



United Nations

ICCD/COP(13)/5



Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.: General
23 June 2017

Original: English

Conference of the Parties

Thirteenth session

Ordos, China, 6–16 September 2017

Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda

Effective implementation of the Convention at national, subregional and regional level

Additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the Conference of the Parties in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention – Terms of reference of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

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Note by the secretariat

Summary

Decision 11/COP.9, which contains the terms of reference of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), stipulates that the terms of reference of the CRIC should be reviewed no later than at the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 14) in 2019, with a view to making any necessary modifications, including reconsidering the need for and modalities of the CRIC as a subsidiary body. Given that COP 13 is likely to adopt a new strategy for the Convention, the Bureau of the COP decided to include the review of the terms of reference of the CRIC in the agenda for COP 13.

Based on discussions already held among Parties during previous sessions of the CRIC, this document proposes an update of the terms of reference contained in the annex. Barring just a few changes, the terms of reference are proposed to be maintained as originally adopted.

GE.17-10494(E)



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I. Introduction and background

1. The Committee for the Review of Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) was established as a standing subsidiary body by Parties at the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 9). Decision 11/COP.9 stipulated that the terms of reference of the CRIC, its operations and its schedule of meetings should be revisited no later than at COP 14 (2019), with a view to making any necessary modifications, including reconsidering the need for and modalities of the CRIC as a subsidiary body.¹

2. Discussions on some elements contained in the current terms of reference were already held during the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth sessions of the CRIC, mainly with regard to the frequency of CRIC sessions and the frequency of reporting.² Given that the COP at its thirteen session is likely to adopt a new strategy for the Convention, the Bureau of the COP decided to include, in accordance with decision 11/COP.9, the review of the terms of reference of the CRIC into the agenda for COP 13 in order to ensure that the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) reporting and review process undertaken under the purview of the CRIC and its Bureau be revisited and, if need be, adjusted. The forthcoming reporting process expected to commence at the end of 2017 (after COP 13) will, if Parties agree, be based on adjusted terms of reference aligned with the new strategy and its renewed thrust, and focus on implementation and monitoring activities on the ground.

3. On a general note, it should be emphasized that Parties expressed their overall satisfaction with and support for the CRIC as a standing subsidiary body. Therefore, proposed adjustments to its terms of reference are not extensive and focus on just a few elements contained in the current terms of reference.

II. Proposed amendments to the current terms of reference of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

4. The amended terms of reference as annexed to the present document propose just a few changes, one concerning the reporting period. All other amendments and changes introduced were proposed with a view to streamlining and simplifying the terms of reference without changing the orientation of the review or the modalities by which the CRIC should review information submitted by Parties. Some sections, such as the one entitled “composition”, detailing membership of the committee and rules for the election of the CRIC Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons, are proposed to remain unchanged. This is also the case for the sections relating to the organization and transparency of work and the section relating to the nature of the review and methodology.

A. Stakeholders under review

5. In the past, stakeholders other than Parties have been invited to submit reports on the achievements of the operational objectives of the current 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) and their related targets. The new strategy has foregone the concept of strategic and operational objectives

¹ Decision 11/COP.9, paragraph 2.

² Non-paper 2 issued 17 March 2015 (tabled during the thirteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention).

and instead firmly focusses the review on tracking progress made on strategic objectives through related progress indicators. In addition, the new strategy also emphasizes the need to share implementation experience in the most flexible way, i.e. through qualitative information and as part of the implementation framework contained in the new strategy.

6. Given that reporting by stakeholders other than Parties is voluntary, it is proposed to reduce the number of stakeholders under review to Parties, while intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), United Nations agencies and other potential stakeholders will be encouraged to share implementation experience directly with Parties during the sessions of the CRIC on specific topics agreed upon by the Bureau of the CRIC. Identified topics and themes are proposed to be addressed through interactive dialogues where Parties and other stakeholders will be given the opportunity to showcase their implementation experience.

