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The UNCCD reporting and review process in view of the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets into the implementation of the UNCCD

Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties

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Note by the secretariat

Summary

The present document was prepared in response to decisions 7/COP.12 and 15/COP.12, which requested the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to adjust the reporting procedures in consultation with the Global Mechanism in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Convention and improve the relevance of the monitoring framework. The document introduces all relevant elements of the forthcoming UNCCD reporting as well as the timeline for the 2017–2018 reporting process.


As requested, the reporting elements in this document are aligned with the draft strategic framework prepared by the Intergovernmental Working Group, the former being presented to Parties at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) for adoption. Under the proposed new strategic framework, Parties will report on strategic objectives and a section focussing on experience gained in implementing the Convention.

The document also contains information on the next reporting process to be launched immediately after the conclusion of COP 13, as well as an overview of various aspects of capacity-building activities related to reporting. Parties may also wish to refer to document ICCD/CRIC(16)/INF.1, which provides information on the format of future reporting.

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I. Introduction

1. Decision 15/COP.12 requested the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Global Mechanism (GM) to post adjustments to future reporting modalities on the UNCCD website in order to allow for feedback from Parties. The secretariat was also requested to finalize the methodological approach to reporting, including revised reporting tools, and make them available to Parties for the forthcoming reporting process, which is tentatively scheduled to commence after the conclusion of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13).
2. The COP, at its twelfth session, decided to establish an Intergovernmental Working Group on the future strategic framework of the Convention (IWG-FSF) to assess the current 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) (The Strategy) and to consider options for a possible future strategic approach for the Convention.
3. The IWG-FSF, having almost concluded its work, will convene for a final meeting to be held on the sidelines of COP 13 to discuss the content and substance of a newly introduced strategic objective (SO) on drought. The IWG-FSF will then present to the COP a final draft of the new strategic framework entitled “The UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework”¹ for consideration and adoption.
4. In the event that the strategic framework is adopted, Parties would be required to report on five SOs, and an implementation framework comprising three main sections.² Some SOs will be monitored through agreed progress indicators, while the implementation framework provides an opportunity for Parties to report on policies, programmes, and implementation practices at national, sub-regional and regional levels through qualitative information.
5. This document introduces all elements for the forthcoming reporting process scheduled to be launched immediately after COP 13 in 2017–2018. An information document, ICCD/CRIC(16)/INF.1, containing the updated reporting template has been prepared to help Parties familiarize themselves with the future reporting requirements stemming from the new strategic framework.

II. The reporting process 2017–2018

6. As mentioned above, pending a decision on the draft strategic framework, the first reporting process under the new strategic framework will begin after the conclusion of COP 13 in November 2017, as described in detail in annex I.
7. Reporting tools comprising country-specific reporting templates, including national estimates on progress indicators for trends related to land cover, land productivity or the functioning of the land and carbon stock above and below the ground, a manual, and an updated glossary will be prepared in six (6) official United Nations languages and posted on the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) reporting platform as of November 2017.

¹ Also see document ICCD/COP(13)/3. This draft contains a placeholder of the proposed strategic objective on drought which is subject to changes due to the final meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the future strategic framework of the Convention.

² One relating to financing, one to policy and one to actions on the ground.

8. The PRAIS reporting platform is also currently used by 108 UNCCD Parties having committed themselves to setting voluntary land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets and having decided to report on their progress within the context of the LDN Target Setting Programme (LDN-TSP). The LDN-TSP has three main objectives, namely assisting Parties in establishing national LDN baselines, setting voluntary LDN targets, and identifying measures to achieve LDN.

9. Parties engaged in the LDN-TSP will have the benefit of data on land-based indicators, gathered and validated within the framework of the LDN-TSP for the reporting process of the UNCCD, and experience in the process of identifying the baseline assessment. Given that LDN-TSP countries have already undertaken work relating to the baseline, it is expected that they will report more extensively on measures taken to address LDN and its related targets through national reporting under the section of the strategic framework relating to actions on the ground.

10. As part of the scheduled capacity building, Parties will be invited to attend regional workshops during the first quarter of 2018, supported by the Global Support Programme II, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented through the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment). Workshops will be held for Parties to familiarize themselves with reporting methodologies and technical aspects of reporting. As additional support, the secretariat will provide online helpdesk support from November 2017 to June 2018 to respond to queries received by Parties and facilitate the reporting process.

