



**- MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE COP 14 BUREAU  
(4 DECEMBER 2020) -**

The third intersessional COP 14 Bureau meeting has been held virtually, on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020. Opening 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.

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. Status of organization of CRIC19**

The CRIC Chair introduced the agenda item by bringing to the attention of the bureau the following recommendations of the CRIC Bureau convened virtually on 29 October 2020 on the format and programme of work CRIC 19:

- CRIC 19 should be held as an online session over a period of 5 working days of which 3 days will be dedicated to Plenary meetings followed by 2 days of Contact Groups and one Closing Plenary meeting, during which the final CRIC19 report should be adopted. The session is tentatively set to take place from 15 – 19 March 2021.
- To facilitate the work on the final report of CRIC 19, particularly the work on the conclusion and recommendations section, it was recommended to run two Contact Groups in parallel during day 4 and 5 of the session.
- In regard to challenges posed by the multiple time zones covering all Parties to the Convention and with the view to secure the best possible conditions for their full participation, it was proposed to have one meeting every day for the whole duration of the session, from 12:30 pm to 14:30 CET (Bonn time);
- The agenda items for CRIC 19 were extensively discussed. In due consideration of the time constraints faced under the 2 hours virtual meeting, it was recommended to defer in line with Rule 13 of the COP Rules of Procedure two agenda items<sup>1</sup> on capacity building and reporting matters to CRIC 20, which will be held in conjunction with COP 15.

---

<sup>1</sup>Agenda items included in the CRIC19 PoW as per decision 14/COP.14 on: 'Development and promotion of activities for targeted capacity-building to further the implementation of the Convention' and on: 'The reporting and review process of the UNCCD: Procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties'.



- The CRIC 19 virtual session will substantially covered the following agenda items: (1) Opening, adoption of the agenda, appointment of rapporteur; (2) LDN target setting exercise and transformative projects; (3) operationalization of the LDN Fund; (4) policy frameworks: Drought, Gender, Land tenure; (5) interim report of the IWG; and the (6) adoption of the report
- In order to allow Parties to fully familiarize themselves with the agenda items to be discussed during the session, prior to CRIC 19, it was also recommended that the secretariat put at the disposal of Parties an online forum that would allow them to check and review documentation for CRIC 19, especially the conclusions and recommendations sections of the documents;
- It was further recommended to convene regional consultations including where appropriate, consultations with interest groups, to present agenda items (through panel discussions, if needed);
- To this end it was further envisaged that a series of official communications delineating the whole process be sent out by the secretariat to ensure that Parties can understand and participate in the process leading up to CRIC19.

The CRIC bureau has further proposed the below timeline for activities leading up to CRIC 19 for the attention of the Bureau members:

<b>October 2020</b>	29	CRIC Bureau meeting
<b>December 2020</b>	4	COP Bureau meeting
	7	Advance copies of official pre-session documentation posted on the UNCCD website
	mid-Dec	Official notification to Parties on CRIC 19 followed by Distribution of Information on consultations <sup>2</sup> of Regional Implementation Annexes I to V to National Focal Points and Outreach to interest groups to facilitate preparation for CRIC 19
	end Dec	Official CRIC19 pre-session documentation available, in all UN languages
	end Dec	Online forum for providing feedback on official documents launched
<b>January 2021</b>	15	Compilation of substantive feedback on CRIC19 official pre-session documentation.
<b>20-January 20-February 2021</b>	(dates to be confirmed)	Regional consultations and consultations of interest groups (upon request).
<b>February 2021</b>	27	Compilation of comments and feedback on draft recommendations as they come out of the regional consultations made available to all Parties
<b>March 2021</b>	15 – 19	CRIC 19

<sup>2</sup> Information will be also made available on the CRIC19 webpage



A Bureau member stated that their region endorsed the possibility of a virtual CRIC 19 in March but underlined concerns about ways and means to envisage the negotiations under such format.

The same bureau member further:

- appreciated the efforts of the CRIC bureau in streamlining the CRIC agenda but expressed concerns on the proposed rescheduling of the reporting agenda item and the ensuing ability of Parties to effectively address the matter at COP15;
- raised the issued on the allocation of time to agenda items such as Drought, Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) report and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN). How these two hours/per day will be allocated in a way to allow parties to have fruitful discussions;
- brought to the attention of the bureau that due to their reduced size, delegations will not be able to attend parallel consultations in contact groups;
- recalled that its region does not speak through a spokesperson. and insisted on the need to have everyone speaking equally.