7. The proposed change would have two major impacts. Firstly, it would reduce the burden on the secretariat to produce reporting templates for a number of reporting entities in various languages. Secondly, and more importantly, it will enhance the relevance of input provided by IGOs and United Nations agencies, including the Global Environment Facility (GEF), to the review process, through a focussed discussion on pre-selected topics.

B. Reporting period

8. During the last three sessions of the CRIC, Parties discussed the periodicity of reporting at length. The current terms of reference (decision 11/COP.9) make a distinction between reporting on progress indicators (every four years) and on performance indicators (every two years). There is consensus among Parties that progress indicators cannot be reported on too frequently as this would render biophysical indicator trends undetectable and make the reporting burden too high for Parties.

9. Information submitted by Parties on the implementation framework of the new strategy is meant to enhance experience-sharing on activities on the ground. Based on narratives submitted by Parties, it is proposed that the CRIC Bureau shall identify topics and themes of general interest for interactive dialogues held during the sessions of the CRIC, with the assistance of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM). The selection of topics and themes prior to the session by the CRIC Bureau would ensure maximum flexibility and relevance in the review process and allow additional or new information to be added by Parties and other stakeholders. This would guarantee that the information discussed is as up-to-date and complete as possible.

10. Bearing the aforementioned scenario in mind, it is proposed to have a unified reporting period of four years for UNCCD reporting. The caveat would be that narrative information submitted through the reports would feed interactive dialogues and may be updated when required for the session and for interactive dialogues which would also include input and feedback from IGOs, United Nations agencies and the GEF.

III. Recommendations

11. The COP at its thirteenth session may wish to:

(a) Consider and adopt the updated terms of reference as annexed to this document;

(b) Request the Bureau of the CRIC to select themes and/or topics on the basis of qualitative information provided by Parties as part of the official UNCCD reporting;

(c) Also request the Bureau of the CRIC, with the assistance of the secretariat and the GM, to arrange for interactive sessions of the CRIC to showcase experience in implementation, including the support provided by IGOs, United Nations agencies, the GEF and others;

(d) Further request the secretariat to make arrangements for the forthcoming reporting and review process in line with the updated terms of reference and under the guidance of the CRIC Bureau.

Annex

Updated terms of reference of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

I. Mandate and functions

1. Under the authority and guidance of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and as an integral part of the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS), the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) shall assist the COP in the review of the implementation of the Convention and shall facilitate the exchange of information on measures adopted by the Parties pursuant to article 26 of the Convention.
2. In particular, the CRIC shall perform the following functions:
 - (a) Undertake an assessment of the implementation of the Convention and the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework (hereinafter referred to as “assessment of implementation”) through the review of information provided by Parties;
 - (b) Undertake a performance review of the Convention’s institutions and subsidiary bodies (hereinafter referred to as “performance review”), following a results-based management approach (RBM) and on the basis of the report on the two-year costed work programme.
3. As part of the functions specified in paragraph two above and consistent with the RBM approach, the CRIC shall, as appropriate:
 - (a) Consider information on the mobilization and use of financial resources and other support with a view to enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency to help achieve the objectives of the Convention, including information from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Global Mechanism (GM);
 - (b) Recommend methods that improve the communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the COP;
 - (c) Also recommend further steps in the implementation of the Convention.
4. The CRIC shall report regularly to the COP on all aspects of its work, particularly through:
 - (a) A final report on sessions held between ordinary sessions of the COP, containing its recommendations on further steps to be taken to facilitate effective implementation of the convention;
 - (b) Draft decisions prepared at sessions held in conjunction with ordinary sessions of the COP, where necessary, for consideration and adoption by the COP. These decisions shall contain substantive elements to facilitate effective implementation of the Convention, showing targets and assigned responsibilities and the expected financial implications of their implementation, as necessary.