11. National reports submitted by the deadline will undergo quality assurance arranged by the secretariat of the UNCCD and the GM in order to ensure maximum accuracy, particularly in terms of the information relating to progress indicators where default data was provided. The deadline for final report submission is expected to be the end of June 2018 in order to allow adequate time to prepare preliminary analyses prior to the seventeenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 17) which is tentatively planned for October 2018.

12. The intersessional session of the CRIC in 2018 will be the first session to discuss outcomes and best practices deriving from the reporting process under the new strategic framework. Consultations among Parties and their development partners are forecast, to discuss, inter alia, progress indicators, voluntary LDN target setting and experience-sharing on implementation at national level.

III. Substantive aspects of the reporting

13. Document ICCD/CRIC(16)/INF.1 contains information on the reporting template that would be available to Parties to report on various aspects and programmes at national, sub-regional and regional levels during the forthcoming reporting process.

A. Reporting on strategic objectives

Measuring progress towards the strategic objectives

14. In its current formulation, the future strategic framework foresees that indicators used for reporting on progress towards the SOs will be those identified by Parties in decisions 22/COP.11 (for SOs 1–3) and 15/COP.12 (for SO 4). In addition to indicators included in decision 15/COP.12 for SO 4, members of the IWG-FSF added progress indicators to measure financial flows and aspects relating to technology transfer.

15. Of the six progress indicators adopted in decision 22/COP.11 for SO 1-3, a set of three land-based indicators (namely trends in land cover, trends in land productivity and trends in carbon stocks above and below ground) and associated metrics are: i) used to measure the progress towards achieving LDN in the context of the LDN-TSP implemented by the GM in collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat, ii) used to measure the implementation of the Convention as a whole, and iii) being considered for monitoring Sustainable Development Goal 15.3, indicator 15.3.1 “Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area”.

16. As requested by decisions 3/COP.12 and 15/COP.12, and as part of the LDN-TSP, the secretariat of the UNCCD has collaborated with the GM to provide Parties with national estimates of the metrics/proxies associated with the three progress indicators, “trends in land cover”, “trends in land productivity or functioning of the land” and “trends in carbon stocks above and below the ground”, from global datasets.

17. This exercise has helped shape the reporting on progress indicators under the forthcoming UNCCD reporting and allowed institutions of the UNCCD to further fine-tune the mechanism by which data will be delivered to Parties. In line with decision 22/COP.11, Parties will receive templates prepopulated with default global datasets and will have the possibility to validate, replace or reject the default data.

18. On the other hand, and in order to assist Parties in minimizing the burden of reporting, Parties that participate in the LDN-TSP will be given the opportunity to use the data on land-based indicators, gathered and validated within the framework of the LDN-TSP for the UNCCD reporting process.

19. Parties may also wish to report on progress towards expected impacts for SOs 1–3 – which are not fully covered by the set of indicators adopted in decision 22/COP.11 – by using nationally relevant quantitative indicators or qualitative information, as appropriate. This also applies to reporting on progress toward the newly introduced SO on drought.

20. By decision 15/COP.12, Parties approved the refined set of progress indicators relating to SO 4 and requested the GM and secretariat to develop a template for data collection on the financial indicator and methodology for data analysis, as outlined in document ICCD/CRIC(14)/8.

21. The special intersessional session of the CRIC held in 2016 (CRIC 15) gave Parties an opportunity to discuss key elements for the future strategic framework of the UNCCD, including future modalities for reporting. Parties at CRIC 15 considered that the implementation of the future strategic framework will require increased resources and more purposeful tracking and reporting of financing. New approaches to financial reporting were outlined in document ICCD/CRIC(15)/5 in light of the lessons learned from the previous reporting processes, namely that: (i) tracking has been mostly focused on public resources in a climate where opportunities from the private sector, foundations, and climate finance are becoming increasingly important; (ii) it has been difficult to access reliable and comparable cross-country data for the “trends in domestic public resources”; and (iii) reporting costs including opportunity costs for Parties, are high.

