

**Bureau of the Conference of the Parties
to the United Nations Convention to
Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**

Bonn, 2 April 2004

Report of the Bureau Meeting

1. A meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties was convened by the President of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP6) to the UNCCD. The meeting was held in Bonn, Germany on 02 April 2004.

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

2. The meeting was opened at 10.30 a.m. by Dr. Daniel Codorniú Pujals, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba. Dr. Codorniú Pujals informed the Bureau members that Dr. Rosa Elena Simeón Negrin, Minister of science, Technology and Environment of Cuba, and President of COP6 is recovering from a recent surgery. Consequently, she requested Dr. Codorniú Pujals to chair the Bureau meeting on her behalf.
3. All Bureau members have conveyed their best wishes to Dr. Negrin for a prompt recovery and the hope to see her back in the Bureau by the next meeting.
4. With regard to the adoption of the Agenda, one delegation proposed to change the ordering of the agenda item but was not supported. The Bureau members therefore adopted the agenda presented to them without modification.

**II. Activities undertaken since the sixth session
of the Conference of the Parties**

II-1. Presentation of the final report and of the outcomes of COP6

5. The Executive Secretary welcomed the Bureau members and presented the final report of COP6. He mentioned the amendment made on the proceedings of the Conference taking into account the comments made by one country Party. He informed that the report is posted on the website of the Secretariat.

II-2. Presentation of the work plan for 2004

6. He also presented the work plan for the Secretariat for 2004 and invited Bureau members to provide comments or guidance as deemed necessary. He added the activities mentioned in the work plan are undertaken in close collaboration and with the support of other partners, particularly the Global Mechanism.

II-3 Activities undertaken in the regions

7. The Executive Secretary informed the Bureau on the activities undertaken since COP6 in the various regions. The information notes, which were circulated under this agenda item, state that the main activities include the following:

A. Africa

National Level

8. It was pointed out that 29 countries have finalized and adopted their National Action Programmes (NAPs). The Secretariat is currently assisting another group of countries in the launching of their NAP formulation processes.
9. Information was also provided on joint missions undertaken by the Global Mechanism and the Secretariat in support to the preparation for donor's consultations in several African countries (e.g.: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Mozambique, Niger, Uganda and Madagascar).

Sub-regional level

10. The sub-regional activities also are being developed in the Central African sub-region through the formulation process of the Sub-Regional Action Programme; in Southern Africa, through the development of pilot activities on agroforestry and soil conservation.
The Secretariat also continues to facilitate the development of a number of transboundary pilot projects in the existing four Sub-Regional Action Programmes (Western, Southern, Eastern, Northern) of Africa.

Regional level

11. The Bureau was informed on the active role played by the Secretariat for the preparation of the Partnership Conference on the NEPAD Environmental Action Plans held in December 2003. The Executive Secretary reported on support provided to the relevant sub-regional institutions. He underlined the priority given to land degradation and desertification under the NEPAD Environmental Action Plan. He informed also on current activities under the NEPAD framework, which aim at advancing some of the 39 out of 68 selected projects. Several regional and international organizations (e.g. UNEP, WMO, the GEF, ICRISAT, the Islamic Development Bank) and bilateral partners (Italy and the United Arab Emirates) are providing catalytic support for the development of some of these projects.

12. Information was also provided on the preparatory activities for the launching of the thematic programme network (TPN) on the promotion of the renewable sources of energy, which is part of the Regional Action Programme to combat desertification in Africa.
The TPN on sustainable agricultural farming systems will also be launched this year.

At interregional level

13. The Secretariat informed on the preparation of the fourth Africa-Latin America and the Caribbean forum, which will be organized in the Autumn 2004. This event will focus on sustainable agricultural farming systems.

B. Asia

National level

14. The Executive Secretary gave a brief presentation on the status of NAPs in some affected Asian countries. It was indicated that 19 countries in the region have finalized their NAPs. It is expected that more will be finalizing the NAPs by the end of 2004. The Secretariat informed also that in accordance with decision 8/COP4, support is being provided through the Joint Work Programme with the Global Mechanism so as to assist Asian country Parties in the NAP formulation process.
15. It was further mentioned that all Asian countries but Iraq have ratified the Convention.

