



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

Assessment of the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface

May 2017

In 2013, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) decided to establish a Science-Policy Interface (SPI), with the objectives of facilitating a two-way science–policy dialogue and ensuring the delivery of policy-relevant information, knowledge and advice on DLDD to all interested parties. In 2015, the COP further decided that the work conducted by the SPI and its overall achievements since its establishment will be reviewed at the 13th meeting of the UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology (CST), to be held in the second half of 2017, in order to decide on the future functioning of the SPI. This assessment is intended to assist Parties to the UNCCD in their considerations and decision-making on the future functioning of the SPI at the CST meeting.

This assessment was commissioned by the UNCCD Evaluation Office and authored by Dr. Richard Escadafal with the collaboration of Prof. Lindsay Stringer and Dr. Richard James Thomas, in January-May 2017. The views expressed are of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the UNCCD secretariat or the Global Mechanism.

CONTEXT OF THE ASSESSMENT

Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification - UNCCD - is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. Its 10-Year Strategy states as the vision "to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability". The Convention's 196 Parties work together to improve the living conditions for people in areas affected by land degradation, to maintain and restore land and soil productivity, and to mitigate the effects of drought. The UNCCD is particularly committed to a bottom-up approach, encouraging the participation of local people in combating desertification and land degradation.

Decision-making under the UNCCD is done at the Conference of the Parties (COP) that brings together all signatories to the Convention every two years. The COP is assisted by two subsidiary bodies: the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC). The work under the UNCCD is supported by two entities: the UNCCD secretariat that organizes the intergovernmental process and facilitates cooperation and information exchange among countries, development partners, the scientific community, the civil society and other key stakeholders; and the Global Mechanism (GM) that promotes the mobilization of resources for sustainable land management.

In 2013 COP 11 decided to establish a Science-Policy Interface (SPI) composed of 20 members and three observers. This decision follows the recognition that a better means of delivering scientific information on *desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD)* to all interested parties is required and that the COP needs to be kept up to date on scientific developments. The SPI's objectives are *to facilitate a two-way science-policy dialogue and ensure the delivery of policy-relevant information, knowledge and advice on DLDD* to all interested parties.

The SPI is assigned numerous tasks that deal with identifying scientific knowledge needs, acquiring and analyzing scientific findings and other science related information concerning DLDD, and "translating" this information for policy use, particularly for decision-making under the UNCCD. It is also tasked with identifying and bringing forth ways and means for meeting the scientific knowledge needs, and interacting with various scientific bodies and processes. Information of the role of the SPI vis-à-vis the overall UNCCD framework for scientific collaboration is presented in annexes 1 and 2. The UNCCD secretariat provides administrative support to the work of the SPI, as well as information about relevant ongoing activities.

The SPI is currently pursuing a 2016-2017 work programme which was approved by the COP in decision 21/COP 12 in 2015. For this biennium, thus, its work is based on priorities and

tasks that have been considered and approved at intergovernmental level. The same COP also decided that the work conducted by the SPI and its overall achievements since its establishment will be reviewed at the 13th meeting of the CST in 2017 (decision 23/COP.12) in order to decide on the future functioning of the SPI.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSESSMENT

In the context described above, the present assessment will look at (1) the work conducted by the SPI in the biennium 2016-2017, and (2) the overall achievements of the SPI since its establishment. It identifies and documents lessons learned and makes evidence-based recommendations for the future.

The information provided through the assessment is intended to assist Parties to the UNCCD in their considerations and decision-making on the future functioning of the SPI.

METHODOLOGY

Theory of change

During the first step of this work the initial situation was analysed and a **'baseline' theory of change** was defined to serve as guideline for the assessment. The theory of change that was used originates from the analysis and propositions of the AGSA group¹ and its current form has been established by a COP decision and the further Terms of Reference of the SPI². The analysis conducted is summarised in Figure 1.

This initial theory of change seeks to provide a pragmatic interpretation of the objectives and the expected outcomes of the SPI. It translates the general aim of the SPI to be met when **SPI products are used by decision makers in UNCCD country Parties**. It further suggests that the key steps toward this are (1) raised awareness of scientific aspects of key DLDD matters through SPI products and (2) access of Parties to latest DLDD and SLM scientific findings in a 'decision-making ready' format.

