- Minutes of the Meeting of the COP 13 Bureau
(26 February 2019)-

The meeting of the COP Bureau took place in Guiyang, China on 26 February 2019. Openings remarks were provided by the President, Mr. Haibo Gou, Counsellor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, China and UNCCD Executive Secretary Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw.

Mr. Thiaw welcomed the President and Members of the Bureau and delineated his vision aimed at continuing to advance the UNCCD objectives and process.

I. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted without modification. The secretariat requested the floor in order to circulate written comments received from a representative unable to attend the meeting. The Secretariat further requested to add an additional agenda item under “other matters” pertaining to the report of the Board of auditors. After consulting the Bureau, the President requested the secretariat to address those comments and inscribed the proposed additional agenda item under “other matters”.

II. Presentation of the outcomes of the seventeenth session of the Committee to Review the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC17) and status of CRIC activities

Further to the presentation of the outcomes of CRIC17 and status of CRIC activities by the Chair of the CRIC, one member expressed gratitude to the Government of Guyana for successfully organizing the 17th session of the CRIC and underlined the need to seek solutions for assisting countries in using data in reporting in the future.

Another member noted that the document before the COP Bureau was an informal summary document and that it might be misunderstood as an official document, but that the CRIC -17 report gives a more comprehensive idea on what happened in Georgetown, where Parties only took note of the documents provided by the Secretariat and did not endorse the recommendations contained therein. The member added that Parties had decided to make available global data sets to facilitate reporting but noted some challenges once Parties actually considered using that data in their reports, and that for some it caused confusion among ministries as to the original source of the data provided which prevented their ultimate acceptance and use by those Parties.
Another member added that there is a need for developing countries to focus on the collection of data and its quality.

Another member emphasized carbon storage as a methodology. The member thought it would be important to consolidate these approaches in order to achieve LDN by 2030.

The Chair of the CRIC highlighted that much of this information is contained in the report, while noting the general concerns by the members regarding access and use of data.

III. **Status of activities of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) including preparation of the CST14**

The Secretariat introduced the item, highlighting the intersessional activities of the CST Bureau and the SPI, together with its work programme.

One member commended the practice of materials developed by consultants and provided to the SPI for review before being presented to the CST, which was thought to be very useful in order to ensure quality of information and products that reach the CST.

Another member noted the SPI’s positive work and underlined the good work conducted by the CST in cooperation with other institutions and hoped that the next session will be more science-based. The member appreciated the work between CST and WOCAT, noting that it houses the largest dataset in the world, but unfortunately does not include every country.

Another member suggested to the secretariat to work with CST focal points in improving their communication to the Parties.

IV. **Overview of the issues on the provisional agenda for COP14**

The secretariat presented an overview of the schedule of work and the provisional agenda for COP14.

One member inquired about the fact that meetings of the regional consultations were not foreseen in the schedule of work. The secretariat highlighted that regional consultations were in fact scheduled and confirmed per se, but explained that these meetings were not part of the official schedule of work of the COP.
It was further observed by one member that the COP 14 Bureau meetings were not mentioned in the schedule, to which the secretariat responded that regions had to nominate representatives to the COP 14 Bureau before being able to schedule any such meetings.

Responding to a question, the secretariat pointed out that the document before the COP Bureau did not consider the programme of work of the subsidiary bodies, as it was still under consideration by the respective bodies.

Another member suggested to add a sub-agenda item dedicated to land rights in order to foster the implementation of the Convention. This might also benefit vulnerable people by providing them food security and sustainable livelihoods. Securing land rights might also increase investments for sustainable land management. Another participant supported this proposal to address land tenure in the agenda and indicated that this new item could be dealt with under agenda item number 3), c iv. New and Emerging Issues – “Land tenure”.

The President requested the secretariat to provide clarifications on the possibility to add this new agenda item. The secretariat responded that COP rule of procedure 10 allows any Party to submit an agenda item before the finalization of the draft agenda. Regarding the issuance of a document, the secretariat explained that if such a submission was to be made by a Party it could be done as a miscellaneous or CRP document, if however if such document was to be submitted by the secretariat it would require consultation with the United Nations Office at Geneva in order to assess if translation would be granted or had to be ensured through external services, the latter requiring an additional cost.

