



United Nations

ICCD/CRIC(17)/8



Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.: General
19 November 2018

Original: English

Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

Seventeenth session

Georgetown, Guyana, 28–30 January 2019

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

The reporting and review process of the UNCCD

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

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

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document was prepared in response to decisions 13/COP.13, 15/COP.13 and 16/COP.13, which requested the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to improve and adapt the reporting modalities and procedures in consultation with the Global Mechanism in light of the adoption of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. It introduces all components of the 2017–2018 UNCCD reporting process, highlighting the challenges experienced and proposing improvements for future reporting processes.

This document also discusses other tools and approaches used during the reporting process to improve the quality of submitted reports. While documents ICCD/CRIC(17)/2 to ICCD/CRIC(17)/6 present the preliminary analysis of the information received, this document focuses on opportunities and the challenges faced during the reporting process, including capacity-building activities and technical backstopping provided to Parties.

GE.18-19696(E)



* 1 8 1 9 6 9 6 *

Please recycle



Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1–5	3
II. The 2017–2018 reporting process	6–9	3
III. Substantive aspects of the reporting	10–24	4
A. Reporting on strategic objectives	10–19	4
B. Reporting on the implementation framework	20–24	7
IV. Capacity-building for reporting	25–43	8
A. Regional workshops	26–29	9
B. Reporting tools	30–40	9
C. Helpdesk and technical backstopping	41–43	11
V. Reporting timeline and the quality assurance process	44–50	11
A. Quality assurance for reports	44–46	11
B. Timeframe for future reporting	47–50	12
VI. Conclusions and recommendations	51–52	13

I. Introduction

1. At the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13), Parties adopted a new strategic framework for implementing the Convention.¹ In light of this decision, which necessitated an overhaul of reporting modalities and procedures, decision 15/COP.13 also requested the secretariat to consider further simplifying the reporting templates and other reporting tools for future reporting processes, including making the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS) more user-friendly.

2. The same decision requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM), in coordination with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to harmonize their respective support at global, regional and national level (through the Global Support Programme (GSP II)² and the umbrella projects³) in order to provide targeted and timely capacity-building support for reporting.

3. After COP 13, the secretariat and the GM finalized the work on the reporting tools, ensuring compliance with the newly adopted 2018–2030 Strategic Framework which requires Parties to report on five strategic objectives and an implementation framework. In addition, other activities were initiated in October 2017 aimed at making the newly adapted reporting tools available through the PRAIS portal and facilitating capacity-building activities in a timely manner.

4. In this context, it is important to note that the 2017–2018 reporting process constitutes the first attempt by Parties to report on land-based indicators⁴ under the first strategic objective, using a standardized methodology and standardized data. Cognizant of the fact that many Parties face difficulties in collecting and compiling data using a standardized methodology, Parties requested the secretariat to make default data available for those indicators at COP 11.⁵ This was achieved in cooperation with the European Space Agency, the International Soil Reference and Information Centre and the Joint Research Centre, which ensured the availability of default data for all Parties by January 2018.

5. This document is meant to provide a preliminary insight into the opportunities and challenges faced by Parties during the 2017–2018 reporting process which was launched immediately after COP 13 and officially concluded on 31 August 2018. The dedicated agenda item during the seventeenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 17) will provide more time for Parties to submit further comments, proposals and opinions on how reporting modalities and procedures can be improved for future reporting.

II. The 2017–2018 reporting process

6. In addition to the UNCCD reporting templates, default data and the overhauled PRAIS portal, convention institutions also uploaded e-learning reporting modules, an

¹ Decision 7/COP.13.

² The Global Support Programme was financially supported by the Global Environment Facility and implemented through the United Nations Environment Programme.

³ Umbrella projects provide financial assistance to Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification at national level by enabling funding made available by the Global Environment Facility. Umbrella projects for reporting by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification are implemented and managed by the United Nations Environment Programme.

⁴ Trends in land cover, trends in land productivity and trends in carbon stock above and below the ground.

⁵ Decision 22/COP.11.

updated manual and a glossary to the website in the first quarter of 2018. The reporting templates, manual and glossary were produced and posted on the PRAIS portal in the six languages of the United Nations. An improved version of the portal had already been used by Parties during the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP). Thus, more than 100 Parties had already had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the portal and some of the default data. However, taking the specific requirements for UNCCD reporting into consideration, the platform was further improved in order to reflect all the newly introduced requirements for UNCCD reporting.