¹ The Ad Hoc Working Group to Further Discuss the Options for the Provision of Scientific Advice Focusing on Desertification/Land Degradation and Drought Issues (AGSA) was established in July 2012 to make proposals for improving scientific advice to the UNCCD, in accordance with decision 20/COP.10. It delivered its report approximately one year later.

² Decision 23/COP 11, amended by the SPI in 2016 in order to take into account the extended mandate resulting from COP 12.

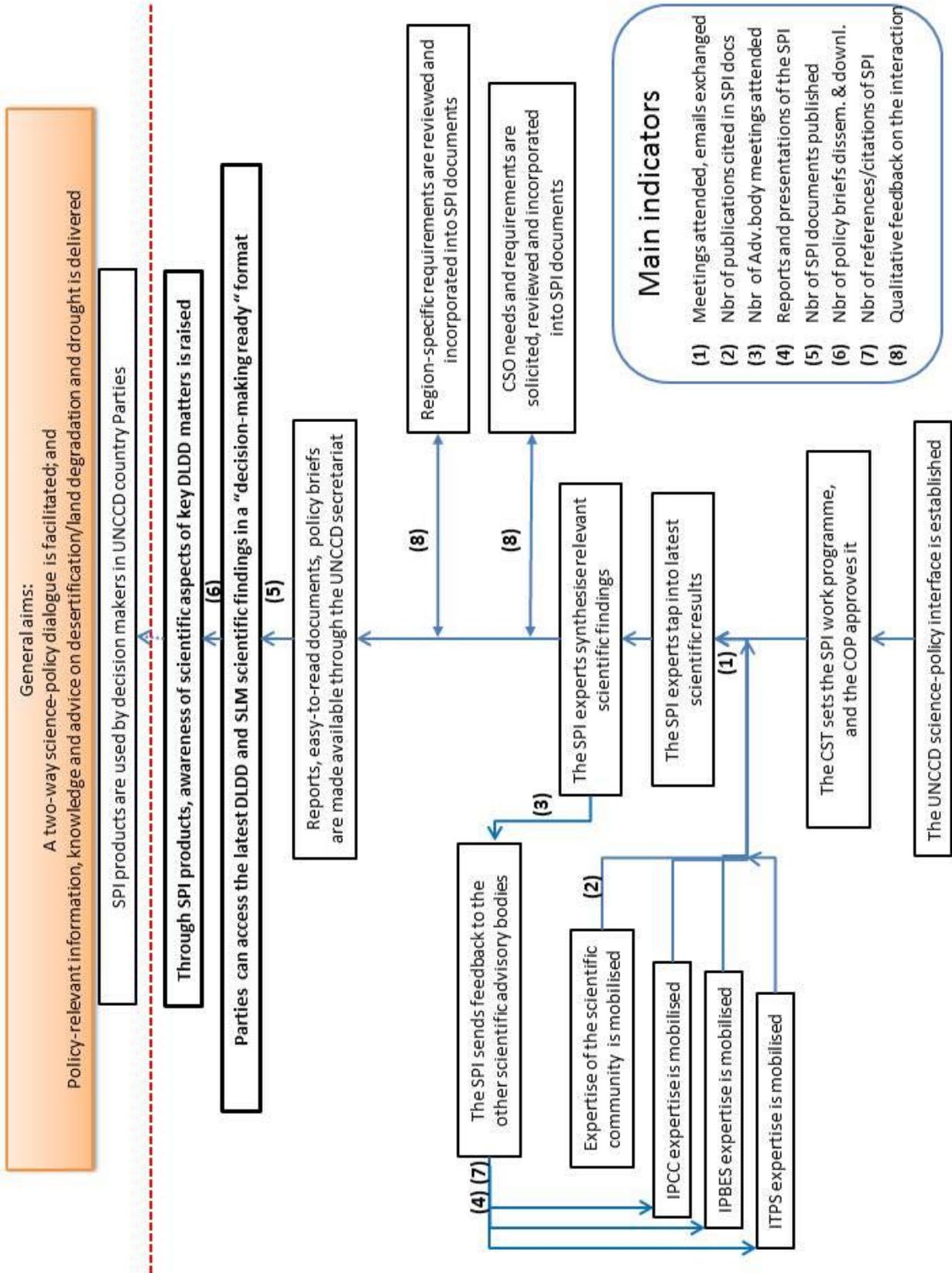


Figure 1 The initial theory of change for the SPI

Building on the mandate given to the SPI, the initial theory of change identifies four main outcomes for the SPI, which will be critical for meeting the above-mentioned key steps, as follows:

- Latest scientific results are tapped into by the SPI
- Relevant scientific findings are synthesized by the SPI experts (including attention to region-specific requirements and needs and requirements arising from the civil society)
- Other scientific advisory bodies are aware of UNCCD perspectives through the SPI inputs
- Expertise of the scientific community is mobilized.

