BUREAU OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO  
COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD)**

**New York, 21 October 2002**

**Report of the Bureau Meeting**

1. A meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties (COP) was convened by the President of the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD, Mr. Charles Bassett. The meeting was held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA on 21 October 2002.

**I. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the Agenda**

2. The meeting was opened at 15.00 p.m. by the President of the Bureau who welcomed the members.
3. The Bureau Members adopted the Agenda presented by the Secretariat.

**II. Activities undertaken by the Secretariat since the last Bureau Meeting (March 2002)**

4. The Executive Secretary made a presentation on the Secretariat's activities in the period under review. He informed that the Secretariat focused on assistance provided to affected countries in the preparation of the national Action Programmes (NAPs); the preparation of national reports to be reviewed by the first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) as well as the development of activities relevant to the sub-regional and regional action programmes.

**A. AFRICA  
National level**

5. The Secretariat informed that 29 countries have finalized their NAPs. Six additional countries are in the process of finalizing their NAPs. The Secretariat, the Global Mechanism and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have taken steps towards facilitating the organization of donor's consultations in some of the countries, which have adopted their NAPs.
6. In preparation of the first session of the CRIC, 48 reports have been submitted by the African Country Parties.

**Sub-regional level**

7. The Secretariat reported that additional financial resources have been mobilized for the development of the transboundary pilot projects. A consultative meeting, which will make

**CCD**

preliminary assessments on the status of transboundary pilot projects is scheduled to take place in Tamammasset, Algeria by the end of the year 2002.

8. The Secretariat has been involved in other important sub-regional activities such as: The third sub-regional workshop on resource mobilization and partnership agreements for Western and Central African sub-regions. Another important event in which the Secretariat took part is the Africa Land and Water Management initiative organized by the GEF implementing agencies (UNDP, WB & UNEP).

#### **Regional level**

9. The Secretariat facilitated the launching of the fourth UNCCD Thematic Programme Network (TPN4) on ecological monitoring, natural resources mapping, remote sensing and early warning systems. The meeting was held in Tunis in early October 2002. The Secretariat reminded that three out of the six networks that lay the foundation of the Regional Action Programme have already been launched and have started their activities.
10. The Secretariat also informed the Bureau on follow-up activities undertaken in order to facilitate the preparation of project proposals to combat desertification in the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).
11. The Secretariat further informed on the outcomes of the African Regional Conference preparatory to the first session of the CRIC (Windhoek, Namibia July 2002).

#### **B. ASIA**

##### **National level**

12. The Secretariat reported that some 13 Country Parties have finalized their NAPs. At least 7 additional countries are in the process of finalizing their NAPs with the support of the Secretariat and other interested partners.
13. The Secretariat mentioned that requests for technical and financial assistance towards the development of NAPs are still received from countries. In collaboration with the Global Mechanism, it is planned to assist many more countries in their NAP formulation process.
14. The Secretariat informed that 36 national reports were submitted by Asian countries in preparation for the session of the CRIC.

##### **Sub-regional level**

15. A presentation was made on the status of sub-regional activities in Central, Western and North East Asia. These activities include the preparation of the sub-regional action programme to combat desertification in the Aral Sea Basin; the establishment of a database on water resources and vegetation cover in Western Asia and the preparation of a project for alleviating sand storm in North East Asia.

##### **Regional level**

16. The Secretariat reported on the status of the Regional Action Programme. Support has been provided for the launching of various Thematic Programme Networks.

17. The Secretariat also facilitated the preparation and organization of the Asian Regional Conference in preparation for the CRIC (Damascus, Syria July 2002)

### **C. LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

#### **National level**

18. The Secretariat informed that 7 countries of the region have finalized their NAPs. A group of additional 10 countries are in the process of finalizing their NAPs.
19. The Secretariat has also provided support to some countries of the region towards the organization of national workshops on synergies between sustainable development conventions.

#### **Sub-regional level**

20. The Secretariat reported on recent developments concerning the 'Gran Chaco' project (Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia); the 'Puna Americano' activities (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru); the Mesoamerica initiative (Belize, Costa Rica, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama) and the Hispaniola Island Project (Dominican Republic, Haiti).