A further question was asked by the same member as to what the difference would be if the Party submitted the document or if the secretariat did so. The secretariat indicated that it was a difference between submitting a document in English only, or in all six languages through UNOG.

After discussions, the Bureau decided that this topic will be added to the draft COP14 agenda. The Secretariat will submit to the Cop13 Bureau recommendations as possible elements for a document to be tabled at COP14.

Another member underlined that agenda item 2 a) should use the exact language of COP decisions since the UNCCD does not have to address other SDGs and targets than 15 and 15.3. The member further noted that the same should apply to all cross references to the SDGs so as to ensure consistency of language across all documents, the secretariat
noted that while agenda item 2 a) reproduced the language of decision 35/COP.13 on the programme of work of COP14 (vice that of decision 3/COP.13), the concerns voiced regarding the further cross references to SDGs were duly noted and will be addressed.

A member enquired about the possibility to hold the ODS sessions with the civil society during the first week of the COP session so as to be responsive to the COP’s request in decision 5/COP.9 to hold the dialogue during the first week in order to ensure the effectiveness of CSOs input in the deliberations of the COP, and suggested some small shifts in scheduling blocks to accommodate this request. The member also enquired if the funding of the CSOs’ participation was limited to the first week only.

The secretariat explained that the structuring of the ODS meetings over two weeks, built on past practice, but further underlined that present consultations on the respective requirements of the different governing bodies may eventually allow for the organization of these sessions during the same week. The secretariat further explained that the funding of CSOs was granted for two weeks. One member requested clarification on the different wording of paragraphs 6 and 7. The secretariat confirmed that it was an editorial matter.

A member requested to make efforts so as to avoid simultaneous meetings of the COW and CRIC contact groups. The secretariat indicated that all efforts will be made in that respect but counted on the support of the COP Bureau in assigning tasks to the respective facilitators in that respect.

The Executive Secretary noted that the IPCC may finish its report on land degradation around the time of the COP and that he envisaged to invite IPCC to introduce the report at the COP.

On member welcomed the idea of the IPCC coming to the COP but envisaged such participation more under the angle of a side event.

Another member invited the secretariat to start the process of organizing side events for COP 14 as soon as possible and consider increasing their number.

One member enquired about the possibility to list the sub agenda item on financing as a separate item together with a new item on LDN, given their respective importance. While acknowledging the importance of both issues and parties’ ability to reshuffle and amend the agenda, the secretariat explained that the proposed agenda structure was drawn from the provisions of decision 35/COP13.
V. Status of the consultation with the organization of COP14

The secretariat briefed the Bureau on the efforts taken by the Government of India to host to the 14th session of the COP in New Delhi; highlighting that now that the offer had been finalized, the secretariat would conduct its first planning mission in March 2019. Responding to a query by a member regarding the eventuality of a “New Delhi Declaration” being tabled, the secretariat confirmed that the Government of India was interested in such a declaration as well as in introducing a specific legacy programme at COP14, and that it was intended that the special segments would result in chairperson summaries.

A member underlined its government’s readiness to share its experience in organizing sessions of the COP with India.

Another representative asked if India was considering supporting the funding for eligible participants as part of the hosting of the COP and its subsidiary bodies.

The secretariat responded that initial exchanges with the host country points out at its intention to maintain past practice, which the members warmly welcomed.

A member asked if it would be possible to obtain some information on the schedule of side events. The secretariat explained that the call for side events will be launched after the first mission and the assessment of facilities.

The Executive Secretary added that this year marks the 25th year of the Convention, which should testify of the achievements of this process at the forthcoming COP. He emphasized that he would like the host country agreement to be signed as quickly as possible and further aimed at good synergies with other UN agencies.

VI. Outcomes on the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

The secretariat introduced the document to the COP Bureau.

One member expressed satisfaction with the secretariat’s active engagement in relevant events in New York last year. Nevertheless, the member raised concerns regarding some of the conclusions in the document, as the secretariat is governed by decisions of its governing body, i.e. the COP, and not by resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations. The member indicated that the UNGA did not give the UNCCD a mandate to build the SDGs around 15.3 and urged caution regarding the content, scope, and wording of possible actions. The same member noted that the secretariat should use agreed language
contained in COP decisions instead of that contained in UNGA resolutions since those reflect
the instructions of UNCCD Parties.

