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## **Conference of the Parties**

### **Tenth session**

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Item 6 (d) of the provisional agenda

**The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)**

**Review of progress in implementation of the comprehensive communication strategy**

## **Review of progress in implementation of the comprehensive communication strategy**

### **Note by the secretariat**

#### *Summary*

By its decision 4/COP.9, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the Executive Secretary to report on progress in implementation of the comprehensive communication strategy (CCS) at the tenth session of the COP. The CCS was developed as a result of decision 3/COP.8 and to serve as a tool for the effective implementation of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018).

The current document provides information on progress in implementation of the CCS, which has been coordinated mainly by the secretariat. It offers recommendations to the Parties for advancing implementation of the CCS as an integral part of the implementation of The Strategy.

Further information on some of the progress made in implementation is linked to relevant documents: ICCD/COP(10)/CST/9, ICCD/COP(10)/27 and ICCD/CRIC(10)/11.

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## **I. Introduction**

1. At the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 9), the Parties reviewed the comprehensive communication strategy (CCS) which was developed based on decision 3/COP.8. The outcome of the review was formulated as decision 4/COP.9.
2. In its decision 4/COP.9, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the Executive Secretary to report to the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties on progress in implementation of the CCS.
3. The current document provides information on progress in implementation of the CCS, which has been coordinated mainly by the secretariat.

## **II. Background**

4. “Advocacy, awareness-raising and education” form a main pillar of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy). The Strategy aims to guide the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) “to actively influence relevant international, national and local processes and actors in adequately addressing desertification/land degradation and drought-related issues” (operational objective 1).
5. The CCS was developed to serve as a tool for effective implementation of The Strategy, by setting in place the necessary information basis and providing a capability for exchange among stakeholders. Eight target groups are identified as well as core communication objectives and expected results, which are differentiated to reflect the respective roles and added values of each group. Partnerships with various stakeholders are key for the strategic actions.
6. By decision 4/COP.9, Parties requested the secretariat to review the CCS to ensure that it is implemented in conformity with the mandate of the UNCCD, as well as with the priorities of affected country Parties. The revised communication strategy is available on the UNCCD website at <<http://www.unccd.int/convention/docs/css%20rev.pdf>>.
7. By the same decision, the secretariat was requested to continue its role of coordinating implementation of the CCS in relevant forums at the international and regional levels.

## **III. Implementation progress**

8. As emphasized in decision 4/COP.9, implementation of the CCS is one of the priorities of the Convention, as appropriate and in the context of the 2010–2011 programme of work as adopted by the Parties at COP 9. In the context of the 2010–2011 programme of work, the following activities have taken place:

### **A. Printed and electronic materials**

9. As stated in the CCS, the priority for earlier years during the period of The Strategy focuses on raising and increasing awareness of desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) among key target groups, so that the issues are known or better known. Accordingly, a number of awareness-raising materials have been produced. These included the revised UNCCD information kit “Desertification: a visual synthesis”, the quarterly

UNCCD News, two-page thematic factsheet series, WDCD promotional videos, posters, postcards, stickers, leaflets, CD-ROMs and exhibition displays.

## **B. The web portal and clearing house**

10. There was an increase in UNCCD website visits, which have risen from an average of 8,000 per month in 2007 to around 20,000 per month in 2009, and 23,000 per month in 2010, confirming increased use of information provided by the secretariat. In addition, the UNCCD web page in German was launched with the support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit. The process of revamping the website started in early 2010 as part of the knowledge-management and knowledge-brokering systems. The initial needs assessment for defining the structure, design and contents was completed. The launch of the newly-designed website is expected before the end of 2011. Details of development of the knowledge-management system are available in document ICCD/COP(10)/CST/9.

11. The library information service has been strengthened by the launch of “Land Scan” which provides efficient and targeted services to clients. Land Scan is issued on a weekly basis; it compiles information retrieved mostly from online sources. To improve the process of information exchange and communication, the creation of an on-line public access catalogue is envisaged.

## **C. Strategic partnerships**

12. The implementation of the CCS is undertaken with the support of five core partnerships – national focal points (NFPs), the United Nations system, civil society, the media and the private sector. During the reporting period, much cooperation has been received in the communication and awareness raising activities coordinated by the secretariat from these partnerships.

