



Convention to Combat Desertification

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

Mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention

Mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention

Note by the secretariat

Summary

Decision 3/COP.9 stipulates that the Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism (GM) should strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCMs) to facilitate the implementation of the Convention, as requested in the 10-year strategic plan and framework for the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy). In so doing the Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the GM are, inter alia:

- (a) To facilitate cooperation among affected country Parties within the regions;
- (b) To enhance synergies among the relevant institutions, programmes and mechanisms; and
- (c) To provide technical assistance to the national action programmes.

It also requests the Executive Secretary to provide staffing for the Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) within the core budget resources, and requests the GM to do the same, within available resources, upon requests by the regions.

It further stipulates that the Executive Secretary should review the current hosting arrangements of the existing RCUs, and conclude, where appropriate, new memorandums of understanding with host institutions and host countries and, at the initiative of Central and Eastern European country Parties, facilitate the establishment of an RCM for Annex V.

The present document details the actions taken by the Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the GM in fulfilment of their mandates as outlined in the decision, and presents conclusions and recommendations which the Conference of the Parties may wish to consider in determining additional actions to be taken.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Background	1–8	3
II. Supporting and strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of Regional Coordination Mechanisms in implementing the Convention	9–48	4
A. Facilitating cooperation between affected country Parties within the regions included in the Annexes.....	9–15	4
B. Enhancing synergies among relevant institutions, programmes, mechanisms and partners.....	16–22	5
C. Support for regional committees.....	23–28	6
D. Strengthening the Regional Coordination Units	29–33	7
E. Review of the status of thematic programme networks	34–37	8
F. Facilitation of regional and subregional action programmes	38–42	10
G. Provision of technical assistance to the national action programme process..	43–48	10
III. Secretariat/Global Mechanism cooperation to support regional coordination and collaboration in addressing existing and emerging needs, capacities and specific issues, with a view to achieving the operational objectives of The Strategy.....	49–55	12
IV. Review of the current hosting arrangements of the existing Regional Coordination Units.....	56–82	14
A. Review of the Regional Coordination Unit in Africa	59–63	14
B. The host institution memorandum of understanding	64–70	15
C. Review of the Regional Coordination Unit in Asia	71–72	16
D. Memorandum of understanding with United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.....	73–75	16
E. Review of the Regional Coordination Unit in Latin America and the Caribbean.....	76–77	16
F. Memorandum of understanding with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	78–82	17
V. Establishing and supporting the regional coordination mechanisms for Annex V..	83–95	17
A. Establishing a Regional Coordination Unit for Annex V	84–87	17
B. Appointment of staff to support the regional coordination mechanism process in Central and Eastern Europe	88	18
C. Other actions to support regional coordination for the Annex V region.....	89–90	19
D. Meeting of the regional Chairs	91–93	19
E. The regional committee	94	19
F. Conclusion	95	19
VI. Conclusions and recommendations	96–99	19
A. Conclusions	96–98	19
B. Recommendations.....	99	20

I. Background

1. By decision 3/COP.8, paragraph 1, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) adopted a 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018), otherwise known as “The Strategy”. Paragraph 29 of the same decision recognizes that regional coordination is an important component in implementing the Convention and The Strategy, and that coordination mechanisms must be responsive to the needs, capacities and specific issues of regions.

2. Paragraph 30 of decision 3/COP.8 calls upon each region to develop a proposal, in collaboration with the Executive Secretary and the Global Mechanism (GM), on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention, taking into account, inter alia, existing regional coordination activities, tools, and donor and regional funding arrangements, and providing details of staffing, hosting possibilities and other financial resources required, and to define their functions and output and reporting arrangements in terms of implementing the Convention and delivering The Strategy.

3. By its decision 3/COP.9 the COP, taking note of document ICCD/COP(9)/3, calls upon the Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the GM to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of regional coordination mechanisms (RCMs) to facilitate the implementation of the Convention, as requested in The Strategy, to facilitate cooperation among affected country Parties within the regions, and to enhance synergies among the relevant institutions, programmes and mechanisms of the United Nations system, multilateral development banks, bilateral donors and other regional and subregional actors and mechanisms in order to facilitate regional and subregional action programmes and, where appropriate, provide technical assistance to the national action programmes (NAPs).

4. Decision 3/COP.9 also requests the Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the GM to, inter alia:

(a) Within available resources enhance interaction with and between affected country Parties and other organizations and institutions;

(b) Provide one post per region within the available resources of the core budget to Regional Coordination Units (RCUs), if so requested by the regions; and

(c) Actively collaborate on the joint work programme (JWP) to enhance their cooperation and provide effective support to affected country Parties.

5. In paragraph 5 of decision 3/COP.9, the COP further requests the Executive Secretary to review the current hosting arrangements of existing RCUs, and to conclude, where appropriate, new memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with host institutions and host countries, with a view to reducing operational costs, accommodating additional staff, and strengthening partnerships at subregional and regional levels, and to explore alternatives, where appropriate. Paragraph 6 of the same decision requests, inter alia, the Executive Secretary, at the initiative of Central and Eastern European (CEE) country Parties, to facilitate the establishment of a RCM for Annex V.