The two key steps and four outcomes are the results framework against which the overall achievements of the SPI are measured in this assessment. As the SPI has functioned for a limited time and many of its products have been published only recently, progress toward the general aim (*SPI products are used by the decision-makers*) is not considered here.

The assessment builds loosely on eight evaluation questions that are presented below:

1. What activities have been undertaken by the SPI and in what sequence and timing?
2. Which planned outputs have been delivered, which objectives have been achieved? Which remaining outputs are likely to be delivered /objectives likely to be achieved by the end of the biennium?
3. Where applicable, how have the activities and outputs been used? By whom? Has there been any feedback from the users?
4. Has the planned budget been adequate for carrying out the activities? Have the necessary resources been made available?
5. How well has the SPI organization of work supported the delivery of outputs and the achievement of the objectives?
6. How has the SPI process been communicated beyond its members?
7. Have external partners been involved? In which roles?
8. How has the UNCCD secretariat supported the work of the SPI?

To organise the data, the initial theory of change identifies some practical indicators, which allow an estimation of the intensity of the 'flow' along each of the arrows shown in figure 1.

Data collection

The assessment process involved the collection and study of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Quantitative data included documents and reports concerning the functioning of the SPI, its meetings as well as its products. Statistics concerning the volume of dissemination/downloads of the SPI products were consulted too.

Two online surveys were conducted, one open for all UNCCD stakeholders with particular focus on the national focal points, and another one targeting civil society organisations (CSOs) accredited to the UNCCD. These surveys contained multiple-choice questions for clarifying respondents' opinions on various aspects of the SPI.

Qualitative data consisted of interviews of the CST Bureau members, the SPI members, other scientists working on DLDD issues, a small number of national (political) delegates and the staff of the UNCCD secretariat and the Global Mechanism.

Some of the interviewees responded to the interview questions in written form, where it was not possible to arrange a mutually convenient time for interviews.

Overall, close to 200 people were consulted through the surveys and interviews during the assessment process.

At the end of April 2017, as the assessment report was at an advanced draft stage, the lead evaluator participated in a SPI meeting held in Bonn, Germany to present the main findings and draft recommendations. The SPI members were provided an opportunity to comment on and provide feedback to the draft, and their input was used to further develop the report.

FINDINGS

In line with its terms of reference, the findings of the assessment are presented in two parts:

1. 2016-2017 performance review, which is designed to assess the progress made in implementing the 2016-2017 SPI work programme. Focus of this part is on outputs (mainly products delivered by the SPI).
2. Overall achievements of the SPI, which is based on a thorough analysis of the SPI functioning since its establishment. The outcomes that the initial theory of change presents provide the basis for this part.

1. Performance review 2016-2017

Formally the current work programme of the SPI unfolds from COP12 to COP13. It has three objectives: i) addressing the operationalization of the voluntary land degradation neutrality (LDN) target, ii) highlighting the science-based synergistic potential of sustainable land management (SLM) practices to address DLDD, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and iii) encouraging the development and implementation of specific rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands. It also contains four coordination activities involving a) the land degradation and restoration assessment (LDRA) conducted by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), b) the development of the Global Land Outlook (GLO), c) the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS), and d) the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Work on the three objectives has been addressed through self-organization of SPI members into teams, usually with a designated leader. The four coordination activities were also led by self-organized SPI teams. However, due to the strategic implications of the coordination activities, their implementation was carried out in close collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat.

The implementation of the work programme was organized and discussed during two full-fledged SPI meetings (October 2015 and September 2016), and during additional meetings and consultations in the sidelines of scientific conferences (e.g. the Global Soil Week, April 2015). Much of the work was done remotely through email and teleconferences.

The findings of the review of the SPI performance are summarized in tables 1 and 2.

From the findings presented in these tables, it can be observed that the SPI has taken action to address all of its work programme objectives and coordination activities, while some activities have received greater attention than others. Some activities have been dependent on the development of new collaborative partnerships, which has been time-consuming even if the partners have been enthusiastic and committed to the joint tasks at hand. Collaboration with other agencies has been successful in some cases, but often such efforts have been delayed due to reasons beyond the control of the SPI members.

