



**Meeting of the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology
09 - 10 December 2019, Bonn, Germany**

Date: 9 – 10 December 2019
Venue: UN Campus - Langer Eugen
Meeting Room: LEU1511
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn, Germany
Working languages: English
Working hours: 9:00 - 13:00, 14:00 - 18:00

- REPORT -**I. Welcome address**

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Deputy Executive Secretary, Pradeep Monga, welcomed all participants of the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) meeting (see annex I) to the UNCCD headquarters in Bonn, and presented a motivational speech thanking and encouraging the new CST members for their new task ahead. CST Bureau member Pablo Hernán Viegas Aurelio from Argentina was not able to be physically present at the meeting and therefore participated via Skype. The Chair of the CST thanked the Deputy Executive Secretary and continued with agenda item II.

II. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

The CST Chair, CST vice-Chairs and UNCCD secretariat introduced themselves and the agenda was adopted without any amendments (see annex II).

III. Brief introduction on procedural matters and the election of the Rapporteur

The secretariat (Carmen-Alina Margina) briefly described the role and responsibilities of CST Bureau and the procedures related to their work. There was an emphasis on the need to geographically rotate the selection of the Rapporteur, which was addressed. The CST Chair, with support of the secretariat, facilitated the election of the Rapporteur. Mr. Ratko Ristic from Serbia volunteered for this role, which was supported by all CST Bureau members unanimously. The CST Bureau requested that the secretariat circulate the presentation on procedural matters.

IV. Consideration of the modalities of work of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI)



The CST Bureau reviewed the SPI Terms of Reference (ToR)¹ and associated policies (i.e. Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest and Communications Strategy). The CST Bureau concluded that no new amendments are required for any of these documents at the current time. However, with respect to the Communications Strategy², the CST Bureau asked for clarification from the secretariat on the role of CST Bureau and SPI members in representing the SPI, the CST and the UNCCD in interactions with the media. Guidance for specific circumstances is provided under section 5 in the SPI Communications Strategy, and the secretariat (Wagaki Wischnewski) reinforced that the hierarchy provided therein ultimately is supported by the UNCCD Communications team, who can (and should) be contacted at any time for guidance or support in any engagement with the media.

The secretariat (Wagaki Wischnewski) presented the overall UNCCD communications and knowledge management strategy of the UNCCD, and summarized key elements (e.g., World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought to led by the Republic of Korea in 2020; UN General Assembly dialogue on the UN Decade on Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification,³ which ends in 2020, and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, which begins in 2020. It was emphasized that the CST and SPI will be a central part in supporting the communications strategy, by moving away from communicating the problem – and focusing on showcasing the solutions. A positive narrative in media, social media and outreach, supports the transfer of scientific knowledge into communities, making the people more central to the work of the UNCCD and linking this to ecosystems, while also reflecting regional interests. The CST Bureau requested that the secretariat circulate the presentation on communication strategy.

V. Report to CST 14 Bureau from the SPI co-Chair

SPI co-Chair Mariam Akhtar-Schuster presented proposals made by the four SPI members who will rotate off the SPI at the end of December 2019. All four are original members of the SPI whose terms were extended on an exceptional basis as part of the staged renewal of the SPI, and thus comprise invaluable experience which they compiled into a report (at the request of the CST 13 Bureau in their final meeting), which was shared with the secretariat and the CST Bureau in November 2019. The aim of this report was to provide the new CST 14 Bureau information designed to help improve the effectiveness of the SPI into the future. The report made by Mariam Akhtar-Schuster to the CST Bureau was based on lessons learned and success stories emerging from SPI activities, particularly during the biennium

¹ SPI Terms of Reference: https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/SPI%20Terms%20of%20Reference_110717.pdf

² SPI Communications Strategy: https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/SPI%20Communications%20Strategy_110117_0.pdf

³ UNDDD: https://www.un.org/en/events/desertification_decade/background.shtml



2018-2019. Those recommendations and the actions on them agreed by the CST Bureau are summarized here.

- Guidance for authorship of publications resulting from SPI work: SPI members are encouraged to produce refereed journal articles and other scientific publications spinning out of their work in support of the SPI. The departing SPI members recommended that authorship guidelines be developed to ensure SPI members as well as any supporting external experts and/or consultants are aware, as stated in the SPI Communications Strategy and the SPI Terms of Reference (ToR), that “The UNCCD secretariat will be the sole owner and possess all rights, titles and interest in all proprietary intellectual property, including copyrights for methodologies and products developed and delivered by the SPI and its members.” However, the authorship guidance needed to be extended to make clear the role of and external experts and consultants engaged by SPI through the secretariat, with language in their terms of reference clarifying how their work contributes to the SPI, who then determine what publications might result from that work as well as authorship. The secretariat agreed to communicate this suggestion to UNCCD secretariat Human Resources.