7. Finally, the secretariat provided online support from November 2017 onwards to respond to queries received by Parties and facilitate the reporting process. This additional support proved very effective.

8. The deadline for the final submission of reports was extended until the end of August, as requested by many Parties. In total, 141 reports were submitted, of which 138 provided data suitable for the preliminary analyses. Most of the national reports submitted by the deadline underwent quality assurance arranged by the convention institutions in order to ensure accuracy, particularly in terms of the information relating to land-based indicators where default data was provided.

9. The intersessional session of the CRIC in 2019 will be the first session to discuss the outcomes and best practices derived from the 2017–2018 reporting process. It is hoped that this review will also provide proposals and suggestions from Parties in order to further improve or establish national mechanisms to report on progress indicators and improve linkages at national level, ensuring reporting synergies in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15.3.1 indicator for future reporting processes.

III. Substantive aspects of the reporting

A. Reporting on strategic objectives

1. Strategic objectives 1 to 4

10. Indicators used for reporting on progress towards strategic objective 1 (SO1) to 4 of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework are those identified by Parties in decision 22/COP.11.⁶

11. In line with decision 22/COP.11, the secretariat provided country Parties with national estimates of each respective metric for three progress indicators, based on available data sources. Parties were urged to subsequently verify or replace these national estimates using data sourced or computed nationally or locally. More specifically, and based on the same decision, default data was provided for the indicators used to measure progress towards SO1, for which standardized global datasets are available with the option to disaggregate to sub-national level. The sources of default data had been published in the scientific literature and were perceived as the best available at the global level for each indicator at the time of the selection.⁷ The provision of default data was aimed at facilitating national reporting and meeting a perceived data capacity gap. In parallel, efforts were made to facilitate the use of national data to ensure full country ownership of the process.

12. For the other SOs and associated indicators/metrics, the secretariat did not provide country Parties with national estimates through the PRAIS portal, but indicated suitable

⁶ For ease of reference, see footnote three for the list of land-based indicators.

⁷ For more information on the data sources for strategic objective 1, see document ICCD/CRIC(17)/2.

data sources in the UNCCD reporting manual⁸ for use by countries in the absence of or to complement national data.⁹

13. In addition to providing default data for reporting on SO1, the secretariat promoted the development and use by country Parties of the Trends.Earth toolbox which was produced by Conservation International as part of the “Enabling the use of global data sources to assess and monitor land degradation at multiple scales” project, funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).¹⁰ Trends.Earth supports the calculation and analysis of the three land-based indicators used for reporting on SO1 and for estimating SDG indicator 15.3.1 (i.e. the proportion of land degraded over the total land area), in compliance with the UNCCD and SDG reporting requirements. The toolbox gives users the opportunity to substitute default datasets with other national datasets, thereby meeting the request to steadily enhance country ownership of the reporting process.

14. Based on the preliminary analysis of information submitted by country Parties on SO1 to SO4 as well as the feedback received by country Parties during the regional capacity-building workshops and via the helpdesk, the following preliminary conclusions can be drawn:

(a) Earth observation default data can provide timely, complete and relatively accurate statistics comparable over time and across countries at low or no cost;

(b) The provision of default data contributed to achieving a higher reporting rate for SO1 – especially for land cover and land productivity – compared to the results obtained as part of the 2012–2013 reporting and review process. In 2017–2018, 134 (around 97 per cent of reporting countries) and 127 (around 92 per cent of reporting countries) country Parties reported on land cover and land productivity respectively, versus 49 (around 69 per cent of reporting countries) and 12 (around 17 per cent of reporting countries) for the same indicators in 2012–2013;

(c) The provision of default data also contributed to achieving a higher reporting rate for SO1 compared to SO2, SO3 and SO4. In total, 126 and 121 countries respectively reported on the trends in communities living below the relative poverty line and/or income inequality in affected areas, and on trends in access to safe drinking water in affected areas (i.e. SO 2). Ninety-five countries reported on indicators for SO3, and 95 countries on trends in abundance and the distribution of selected species (i.e. SO4);

(d) The provision of default data, coupled with the provision of clear reporting guidelines and a more structured reporting template, led to greater harmonization of reported data and information compared to the 2012–2013 reporting process. For instance, in 2012–2013, around 320 unique land cover classes were reported by 49 countries with different levels of detail (from two or three land cover classes to more than 40 different classes for a single country) and coverage. Based on this experience, a default simplified classification system consisting of six broad land cover classes was used for the 2017–2018 reporting process by all country Parties;

(e) The countries prepared to use national data were able and encouraged to do so, ideally using common underlying methodologies. While efforts were made to pursue a harmonized process, divergent estimates were possible due to the differences in the resolution of input datasets and deviations from the established indicator methodologies;

⁸ <https://prais.unccd.int/sites/default/files/helper_documents/2-Manual_EN_1.pdf>.