Another member emphasized that these high-level segments can be very important for Parties.

The CRIC Chair inquired about how all of these high-level declarations can be put into
action at the local level. The secretariat responded that in the course of national reporting,
countries may opt to internalize them into their action plans in such areas as drought and
SDS for example.

VII. Preparations of the modalities, criteria and terms of reference for the mid-
term evaluation UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework

The secretariat presented the document and its annex.

One member highlighted that the note presented stated that the Bureau will prepare
a document for consideration by the COP, including an independent assessment. The same
member asked if a) there was already a schedule for this work; b) what will be the
methodology and measures for the private sector; and c) how would the UNCCD contribute
to the national agenda in the context of CBD and other international processes?

Another member recommended the creation of a work group represented by all
regions when conducting the mid-term evaluation of a new Strategy.

The secretariat noted the points raised, indicating that it would start the tender
process for an independent process at least six months in advance. It was also mentioned
that the working group issue would be brought up internally and reported back to the COP
Bureau.

Further comments were made with regard to the annex as follows:

- Who would conduct the review? In one of the last processes (IWG),
  consultants collected and provided information for consideration by the
  working group, which seemed to work well.
- Responding to the needs of the Parties, actions recommended under para 11
  seemed very broad and difficult to assess in terms of tangible output and it
  was requested that this section be deleted.
- In para 12, the meaning of the second sentence regarding the progress made,
  which sounds way to broad – should be deleted.
• Regarding para 15 on effectiveness and efficiencies, the review should look at the implementation of the Convention, or it may become a very overwhelming exercise.

• In paragraph 18.1, it was noted that the IWG and not the COP Bureau would supervise the independent assessment carried out by the external evaluation expert and it was requested that this reference be corrected.

• On paragraph 19, concerns were raised on the efficiency and cost efficiency of proposals contained in the last sentence, i.e. further documentation, including surveys and interviews, as previous exercise of this nature proved to be of limited benefit. Accordingly, this sentence should be deleted.

One member wanted to know if the indicators that will be used would include gender.

The secretariat took good note of the points raised by the Bureau which will be addressed internally and reported back to the Bureau.

VIII. Status of the preparation of the study on the role that measures taken to implement the Convention can play to address DLDD as one of the drivers that causes migration to promote the objectives of the Convention

The secretariat introduced the document highlighting its partnership with the IMO and further steps taken to hire a consultant and the launching of a call for contributions. The secretariat also presented the expected schedule of finalization of the study.

One member underlined for information purposes that in some instances governments will conduct organized migration in order to find suitable and sustainable employment for the population affected by DLDD.

A member wanted to know when the call was launched and how responsive Parties were to this issue. The member further asked if the detailed outline would be distributed to all Parties, or just Members of the Bureau. The same member further praised the involvement of IOM and raised a question about the modality of the reporting.

The secretariat responded that some points would have to be considered internally for further feedback. The secretariat further pointed out that the modality of the reporting will have to be decided in the framework of the finalization of the COP agenda but pointed at various possibilities, including a presentation in Plenary, a cross reference in the interactive dialogues of the HLS or a side event.
One member further elaborated that the reporting could be envisaged into either a side event or HLS, depending on how broad it would be.

Another member recalled that many Parties adopted the Global Compact on Migration and wanted to know how these conclusions would be brought into the study.

The secretariat indicated that IOM would certainly consider it as part of its report.

**IX. Financial requirements for facilitating the participation of eligible country representatives, CSOs and Science and Technology correspondents at CRIC 18, CST 14 and COP 14**

The secretariat introduced the requirements for the upcoming sessions of the CST, CRIC and the COP for the special fund that was established to support the participation of representatives of developing, and in particular least developed, country Parties affected by desertification and/or drought, particularly those in Africa. The estimated resources for participation at the COP 14 and its subsidiary bodies were said to amount to EUR 1.23 million after adjusting to the confirmed location of the next COP. Furthermore, it was made clear that the secretariat ensures a balance of representation of civil society organizations when considering funding for participation at the COP.

One member encouraged the practice of continuing to work with potential host countries to include a contribution to the Fund and noted that while participation of all Parties is greatly desired, as a practical matter there may come a time in the future when Parties need to reconsider how travel and DSA are supported.