In addition, the departing SPI members recommended that the entire “determination of authorship on spin-off publications” approach be discussed in the first SPI meeting of 2020 to ensure all are aware. The secretariat agreed with this proposal and will share standard guidance used in the scientific community such as the widely accepted ICMJE criteria on authorship⁴, emphasizing that the ultimate decisions on authorship will remain with the SPI contributors to technical reports which lead to such spin-off publications.

- Reminder that the LDN Special Issue open access period is closing soon: The CST Bureau agreed with the proposal of departing SPI members to have the secretariat remind National Focal Points (NFPs) and Science and Technology Correspondents (STCs) that Elsevier has offered promotional access (free of charge) to the entire Special Issue on LDN in the journal *Environmental Science & Policy*.⁵
- Consideration of “career stage” in the SPI membership application and review process: The departing SPI members raised a concern about more effectively making it possible for applications for SPI membership from early career scientists to be appropriately considered with respect to their scientific productivity relative to their career stage. The secretariat reported that, for the current staged renewal of the SPI, this concern was addressed by changing the online application fields to

⁴ Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors <http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>

⁵ LDN Special Issue: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/environmental-science-and-policy/special-issue/10Q4R8GT38L>



capture career stage and by making it possible for the CST Bureau to weight scientific productivity during the review process accordingly. The approach was approved by the CST Bureau and applied during the selection process which took place later in the meeting.

- Creating additional opportunities for the engagement of early career scientists in SPI work: The departing SPI members proposed creating an “unpaid fellowship scheme” with the aim to further enhance skills and expertise of outstanding early-career scientists, policy-makers and practitioners in the production and use of SPI scientific assessments by selecting them to take part as fellows in the achievement of an SPI work programme objective. This would not only support the delivery of SPI technical reports and other deliverables, but also create a pool of early-career experts qualified for contributing to the future work of the SPI. The approach could be modelled of a similar IPBES programme, which does not remunerate the early-career experts, but does cover expenses (such as travel to meetings).⁶ The CST Bureau has requested the secretariat to develop such a programme for their consideration, with clear criteria and the necessary transparency required for success.

The CST Bureau also recommended caution on terminology, noting that the term “fellowship” may lead to the misinterpretation that such a programme could be misconstrued as monetized fellowship. They therefore suggested consideration of an alternative title for the programme, such as “Early Careers Scientists Programme”. They also asked the secretariat to ensure that differences and/or synergies between this potential SPI programme and the secretariat-wide fellowship programme being designed by the UNCCD Capacity Development Officer (Richard Byron Cox) be fully clarified before implementation.

- Leadership, advisory and liaison roles among SPI members and observers: The CST Bureau supported the current SPI leadership approach which involves to naming of two co-Leads and an Observer Advisor for each SPI work programme objective, as well as co-Leads for each coordination activity (ideally ensuring a healthy mix of a more and less experienced SPI member). The departing SPI members commented on the invaluable role played by a previous member in ensuring cohesion across the work of multiple SPI objectives, and recommended such a liaison role be more formalized into SPI modalities of work. The CST Bureau supported the proposal of implementing the additional SPI function of a “Coordinating Scientific Contributor”

⁶ For more information on the IPBES early career scientist approach, see IPBES-7/INF/7 Appendix III “Review of the fellowship programme” May 2018: https://www.ipbes.net/system/tdf/ipbes-7-inf-7_capacity_building.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=29928. For an example of a call related to this IPBES programme, see: https://www.ipbes.net/sites/default/files/em_2018_31_call_for_nomination_of_fellows_for_the_development_of_scenarios_methods.pdf



to bridge the gap between the SPI work programme objectives with the aim of supporting the effort of the SPI co-Chairs to ensure continuity. The CST Bureau agreed this role would be important and proposed SPI co-chairs work to identify an SPI member best suited for this role as they identify potential co-Leads and Advisors. The CST requested that the secretariat support their efforts to identify individuals who might wish to take on these key roles in preparation for the next SPI meeting.

