
CRIC Bureau Virtual Meeting Report 8 – 9 April 2020

I. Welcoming Remarks by the Executive Secretary, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw

1. Mr. Thiaw welcomed the Chair and Vice Chairs of the Bureau of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) and expressed appreciation for the long-standing support that the CRIC has provided to the UNCCD. He applauded the excellent work that the CRIC, under the guidance of the old CRIC Bureau, has accomplished at the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 14).

2. In his welcoming remarks,¹ Mr. Thiaw spoke of the crisis that the world is currently facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic which he described as a complex emergency with significant human, health and socio-economic dimensions at global level. Mr. Thiaw added that helping to address the COVID-19 crisis is a priority of the UNCCD. The UNCCD, like all organisations, faces now a fundamental test of collective strength; he noted that the secretariat is committed to continue to deliver its mandate and to provide high quality support to all Parties. Mr Thiaw stressed the role and responsibility of the CRIC and that of its Bureau and emphasized that it is important today more than ever, that this subsidiary body of the Convention continues to steer implementation in the right direction and keeping it moving towards the global common good.

3. Mr. Thiaw further highlighted that in the current context, the pursuit of public health depends on careful attention that needs to be placed on the processes of land degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss. He underscored that it is important to draw the world's attention to the potential of land in addressing today's crisis by creating jobs, protecting vulnerable communities and steering economic recovery towards a more sustainable and inclusive path.

4. The welcoming remarks were followed by remarks by the CRIC Chair, Mr. Trevor Benn, in which he acknowledged and took note of the main points made by Mr Thiaw, further thanking him for his continued leadership and support by the secretariat.

II. Adoption of the Agenda

The provisional agenda of the meeting was considered and adopted by the Bureau members as contained in annex I of this report.

¹ See: https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2020-04/For%20website%20_08042020%20CRIC%20Bureau%20%20Welcoming%20Speech%20of%20the%20Executive%20Secretary.pdf



III. Briefing on procedural matters and election of the rapporteur

5. The secretariat briefed the Bureau on procedural matters relating to intersessional sessions of the CRIC as well as on the overall institutional arrangements of the Convention. This included the roles of the COP, CRIC, Committee of Science and Technology (CST), and of their Bureaux as well as the practice pertaining to the election of the CRIC Rapporteur.

6. After the Chair sought a motion from members for the election of the Rapporteur, the Bureau members unanimously agreed on the election of Mr. Hussein Nasrallah (Lebanon) as the Rapporteur of the Committee for the biennium 2020-2021, to be proposed to country Parties for their consideration and endorsement at CRIC 19.

IV. Briefing on the work programme of the CRIC

7. Under this agenda item, the secretariat briefed Bureau members on activities undertaken by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) that are relevant to the work programme of the CRIC and hence form an integral part of the work programme of the CRIC Bureau. This included presentations on five agenda items related to the UNCCD reporting and review process.

8. With regards to the in-country technical review of national reports, as mandated by decision 11/COP.14, the Bureau noted the financial and human resource constraints that make it only feasible to conduct this activity in a limited number of countries and agreed to the proposal made by the secretariat to limit the in-country technical review to five countries (one per regional implementation annex). The CRIC Bureau also noted that due to the current global travel restrictions, the in-country workshops which were previously envisaged as part of the in-country technical reviews of the 2017-2018 national reports would need to be cancelled. However, it was agreed that preparatory work relating to the drafting of guidelines for future technical reviews will be completed and presented to CRIC 19.

9. Regarding the Group on Earth Observation Land Degradation Neutrality (GEO LDN) initiative, the Bureau welcomed the progress made by the working groups established as part of this initiative and particularly the ongoing work on minimum data quality standards, which will feed into the revision and update of the Good Practice Guidance for SDG Indicator 15.3.1.² The Bureau also welcomed the work of Conservation International for the further development of Trends.Earth in support of the UNCCD reporting process.

10. Concerning the development of Good Practice Guidance for reporting on strategic objective 3, the Bureau noted that reporting using the adopted indicator and monitoring framework on drought hazard, exposure and vulnerability will be already required during the 2021-2022 reporting cycle, even though countries have only recently started to develop national drought plans under the Drought Initiative.