6. The present document reports on the activities carried out by the Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the GM pursuant to decision 3/COP.9. It provides detailed information on the efforts by the secretariat and the GM to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of RCMs by, inter alia:

(a) Providing staff to the RCUs;

(b) Supporting the regional committees;

- (c) Promoting coordination within regions;
- (d) Providing technical assistance to the NAP alignment process; and
- (e) Supporting efforts for the establishment of an RCM and RCU for Annex V.

7. It provides information on the outcomes of a review commissioned by the secretariat on the hosting arrangements of the existing RCUs, and on the secretariat's actions in support of the of Central and Eastern European country Parties' initiative to establish an RCM.

8. This document seeks to provide a factual basis for a review of the actions taken by Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the GM to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of RCMs. The COP, having considered this report, may determine other necessary actions for the enhancement of the RCMs.

II. Supporting and strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of Regional Coordination Mechanisms in implementing the Convention

A. Facilitating cooperation between affected country Parties within the regions included in the Annexes

9. In their efforts to promote cooperation among affected country Parties within the regions, the secretariat and the GM facilitated, in accordance with decision 6/COP.9, the identification of regional priorities through supporting exchanges among Parties within each region. The secretariat facilitated the initial process, which allowed Parties to participate and resulted in the preparation of drafts of the regional priorities for all Annexes. These priorities have been submitted in document ICCD/COP(10)/3 for consideration by the COP at its tenth session (COP 10).

10. The secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with the Government of the Czech Republic, organized a regional capacity-building workshop on NAP alignment for CEE. This event, held in June 2010, provided Parties with an opportunity to share ideas and experiences on the development and alignment of their NAPs.

11. Both organizations supported and provided technical guidance to the first meeting of the regional consultative committee (RCC) for implementing the Convention in Africa, which was convened by the Government of Algeria with the financial support of the African Union, the secretariat and the GM, and held in Algiers in November 2010. The focus of the meeting was the cooperation of the country Parties in the region within the framework of their RCM. Issues covered included:

- (a) Working relationships between the RCC and the Africa Group;
- (b) Issues with regard to coordination at subregional levels;
- (c) Thematic programme networks (TPN);
- (d) Coordination between the RCC and other African initiatives; and
- (e) Coordination between African Parties with regard to negotiations during sessions of the COP and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC).

12. Regional meetings preparatory to CRIC and COP 10 sessions for all Annexes are foreseen for September 2011. These established forums promote cooperation between

Parties within the regions, on, inter alia, issues relating to the CRIC, the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the COP.

13. By appointing officers to each Regional Coordination Unit (RCU), the secretariat and the GM have strengthened the latter's ability to render services to the regions, including in facilitating cooperation among Parties within the regions. At the secretariat, one officer has been assigned to Annexes IV and V to support the RCM process, as these Annexes have no RCUs for the time being.

14. The secretariat and the GM facilitated the work of the regional Chairs by supporting the dissemination of information within their regional groups. Consultations within regional groups on important and emerging issues were encouraged, and regional and subregional activities, such as the workshops conducted on capacity-building for NAP alignment, doubled as forums for exchanges among Parties belonging to the regional and subregional groups concerned.

Conclusion

15. Strengthening existing RCUs through the provision of a secretary, forming an effective regional committee for Annex II, and establishing an RCU for Annex V will help to enhance cooperation and coordination in these regions.

B. Enhancing synergies among relevant institutions, programmes, mechanisms and partners

16. The secretariat and the GM took steps to enhance synergies among institutions, programmes, mechanisms and partners from their headquarters as well as through the RCUs. The secretariat developed a joint action plan with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and a joint work plan with the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The activities undertaken to implement these plans are aimed at enhancing synergies between programmes, partners and institutions both at national and regional levels, which are involved in planning and developing the NAP, subregional action programme (SRAP) and regional action programme (RAP), and NAP mainstreaming and implementation processes. Building national partnerships with the UNDP offices and GEF focal points, and cooperating and collaborating with regional and subregional programmes, partners, institutions and mechanisms, such as the Central Asian Countries Initiative on Sustainable Land Management (CACILM) and the Great Green Wall in the Sahel, are indeed seen as crucial to the implementation of these joint endeavours.

17. In June 2010 the secretariat, in collaboration with the GM and the Government of the Czech Republic, held a regional workshop on capacity-building for the Parties of CEE. An invitation was also extended to and accepted by the European Commission (EC) as a supporter of the Convention process in that region. The participation of the EC allowed for these Parties and the EC to discuss ways and means of strengthening their collaboration to promote the implementation of the Convention in CEE.

18. To facilitate the implementation of the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS)-I, and in particular its training and capacity-building aspects, the secretariat engaged 14 centres. Two of the main criteria for choosing these regional centres were that they were (1) subregional organizations and/or partners working on desertification and land degradation issues; and (2) prepared to continue to support the process in their respective subregions. This approach helped enhance the synergies among these institutions, programmes, mechanisms and partners in the concerned subregions.

19. The secretariat proposes to organise in September 2011 one regional and three subregional workshops on capacity-building for action programme alignment. A key theme at these workshops was establishing modalities for cooperation and coordination among relevant institutions, programmes, mechanisms and partners for the development of the SRAPs and RAP. This helped Parties to identify the bodies and programmes involved in developing the SRAPs and RAP and recognize the need for proper regional and subregional coordination to ensure that SRAPs and RAPs are feasible and effective.

20. As part of the Joint Liaison Group, the secretariat extended invitations to its sister conventions, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity, to participate in the aforementioned subregional workshops so that, through their input, synergies between the action programme alignment process, the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) could be better understood, stimulated and pursued.