⁹ For more information on the data sources for strategic objectives 1 to 3, see documents ICCD/CRIC(17)/4, ICCD/CRIC(17)/5 and ICCD/CRIC(17)/6.

¹⁰ <<http://trends.earth/docs/en/>>.

(f) It is also important to note that in the established indicator derivation methodology, country Parties had the option of including additional indicators for the calculation of the proportion of degraded land, as appropriate to national or local circumstances. Any indicators that may have been added would also influence the final estimates;

(g) The approach taken to facilitate the use of national data was based on the development of Trends.Earth. By automating the processing needed to use nationally produced data in the estimation of SDG indicator 15.3.1 in as close a way as possible to the way in which the default data was generated, Trends.Earth helped harmonize methods and enhanced the comparability of results across country Parties, while empowering them to evaluate all data options and use the most appropriate one based on specific national circumstances. Enabling country Parties to produce their own estimates helped to improve country ownership and strengthen country capacities for data production and use;

(h) A higher spatial resolution will generally improve accuracy and is considered a necessity for countries such as Small Island Developing States and countries with mountainous regions and highly fragmented landscapes. It is important that recently released higher resolution global datasets, at 10–30 m, are provided for all three land-based indicators used for reporting on SO1 and for estimating SDG indicator 15.3.1. To ensure comparability over time, these new datasets will need to be combined with the moderate resolution (300 m–1 km) Earth Observation data used as default data for the 2017–2018 reporting process;

(i) Advances in science and technology and data availability may require periodic recalculations of previously submitted estimates (i.e. the baseline estimates reported in 2017–2018 as well as all subsequent years of the time series up to the year for which the recalculations are made). While recalculations may require refinements in terms of target setting, they are necessary to ensure comparability with future monitoring and reporting data. It is good practice to report recalculations with explanatory information and justifications and with a discussion on the impact of the recalculations on national targets.¹¹

2. Strategic objective 5

15. Parties to the UNCCD are required to report on the mobilization of financial and non-financial resources to support the implementation of Convention. The GM simplified the reporting template for SO5 in collaboration with the secretariat and in accordance with decision 15/COP.13, and prefilled the template with default data, where applicable.

16. Progress indicator SO5-1 was prepopulated with default data on desertification-related finance for Parties that are members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Parties were requested to review and amend pre-filled data with national data, if required.

17. Progress indicator SO5-2 provided an overview of the trends observed in the expenditure of domestic public resources between 2012–2016 for the activities relevant to the implementation of the Convention.

18. Progress indicator SO5-3 offered trends in the number of co-financing partners relevant to the implementation of the UNCCD.

¹¹ See the “Guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part I: UNFCCC reporting guidelines on annual greenhouse gas inventories”, contained in Annex I of decision 24/CP.19 by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, available at: <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2013/cop19/eng/10a03.pdf#page=2>.

19. Progress indicator SO5-4 provided an insight into the investments mobilized from innovative sources of finance, including the private sector. The reporting manual provides explanatory notes on the definition of innovative sources of finance

B. Reporting on the implementation framework

20. While negotiating the new 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, members of the Intergovernmental Working Group placed considerable importance on the exchange of experience and information on actual implementation efforts in national reports and sessions of the CRIC. A new idea surfaced to replace quantitative reporting on performance indicators under the old strategy with the option to report on three major issues identified by the Intergovernmental Working Group in free text boxes with little guidance on national experiences. The main topics included in the new 2018–2030 Strategic Framework are: (a) the mobilization of financial and non-financial resources; (b) policy and planning; and (c) action on the ground. Each topic was further specified and split into sub-topics and the convention institutions attempted to simplify qualitative reporting for some of those sub-topics by proposing classifications for narratives that may be reported under those sub-topics.

21. Reporting under the implementation framework is optional by default as Parties may not have interesting experiences to share for all major topics and sub-topics. That said, a fair number of Parties decided to submit information under the implementation framework as shown in the table below. The highest percentage was reached for submissions under the “action on the ground” category, particularly for issues relating to sustainable land management practices, restoration and rehabilitation efforts (79.29 per cent and 77.86 per cent respectively).

