



**- MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE COP 14 BUREAU
(28 JUNE 2021) -**

The sixth intersessional COP 14 Bureau meeting has been held virtually on the 28th of June 2021. Opening remarks were provided by the President, Ms. Uma Devi, 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 matters discussed, and decisions taken by the Bureau are presented below.

I. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted without modification.

II. Process for the adoption of the interim budget for 2022

The secretariat introduced the agenda item by recalling 1) the decision made at the last intersessional meeting of the COP 14 Bureau held on the 8th of April to postpone the fifteenth session of the Conference of Parties to 2022 and 2) decision 2/COP.1, OP.4 on the *Financial rules of the Conference of the Parties, its subsidiary bodies and the Convention Secretariat* whereby, “the [COP] shall, prior to the commencement of the financial period that the budget covers, consider the budget estimates and adopt by consensus a core budget authorizing expenditure... ”.

Accordingly, the following scenario was proposed to convene the second extraordinary session of the COP (COP(ES-2)) to consider the interim 2022 programme budget proposal:

- a. official notification to all Parties, on behalf of the COP 14 President, will be sent by 1st of July seeking the approval of Parties to hold an extraordinary session for the adoption of an interim programme budget, with a deadline of 30 September 2021 for at least one third of Parties to support it;
- b. if at least one third of Parties approves the convening of the COP(ES-2), the secretariat will send by 1st October, at the latest, a second notification confirming the convening of the session and encompassing further information on the session, including on the envisaged procedure to participate in the informal group on budget;
- c. official pre-session documentation for the COP(ES-2), including a provisional annotated agenda and the main document for the session addressing the interim programme budget for 2022, will be prepared by the secretariat and made available in all UN languages to Parties and Observers at least six weeks before the opening of the session;
- d. following the appointment of its Chair by the COP President, the informal group on budget will start its work through a virtual meeting from 15 October to 15 November 2021. As per the established practice, participation in the informal group on budget will be open to all delegations.



The Secretariat further reported that:

- all discussions and electronic exchanges will be conducted in English, in conformity with the established practice for informal groups;
- the informal group could convene virtually, as needed, in order to prepare the draft decision on the interim programme budget by 15 November 2021;
- the group will complete its work and submit the draft decision on the interim programme budget to the President of the COP.

Within that context, the secretariat proposed that the COP (ES-2) be organized from 6 to 9 December 2021 through a silence/written procedure. Accordingly, on 6 December at 12.30 p.m. Central European Time (CET), the COP President will submit, by email to all registered Parties and Observers, a written statement and draft decision text for consideration and place it under the silence procedure until 9 December 2021 at 12.30 p.m. CET.

If there are no objections raised by Parties, the report will be finalized to reflect the outcome of the COP(ES-2)), and considered adopted, when the President's conclusion on the interim programme budget item is circulated on Thursday, 9 December 2021, at 1.30 p.m. (CET).

A bureau member enquired about the level of the signatories expected for the letters from Parties in response to the convening of the extraordinary session of COP. The same bureau member requested more clarification on the paragraph 4, on the specific role of the members of the Bureau in the organization of the contact group (paras 4.b and 4.d), on the tight timeline of the contact group from Friday 15 October to Monday 15 November and on the exact meaning of the word "virtual" (para 4.e). It was also requested clarification on what the options are in case the silent procedure is broken (para 4.h).

Another bureau member sought clarifications on the expected timing of the finalization and closing of the budget contact group. The same bureau member further enquired about the scenario foreseen during the silence procedure timeframe in the case the contact group could not agree before the 6 December.

A question was also tabled as to what would happen in case a region is not represented in the contact group. The same bureau member further asked if the secretariat is envisaging to technically support Parties in consolidating their submissions.

Another bureau member informed the COP Bureau that their regional group reached an agreement and supports on the convening of an extraordinary COP session. The same bureau member further requested clarification on the paragraph 4. h of the information note regarding the role of the COP Bureau throughout the process.

In addressing the question above, the secretariat clarified that responses to the first notification seeking support for the convening of COP (ES-2), could be signed by the National Focal Point (NFP) or any authority deemed relevant by respective Parties. At a later stage, should COP-ES2 be convened, and delegations be constituted, the issuance of full powers would need to be signed by the Head of State, Head of Government or Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The secretariat further clarified that the budget contact group would be open to all Parties who are interested in participating. However, it will be important for the Bureau



members to inform their groups in order for those regions that wish to do so to designate representatives to attend the contact group with a regional spokesperson, and more broadly to help ensure all regions participate.

On the contact group timeframe, the secretariat also clarified that the October 15 to November 15 period was indicative as Parties in the contact group will decide on how to work within that timeframe. In addition, if one third of the Parties agree to hold the extraordinary session before the end of the September deadline, the whole timeline may be shifted earlier.