21. In June 2011 the secretariat became a member of the RCM of the United Nations agencies supporting the African Union on the thematic cluster of 'environment, population and urbanization'. This mechanism includes the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, International Organization for Migration, World Meteorological Organization, African Union, New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Regional Executive Committees (RECs) of Africa, inter alia. It focuses on regional cooperation and coordination for sustainable development in Africa.

Conclusion

22. Regional committees, where they exist, play a more active role in promoting these synergies. Establishing an RCU for Annex V could help to promote synergies in CEE.

C. Support for regional committees

23. The secretariat has informed all regions of its readiness to facilitate the establishment of regional committees. Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) already have regional committees. The Parties of Annex III have not taken any steps to establish such a committee, while the Parties of Annexes IV and V stated that they shall not establish such committees at present.

24. The first meeting of the RCC for the implementation of the Convention in Africa was sponsored by the African Union Commission and convened by the Government of Algeria and held in Algiers in November 2010. The secretariat and the GM supported and facilitated this process through the mobilization of resources by staff at the Africa RCU, and by providing technical assistance and guidance.

25. The participants in the meeting agreed on:

- (a) The subject, mandate, modalities and means of functioning of the RCC;
- (b) The Bureau of the RCC;
- (c) Format and modalities of RCC meetings;
- (d) Working relationships between the RCC, the Africa Group and the RCU;
- (e) Work programme of the RCC and the Presidency, and priorities of the region;
- (f) Coordination of the RCC work programme with that of the Africa RCU; and
- (g) Coordination between the RCC and other African initiatives.

26. In LAC, the REC spearheaded the development of the RAP/regional priorities for the 2011–2012 biennium, supported by the LAC RCU. Since the secretariat and the GM relocated staff to the LAC RCU, the REC has been able request support from the RCU in any area of facilitation of its work.

27. During the period under review the secretariat organized two meetings of consultations with the Chairs of all regional groups. The first meeting was held in Bonn in January 2010, where the secretariat and the GM listened to the views of the Chairs on PRAIS-I and the fourth reporting process. The second meeting was held in June 2010 in the Czech Republic and organized by the secretariat, GM and the host country. Participants at the meeting discussed the mobilization of resources, the fourth reporting process and the NAP alignment processes.

Conclusion

28. The role of the regional committees needs to be more firmly established in the regional decision-making processes. Parties should consider holding meetings of these committees back-to-back with COPs, CRICs and CSTs.

D. Strengthening the Regional Coordination Units

29. As requested by the Parties concerned, the secretariat and the GM have relocated staff to the RCUs in Africa, Asia/Pacific and LAC. While the Parties included in Annex V have expressed their desire to have an RCU located in that region, at the time of preparation of this report consultations were still on-going as to the a host country and host institution where it shall be located.

30. While awaiting the establishment of an RCU in the CEE region, the secretariat has begun the process of recruiting a permanent staff member based at the secretariat to support the coordination of activities in that region. One staff member has the responsibility of providing services to Parties included in Annex IV. These two officers, along with the Officer-in-Charge, the Action Programme Alignment Officer, Capacity-building Officer, and the team secretary, comprise the Regional Coordination Functions (RCF) Unit. This secretariat-based unit is responsible for the coordination, administration and management of all activities between the secretariat and the RCUs, as well as the Annexes that have no RCUs. It provides the substantial support necessary for effective and efficient communication between the regions, RCUs and the secretariat. The GM has also appointed one officer based at its headquarters and backed up by other GM staff, as appropriate, to support the CEE countries.

31. It should be noted that country Parties of Annex IV have listed the exploration of options for establishing an RCU as a regional priority for the 2012–2013 biennium, (see ICCD/COP(10)/3). The Turkish government has officially expressed an interest in hosting an RCU for the region. The secretariat shall facilitate this process once there is an affirmative decision.

32. The RCUs have specific work programmes and are responsible for the coordination of activities in their respective regions.

33. Table 1 below shows the present allocation of staff by the secretariat and the GM to the RCUs in Africa, Asia and LAC.

Table 1
Staffing at the Regional Coordination Units

Number of secretariat/GM staff in Regional Coordination Units

Regional Coordination Unit	Location	No. of secretariat staff	No. of GM Staff	Total
Africa	Tunis	2	1	3
Asia	Bangkok	2	1	3
Latin America and the Caribbean	Mexico City	2	1	3
Grand total	N/A	6	3	9

E. Review of the status of thematic programme networks

34. There are 18 Thematic Programme Networks (TPNs), six each in Africa (Annex I), Asia/Pacific (Annex II), and LAC (Annex III). Since their creation, these networks have generally failed to meet the objectives set for them. In 2010 the secretariat initiated an evaluation of all TPNs through the respective RCUs and in collaboration with the host institutions of the TPNs. The results show that, inter alia:

- (a) There is no region in which all TPNs are functioning;
- (b) For the TPNs that are functioning (two in Africa, four in Asia and two in LAC), they basically operate as national as opposed to regional networks;
- (c) There is a lack of sustainable funding because, in general, all TPNs are financed by the Governments of the countries in which the host institutions are situated, with the occasional small grants coming from donor agencies or donor countries.
- (d) There is therefore no regional institutional support, and TPNs are not mainstreamed into other relevant regional initiatives; and
- (e) TPNs have access to very limited relevant expertise in many cases.