22. However, the table below also highlights that information submitted under the implementation framework often did not match either the topic or sub-topic indicated and some Parties stated that they wished to report on a given topic but did not follow through by actually detailing the experience in the available free text box.

23. Through the helpdesk services and the Bureau of the CRIC, the convention institutions were advised that reporting under the implementation framework was not seen as user-friendly, mainly because the free text boxes did not expand and allow the author to read his/her full submission. Confusion may have been also caused due to the lack of simple instructions that could have been inserted in the template itself rather than the reporting manual.

24. Considering that Parties view the exchange of implementation experience as important, the template must be adjusted to make it easier for Parties to report on their successful stories with a view to sharing them. It might also be necessary to consider additional opportunities on how to use submitted information other than drawing on selected stories to guide interactive exchanges during the meetings of the CRIC.

Table
Reporting under the implementation framework during the 2017–2018 reporting process

Section	Experience	Parties reported YES		Parties reported NO		Parties that did not report		Relevant narratives *	Non-relevant narratives
		YES	In %	NO	In %	in %	in %		
1	Financial and non-financial resources	82	58.57	41	29.29	17	12.14	25%	75%
2	Increasing mobilization of resources								
3	Using land degradation neutrality as a framework to increase investment	55	39.29	66	47.14	19	13.57	50%	50%
4	Improving existing and/or innovative financial processes and institutions	76	54.29	46	32.86	18	12.86	50%	50%
5	Policy and planning	86	61.43	35	25.00	19	13.57	55%	45%
6	Action programmes	107	76.43	17	12.14	16	11.43	50%	50%
7	Establishing policies	95	67.86	28	20.00	17	12.14	70%	30%
8	Synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements	91	65.00	32	22.86	17	12.14	60%	40%
9	Mainstreaming desertification, land degradation and drought	97	69.29	28	20.00	15	10.71	40%	60%
10	National policies on drought	111	79.29	17	12.14	12	8.57	40%	60%
11	Action on the ground	109	77.86	18	12.86	13	9.29	50%	50%
12	Sustainable Land Management practices	87	62.14	37	26.43	16	11.43	25%	75%
13	Restoration and rehabilitation	88	62.86	36	25.71	16	11.43	50%	50%
	Drought risk management and early warning systems	69	49.29	49	35.00	22	15.71	50%	50%
	Promoting alternative livelihoods								
	Establishing knowledge sharing systems								
Average answers			63%		25%		12%		

* Relevant narratives of information received from Parties that reported yes

IV. Capacity-building for reporting

25. Capacity-building for reporting is one of the core functions of the UNCCD secretariat. As per decision 15/COP.13, the secretariat and the GM, in coordination with the

GEF and UNEP, designed a capacity-building programme for the 2017–2018 reporting process with a focus on providing training to National Focal Points (NFPs) and/or their designated reporting officers, mainly technical officers, on the reporting requirements, particularly the land-based indicators through which the implementation of the Convention will be monitored.

A. Regional workshops

26. Five regional capacity-building workshops were convened for Parties belonging to regional implementation annexes. This series of workshops was preceded by a Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop held at the UNCCD headquarters in Bonn, encompassing delivery teams from both convention institutions and consultants supporting the teams. Preparations for the five regional workshops and improvements to the training materials were discussed during this workshop in addition to ensuring that delivery teams were as well prepared as possible for the potential challenges ahead.

27. The regional capacity-building workshops were organized in collaboration with host governments and/or partner organizations for all implementation Annexes. Separate workshops were conducted for Annex I (Africa), Annex II (Asia) and Annex III (Latin America and the Caribbean). Parties from Annex IV (Northern Mediterranean) and Annex V (Central and Eastern Europe), as well as some Parties from Annex II (Central Asia), were grouped together for one workshop held in Antalya, Turkey. A separate regional capacity-building workshop for Arabic-speaking countries from Annex I and Annex II was organized in Cairo, Egypt in collaboration with regional organizations.

28. Two representatives from each eligible Party were funded. Given the introduction and training on land-based indicators and the reporting on the SDG indicator 15.3.1, it was also recommended that participants from National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and Geographic Information System (GIS) experts be included in the nominations made by the Parties.

