



## Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting, 28 April 2020

#### Executive Summary

The Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) virtually met for the second time to discuss the details of the topics for the proposed four task groups, its composition and timelines. Overwhelming majority of the members emphasised the need to focus and strengthen the IWG's contribution towards international policy, to produce a coherent report that integrates other international conventions and organisations and to reinforce the UNCCD's role towards drought risk reduction for humans and ecosystems.

The IWG members agreed, in principle, to form four task groups. The task groups were formed in alignment with the three pillars of drought risk reduction, with the last pillar divided into 'physical' and 'policy' aspects. The proposed task groups were:– (i) Implementing drought monitoring and early warning systems, (ii) Assessing impacts, vulnerability and risk of drought, (iii) Drought risk mitigation and response measures – Physical, (iv) Drought risk mitigation and response measures – Policy. Each of the task groups (TG) were expected to first review and assess existing policy, implementation, and institutional coordination frameworks, including partnerships in order to deliberate on viable options for suitable measures. The topics for group 3 and 4 were subject of discussion. While some members suggested group 3 should focus on the economic and financial aspects (benefits of action vs. cost of actions), the other members proposed to focus on infrastructure and physical dimensions of drought risk mitigation.

Each of the TGs will have one representative, who along with the Chair and Vice Chair form the coordination committee to ensure robust coordination, communication, and coherence for the final IWG report. It is the TGs and Coordination Committee along with the UNCCD secretariat that will form the IWG structure. The composition of the TGs is being revised based on the comments and wishes of the members and reflecting the representation from experts and regional perspectives. The Coordination Committee will meet in the first half of May to map out the details of the outline and finalize topics for the task groups.

The IWG Members made few clarifications and suggestions. IWG members underscored the importance of the report to serve as a guideline for countries on how to address drought by introducing possible measures, considering regional typologies. The report will call for a stronger, positive action from the international community to address drought. The clarifications revolved around the focus of stocktaking and/or review in the IWG report as part of Terms of Reference. Discussions favored assessment and going beyond mere description of stocktaking, as members found the latter too elaborate and extensive for the IWG. Taking the suggestions from the members for coherence between SPI and IWG, the Secretariat highlighted that SPI members in the IWG will ensure alignment and complementarity between the two processes. In addition, the members requested the secretariat to have a professional Editor/Writer to support the work of the IWG. Members also agreed to produce a two-pager summary policy brief, in addition to the report, as part of the wider dissemination activities.

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## I. Opening Remarks

1. Gunilla Björklund, IWG Chair, welcomed the participants and opened the session by briefing the members on the achievement made to date and the objectives of the second IWG meeting. She then introduced the agenda of the day. She directed the participants' attention to the High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy (HMNDP), which took place in Geneva in March 2013 where heads of delegations gathered and conducted a meeting organized mainly by UNCCD, WMO, FAO and supported by many other organizations. The HMNDP culminated in a declaration which includes preambular that highlights the urgency of the drought problems. The urgency was such that the then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon underscored the issues at stake, noting the need for preventive measures on drought as a priority and that nations need to develop strategies for resilience, especially for the poor who are always hit first and worst. The chair also noted the importance of critical elements from the declaration, which included scientific progress in drought monitoring and early warning systems; vulnerability and impact assessment; rapid dissemination of information and response; and the need for developing effective policies. She highlighted the operative part of the declaration, which is pertinent to the long-term drought preparedness. She underscored that drought management needs to go beyond the "crisis" management, alluding to the importance of "proactive" and "risk" management approach.

## II. The Presentation

2. Secretariat presented the proposed composition and allocated topics of the four task groups framed in accordance with the three-pillar approach to drought risk management, namely: (i) Early Warning and Monitoring Systems; (ii) Vulnerability and Impact Assessment and (iii) Drought Risk Mitigation & Response Measures. The third pillar was split into 'physical' and 'policy' groups. The proposed assignments of each task group were also presented. They include identifying the issues at regional and national levels; developing viable instruments that can respond to the needs for addressing drought preparedness; and evaluating the issues from an economic, policy, implementation and institutional framework perspective, among others. The proposed four task group leaders, together with the Chair and Vice-Chair, would form the coordinating committee of the IWG. The tentative outline of the IWG interim report was presented for the IWG members' consideration. The next steps included a coordinating committee meeting to finalize the groupings and the themes. Microsoft Teams have also been set up for task groups to hold meetings and to facilitate sharing of documents. Overall, there was agreement from the members that the IWG forms four task groups and a coordination committee.

## III. Discussion

### 3. The SPI and CRIC alignment

It was noted that presence of the SPI (Science Policy Interface) as members in the IWG will ensure alignment of the SPI's work on drought to the IWG. The need for the interim report to be disseminated wider to all Parties of the UNCCD before the 19<sup>th</sup> Convention for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) was also highlighted.

#### **4. Split of task groups 3 and 4**

The task groups were aligned in the framework of the three pillars of drought risk reduction, with the last pillar divided into ‘physical’ and ‘policy’ aspects– (i) Implementing drought monitoring and early warning systems, (ii) Assessing impacts, vulnerability and risk of drought, (iii) Drought risk mitigation and response measures – Physical, (iv) Drought risk mitigation and response measures – Policy.