35. The scenario described in paragraph 33 above demonstrates that the many weaknesses in the present TPN system are so severe that they hamper the TPNs' operations and ultimately their development. Some serious changes must be implemented if the TPNs are to become effective.

36. Table 2 below shows the present operational status of TPNs.

Table 2
Operational Status of thematic programme networks

Table of operational status of thematic programme networks (TPNs)

Region	TPN	Subject	Operational status
Africa	1	Integrated management of international river, lake and hydro-geological basins	NF*
	2	Promotion of agroforestry and soil conservation	NF
	3	Rational use of rangelands and promotion of fodder crops development	PF**
	4	Ecological monitoring, natural resources mapping, remote sensing and early warning systems	NF
	5	Promotion of new and renewable energy sources and technologies	NF
	6	Promotion of sustainable agricultural farming systems	PF
Asia	1	Desertification monitoring and assessment	PF
	2	Agroforestry and soil conservation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas	PF
	3	Rangeland management in arid areas including the fixation of sand dunes	PF
	4	Water resources management for agriculture in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas	NF
	5	Strengthening capacities for drought impact mitigating and desertification combating	NF
	6	Assistance for the implementation of integrated local area development programmes (LADPs) initiatives	FP
Latin America and the Caribbean	1	Identification and use of benchmarks and indicators of desertification and drought	PF
	2	Information Network on Desertification and Drought (DESELAC)	NF
	3	Integrated water resource management and water efficiency programmes	NF
	4	Promotion of agroforestry and combating poverty	NF
	5	Best practices, traditional knowledge and technologies	PF
	6	Promotion of sustainable renewable energy	NF

* NF: Not functioning at all.

** PF: Partially functioning.

Conclusion

37. There needs to be appropriate institutional remodelling of all TPNs allowing for their financing, sustainability and regional relevance, thereby ensuring they can effectively serve their intended purpose.

F. Facilitation of regional and subregional action programmes

38. The secretariat organized workshops on capacity-building at regional, subregional and national level. Three subregional workshops involving national focal points (NFPs) from the South American, East African, South-South-East and East Asian subregions, and a regional workshop for CEE are proposed for September 2011 in Mexico, Algeria, Indonesia, and at the secretariat, respectively. The first three will focus on the development and alignment of NAPs and SRAPs, while the CEE regional workshop will also pay attention to developing the RAP. More capacity-building workshops to support the development and alignment of NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs in other regions and subregions are planned for the 2012–2013 biennium.

39. In accordance with decision 6/COP.9, the secretariat and the GM facilitated coordination among Parties of all Annexes for identifying regional priorities. Annex V Parties decided to commence discussions on the objectives of their RAP during the regional meeting preparatory to the eleventh session of the CRIC (CRIC 11) in 2012. Country Parties of Annex IV decided to collect background information regarding the need for the SRAP and/or RAP, and to design a roadmap for their development during the 2012–2013 biennium.

40. Annex III Parties do not differentiate between regional priorities and the RAP. Consequently, the regional priorities identified for the region essentially form the LAC RAP for the 2011–2012 biennium.

41. The secretariat supported and facilitated a comprehensive review of the SRAPs and RAP for Asia/Pacific in July 2009. It held a capacity-building workshop in Bali, Indonesia in September 2011, where the issues of a SRAP for the Pacific are to be addressed.

Conclusion

42. Apart from the technical support provided by the secretariat and the GM, the SRAP and RAP alignment processes would need financial support, strong and effective RCMs, and the firm commitment of the respective Parties if they are to be feasible and meaningful.

G. Provision of technical assistance to the national action programme process

43. Pursuant to decision 3/COP.8 and decision 1/COP.9, the secretariat and the GM implemented a series of actions aimed at providing technical assistance to NAPs, and in particular to the alignment process. A series of technical papers and concept papers were developed on NAP alignment and the Integrated Investment Framework (IIF) and Integrated Financial Strategy (IFS) processes. These papers provide theoretical and technical guidance to help national focal points in spearheading and advancing the NAP process, and have been used in various activities organized and held separately and/or within the framework of the secretariat/GM JWP. They have also been placed on the websites of both organizations.

44. While hampered by a serious limitation in resources, the secretariat and the GM, under the JWP as approved by decision 2/COP.9, developed a programme on NAP

alignment. This ‘Kick-start Programme on NAP Alignment’, designed to stimulate and/or promote the alignment process, was officially launched through two roundtable discussions during CRIC 9. Its implementation included the following workshops on capacity-building for NAP alignment:

- (a) In Prague in June 2010 for Parties of Annex V, in collaboration with the Government of the Czech Republic;
- (b) In Guatemala City in January 2011 for Central American Parties of Annex III, in collaboration with the Government of Guatemala; and
- (c) In Colombo, Sri Lanka and Guatemala City, Guatemala in July 2010 and January 2011, respectively.

