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Procedural matters

Participation and involvement of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Participation and involvement of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 5/COP.12, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat to address a number of issues relevant to the involvement of civil society organizations (CSO) in the process of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The COP requested the Executive Secretary to facilitate the renewal of membership to the Civil Society Organization Selection Panel (the Panel) and together with the Panel, to make proposals to the Bureau of the COP on ways to support the work of the Panel and expand its membership.

By the same decision, the COP requested the Executive Secretary to report at its thirteenth session (COP 13) on the implementation of the decision, including the report of the Panel on the implementation of its tasks.

This document contains the reports of the Executive Secretary and the Panel on the measures undertaken by the secretariat to implement the above-mentioned decision, and provides recommendations for consideration at COP 13.

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I. Background information

1. By its decision 5/COP.10, the Conference of the Parties (COP) introduced amendments to the procedure of accreditation of civil society organizations (CSOs) to the COP, including modifications to the composition of the Civil Society Organization Selection Panel (the Panel), which was originally established by decision 5/COP.9. By its decision 5/COP.11, the COP defined the composition of the Panel and enhanced the tasks entrusted to the panel in terms of communication and coordination with the CSOs.
2. Decision 5/COP.12 requests the secretariat and the Panel to make proposals to the Bureau of the COP on ways to support the work of the Panel and expand its membership. It also requested the CSOs to increase their synergies with the three Rio conventions. The Parties also requested the secretariat to report on the implementation of the decision at the thirteenth session of the COP (COP 13).
3. Building upon the ministerial dialogue held at COP 12 with the CSOs on the topic of land rights, the Panel decided to devote its work during the current biennium to research, consultation and coming up with a set of recommendations on topics included in the report of the Panel.
4. COP 10 requested that COP 13 undertake an overall review of the results achieved with the revised procedures for accreditation of CSOs in terms of the increased effectiveness of their involvement in the implementation of the Convention. The secretariat facilitated the organization of the review through a consultant. The outcomes and recommendations of the review are included in section IV of the present document.

II. Implementation of the procedures for the participation of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

A. Renewal of the membership of the Civil Society Organization Selection Panel

5. By decision 5/COP.12, paragraph 3, the COP requested the Executive Secretary to facilitate the renewal of memberships to the Panel by January 2016. Following this provision, and as a result of the consultations reached with the accredited CSOs in November 2015, the following members were appointed:
 - Ms. Hindou Ibrahim Oumarou (Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC)) – representative of Africa;
 - Mr. Bhawani Shanker Kusum (Society for Rural Development (GBS)) – representative of Asia;
 - Ms. Marioldy Sanchez Santivañez (Asociacion para la Investigacion y Desarrollo Integral (AIDER)) – representative of Latin America and the Caribbean;
 - Ms. Sophiko Akhobadze (Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus (REC Caucasus)) – representative of Central and Eastern Europe;
 - Mr. Baris Karapinar (Nature Conservation Centre (NCC)) – representative of Western European and Others;

- Ms. Jamal Annagylyjova and Camilla Nordheim-Larsen – representatives of the secretariat and Global Mechanism (GM) respectively.

6. Since January 2016, the Panel has met 11 times (three times in person and the remainder via telephone conferencing) to deliver its original mandate. The secretariat has supported the work of the Panel and prepared the required documents and follow-up as requested by the members.

B. Proposal to expand membership for the Civil Society Organization Panel of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

7. Decision 5/COP.12 requested the secretariat and the Panel to make proposals to the Bureau of the COP on ways to support the work of the Panel and expand its membership.

8. The Panel met with the Bureau of the COP on 13 January and presented a set of options to fulfil the decision of the COP. The Panel informed the Bureau of the COP on the potential existing options to fulfil this requirement. These included:

- (a) A continuation of the status quo;
- (b) Integration of the 10 major United Nations groups;¹
- (c) Expansion to allow for subregional representation;
- (d) A combination of the elements of the options above.

9. After careful review, the Panel suggested that the Bureau of the COP aim for option (d). Given the need to include additional actors within the Panel while ensuring the appropriate representation and efficiency of the group, there is an option to continue with five members, as agreed by decision 5/COP.11, in addition to three CSOs selected in case there are under-represented major groups according to the guiding principles of the Panel and its workplan. In the meantime, the Panel will continue to build national networks with the aim of reaching subregional representatives.