²² https://prais.unccd.int/sites/default/files/helper_documents/4-GPG_15.3.1_EN.pdf



11. The Bureau also welcomed the launching of a re-evaluation of the biodiversity-related indicator and/or associated metrics (biodiversity related element of Strategic Objective 4) that is currently being undertaken by the Secretariat in accordance with decision 22/COP.11, the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, and the request of some Parties at the seventeenth session of the CRIC.

12. With regards to the integration of the gender dimension to the reporting process, the Bureau welcomed the secretariat report, further noting that this will be done without adding additional reporting burden on Parties.

13. Regarding the Global Support Program (GSP) III due to start towards the end of this year, the GM informed the Bureau that this program will support all GEF eligible country Parties. The GM highlighted that efforts are under way to better coordinate the GSP III activities (executed by the GM in collaboration with the secretariat) with the UNEP Umbrella Project (implemented by UNEP), which provides the necessary funding to individual countries in support to the UNCCD reporting process. The Bureau members acknowledged the success of the GSP in supporting the reporting process, welcomed the support provided by the UNEP and the GEF, and recommended the continuation of the regional capacity building workshops in this regard.

14. Taking note of the capacity building component of the in-country technical reviews of national reports and the continuation of the capacity building regional workshop under the GSP III, the Bureau highlighted the importance of capacity development for reporting, specially to support country Parties' understanding of the new reporting elements such as those related to drought, or with relation to any changes in the indicator/metric used for the biodiversity element of Strategic Objective 4, as well as their skills in the use of Trends.Earth' new features.

15. The Bureau requested the Secretariat to consider the possibility of a joint CRIC/CST Bureau meeting to discuss topics related to methodology development for the indicators. The Secretariat took note of the suggestion made by the Bureau.

16. The secretariat presented to the Bureau the tentative proposed timeline of the 2021-2022 UNCCD reporting and SDG process, noting the dependencies between the different activities currently being undertaken and required for establishing the full set of reporting tools (i.e. templates, default data, manual, glossary, the reporting platform). The secretariat noted that due to those dependencies Parties at CRIC 19 will not be able to see the final reporting templates and reporting platform that are scheduled to be completed by spring 2021. Instead, fully-fledged documents describing the reporting elements will be provided to Parties at CRIC 19 for their consideration and comments. The secretariat also reported that, following requests made by Parties at COP 14, it is currently looking at creating a geospatial platform for reporting that will be integrated with Trends.Earth in an effort to make the reporting platform even more user friendly.



V. Consideration and endorsement of the draft provisional agenda of CRIC 19

17. The secretariat briefed the Bureau on the status of the preparation for CRIC 19. The secretariat started by recalling decision 15/COP.14 whereby Parties decided that subject to the availability of resources, the CRIC 19 should be held in the second half of 2020 at the most cost-effective venue of either Bonn, Germany – the site of the Convention secretariat – or any other venue with United Nations conference facilities in the event that no Party makes an offer to host the session and meet the additional financial costs.

18. In the absence of an offer from a Party to host the CRIC 19 session, the Secretariat noted that formal exchanges on the matter have been initiated by the UNCCD Executive Secretary with the Government of Germany. As per the latest developments, the secretariat stated that it is envisaged for CRIC 19 to take place from 24 to 26 November 2020 for a duration of three consecutive days. A one-day training fair and one-day preparatory meetings for all regional implementation annexes would precede the CRIC 19 on 22 and 23 November respectively. In line with current on-going logistic arrangements, the secretariat added that it is intended for the CRIC 19 session to be held within the premises of the World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB) with additional meetings, namely the training fair and the one-day regional preparatory meetings to be held in the UN Bonn Campus. Thorough assessments of the conference facilities at the proposed venue in terms of logistics, equipment and security are also on-going. The secretariat also noted that similar to CRIC 13, which was also held in Bonn, no side events will be organized during CRIC 19.

19. The Bureau was further informed that if the CRIC was to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the secretariat may run the risk of losing the allocated budget for the session because of the recent shift to an annual budget by the General Assembly compared to a biennial one.

20. Following this briefing, the secretariat presented the draft preliminary CRIC 19 agenda which includes issues to be discussed as well as proposals for interactive sessions. The secretariat noted that the agenda is still a work in progress and that final endorsement of the agenda by the Bureau will be requested at a later stage.

21. The secretariat proposed two topics for the interactive dialogues, one on the voluntary LDN target setting process and related implementation efforts, and one on land tenure where the alignment of policies on tenure and how they can feed in the implementation of the Convention as well as a stock taking for the joint work of FAO and the UNCCD secretariat on this issue could be discussed.

