



## **- MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE COP 14 BUREAU (30 SEPTEMBER 2020) -**

The second intersessional COP 14 Bureau meeting has been held virtually, on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Openings remarks were provided by the President, Mr. Jigmet Takpa, on behalf of his Excellency Mr. Prakash Javadekar, Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change and UNCCD Executive Secretary Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw.

The Executive Secretary concluded his remarks by bringing to the attention of the bureau senior appointments at the secretariat, particularly that of Ms. Tina Birmpili, as Deputy Executive Secretary (DES) and Ms. Miriam Medel Garcia, as Chief of the External Relations, Policy and Advocacy (ERPA) unit. The Executive Secretary also congratulated Mr. Pradeep Kumar Monga, the outgoing DES, for his outstanding service to the UNCCD.

An overview of the matters discussed, and the decisions taken by the Bureau are presented below.

### **I. Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was adopted without modification.

### **II. Updates on Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on Drought**

A presentation was made by the chair of the IWG Ms. Gunilla Björklund, recalling the establishment of the IWG by decision 23/COP 14 with the aim to develop effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under UNCCD.

The IWG chair underlined that thanks to the support of the COP Bureau, a highly efficient and well-balanced group of thirty IWG members was established. The IWG's call for submissions on existing drought policy, coordination and partnerships was met with overwhelming response, as more than seventy countries, regional and international organizations responded to the survey, which laid a unique basis for the work of the group.

The IWG work focuses on:

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

The IWG Chair further added that the work of the IWG is being built on essentially three pillars: (1) monitoring and early warning, (2) vulnerability and impact assessment and (3) mitigation, preparedness and response.



The IWG chair requested guidance from bureau members on the four task groups, to better substantiate the options and next steps, to facilitate decision making at COP 15. The working groups included the following:

1- Policy and Governance Group:

- Heighten commitment at global level such as legal or other mechanism.
- Strengthen collaborative centers, networks and capacities.
- Establish a global network specific to integrated drought management.

2- Resources and Incentives Group:

- Consider establishment of drought funds at various levels.
- Change the incentives for the private sector – ex. insurance providers, banks and private financing institutions, water pricing, etc.

3- Vulnerability and Assessment Group:

- The need to support concerted effort to boost the mapping of drought impacts, exposure, and vulnerability across all regions.
- The need to pursue additional focused consideration of methods of assessing drought vulnerability.

4- Monitoring and Early Warning Group

- Boost the global systems for monitoring the systemic effects of land and ecosystem management in mitigating drought effects.
- Invest not only in technical capacities & infrastructure but governance, stakeholder engagement & communication processes.

The IWG Chair finally presented the 2020-2021 IWG work timeline as below:

2020	
September 14 <sup>th</sup>	Draft interim report (shared with the COP 14 Bureau)
<u>September 30<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>Meeting of IWG with COP 14 Bureau</u>
October 05	3 <sup>rd</sup> IWG Meeting
October 31 <sup>st</sup>	Interim Report will be available among CRIC 19 documents
Nov. / Dec.	Regional Consultations, eventually one seminar per Task Group
2021	
February	The report will be presented at CRIC 19 session
March-May	Towards the final report (including an IWG meeting)
June 30	The Final report to be available. The same will be translated in UN languages and integrated in COP 15 Documents
Nov/Dec	COP 15



A bureau member made a statement, on behalf of a group on the draft report. He highlighted on that occasion that his group:

1. saw drought as a priority issue and have a strong interest in finding solutions and pragmatic and practical recommendations on drought risk reduction.

2. urged the IWG to focus its recommendations on strengthening existing legal and financial mechanisms rather than on developing new ones. Expressed concerns by the focus on additional legally binding mechanisms and wanted to emphasize that drought-related objectives should be implemented under existing legal and financial frameworks. To this end and to avoid the further fragmentation of international governance, greater focus should be given to strengthening existing mechanisms and the coordination between them. Two pragmatic pathways were presented in that respect:

- a. Strengthening existing initiatives within the Convention. Building on the good work of the Drought Initiative, the IWG should analyze the Initiative's work, identify gaps and develop recommendations on how land-based drought risk reduction approaches can become more effective at the national level. This should also include national governance issues.
- b. Increase coordination at the political level and regarding financing. Recognizing the complexity of the issue of drought, more vigorous coordination and integration between the three Rio Conventions and relevant UN agencies as well as regarding financial means available is necessary. In this context.

Another bureau member congratulated the new DES and the new Chief of ERPA on their respective appointments and wished all the best to the outgoing DES on his retirement. The bureau member also expressed gratitude to the IWG chair for the work done on the draft report despite the working challenges imposed by the pandemic.

The bureau member, further stressed:

- it is important to avoid duplication and to leverage the efforts of other international processes that are relevant to the work of the IWG, and that we should strengthen existing legal and financial mechanisms rather than developing new ones.
- there was still need to align drought related issues across United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNDRR)/Sendai, Paris and SDGs goals – mainly from a funding and coherence standpoint, the IWG is encouraged to foster coherence of focused critical issue definitions and funding alignment and engagement;
- to look beyond the precipitation and temperature indicators and examine the impacts of the lack of moisture in an effective drought monitoring system. It seems that the groups are focusing on the actual rainfall departures not looking at the impacts of what has occurred. Drought monitoring must take into account the timing, intensity, and effectiveness of the rainfall;



- to also look at the vulnerability of a region at various times. Experts from the same region described how rainfall is required on a frequent basis to keep plants healthy and productive during the growing season, but during the winter they are more concerned about the total moisture available in spring rather than the day to day accumulations.