Sub-regional level

16. The Executive Secretary informed on the status of various initiatives undertaken in Central Asia, West Asia, South East Asia, South Asia and North East Asia. These initiatives include the adoption of the Sub-Regional Action Programme for Central Asian countries, the design and project formulation phase for pilot activities in West Asia, the development of SRAP in South East Asia. Countries of North East Asia have also formulated project proposal on dust and sand storms, which they have submitted to the GEF for financial support.

Regional level

17. The Executive Secretary informed that appropriate follow-up activities are being undertaken in cooperation with the government of the United Arab Emirates and in accordance with decision 8/COP6.
18. The Bureau was also informed on the recent activities of the Thematic Programme Networks on agroforestry (TPN2), desertification monitoring and assessment (TPN1), rangeland management and sand dune fixation (TPN3), as well as water resource management for agriculture (TPN4).

C. Europe

National level

19. The Executive Secretary mentioned that some Annex V countries are being supported for their NAP formulation process under the Joint Work Programme between the Global Mechanism and the Secretariat.
20. It was also noted that consultations are underway with high level officials of two countries, (Estonia, Serbia and Montenegro) that are completing their national processes to become Parties to the Convention.

Sub-regional and regional levels

21. The Secretariat reported on its participation at the regional meeting for strengthening cooperation in the field of land resources management in Central and Eastern Europe (Minsk, Belarus 15-16 December 2003).
22. As a follow-up to this regional event, the Secretariat is currently facilitating the organization of an expert meeting on drought mitigation for Balkans and neighbouring interested countries.

D. Latin America and the Caribbean countries

National level

23. The Bureau was informed that 11 countries from the LAC region have finalized their NAPs. The Secretariat and the Global Mechanism have provided another group of 11 countries with technical backstopping and financial support, so that they will finalize their NAPs by the end of 2004.
Other forms of support are also being provided towards the convening of donor's Round Table (Peru) and the organisation of synergy workshops at the local level (Argentina).

Sub-regional and regional levels

24. The Secretariat informed on assistance being provided for the development of activities in Chaco and Puma ecosystems, as well as in the framework of the Hispaniola project.
25. The Bureau was also informed on assistance provided to countries of the region for the development of the Thematic Programme Networks on integrated water resources management and water efficiency, agroforestry, benchmarks and indicators and on sustainable renewable energy.

II-4 External Relations and Public Information

26. The Secretariat reported on the development of its activities with the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the civil society as a whole, the functioning of the UNCCD reference Unit, and on its activities related to public information.
27. It was recalled that over 720 NGOs are accredited to the COP and that the participation of the NGOs to the UNCCD COP sessions remains very important. The successful organization of the open dialogue session at COP6, the input provided by the NGOs during the discussions of the Committee on Science and Technology, have been highly appreciated by all Parties.
28. With regard to the UNCCD reference unit, the Secretariat informed that it is currently engaged in re-cataloguing its materials with the view of posting them on-line. Furthermore, the development of an intensive networking policy has facilitated the establishment of working relationships with other relevant institutions and academic structures.
29. The Secretariat informed also on the production of multimedia tools, which aim at enhancing the visibility of the UNCCD. The collaboration with the public information units of the other Rio Conventions has been strengthened through the exchange of databases.
An electronic database has been developed for easy retrieval of information that may interest the journalists. This database has been expanded significantly through the collection of information provided by the UNIC offices and UNCCD focal points.
30. The Secretariat informed the Bureau on special actions being undertaken towards the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the UNCCD (17 June 2004).
The Bureau was also informed on the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, which declared 2006 the International Year of Deserts and Desertification.
Members of the Bureau were invited to provide the Secretariat with their views on measures that could be envisaged in partnership with other UN specialized agencies so as to successfully undertake special initiatives in observance of the year with the goal of enhancing the implementation of the Convention.

II-5 Global issues

31. The Secretariat informed the Bureau on various activities being developed in conjunction with interested partners, such as the other Rio Convention Secretariats, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the preparation of capacity building in GEF projects.
32. Bureau members were also informed on the outcomes of the Joint Liaison Group meeting held in Bonn at the end of January 2004, the participation of the Secretariat in the 10th meeting of the Secretariats of the Multilateral Environment Agreements. The Secretariat informed as well on the preparation of the workshop on forests and forest ecosystems (April 2004), jointly organized with the CBD, with the cooperation of the UNFCCC Secretariat.