Another bureau member expressed once again the preference of its region to have the CRIC 19 held in person, if possible, otherwise options to hold it virtually or to postpone it to April/May 2021 should be envisaged. The same bureau member further expressed his worry on the time constraints for the contact groups, and its impact on the CRIC Agenda in case the contact group could not timely finished their work.

Another bureau member inquired about the option to have the CRIC back-to-back to COP 15. As the virtual format of the CRIC will be an "experimental approach" it will be a big challenge to have negotiations and decisions during the virtual format of global meeting such as CRIC.

Another bureau member stressed the time constraints faced for the preparation of the CRIC 19 till March 2021. With limited time (having in between the summer holidays), there is a need to diligently move on the preparation. This will also involve coordination at the respective regional levels. The bureau member further stressed that 2 hours per day for the negotiations will also not be enough.

Another bureau commended the efforts of the CRIC bureau to have the session the soonest and also expressed his region's hope to have the CRIC 19 session to be held as soon as possible. The bureau member underlined the need of having an effective discussion at regional meetings, token of a successful virtual session of CRIC.

The Executive Secretary thanked all the bureau members for their questions, comments, and advices. and further requested additional guidance on the key elements, as follows:

- no negotiations at the CRIC 19 virtual session in March 2020; more exchanges and sharing of information and discussions on key topics including the report on



the IWG on drought. This then means, moving ahead on the preparation of the virtual format of CRIC in March, with a revised agenda;

- some keys issues that will could not be discussed at CRIC 19 to be integrated in CRIC 20 agenda;
- the proposal to have CRIC 19 physical meeting back-to-back to COP 15 will also be explored and discussed with the host country, particularly on its financial implications.

Further to the Executive Secretary's intervention, a bureau member added that their region is opened to have a virtual session of CRIC 19 but without negotiations, mostly sharing information and ideas. The bureau member further enquired about the possibility to dispose of the revised CRIC 19 agenda in December 2021 before the holidays, in order to come to a final agreement on the matter.

The bureau member further expressed concerns about the rescheduling of the agenda item on reporting, particularly its impact on the reporting cycle.

Another bureau member further requested to keep the following two agenda items at the CRIC agenda: Capacity building and reporting.

The secretariat explained that decisions has been made by the CRIC bureau to defer the reporting to the CRIC 20 as (i) it does not impact the current reporting cycle and (ii) in order to have substantive discussions at COP in December 2021.

### **III. Report by the Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST)**

The CST Chair introduced the agenda item.

Two CST Bureau meetings were convened; the first on 9-10 December 2019 in-person in Bonn and the second was held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020 virtually back-to-back with the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Science and Policy Interface (SPI).

The first bureau meeting: (1) revisited 15 decisions of COP 14, and proposed timelines for SPI work programme; (2) reviewed the procedure of renewal of the SPI membership contained in SPI terms of reference (TOR), and concluded that no new amendments were required at that time; (3) renewal of the SPI membership and selected four independent scientists and two new observer organizations and finally welcomed the CSO Panel representative in SPI.

The second bureau meeting considered: (1) the progress on and challenges faced on SPI work programme 2020-2021; (2) follow up on the activities to SPI work programme 2018-2019; (3) collaboration between CST and CRIC on reporting; (4) knowledge sharing and communication with stakeholders and the public; (5) the early planning towards CST15/COP15 and documentation forecast and finally the way to improve communication and support to CST.



On the upcoming CST Bureau meeting: a joint CST-CRIC Bureau meeting on CST-CRIC collaboration early next year is being explored (1); late February 2021, to review the draft deliverables of the SPI, setting the stage and milestones towards CST15/COP15 documentation (2); late June 2021, to review the proposed draft CST15 pre-session documents and draft decisions (3).

The Science Policy Interface convened two meetings in 2020. The 11<sup>th</sup> SPI meeting was held in-person at the UN Campus in Bonn from 17-19 February 2020, while the 12<sup>th</sup> SPI meeting took place virtually on 4-6 November 2020 back-to-back with the CST Bureau virtual meeting.

The first SPI meeting: (1) revisited the SPI governing documents: TOR<sup>3</sup> and SPI Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest Policy and Communication Strategy<sup>4</sup>, the Role of Authors and Contributors and internal rules of procedure, included external relations and communication. All SPI members accepted and signed the relevant documents. (2) elected co-Chair, Ms. Nicole Barger, and appointed Mr. Ermias Betemariam as SPI rapporteur; formed working groups, identified co-leads for each group. Roles of members on coordination activities were proposed, to be finalized. (3) programmed SPI work in 2020-2021, scoped and outlined the concept of two objectives, set tentative timelines, and identified pathway.