C. Support the Civil Society Organization Panel in discharging its mandate

10. Following the mandate provided by the Convention and the decisions of the COP, the secretariat has been supporting the work of the CSOs and the Panel to ensure that they are involved in the implementation of the Convention at all levels.

11. The secretariat continued facilitating the accreditation of the CSOs. At the time of this document, an extra 147 organizations correctly submitted their documents for accreditation as observers to the COP. It is expected that additional organizations will have fulfilled this requirement by COP 13.

12. Furthermore, the secretariat assisted the CSOs, including the Panel, in raising funds to allow the functioning of the Panel and the participation of the CSOs in meetings of the COP and its subsidiary bodies.

13. In this regard, the government of Switzerland, through its Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, has provided the funds needed for the Panel to carry out its tasks over the last four years.

¹ <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/majorgroups/about>>.

14. Section III contains the report of the Panel, which includes the work undertaken to further involve the CSOs in the implementation of the convention.

III. Report of the Civil Society Organization Panel

A. Activities undertaken by the Panel

1. Background

15. The present Panel was established in January 2016 after the consultations organized with the CSOs accredited to the UNCCD. The composition of the Panel has since been as follows:

- Ms. Hindou Ibrahim Oumarou (IPACC) – representative of Africa;
- Mr. Bhawani Shanker Kusum (GBS) – representative of Asia;
- Ms. Marioldy Sanchez Santivañez (AIDER) – representative of Latin America and the Caribbean;
- Mr. Baris Karapinar (NCC) – representative of Western European and Others;
- Ms. Sophiko Akhobadze (REC Caucasus) – representative of Central and Eastern Europe;
- Ms. Jamal Annagyjova and Camilla Nordheim-Larsen – representatives of the secretariat and GM respectively.

16. At the Panel's first meeting, held on February 2016, Ms. Akohbadze was appointed Chair of the Panel.

2. Work of the Civil Society Organization Panel

17. The Panel has met 11 times since February 2016. Three were in-person meetings (Bonn in April 2016, Nairobi in October 2016, and Istanbul in January 2017) and eight were virtual telephone conference meetings.

18. In its first meeting, the Panel agreed on its modus operandi and prepared the programme of work for the biennium 2016–2017 to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

19. In addition to their formal meetings, the Panel members held informal consultations among themselves, either by e-mail or by telephone, in order to address and discuss a wide variety of issues. They also held face-to-face consultations with the Executive Secretary, country Party representatives and other relevant stakeholders.

20. In addition, Panel members have been in constant contact with their constituencies to ensure that the voice of civil society is properly reflected in the Panel discussions. In the same spirit, discussions have taken place among individual Panel members and national focal points.

21. The main issues considered by the Panel were:

(a) Land rights, with the Panel promoting a policy agenda on land rights and set to advocate a COP decision addressing this topic. With the support of several consultants, the Panel has drafted a policy report on land rights, the recommendations for which are contained in section B below;

(b) Synergies with the Rio conventions, particularly the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

(c) Involvement with the work of the Science–Policy Interface (SPI) (one member of the Panel is an alternate observer to the SPI). The Panel sent contributions to the workplan of the SPI for the next biennium and interacted with the titular SPI observer;

(d) The Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP). The Panel promotes the participation of CSOs in the LDN process at national level and has prepared and communicated with the national focal points participating in the LDN TCP to encourage Parties to facilitate the participation of CSOs in LDN national working groups;

(e) Involvement in the Advisory Panel of the LDN Fund (with involvement from one Panel member) and facilitation of CSO participation in the development of social and environmental standards for the operation of the LDN Fund;

(f) Support for the implementation of the Comprehensive Communication Strategy of the UNCCD, including the involvement of Panel members (and their constituencies) in the World Day to Combat Desertification;

(g) Publication of a Panel newsletter. Five issues of this newsletter have been issued and coordinated by the Panel;

(h) Publication of LDN newsletters: nine issues have been produced and distributed to CSOs and country Parties, providing information on LDN;

(i) Support to strengthen the involvement of disadvantaged groups in the work of the Convention, mainly women and indigenous peoples;

(j) Mobilization of CSOs and other existing networks;

(k) Collaboration in preparations for Desertif'actions 2017;

(l) Facilitation of CSO participation in sessions of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) and the COP.