- Increasing the involvement of former SPI members and observers: The CST Bureau accepted this proposal to more effectively keep former SPI members and observer organizations involved in current SPI activities. The Bureau requested the secretariat to update the former SPI members and observers webpage⁷ and more systematically invite these past members and observer representatives to participate in relevant SPI processes to be undertaken, most notably nominations to external scientific processes, the review of SPI deliverables and participation on scientific publications spinning off of SPI work. The CST Bureau agreed with the proposal to encourage SPI observer organizations that are rotating off the SPI, to stay engaged in SPI activities, and requested the secretariat to reflect this in the thank you letters which will be sent following the completion of their service at the end of December 2019. The CST also requested that SPI members identify former observers, including among the broader UNCCD CSO community whom may be a guide for crossing-cutting themes including gender, youth and traditional knowledge.
- LDN “certification”: The departing SPI members brought to the attention of the CST Bureau an unsolicited proposal received suggesting the development of an LDN certification process. Noting the SPI work on the refinement of LDN during the previous biennium did not lead to a recommendation of this kind as well as the strong emphasis on the voluntary nature of LDN in all related COP decisions, the CST Bureau decided not to take this forward to the SPI. However, the CST Bureau noted external efforts to develop certification of key aspects of LDN, such as a programme involving GIZ in east Africa exploring the development of certification process for SLM initiatives that seek to sequester carbon. The CST Bureau encouraged the secretariat to ensure GIZ considered recent work of the SPI in the development of decision trees related this theme.⁸

⁷ Former SPI members and observers: <https://knowledge.unccd.int/science-policy-interface/spi-members-and-observers/former-spi-members-and-observers>

⁸ Realising the Carbon Benefits of Sustainable Land Management Practices
<https://knowledge.unccd.int/publication/realising-carbon-benefits-sustainable-land-management-practices-guidelines-estimation>



- Expanding on the success of the SPI-led “Science Day” at COP 14: The CST Bureau welcomed the report on the success of the First SPI Science Day, which took place towards the end of the first week of COP 14. The Bureau also welcomed the proposal from the departing SPI members that this secretariat and the CST capitalize on this success by initiating plans for the COP 15 edition of the “Science Day” as early as possible. The placement of the “Science Day” in the Rio Conventions Pavilion, which the UNCCD communications team had made a central focus of COP 14 activities, helped attract a high level of interest (standing-room only crowds in most of the sessions throughout the day). The highly interactive nature of the sessions which led to key messages which were provided to participants of the High-Level Segment the following week as well as an outcomes report heavily influenced by the input of the on average 100 participants in the interactive Science Day sessions throughout the day.⁹ The CST Bureau strongly encouraged the secretariat and the SPI to work towards the Second Science Day anticipated for COP 15. There was considerable discussion on optimizing the timing for the Science Day to maximize participation, noting that the timing most First Science Day sessions conflicted with Plenary sessions. The CST Bureau acknowledged this posed a particular challenge smaller delegations who were not able to participate, and requested the secretariat take this into consideration in future planning.

- Presentation of these proposals at the next SPI meeting: The CST Bureau invited Mariam Akhtar-Schuster to present the proposals of the departing SPI members which were embraced by the CST Bureau at the 11th SPI meeting in February 2020.

VI. Consideration of relevant decisions of COP 14 that impact the work of the CST and of the SPI

The CST Bureau considered the following decisions taken at the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and their impact on the work of the CST and of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI): decision 2/COP.14, 3/COP.14, 8/COP.14, 11/COP.14, 13/COP.14, 16/COP.14, 17/COP.14, 18/COP.14, 19/COP.14, 20/COP.14, 21/COP.14, 23/COP.14, 24/COP.14, 25/COP.14 and 27/COP.14.¹⁰

⁹ Portraying the UNCCD-SPI First Science Day held on 5th September 2019 at the Rio Conventions Pavilion in New Delhi <https://knowledge.unccd.int/publication/science-day-2019-report>

¹⁰The report of the Conference of the Parties on its fourteenth session, held in New Delhi, India, from 2 to 13 September 2019 is available at: https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-12/ICCD_COP%2814%29_23-1918294E.pdf . This document contains all COP 14 decisions.



The secretariat presented a brief summary of the SPI work programme 2020-2021 (Decision 18/COP.14) as well as a follow-up of the 2018-2019 activities. The CST will further discuss and refine details during the upcoming 11th SPI meeting in 2020.

Brief interventions were received from members on the work of the secretariat on COP decisions related to science and the SPI, with particular emphasis on those activities which would benefit from input from the CST and/or SPI. Discussions on reporting (decision 11/COP.14), Good Practice Guidance and the GEO LDN Initiative (decision 8/COP.14), Capacity development (decision 2/COP.14), Drought and the forthcoming establishment of an intergovernmental working group (IWG) (decision 23/COP.14), Restoration and GLO2 (decision 18/COP.14, decision 20/COP.14), Sand and Dust Storms (decision 25/COP.14), and LDN implementation case studies (decision 13/COP.14), and Urban-rural interlinkages (decision 17/COP.14, including its Annex I, the New Delhi Declaration).

