



- MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE COP 14 BUREAU (8 APRIL 2021) -

The fifth intersessional COP 14 Bureau meeting has been held virtually on the 8th of April 2021. Opening remarks were provided by the President, Ms. Uma Devi, Additional Secretary 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. Date and Venue of the COP 15

The secretariat introduced the agenda item by recalling decision 33/COP.14, which called for the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to be held in Bonn, Germany, in autumn 2021, if no other Party made an offer to host that session.

Considering the ongoing worldwide effects of COVID-19 and the evolution of the pandemic, holding a COP15 in 2021 may no longer be possible. An additional challenge, was faced by the fact that the World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB), i.e. the designated UN conference center in Bonn, had been reserved and designated by the local health authorities as a vaccination center in 2021.

Accordingly, leading rescheduling options for the COP were being assessed, as follows:

- Option 1: A face-to-face meeting: 9th May – 20th May 2022 in Bonn (venue to be confirmed).
- Option 2: A face-to-face meeting: 10th October – 21st October 2022 in Bonn

Meanwhile, consultations with potentially interested Parties to host COP15 will continue, and the secretariat would report any major development in that respect to the Bureau.

The rescheduling of the fifteenth session of the COP would still require convening an extraordinary session of the COP (ICCD/COP(ES-2)) in 2021, in line with Rule 14 of the UNCCD COP Rules of procedure, with a view to approve the budget for 2022. The secretariat would propose a draft interim budget for a duration of one year. An informal group on budget would be established under the guidance of the COP Bureau and notified to all Parties, to prepare a draft decision, to be submitted for adoption by the COP, through a silence procedure, over a given time frame to be agreed upon by the COP14 Bureau.

A bureau member thanked the secretariat for the presentation of the agenda item and the proposal to have an extraordinary session on budget, should the COP be rescheduled next year. The bureau member further endorsed the option of October 2022, as the option of May could entail financial implications.



Another bureau member stressed the preference of its region for the option of October 2022 to ensure that the pandemic is over and that all parties to the Convention can participate without risks for further postponing the COP. The bureau member invited the secretariat to check the dates of the meetings of other Conventions to avoid any accidental overlap.

The same bureau member expressed concerns about the impacts of the postponement of the COP from 2021 to 2022 both on the reporting cycle and on the availability of the resources already approved for 2021 by the UN General Assembly to the next year.

The same bureau member further proposed, in the case that no host could be secured for COP, to explore the possibility of hosting the session in Bonn under the Presidency of another Party, including the Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Another bureau member advised to minimize the distortion that may be created by postponing the COP15 to October 2022, three years since COP14, and accordingly plan for COP15 in May 2022. The same bureau members raised further concerns resulting from the envisaged rescheduling, such as the need to address in due time the term of office of the SPI members.

Another bureau member underlined the preference of its region to organize COP 15 the soonest possible within the timeframe put forward by the secretariat. In case the venue (WCCB) would not be available in May 2022, the bureau member proposed to explore other venues and eventual hosts. The bureau member also expressed the willingness to consider the option of having COP in October 2022.

On the reporting, the secretariat underlined that the work of the secretariat is on track and that reporting tools and the updated platform will be completed within the second semester of 2021 as well as related capacity building activities. If there were not a postponement of COP 15, the reporting by Parties would have been done before the intersessional CRIC that was scheduled for 2022. Should the COP be postponed, the date and venue for the intersessional CRIC will be scheduled through a decision taken by Parties at the COP, and this will determine the timeline of reporting done by Parties.

The secretariat will include in the next bureau meeting an agenda item on “reporting” and a note will be prepared which will respond to all questions raised by the Bureau members.

The secretariat further clarified that, according to the resolution taken at the 75th General Assembly session, the United Nations Secretary General should make provisions in the regular budget for the session of the COP and its subsidiaries bodies for the year 2021 and subsequent years. The secretariat’s reading of this resolution is that provisions will be made year after year for the secretariat’s conference services. The Executive Secretary added that further to the COP14 Bureau meeting and postponement of the COP to next year, the Controller in New York will be informed in order to secure related entitlements in 2022 budget.

Regarding the steps foreseen for the adoption of the interim budget, the secretariat will revert with a clear process to be followed on the interim budget and timeline for consideration and endorsement by the Bureau.



In view of the above, the Executive Secretary requested to be entrusted by the Bureau with the flexibility to pursue consultations with all relevant stakeholders with the view to organize the forthcoming session of COP15 between May and October 2022.

Hearing no objections to the proposed course of action, the President confirmed that the following had been agreed:

- to postpone COP 15 to 2022 at a date and venue to be confirmed between May and October 2022. Following its consultations, the secretariat will inform the COP14 Bureau of its proposal for a new date and the venue of COP15 for the Bureau's concurrence;

- to organize an extraordinary session of the COP (ICCD/COP(ES-2)) in 2021, with a view to approve an interim budget for 2022.

The secretariat will include in the next Bureau meeting an agenda item on "reporting" and another item on the "process for the adoption of the interim budget for 2022".

III. Report by the Chair of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)

The CRIC Chair introduced the agenda item.