#### **Regional level**

21. The Secretariat informed that the Regional Coordinating Unit has been relocated at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Mexico City.
22. The Secretariat also facilitated the organization of the regional meeting preparatory to the first session of the CRIC ( Bridgetown, Barbados, 29 July - 1 August 2002).

### **D. EUROPE**

#### **National level**

23. Information was provided on the secretariat's continued effort to promote the Convention and facilitate the accession to it by the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Some four countries of the region have deposited their instruments of accession to the depositary between March and October 2002.
24. The secretariat has also provided direct assistance to countries that have requested support for the preparation of their national report to the CRIC.

#### **Regional**

25. A regional conference preparatory to the CRIC has been organized at the end of July 2002 in Geneva, Switzerland. Various reports submitted by Annex IV, Annex V and other developed Country Parties have been considered. A synthesis of these reports and recommendation made at the Geneva Conference will be reviewed at the first session of the CRIC.

## **II.2 External Relations and Public Information**

26. The secretariat reported on its cooperation with other sustainable development instruments. The Bureau members were informed on the fact that the national reports to be received by the first

session of the CRIC present the views of the affected countries on successes and shortcomings in the achievement of synergies among the relevant conventions.

27. The Secretariat informed on the status of its joint work programme with the Convention on Biological Diversity. In this regard, the Bureau was informed on a training programme, which was organized in Italy for experts from affected developing Country Parties.
28. The Secretariat also informed on the collaboration with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Several consultative meetings between the two Secretariats have had to identify a number of areas of cooperation, which include: the sharing of information systems, development of national profiles, adaptation of strategies in countries with arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.
29. The Secretariat further informed on the cooperation with the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). In the framework of the CRIC process, the secretariat has encouraged the NGOs to actively participate in the reporting process through their respective National Coordinating Bodies (NCBs). In addition, several NGOs events related to the implementation of the UNCCD have been facilitated in the sidelines of the regional meetings preparatory to the CRIC.
30. Other activities carried out by the Secretariat include the preparation and organization of the World Day to Combat Desertification (Osnabruck, Germany 17 June 2002); the issuance of a biennial newsletter called 'Down to Earth'; the publication of a booklet titled 'making a difference'.
31. The Secretariat informed that the UNCCD reference unit has been fully operational since April 2002. The reference unit has been collaborating since then with the libraries and documentation centres of other UN organizations based in Bonn.

### II.3 Committee on Science and Technology (CST)

32. The Chairman of the CST recalled the decision of the Bureau concerning the selection of the CST's group of experts. He informed that pursuant to consultations with the regional groups and the Secretariat, the CST Bureau convened a meeting from 07 to 10 October 2002, in Bonn. The CST members selected 25 candidates who will compose the CST's group of experts.
33. As requested by the Bureau of the COP, the list of the 25 selected candidates has been circulated. A copy is annexed to this report. The first meeting of the group of experts will be held in Hamburg, Germany from 04 to 07 November 2002.
34. The Chairman of the CST also reported on activities relating to the establishment of a research centre on Traditional Knowledge in Italy. He informed that a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Ministry of Environment of Italy and the Secretariat of the Convention in July 2002. Steps have been taken for the definition of the mandate of the Research Centre and its programme of work.
35. The chairman of the CST further reported on the financial difficulties encountered for the implementation of phase two of the survey and evaluation of existing networks.
36. With regard to the desertification information system to support national action programmes in the Mediterranean (DISMED), the Bureau were informed on the current collaboration between the Ministry for Cooperation of Italy, the European Agency of Environment and the Secretariat.

### III. Consideration of the measures on the UNCCD adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)

39. As a follow up to decision 8 / COP.5 relating to the preparation of the WSSD. The Executive Secretary informed on actions initiated by the secretariat to participate actively in the preparatory process for the WSSD and in the summit, with a view to ensuring that the UNCCD goals and objectives were duly reflected in its outcome.
40. The President of the Bureau emphasized that the Summit was a success from the view point of the UNCCD. The plan of implementation of the WSSD acknowledged the UNCCD as one of the tools for poverty eradication. The Summit also agreed to strengthen the implementation of the UNCCD, and to 'call on the Second assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to take action on the recommendations of the GEF Council concerning the designation of land degradation (desertification and deforestation) as a focal area of the GEF as a means of GEF support for the successful implementation of the UNCCD.
41. The Executive Secretary also informed the Bureau on the outcome of the Second Assembly of the GEF. He said that the Assembly, which met from 16 to 18 October 2002 in Beijing, China, responded to the call made by the WSSD and decided to declare the GEF's availability to serve as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD should the COP so decides at its next session.
42. The Bureau recognized that the whole issue of UNCCD took quite a significant step forward. The chairman added that this positive outcome features prominently certainly because of the linkages between desertification and poverty.