The Secretariat further informed on its involvement and active role in the preparatory activities for the International Conference for renewable energies to be held in Bonn, Germany in early June 2004.

II-6 Committee on Science and Technology

33. The Secretariat informed that it has been actively following up on 8 CST related decisions adopted at COP6.
Bureau members were informed that the meetings of the CST and the group of experts will be organized at the venue of the CRIC3, so that some members of this scientific body including the chairpersons of the CST and the Group of Experts will have an opportunity to participate in the CRIC3 session.
34. The Bureau was informed that as a follow-up to decision 14/COP6, UNEP has prepared jointly with the Secretariat a medium-sized project for the development of phase 2 of the survey and evaluation of networks, agencies and bodies relevant to the implementation of the Convention. The project is being submitted to the GEF.
35. Due consideration has also been given to decision 13/COP6, which requested to take into account the NGOs. The Secretariat continues also to closely follow the activities of the Dryland Degradation Assessment (LADA) and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.
36. The Secretariat further informed on the development of the “Desertification Information Systems to support National Action Programmes in the Mediterranean (DISMED)”.
37. Official notifications were sent to the Parties inviting them to submit their written contribution on important CST issues, such as Benchmarks and indicators, Early warning Systems, traditional knowledge and land degradation, vulnerability and rehabilitation.
38. The Managing Director of the Global Mechanism informed on the development of Joint Work Programmes (JWP) with some members of the facilitation committee. These JWP will be made available on the website of the GM. He also informed that the 12th session of the Facilitation Committee was held in Rome, Italy from 17 to 19 March 2004. He further mentioned that IFAD has established an internal advisory group on desertification, which includes all Divisions of IFAD. It is expected that the advisory group will help strengthening the relationship between IFAD and UNCCD.

GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

39. The members of the Bureau made the following comments.
 - The representative of Swaziland speaking on behalf of the African region expressed his gratitude and congratulations to the Secretariat for the activities undertaken since COP6. He referred to the training courses of developing country representatives in GEF project preparation and encouraged strongly the

Secretariat in liaison with some of the GEF implementing agencies and bilateral donors to pursue such activities with vigour so as to help build capacity in GEF projects preparation.

With regard to the resolution on the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (2006), he advised that the Bureau should provide the Secretariat with every assistance necessary.

- The representative of Morocco also speaking on behalf of the Africa region expressed satisfaction with the report presented under agenda item II. He referred to the forthcoming session of the CSD and asked if the Secretariat is going to report on issues relating to water, sanitation and human settlement. He also suggested that the Bureau could envisage organizing some of its meetings in areas affected by desertification. Such a context would give an excellent opportunity to visit projects that are being developed by the countries.
- The representative of Norway speaking on behalf of the JUSCANZ group asked whether comments could be made by her group after the meeting for transmission to the other members of the Bureau. She pointed out the need to mobilize support from the GEF implementing agencies, especially in the context of the training courses in GEF project preparations, as well as the mobilization of co-financing for eligible projects.
- The chairperson of the CST completed the presentation made on the activities of the CST. He expressed concerns that CST may not be able to implement all COP6 decisions due to the limited financial resources and therefore financial strategy is needed.
- The chairman of the CRIC expressed thanks for the presentations made. He supported the concern of the CST chair and emphasized the importance of all inputs in the implementation process of the Convention. With regard to the amendment made on the proceedings of the COP6 at the request of one delegation, he recalled that there were many statements reacting to the statement made by Canada. He referred to the statement of the African group and recalled that intergovernmental practices require that when a request is made, to include a reference to the statement in a report, other statements related to the same topic should also be reflected in fairness.
- The representative of Belgium speaking on behalf of the European Union expressed support of his group on the good work done by the Secretariat. While recognizing that a lot has been done, he wondered what is it one should do to see NAPs fully integrated in the national development strategies. He underlined the importance of having UNCCD agenda reflected at higher level, especially during negotiation at bilateral and multilateral levels. With regard to the activities of the CST, he said that this scientific body of the Convention needs to receive appropriate support so as to be able to fulfil its mandate. He congratulated the Secretariat on activities related to external relations, particularly the working relationship with UNESCO.

