

Decision 8/COP.7**Improving the procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties**

The Conference of the Parties,

Recalling article 22, paragraph 2 (a), (b), (c) and (d), as well as article 26 of the Convention,

Recalling also its decisions 11/COP.1, 5/COP.2, 10/COP.4, 1/COP.5, 3/COP.5, 10/COP.5, 1/COP.6 and 4/COP.6,

Noting with appreciation the information provided by African and developed country Parties, as well as by the organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations in their reports submitted to COP 7 through CRIC 3,

Aware that the third cycle of communication of information is to be completed at COP 8,

Acknowledging the need to streamline the reporting process under the Convention in such a manner that it provides all stakeholders, and in particular decision-makers, with adequate and qualitative factual information to assess progress and identify targets in attaining the objectives of the Convention in a long-term perspective,

Recognizing the need to provide more substantive information on lessons learned regarding achievements and constraints, on best practices and the most effective options, as well as on assessment of the impact of approaches and actions taken and results achieved, in the reports to be submitted by Parties and observers,

Recalling the need to strengthen the collection and accessibility of reliable, standardized qualitative data and information, when appropriate, on the status of land degradation and combating desertification, as well as on actions taken in implementing the Convention, in the reports to be submitted by country Parties,

Recognizing further the need for comparable, compatible and harmonized data and information on support provided for the implementation of the Convention in the reports to be submitted by developed country Parties and by the organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations,

1. *Decides* to establish an ad hoc working group to improve the procedures for communication of information, particularly at the national level, as well as the quality and format of reports on the implementation of the Convention;
2. *Decides also* that the ad hoc working group shall convene Parties' representatives appointed with due attention to equitable geographical representation. No more than five representatives, who should be experienced in reporting, shall be nominated per region. The

Chairpersons of the CRIC and the CST, as well as a representative of the GM, shall provide advice to the ad hoc working group;

3. *Further decides* that the ad hoc working group shall work primarily by electronic and documentary means and that members should also take advantage of regional preparatory meetings to CRIC 5 and the CRIC 5 session;

4. *Decides furthermore* that following CRIC 5, the ad hoc working group shall continue its work outlined in the annex primarily by electronic/documentary means. A technical meeting of the ad hoc working group shall be convened between CRIC 5 and COP 8, depending on the availability of voluntary contributions, to facilitate progress and prompt completion of its work, including a timely submission of the report of the group to COP 8 through the secretariat;

5. *Requests* the secretariat to facilitate the work of the ad hoc working group;

6. *Welcomes* the formulation and improvement of country profiles in the national reports of affected country Parties as tools to: (a) monitor and assess in a participatory manner the status of land degradation and combating desertification covering both the bio-physical and the socio-economic parameters; (b) ensure comparability of results over the years in areas of specific importance to the Convention; (c) strengthen preparedness and the effectiveness of measures taken to implement the Convention; (d) enhance civil society participation in the implementation of the Convention;

7. *Invites* the CST to advance progress in standardization of systems and data and information for the monitoring and assessment of land degradation and desertification, and to assist in establishing standardized formats for bio-physical and socio-economic indicators to be used in the formulation of country profiles;

8. *Invites* developed country Parties and international organizations to develop and/or support capacity-building activities at national level in addressing agricultural, environmental and natural resource management in order to enhance the Parties' capacity to monitor the processes under the Convention, bridge the information and research gaps, collect relevant statistics data and submit national reports in time, and promote partnerships conducive to participatory assessment processes at all levels;

9. *Also invites* the GEF and other organizations that have sponsored the national reports submitted by the country Parties of the Regional Implementation Annex for Africa to further assist in the completion of the CRIC review cycle by providing timely support for the formulation and submission of national reports of country Parties of other Regional Implementation Annexes, before the fifth session of the CRIC in 2006;

10. *Further decides* that the review of ways and means for improving the procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the COP, will take place at COP 8, and *requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the COP on the measures taken to implement this decision.

*12th plenary meeting
28 October 2005*

Annex

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON IMPROVING THE PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNICATION OF INFORMATION, AS WELL AS THE QUALITY AND FORMAT OF REPORTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Rationale

The CRIC noted that procedures for communication of information have evolved and become increasingly complex since the Convention was adopted. Rationalization and clarification towards the improvement of reporting procedures are therefore a priority for improving reporting on the implementation of the Convention.

Objectives

- Provision of guidance to the COP on simplified, consistent reporting procedures and formats for reports after the completion of the third reporting cycle;
- Clarification and standardization of terms and issues targeted in current reporting with a view to their eventual application in the new formats of reports;
- Facilitation of a more substantive assessment of the implementation of the Convention at national level through the review of reports by Parties and observers.

Expected results

A report shall be prepared for submission to COP 8 on the findings and recommendations for improving the procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the COP. This document is intended to provide information for decision-making at COP 8. Some of the areas to be considered include:

- Proposal of a selection of simplified, consistent and efficient measurable indicators for reporting by affected and developed country Parties;
- Clarification of the role of benchmarks and indicators in reporting;
- Clarification of the role of country profiles in national reporting and possible improvements in their use;
- Proposal on how to integrate the best practices related to the implementation of the identified strategic areas for action (decision 8/COP.4);
- Identification of ways and means for facilitating assessment of the implementation of the Convention at the national level.

Composition

The working group will be composed according to the provisions provided in operative paragraph 2 of this decision.

Organization of work

Phase 1

The group shall start working immediately after COP 7 using the means defined in operative paragraph 3 of this decision, with English as the only working language. The nomination of representatives shall be effected by 1 December 2005.

The group shall take advantage of regional preparatory meetings to CRIC 5, with the assistance of regional coordinators who shall be nominated by their respective regional groups. It shall also, as appropriate, take into account relevant outputs from the working group on the JIU report including the long-term vision and strategic plan for the UNCCD and relevant work of CST.

The group members shall submit to the secretariat prior to CRIC 5 documents describing technical issues experienced in the national reporting process, and suggestions for improvement. The secretariat shall compile and categorize these submissions in an official document for consideration at CRIC 5.

CRIC 5 shall consider the aforementioned document under the appropriate agenda item. Adequate time shall be given to this agenda item for exchange of views and open discussion. The ad hoc working group should meet in the margins of CRIC 5 to discuss issues raised at CRIC 5.

Phase 2

Following CRIC 5, the group shall take on board the relevant outcomes of CRIC 5, as presented in the report of the CRIC on its fifth session. It shall continue its work primarily by electronic/documentary means. A technical meeting shall be convened between CRIC 5 and COP 8, depending on the availability of voluntary contributions, with the aim of facilitating progress and prompt completion of the work of the group, including a timely submission of the report of the group to CRIC 6, through the secretariat.

Output

CRIC 6 shall review the report of the CRIC on its fifth session and make further recommendations in the form of draft decision(s) on improved format for national reporting on the implementation of the Convention, for the consideration by COP 8.