**X. Convention budget: status of assessed contributions**

The secretariat introduced the item.

One member asked if a request for the collection of contributions was part of the audit report. The secretariat responded that such a recommendation was part of not only the Board of Auditors’ report for 2017, but also an on-going recommendation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services in its audit reports.

**XI. Other business**

a. Presentation by the Board of Auditors of the audit report for the year ended 31 December 2017.
A representative of the UN Board of Auditors from Germany introduced the document before the Bureau.

One member asked about the weaknesses of after-service-health-insurance and what steps should be taken to address the issue. Furthermore, it was requested to know what the Parties should do to encourage the secretariat to implement the Anti-fraud Framework.

The secretariat responded by saying that the matter of ASHI has been discussed in the Budget Contact group since COP10 and would continue at COP14. It went on that although deductions had been made on a monthly basis in the accounts through payroll, the secretariat indicated to Parties that the deductions against the core budget had been reversed and reflected in the 2018 accounts.

With regard to the secretariat’s actions taken with respect to the anti-fraud framework, the secretariat said that there have been all-staff presentations and discussions regarding such topics in the Secretary-General’s Leadership Dialogue, which have included discussions on staff members’ role in reporting wrong-doing.

b. A member expressed gratitude to the Government of China for organizing the COP Bureau meeting and further emphasized that the new Executive Secretary could count on the support of its regional group. The same member thanked the secretariat for its support in organizing the successful session of the CRIC in Guyana in January. He further underlined that Parties would need time to consider the proposed new agenda on land tenure.

XII. Next meeting

The secretariat said that the next meeting of the COP 13 Bureau is traditionally held one day (Saturday) before the start of COP14.

One member underlined the need for regions to know in advance their respective representatives in the next COP Bureau and encouraged members to ensure their region is prepared to announce their new Bureau members at the beginning of the COP so they may attend the Bureau meetings during the COP starting as soon as possible.
## Annex

### COP 13 Bureau members

COP 13 Bureau meeting, 26 February 2019, Guiyang, China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>COUNTRY/ORGANISATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mr. Haibo Gou</td>
<td>Acting as COP 13 Bureau President Counsellor, Department of Treaty and Laws, Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>CHAIR/CHINA</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mr. Renato Morales</td>
<td>Secretary of Embassy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Department of Environmental Affairs</td>
<td>COP13 Bureau vice-president Argentina</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mr. QI Haihua</td>
<td>Deputy Director, Department of Combating Desertification, National Forestry and Grassland Administration</td>
<td>China</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Mr. Ghousébasha Gaffar</td>
<td>Head of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Environment and Climate Division</td>
<td>COP13 Bureau vice-president France</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Mr. Trevor Lwellyn Benn</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer of the Guyana Lands &amp; Surveys Commission</td>
<td>COP13 Bureau vice-president Guyana</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Mr. Khalid CHERKI</td>
<td>Head at the Directorate of Studies, Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>COP13 Bureau vice-president Morocco</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Mr. Valeriu Cazac</td>
<td>Chief at the Hydrology Department, State Hydro Meteorological Service</td>
<td>COP13 Bureau vice-president Moldova</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Mr. Samuel Mabin Contreras</td>
<td>Head, Soil Conservation and Management Division, Bureau of Soils and Water Management, Department of Agriculture</td>
<td>COP13 Bureau vice-president CRIC Chair Philippines</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Ms. Barbara De Rosa-Joyn</td>
<td>Division Chief for Biodiversity, Office of Conservation and Water, OES/ECW HST Room 2658 U.S. Department of State</td>
<td>COP13 Bureau vice-president United States of America</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Mr. Peter Korn</td>
<td>Director of External Audit</td>
<td>Invited Observer</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw</td>
<td>Executive Secretary</td>
<td>UNCCD Secretariat</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Mr. Pradeep Monga</td>
<td>Deputy Executive Secretary</td>
<td>UNCCD Secretariat</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Mr. Rajeb Boulharouf</td>
<td>Chief of staff (Bureau Secretary)</td>
<td>UNCCD Secretariat</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Mr. Lyndle Lindow</td>
<td>Chief of Administrative Services</td>
<td>UNCCD Secretariat</td>
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