II. Composition

5. The CRIC shall be composed of all Parties to the Convention.

6. Any other body or agency, whether national or international, governmental or non-governmental, wishing to be represented as an observer at a session of the CRIC may be admitted, unless one-third of the Parties present at the session object.

7. The CRIC shall elect its own four Vice-Chairpersons, of whom one shall act as Rapporteur. These four Vice-Chairpersons shall constitute the CRIC Bureau alongside the Chairperson, elected by the COP in accordance with rule 31 of the rules of procedure. The Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons shall be elected with due regard to the need to ensure equitable geographical distribution and adequate representation of affected country Parties, particularly those in Africa, while not neglecting affected country parties in other regions. They shall not serve for more than two consecutive terms. The Chairperson of the CRIC shall be a member of the Bureau of the COP.

8. The Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons of the CRIC shall be elected at the final meeting of the session of the CRIC held in conjunction with the sessions of the COP, and shall assume their office immediately.

III. Stakeholder under review

9. Information provided by the following reporting entities shall be reviewed as part of the work programme of the CRIC:

(a) Assessment of implementation: Parties;

(b) Performance review: the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies (the secretariat, the GM, the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the CRIC).

10. Information relating to civil society, including the private sector, may be supplied by Parties through their reports or obtained through independent studies, as appropriate. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), United Nations agencies and the GEF will be invited to provide implementation findings and experience directly to the sessions of the CRIC based on topics identified by the CRIC and its Bureau.

IV. Scope of the review process

11. Sessions of the CRIC shall be held during each of the ordinary sessions of the COP and once in-between.

12. In sessions held between ordinary sessions of the COP, the CRIC shall focus its work on the review of the implementation of the Convention by Parties through, inter alia:

(a) Undertaking an implementation assessment using progress indicators every four years;

(b) Undertaking an implementation assessment using qualitative information emerging from the implementation framework every two years;

(c) Reviewing financial flows for the implementation of the Convention every two years;

with a view to submitting the report referred to in paragraph 4 (a) above to the COP.

13. The review of implementation at sessions held between ordinary sessions of the COP shall be based on reports by the reporting entities under paragraph 9 (a) above, submitted at the same time. In order to review inputs from the private sector, independent studies will be produced for an impact review, subject to available resources.

14. Participation of civil society organizations in the discussions of all public sessions held between ordinary sessions of the COP shall be facilitated.

15. At sessions held in conjunction with ordinary sessions of the COP, the CRIC shall assist the COP in:

(a) Reviewing the multi-year workplans of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies;

(b) Also reviewing its report at sessions held between ordinary sessions of the COP on the implementation assessment (progress indicators and/or information from narrative reporting) provided by Parties;

(c) Carrying out a performance review of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies using an RBM approach;

(d) Reviewing the collaboration with the GEF at the time of the COP's choosing;

(e) Providing advice on issues as requested by the CST;

with a view to developing draft decisions, where necessary, as referred to in paragraph 4 (b) above.

V. Frequency of sessions

16. Sessions held between ordinary sessions of the COP shall be held every two years.

17. Sessions held between ordinary sessions of the COP shall last no longer than one week (five working days).

18. Extraordinary sessions of the CRIC shall be held at such times as may be decided by the COP.

VI. Organization of work

19. Sessions of the CRIC shall be public, unless decided otherwise by the CRIC.

20. The CRIC shall adopt its agenda and organization of work at the beginning of each session.

21. The provisional agenda of the sessions of the CRIC shall be prepared by the Executive Secretary, in consultation with the Bureau of the CRIC.

VII. Nature of the review and methodology

22. The review shall be open, transparent, inclusive, flexible and facilitative, as well as effective in terms of the use of financial, technological and human resources, with due regard to geographic regions and subregions. It shall constitute an experience-sharing and lesson-learning exercise in an interactive format, to identify successes, obstacles and difficulties with a view to improving the implementation the Convention and the strategic framework.

VIII. Transparency of work

23. All the reports and the results of the work of the CRIC shall be in the public domain.