3. Civil Society Organization Panel participation during the fifteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

22. During these meetings held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 18 to 20 October 2016, the Panel coordinated the participation of CSOs in the discussions, delivered two statements (at the opening and closing plenaries), and took advantage of new participant organizations to interest them in the UNCCD process and encourage them to begin the accreditation process.

23. Furthermore, the Panel ensured that at least one consolidated intervention from CSOs attending the meeting was presented at each of the agenda items of the Committee.

24. The members used this opportunity to meet with representatives of several countries (Japan, Turkey, China, Canada, Germany and France) to encourage them to offer financial support to the work of the CSOs in the same way as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

25. The funds made available by the government of Switzerland helped sponsor eight representatives of CSOs at the session of the CRIC.

4. Preparations for civil society organization participation in the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties

26. At the time of preparation of this report, the Panel was working on preparations for the participation of CSOs in COP 13.

27. The main issues under consideration were:

- (a) Organization of the CSO preparatory meeting, to be arranged by the China Green Foundation in coordination with the Panel;
- (b) Organization of one open dialogue session. The subjects are under discussion and the Panel will facilitate the participation of CSO constituencies for the selection of topics;
- (c) Organization of an interactive dialogue session during the special segment with CSOs on gender and land rights;
- (d) Publication of daily ECO newsletters to reflect CSO points of view;
- (e) Organization of daily CSO meetings;
- (f) Recommendations for the selection of CSO delegates to be supported by voluntary contributions made available through the Special Fund.

5. Lessons learned

28. The two-year experience of participation in the Panel was considered very positive by its members.

29. Among the positive lessons learned, the Panel members highlighted the following:

- (a) Coordination between CSOs at the global level is possible and a group of dedicated CSO representatives could ensure this if they were to work together;

- (b) The work of the Panel has contributed to improving the visibility of civil society priorities in the processes of the UNCCD at global level. Improving visibility at the regional and national level remains a challenge for the Panel.

30. The Panel also suggested some ideas for improving the performance of the Panel in the future:

- (a) Since Switzerland provides the sole funding for its work, the Panel would like to encourage other countries to also provide funds to strengthen the work of the CSOs at all levels;

- (b) Not all accredited CSOs are involved at the same level. Some are very active in terms of communication and coordination, while others remain fairly passive. The Panel will need to work to encourage their participation through, inter alia, the involvement of large international organizations that may provide contribution and input through advocacy, policy research and evidence-building that will strengthen the CSO position on relevant issues of the UNCCD. The decision to produce a newsletter was made in order to maintain closer contact, however there is a need to enhance the communication between the Panel and CSO constituencies. A communication strategy must be developed and social media and communication platforms must be maximised;

- (c) To guide the work of the Panel, the Panel Guiding Principles and Operational Rules and Procedures must be finalized;

- (d) The expansion of the Panel: in order to continue strengthening accredited CSO participation in the UNCCD at the global, regional and national level, CSO membership expansion is necessary to broaden its reach and influence. In line with decision 5/COP.12 on the participation and involvement of CSOs, the current Panel proposes the Bureau to expand the Panel composition with the inclusion of three CSO representatives in case major groups are under-represented through the five CSO regional representatives originally agreed by decision 5/COP11. This new composition, which could potentially reach eight members, maximum, will enhance the impact of civil society participation in the processes of the UNCCD. The procedures for the selection of representatives and for

the work and interaction of the Panel will be established in the overall operational guidelines of CSO participation in the UNCCD.

B. Land Rights: the priority of the civil society organizations

31. The specific recommendations listed here are outcomes extracted from the policy paper that provides examples and more background and in-depth information.

32. *Assessments.* Land rights assessments should be included in the LDN framework along with other types of assessments. There are conventional approaches to assessing land tenure that are rapid, straightforward and highly reflective of the status of rights, including tenure security.

33. *Awareness-raising.* Greater understanding is needed in governments about the connection between land rights and land degradation, and the causes, consequences and remedies involved. The role of advocacy and government lobbying with regard to the important components of this connection, such as recognition of indigenous peoples' land rights, tenure security, and dispute resolution, should receive greater appreciation.