The Bureau member however expressed regrets to see that the first IWG meeting could not be held in person. The following concerns have also been raised by the bureau member:

- Not seeing enough focus on whether existing UNCCD resources such as the Drought Toolkit and the financing mechanism could be looked at for incremental improvement, as a more achievable and realistic way forward, than some of the possibilities currently being considered. It is expected that the IWG will fully leverage existing tools and other resources.
- on the IWG work timeline under the current pandemic realities, to eventually explore the potential for extending the deadline, should that help ensuring a more constructive and productive outcome;
- distinctions still being made regarding the status of IWG members (i.e., whether they are regional nominees or independent experts). There should not be any sort of distinction made between IWG members as all are meant to be equal with equal voices. A cautious approach about such distinctions should be ensured.

Another bureau member underlined that the Bureau should provide guidance, not be expressing positions on the draft report, as this report is to be presented by the IWG and then acted upon at COP. The Bureau member further recommended to the IWG to increase the focus on two critical group: Policy and Governance (1) and Resources (2) for a fruitful and affective debates on the final report at COP 15.

Another bureau member congratulated the IWG for the work achieved recognizing that all outcomes should be under the umbrella of UNCCD Mandate and strengthening the coordination with existing bodies working on drought at regional and global levels.

The IWG chair took note of the comments and guidance made by all the bureau members.

### **III. Status of organization of CRIC19**

The CRIC Chair introduced the agenda item.

In due consideration of the current restrictions with regard to the evolution of the COVID19 pandemic during the remainder of the current year, including unforeseen development in mandatory public health policy around the world, and taking into account similar decisions taken by other Bonn-based organizations, the nineteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC-19) was rescheduled to take place in Bonn, from 10 to 12 February 2021.



Thorough assessments of the conference facilities at the proposed venues World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB) and UN Campus in terms of logistics, equipment and security are also on-going. In order to tentatively confirm the scheduled time slot for the session, the secretariat will sign a contract with the WCCB in September 2020, which will include a cancellation clause for some time in November 2020.

In line with Rule 5 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of Parties (COP), the secretariat will notify all Parties of the dates and venue of an ordinary session at least two months before the session is due to commence, i.e. beginning of December 2020.

Should evolving travel restrictions not allow Parties to attend in-person the conference, the possibility of organizing, on an exceptional basis, an online CRIC19 is also currently being explored by the UNCCD secretariat in consultation with UNOG, as service provider.

The secretariat further added that critical aspects will have to be addressed when considering the convening of an online meeting, such as content (agenda revision), schedule of work (format and timing) and envisaged outcomes (procedure for input gathering and format of the report).

Being aware of the inherent complexities attached to online negotiations, the secretariat is currently exploring further options for possible ways to gather inputs from Parties on CRIC19 pre-session documentation and/or draft decisions, including potentially through the organization of an 'online forum' prior to the session. Such a platform may enable Parties to reach a critical mass of understanding/consensus prior to the CRIC session.

A bureau member expressed the preference to have the CRIC 19 held in person, if possible, otherwise options to hold it virtually may be envisaged.

Another bureau member inquired about the funding of a rescheduled CRIC in 2021 in light of the fact that funds provided by the UNGA should only be accessible in 2020.

The bureau member also noted that decision 32/COP.14 requires draft decision texts to be made available with the package of meeting documents provided for consultation six weeks prior to the COP so as to allow for timely consultations within respective region, and that fulfillment of this requirement needs to be factored into planning for CRIC19. The bureau member finally inquired about the next host of COP 15.

Another bureau member expressed the preference to have the CRIC 19 held in person, due to the several constrains facing of organizing global virtual meeting such as the time zone differences , technical problems with the internet connection and reaching on agreement during the meetings .

The secretariat clarified that resources have been secured for logistical requirement and venue of the CRIC 19 through the Germany's 'Bonn fund' and that these funds would still be available for use in 2021. Consultations are also on going with the UN controller's office in New York to address the very pertinent issue of entitlements, so to ensure that resources granted for 2020 be effectively carried into 2021.



The secretariat further confirmed that all the CRIC 19 documents will be available by December 2020 and noted that preparation of these documents make up a large part of the expenses paid using the funding received from New York.

On COP 15, the secretariat is in contact with several parties. Should these consultations fail to bear positive results, the COP 15 will be held at the headquarters of the secretariat in Bonn.

In light of the continued uncertainties related to the pandemic, including travel restrictions and limited and unpredictable flight availability, multiple bureau members expressed concern that the rescheduled February timing of CRIC19 was unlikely to be feasible and indicated an interest in considering delaying the CRIC to be held in person in a late April or early May timeframe. It was noted that the CRIC bureau would need to discuss this possibility as well.

The secretariat plans to revert back to bureau member with a clear contingency plan on the organization of CRIC 19 by November for the group to discuss at a November bureau meeting.

#### **IV. Other Business**

No other business has been addressed.