



- MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE COP 14 BUREAU (30 NOVEMBER 2021) -

The seventh intersessional COP 14 Bureau meeting has been held virtually on the 30th of November 2021. Opening remarks were provided by the President, Mr. Jigmet Takpa, on behalf of his Excellency Mr. Bhupender Yadav, 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. Status of organization of COP ES-2

The secretariat introduced the agenda item by informing the Bureau that the informal group on budget held online meetings from 18 October to 12 November. The Regional online meetings for Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe were organized to brief the countries in each region on the preparatory process towards COP (ES-2). At its request, a similar briefing was also organized for the European Union and its member states. An online meeting was further planned for the African countries, unfortunately suitable timing could not be secured. "Questions and answers" note¹ presenting the main deadlines and procedures has also been published by the secretariat on its website on 28 September in English, French and Spanish to assist Parties in preparing for COP(ES-2).

The informal group on budget, comprising 42 participants from 28 countries representing all regional and interest groups, began its meeting virtually on 18 October, with Mr. Bongani Masuku (Eswatini) later serving as Facilitator.

The group considered the draft decision through four meetings held on 26 October and 2, 10 and 12 November, respectively. In the course of the month-long discussion, the group agreed on using decision text similar to previous UNCCD decisions on programme and budget.

While the group members generally agreed on the importance of securing an interim budget for the secretariat and the Global Mechanism for 2022, with their consideration of the draft decision advancing smoothly, two provisions of the draft budget decision required particular attention:

- First, the group members had diverse interpretations over the application of the most recent UN scale of assessment to the 2022 UNCCD contributions: some considered that the upcoming UN scale for 2022-2024, which is expected to be adopted by the General Assembly at the end of the year, should be used, while some others maintained that the current UN scale for 2018-2021 should be applied for 2022. At its last meeting, the group agreed to

¹ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/Q%20and%20A%20COP%20ES2%20.pdf>



language by which the 2022 contributions are calculated according to the 2018-2021 UN scale, and COP15 will consider how to apply the new UN scale to the overall 2022-2023 budget, with any adjustments to be made as necessary to the 2023 contributions.

- Second, some group members considered that the budget proposal should be submitted to COP 15 presenting only a zero nominal growth scenario, taking into account that there will be significant savings from this biennium for the COP to consider. After some exchanges, the group agreed to maintain the former approach that requests the secretariat to present two scenarios, one of which is for zero nominal growth.

On the registration side for COP ES-2, the secretariat had as of 30 November registered 58 countries. The secretariat will continue reminding Parties to submit their registration as soon as possible. Registration will however continue up until 9 December 2021.

A bureau member expressed appreciation of the work being done by the secretariat in the preparation for the COP (ES-2).

Another bureau member enquired about the registrations of Parties, particularly the number of countries that already registered and the number of registration required for the session. The bureau member further added that the issue is indeed to get the credentials and submit them prior the session and that Parties are facing many challenges due to the heavy and time-consuming level of clearances.

Another bureau member also enquired about the scenario in case we could not secure the 131 country registrations . The same bureau member further requested that a decision be taken during the meeting about extending flexibility to countries for their submission of credentials.

The secretariat recalled that, as per the Rules of Procedures of the COP, 2/3 of the 197 [131] Parties are required to reach the quorum and convene the session. The secretariat further informed that all the efforts are being done to reach out and help countries to get registered the soonest.

Given to the challenges faced to get the required credentials from Parties in time, the secretariat invited the bureau member to consider exceptional measures, including notifications from the National Focal Points (NFPs).

A bureau member expressed concern on the procedure being undertaken by the bureau to empower Parties to take decision that may extend beyond the Bureau's mandate .

Based on the extra ordinary circumstances surrounding the COP-ES2 ; and strictly limited to the present session, the same bureau member proposed to allow Parties to submit credentials through their NFPs. The bureau member further requested the secretariat to draft language and circulate it to all bureau member for approval the same day, prior to reaching out to Parties.



Another bureau member supported the proposal made, as many countries in his region could not meet the formal credentials submission timeline.