13. As part of the effort to keep Parties informed of UNCCD developments, information dissemination services targeted primarily at NFPs, civil society organizations (CSOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and scientific and technology correspondents have been strengthened. These include the bi-monthly UNCCD News, the bi-weekly UNCCD Alert and the ad-hoc UNCCD Flash for specific occasions. NFPs were strong partners in awareness-raising events such as the World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD). Media interviews and identification of DLDD sites for filming have frequently received advice from NFPs.

14. Many of the partnerships with United Nations system entities have been implemented according to joint work programmes, agreements or taskforces. Through the joint work programme with the Global Mechanism, a thematic fact sheet, two joint press releases, two joint newsletters, two exhibitions and two information products were produced. In addition, under the joint work programme with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and in cooperation with Global Planet, a publication on sustainable land management (SLM) and a film on DLDD were produced. Cooperation with the Rio Convention secretariats has been notably strengthened since last year through the joint organization of the Rio Conventions’ Ecosystems and Climate Change Pavilion. The Ecosystems Pavilion is a coordinated platform which contributes to enhanced awareness-raising, information sharing and outreach within the framework of the Rio Conventions, and to strengthening collaboration among the Rio Conventions. Other partnerships for joint awareness-raising activities included the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization.

15. CSOs have made significant contributions to the implementation of the CCS independently with various stakeholders or in cooperation with the UNCCD secretariat. Major occasions for cooperation included the WCD and United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (UNDDD) global and regional launches (see document ICCD/COP(10)/27). A number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), schools, universities and student associations requested a representative from the UNCCD secretariat at school and extra-curricula events marking these occasions. In this regard, the active engagement of staff members in opportunities to speak publicly on DLDD was encouraged. Activities of civil society organizations with regard to DLDD are described on the UNCCD website, on the page “Desertification: The Battle is On”: <<http://www.unccd.int/publicinfo/partners/menu.php>>

16. To enhance its effectiveness in media outreach, the secretariat explored the potential for establishing a media relations partnership in cooperation with NFPs, United Nations institutions and other key partners having a stake in DLDD/SLM, according to the CCS. As a result, a partnership agreement was concluded with the International Press Service, and cooperative relations initiated with global media outlets including Reuters, France TV5, Deutsche Welle, the *New York Times*, Agence France Presse and the *Guardian/Observer*. The secretariat also strengthened collaboration with the media arms of other IGOs, in particular the Department of Public Information of United Nations Secretariat, the GEF and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

17. The private sector also contributed to raising awareness of DLDD. SLM business representatives were invited at awareness-raising events to share their successful experience. Financial and in-kind contributions to the production of awareness-raising materials were received from, among other contributors, Entico and Young and Rubicam Mexico Office.

#### **D. The mass and alternative media**

18. There has been a significant increase in press materials. The total number of press releases increased from 4 (2007), 17 (2008), 24 (2009) to 81 (2010) and public awareness and media statements from 4 (2007), 13 (2008), 18 (2009) to 10 (2010). As far as possible, press materials were translated into French, Spanish and German for timely distribution. Comprehensive Press Kits were developed for COP 9 and the ninth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation and the second special session of the Committee on Science and Technology. The in-house media database has increased from 650 (2008) to 1,590 (2009). The Awareness Raising, Communication and Education Unit (ARCE) also responded to some media reports by means of letters to editors. In addition, it frequently facilitated media opportunities for the secretariat staff members including the Executive Secretary. ARCE was also involved in the organization of and participation in training sessions for environmental journalists on climate change, within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process. Furthermore, it co-organized a similar journalists’ training session under the auspices of the United Nations University (UNU) on land and water in Cairo, 2009 and convened three press conferences in 2008 and five in 2009. In 2010, ARCE conducted training workshops on climate change and desertification for over 50 journalists during the Global Media Forum, and over 100 journalists at the Cancun Climate Change Conference. These training sessions were part of the training programmes of partner organizations. In 2010, the UNCCD events were covered by global media outlets which included the Inter Press Service, Agence France Presse, EuropaPress, LaPrensa, SciDev, the *Guardian*, the BBC Africa Region, United Nations TV, United Nations Radio, United Nations News, *China Daily* and China Radio News. Two editorials were published in regional newspapers in Argentina and East Africa.