The CST Bureau requested the secretariat provide a concise summary of each of these interventions (see annex III). The Bureau also requested that the secretariat ensure that the call of the IWG would be open to SPI members and observers.

VII. Staged renewal of the SPI

The secretariat recalled that, by decision 19/COP.13, the COP decided to:

- a) continue the SPI and extend its current mandate up to the end of the sixteenth session of the COP (2023);
- b) renew the SPI membership using a rotating system;

The secretariat also recalled that, based on the revised Terms of Reference of the SPI, and in accordance with decision 23/COP.11, paragraph 4, and its Corrigendum, as amended by decision 19/COP.13, paragraphs 2-4, the membership of the SPI shall comprise:

- a) the five members of the Bureau of the CST;
- b) five scientists, one nominated by each region;
- c) ten independent scientists selected by the Bureau of the CST through an open call taking into account regional and disciplinary balance; and
- d) five observers with at least one each from a relevant civil society organization, a relevant international organization and a relevant United Nations organization.

Based on the above, the CST Bureau agreed to proceed with the selection of 4 new globally selected independent scientists, and 2 new observers. These new members/observers, together with 4 new globally selected independent scientists, would complete the composition of the SPI which already included 5 CST Bureau members, 5 regionally nominated independent scientists, and 6 globally selected



independent scientists and 3 observer organizations who have completed their first term and will complete their final term in two years (through to the end of 2022 following COP 15).

Selection of independent scientists

The secretariat recalled that a global public call inviting experts to apply to become members of the SPI was open from 24 October to 1 December 2019. Applicants were prompted to apply via online application form designed by the secretariat. A total of 70 applications were received and organized according to the published requirements and criteria for selection (see annex VI a.) by the secretariat.

Based on these requirements and criteria for selection and keeping in consideration the need for regional, gender and disciplinary balance, as specified in the TOR for SPI members, the CST Bureau selected Mr. Xiangzheng Deng, Mr. Nijavalli Ravindranath, Mr. Sergio Vicente-Serrano and Ms. Caroline King-Okumu to fill the open slots for globally selected independent scientists.

Further, the CST decided, that in the case that a selected applicant cannot accept his/her role in the SPI, the CST Bureau agreed that Ms. Yanfen Wang would serve as an alternate candidate in the case that one of the above declines.

The CST Bureau discussed in detail the objective of gender parity, as mandated by the UN General Assembly in all UN activities¹¹ and the balance between men and women in the composition of the SPI. Although women were encouraged to apply in the text of the open call for independent scientists, only 19% of the applicants were female, which, although similar to estimates of the gender balance among Earth sciences professors¹², is lower than the global estimates for gender balance among researchers across all domains¹³. The CST Bureau recommended that there be a concerted effort in the future to identify and vigorously recruit female scientists to apply to the SPI.

¹¹ See Improvement in the status of women in the United Nations system <https://undocs.org/en/A/72/220> and administrative instructions ST/AI/1999/9 (Special measures for the achievement of gender equality) and ST/AI/2016/1 (Staff selection and managed mobility system).

¹² The statistics for the Earth and environmental sciences are similar, but there is an indication the trend is improving. A recent study reported that, “within the U.S. geoscience workforce, the proportion of female PhD recipients increased from 23% to 40%, and the proportion of female full professors increased from 5% to 14% between 1996 and 2015” See introduction of: <https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1029/2019EA000706>.

¹³ UNESCO’s 2017 report “Measuring Gender Inequality in Science and Engineering” cites current statistics, noting that “women represent nearly 30% of all researchers globally, with regional differences visible across the world”. See page 20: <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/saga-toolkit-wp2-2017-en.pdf>



Selection of observers: civil society organization (CSO)

The representative on the SPI from one UNCCD-accredited observer organization was selected following the rules and procedures of UNCCD CSO panel prior to the CST Bureau meeting.

Specifically, following the request by the CSO panel to have an alternate that could support the work of the civil society organizations and their interest, the secretariat supported the panel in April 2018 to organize elections to identify this person, following an agreed upon set of requirements and criteria.¹⁴ The intention was that the representative would serve as alternate for a period of 2 years becoming the CSO representative for the biennium 2020-2021, to ensure continuity of the observers to the SPI in line with decision 19/COP.13.

As a result of the elections and decision taken at the 15th meeting of the UNCCD CSO panel, the CSO panel requested the secretariat officially inform the SPI that Mr. Noel Oettle, Environment Monitoring Group, South Africa, (the CSO alternate for the SPI for the previous biennium) to become the official CSO representative of the SPI as of the 1 January 2020 for the next two years.