22. Parties underlined that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement provide a new window of opportunity for scaling up finance to support the implementation of the Convention, including through existing sources such as the GEF and the Green Climate Fund, and innovative forms of financing in line with the future strategic approach for the Convention. While many Parties supported the implementation of decision 15/COP.12 with regard to tracking financial flows with a slight modification in line with the future strategic framework of the UNCCD (i.e. ‘Option 1’, as described in document ICCD/CRIC(15)/5), other Parties were in favour of a combination of Option 2 (analysis of global datasets to identify financing patterns and

financing opportunities for the implementation of the Convention) and Option 3 (in-depth country analysis of resource mobilization, public spending, and the economic and social benefits of increased spending). With regards to Option 3, some Parties recommended that it should not restrict itself to just a few “champion” countries. They welcomed the compilation of specific countries’ lessons learned, as outlined in option 3, as a means of improving resource mobilization and public expenditure for the implementation of the Convention.

23. In response to decision 15/COP.12 and in light of the above-mentioned CRIC 15 deliberations, it is hereby proposed that country reporting on SO 4 be further simplified and complemented by an analysis of global datasets by the GM. This approach will facilitate a comprehensive assessment of existing and emerging public and private, international and national financial flows, including bilateral and multilateral flows and climate finance related to the implementation of the UNCCD.

24. It is therefore proposed that country reporting on SO 4 will cover the following progress indicators:

(a) **SO 4-1 Trends in international bilateral and multilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA):** intended for developed country Parties to indicate the total amount of bilateral ODA committed to activities relevant to the implementation of the Convention over the last four years. For developed country Parties reporting to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), this indicator will be pre-populated with data available in the Creditor Reporting System of the OECD;

(b) **SO 4-2 Trends in domestic public resources:** intended for affected developing country Parties to describe the trends in national-level financing committed to activities relevant to the implementation of the Convention;

(c) **SO 4-3 Trends in the number of co-financing partners:** intended for all country Parties to describe the trends in the number of co-financing partners involved in activities relevant to the implementation of the Convention;

(d) **SO 4-4 Resources mobilized from innovative sources of finance, including from the private sector:** intended for affected developing country Parties to describe trends in the amount of resources mobilized from innovative sources of finance, including the private sector, for activities relevant to the implementation of the Convention.

25. For the complementary analysis of global datasets, a number of potential sources of relevant data have been identified by the GM in partnership with the International Institute for Sustainable Development. These include the OECD, AidData, Multilateral Development Banks and the International Aid Transparency Initiative. For each reporting cycle, the GM is able to undertake an in-depth analysis of global datasets with the aim of assessing financing patterns and identifying financing opportunities for the implementation of the Convention.

B. Reporting on the implementation framework

26. As presented in document ICCD/CRIC(16)/INF.1, Parties will also have the opportunity to report, in narrative form, on actions implemented on the ground in order to share experience and showcase implementation approaches that have been successfully applied at national, sub-regional or regional level, as appropriate.

27. The annex to document ICCD/COP(13)/3 contains the proposed future strategic framework and specifies three main categories for reporting on by Parties at the national

level and, when requested, at regional and sub-regional level. Parties will have the opportunity to report on:

(a) **Financial and non-financial resources.** In addition to the quantitative information reported on under SO 4, this sub-section will allow Parties to describe in more detail how they have successfully mobilised financial and non-financial resources to better implement the Convention. Parties will also be invited to report on innovative financial resources, and how LDN can be used as a catalyst for leveraging investments geared towards benefitting multiple objectives;

(b) **Policy and planning.** The implementation of national action programmes, the establishment of relevant national policies and the creation of an enabling environment for the implementation of the Convention are all considered important tools on which Parties will have the opportunity to report as part of future reporting. As was already the case during previous reporting process under the UNCCD, Parties will be invited to share experiences through qualitative information on the above-mentioned categories which will feed interactive sessions of the CRIC;

(c) **Actions on the ground.** This sub-section is considered by many Parties to be the most substantive under the implementation framework as it focusses on implementing the Convention at national level. Parties will be invited to share stories of successful implementation practices used to achieve sustainable land management, increase restoration efforts and/or rehabilitate ecosystems, also addressing issues such as drought risk management and how they are establishing effective systems for sharing information and knowledge.