45. Following the decision of the GEF Council to provide up to USD 150,000 from the GEF-5¹ System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) to support eligible affected country Parties for enabling activities in the areas of NAP alignment and reporting, this programme is being expanded to cover all affected country Parties. However, due to limited resources, it will be implemented in phases, the first of which is to involve one regional and three subregional workshops on capacity-building for action programme alignment for Parties from CEE, East Africa, South-South-East and East Asia and South America. Topics to be covered include:

- (a) Technical assistance and guidance for NAP alignment;
- (b) Access to the GEF funding under the Land Degradation Focal Area in general, and to the USD 150,000 for enabling activities in particular;
- (c) NAP mainstreaming;
- (d) SRAP and RAP development and/or alignment;
- (e) Exchanges between focal points of the respective subregions on their NAP and SRAP alignment processes;
- (f) Ways of fast tracking the action programme alignment process, bearing in mind decision 13/COP.9.

46. The secretariat provided technical assistance and theoretical guidance on the NAP process to the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Parties to the Convention by organizing a side event during the Fourth United Nations Conference on the LDCs (LDC-IV), held in Istanbul, Turkey in May 2011. This conference focused on synergies between NAP alignment, NBSAPs and NAPAs.

47. The secretariat and the GM participated in and provided technical assistance to two subregional workshops on capacity-building for NAP alignment for focal points in West and Central Africa held in Abuja, Nigeria in March 2011 and in Bujumbura, Burundi in June 2011. The secretariat also assisted some Parties by reviewing drafts on aligning NAPs, as well as by providing technical guidance papers for the process.

Conclusion

48. Secretariat and GM assistance to the NAP development and alignment process is increasing, and affected country Parties are seeking this assistance more and more. The process must be intensified if the CONS-O-5 requirements set out in decision 13/COP.9 are to be met.

¹ Current funding cycle of the Global Environment Facility.

III. Secretariat/Global Mechanism cooperation to support regional coordination and collaboration in addressing existing and emerging needs, capacities and specific issues, with a view to achieving the operational objectives of The Strategy

49. The secretariat and the GM worked together to increase support to regional coordination by implementing the regional components of their JWP. Both organizations have relocated officers to the RCUs for the regions included in Annexes I, II and III who facilitate the regional coordination process by supporting, inter alia:

- (a) Information sharing;
- (b) Greater civil society organization participation in the regional process;
- (c) The creation of regional committees; and
- (d) Interaction on Convention issues between the Chairs of the regional committees with relevant regional agencies.

50. Through the RCU and in cooperation with the African regional Presidency (Algeria) and the African Union Commission (AUC), the secretariat and the GM supported the creation and first meeting of the regional consultative committee for implementation of the Convention in Africa. They also worked together on developing a renewed cooperation framework with the African Development Bank (AfDB), finalizing the regional work plan and jointly participating in regional events, such as subregional workshops for capacity-building for action programme alignment.

51. Both bodies have sought to promote regional coordination and collaboration in Asia/Pacific by working with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and creating links to the Convention process in the region with programmes such as CACILM. The Asia/Pacific RCU has been strengthened through the appointment of a GM staff member.

52. In the LAC region, the RCU was instrumental in supporting the regional Presidency (Uruguay) on various issues, including the development of the RAP. The secretariat and GM officers worked together on:

- (a) Promoting the Convention process among relevant regional institutions and programmes, including at the Forum of Ministers of the Environmental of Latin America and the Caribbean;
- (b) Organizing NAP alignment workshops in Guatemala;
- (c) Organizing the meeting on desertification and climate change, held in November 2010 in preparation for the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC;
- (d) Evaluating of the current NAPs in LAC aimed at identifying gaps with the Strategy;
- (e) Participating in United Nations Country Team meetings; and
- (f) Developing the Regional IFS for LAC.

53. The secretariat and GM have been, through designated officers at headquarters, working together to strengthen regional cooperation among Parties of Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV), and CEE (Annex V). They also supported these regions by facilitating the exchange of information among Parties, supporting the respective regional

Chairs, and identifying regional priorities (see document ICCD/COP(10)/3), and promoted closer cooperation between the Parties of Annex V by facilitating the exchange of views on their action programme alignment process and facilitating their cooperation with the EC.

54. Table 3 below shows the staff support provided by the Secretariat and the GM in support of regional coordination and collaboration.

Table 3
Staff support for the Regional Coordination Mechanisms

<i>Secretariat and Global Mechanism staff serving the regional coordination mechanisms</i>				
Organization	Level	No. of Staff	Post	Location
Secretariat	P-5	1	Officer-in-charge	Regional Coordination Functions (RCF)/Bonn
	P-4	1	Action Programme Alignment and Capacity-building Officer	RCF/Bonn
	P-4	1	Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) Coordinator	RCU/Africa
	P-4	1	RCU Coordinator	RCU/LAC
	P-4	1	RCF Programme Officer	RCF/Bonn
	P-3	1	RCU Programme Officer	RCU/Africa
	P-3	1	RCU Coordinator	RCU/Asia
	P-3	1	RCU Programme Officer	RCU/Asia
	JPO	1	RCU Associate Programme Officer	RCU/Mexico
	G-5	1	RCF/RCU Secretary	RCF/Bonn
GM	Consultant*	1	Programme officer	RCU/Africa
	Consultant*	1	N/A	RCU/Asia
	Consultant*	1	N/A	RCU/Mexico
	P-5	1	Programme coordinator	Overall coordination for RCUs from headquarters
	P-4	1	Programme officer	Provides support from headquarters to Asia/RCU
	P-3	1	Programme officer	Provides support from headquarters to the CEE
Total		16		

* These are long-term consultants hired at a level equivalent to P-3 and posted to the respective RCUs (i.e. Africa, Asia and LAC).