The CSO panel requested the secretariat to organize an election for the new alternate to the SPI at the same time as the general elections for the new CSO panel members. The CSO panel would like to build upon the earlier election for the CSO observer. It was stressed that the CSO panel explicitly invites nominations of women and of CSO representatives from Eastern Europe or Asia, since the other groups have been represented within the SPI in the past.

Additionally, the panel also requested the secretariat to draft some terms of reference and make available some financial support to ensure that official CSO observer of the SPI and alternate are able to work collaboratively and support each other.

Selection of observers: United Nations and/or other international organizations

The secretariat recalled that a public call inviting international organizations and United Nations organizations to express an interest to become observers to the SPI was open from 24 October to 5 December 2019. A total of 5 applications were received and shortlisted by the secretariat.

¹⁴2018 Call for a CSO observer to the UNCCD Science Policy Interface <https://www.unccd.int/news-events/call-cso-observer-unccd-science-policy-interface> and <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/UNCCD%20SPI%20Call%20for%20CSO%20representative.pdf>



Based on the requirements and criteria for selection listed in the call for international organizations and United Nations organizations to be an observer to the SPI (see annex VI b.), the CST Bureau selected the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-HABITAT) as new observer organizations.

The CST Bureau also discussed the profiles of the proposed representatives for observer organizations, noting the importance of having people with domain knowledge and experience relevant to the SPI work programme. The Bureau requested the secretariat to emphasize this need in the letters being drafted for the observer organizations, requesting they ensure that their chosen representative and alternative have the appropriate technical and policy background, ensuring that at least one of the two designated people are technical experts.

VIII. Other matters

Ensuring adequate financial and human resources to fulfil the work programmes of the CST and SPI: The CST Bureau, noting the report of the final meeting of the CST 13 Bureau in September 2019 as well as the report of the departing SPI members in this meeting, discussed the challenges faced by the secretariat in supporting the work of the CST and the SPI in a effective and efficient way while also fulfilling all other requests for scientific support that may be placed on the secretariat. The Bureau noted that the momentum generated by the impact of past work of the SPI has increased the volume of requests placed on the SPI and the secretariat, reflected in COP decisions and also in the growing interest being expressed through requested received by the secretariat from other organizations, governments and the media. With respect to the release of financial resources dedicated to science, the CST Bureau noted with appreciation the report of the secretariat that approvals have already been obtained to launch the future work of the SPI in 2020. With respect to human resources, the CST Bureau strongly recommended the secretariat review the growing demands being placed on the secretariat so that its work in support of the CST and the SPI is efficient and effective.

More regular engagement of the Science and Technology Correspondents (STCs): The CST Bureau strongly recommended the secretariat identify ways to ensure more continuous/systematic engagement of STCs in the processes of the Convention.

Increasing interaction of STCs and National Focal Points (NFPs) at COPs: The CST Bureau reiterated a request made at COP 14 that the secretariat review the strategic, logistical and budget implications of scheduling the STCs arrival at COPs to coincide with NFPs to ensure more effective interaction, noting that this would translate into an additional day, and thus additional costs.



Incorporating time for the CST Bureau to meet at the 11th SPI meeting: The CST Bureau further decided that the Bureau will meet for +/- 3 hours at the start of the 11th SPI meeting planned for 2020.

Timeliness of documents related to CST Bureau and SPI meetings: The CST Bureau requested that in future, all CST relevant documents should be sent at least 10 days before the CST and/or SPI meeting.



Annex I – List of participants

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Annex II – CST Bureau meeting agenda

Meeting of the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology

Date: 9 – 10 December 2019
Venue: UN Campus - Langer Eugen
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Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
53113 Bonn, Germany
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- PROVISIONAL AGENDA -

- I.** Welcome address
- II.** Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
- III.** Brief introduction on procedural matters and the election of the Rapporteur
- IV.** Consideration of the modalities of work of the SPI
- V.** Report to CST 14 Bureau from SPI co-chair - Mariam Akhtar-Schuster
- VI.** Consideration of relevant decisions of COP 14 that impact the work of the CST and of the SPI
- VII.** Staged renewal of the SPI
 - a. Selection of independent scientists
 - b. Selection of observers
- VIII.** Other matters



Annex III – Summaries of points from secretariat members

a. Sara Minelli (on behalf of Anja Thust): Reporting (Decision 11/COP.14)

Planned work on methodology development for the indicators and opportunities for contribution by the CST, its Bureau as well as (current and former) SPI members and observers:

- Revision of the Good Practice Guidance (GPG) for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicator 15.3.1: The GPG for SDG Indicator 15.3.1¹⁵ needs to be reviewed and updated in light of evolving data user needs and the rapid developments in Earth Observation datasets and methodologies. The revision will start in early 2020 and the UNCCD will rely upon the scientific and technical services of a qualified company/institution. The CST Bureau and the SPI will be invited to contribute to the external review of the GPG for SDG Indicator 15.3.1 v. 2.0 that is tentatively planned for June 2020. The revised GPG for SDG Indicator 15.3.1 v. 2.0 will constitute the basis for the refinement of all reporting tools, including Trends.Earth.
- Enhancement of Trends.Earth:¹⁶ Trends.Earth is the plugin developed by Conservation International to support calculation and reporting of SDG Indicator 15.3.1. Trends.Earth allows non-technical users to integrate national data and information with global datasets to track changes in the indicators of land degradation. The newly funded GEF project “Strengthening Land Degradation Neutrality data and decision-making through free and open access platforms” will provide improved data and methods for assessing land degradation and understanding the socio-economic conditions of vulnerable communities in affected areas through the enhancement of Trends.Earth. The SPI may be invited to be represented in the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the project to assure the scientific and technical validity of the products produced.
- Development of Good Practice Guidance for reporting on drought hazard, exposure and vulnerability (i.e. strategic objective 3): Following the adoption of the indicator and monitoring framework for strategic objective 3 by Parties at COP.14, the secretariat was requested to prepare methodological good practice guidance in cooperation with technical partners (decision 11/COP.14 para 19b). The development of the Good Practice Guidance for strategic objective 3 by a qualified company/institution will start in early 2020 and the CST Bureau and the SPI will be invited to contribute to the external peer review process.

¹⁵ https://prais.unccd.int/sites/default/files/helper_documents/4-GPG_15.3.1_EN.pdf

¹⁶ <http://trends.earth/docs/en/>



b. Sara Minelli: Group on Earth Observation (GEO) Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Initiative (Decision 8/COP.14)

- Launched during the GEO Week 2018 in Kyoto, Japan, the GEO LDN aims to bring together EO data users, providers and governments to develop quality standards, analytical tools and the capacity needed to strengthen LDN monitoring and reporting. The GEO LDN Initiative established three Working Groups (WGs) to kick-start its efforts focusing respectively on: building national capacities (WG-1); developing data quality standards and protocols (WG-2); and establishing platforms with high computing capacities for big data analytics, such as open data cubes (WG-3). In 2020, WG-2 will focus on the development of minimum data quality standards for the estimation of SDG Indicator 15.3.1 and its sub-indicators, and it will produce decision trees to guide countries in selecting datasets that meet their specific needs. The outputs of this work will feed into the GPG for SDG Indicator 15.3.1 v. 2.0. Since this activity will benefit from the decision trees developed by the SPI to guide efforts in soil organic carbon monitoring, the SPI will be consulted to ensure coherence in the proposed approaches.

c. Richard Byron Cox: Capacity building (Decision 2/COP.14)

A general overview of the capacity building efforts as stipulated by Article 19 of the Convention and various decisions of the COP was presented to the meeting. This covered inter alia activities done in the areas of training in various fields and of various types. Some details were shared as regards the successes and challenges faced over the years in implementation the stipulations. It was noted that the need for capacity building was a recurring theme in the national reports on implementation, in particular reports from affected developing countries. Some major achievements realized over the years were noted including the creation of meaningful partnerships, the establishment of the Capacity Building Marketplace; the successes of the internship/mentorship programme, the holding of the UNCCD Capacity Building Training Fair, the establishment of the UNCCD E-learning platform; and the practical training provided as regards the reporting process.

The meeting was informed of the efforts to build more partnerships, especially in geographical areas that need much help with capacity; the work taking place with universities and other learning institutions, including plans to hold the first UNCCD/Bonn International Conference of Universities; the broadening of the e-



learning programme, and the development of a special internship/mentorship programme to assist SIDS and the LDCs with capacity building.