Table 1: Progress toward the SPI objectives in its WP 2016-2017

Objective	Expected outputs	Process	Remarks
1: Provide scientific guidance to the operationalization of the voluntary land degradation neutrality (LDN) target	User guide for implementing LDN at country level, based on a review of proposed conceptual and methodological frameworks that would scientifically underpin LDN implementation	Undertaken by SPI team, led by two of them and supported by an initial write-shop with external experts, and contributions by SPI members and external reviewers	Document produced: "SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY". Released for external peer reviewing in June 2016, final version published Feb 2017. From this 98 pages document in English only, a 6-page Science Policy Brief has been derived and made available in 3 languages in both printed and electronic form.
2: Highlight the science-based synergistic potential of sustainable land management (SLM) practices to address DLDD, climate change mitigation and adaptation	Technical report, commissioned to an institution/consortium. Activities in this objective were decided at COP12 and extremely detailed, contrary to those of the other objectives where the components were defined by the SPI.	Addressed by a small team of SPI members, coordinated by four of them. Definitions of the TOR, the call (posted online from 15/7/2016- 16/9/2016) and selection of the consortium took longer than expected. The report is being reviewed by SPI members and by external reviewers	The technical report delivered to the SPI for review by its members and external reviewers (1-17 April) should be finalised in the coming weeks. The corresponding Science-Policy Brief will be prepared by the SPI shortly thereafter. Their delivery on time for consideration by COP13 cannot be verified within the timeframe of this assessment.
3: Encourage the development and implementation of specific rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands	Review of existing suitable practices and to propose scientific guidance to use those practices	To avoid duplication, the SPI considered tapping into an initiative of the UNEP-International Resources Panel (IRP) to collaborate in preparing a report on land restoration. This requires interaction with the internal process of IRP to approve and launch.	Although (positive) online exchanges with the IRP began already in the second half of 2015, targeted consultation involving SPI representation started only at the IRP Land Restoration working group meeting in March 2017. Thus, collaboration with the IRP was launched very recently. Work on this objective will continue in the next SPI work programme, subject to COP13 decision.

Table 2: Progress on coordination activities

Coordination activity	Progress
1: Follow up and contribute to the land degradation and restoration assessment (LDRA) conducted by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)	During June – July 2016 the SPI contributed to the review of the 1st order draft of the LDRA. Volunteering SPI members will continue the collaboration with the IPBES by providing further inputs at the occasion of the 2nd order draft of the full technical report, and its associated summary for policymakers, available for review during May – June 2017.
2: Contribute to the development of the Global Land Outlook (GLO)	SPI team leaders for coordination activity 2 have been involved in the 3rd meeting of the GLO Steering Committee (30 June and 1 July 2016 in Bonn). Two potential contributions from the SPI have been identified: i) outputs prepared as part of the SPI work programme could be incorporated in the GLO structure (first or future editions) as possible working papers; ii) SPI members would review GLO working papers and draft chapters during the external review process planned for December 2016 – January 2017. However the GLO remains essentially a public awareness document rather than a scientific output.
3: Follow up on current collaboration with and explore further means of collaboration with the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS)	Soil organic carbon is a key indicator for LDN implementation and a major topic of the collaboration between the SPI and the ITPS. At the 5th Working Session of the ITPS in March 2016, three joint activities for 2017 were identified: i) The ITPS was invited to contribute a chapter on soils to the GLO; ii) ITPS would collaborate with the SPI on assessing soil organic carbon (including a new global soil organic carbon (SOC) map by 2017) in the framework of indicator 15.3.1 of the SDGs and the endorsed metrics for assessing land degradation neutrality (LDN); and iii) a joint global assessment of soil erosion will be performed under the leadership of Working Group 1 “Sustainable Soil Management” of the ITPS. First concrete result of the SPI-ITPS collaboration was the soil organic matter symposium organised in Rome in March 2017, co-sponsored by the UNCCD/SPI, GSP/ITPS and the IPCC.
4: Initiate and coordinate interactions between the UNCCD and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)	The context of this coordination activity is the preparation of a special report by the IPCC on “climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems” (SR2). One SPI member attended the IPCC-FAO meeting in Rome in January 2017 together with UNCCD staff. The SPI co-chair was nominated by the UNCCD, through the CST Bureau, for the Scoping Meeting of the SR2 in Dublin (February 2017) and also attended the 45 th IPCC session (Guadalajara, Mexico, March 2017), where based on the scoping report, the IPCC plenary decided to start the development of the Special Report. The SPI-IPCC collaboration will complement the activities on SOC.