The nineteenth session of the CRIC was held from 15 to 19 March 2021 for a duration of five days with two hours of daily online meetings. The agenda of CRIC 19 comprised the following items: (1) Update on the implementation of the voluntary land degradation neutrality targets and related implementation efforts; (2) Update on the operationalization of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund; (3) Update on the implementation of the Drought Initiative and related implementation efforts; (4) Interim report of the intergovernmental working group (IWG) on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD.

A total of 138 Parties, 9 UN agencies, 15 Intergovernmental Organizations, and 63 civil society organizations took part in the debates.

Due to the online format of the session, Parties decided to adopt the procedural part of the final report of the session, while entrusting the rapporteur of the CRIC 19 and CRIC 20 Mr. Hussein Nasrallah from Lebanon to finalize the substantive part with the assistance of the secretariat.

In order to enhance transparency on the process of compiling summaries of the debates without a contact group clearing those summaries, the secretariat posted on the UNCCD website during the session files reflecting the substance of interventions per agenda items. After the end of the session, the rapporteur with the assistance of the secretariat, compiled the substantive report of the meeting. The draft report was posted on the CRIC 19 webpage for two weeks for comments by Parties.

The CRIC Chair finally thanked the Acting Chair and the Rapporteur of the CRIC 19 session as well as the secretariat staff for their support to the CRIC Bureau for a successful CRIC 19 session.



A bureau member thanked the CRIC chair for the presentation, and underlined the fact that the session, given to its online format, was regrettably not very inter-active. Some Parties went more into political statements rather than experience sharing including accomplishments and challenges at the national level. The same bureau member also requested the secretariat to explore having three hours session instead of two for any possible future online meeting as it was the case with the practice followed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). This could allow more time for effective and inter-active sessions. The bureau member also highlighted that there had been an error, subsequently addressed by the secretariat, that resulted in their region not being notified about the release of the draft CRIC report for comments and welcomed the resolution of that accidental oversight of the region.

Another bureau member also congratulated the CRIC Chair and the secretariat for the work well done under very challenging and difficult circumstances. The bureau member also proposed to review the time allocation.

The Executive Secretary thanked the Bureau members for their comments and appreciation on the organization of the online session. The Executive Secretary also recalled the various measures taken in assisting countries with connectivity issues. The time allocation had also been a real challenge due to the different time zones of countries. The Executive Secretary finally expressed his appreciation to the CRIC Chair and the CRIC team for the work done despite the challenges. As for the notification to Parties on the final report, he assured the Bureau members that corrective measures have been taken.

The CRIC Chair concluded by thanking the Bureau members for their comments and ensured that necessary and corrective measures will be taken for future online sessions.

IV. Report by the Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST)

The CST Chair introduced the agenda item.

A joint CST-CRIC Bureau meeting on the collaboration in reporting matters was convened on 16 February 2021. The secretariat provided an update on the progress and status regarding revision of Good Practice Guidance (GPG) SDG Indicator 15.3.1, development of GPG on drought reporting (strategic objective 3), re-evaluation of the current biodiversity indicator and/or associated metrics and alignment of the reporting process with the gender-responsive indicators.

The COP Bureau was informed that the CST Bureau participated in the 16th meeting of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) and Bureau, which took place online from 12 February to 2 March 2021. The CST Chair presented relevant coordination activities from the UNCCD, reporting on SPI's contributions to the review of the two draft scoping reports of the Nexus and the Transformative Change Assessments and provided feedback on the outcomes of a preliminary analysis of the revised drafts.

The Bureau was also advised that the secretariat participated in the informal online session of the CBD SBSTTA24 on 17-19 February and 24-26 February 2021 and the UNFCCC SBSTA Panel Dialogue on the relationship between land and climate change adaptation related matters, held from 23 November to 1 December 2020, and also that it submitted a statement proposing to amend the draft decision concerning the Programme of Work of the IPBES.

The CST Chair also advised the Bureau that the working groups for both SPI objective 1 (The contribution of integrated land use planning (ILUP) and integrated landscape



management (ILM) to land degradation neutrality (LDN)) and objective 2 (Multiscale approaches for the assessment and monitoring of the resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems to drought) had produced zero drafts of the technical reports mandated in decision 18/COP.14 that have resulted from scientific assessments, and the SPI internal review process for each of these reports has begun.

The CST Chair reported that the 13th SPI meeting was held online from 29 March to 1 April 2021 and that the two SPI technical reports both received comprehensive contributions and comments. The SPI also produced five clusters of key messages and policy proposals distilled from the Special Report on Climate Change and Land (SRCCL) and its Sixth Assessment Report (AR6). The SPI Early Career Scientist Fellowship programme was also introduced.

The next CST Bureau Meeting was scheduled for 14 April 2021, 14:00-17:00 pm (CET).

A bureau member congratulated the CST Chair for the informative presentation, also for all the work being done by the CST team and SPI members despite the working circumstances imposed by the pandemic.

The same bureau member also noted that due to the COP15 postponement, more time may be given to SPI to finalize the reports as needed, which was viewed as a positive development. The bureau member further expressed appreciation for the engagement of the SPI members in other technical fora.

The Executive Secretary stressed the need to have our work based on scientific evidence and thanked the CST Chair and the secretariat team for all the work that has been done.

The Executive Secretary finally thanked the Chair and all the Bureau members for the excellent meeting and clear guidance that they have provided. The secretariat will revert to the Bureau members with possible dates for the next Bureau meeting.

V. Other Business

No other business has been addressed.