The meeting was advised that the Capacity Building Office intends to work very closely with the CST (through the office of the Lead Scientist and Secretary to the CST), to ensure the implementation of the relevant sections of Decision 16/COP.14 and all other relevant decisions. It was suggested that the CST could play a key role in:

- Supporting the practical implementation of the capacity building process, especially as regards issues relating to science and technology
- Helping to promote the integration of the capacity building programme throughout the entire UNCCD process
- Helping to facilitate the partnership building process for an efficacious UNCCD capacity building programme especially with research institutions
- Supporting the new innovations process that will come on stream in the near future
- Playing a very active part in the First UNCCD/Bonn International Conference of Universities.

d. Daniel Tsegai: Drought (Decision 23/COP.14)

AT COP 14, the UNCCD parties decided to establish an Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, with a view to presenting its findings and recommendations to Parties for their consideration at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

The IWG will review existing policy, implementation and institutional coordination frameworks, including partnerships, on drought preparedness and response and to consider options for appropriate policy, advocacy and implementation measures at all levels for addressing drought effectively under the Convention, in the context of a wider holistic and integrated approach to disaster risk reduction and enhancing the resilience of communities and ecosystems.

The IWG will consist of a maximum of three Party representatives nominated by the respective regional group based on nominations by national governments.

The IWG will also involve key experts who will be on equal standing with the IWG members from the regions, including United Nations organizations, the Science-Policy Interface and other scientific organizations, regional organizations and civil society organizations, with a maximum of 15 additional members.

CST is keen to support the work of the IWG at all stages.

CST (through the SPI) to contribute into the selection process of the experts for the IWG. The call for experts is posted on the UNCCD website with a deadline of 31 December 2019. CST will ensure the representation of the SPI in the IWG as it is stated



in the COP decision. <https://www.unccd.int/news-events/call-experts-intergovernmental-working-group-drought>
CST to ensure relevant drought work of the SPI will contribute to the work of the IWG. CST to provide support for the ongoing compilation of existing drought-related tools, Policy, implementation and institutional coordination frameworks and implementation measures for addressing drought under the Convention. The link to the online form below:
<https://www.unccd.int/news-events/invitation-submit-drought-relevant-information>
The first IWG meeting is tentatively set for 4-6 March 2020 in Brussels.

e. Sasha Alexander: GLO2 and Restoration (Decision 18/COP.14, Decision 20/COP14)

The UNCCD is now preparing to produce the 2nd edition of the GLO (GLO2) to be launched in late 2021. GLO2 is expected to support and inspire the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) by focusing on action and impact on the ground. GLO2 will elaborate proven implementation pathways for meeting the objectives of the Decade, present the human face of ecosystem restoration projects and programmes, and elaborate a positive narrative and future scenarios that stress the potential and opportunities afforded by activities along the restoration continuum. GLO2 will also include scenarios for land management and restoration potential produced by PBL, the Dutch Environment Assessment Agency. As detailed in its approved work programme, the SPI will:

- Nominate a focal point and participate as member of the steering committee for GLO2; the first meeting is expected to take place in Europe in March/April of 2020
- Consider its contribution, review and approval process for the final text of GLO2 in its upcoming work plan
- Related contributions to the GLO2 and allied publications will include outputs from the request to the secretariat in decision 20/COP14, namely:
 1. Compile options to enhance cohesion among restoration initiatives
 2. Map the spatial extent and status of restoration activities globally
 3. Outline options for land and restoration potential at various scales

f. Morgane Chiocchia: Urban-rural interlinkages

COP13: Interactive Dialogue with Mayors. The mayors' message then was clear. "The ways in which cities are planned, financed, developed, built, governed and managed has a direct impact on sustainability and resilience that goes well beyond urban boundaries." COP14: Local and Regional Governments Day; and Ministerial Roundtable at the High-Level Segment on "Urban and Rural Communities: failing or flourishing together". The New Delhi Declaration "Encourage local governments to adopt integrated land use management and enhanced land governance to rehabilitate the natural resource base that makes cities sustainable, taking into consideration the New



Urban Agenda, including by reducing rates of land consumption and soil sealing along with biodiversity and ecosystem loss”.

Opportunities in the next biennium:

- Fostering a joint approach Land/Climate/Biodiversity/Urbanization: increasing the linkages between the different agendas and relevant SDG indicators.
- Integrating the issue of rural-urban onto our work on integrated land use planning (Urbanization is projected to cause the loss of between 1.6 and 3.3 million hectare of prime agricultural land per year between 2000 and 2030. Africa and Asia are projected to experience 80 per cent of the global cropland loss due to urban area expansion).
- Urban sustainable planning means integrated land use, but also means paying attention to people. Discussions over the last few years and at COP highlighted the need to not only talk about biophysical indicators, but also to focus more on people. Rural out-migration is increasing and the question of generating employment and livelihood opportunities in rural and urban areas at the same time is becoming critical.
- Engaging on LDN at the local level: what can successful urban-rural dynamics for LDN mean?

g. Utchang Kang: Sand and Dust Storms (Decision 25/COP.14),

Parties requested the secretariat:

- To finalize the Sand and Dust Storms Compendium;
- To refine the Global SDS source base-map; and
- To develop an SDS toolbox.

