United Nations
Convention to Combat Desertification

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Report on the meeting of the Bureau of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (Bonn, Germany, 15 October 2018)

I. Adoption of the agenda

1. The Chairperson of the CRIC, Mr. Samuel Mabilin Contreras opened the meeting and welcomed everyone, including the Deputy Executive Secretary Mr. Pradeep Monga. Mr. Monga welcomed the participants and provided his message to the CRIC Bureau members.

2. The Bureau welcomed again Mr. Jose Armando Alanis de la Rosa (Mexico) from the Latin American and Caribbean implementation annex replacing the vice-chair Mr. Dr. Jorge Luis Garcia Rodriguez and extended a welcome to Mr. Bryn Canniffe from Namibia who replaced the Vice Chair from the Africa region. The Chair introduced the Provisional Agenda and sought a motion from members for its approval and adoption. The provisional agenda was adopted as contained in annex II.

II. Status report on the 2017 – 2018 UNCCD reporting process

1. The secretariat provided the Bureau members with an update on the 2017-2018 UNCCD reporting process which generated a lively debate. In his opening remarks, the Deputy Executive Secretary Mr. Monga urged Bureau members to call for further submissions of national reports from their constituencies so that Parties will be able to report in four years time against a baseline that they established during the 2017-2018 reporting framework.

2. One hundred forty-one (141) reports were submitted by the reporting deadline, while five (5) reports were submitted after the reporting deadline. Out of the 141 reports received 138 provided suitable data for the analysis. There are fifty (50) Parties in total belonging to all regional annexes which have not yet submit their national reports. Countries are encouraged to continue submitting their improved or new reports in the coming months. However, it is worth noting that only data submitted by the deadline will be taken into consideration for the analysis produced for CRIC17.

3. The CRIC Bureau also noted the importance of using the national data, when available, however they emphasized the need to ensure that this data is comparable and accurate.

4. The following comments were made by Bureau members

a) In order to effectively reach Parties that have yet to submit their national reports, the CRIC Bureau members requested the secretariat to provide to them a list of Parties per region with information which reported against the strategic objectives and which would still need to submit their report after the reporting deadline. It was furthermore clarified that it is possible for those Parties that have already submitted a report to update it at any time;
b) Some Parties experienced difficulties in using both default data provided by the secretariat and their own national data. In some cases the national data was considered better (better resolution, more data points etc.) but could not be used together with the default data because the data sets were too different and created distorted results;
c) Time available for the quality checks and the resubmission of reports was too short which made it difficult for Parties to take comments provided by the secretariat and the GM into consideration;
d) Despite the fact that filling in the section in the reporting template on the implementation framework seemed easy, Parties faced technical difficulties in providing their stories and experiences. A simple technical change in the way the template looks would probably take care of those difficulties;
e) The convening of regional workshops would need to happen in consultation with Parties. Bureau members reported that participation in the Turkey workshop for Annex IV, V and some Annex II countries resulted in problems for self-funded delegates to attend in addition to the late invitation sent to Parties from Annex IV;
f) The secretariat also informed the CRIC Bureau that for the future reporting there would be a common understanding on how to provide data especially taking into consideration advances to occur in science and technology and data availability over time. Availability of new data sets may require periodic recalculations of previously submitted estimates (i.e. the baseline estimates reported in 2017–2018 as well as all subsequent years of the time series up to the year for which the recalculations are made).
g) Questions were also raised with regard to what can be done with the submitted data and that it should be made public and should be used for awareness raising outside the rather formal review undertaken by the CRIC. In response the secretariat explained that the next activities under the GSPII would include a data visualization functionality, allowing public users to fetch for information submitted by countries on progress indicators;
h) The shifting of the deadline for report submission was perceived by some as positive, enabling more Parties to submit in time. Others argued that the deadline should be respected by Parties since some reporting officers and national officers

involved in reporting went out of their way to submit their report in time and then realized that the deadline was postponed;

i) While cognizant of the fact that data submitted by Parties through the UNCCD can and will be used for the SDG reporting, more information needs to be made available to Parties on how this will be done. Concerns were raised that experts at national level responsible for the SDG reporting will use different data sets or methodologies to calculate their input to the SDG process;

Actions to be taken: The debate around this subject reflected to a certain extent what to expect during the CRIC 17 session on the agenda item relating to the reporting process, modalities for reporting etc. The decision by the CRIC Bureau to make more time available for this agenda item during CRIC 17 (reference to the discussions on the tentative agenda for CRIC 17 point IV of the agenda) may ensure that all comments, suggestions and opinions from Parties on how reporting can be improved can be collected and that the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) can take action in the framework of another Global Support Programme most likely to be established for the next reporting process to address comments made by Parties in that respect.