29. Overall, 316 participants belonging to 140 Parties attended the regional capacity-building workshops, including 21 NSO representatives and 57 GIS experts. In spite of the emphasis placed on this particular aspect by the UNCCD, it was observed that the number of participants representing NSOs or with a solid GIS background remained relatively low. The online surveys conducted before the workshops also revealed the same results. In some cases, the NFPs were also represented by a participant from their national team.

B. Reporting tools

1. PRAIS platform

30. An updated version of the PRAIS portal was made available to the Parties having committed to setting voluntary LDN targets after COP 12 and which participated in the TSP. It was further adjusted to fit the requirements of the UNCCD reporting process which resulted in numerous changes. The principal, most apparent change was that Parties were able to access a country-specific space featuring a prefilled-template available in six United Nations languages. Depending on country-specific circumstances, the prefilled data in the template was derived from:

(a) The Update Note, for countries that had participated in the LDN TSP and submitted the note;

(b) The LDN report for countries that had participated in the LDN pilot project and submitted their report (pilot countries);

(c) The default data – original release (2000–2010), for countries that had participated in the LDN TSP and did not submit the Status Update Note;

(d) The default data – new release (2000–2015), for countries that had not participated in the LDN TSP.

31. On the same country-specific page, Parties were also able to access the new release (2000–2015) of the default data to provide interested Parties with easy access. Another separate page was created for other reporting tools, including the updates to the manual, the glossary and other supporting documentation serving as a reference library.

32. NFPs and reporting officers were able to access the country-space page on the PRAIS. This space was only accessible by the individual reporting officer having received login information for the site. However, all users were given access to tools and general information, including the final reports submitted. A separate page was created for the submitted UNCCD national reports which also included a feature allowing Parties to upload other additional supporting documents containing information that may not otherwise be included in the report itself.

2. Templates, manual and glossary

33. Following the 2013–2014 reporting and review process, reporting templates were developed and made available for offline use to prevent connectivity issues for Parties and allow them to distribute the template at national level and submit the report once approved.

34. The templates include drop-down lists, prefilled fields and empty spaces allowing Parties to insert narratives where needed. Parties faced some technical challenges during the reporting process which the secretariat either attempted to fix immediately or took note of in order to improve the technical aspects of reporting for the next round of reporting.

3. Trends.Earth

35. As mentioned in paragraph 13 above, a new toolbox was introduced for this reporting process, recognizing the importance of country Parties enhancing their ownership of the reporting process and their need for efficient tools to enable them to do so. Produced by Conservation International, Trends.Earth operates as a free plugin for the open source geographic information system QGIS 2.18.x and supports the calculation of SDG indicator 15.3.1. Using satellite imagery and global data, Trends.Earth allows users to identify potential land degradation hotspots as well as bright spots for improvement.

36. Trends.Earth offers data and tools to use in the land management decision-making process. The platform uses cloud computing to convert massive satellite images into usable information, assessing land trends through the three land-based indicators used for reporting on SO1 and for estimating SDG indicator 15.3.1. It allows users to access the best available open datasets and to combine this data with national-level data and locally available information when available.

37. Country Parties greatly appreciated the introduction of this toolbox and the hands-on exercises they were trained to do, often using their national data. Guidelines and handouts of this toolbox were shared in three UN languages prior to and during the workshops.

4. E-learning tools

38. As mentioned in paragraph 26, a ToT was held prior to launching the series of capacity-building workshops in March 2018. Following the ToT, videos on every subject related to the 2017–2018 reporting process were produced and posted in order to allow country Parties, specifically reporting officers, to use them as reference material, when needed.

39. Only available in English, these videos have become an additional asset and have been watched by a huge number of users since they were posted online. By mid-October 2018, the 11 videos had been viewed more than 2750 times. Given that regional workshops are expensive and a one-off event in a process spanning several months, capacity-building activities – e.g. webinars and e-learning materials that remain a reference on the web – should factor more predominantly in future UNCCD reporting activities to create a long-term library for users.

40. Further into the reporting process, an e-course was developed and posted on the UNCCD website, including a collection of specialized material to support the 2017–2018 reporting process. The e-course can be downloaded and contains numerous tips and training videos. The course is also available to users not directly involved in the national reporting process in order to increase knowledge among interested individuals, organizations and other institutions on issues relating to the 2017–2018 UNCCD reporting process.