- The representative of China speaking on behalf of the Asia region expressed also appreciation for the work of the Secretariat and the complete information provided. He asked for information on the status of cooperation between the UNCCD and the GEF. He also asked the Secretariat to update him on how it is implementing the WSSD plan of action. He finally asked for clarification on the division of responsibilities between the GM and the Secretariat.
40. The Executive Secretary answered to the questions put forward by some Bureau members, they can be summarized as follows:

Training courses: they are not funded by the GEF at the moment. They are prepared jointly with the implementing agencies with the financial assistance of donor countries to assist in the implementation of the CCD/CBD Joint Work Programme. These training sessions have proven to be useful particularly at a time countries are preparing projects to be submitted to the GEF for eventual support.

International Year of Desert and Desertification: the proposal has been made by the UNEP Governing Council.

Now that the General Assembly has adopted the Resolution, the Secretariat will consult with the group, which has been put in place so as to agree on modalities of their cooperation. The forthcoming session of the CSD will provide a good context to initiate this consultation process.

CSD session (April 2004): the Secretariat will be participating at the session, which deals with water and sanitation and provide inputs on the report. It is also organizing a high level panel discussion. It is however important to underline that UNCCD is getting ready to contribute substantially on the topic dealing with land resources in 2006.

Field visits: the proposal to organize some meetings of the Bureau in areas affected by desertification would certainly enable Bureau members to see developments on the ground and to assess the reality of local conditions, particularly in affected developing countries.

Comments on reports from constituencies: the Secretariat will transmit to the Bureau any communications by regional groups, if requested to do so.

Funding of CST activities: a solid scientific basis is of importance to the work of the affected countries and therefore an appeal was made to support the activities of the CST and the members of the group of experts.

Integrating NAPs in the National Development Strategies: there is still a deficit in terms of support to the UNCCD process. The Secretariat's responsibility is to uplift the visibility of the UNCCD and he believes that the best way to implement the NAPs is indeed through mainstreaming it into existing strategies such as the PRSP.

Division of responsibilities between the Global Mechanism and the UNCCD: An important progress has been made in strengthening collaboration. More is being done to avoid duplication and focus support to the countries. At present, the assistance is

provided to countries through the Joint Work Programme. As there is the deadline set by COP for countries to finalize their NAPs by 2005, both the GM and the Secretariat should continue to assist countries to fulfil their obligations vis a vis the Convention.

WSSD: the Secretariat is consulting various partners as to identify the best way by which the various recommendations can be implemented, using the framework of the UNCCD as a tool to fight poverty and help in achieving the objectives of the Millennium development goals.

The Managing director of the GM recalled that the various support provided at national level stem from the COP decisions, including at COP6. With regard to the research aspect, he underlined that research agenda is very much needed in the UNCCD process. This can be done in close relationship with the work of the CST.

41. The Chairman summarized the discussion and added that the Bureau recognizes the very important work done by the Secretariat since COP6.
42. He invited the Secretariat to ensure on the occasion of the next COP Bureau meetings that the documentation are sent early enough so as to allow sufficient time for consultation at the level of the regional groups.

III. Financial, Administrative and related matters

III-1 Financial situation of the Secretariat

43. The Executive Secretary made a presentation on the difficult financial situation of the Secretariat due to the continuing depreciation of the US dollar. He recalled that at COP6 in August-September 2003 the Parties agreed on the programme-budget of the Secretariat with Euro 1.00 = USD 1.085.
The situation that the Secretariat faces at present is more and more worrisome with an official UN exchange rate fixed at Euro 1.00 = USD 1.2195 for the month of April 2004.
This represents an increase of over 13,7% since COP6 in the cost of services denominated in Euro, which is for instance the case of all General Service staff salaries.
The cost of P staff salaries are denominated in USD, however each P staff received a post adjustment to accommodate the change in the value of the Euro in relation to the US Dollar. He mentioned that as a result, posts that become vacant in the course of 2004 are not filled and their functions are redeployed to other staff members. In the meantime, consultant's costs and travel costs were shifted to the supplementary funds. Further cost reduction have been explored but there are few possibilities to continue this trend without hampering the work of the Secretariat.
As a result of the continuing decline of the USD vs the Euro, the budget of the Secretariat in 2004 only shows a shortfall of USD 725'000.
Further deterioration of the exchange rate will lead to a shortage of available budget funds to meet basic obligations of the Secretariat, including the running costs (heating, communication, electricity, etc.).

