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**Strengthening the support for scientific, research and training institutions in implementing The Strategy Enhanced scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange between the Committee on Science and Technology and the scientific subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Facility and relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations**

### **Enhanced scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange between the Committee on Science and Technology and the scientific subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Facility and relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations**

#### Note by the secretariat

##### *Summary*

This document presents information on activities of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the secretariat relating to scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange between the CST and the scientific subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Facility and relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations, following decision 26/COP.9 by which the Conference of the Parties decided to include this matter on the agenda of the tenth session of the CST. It includes information on scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange in support of national monitoring and vulnerability assessment on biophysical and socio-economic trends in affected countries and of activities on drought mitigation and knowledge management.

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## I. Introduction

1. Article 22, paragraph 2 (i), of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification calls for the Conference of the Parties (COP) to promote and strengthen relationships with other relevant conventions. The vision of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) emphasizes this call by aiming “to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas”.<sup>1</sup>

2. Decision 8/COP.9 encourages the development of further cooperation with relevant international bodies on matters pertaining to desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) with respect to the implementation of The Strategy. In the same decision, the Executive Secretary is requested to continue cooperation with United Nations programmes and specialized agencies and with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), with a view to strengthening the involvement of these agencies and organizations in the implementation of the Convention through their cooperation with affected countries.

3. Document ICCD/CRIC(10)/18 reports on progress made in the implementation of decision 8/COP.9. The present document reports only on progress made towards enhancing scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange between the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and other bodies, agencies and institutions, in accordance with decision 26/COP.9 by which the COP decided to include on the agenda of the tenth session of the CST an item on enhanced scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange between the CST and the scientific subsidiary bodies of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the GEF (GEF-STAP) and relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations.

4. Chapter II of this document reports on activities undertaken towards enhancing scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange between the CST and the scientific subsidiary bodies of the UNFCCC and the CBD.

5. Chapter III of this document reports on major activities relating to scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange between the CST and the GEF-STAP and other relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations, including the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). It includes information on cooperation with UNFCCC and CBD on the refinement of impact indicators.

## II. Scientific cooperation between the Committee on Science and Technology and the subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity

6. The Strategy defines one of the expected outcomes under its operational objective 3 concerning science, technology and knowledge as follows: “Knowledge of the interactions between climate change adaptation, drought mitigation and restoration of degraded land in affected areas is improved to develop tools to assist decision-making”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Decision 3/COP.8, annex, paragraph 8.

<sup>2</sup> Decision 3/COP.8, annex, paragraph 11, outcome 3.4.

7. In line with this expected outcome, the multi-year workplan for the CST for 2010–2013, contained in annex I to decision 1/COP.9, defines two expected accomplishments, as follows:

(a) Scientific cooperation and knowledge exchange with the scientific subsidiary bodies of the UNFCCC and the CBD are increased;

(b) Increased mutual use of the material produced by the scientific subsidiary bodies of the three Rio Conventions.<sup>3</sup>

8. Enhancing scientific cooperation between the scientific subsidiary bodies of the UNCCD, CBD and UNFCCC was discussed during several CST Bureau meetings in the biennium. The Bureau commended the activities undertaken by the secretariat in this regard and noted that in the long term, scientific cooperation and interaction could involve the CST Bureau to a greater extent. In the current biennium the CST has not yet addressed cooperation with the scientific subsidiary bodies of the UNFCCC and the CBD, or interactions between climate change adaptation, drought mitigation and the restoration of degraded lands, taking into consideration that there were other issues taking priority.

9. The Chair of the CST participated in some meetings relating to the CBD process, including one of the preparatory meetings towards the establishment of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Time constraints caused by overlaps between meetings of different Conventions prevented the attendance of the CST Chair or representatives of UNCCD at more meetings.

10. In addition, the CBD and the UNFCCC contributed to the scientific peer-review process for the refinement of the set of UNCCD impact indicators and associated methodologies, as described in chapter III.