III. Logistical arrangements made for the seventeenth session of the CRIC

I. The secretariat briefed the Bureau members on logistical arrangements made for the seventeenth session of the CRIC. The following were the remarks made by Bureau members:

a. Questions were raised as to the participation of delegates to the training fair that is convened on the sidelines of CRIC 17 and a request to the secretariat was made to include information on the training fair in the invitation letter so that nominations for delegations can be made in light of the training opportunities available for Parties in Guyana;

b. Information on the interactive session should also be made available prior to the session so that Parties can prepare their input and help to create a focused discussion on the topics selected by the Bureau;

c. Security concerns were raised by one Bureau member and questions were posed as to the transportation to and from the conference center;

d. Also questions on how visa arrangements will be organized were asked with Guyana not having many consulates around the world;

e. In response to questions relating to when invitation letters for CRIC 17 would be send out the Bureau was informed that that invitations are scheduled to be sent by the end of October.

Actions to be taken: The secretariat is requested to make available on the UNCCD website a specific site for the CRIC 17 session where information on interactive sessions during CRIC 17 should be made available. Also the secretariat should devise a system whereby Parties before the official nominations are sent can see what kind of training is available so that relevant and interested delegates can be added to the nomination list for CRIC 17. Information on the visa arrangements need to be produced and the secretariat is invited to see with the government of Guyana whether visa on arrival can be provided to delegations.

IV. Consideration of the draft provisional agenda of CRIC 17

1. A draft tentative agenda for CRIC 17 was provided to the CRIC Bureau members prior to the meeting. The secretariat briefed the CRIC Bureau members on the programme of work and the format of the session and introduced an amendment for consideration of the CRIC Bureau to the programme of work of CRIC 17. In short, the proposed amendment would aim at:

    a) Ensuring that by the end of day 2 of the session, all substantive agenda items would have been dealt with in plenary so that the contact group can finalize its deliberations on the possible conclusions and recommendations of the session;
    b) All official documents relating to the findings on information submitted under the strategic objectives will be introduced at once after which the floor will be opened for comments.
    c) Time for an exchange on the reporting process and modalities for reporting would be expand in order to enable Parties to provide their comments, opinions and suggestions to both the secretariat and the Global Mechanism.

Actions to be taken: The Bureau members agreed to the proposed amendment of the programme of work for CRIC 17 and requested the secretariat to finalize the agenda and to ensure that it is submitted in due time to UNOG for further processing.

V. Identification of topics for the interactive sessions during CRIC 17

1. As part of the discussion on the CRIC 17 agenda and the reallocation of time for the various agenda items, the Bureau also discussed the selection of topics for interactive sessions.

Actions to be taken: Three such interactive sessions are foreseen for CRIC 17 and the Bureau decided on the following topics:

a) Progress made in setting land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets and advancing towards LDN implementation;
b) The Gender Action Plan of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) as a tool to improve the living conditions of affected populations;
c) Identifying emerging innovative financing opportunities to combat land degradation;
d) Concept Notes on each of the sessions to be shared with the CRIC Bureau and information on the interactive sessions including outlines, briefs are to be made publicly available on the UNCCD website so that Parties can prepare for those sessions.

VI. Any other matter

1. Under "any other matter" discussed future meetings of the Bureau especially those that will take place on the sidelines of CRIC. The Bureau was also notified that India has officially proposed to host the fourteenths session of the Conference of the Parties.

Actions to be taken: It was decided that the next CRIC Bureau meeting is to be convened on Sunday 27 January either during lunch time (1 to 3 P.M) or after the regional consultations will have finished. It was also tentatively discussed for the CRIC Bureau to meet again Tuesday 29 January from 6 – 6.30 pm but it was agreed that the Bureau will decide on an ad hoc basis on the need for meetings of the Bureau during the intersessional session. It was also agreed that the CRIC Bureau should express its gratitude to the government of India for having agreed to host the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

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Annex I- List of participants

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Annex II - Agenda of the CRIC Bureau meeting

1. Adoption of the Agenda
2. Status report on the 2017-2018 UNCCD reporting process
3. Logistical arrangements made for the seventeenth session of the CRIC
4. Consideration of the draft provisional agenda of CRIC 17
5. Identification of topics for the interactive sessions during CRIC 17
6. Any other matter