The Executive Secretary therefore has asked the Bureau to give guidance on how to proceed.

44. Several Bureau members expressed concern with the financial situation as presented by the Executive Secretary and expressed the need to address this issue in an expeditious manner.
45. The representative of Mauritania stated that the Bureau has the mandate to take a decision if we refer to paragraphs 13 and 14 of Decision 23/COP6. It is in that understanding that he proposed to the Bureau members a draft decision, which aims at authorizing the Executive Secretary to draw on available cash resources from the core budget and the working capital reserve so as to be able to meet the Secretariat's staff salaries and basic related costs.
46. Four members of the Bureau have indicated that while they recognize the critical financial situation described by the Executive Secretary, they do need to consult with their regional groups and revert to Bureau.
47. The representative of Mauritania explained however that the proposal does not contain any real term increase in the Budget approved by COP6. However, it urges countries that have not yet done so to pay their dues. It deals also with the use of the working capital reserve as well as the use of available cash resources from unspent balances, contributions from previous financial periods and miscellaneous income to incur obligations.
48. After some exchange of views, the Bureau decided to take note with concern of the difficult financial situation of the Secretariat due to the negative impact of the USD depreciation against the Euro.
The Bureau also expressed concerns on outstanding payments and urges countries, which have not paid their contributions to do so promptly.
The Bureau further decided to analyse the measures on the draft decision proposed by some members and invited all Bureau members to revert to the President of the Bureau, in written, by 07 May 2004.
The Executive Secretary is requested to send as soon as possible to all Bureau members the report on the financial situation of the Secretariat, which was orally presented at the meeting of the Bureau.

III-2 Next term of office of the Executive Secretary

49. *(Wording to be provided by the President).*

IV. Overview of the Preparation of the third session of the Committee for the review of the implementation of the Convention (CRIC3)

IV-1 Organization of the activities at CRIC3

50. The Secretariat recalled relevant COP decisions, which constitute the basis of the preparation of the third session of the CRIC. These include decisions 11/COP1, 1/COP/5, 8/COP4, 9/COP6 and 10/COP6.
Bureau members were informed on recent consultations between the chairperson of the CRIC and the Secretariat with the aim to define the provisional agenda and programme of work of CRIC3.
51. Taking also into account the fact that only one region (Africa) will organize a meeting in preparation for CRIC3, the Secretariat informed that the format of this session would include the organization of regional consultations at the venue of the CRIC3. It is also proposed to convene a global interactive dialogue, which will address some of the areas of interest that have been identified by all Parties in previous CRIC sessions.

IV-2 Support for the preparation of national, sub-regional and regional reports in Africa

52. The Secretariat informed on the status of the preparation of reports that will be submitted to CRIC3. In this regard, it was underlined that the Secretariat has produced an updated version of the help guide, which includes elements for the preparation of country profiles.
53. The Secretariat recalled that each African country Party is expected to present a report, which would include thematic issues identified by the COP. The Global Mechanism and the CST will also be requested to provide inputs to the deliberations of the Parties.
54. The Secretariat further informed on current efforts towards the mobilization of adequate financial resources, necessary to assist African country Parties in the preparation of their national reports. In this regard, the Bureau was informed that the World Bank has expressed readiness to financially contribute to the preparation of the national reports with co-financing sought from the GEF.
55. With regard to the preparation of the reports on the implementation of the sub-regional action programmes, the relevant African institutions concerned have been already requested to start preparing their reports whereas the Regional Coordination Unit is preparing the report on the status of the Regional Action Programme to combat desertification in Africa.
56. The Secretariat has also informed that an African regional meeting will be held in the second semester of 2004 with the aim to enable the African focal points to undertake a peer review of their reports.

IV-3 Support for the preparation of consultations in regions other than Africa

57. The Secretariat informed that the purpose of these regional consultations is mainly to prepare for CRIC3 by allowing each region to discuss and coordinate their views on thematic issues, thus enhancing their capacity to actively participate in the deliberations.