19. Despite these achievements, the potential for media coverage was constrained by three factors. First, the lack of pre-packaged visual materials, specifically visual materials such as television footage, high-quality photographs and audio clips. Second, media-pitching (direct face-to-face lobbying and education of the media) is lacking, although it is a basic requirement of all successful media campaigns. Third, given existing misconceptions about drylands and the technical nature of the core issues of the Convention, the provision of media training is a prerequisite for effective media campaigns.

## **E. Public awareness campaigns and events**

20. Various outreach activities have been implemented to raise awareness of DLDD among policy makers and the general public. Targeted events included WDCD and the Land Day events held on 8 June 2010, 23 October 2010 and 11 June 2011; there has also been active participation in external events such as the Global Media Forum, the Bonn Symposium, the Bonn International Model United Nations Conference, and United Nations Day in Bonn, Germany. The number of countries and organizations reporting WDCD activities has been increasing, from 20 in 2008 and 36 in 2009 to 38 in 2010.

21. Exhibitions have been other important means for targeted outreach. Major exhibitions organized at external events included those at the World Water Forum in Istanbul, IFAT ENTSORGA in Munich, Germany, World Water Week in Stockholm, World EXPO in Shanghai, Bonn Climate Talks and the Convention on Biodiversity COP 10 in Nagoya, Japan. Apart from the exhibitions organized and manned by the secretariat, awareness-raising materials were dispatched to 32 exhibitions which were organized with partners.

22. On 21 December 2009, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/64/201, declaring the decade 2010–2020 as the UNDDD. It designated the UNCCD to be the focal point of the decade, in collaboration with UNEP, UNDP, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and other relevant bodies of the United Nations, including the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat. To invigorate the first year of the UNDDD, one global launch and subsequent five regional launches were organized in 2010. Detailed activities on the UNDDD is available in document ICCD/COP(10)/27.

## **F. Computer-mediated communication**

23. The CCS recognizes computer-mediated social networks as powerful mechanisms for social mobilization, particularly for youth. New and alternative media have been actively explored as non-traditional information dissemination and interactive tools. UNCCD pages on Twitter and Facebook provide space for exchanging opinions, which are not necessarily official and which promote public interest. There is evidence of public interest in the use of these media, and this is an area with great potential for growth.

## **G. Sustainable land management champions**

24. In recent years, public personalities have increasingly played important roles in sustainable development issues by drawing the attention of decision and policy makers to the importance of topics such as sustainable land management and its relevant national policy agendas. Highly-regarded SLM champions could draw attention to objectives supported by the Convention and provide the impetus needed to implement fully the objectives of The Strategy. In January 2010, the first SLM Champion Ambassador Byong

Hyon Kwon (Republic of Korea) was designated, who had contributed to various awareness-raising activities and events such as the observance of WDCD in Shanghai, China, and the cartoon exhibition “Save the Earth” in concurrence with the G20 Summit in Seoul. Following the success of the programme, it has been revised in 2011 as the Drylands Ambassador programme. The 2010 Football World Champion Mr. Carlos Marchena (Spain) was designated as Drylands Ambassador on 17 June 2011. Further identification of Drylands Ambassadors are being undertaken, aiming at geographical balance.

## **H. Capacity-building**

25. In the area of capacity-building and its links to the CCS, much work has been done and is continuing to be done. The establishment of the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) portal and its further enhancement, which is fundamental to the reporting process, is an essential element of The Strategy. A comprehensive capacity-building web page is in its final stages of development. This page is envisaged to be interactive, allowing e-learning, information collection and dissemination, exchange of experience and the promotion of training in all aspects of the UNCCD process. A number of technical notes for additional guidance to the action programme alignment process have been prepared and shared with Parties as part of the secretariat’s outreach efforts in this area. Plans are under way for the development of an e-training module on negotiations for UNCCD focal points, all of which will be integral elements of the CCS. Capacity-building as a component of PRAIS is described in ICCD/CRIC(10)/11.

## **IV. Branding and corporate identity development**

26. In order to further support the implementation of the Convention under The Strategy, the secretariat reviewed ongoing corporate branding, including its logo. As a result, the UNCCD Corporate Identity Manual was produced for the use of the secretariat. The manual includes specification of the UNCCD logo by different usage patterns and in different file formats, and the typography and templates for stationery, cover pages of standard publications, and powerpoint presentations. The process was supported by Young and Rubicam Mexico Office on a pro-bono basis.