34. *Tenure security.* The provision of tenure security is a priority recommendation. While it is difficult to quickly provide tenure security itself to a whole population, the enabling policies and practices are clear, straightforward and achievable. First among these are the dispute resolution institutions and mechanisms – indigenous peoples, customary, and statutory – which must be made accessible, low cost and fair. Different forms of evidence and proof of claim (evidence rules), including indigenous peoples, customary, oral, and written, must be admitted into state-run dispute resolution proceedings. This is particularly important for proceedings seeking to resolve disputes between claims based on state versus customary or indigenous peoples' tenure systems. And decisions must be enforced. Lastly, the state must realize that indigenous peoples and customary dispute resolution mechanisms are largely a free good to the state, which does not have to provide training, administration, or salaries for them to function.

35. *Replacement of tenure systems.* Caution is recommended when attempting to replace customary and indigenous peoples' land rights systems with formal, state tenure, given the history of problems this has caused. Tenure security is the main issue, and this can be supported in state tenure systems, indigenous peoples' systems, customary systems, and hybrids between these. It is important to find ways to allow for interaction between these systems, rather than attempting to replace one with another. A great deal of progress has been made in this area and a variety of successful country examples exist. From the state's point of view, it is important to offer official recognition, under national law, to diverse, local, in-place patterns of access to and control over land resources.

36. *Making money from rehabilitated degraded lands.* Governments should be made aware of the very significant economic contribution that degraded lands can make to a national economy following rehabilitation. Investments made in the recovery of degraded lands can offer large returns when such lands return to productivity. Very direct relationships exist between land degradation and the money to be made or lost from grazing, farming, agroforestry, forestry, water management, and multiple land use arrangements. At the same time, greater awareness is needed regarding the economic loss associated with allowing lands to become degraded.

37. *Legal reviews of existing laws.* Well-intentioned laws can have unintended consequences. A variety of commonly-applied laws can entail components that inadvertently encourage land degradation. A review of these laws allows for often easy-to-make changes supportive of LDN. A study of corruption in land governance should also be a priority.

38. *New laws.* A variety of new legal approaches can be implemented to assist in the prevention and recovery of degraded lands. Among these are the legal arrangements that allow, encourage and, at times, mandate multiple land uses of certain lands by various cooperative groups instead of a confrontational way. Examples include investor–smallholder land uses, and pastoralist–farmer land uses. Important to infrastructure development is the need to promote the tenure security of local communities before large-scale infrastructure projects begin in order to avoid what nearly always results in a loss in tenure security, expulsions, in-flows of migrants who take land and, ultimately, land degradation.

39. *Use of trees.* Tree tenure can be a valuable land recovery and degradation prevention tool. Trees often exist at the intersection of land rights and land degradation. Rights to trees are configured in various ways in different communities and countries, but often tied to specific customary and indigenous groups. As such, various tools can be applied in areas under the control of specific groups. The section on 'tree tenure as a tool in land recovery' describes a few of these. Of particular note is the potential for involving local communities, CSOs and non-governmental organizations (NGO) in tree planting.

40. *Social entrepreneurship.* Local communities live very close to the land and are thus a primary resource for the innovation, experimentation and adaptation needed to find new ways to mix land rights, production systems and technology. Support needs to be provided to such entrepreneurship to allow for experimentation with viable options.

41. *International land rights organizations.* A wide variety of international efforts, organizations and groups targeting land rights can be of use to the LDN goals. These include database efforts, technology development organizations, groups that work on the legal, social and economic aspects of land rights, and those who work with advocacy and large-scale movements. Some of these efforts may align with the priorities and operating mode of the LDN and these should be examined to determine if contact and collaboration is worthwhile.

42. *Partnerships to support LDN.* The establishment of partnerships with government, civil society, NGOs, investors and donors with regard to the constraints and opportunities provided by land rights in the LDN context will be important to achieving the LDN goals. While partnerships can be constructed in a variety of ways, they should seek to be inclusive (particularly to traditionally marginalized portions of society such as women and indigenous groups), continuous, and taken seriously by the various actors. Such partnerships can be viewed as a way to solve problems and resolve differences before they become too difficult, and gain cooperation for important initiatives. One way to get the relevant actors more involved is to make the issue of land rights more central to discussions for the partnership as land rights are often a 'hot button' issue for attracting considerable attention, and important to all actors wishing to communicate their interests in this regard.