With regard to the organization of work, the burden of carrying out the SPI tasks is not equally distributed among the SPI members. However, task allocation has been based on voluntary commitments and, most importantly, the necessary activities have been actively pursued.

The current size of the SPI seems appropriate for meeting its expectations, given the level of available financial support. While the current size may be seen as limiting the scope and range of topics that the SPI can cover, it also provides operational “agility” – the SPI has considerable flexibility in organizing and scheduling its tasks, it is very resource efficient, and its meetings and other service needs can be managed by the Convention secretariat. A bigger science policy interface would certainly need very different arrangements.

The financial support progressively mobilized for the SPI activities appears to have been sufficient, but some respondents found that the lack of visibility and transparency about available resources created difficulties. The number of face to face meetings is considered insufficient by a majority of members. All SPI members have expressed appreciation of the strong and efficient support provided by the secretariat throughout the process.

2. Overall achievements

This section situates the findings above in a broader perspective of assessing the main achievements of the SPI since its establishment. While the review of 2016-2017 work programme performance provides information focusing on whether the planned SPI outputs have been completed/ are in the process of being delivered, this part of the assessment seeks to clarify whether the work of the SPI and the products that it is creating have been useful and of interest to the UNCCD stakeholders; and whether they have been able to generate broader outcomes.

Statistics on the SPI products - brochure dissemination and online downloads - indicate that these products are being used, and that the most visible and used SPI documents are the policy briefs 1 “Pivotal Soil carbon” and 2 “Land in balance”. According to the UNCCD secretariat, the second policy brief is becoming the most largely distributed brochure of all UNCCD publications, with the current re-printing bringing the amount of brochures to 5,000.

The most significant SPI work, according to interviewees, is the LDN Conceptual Framework and its derivatives by the GM. This framework has been used to inform the GM document: “LDN Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality at the country level: Building blocks for LDN target setting” (October 2016), which is one of the key papers on the national level LDN target-setting process which involves more than 100 UNCCD Parties. However, it is also noted that the work of the GM on LDN target-setting is only partially tapping into the SPI

outputs, and policy makers and practitioners involved in the target-setting activities do not always seem to be aware of the SPI documents.

SPI publications are perceived as of high quality and established on solid scientific grounds; they are based on duly cited publications. This allows the tracing of the information provided and used. For example, the LDN Conceptual Framework (98 pages) contains 201 footnotes referring to 134 links, documents or publications, as well as 8 tables and 15 figures; it draws strongly from peer-reviewed scientific literature. Some interviewees considered the SPI documentation as a major improvement in the provision of verified, credible (numerical) information published under the UNCCD.

More than 80% of the online survey respondents were of the opinion that the documents produced by the SPI are informative and their content is easy to understand. Nearly as many considered that the SPI work has improved their awareness of the topics that it has covered and/or related scientific aspects. Interviewees also indicated that the SPI is well known and its products are appreciated.

However, many interviewees considered that the overall impact of the SPI products is still low beyond those familiar with the UNCCD process and secretariat's activities, as a wider audience of end-users has not yet been reached.

Considering that the SPI work programme was approved by the COP, it was somewhat surprising to learn that close to one-third of the open survey respondents did not consider that the most important UNCCD-related questions of a scientific nature are taken into account in the SPI work.

The overall impact of SPI work upon the decision making process and the COP decisions is, at the time of this assessment, difficult to assess.

With regard to CSOs, large majority of the respondents to the online survey targeting CSOs confirmed their awareness of the SPI and of its work to synthesize scientific results. However, only slightly more than half of them consider that questions raised by the CSOs are taken into account in the SPI work, whereas 60% felt that the SPI policy briefs and reports meet the CSO needs in terms of scientific background for action on DLDD and land degradation neutrality.

With regard to inputs to other scientific processes and mobilisation of the scientific community, SPI has succeeded in establishing links with other science-policy bodies with different degrees of success to-date. For the IPBES, the success rate is perceived as low, for ITPS it is fair and for IPCC good. Collaboration with the UNEP-IRP (IRP) has only recently started.

The SPI is designed not to compete with larger and more resource intensive science-policy interfaces, but rather to work collaboratively with them on topics related to DLDD. In its

current configuration, the role of SPI vis-à-vis the other bodies is essentially to deliver to the UNCCD the 'products' that others do not produce, building on the specific priorities/guidance from the COP.