55. Further information concerning the joint work of the secretariat and the GM is contained in ICCD/COP(10)/11.

IV. Review of the current hosting arrangements of the existing Regional Coordination Units

56. Pursuant to paragraph 5 of decision 3/COP.9, in which the COP requested the Executive Secretary to, inter alia, review the current hosting arrangements of the existing RCUs, the secretariat commissioned a comprehensive review. The report detailing the complete results of this review is submitted to the COP as document ICCD/COP(10)/MISC.1. This chapter recalls the salient points and conclusions of the review.

57. The review's structure is based on four major themes. It provides (1) an assessment of the existing host country agreements. This is followed by (2) an in-depth analysis of the existing MOUs with the host institutions and the resulting arrangements. It then presents (3) a comparative analysis of the three institutions that have shown an interest in hosting the RCU for Annex V (see chapter V). Finally, it offers (4) some recommendations and suggestions regarding the way forward for the RCUs.

58. The review was conducted by analysing relevant COP decisions and other official documents, such as MOUs and/or agreements with host country and host institutions and relevant reports submitted to the COP. A questionnaire based on the requirements for an RCU was also developed, and several meetings with representatives of country Parties from the regions concerned, and interviews with staff members of the relevant RCUs and host institutions were held. Other individual interviews were conducted and additional information collected through questionnaires. The resulting information forms the body of the report.

A. Review of the Regional Coordination Unit in Africa

59. The RCU for Africa was officially established through a host agreement between the AfDB and the UNCCD secretariat following the latter's signing of a host country agreement with Côte d'Ivoire in 2000. Based on these agreements, the RCU was housed at the AfDB's headquarters in Abidjan. The agreement with AfDB has no expiration date and grants diplomatic privileges and immunities to RCU staff. Due to instability in the host country, the AfDB headquarters, with the RCU, was temporarily transferred to Tunis, Tunisia in 2003.

60. As this transfer is not intended to be permanent, no host agreement was ever signed with Tunisia, even though eight years have elapsed. However, the political situation in Côte d'Ivoire has recently improved and the President of the AfDB has declared that the AfDB shall prepare to return to Abidjan within three years. The question of the future location of the RCU still remains to be settled.

61. The report offers the following options:

(a) Continue with the present state of affairs on an interim basis until the AfDB returns to Abidjan. It should be noted that the report underlines that the RCU received no support from Côte d'Ivoire while it was located there;

(b) Sign a host country agreement with Tunisia, limited to two or three years, with possibility of renewal, bearing in mind that the AfDB, might return to the Côte d'Ivoire. The report highlights that apart from the AfDB's temporary relocation, there is only one other institution with a regional or international mandate located in Tunisia (the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (SSO)). This limits the RCU in building regional contacts/partnerships, which is essential for realizing its mandate; or

(c) Choose another country. This will necessitate new arrangements including:

- (i) Conclusion of a new host country agreement;
- (ii) Selection of a new host institution and concluding an agreement;
- (iii) Covering the transfer cost; and
- (iv) Evaluation of the added value of this option.

62. If the first recommendation is chosen, a new host country agreement with provisions defining the status and role of the RCU in accordance with its role in light of The Strategy and decision 3/COP.9 would have to be concluded.

63. If either recommendation 2 or 3 is chosen, the secretariat shall terminate the agreement with Côte d'Ivoire, as stipulated in that agreement.

B. The host institution memorandum of understanding

64. As mentioned in paragraph 59 above, the RCU in Africa is housed at AfDB based on a May 1999 MOU between the AfDB and the African Development Fund, and the secretariat. Under this MOU, the AfDB makes a significant contribution to the RCU by providing cost free office space and utilities.

65. The presence of the RCU in the AfDB headquarters has led to, inter alia, some synergies between the activities and programmes of the latter and the Convention process in Africa. It has encouraged an increase in support for achieving the Convention's objectives from the portfolios of the AfDB and the World Bank that are devoted to this sector.

66. A study conducted by the Global Mechanism and the AfDB shows that, from 2000 to 2005, the AfDB portfolio dedicated USD 1.6 billion to sustainable land management (SLM). The report recommends that the AfDB should be invited to COP 10 present a more recent study covering the period from 2000 to 2010.

67. The RCU and the AfDB have adopted a collaborative framework for 2011 focusing on a number of crucial areas. The report recommends that the RCU should serve as a technical authority in desertification control/dryland management and SLM, advising the AfDB on UNCCD initiatives and their likely relevance and importance to the AfDB's sectoral programmes and policy goals.

68. The report identified the following disadvantages of the RCU being housed at the AfDB:

- (a) AfDB is not a United Nations organization; and
- (b) The present host country is not easily accessible to many African country Parties and has an insignificant number of regional/subregional institutions which are partners in the Convention process.

69. The report concludes that there is no need to sign a new MOU with the AfDB as the support provided to the Africa RCU is adequate. Even so, the present MOU allows for changes to be incorporated through a simple exchange in writing.

70. Owing to the stability process in Côte d'Ivoire, some African country Parties have suggested that the RCU be moved to a new host institution and host country. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and AUC, both located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and the UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya have been suggested. The report considered each option, showing the advantages and/or disadvantages. It concluded that all options should be carefully considered by Parties, but that in any case, the excellent relations established with the AfDB should be maintained.