28. Reviewing the information reported under the implementation framework will differ from the previous approach for the operational objectives under The Strategy. In the absence of performance indicators and related targets which were abolished for the sake of increasing experience sharing on actual implementation, it is proposed that the Bureau of the CRIC be tasked with identifying specific topics and/or themes that will feed interactive sessions of the CRIC on the basis of information submitted by Parties and for each intersessional session. Parties and interested agencies and institutions will be informed about the selection of topics and/or themes and the Bureau of the CRIC, with support from the secretariat, will ensure that implementation efforts are discussed and shared between Parties and their stakeholders during the sessions.

IV. Technical aspects of the reporting

The Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System

29. The Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System portal ("PRAIS 2"), developed by the first Global Support Programme (GSP I) to assist Parties during previous reporting processes under The Strategy, will remain the platform for reporting under the future strategic framework.

30. The technical infrastructure of the PRAIS 2 platform is currently being modified to meet new requirements for reporting on progress indicators and the implementation framework. Since default data needs to be provided to each Party, country-specific templates will be made available to the reporting officer for validation purposes. In addition, other essential improvements such as the query functions for submitted data will also be made available through PRAIS 3.

31. Efforts have been made to reduce the reporting burden as much as possible. Given that land-based indicators used for monitoring the LDN process are the same as for

UNCCD reporting, Parties participating in the LDN-TSP will be able to use data they already submitted through the baseline assessment for setting voluntary national targets.

32. As per usual practice, national focal points and reporting officers will be able to submit their reports through the PRAIS 3 portal once it is completed. They will also have access afterwards to review their reports. It is expected that PRAIS 3 will also be used to make findings from the review process public and allow interested users to query the database.

V. Capacity development for reporting

33. Parties at the thirteenth session of the CRIC (CRIC 13) highlighted the need for a successor programme to the GSP I to enable them to comply with new and/or additional reporting requirements, particularly the capacity requirements to collect and analyse quantitative and geospatial data related to the bio-physical indicators.

34. As past experience has clearly indicated, activities carried out under the first GSP I assisted Parties in complying with reporting obligations as regards data collection and the capacity to submit their reports in a timely manner. Therefore, capacity building and technical support provided at global level have been shown to have a significant impact on the reporting process, principally the response of the Parties to submitting good quality reports on time.

35. In addition to efforts at global level, eligible UNCCD country Parties are entitled to receive enabling activity funding from the GEF for national-level activities in support of reporting. This type of funding is mainly disbursed through “umbrella projects” managed by the UN Environment. While separately managed, it is important to note the necessity for a coordinated approach to implementation for both the support provided at national and global level.

36. In addition to the availability of reporting tools and the reporting platform, the second Global Support Programme (GSP II) will give Parties the opportunity to attend regional workshops on the reporting process, particularly on how to report on quantitative data and manage, analyse and monitor biophysical progress indicators.

37. Throughout the reporting period, Parties will be provided with technical backstopping for reporting on UNCCD biophysical progress indicators, through regional consultants under the Regional Coordination Units (annex II).

38. Parties will also benefit from a quality assurance process after the submission of their reports. The tentative deadline for report submission is set for June 2018, however it is expected that many Parties will submit their reports earlier or seek quality assurance for their report before officially submitting it through PRAIS.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

39. At its thirteenth session, the COP may wish to consider taking the following action:

(a) Providing further guidance to the secretariat of the UNCCD and other relevant bodies, institutions and organizations on necessary capacity-building measures needed to further the reporting and review process;

(b) Requesting the Bureau of the CRIC to include in its work programme the selection of topics or themes for interactive sessions of the CRIC which will be

based on the qualitative information submitted by Parties on the implementation framework;

(c) Also requesting the secretariat to provide to the Bureau of the CRIC a summary or synthesis of qualitative information submitted by Parties with a view to enabling the Bureau to select topics and/or themes of general interest;

(d) Further requesting the Bureau of the CRIC to ensure, with the assistance of the secretariat and the GM, where appropriate, that development partners are able to share their experience in implementation and/or support for implementation during sessions of the CRIC;

(e) Requesting the secretariat and UN Environment to align their respective support at the global and the national level (GSP II and the respective umbrella projects) in order to provide targeted support to capacity building for reporting;