According to the interviewees, the larger scientific community has been modestly involved through the process of external reviewing of SPI technical reports, and via the external expert group organized for starting the operationalization of the SPI objective 1. The connections with the larger scientific community are gained by establishing responsive partnerships on an ad hoc basis, depending on the topic, such as through current development of special sessions in conferences or special issues of journals.

With regard to feedback from scientists outside the UNCCD "circles", the majority of the respondents consider the SPI as a valuable tool for the UNCCD that is useful for addressing DLDD and LDN issues. However, it appears that the awareness of the scientific community about the SPI is still low and the impact of the SPI products could be greater.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings confirm that the SPI has made good progress in implementing its 2016-2017 work programme. It is working on all objectives and coordination activities that were assigned to it and many planned outputs have already been delivered. The SPI has effectively organised its work by allocating tasks among members, and the secretariat has provided the necessary services for its functioning.

From the stakeholder feedback it is clear that the SPI produces useful knowledge that is on a solid scientific basis. It is also succeeding in influencing other scientific processes and better involving the scientific community in the UNCCD work, although there is yet plenty to be done in these areas.

In general, the findings of this assessment indicate that the SPI has made a promising start and should be continued after this 'trial' period. The following recommendations propose modifications to the SPI composition, functioning and resourcing process, with the aim to improve its operations and capacity to deliver.

1. The SPI members should contribute through their own work to a better recognition of the SPI.

SPI is gradually being recognized, particularly since its logo appears on publications and presentations in meetings. However, it needs to gain a stronger and wider reputation and to become a known reference point on DLDD scientific issues. Individual SPI members could, through their own scientific work, be instrumental in this regard. They could, for example,

co-author publications in high quality citation-indexed journals, reaching large international audiences, or contribute to a series of papers on DLDD topics in an annual special issue of a dedicated journal willing to do so. While they would co-author/contribute at their own name, they would also acknowledge the SPI. An alternative could be a series of UNCCD technical reports that would be directly attributed to the SPI.

The SPI members' profiles would benefit from linking SPI with their work, and also enhance the reputation of the SPI beyond the UNCCD "circles". Such benefit would be a good incentive to attract scientists to consider being nominated for SPI membership and to contribute to SPI objectives and outputs, particularly because the work is done on a voluntary basis and is quite demanding at times.

2. Interaction between the SPI and the IPBES, and SPI and the IPCC, should be formalized.

The SPI interaction with the IPBES and the IPCC has begun through essentially opportunistic actions based on good will. This could be enhanced by more formalized links and collaborations modes. The Convention secretariat, in consultation with the CST Bureau, should clarify and prepare for formalizing the interaction.

3. The CST Bureau, supported by the secretariat, should refine the terms of reference for the SPI membership, including a more detailed membership criteria, specification of what is expected from the members, and a revision of the process to renew the members.

The current well-balanced composition of the SPI appears appropriate and working as initially planned. However, criteria for membership should be further elaborated so that candidates know better as to what are expected from them (for example, for IPBES the expert selection criteria is the subject of a full document³).

More generally, different functions within the SPI should be better defined. Team spirit is essential and the number of members actually involved in the activities should be maximized, striving to involve younger members while also considering gender and disciplinary balance

For scientists proposed by the regions, criteria for selection should emphasize active involvement in networking activities of regional interest and dimensions, enabling them to be the main channel of communication between the SPI and the wider scientific community of their region. They are the ambassadors of the SPI in their region.

For CST Bureau members, being part of the SPI and requested to contribute to its activities is a new and demanding additional task compared to previous CST Bureau responsibilities.

³ IPBES/3/INF/16

These expectations should be added to the profile description of CST Bureau members and further reflected in the corresponding election criteria.

The SPI has been established with a mandate of four years for scientists and observers, whereas the CST Bureau is renewed every two years, at each COP, so every 4 four years SPI members would all be new. The renewal of SPI members should avoid abrupt discontinuities in SPI composition, which might lead to loss of institutional memory and disruption to its WP.

The renewal process could usefully be adapted to the biennial COPs as a rolling mechanism, renewing members with four-year mandates in two parts,

- o e.g. COP 14: 5 CST Bureau members are renewed; 5 independent scientists are renewed (group a); 3 observers are renewed,
- o then COP15: 5 CST Bureau members are renewed, 5 scientists from the regions are renewed, 5 independent scientists are renewed (group b); at COP16 the process would begin again.