C. Review of the Regional Coordination Unit in Asia

71. The Asia/Pacific RCU was established in 2000 at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia/Pacific (UNESCAP) in Bangkok, Thailand. No host country agreement was signed with the Government of Thailand. Despite this, the RCU maintains good working relations with the relevant national bodies, including the NFP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Thai Government provides office space for the RCU, but without office amenities.

72. The relevant host country agreement should be concluded providing a proper legal basis for the RCU to carry out its functions. This will regularize the status of the RCU and pave the way for its full recognition by the many missions and regional and subregional agencies with offices in Bangkok, allowing for partnership-building. The report affirms that there is political will on the part of the host country to conclude an agreement, and recommends that the secretariat pursue the same.

D. Memorandum of understanding with United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

73. The host agreement between the secretariat and UNESCAP was signed in September 2000. It is clear in the report that the agreement, which has no expiry date, serves its purpose and does not require revision. UNESCAP provides office space and covers all of the RCU's operational costs free of charge. Of the 37 United Nations agencies and institutions located at UNESCAP, only the RCU is afforded this privilege while receiving equal service. However, UNESCAP has started charging for the additional office space allocated to an officer from GM.

74. The RCU has serious limitation in language, as it is being requested to provide service to country Parties where Arabic and Russian are spoken, but lack staff with the appropriate language skills. The report recommends that the secretariat hire for the RCU a technical assistant fluent in English, Russian and Arabic, and a secretary fluent in English and Thai who is familiar with administration and methodologies of work within the United Nations system.

75. That the Coordinator is at the P-3 level also presents a problem as he does not have the rank to attend senior and high-level meetings. There is also a need for the RCU to prepare an annual work programme using the results-based management system. Enhancing synergies between the activities of UNESCAP and the Convention, and partnership-building with relevant regional and subregional institutions in Bangkok must be pursued.

E. Review of the Regional Coordination Unit in Latin America and the Caribbean

76. An exchange of letters of intent between the secretariat and the Secretariat of Environment, National Resources and Fisheries of Mexico was the starting point for establishing the LAC RCU. The host country agreement was signed in 1999 between the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Mexico and the Secretariat. This agreement covers, inter alia, the location of the RCU, the legal capacity of the secretariat, the RCU's privileges, immunities and juridical exemptions.

77. The agreement never entered into force because the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintains that only the Minister of Foreign Affairs has the authority to conclude and sign a host agreement on behalf of the Government. The report underlines that if the RCU is to remain in Mexico, the secretariat must conclude a new host country agreement

ensuring its legal status. It is worth noting that the Mexican Government granted USD 20,000.00 in financial assistance to the RCU in 1998. No assistance has been given since the objection, even though the Mexican Senate adopted a *Punto de Acuerdo* in 2007 to allocate financial resources to the RCU for the 2008 fiscal year.

F. Memorandum of understanding with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

78. The LAC RCU was established in 1998 in Mexico City through an initial MOU between the secretariat and the UNEP Regional Office for LAC (UNEP/ROLAC) in Mexico. UNEP/ROLAC was transferred to Panama City and a new MOU was signed between the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the secretariat in October 2002, making ECLAC the host organization of the RCU. ECLAC will move to the new premises towards the end of 2011, and has stated that there is no space to accommodate the RCU. Following the recommendations of the report, the secretariat has considered the three possible options for location of the LAC RCU: (1) Remain in Mexico in premises separate from ECLAC; (2) transfer the RCU to the ECLAC regional office in Santiago de Chile; or (3) transfer the RCU to a regional or subregional United Nations office in Panama.

79. Remaining in Mexico would mean that the RCU would have to rent premises of its own which entails, inter alia, providing its own security and being housed outside of ECLAC, the only subregional organization in Mexico. The latter fact will have implications for the implementation of the MOU with ECLAC.

80. A transfer to the ECLAC regional office in Santiago would involve costs for office and staff transfer, adjusting the existing MOU with ECLAC, concluding a host agreement with Chile and paying some administration costs to ECLAC. It should be noted that travelling to Santiago presents a challenge for Caribbean country Parties.

81. Panama City is nearly equidistant from most LAC countries that are not located in Central America. It hosts several regional and subregional offices which could house the RCU and which present opportunities for partnership-building. As in the case of the other two options, the relevant host agreements would have to be concluded.

82. Based on the report's recommendations and in keeping with the mandate as granted in paragraphs 5 and 6 of decision 3/COP.9, the secretariat has begun the process of concluding new host country and host institution agreements for the RCUs in Africa and LAC and is finalizing a host country agreement for the RCU in Asia.

V. Establishing and supporting the regional coordination mechanisms for Annex V

83. The secretariat supported the RCM process in CEE (Annex V) through facilitating a series of events including meetings for the Parties during CRIC 9, and consultations via e-mail. The establishment of the RCM was also discussed at the regional workshop on NAP alignment held in Prague in July 2010 and at the Annex V regional meeting preparatory to COP 10.

A. Establishing a Regional Coordination Unit for Annex V

84. CEE countries see having an RCU as an integral element in the RCM. Georgia, the Russian Federation and Serbia have officially expressed an interest in hosting the RCU,

naming the institutions where it would be housed. The secretariat commissioned a comprehensive review of all three offers, including an in-depth analysis of the institutions which are proposed to host the RCU.