### IV. **Overview of the preparation of the first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)**

#### 1. Measures to prepare the first session of the CRIC and consideration of the main issues on the Agenda of the CRIC

43. The Secretariat made a presentation on the preparatory activities for the session of the CRIC. Emphasis was made on the quality of the 185 reports submitted by the Country Parties and some observers. The Secretariat has compiled and synthesized the reports for the consideration of the Parties.
44. The Bureau were also informed on the arrangements made in cooperation with the Government of Italy, host country of the CRIC, and the FAO, which agreed to make available its conference facilities.
45. The Secretariat further recalled that the review of the reports will be undertaken through case studies according to the thematic topics that were identified by the COP.5.
46. Some Bureau members made comments on the need to be very concrete at the CRIC session and focus on priority issues identified in the relevant decision of COP.5 and in the national reports.
47. The Secretariat informed that the regional wrap up sessions, which will be organized during the second week of the session will highlight the outcomes from the regional meetings and continue

the debate on UNCCD implementation with a view to contribute to the comprehensive report of the CRIC, including conclusions and recommendations.

48. The Secretariat also mentioned that after having considered the thematic issues, the Parties would have the opportunity to consider some key elements through a Global Interactive Dialogue, which will take into account recent developments concerning the UNCCD processes.

## 2. Facilitation of the Participatory to the First Session of the CRIC

49. The Executive Secretary called the attention of the Bureau to the funding requirements for the participation of developing countries and the representatives of the NGOs at the CRIC session. He underlined the fact that the contributions received through the special fund for support towards the participation in the CRIC continue to be a matter of concern. He said that given this context only one delegate per developing country will be sponsored by UNCCD.
50. The President urged all Bureau members to communicate to countries of their regions, inviting them to consider making contributions to the special fund for participation.

### **V. Other matters**

51. The Executive Secretary informed the Bureau members on recent discussion with a couple of countries concerning the venue of the Sixth Session of the COP. He reported that Cuba has been considering hosting a COP for quite a few years. The Government of Cuba informed recently the Secretariat of their interest in hosting COP.6 in early September 2003.
52. Members of the Bureau expressed their support to the offer from Cuba. The President of the Bureau concluded that the Bureau accepts the offer and authorizes the Executive Secretary to undertake detailed arrangements with the Government of Cuba.

### **VI. Next meeting**

53. The next ordinary session of the Bureau will be held in the margins of the meeting of the Committee on Sustainable Development scheduled in April 2003. The Executive Secretary will consult with the President of the Bureau on the date of the meeting and inform the Bureau members accordingly.
54. The President thanked the Bureau members and the secretariat for their contribution and support. He declared the meeting closed at 18:00 p.m.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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## ANNEX

The Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology met from 7 to 10 October, 2002 in Bonn, Germany to select in consultation with the UNCCD Secretariat the 25 members of the Group of Experts as noted in Decision 17/COP5 and its Annex. The selected candidates are as follows:

**Africa**

Badroui, Mohamed  
El Bagouri, Ismail Hamdi  
Folorunso, Olatunji  
Saadou, Mahamane  
Seely, Mary Kathryn

**CEE**

Baloyan, Samvel  
Debicki, Ryszard  
Sokolovska, Maria  
Vermes, Laszlo  
Tesarova, Marta  
WEOG  
Mouat, David Anthony  
Ornas, Anders  
Ozden , Dursun Murat  
Sanchez, Victor  
Sciortino, Maurizio

**Asia**

Ahmadi, Hassan  
Al-Amoud, Ahmed Ibrahim  
Singh, Harish  
Takeuchi, Kazuhiko  
Wang, Lixian

**LAC**

Abraham, Elena Maria  
Febles, Gustavo  
Leon, Alejandor  
Nascimento, Nadima  
Santibanez, Fernando