In response, the secretariat drafted and submitted to the bureau members the below statement:

“Owing to the extraordinary conditions under which the forthcoming second special session of the COP (COP-ES2) is being convened, the COP14 Bureau decided on an exceptional basis and limited to the COP-ES2 session only, to accept - if necessary- a letter by the National Focal Point (NFP) in lieu of the formal credentials otherwise required by rules 19 and 20 of the COP rules of Procedure”.

The proposed language was subsequently endorsed by bureau members and Parties were accordingly contacted.

III. Status of organization of COP 15

The secretariat introduced the agenda item by recalling the Bureau decision taken at its meeting held on 8th April 2021, to postpone the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties until 2022. Following exchanges on the matter with several interested parties, the Government of Côte d’Ivoire informed the secretariat, by a letter of 14 June 2021 from H.E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs, , of its readiness to host COP15 in May 2022.

After confirming that the proposed dates didn’t clash with the meetings of the Rio Conventions, and of other international organizations, particularly the Seventh session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GP2022) scheduled from 23 to 28 May 2022 in Bali, Indonesia and the fifteenth Global Forum for the World Forestry Congress scheduled from 2 to 6 May in Seoul, Republic of Korea; a notification was sent on 5th July, indicating that COP15 would be held in Cote d’Ivoire on the second and third week of May 2022. On 08 July the same information was posted on the website.

Extensive consultations followed between the UNCCD secretariat and the Government of Côte d’Ivoire, through which all relevant legal, financial, logistical and technical documentation on COP requirements were communicated, including a draft Host Country Agreement (HCA).

Two planning missions have been organized so far, at the invitation of the Government of Côte d’Ivoire:

- a first facts finding mission from 29 August to 3 September 2021 in Abidjan, for a preliminary assessment of a proposed venue for the COP15 (Sofitel Abidjan Hotel Ivoire) from logistical, space, documentation and IT perspectives;
- a second planning mission from 9 to 15 November 2021 for a thorough assessment of the conference facilities at the designated venue in terms of logistics, equipment and security, with a view to providing consensual grounds for the early finalization of the operational Annexes to the Host Country Agreement (HCA).



A third planning mission is also envisaged end of January beginning of February 2022. On that occasion, it is envisaged also to agree on a final version of the Host country Agreement (HCA) text and its operational Annexes.

A bureau member expressed concern on the schedule of events in May 2022. Beyond the two events mentioned by the secretariat, UNCCD COP 15 dates also overlap with the 9th Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture scheduled for May 9 to 14 in New Delhi, India. It was unfortunate that two Rio sister conventions events dates clashed, and these schedules might unfortunately create challenges for delegates.

Another bureau member thanked the secretariat for the presentation and noted the legitimate concern raised by the previous bureau members. As the Government of Côte d'Ivoire is already committed to the dates and the momentum is already high, the bureau member requested flexibility from other bureau members to focused on the May (9-20) dates for COP 15 and extend all possible efforts to make it happened.

The secretariat thanked the bureau members for their legitimate concerns and confirmed that the dates of the 9th Session of the Governing Body of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (FAO) was not taken into consideration. The secretariat added however that, in conformity with the last Bureau meeting request, consultations were engaged with FAO on the dates of the World Forestry Congress and COP 15 dates had been notified in advance to other Rio sister conventions

IV. Other Business

a. Presentation of the audit reports for the financial years 2019 and 2020 by the UN Board of Auditors

The agenda item was introduced by Ms. Daniela Nick from the UN Board of Auditors on the reports of the Board of Auditors on the Financial Statements of the UNCCD. The report presented key findings from the audit reports on the financial statements for the years 2019 and 2020.

The reports on the financial statements may be found at the following links:

- Report of the United Nations Board of Auditors on the financial statements of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification for the year ended 31 December 2019
https://www.un.org/en/auditors/board/pdfs/2020-07-21_BoA_Report_on_UNCCD-Signed.pdf
- Report of the United Nations Board of Auditors on the financial statements of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification for the year ended 31 December 2020
<https://www.un.org/en/auditors/board/pdfs/2021-07-23%20BoA%20Report%20on%20UNCCD%20-%20Signed.pdf>



The statement made by the Board of Auditors has also been circulated to all bureau members, per their request.

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