C. Helpdesk and technical backstopping

41. To support this reporting process, the secretariat has implemented a helpdesk feature that assisted country Parties in communicating their requests and inquiries about the reporting process to the secretariat, as per the last reporting process. One hundred and thirty-seven tickets were registered on the helpdesk by country Parties from all annexes.

42. Despite the secretariat's promotion of this helpdesk feature, many country Parties instead opted to send their inquiries via email, which may also be explained by helpdesk connectivity challenges in their countries. The secretariat engaged in approximately 1000 email exchanges with Parties during the reporting process, which highlights the need for a continuous exchange with Parties even after regional workshops have been convened.

43. Data experts, regional consultants and almost ten staff members from the convention institutions were involved in technically backstopping Parties during the 2017–2018 reporting process. Experience has shown that without a dedicated team going above and beyond the existing staff available from the convention institutions, an appropriate and timely response to queries from Parties cannot be provided.

V. Reporting timeline and the quality assurance process

A. Quality assurance for reports

44. Four regional consultants coordinated by the Regional Coordination Units were selected to assist the secretariat in both technical backstopping and the quality assurance process for submitted reports.

45. National reports submitted before and by the reporting deadline were screened and checked by the regional consultants in line with a procedure established to ensure the coherence and completeness of national reports. Despite these efforts, not all national reports were reviewed on time because of: (i) the late submission of national reports; (ii) the time needed for the review of a single national report; and (iii) the requirement to proceed with a preliminary analysis for the preparation of official documentation.

46. Forty-one country Parties were able to submit an improved national report by the reporting deadline, upon receiving the assessment of their initially submitted report from their relevant Regional Coordination Units. Country Parties were encouraged to continue submitting the improved reports after the reporting deadline, and many have done so.

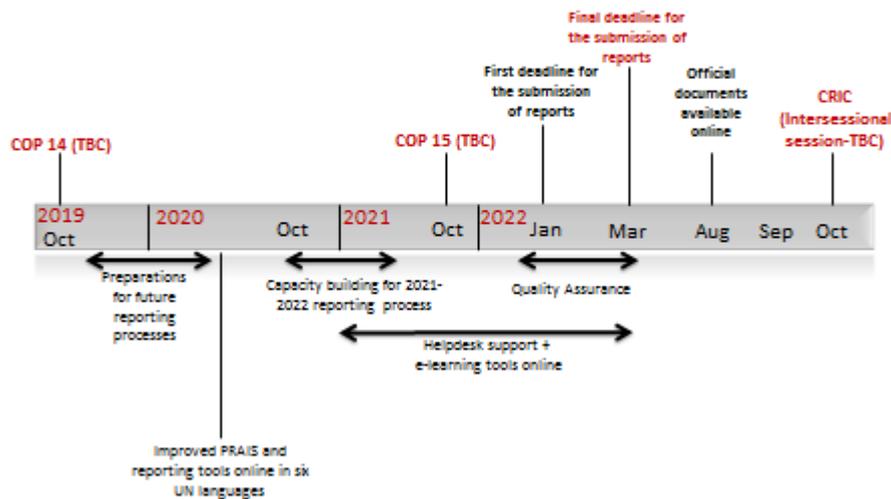
B. Timeframe for future reporting

47. Given that a credible and robust analysis, particularly one conducted on progress indicators, is needed for the CRIC to draw targeted recommendations, the future timing of the reporting activities will need to be carefully considered. To date, amendments to the reporting process have only been made after Parties have adopted relevant decisions relative to the communication of information at the sessions of the COP. As such, preparation for the upcoming reporting process – which was conducted every two years – has always been hasty. At COP 13, Parties decided on a four-year reporting cycle which will ease the perceived difficulties and grant convention institutions more time to prepare reporting tools and capacity-building activities and provide sufficient time for Parties to compile data and submit their report.

48. In light of the above, the secretariat will propose a timeline for the next reporting process which meets the requirements of the reporting process and the needs addressed by Parties (see figure).

Figure

Proposed timeline for future reporting



Notes: CRIC: Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention; COP: Conference of the Parties.

49. As shown in the graph, the secretariat suggests two separate deadlines for reporting, the first of which deals with quality assurance. Parties would have almost eight weeks to review and produce their final report, based on the comments received from the convention institutions. The second deadline is the final one. The version of the national report

submitted by the second deadline will be considered the official submission by the Party and made public.