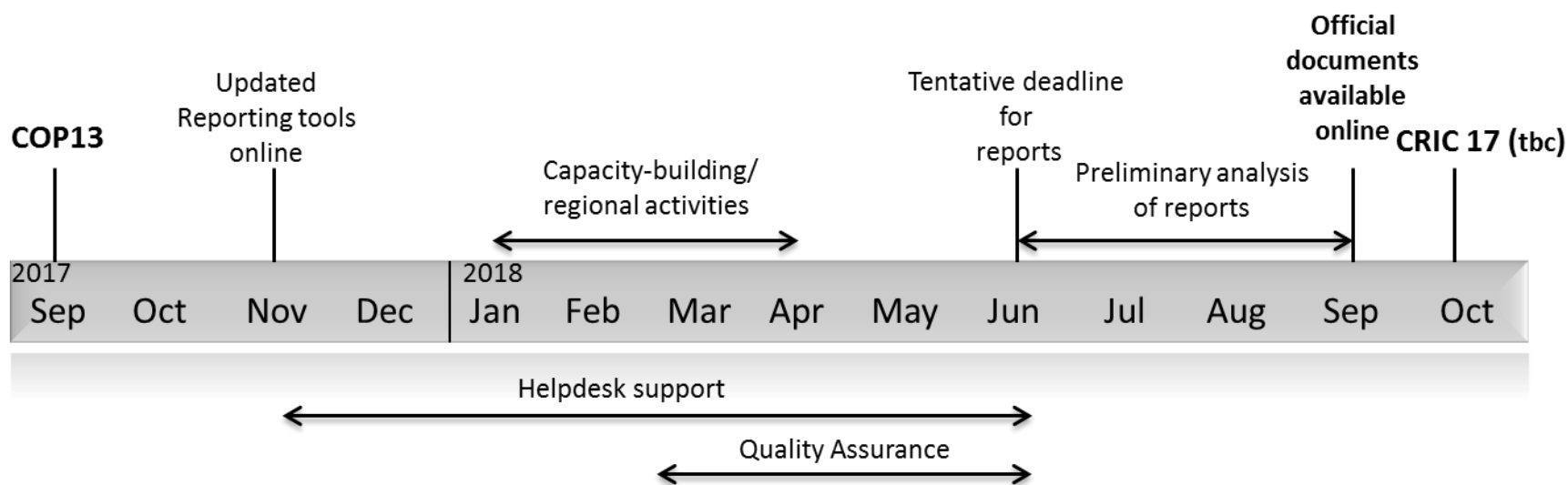
(f) Considering the need for a specific indicator-based monitoring framework for the SO on drought contained in the new strategic framework and, where necessary, requesting the Committee on Science and Technology to assist in the work relating to the establishment of such a monitoring framework;

(g) Deliberating on the proposed approach and timeline for the forthcoming progress reporting under the future strategic framework;

(h) Also requesting the Convention institutions to finalize all necessary reporting tools for the forthcoming reporting process.

Annex I

2017–2018 reporting timeline



Annex II

Financial implications

The table below indicates the budget requirements for the implementation of the activities according to the recommendations contained in paragraph 39 of this document. Funding will come from extra-budgetary resources, as well as other possible sources, if known. It is expected that all budgetary requirements will be met by funding made available through the Global Support Programme II, implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme and funded by the Global Environment Facility. The convention institutions will also provide core budget and in-kind contributions to this project which will be executed by the Global Mechanism.

Table
Activities, cost estimates and possible sources of funding

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Cost (euro)</i>	<i>Possible sources of funding</i>
Developing and improving UNCCD reporting tools	295 000	GSP II (GEF)
Capacity-building workshops on quantitative data collection, management, analysis and monitoring related to biophysical progress indicators of the UNCCD	937 000	GSP II (GEF)
Also developing effective tools to establish mechanisms for monitoring biophysical progress indicators of the UNCCD	109 000	GSP II (GEF)
Further developing visualization functionalities to allow Parties to access data.	68 000	GSP II (GEF)
Assessment of investment patterns and global datasets to increase finance for UNCCD implementation	71 000	GSP II (GEF)
Total extra-budgetary resources	1 480 000	