58. These regional consultations will provide the countries concerned with an opportunity to also assess the progress achieved in following up recommendations made in previous regional initiatives on UNCCD. The focal points of the regions concerned will further consider some sectoral areas relating to the progress made in implementing the Declaration on the commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the Convention.

IV-4 Date and venue of CRIC3 and measures to prepare the session

59. The Secretariat recalled decision 10/COP6 in which the Parties decided on procedure regarding the date and venue of CRIC3. In consultation with the chairperson of the CRIC, it is proposed that CRIC3 will last seven (7) days, including regional consultations, and 3 working days allocated to panel discussions on selected themes, relevant to decision 8/COP4.
60. The Secretariat also informed that the financial support expected from the World Bank and the GEF for the preparation of the national reports is expected to be transferred by mid April 2004. Countries therefore would need adequate time after they receive the financial assistance to prepare their reports. Against this background, it is proposed to organize CRIC3 from 31 January to 11 February 2005.
61. With regard to the venue of CRIC3, the Secretariat proposed the Bureau that offer(s) to host CRIC3 could continue to be received until 31 July 2004.
62. Several comments were made by Bureau members on CRIC3 preparations.
- Some have advised not to extend the format too much on panel sessions, others insisted on the need to give time to the consideration of some of the main areas under the “Bonn Declaration” (decision 8/COP4).
 - The CST chairman recalled the need to organize the meeting of the CST in the same venue of the CRIC so as to allow some experts to participate in the deliberations.
 - The representative of Belgium circulated a paper called “Improving the impact of CRIC for UNCCD implementation”. He also proposed a shorter duration of the CRIC.
 - The representative of China expressed concerns on the proposed dates, which coincide with China’s new year and proposed to look into other possible dates.
 - Many opposed the proposal to limit the duration of CRIC to one working week.
 - The chairperson of the CRIC recalled that at CRIC3 not only national experience will be reviewed along thematic lines, but also sub-regional and regional reports, as well as reports submitted by the developed countries, intergovernmental organizations and UN Specialised agencies. He proposed a draft decision and added that if the Bureau agrees, he is willing to pursue the

consultation with the Secretariat and report to the Bureau through the President of the COP.

63. The Executive Secretary commented on some issues raised by Bureau members. He referred to the date of CRIC3 and advised that instead of coming up with a firm date it could be decided that CRIC3 will be held in early 2005. In the meantime conference services will be consulted to identify a period, which will suit all Parties. He informed also that the Africa Regional meeting will be postponed until the end of November 2004. The exact date will be determined in consultation with the Host country. The Secretariat will make all necessary arrangements to ensure that CRIC documentation will be circulated six weeks before the session starts.
64. The President of the Bureau proposed that CRIC3 will be held in early 2005. He invited the chairperson of the CRIC to consult with the Secretariat and propose a final format by the end of April 2004 taking into account the various comments made.
65. The Executive Secretary introduced an information note on the estimated costs to facilitate the participation of developing country Parties and representatives of accredited NGOs.

**V. Follow-up on some issues on the Agenda of the seventh session
of the Conference of the Parties (COP7)**

V-1 Collaboration between the GEF and the UNCCD

66. As a follow-up to decision 6/COP6, the secretariat informed the Bureau members on its consultation with both the Global Mechanism and the GEF. The draft Memorandum of Understanding between the GEF Council and the COP has been sent to the CEO of the GEF for consideration.
67. The Secretariat continues to closely follow the activities of the GEF Council. The Secretariat also introduced before the UN General Assembly the report of the Secretary-General of the UN, which informed on the status of cooperation between UNCCD and the GEF. The Assembly welcomed the developments in the involvement of the GEF in the implementation of the Convention and urged for the preparation of the MOU for consideration of and adoption by the COP to the Convention and the Council of the GEF.
68. The Secretariat also informed on its current working relationships with the GE implementing agencies (The World Bank, UNDP and UNEP) and the GEF Secretariat. With regard to the operationalization of the GEF operational programme on sustainable land management (OP 15), the Secretariat informed on various initiatives being developed by the implementing agencies.
69. In this regard, it was noted that UNEP is finalizing a medium sized project on global support to facilitate the early development and implementation of land degradation programmes and projects; UNEP is facilitating the preparation of some project proposals on combating desertification in the framework of the Environmental Action plan of NEPAD; UNDP is developing a targeted umbrella project for capacity

building for effective and mainstreaming of sustainable land management practices in affected developing country Parties. In this project, UNDP will assist countries for the finalization of their NAPs; the GEF Secretariat has also prepared a pilot country partnership on sustainable land management, which aims at assisting affected countries to address land degradation based on the priorities outlined in the NAPs.