27. Branding is not simply a question of graphic design but of establishing the identity of the Convention. In this regard, the CCS mentions the necessity of defining a few short compelling sentences summarizing what the Convention is about and how it operates. These promotional slogans will be produced as part of the next biennium work programme in line with the guidance given by the Parties during this session on the development of advocacy policy frameworks.

## **V. Innovative sources of financing**

28. In its decision 4/COP.9, the Parties encouraged the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, in line with their main functions, to actively seek innovative sources of financing, including from the private sector, foundations and relevant civil society organizations as well as in-kind support for the implementation of the CCS whose implementation has benefited a great deal from partnership with the private sector and CSOs; this potential could be exploited fully for future activities.

29. To provide some examples, Young and Rubicam Mexico Office has been supporting the secretariat in some aspects of public relations under their Corporate Social

Responsibility mandates. It has provided poster and postcard designs for the WDCD awareness-raising materials, and support for the UNCCD exhibition in the United Nations Pavilion at the Shanghai Expo and the corporate identity development exercise. The NGO Fundacion Agreste (Argentina) has contributed visual designs for the WDCD. There have been many in-kind contributions from the private sector, local governments and research institutions for the occasions of the UNDDD global and regional launches, the details of which are reported in ICCD/COP(10)/27. The World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) provided exhibition designs based on the UNCCD WOCAT joint publication "Benefits of Sustainable Land Management". London-based Entico supported the production of the Rio Convention calendars.

30. And yet, awareness-raising and communication has not attracted much financial contribution from external resources. While the resource requirements for implementation of the operational objective in the biennium 2010–2011 work programme, as described in decision 9/COP.9, was 2,350,000 euros,<sup>1</sup> the supplementary funds received for the implementation of the CCS was 150,000 euros (contributions from the Governments of Switzerland and Finland). Contributions from non-traditional donors such as the private sector tend to be events-specific, which do not provide resources to enable a balanced distribution of information, such as language translations. As the secretariat lacks both the personnel and the financial capacity to meet multi-language requirements fully, this may have caused a skewed distribution of information at the global level. Accordingly, fund mobilization from the international community for further implementation of the CCS continues to be critical.

## VI. Conclusions and recommendations

**31. The implementation of the CCS has enabled coordinated and targeted awareness-raising activities which support effective implementation of The Strategy. Its achievement in the first two years of implementation was visible in the increasing number of website visits and media reports and increased production of materials. However, further exploration is needed in some areas, such as social media, where keen interest is shown, but there is little in-house human resource capacity for implementation. Partnership with various stakeholders multiplies outreach efforts while burdens on financial and human resources can be eased by task-sharing. However, the lack of complementary financing from the UNCCD limits exploitation of the full potential of these relationships. As high-quality awareness-raising materials and the organization of events and campaigns can be costly, further financial and/or in-kind support from Parties, as well as from Governments of States not Parties to the Convention, IGOs and NGOs is sought to ensure effective implementation of the CCS, as stated in decision 4/COP.9.**

**32. In order to make implementation of the CCS an integral part of the implementation of The Strategy, it needs to be used as a tool for the Convention reporting frameworks by the Parties and the UNCCD subsidiary bodies and institutions. In this regard, the monitoring and evaluation of CCS implementation needs to be linked to PRAIS. This could be possible in the fifth UNCCD reporting and review cycle which will consider the implementation of the Convention between 2010 and 2011.**

**33. In view of the above, Parties may wish to consider the following:**

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<sup>1</sup> This amount is the total from all operational activity 1 activities (ICCD/COP(9)/18/Add.1 page 59).



(a) In view of the importance of language as a fundamental tool for any communication, and especially for public outreach, there is a need for translation services in order to ensure wider and equal dissemination of media and outreach materials;

(b) Support for training and capacity development among journalists and environment correspondents could be provided with a view to developing a core group for whom DLDD/SLM is a primary environment focus;

(c) Private-public partnership for CCS implementation could be further strengthened to reach out to new actors on SLM and receive their support for global campaigns on DLDD;

(d) While innovative sources of financing is being sought, there is a need to increase traditional means of financing through extra-budgetary sources, in order further to strengthen implementation of the CCS;

(e) A mid-term evaluation of CCS implementation could take into account the result of the fifth UNCCD reporting and review cycle.

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