On the format of the meeting, the secretariat would set up a restricted-access webpage where budget contact group members could submit their inputs/edits proposal to the draft text.

The secretariat also underlined that in case of an objection during the silence procedure, the COP President might consider suspending the session for two weeks and reconvening another silence procedure; as per the case for the Convention on Biodiversity's session.

In case the contact group could not agree on a draft, the secretariat will engage into dialogue with Parties and provide all required details and information in order to reach an agreement.

The secretariat will also be very attentive to the request of the regional groups and will be assisting Parties in terms of connectivity whenever and if virtual discussions take place. Regarding paragraph 4.h indent 3, the secretariat explained that the COP Bureau might be consulted for guidance and advise during the discussion in the contact groups.

III. Report by the Chair of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) on the 2021 – 2022 UNCCD reporting

The CRIC Chair introduced the agenda item by highlighting three key elements:

1. the improvements that have been introduced to the reporting;
2. an overview on the indicators being used;
3. and the implications of the postponement of COP15 on the reporting timelines.

The Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS) has been reviewed and is undergoing an upgrade to bring it into line with modern systems architecture with added functionality to ingest and manage large geospatial datasets.

This upgrade from PRAIS 3 to PRAIS 4 will be carried out in two phases.

- *Phase 1:* The platform is delivered to Parties in September, providing them with a space where data can be compiled and submitted, and
- *Phase 2:* The analytical, synthesis and visualization functions of the submitted data in a public facing UNCCD virtual data centre will be delivered in the fall 2022.

On the methodological improvements and reporting tools the CRIC Chair recalled COP *decision 11/COP.14* whereby Parties requested the improvement of the methodological guidelines and tools for the next reporting process.



To address Parties request, three new indicators have been proposed: SO 2-3, SO 4-3, SO 5-3,4 and 5. Those indicators will be considered as optional in the reporting until their formal adoption by COP.

The secretariat is also engaged in developing material in Capacity Building and the support mechanisms that will be made available to Parties during the reporting period. Taking into consideration the COVID-19 pandemic however, those capacity building activities would need to be designed as online tuition and webinars, aimed at introducing National Focal Points and assigned reporting officers to the new methodological requirements for reporting, including the updated PRAIS 4 reporting platform. In addition to the webinars and online tuition, the secretariat will set up a Helpdesk service where queries from Parties on reporting will be addressed and support will be provided. As per past practice, this service will be made available to Parties throughout the entire reporting process.

It is expected that training activities will take place after the PRAIS 4 reporting platform is launched in September and they will be available to all Parties.

On the implications of the postponement of COP15 to the reporting timeline, the CRIC Chair shared two possible scenarios for CRIC 21 to either be held in 2022 or in 2023. If reporting commences in September, the deadline for submission of national reports could be May still pending a final decision by the Executive Secretary and the CRIC Bureau who will assess progress made in reporting by Parties early next year. Capacity building is tentatively scheduled for September/October and technical backstopping will be provided throughout the reporting process. The date and venue for the intersessional session is set by Parties at the COP. So, if COP takes place in May, the earliest for convening the intersessional session of CRIC would be December 2022. If COP takes place later in the year 2022, the intersessional session of CRIC would move to 2023.

A bureau member thanked the CRIC Chair for his presentation and expressed appreciation seeing the reporting elements moving forward. The same bureau member enquired about the possibility to use an offline version of the report.

In the absence of any reference to a COP decision, the bureau member further raised concern on the development of the three new indicators.

Another bureau member underlined the need of some Parties for training and support in the reporting process.

The secretariat clarified that the system would allow Parties who wish to download an offline version to do so and share with their national counterparts.

The secretariat further clarified that waiting for a COP decision to test the new indicators; would have meant to integrate them only in the next reporting cycle in 2025. In this case, some of the very important indicators, such as Gender would then not to be considered in this cycle. The indicators are being made available to Parties on an optional basis, as Parties will not have to report on those indicators, if they wish not to do so.

The secretariat further informed that an information session will be convened on 6 and 7 July, for Parties to go through the reporting template and technical details. This will be an occasion for the secretariat to gather final feedback from Parties on the templates before



finalization. The Secretariat also advised that they were available for individual or multi-Party consultations as they work to address Parties' challenges with reporting.

The secretariat also informed that Capacity Building needs will be addressed and conducted using online materials and virtual events.

IV. Other Business

On the COP 15 dates, a bureau member invited the secretariat to check the dates of the meetings of other international organizations to avoid any overlap in May 2022. Another bureau member indicated again that the preference of her group is to hold COP15 later in 2022 as the evolution of the pandemic is yet unknown. The secretariat took note of the guidance of the Bureau members and will further address the matter with the host country.

The Executive Secretary finally thanked all the COP bureau members for their guidance and will revert to the Bureau on any further developments.