50. As for future capacity-building activities, work relating to reporting tools and templates will have been concluded by 2020, and capacity-building activities and the actual reporting by Parties will span almost two years with a report submission deadline tentatively set for March 2022. While the graph does not specify activities ensuring synergies with the GEF-funded umbrella projects aimed at providing financial assistance for reporting at national level, it is important to synchronize those efforts with the possible global activities for building capacities on reporting. In some cases, the delay in the disbursement of umbrella project funds this year made it substantially more difficult for Parties to undertake activities at national level and jeopardized their ability to submit their national reports on time.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

51. Parties at CRIC 17 may wish to consider the proposals contained in this document with a view to initiating early consultations on draft decisions to be forwarded to COP 14.

52. Parties may wish to recommend that:

For reporting under SO1–4

(a) The secretariat continue providing country Parties with national estimates of each respective metric of the progress indicators through the PRAIS portal, based on the best available data sources, and extend this data provision to SO2–4;

(b) Conservation International continue enhancing Trends.Earth, not only for its usefulness in UNCCD and SDG reporting related to SDG indicator 15.3.1, but also as a fully integrated framework that may enable users to evaluate and prioritize the implementation of activities to avoid, reduce, and reverse land degradation and achieve LDN targets;

(c) The Group on Earth Observations (GEO), as part of its GEO LDN initiative, encourage the larger Earth Observations community to:

- (i) provide expertise, tools and training to build national capacities for the use of Earth Observation in LDN planning, implementation and monitoring;
- (ii) support the development of minimum data quality standards and specifications (e.g. resolution, time series, classification systems) for the underlying methodology, data, algorithms, and tools needed for estimating SDG indicator 15.3.1 and its sub-indicators in order to facilitate harmonization and standardization;
- (iii) consider the need to make higher resolution global datasets accessible for all three land-based indicators used for estimating SDG indicator 15.3.1, based on the recently released time series of high-resolution (10–30 m) satellite imagery;

(d) The secretariat, in collaboration with the GEO and as part of the GEO LDN Initiative, support the refinement of the Good Practice Guidance for SDG indicator 15.3.1, based on the advances resulting from work on minimum data quality standards and specifications. This includes the development of guidelines for the

potential recalculation of previously submitted indicator estimates in order to capitalize on scientific and technical advances in the quality of underlying data sets and indicator derivation methodologies in a way that would ensure comparability between baselines and future monitoring data;

For reporting under SO5

(e) The GM explore partnerships with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), national and international statistical offices and other data collection agencies in order to continue developing a more comprehensive and systemic approach to tracking financial flows for the implementation of the Convention, and also provide more accurate default data to country parties;

(f) Given the increasing funding assistance from the non-DAC OECD member countries, the GM work closely with non-DAC OECD countries, national and international institutions and data collection agencies to develop approaches consistent with Rio markers and other methodologies in order to systematically identify financing related to UNCCD implementation;

(g) The GM explore a quantitative approach to the collection of data from countries on the financing of UNCCD implementation and seek ways to leverage existing national processes, such as national expenditure reviews or other national budget analyses;

(h) The GM continue periodically updating a global analysis of financial flows for UNCCD implementation;

For reporting under the implementation framework

(i) Convention institutions address technical issues reported under the implementation framework and provide Parties with a revised version of the relevant section of the reporting template through the Bureau of the CRIC;

(j) Convention institutions make relevant narratives under the three major topics available, including through the Knowledge Hub of the UNCCD and assess ways and means of further disseminating submitted information with the Bureau of the CRIC;

For regional workshops

(k) Parties may wish to recommend that closer relationships should be sought with experts from NSOs and enhance coordination by also involving those experts in future capacity-building initiatives undertaken by the UNCCD in order to create reporting synergies between UNCCD and SDG reporting;

For reporting tools

(l) The secretariat further improve the reporting tools and portal, mainly by simplifying reporting templates, and make these tools available at an adequate time prior to the next reporting process;

(m) E-learning opportunities should feature strongly in future capacity-building activities in order to maintain momentum for reporting officers in terms of access to reference libraries and online tuition while reporting;

For the reporting timeline and quality assurance process

(n) A dedicated timeframe is needed to ensure that all reports go through the quality assurance process and Parties have sufficient time to upload amended

versions of their reports. It is recommended that a two-month period be envisaged, during which national reports can be checked against a protocol for future reporting;

(o) That a dedicated team be at the disposal of the convention institutions, including consultants able to cope with the increased workload with a view to ensuring a timely deliverance of checked reports to Parties for their consideration;