11. The secretariat's work in support of the CST was guided by its own expected accomplishments, which are supporting the expected accomplishments of the CST, as follows:

(a) The secretariat effectively supports the CST in establishing modalities for cooperation with the scientific subsidiary bodies of the UNFCCC and the CBD;

(b) The secretariat effectively supports the CST in addressing interlinkages between the agenda of the CST and the agendas of other organizations and bodies relating to interactions between climate change adaptation, drought mitigation and the restoration of degraded lands.<sup>4</sup>

12. In its efforts towards reaching those expected accomplishments, the secretariat explored possible modalities for cooperation or information exchange between the scientific subsidiary bodies of the UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD, building on document FCCC/SBSTA/2004/INF.19 on options for enhanced cooperation among the three Rio conventions, which was prepared jointly by the secretariats of the CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD in 2004, and document UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/14/6/Add.1 of February 2010, which presents proposed elements for a joint work programme between the three Rio conventions.

13. Options towards enhancing scientific cooperation between the scientific subsidiary bodies of the UNCCD, CBD and UNFCCC were also discussed during the April 2011 meeting of the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) of the three Rio conventions, which regularly assembles the executive secretaries of the three conventions. The meeting agreed on

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<sup>3</sup> Decision 1/COP.9, annex I, expected accomplishments 3.4.1 and 3.4.2, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Decision 1/COP.9, annex IV, expected accomplishments 3.4.1 and 3.4.2, respectively.

addressing common thematic issues instead of placing institutional cooperation as a premise; i.e. to take an issue-based approach as a basis for cooperation on scientific matters, focusing on action to be taken.

14. By linking CST activities on scientific cooperation to activities on monitoring and assessment and on knowledge management, it is expected that scientific cooperation will be strengthened in the next biennium. Towards that aim, the memorandum of understanding between the UNCCD and the CBD that has been developed in the past year contains provisions relating to the identification of common indicators between The Strategy and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including the 20 Aichi targets, of the CBD. It also contains provisions on linking the existing CBD database of good practices and lessons learned to efforts of the CST to set up a knowledge management system.

### **III. Scientific cooperation between the Committee on Science and Technology, the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Facility and relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations**

15. Cooperation with the GEF-STAP and other relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations is not only focused to support the above-mentioned outcome 3.4 of The Strategy but also aspires, *inter alia*, to support outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 of The Strategy, defined, respectively, as follows:

(a) National monitoring and vulnerability assessment on biophysical and socio-economic trends in affected countries are supported;

(b) A baseline based on the most robust data available on biophysical and socio-economic trends is developed and relevant scientific approaches are gradually harmonized.<sup>5</sup>

#### **A. Scientific cooperation on support to national monitoring and vulnerability assessment on biophysical and socio-economic trends in affected countries**

16. By its decision 17/COP.9, the COP requested the secretariat, under the guidance of the CST Bureau and using an iterative process, to develop proposals to refine the set of impact indicators and associated methodologies, taking account, *inter alia*, of possible synergy with relevant programmes, projects and institutions, including those associated with the other Rio conventions.

17. Decision 10/COP.9 urges stakeholders to look for synergy in monitoring environmental conventions through the use of similar indicators and similar methodological approaches relating to data collection and assistance for affected country Parties for the preparation of national reports.

18. The iterative process for the refinement of the set of impact indicators was designed to be participatory and formative.<sup>6</sup> In order to provide a scientific foundation for furthering the refinement of the indicators, a scientific peer-review process was carried out in the period from August 2010 to August 2011. The subsequent review process included an initial expert review, a technical workshop and a global public consultation. A total of 104

<sup>5</sup> Decision 3/COP.8, annex, paragraph 11, outcomes 3.1 and 3.2.

<sup>6</sup> Document ICCD/COP(10)/CST/2.

technical experts worldwide participated, including representatives of the GEF-STAP and of the following conventions, bodies and relevant specialized agencies of the United Nations: CBD, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), UNFCCC, United Nations University (UNU), United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH), WMO, and the World Bank.

19. In particular, the GEF-STAP, in the context of its work programme for the financial year 2011, which includes advisory work on indicators to inform GEF investments in the land degradation focal area, contributed to all iterations of the scientific peer-review process. A more detailed account of cooperation with the GEF to support progress in measuring the implementation of strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of The Strategy is contained in document ICCD/CST(S-2)/8.