The usefulness of separating ‘policy’ and ‘physical’ infrastructure solutions was not convincing for some members, as they questioned the added value of the “physical” dimension of drought risk mitigation. Instead, it was proposed for group 3 to focus on economic and financing aspects (benefits of action and cost of inaction), while the other group could focus on political, institutional and other policy dimensions.

A few others had a different opinion. They agreed with the proposed topic for group 3 which deals with technical and practical issues on the ground, whereas group 4 would look at the policy level discussion, with the caveat to expand the scope to include institutional, economic, financial, and political arrangements. They considered it logical to start from early warning systems and vulnerability assessments, while the physical actions (that go beyond the humanitarian realm) are also important. Such physical actions will be crucial to developing effective policy framework and the economics of the drought.

#### **5. Composition of Groups**

The balance of the task groups in terms of the representation of scientists/experts and the regional aspects was highlighted with a specific reference to having scientists/experts to lead groups 1 and 2 while groups 3 and 4 on risk mitigation measures are typically development focused and would benefit from the regional representatives who are usually more experienced in policy, development and finance fields. In addition, for the task group leadership, it was recommended to have a regionally balanced membership for ownership and effective feedback [Written recommendation from Stephen Muwaya, Uganda].

#### **6. The need for the stepping back to the original TOR:**

The IWG should go beyond “Stock-taking” and should not be limited to descriptive approach. The IWG needs to review rigorously the existing policy and institutional frameworks in order to judge what is working, what is not working, and what should be done better? This is an opportunity to give a very balanced position and to give objective view on various measures.

#### **7. The need for a writer/editor**

The IWG members proposed that a professional writer/editor join the IWG process and help write a concise report that is impactful, brief and effective in communication. The writer/editor would assist the IWG report in translating the language to policymakers. The writer/editor would also ensure that the report is simple and easy to read noting that if it is hard to read, it is hard to have an impact.

#### **8. Remarks on the IWG report**

IWG members underscored that the report should be more than descriptive to capture new ideas. The report should serve as a guideline for countries on how to address drought by introducing possible measures, considering regional typologies.

It was emphasized that policymakers should be able to understand how to continue to work on the local level issues to cope with drought when reading the report. However, the members' opinion was that the report should focus on the overall perspective providing insights for regional and local level issues.

There was discussion about the outcome of the report. Is it (i) a legally binding document? Or (ii) a framework for implementation, like LDN, which would take a long time to be adopted at the COP? or (iii) mechanisms for implementation of policy for drought at global, national and regional levels?

The members highlighted the impact of COVID 19 lockdowns on the drought. They preferred to draw lessons from the COVID 19 crisis. This perspective should be reflected in the recommendation of the report. Considering this, it was noted that the report could be a guiding document and not a legally binding document.

For whom, the report is prepared? How shall it be used? Who will read a report of 30-40 pages and how are the UNCCD stakeholders going to use the report? These were the questions that will be addressed in the report. By and large, IWG report will clarify what UNCCD and its parties should do to address drought. Given this, the primary audience is the UNCCD and its Parties.

The report will call for a stronger, positive action from the international community to address drought. The positive statement that is going to come from the IWG and the needed actions that can be taken.

The report will also highlight UNCCD's unique feature on dealing with the closer links between the ecosystem and vulnerable people. The need to focus on how the voices of vulnerable people will be reflected in the IWG and in the work of each of the task groups was emphasized. When drafting the interim report and recommendations, emphasis on the policymaking should remain as a centerpiece.

A two-page summary will be prepared alongside the report as a policy document for decision-makers.

## **9. Additional comments**

The need to put science before action was mentioned. Before getting the policies, we need them to be informed by science. That is why we have distinguished scientists in the IWG to crystalize knowledge and background information to inform policy direction, through the four task groups. The IWG should interrogate drought situations, circumstances and opportunities in various contexts and develop recommendations and consider constraints.

It was also referred to the historical background of the inclusion of drought topics as part of the Convention. However, drought has now been overshadowed by LDN. The IWG gives a unique opportunity to take advantage of the synergies between the drought and LDN processes and coordinate activities to the next COP. It was noted that the drought process is currently catching up with LDN in that there is a great opportunity to move drought discussions forward which also fits into the climate change discussions. The members emphasized that the report should help countries to understand, not just what to do, but how we can do it.

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#### IV. Final Remarks

**10.** The IWG members were reminded of the tight timeline for the report as it should be submitted in August for the 19<sup>th</sup> CRIC session. As a next step, the groupings will be revised considering the balanced nature of the task groups and representations of all categories. The coordination committee will finetune the details. In the meantime, the members were requested to share their views and concerns with the secretariat.

**11.** Gunilla Björklund, IWG Chair, thanked the members for the rich discussion. She found the elements in the discussion extremely useful. In closing, she thanked the members for the lively discussion.

**12.** Rajeb Boulharouf, UNCCD Secretariat, on behalf of the secretariat, re-affirmed that the secretariat's commitment to supporting the work of IWG. He noted the importance of the IWG report and the implications for the COP. The secretariat has no views on the issue but to serve the request of Parties.

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#### Participation

All IWG members participated in the meeting.

**Secretariat:** Daniel Tsegai, Hansol Park, Jeroen van Dalen, Louise Baker, Rajeb Boulharouf, Xiaoxia Jia, Norah Ngeny and Saravanan Subramanian.