



Check upon delivery

Welcoming Speech of the Executive Secretary CRIC Bureau E- meeting - 8 – 9 April 2020

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished vice-chairs,

Dear colleagues and friends,

As we gather here today, the world is in crisis.

Over the past weeks, the COVID-19 pandemic has evolved into a complex emergency, with significant human, health and socio-economic dimensions, at global level. The gravity and scale of the situation calls for an unprecedented level of international action and solidarity.

Governments, organizations, communities, and people are stepping up in extraordinary ways. If we don't take care of the pandemic now, we are going to see fallout and secondary effects from this that will have ramifications for a long time, above and beyond the lives that will have been lost.



Helping address the COVID-19 crisis is also a priority of our Convention. We all have a role to play.

Like all organizations, our Convention faces a fundamental test of our collective strength and will.

The role of the CRIC is perhaps today more than ever critical in steering us in the right direction and keeping us moving towards the global common good.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to express my deep appreciation for the long-standing support that the CRIC has offered to this Convention.

First, allow me to underscore the excellent work you have accomplished at COP 14. Your deliberations and take-aways have guided the work of UNCCD over the past months. It has helped us produce better results for the people we serve. There is now a clear understanding that land restoration is the most cost-effective solution to address the global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.



This was outlined at the Climate Action Summit and at the UNFCCC COP 25.

We have continued to boost ambition and accelerate actions for the sustainable use of our land resources, to deliver a land degradation neutral world. We have also been able to make a business case for land restoration through sustainable value chains, calling both on Parties and the private sector to invest and to scale up the impact of individual and collective action.

We have invested in the blossoming of a global movement of land restoration, anchored in nature-based solutions. All this, with a renewed commitment to placing people, especially young people and women, at the centre of our efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

This brings us to my **second point**, your work schedule.

Building on our remarkable achievements, the Secretariat will brief you on the work programme of the CRIC for this biennium.



This is a significant reporting round.

First, we will take stock of the baselines reported on during the 2017-2018 reporting process.

Second, and for the first time, we will talk about trends and see whether, with the assistance of our monitoring framework, we are going in the right direction.

Third, we will introduce a technical review of national reports that were submitted during the last reporting process. Our objective is to support country reporting system and enable our Parties to report credible and robust data.

Lastly, you will be briefed on the upcoming intersessional meeting of the CRIC, CRIC 19 with a view to inform COP 15 on a way that better reflects the implementation needs of your process.

Mr. Chairman,

During this exceptional time, we remain committed to continue delivering our mandate. Rest assured of my and the entire



Secretariat's commitment to continue to provide high quality support to you and to all our Parties.

In these trying times, I would also like to thank you for taking on the additional responsibility to work with us to implement the Convention. This is a testimony of your commitment and leadership.

Mr. Chairman,

This brings me to **my third and last point**. COVID-19 is the most urgent threat facing humanity today. We remain convinced that land restoration and sustainable land management are among the best long term responses to the socio-economic crisis facing humanity.

The science is clear. Land is the basis for human health, livelihoods, food security, and for our social, economic, cultural and spiritual well-being.

The COVID-19 crisis reminds us how much we depend on each other. It also reminds us how much we depend on nature for our health, our food systems and our livelihoods. A healthy and well-functioning



land plays a pivotal role in supporting people. For many, this the only safety net there is.

In the current context, the pursuit of public health, at all levels from local to global, depends on careful attention to the processes of land degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss.

I am confident that soon, the world will restart. This is a chance for our Parties to recover better and come out stronger.

Building on our motto - *healthy land; healthy people*- we must bring the world's attention to the potential of land to address today's crises by creating jobs, protecting vulnerable communities and steering the economic recovery towards a more sustainable and inclusive path.



Mr. Chairman,

We stand at a difficult moment – facing an unprecedented crisis - but it is also an exceptional moment. As leaders are listening and the whole world is watching, we need to continue advocating environmental action to drive transformative change for people; to call for a new social contract with nature. One that allow us to rebuild in ways that are healthy, safe, green, just and more resilient to deliver a land degraded neutral world, the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Returning to “business as usual” is no longer an option. Your role as CRIC Bureau members is critical in that regard. The dialogue you will start today, must expand, flourish, be enriched by your constituencies, and set the stage for a UNCCD COP 15 that meets the new challenges of the 21st century.

I wish you productive discussions over the course of your two-day meeting. My team and I remain at your service. We look forward to receiving your inputs and guidance.



Let us pledge to maintain our commitment and our solidarity for the people and for the planet.

Thank you.