22. In addition to the two interactive dialogues proposed by the secretariat, the Bureau proposed to have two additional interactive sessions: one on the interim report of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under UNCCD, and one on public health and land, to discuss the current COVID-19 crisis and its implications on the work of the Convention. The CRIC Chair noted that the world will not be the same after COVID-19 and requested



the secretariat to look into options available from a procedural point of view for introducing a new relevant agenda item into the agenda of CRIC 19.

23. In addition to the above, the following observations and recommendations were also made by the Bureau:

a. The CRIC Bureau welcomed the presentation made by the secretariat on the logistical arrangements currently being made by the secretariat to organize the nineteenth session of the CRIC.

b. The Bureau expressed concern about the short duration of the upcoming intersessional session of the CRIC (three days) and expressed its concerns about whether it would provide sufficient time to accommodate all deliberations made by Parties. Noting this concern, one member of the Bureau requested that this applies in particular to the introduction of the IWG interim report so that Parties will have sufficient time to provide feedback to the IWG members.

c. Noting that country Parties would like to get more information on the LDN fund, including on how to access it, the Bureau welcomed the inclusion of a dedicated agenda item in the draft preliminary agenda of CRIC 19, and requested the secretariat to find ways to bring the private sector into the discussion and to ensure that there is enough time for questions and answers on the LDN fund.

d. While noting that they would like to avoid burdening CRIC 19 with more agenda items, the Bureau also requested the provision of more information for country Parties on initiatives such as the Peace Forest Initiative supported by the government of South Korea. The secretariat stated that it would look into the possibility, from a procedural point of view, of issuing an information document on this topic and will get back to the Bureau on this request in due course.

VI. Any other business

24. Under this agenda item, the secretariat provided a quick overview about the difference between the scope and mandate of intersessional and sessional sessions of the CRIC, and raised a difficulty that emerges when translating recommendations contained in the final report of the intersessional session into draft texts for negotiations presented at the sessional CRIC. Complaints from Parties, especially some that had not participated in the intersession sessional, were received during COP 13 and COP 14 arguing that the draft texts for negotiations were unclear, with little focus and repeatedly contained issues that were contradictory. The secretariat reminded the Bureau that the report endorsed by Parties during the intersessional session is explicitly meant to capture what had been said during the plenary even if it contains contradictory language and that this is due to the fact that Parties at intersessional sessions do not have the mandate to negotiate the text. Since this



seems to be a reoccurring complaint, the secretariat highlighted to the Bureau that this challenge will most likely be experienced moving from the report of the upcoming intersessional session (CRIC 19) to the sessional session of the CRIC (CRIC 20).

25. In response to this, the Bureau requested the secretariat, as a first step, to prepare draft text for negotiations that will be posted on the UNCCD website as soon as practically possible after CRIC 19 to enable Parties to form views and opinions way ahead of CRIC 20.

VII. Closing Remarks by the Deputy Executive Secretary Mr. Pradeep Monga

26. The meeting ended with closing remarks by the Deputy Executive Secretary, Mr. Pradeep Monga, in which he thanked the Bureau members for their time and guidance. Mr. Monga stated that we should not lose sight of the motto “healthy land creates healthy people” adding that in the current crisis the CRIC may very well become one important vehicle for the Convention to discuss how implementation of the UNCCD can lead to a new social contract that we need to achieve with nature. After the closing remarks by the Deputy Executive Secretary, the Chair of the CRIC formally adjourned the meeting. In his closing remarks the Chair insisted that those virtual exchanges should happen more frequently to ensure free exchange of information and a quick turn around when decisions on substantive issues are needed.



Annex I

CRIC Bureau Meeting

Bonn, Germany

Date: 8 - 9 April 2020
Venue: Virtual meeting
Working languages: English
Working hours: 2 pm – 5 pm (Central European Summer Time (CEST))

- PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA FOR THE CRIC BUREAU MEETING -

Note by the secretariat

8 April 2020

1. Welcoming Speech by the Executive Secretary

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The provisional agenda of the meeting as presented in this document may be considered by the Bureau members with a view of amending/adopting it.

3. Briefing on procedural matters and election of the rapporteur

The secretariat will brief Bureau members on procedural matters relating to intersessional sessions of the CRIC as well as the overall process of CRIC/CST and COP. Following the presentation of the secretariat, the CRIC Bureau may wish to appoint the rapporteur for CRIC 18 and CRIC 19.