43. Recognition by the Parties to the UNCCD that good governance of tenure is necessary to prevent, minimize or reverse land degradation and to ensure equitable outcomes from LDN is an important first step in linking the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), LDN and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. Parties could organize awareness-raising and consultation activities to simultaneously bring attention to the VGGT as a resource to establishing good governance of land tenure in the pursuit of LDN.

IV. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification support for civil society organization participation

44. In February–May 2017, the secretariat commissioned an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the UNCCD support for CSO participation. This evaluation aimed to assess changes in CSO involvement (i.e. the extent to which results are achieved) in the process of the UNCCD since the establishment of the Panel following COP 9, and to clarify how the evolving “facilities” for CSO involvement, particularly the Panel, contribute to changes in CSO involvement. The evaluation was limited to the role and activities of the CSOs in the context of the intergovernmental UNCCD process. It involved data collection through interviews, an online survey and study of documentation.

45. The conclusions and recommendations resulting from the independent evaluation, as contained in evaluation report,² are presented below.

A. Conclusions

Conclusion 1: CSO participation in the UNCCD remains relevant, providing valuable inputs to UNCCD processes, and the Panel has improved the visibility of civil society priorities in this context.

46. At the time of evaluation, 314 CSOs were accredited or heading towards accreditation to the COP. The variety of accredited CSOs (e.g. from local NGOs to international entities) has resulted in rich, valuable and strategic inputs to the UNCCD process. Ensuring that CSO expertise, needs and proposals, particularly for those CSOs working directly on land use matters, are brought to the attention of the COP continues to be vitally important for the decision-making process of the UNCCD, for targeting policies and actions in an effective manner. These CSOs are also intended to be among the eventual key beneficiaries of the Convention implementation.

47. Similarly important is to deliver information about the decisions and exchanges under the UNCCD to CSOs. CSOs are often key agents for the implementation of the Convention, and in this regard, they make the COP decisions a reality. They are important users of knowledge that is transferred and generated through the UNCCD.

48. The Panel has improved the visibility of civil society priorities and the inclusion of these priorities in decision-making of the UNCCD at COP level. It has also been instrumental also in advocating CSO priorities in other processes of the UNCCD, such as the SPI.

Conclusion 2: Input from accredited CSOs in the process of the UNCCD tends to focus on global level, with only limited reflection in their work at national/local levels.

49. While the value of the participation of accredited CSOs in the UNCCD is recognized, it is also noted that their involvement in the UNCCD tends to be limited to providing input to the international agenda – the COP, the CRIC and the CST. Based on the data collected during the evaluation, it seems that many, even most accredited CSOs do not yet actively promote and use approaches and information derived from the process of the UNCCD at national/local level. Similarly, while national focal points and other “political” stakeholders acknowledge the importance of CSO participation in the process of the UNCCD, their collaboration with the accredited CSOs appears to remain low at the national level.

² Available online at the end of July 2017 on the webpage: <www2.unccd.int/about-us/evaluation-office>.

Conclusion 3: Communication is vital to ensure that relevant information is disseminated in a timely manner and knowledge is properly managed.

50. Several social media platforms are used to ensure proper dissemination of information to the accredited CSOs of UNCCD matters, particularly the work of the CSO panel. However, the evaluation findings point toward a need to improve communication: to exploit the potential of social media to the maximum, strengthen the visibility of CSO activities and updates on the UNCCD website and offer more information about the work of the Panel. Pre-COP meetings among accredited CSOs can be used to streamline CSO approaches and agree on a joint positioning for promoting CSO priorities and defending their shared interests at the COP. Furthermore, a mechanism to improve communication between the national constituents and the accredited CSOs is called for, as well as the facilitation of dialogue with other civil society players such as the scientific community.

Conclusion 4: The role of the CSOs in the UNCCD is evolving, including that of the Panel. Better clarity on the Panel roles and responsibilities, possibly in the form of operational guidelines or terms of reference, would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of CSO participation in the UNCCD.