A transition phase would be necessary at COP 13. Part of the current SPI could see its mandate exceptionally extended for two years (5 independent scientists and 3 observers), with the others proceeding normally (so the 5 scientists from the regions are renewed as well as the 5 other independent scientists).

To complete the 'memory' effect of this recommendation, scientists could be considered eligible as co-chairs only when they have already been in the SPI for a minimum of two years.

4. The SPI should use observers more effectively

CSOs contribute actively to recognizing demands from land users and managers, and the value of their knowledge could be strengthened by adding one or two more 'observer' seats to the SPI. This would bring more attention to the CSOs requirements during work programme design and support the preparation of the SPI documents to better respond to the CSOs' needs (content and format).

A category of 'temporary observers' could be added to allow the participation, on an *ad hoc* basis, of members of other scientific bodies (IPCC, IPBES, etc). They could attend specific meetings on topics where collaboration with them and their bodies is desirable and where efforts need to avoid duplication of activities, and harness synergies.

5. Each SPI work programme should be limited to 1-2 priority topics, to be implemented in a realistic schedule.

Given the limited financial and time resources, the SPI work programme would benefit from prioritizing and costing so that only 1 or 2 topics are undertaken at any one time. These topics should be broad, global relevant, with scope to ensure that all necessary scientific disciplines are included, but sufficiently specific to enable the development of concrete proposals for decision-making.

The flow and rhythm of work seems currently constrained by the biennial timetable of the COPs. The nature of the tasks assigned and expected documents do not necessarily match this time frame and the work programme design should take into account the actual time necessary, rather than adherence to the COP timetable. This would act as a quality control measure too.

5. SPI should continue engaging partners to support its substantive work.

On the longer term, it appears feasible that the coordination and synthesis to produce policy briefs continues to be done on a voluntary basis, but the production of background documents that require greater efforts will require some kind of externalisation. This is the case for objective 2 of the current work programme where the SPI commissioned an institution to develop the main report, which they will then convert into a policy brief.

6. SPI should meet at least twice per year

For the SPI to effectively work together to assign and monitor the work to be done, and to write and review the policy briefs, at least two face to face meetings a year are needed.

7. The secretariat should continue to ensure that the SPI has adequate resources for its work.

The unique quality of the flexibility of the SPI -compared to the bigger science policy interfaces- depends on good financial planning and increased transparency over resources. Therefore the commitment of the secretariat to ensure that adequate resources are available for the SPI is essential. The secretariat could consult with the SPI co-chairs and team leaders on the planned activities, and on adapting these activities when necessary.

Annexes:

- 1. Overview the provision of scientific advice to the UNCCD**
- 2. Evolution of the provision of scientific advice to the UNCCD**

Annex 1. Overview the provision of scientific advice to the UNCCD

	Committee on Science and Technology (CST)	UNCCD Scientific Conferences	Science-Policy Interface (SPI)
Where does the mandate come from	Article 24 of the Convention	Decision 13/COP.8	Decision 23/COP.11:
Mandate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ToR in decision 15/COP.1 - provide COP with information and advice on scientific & technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - once it is decided that a scientific conference is held, it takes place under the umbrella of a CST session - to bring a wider scientific community to the CST, focusing discussions on one topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze, synthesize and translate relevant scientific findings and recommendations into proposals to be considered by the CST; - Interact with multiple scientific mechanisms, in particular the IPBES, IPCC and ITPS and other new and existing scientific networks and platforms
Status	Formal & Intergovernmental	Informal & scientific independent (but under intergovernmental process)	Formal & intergovernmental + scientific/independent
Members	193 government representatives (NFPs/STCs) + UN/IGOs and CSOs	Approx. 450 participants (scientists incl. STCs acting in their capacity as scientist)	20 members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 CST Bureau members - 15 scientists
Frequency of meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Every two years under a COP - Each time a scientific conference is organized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - on an ad-hoc basis - The COP decides to hold a scientific conference, that is held under a CST 	Physical meetings twice a year
Work programme	Work program of CST is decided by each COP for the following biennium	Work programme focused on one specific topic decided by COP & further elaboration/organization by the Steering Committee	To be decided by the CST Bureau and the 1 st meeting of the SPI

Annex 2. Evolution of the provision of scientific advice to the UNCCD