V-2 Joint Work Programme between the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism

70. The Secretariat and the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism introduced this Agenda item. They recalled decisions 3/COP 6 and 5/COP6 in which the Parties requested them to develop, adopt and implement a biennial joint work programme.
71. They informed on consultations held in Bonn in early February 2004 and the finalisation of the document on the joint work programme, a copy of which was circulated at the Bureau meeting. In response to a question asking for a more specific description of the roles of the Secretariat and the GM, the Managing Director responded that the detailed operational information on the JWP are available on the web site.
72. The Bureau appreciated the work done at the level of the GEF and in the context of the joint work programme between the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism. Some questions were raised on the status of the project being prepared by the GEF implementing agencies. One Bureau member asked whether support can be provided to the Thematic Programme Networks against the GEF funding.
73. The Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism responded to these questions, highlighting in particular the importance of the collaboration with the GEF implementing agencies. It was underlined that these institutions have an important role to play not only for the formulation but also the implementation of UNCCD priority activities.
74. One Bureau member expressed concern that his country is unable to represent its region in GEF official events due to the difficulty to be granted with a visa. The Bureau reiterated the need of respecting the spirit of the GEF instrument, in particular in relation to the effective participation of all GEF Council members in the GEF meetings. The Bureau urges the CEO of the GEF to take necessary steps in order to guarantee an effective and sustainable solution for the full participation of all GEF Council members in the GEF meetings. The Executive Secretary is requested to inform the CEO of the GEF on this appeal.

V-3 Consultation on the comprehensive review of the activities of the Secretariat

75. The Secretariat recalled decision 23/COP6, which decided that a comprehensive review of the activities of the Secretariat should be conducted. The Bureau of the COP6 was requested by the same decision to develop terms of references by 1 June 2004.

76. The Secretariat informed that letters have been exchanged with the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) in order to initiate the preparation of this comprehensive review of the activities of the Secretariat. The JIU has already informed that its programme of work for 2004 includes the request of the COP6. The JIU plans to send an exploratory mission at the Headquarters of the Convention. It has also informed that his service will bear some costs, especially on travel and related expenses.
77. The representative of Belgium speaking on behalf of the European Union has circulated a paper called "EU Proposal for draft Terms of Reference to implement paragraph 18-20 of decision 23/COP6."
78. Bureau members discussed at some length on how best they should proceed to have the terms of reference prepared. The President of the Bureau proposed the following steps:
 - a) Each regional group should provide its input, in writing, no later than 7 May 2004;
 - b) The Secretariat is requested to compile all received submissions and transmit to the President of the Bureau two weeks later;
 - c) The President of the Bureau will circulate the text to all Bureau members and get their comments;
 - d) The Terms of Reference will be finalised in 1 July 2004;

V-4 Consultation on the Regional Coordination Units

79. The Secretariat recalled decision 11/COP.6, which invites the Parties and relevant entities to submit their views in writing on collaborative arrangements for the Regional Coordination Units.
80. The Secretariat informed that an official note has been sent to Parties and all identified entities. To date, some 18 submissions are received. The Secretariat also informed that a team of two experts are being recruited for the preparation of a costed feasibility study, which will concentrate on main principles defined under paragraph 2 of decision 11/COP.6. The Secretariat further informed that the feasibility study will be circulated to all Parties by 1 August 2004 as requested by COP6.

VI. Next Meeting

The President informed that the Bureau will meet on 9 June 2004 to take decisions on issues that have not been finalised.

He also informed that the Bureau will meet one day prior to the CRIC3. Details will be provided in due time.

VII. Other matters

The representative of China suggested that status of preparation of the terms of reference for the review of the activities of the Secretariat should be included on the agenda for the next meeting of the Bureau.

The President declared the meeting closed at 21:50 p.m.

List of participants

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