BREAK³

³ Please note that we inserted breaks into the agenda in order to provide Bureau members with the opportunity to recover from the additional strain to interact during and listen to a skype conference for extended periods of time. It is proposed that those breaks should last for 10 minutes each.



4. Briefing on the work programme of the CRIC

The secretariat will provide a brief on the work programme of the CRIC for this biennium by going through relevant COP 14 decisions. This includes issues pertaining to reporting, specifically:

- (i) in-country technical reviews of national reports for selected countries;
- (ii) the status of the review and update of the Good Practice Guidance for the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicator 15.3.1 and the GEO LDN initiative;
- (iii) the development of the Good Practice Guidance for reporting on drought hazard, exposure and vulnerability (strategic objective 3);
- (iv) the re-evaluation of the current biodiversity indicator and associated metrics (strategic objective 4);
- (v) the integration of the gender dimension into the reporting process;

BREAK

- (vi) update on work done on relevant COP 14 decisions relating to reporting on strategic objective 5: To mobilize substantial and additional financial and nonfinancial resources to support the implementation of the Convention by building effective partnerships at global and national level.
- (vii) Brief on the Global Support Program (GSP) in support of UNCCD reporting

9 April 2020

5. Consideration and endorsement of the draft provisional agenda of CRIC 19

The secretariat will present the draft preliminary agenda which includes issues to be discussed in the upcoming intersessional session of the CRIC (CRIC 19). The document that includes also proposals for interactive sessions will be presented to Bureau members for consideration and endorsement. In accordance with decision 13/COP.13, the provisional agenda of CRIC sessions is to be drafted by the UNCCD secretariat in consultation with the CRIC Bureau. Once the Bureau endorses the preliminary draft agenda, the UNCCD secretariat will finalize it, taking into consideration the comments received by the Bureau and send it for further processing to Geneva.

BREAK



6. Brief on drafting documents for CRIC 19 and the CRIC final report.

The UNCCD secretariat will brief the CRIC Bureau members on the process relating to the drafting of documents for the forthcoming intersessional session and particularly the drafting of the final report of the CRIC.

7. Any other matter

The Bureau members may wish to raise any other issue that they deem important and which would require action by the Bureau or the Convention institutions.

8. Closing remarks by the Deputy Executive Secretary



Annex II

List of participants:

Latin America and the Caribbean LAC (Guyana) - CHAIR

Mr. Mr. Trevor L. BENN (CHAIR)

Commissioner
Chief Executive Officer
Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission 22
Upper Hadfield Street, Durban Backlands
Georgetown, Guyana
Tel: +592 227 2582
Fax: +592 226 4051
E-mail: trevor.benn@glsc.gov.gy

AFRICA (Algeria) – VICE CHAIR

Ms. Saliha FORTAS

Sous-directrice de la lutte contre la desertification
Direction générale des forêts Algiers, Algeria
Tel: +213 2323 8247
Fax: +213 2323 8286
E-mail: sfortas2017@outlook.fr
sfortas.unccd.algerie@gmail.com

Asia (Lebanon)

Mr. Hussein NASRALLAH – VICE CHAIR

Advisor to the Minister Ministry of Agriculture
Safarat st. Bir Hasan, Beirut
Tel: +96 1182 1300
Fax: +96 1182 3900
Email: hnasrallah@agriculture.gov.lb

Central and Eastern Europe CEE (Georgia) – VICE CHAIR

Ms. Nino CHIKOVANI

Head of Land Resources Protection
Division
Department of Environment and Climate
Change
Ministry of Environmental Protection and
Agriculture
6, Marshal Gelovani ave, Tbilisi 0159,
Georgia Tel: +995 3272 7257 Fax: +995
3272 7223 E-mail:
n.chikovani@moe.gov.ge
nino.chikovani@gmail.com
nino.chikovani@mepa.gov.g

Developed Country Party

Dr. Ahmed SENYAZ - – VICE CHAIR

National Programme Coordinator
FAO-Turkey Forestry Partnership
Programme (FTFP)
Sub-regional Office for Central Asia
(FAOSEC)
Ivedik Caddesi No: 55, 06170 Ankara,
Turkey
Tel: +90-312-307 95 43
Email: Ahmet.Senyaz@fao.org