51. The Panel plays a vital role in coordinating, monitoring and following up on the CSO inputs in the UNCCD process, which involves various substantive and procedural tasks and expectations set for the Panel. The functioning of the Panel, fast start of each new composition of the Panel, its cooperation with the accredited CSOs and other key stakeholders as well as its communication could be greatly facilitated by operational guidelines, which would clarify the working modalities of the Panel and procedural matters for CSO participation in the process of the UNCCD. A time-bound strategic plan outlining the CSO priorities and possibly the need for external support could be prepared as part of the guidelines.

B. Recommendations

52. The following actions are recommended to further improve the effectiveness of CSO participation in the UNCCD:

Recommendation 1: Operational guidelines or terms of reference, including a time-bound strategic plan, for CSO participation in the UNCCD and the functioning of the Panel should be developed.

53. This guideline should: (i) clarify the role of the CSO in the UNCCD; (ii) present detailed terms of reference for the Panel; (iii) include a time-bound strategic plan that describes the priorities of CSO participation; and (iv) indicate the financing modalities for CSO activities.

Recommendation 2: A UNCCD CSO communication plan should be developed.

54. The Panel should collaborate with the secretariat of the UNCCD to develop a communication plan involving the accredited CSOs. This plan should define why CSO communication is needed, what to communicate, how to communicate and what is the target audience. It could also identify who should be involved in communication and when/how often specific CSO communication activities should be carried out.

55. The communication plan could be built on three main aims:

(a) *Communicate for Action.* “Action” refers to a change of practice resulting from the adoption of new methods, materials or approaches derived from the process of the UNCCD or work done by the Panel. This type of communication would involve target

groups/audiences in a position to influence and bring about change within relevant organizations, agencies, sectors or networks;

(b) *Communicate for Understanding*. This type of communication would target audiences able to benefit from learning about the experiences, lessons and good practices resulting from the Panel's interventions;

(c) *Communicate for Awareness*. This type of communication focuses on "packaging" the UNCCD CSO information and priorities for selected, specific audiences and purposes (e.g., global, regional, national, sectorial).

Recommendation 3: The secretariat of the UNCCD should continue to support effective participation of accredited CSOs in the UNCCD process at the global, regional and national levels, paying particular attention to: (i) actively engaging new CSOs to become involved in the UNCCD, so as to broaden the substantive basis and influence of the UNCCD CSO community; and (ii) facilitating follow-up of CSO activities to deepen the impact.

56. The evaluation noticed that of the currently accredited CSO, two-thirds are national and local NGOs. While their input is valuable to ensuring that UNCCD decision-making and implementation builds on realities at the grassroots level, the Convention process could also benefit from bigger, more politically influential international CSOs. Such organisations often have advanced policy research and networking capacities that can considerably facilitate further development of CSO positions and advocacy work in the context of the UNCCD events and beyond.

57. Accredited CSOs can serve as advocates to operationalize COP recommendations by aligning the COP recommendations to their organization's strategic priorities and programmes. The Panel, with support from the UNCCD secretariat (including, for example, linking the work of the SPI with that of the Panel), may provide guidance and technical support on how to operationalize the COP recommendations. This practical service will facilitate better involvement of the accredited CSOs in national and local level activities relating to UNCCD implementation, and will also guide the CSOs in identifying, preparing and implementing their own projects in a manner that is conducive to the objectives of the UNCCD.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

58. With the aim of encouraging more effective participation of civil society in meetings and processes of the UNCCD, and taking into consideration the implementation of decisions 5/COP.10, 5/COP.11 and 5/COP.12, as well as the results of the independent evaluation, the COP at its thirteenth session may wish to:

(a) **Encourage those countries with no or few CSOs accredited to the COP to promote the involvement of their organizations in the UNCCD process at the international level to ensure more balanced participation of CSOs in the sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies;**

(b) **Consider the recommendations made by the Panel regarding land rights and the expansion of the Panel mandate;**

(c) **Request the secretariat, in collaboration with the Panel, to take the necessary measures to implement the recommendations of the independent evaluation;**

(d) Request the Executive Secretary to facilitate the renewal of the membership of the Panel for two years in January 2018, in accordance with the previous decisions;

(e) Urge developed country Parties, international and financial organizations and CSOs and private sector institutions to consider contributing substantially and promptly to the Supplementary Fund and Special Fund of the Convention with the aim of ensuring wider participation of CSOs in meetings and processes of the UNCCD as well as the work undertaken by the Panel of the UNCCD.