85. The review and analysis were conducted against some basic principles. The review and analysis included a questionnaire to be completed by the proposed host institutions on their readiness to accommodate and adequately support the RCU. The review and analysis showed that, unlike the hosts of the existing RCUs, none of the institutions proposed to host the RCU for the Annex V region has a regional focus and mandate. Two have national scope, while the status of the third is yet to be clarified; available evidence suggest it is a non-governmental organization.

86. Table 4 below shows the scores obtained by each institution as a result of the review and analysis done:

Table 4
Analysis of proposed host institutions

<i>SELECTION CRITERIA</i>	<i>IGRAS^a (Russian Federation)</i>	<i>NCDCCM^a (Serbia)</i>	<i>RECC^a (Georgia)</i>
FEASIBILITY	First place	Second place	Third place
KNOWLEDGE	Second place	Third place	First place
LEADERSHIP	First place	Third place	Second place
PARTNERSHIP	First place	Third place	Second place
OPPORTUNITY	Tie	Tie	Tie
RESOURCES	First place	Second place	Third place
MANDATE	Second place	First place	Third place
TIMING	First place	Third place	Second place
RESULT	First place	Third place	Second place
STATUS	National Institute	National Centre	Subregional NGO

^a Abbr. IGRAS = Institute of Geography of Russian Academy of Sciences; RECC = Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus; NCDCCM = National Centre for Desertification, Climate Change and Monitoring.

87. The secretariat forwarded the official offers, the report on the review and the resulting analysis of the offers to the Parties concerned upon their request.

B. Appointment of staff to support the regional coordination mechanism process in Central and Eastern Europe

88. In compliance with paragraph 5 of decision 3/COP.9 and the wishes of the CEE Parties, the secretariat established the post of Programme Officer responsible for the CEE. Cognizant of the time needed for recruitment, the secretariat hired an officer ad interim fully dedicated to servicing Parties of the region. A full-time officer is being recruited. The selection process is expected to reach a final stage by August 2011. The selected officer will work from the secretariat headquarters, pending the establishment of the CEE RCU.

C. Other actions to support regional coordination for the Annex V region

89. In June 2010 the secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with the Government of the Czech Republic, held a regional workshop on capacity-building for NAP alignment in CEE. While establishing the RCM for the region was not its main focus, it was addressed to some degree, resulting in the acknowledgement that it is essential to have an effective RCM in place.

90. The participants also discussed the identification of partners at regional level as regards the alignment process and cooperation with the European Union to enhance implementation through strengthening the Eastern Partnership and its flagship initiative devoted to environmental governance.

D. Meeting of the regional Chairs

91. A meeting of the Chairs of the Annexes was held back-to-back with the Prague workshop mentioned in paragraphs 43 (a) and 88 above. Here the issue of secretariat support to all regions as regards the Convention process in general, and the NAP alignment and the fourth reporting process in particular were discussed. The Annex V region was represented at this meeting by its deputy Chair.

92. In accordance with decision 6/COP.9, Annex V Parties have determined the priorities of the region for the 2012–2013 biennium. This itemizing of regional priorities was done in a coordinated manner, assisted and facilitated by the secretariat and the GM.

93. In September 2011 the secretariat will organize a regional workshop on capacity-building for the development and alignment of a RAP and SRAPs for Annex V Parties. Regional cooperation and coordination will be a main topic of this exercise.

E. The regional committee

94. After various consultations facilitated by the secretariat, the CEE Parties stated that, at present, they had no need for a regional committee, given that the Chair and Vice-Chair of their Annex are playing a sufficiently effective role.

F. Conclusion

95. Some progress has been made in the effort to support the establishment of the RCM for the Annex V region during the period under review. The secretariat continues to support the Parties' efforts to establish an RCU by helping to locate a suitable institution to host it. The appointment of secretariat and GM staff to support the region, the identification of regional priorities for the biennium and the on-going efforts to develop the SRAPs and RAP and the deepened cooperation among the Parties are all evidence of this progress.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

1. Strengthening the RCMs

96. Even though the RCUs have been strengthened and regional priorities identified, there is still a need for:

(a) The speedy development and alignment of SRAPs and RAPs which provide a genuine framework for practical cooperation within regions;

(b) The regional committees, where they exist, to play an active role in promoting the operations of the RCMs; and

(c) TPNs need to undergo institutional change if they are to meet their objectives.

2. Secretariat/GM cooperation

97. The following should be noted:

(a) There has been improvement in cooperation at the regional level, in particular in the area of NAP alignment and support to the RCUs;

(b) There are still challenges related to limited resources and coordination; and

(c) Activities jointly sponsored by the secretariat, GM and country Parties have been very successful.

3. Review of RCUs

98. The RCUs could be made more effective through:

(a) Greater support from country Parties within regions;

(b) Addressing the issues language limitations and the absence of secretarial support.

B. Recommendations

99. The following recommendations are proposed:

(a) Speedy alignment of SRAP and RAPs by Parties within the RCM framework;

(b) Development of terms of reference for regional committees within the RCMs;

(c) Rejuvenation of the TPNs through relevant institutional changes;

(d) More support from Parties within regions to their RCUs to ensure their effectiveness;

(e) Adequate resources have to be made available for secretariat/GM cooperation at regional level;

(f) More collaboration among the secretariat, GM and country Parties on concrete exercises;

(g) Provision of administrative support to the RCUs through the provision of secretaries.