20. One of the critical outputs of the scientific peer review was the refinement of the structure of the indicator set into a hierarchy, making it possible to distinguish what to measure (general indicators) and how to measure (metrics/proxies). The proposed refinement metrics/proxies were obtained from WMO, CBD, and two major indicator development activities:

- (a) The Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA)/World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT);
- (b) UNU-INWEH/GEF KM:Land Initiative (KM:Land).

21. The scientific peer review of the proposed impact indicators concluded that there was no mechanism for coordination and collaboration between organizations working on the proposed impact indicators and the underlying data sets, which are also at different stages of development and implementation. It was thus recommended that the secretariat develop a proposal for the establishment, at COP 10, of a taskforce of institutional partners, as described in document ICCD/COP(10)/CST/2.

22. As part of the iterative process reviewing the proposed set of impact indicators, a pilot exercise with 11 illustrative countries has been initiated, to occur during July–October 2011. It aims to produce evidence, examples and recommendations on the national production and reporting of the impact indicators, in preparation for the 2012–2013 reporting and review process. Some of the piloting countries are supported by the FAO LADA project. More detailed information on the pilot impact tracking exercise is contained in document ICCD/COP(10)/CST/INF.2.

23. Decision 19/COP.9 invited the CST, with the support of the secretariat, to consult with the LADA programme as it consolidates the agreed upon impact indicators relating to land degradation and the related methodologies. In addition to the involvement of LADA referred to above, a meeting between LADA and the UNCCD secretariat was organized in Bonn, several exchanges took place through conference calls, and the UNCCD secretariat participated in meetings of the LADA steering committee.

24. During its meeting on 19–20 May 2011 the CST Bureau discussed scientific cooperation between the CST and the GEF-STAP. The Bureau commended the collaboration between the secretariat and the GEF-STAP and suggested that a GEF-STAP member or advisor could be invited to a future Bureau meeting to further strengthen the collaboration.

25. In the next biennium (2012–2013), it is expected that the collaboration between CST and other bodies and organizations will be greatly strengthened by focusing on networking and collaborative activities on each UNCCD impact indicator.

## **B. Scientific cooperation on drought mitigation**

26. The UNCCD and WMO secretariats have a long history of collaboration dating back to the adoption of the UNCCD. In the biennium, meetings between the executive secretaries and senior staff of UNCCD and WMO have been organized in order to further increase the level of cooperation. During a meeting in March 2011, representatives from UNCCD and WMO identified priority areas for collaboration, which have been developed into a joint action plan. Collaboration foreseen includes the promotion of drought policies at national level, through, inter alia, the organization of a proposed High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy in 2012, and cooperation in the development and launching of a global drought portal in collaboration with other interested partners.

## **C. Cooperation and exchange on knowledge management**

27. In supporting the knowledge management activities of UNCCD, the secretariat is further taking part in the MEA Information and Knowledge Management (IKM) initiative, which is facilitated and supported by UNEP and which brings together 12 global multilateral environmental agreements (MEA) to develop harmonized and interoperable information systems in support of knowledge management activities.

28. The secretariat is taking part in InforMEA,<sup>7</sup> the United Nations information portal on MEAs, which is the first project of the IKM initiative. InforMEA aggregates data and information from participating MEAs, including COP decisions, contact details of national focal points and official documents.

29. Secretariat activities on knowledge management included cooperation with other organizations; for example, the GEF attended a meeting organized by the UNCCD to discuss knowledge management activities of UNCCD and the GEF. It is foreseen that knowledge exchanges and other collaborative activities will be continued in 2012–2013.

## **IV. Conclusions**

**30. Scientific networking and cooperation is a priority of CST work. It has been considerably strengthened in the proposed draft multi-year workplan for the CST (2012–2015), contained in document ICCD/CRIC(10)/7-ICCD/COP(10)/CST/10, by linking scientific networking and cooperation to the activities on monitoring and assessment, drought and knowledge management.**

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<sup>7</sup> <<http://informea.org>>.