We have been collaborating with SPI on the Compendium and SDS source base map. The Compendium is at its final stage (to be published in the coming months). The secretariat will refine the source base map in partnership with countries, regional partners, etc. The SDS toolbox will be developed in partnership with relevant UN organizations, institutions, experts. It is preliminarily structured to have four major components; source mapping, early warning, vulnerability and impact mitigation, and source mitigation. There is no clear indication of the SPI involvement in those initiatives, however, the secretariat wishes a closer collaboration, particularly in source mitigation, noting the comparative strength of the SPI on land degradation neutrality.

h. Pedro Lara Almuedo: LDN implementation case studies (Decision 13/COP.14)

- Note on the background of this decision text: the language from subpara a) comes from decision 18/COP.13, which was not implemented as country Parties



were not yet engaged in LDN implementation, with most countries being still focused on LDN target setting at the time.

- In order to implement this decision, it is foreseen that the secretariat, in collaboration with the GM, will develop TORs for collecting these case studies (around Sep-Oct 2020).
- This call will be officially launched, communicated to all NFPs and web posted at the UNCCD website (around Nov 2020).
- We would use the upcoming CRIC (Dec 2020) to further mobilize case study submissions from countries.
- Around Jan 2021, the call will close, and the submissions will be analyzed with the assistance of a dedicated consultant in order to produce a synthesis report, which will be reviewed and presented at COP15 in the form of an official document.
- SPI may consider contributing to this process by assisting in defining the TORs (i.e., the scope of the process) and contributing to the review of the synthesis report.



Annex VI a. – Review criteria in the call for independent scientists to join the Science-Policy interface

The full call for independent scientists to join the SPI is available online.¹⁷ The criteria used in the staged renewal review process conducted by the CST Bureau are reproduced here:

“[...] D. Requirements / Criteria for Scientists applying to become members of the SPI shall:

- Have an advanced degree and widely recognized academic knowledge in discipline(s) relevant to the UNCCD process;
- Have at least five years applied and acknowledged interdisciplinary scientific work experience and/or interdisciplinary practical/project experience in thematic areas relevant to the SPI Work Programme 2020-2021, including but not limited to: integrated land use planning/ spatial planning/territorial planning; Integrated landscape management; Drought vulnerability assessment; Land governance; Evaluation of ecosystem services/Natural capital accounting/Environmental economics; Biodiversity (including soil biodiversity); Sustainable consumption and production; Gender and environment/sustainable development;
- Have substantive evidence of significant, peer-reviewed publications in international journals in the last ten years;
- Have experience working with intergovernmental/ international/ interorganizational scientific panels and bodies;
- Have experience in providing scientific advice to natural resource management and/or agriculture policy makers and practitioners at global, regional, national and/or sub-national level national in thematic areas relevant to the UNCCD;
- Have experience in communicating, promoting and incorporating science into policy development processes and in synthesizing information for non-specialists;
- Be willing to work in a multicultural and multidisciplinary team and be accepting of other views and comments from different perspectives in order to reach consensus;
- Be fluent in English (the working language of the SPI is English only);
- Be willing to commit the time and effort necessary to contribute to the work of the SPI (estimated to be between 10-20% of the member’s time); and
- Have full access to email and web-based information and communication systems in order to ensure participation in SPI activities conducted electronically.”
- Female candidates are strongly encouraged to apply.

¹⁷ Available at: https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/SPI%20Call%20for%20Independent%20Scientists_Oct%202019_Extension2-Rev.pdf



Annex VI b. – Review criteria in the call for International Organizations and United Nations Organizations to be an Observer to the Science-Policy interface

The full call for observer organizations to join the SPI is available online.¹⁸

The criteria used in the staged renewal review process conducted by the CST Bureau are reproduced here:

“[...] D. Requirements / Criteria for selection Organisations applying to become observers to the SPI shall:

- Be qualified in matters relevant to the UNCCD;
- Have at least one on-going project, programme or initiative related to DLDD issues;
- Have a research-based work programme;
- Have experience in providing advice to countries in devising policies, supporting planning and creating national strategies in support of sustainable development and achieving environmental goals;
- Have experience in communicating, promoting and incorporating science into policy development processes and in synthesizing information for non-specialists;
- Have any on-going or previous cooperation with the UNCCD;
- Be willing to commit the time and effort of one staff member necessary to contribute to the work of the SPI (estimated to be between 10-20% of the representative’s time)”

¹⁸ Available at: https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/SPI%20Call%20for%20Observers_Oct2019-3rd%20extension.pdf