The second SPI meeting: (1) focused on the application of integrated land use planning and integrated landscape management to achieve LDN and address DLDD, and on the multiscale approaches for the assessment and monitoring of the resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems to drought. (2) reviewed coordination activities in plenary, on progress, status and workplan with IPCC, IPBES, ITPS, UNEP-IRP, IDMP, and GLII, and contributions to the UNCCD GLO2 and IWG. Working group meetings for each of these activities are being planned for later in 2020.

The next SPI meeting is tentatively scheduled in the last week of February 2021 virtually

A bureau member thanked first of all the CST chair for the informative presentation and stressed the important role of the science in the undertaking of decisions making to all parties. The bureau member further enquired about having a ‘‘Science Day’’ at the COP 15.

Another bureau member also congratulated the CST Chair for the elaborate and comprehensive presentation, also for all the work he has been doing despite the actual working circumstances imposed by the pandemic.

---

<sup>3</sup> See <[https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/SPI%20Terms%20of%20Reference\\_110717.pdf](https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/SPI%20Terms%20of%20Reference_110717.pdf)>

<sup>4</sup> See <[https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inlinefiles/SPI%20Communications%20Strategy\\_110117\\_0.pdf](https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inlinefiles/SPI%20Communications%20Strategy_110117_0.pdf)>



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

##### **a. Update on the status of cooperation between the UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD.**

The Chief of the External Relations, Policy and Advocacy Unit (ERPA) introduced the agenda item.

The Joint Liaison Group (JLG) of the Rio Conventions met three times in 2020. At its most recent meeting on 09 November 2020, the Executive Secretaries approved an internal strategy for the next two years which provides a framework for collaboration at the secretariat level. This internal strategy highlights some of the deliverables at the level of the secretariats that will enhance the implementation of the Rio Conventions, foster transformative change, and help build back better during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. These include: (1) shared advocacy, outreach, and strategic communications; (2) Capacity building to overcome bottlenecks to cooperation and implementation; (3) Cross-fertilization of ideas and collaboration on aligned work priorities; (4) Coordinating activities at global and regional levels.

On the cooperation activities with CBD and UNFCCC:

- UNCCD is coordinating the development of the social contract for nature global campaign with the CBD and UNFCCC communications units which is expected to be launched in March 2021.
- ERPA is engaging with both CBD and UNFCCC in the conceptual development of the Peace Forest Initiative.
- ERPA and communication unit organized the youth video competition in collaboration with CBD and UNFCCC with the award ceremony organized on the sidelines of the UNFCCC COPs.
- The CBD is a member of the steering committee on the second session of the Global Land Outlook.
- STI coordinates most scientific and technical collaborations with the UNFCCC, including supporting efforts to refine the direction and content of the SBSTA Climate-Land dialogues initiated at COP25 and the development and implementation of the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture.
- The UNCCD is the UN Anchor Agency for Action Track 3 on Nature-Positive Production for the Food Systems Summit and is coordinating inputs from other UN entities, including the CBD.

A bureau member once again welcomed the ERPA Chief and thanked the secretariat for the presentation. The bureau member further stressed particularly regarding the point 2. on Capacity building, that there is a lot the three conventions could do together to foster synergies at the national levels. The bureau member also underlined on the point related to the conceptual development with the other secretariats of the Peace Forest Initiative and noted that this initiative is a one country



initiative and not an official UNCCD activity. As a result, the bureau member indicated that it is not appropriate for the secretariat to be using core-funded staff time and resources to advocate for an individual party's priority activity that was not approved through a COP decision, and reminded that the limited secretariat resources should remain focused on official UNCCD activities or initiatives and not the priorities of an individual party, regardless of their merit. The bureau member expressed concern that some secretariat activities with sister conventions appeared to place the burden on and use the resources of the UNCCD secretariat with the benefits going to the larger Rio conventions and recommended that the secretariat resources be used for activities that give the UNCCD more visibility and involvement. There is a need to think on how to leverage the resources of the other conventions to benefit the UNCCD.

Another bureau member also expressed his happiness to see the ongoing activities and positive collaboration among the three conventions and further encourage the secretariats to keep going on and further developing joint activities.

The CRIC chair also took the opportunity to thank the secretariat colleagues for their unfailing provided to him in his capacity as a CRIC Chair.

The Executive Secretary further congratulated the CST Chair for all the efforts being done and appreciated the team dynamic with the support of the secretariat's colleagues.

The Executive Secretary finally thanked all the bureau members for a very constructive discussion and appreciated that all bureau members contributed to the exercise by providing their guidance and have promised to have the meeting as requested by the bureau member as soon as possible.