



Convention to Combat Desertification

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Item 9 (b) of the provisional agenda

**Strengthening the support for scientific, research and training institutions in implementing The Strategy
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification fellowship programme**

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification fellowship programme

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 16/COP.8, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat to establish a UNCCD fellowship programme, subject to voluntary funding.

By its decision 20/COP.9, the COP further requested the secretariat, under the guidance of the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), “to take the necessary actions to further develop the proposal for a revised UNCCD fellowship programme.” By the same decision, the COP requested the Bureau of the CST to develop, with the support of the secretariat, detailed criteria and mechanisms for selection of scientific institutions and fellowship candidates in line with the revised programme. Furthermore, this decision encouraged the secretariat, the Bureau of the CST, agencies of the United Nations and intergovernmental organizations “to promote the involvement of scientific institutions with the capacity to do so in contributing to the implementation of a revised UNCCD fellowship programme.” The same decision invited Parties and other organizations with the capacity to do so to make voluntary contributions to support the UNCCD fellowship programme.

This document presents a revised vision for the participation of institutions and individuals in the UNCCD fellowship programme, including, two options for the implementation of the programme. The CST may wish to provide guidance on how to proceed in order to further develop and operationalize this programme, for consideration and, as appropriate, adoption by the COP.

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I. Introduction

1. By its decision 1/COP.6, paragraph 29, the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) invited the secretariat to support the networking of scientific institutions, technology transfer to developing countries, training at universities, internships and scholarships.
2. In its deliberations on ways and means of promoting know-how and technology transfer, the third session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) supported the formulation of a fellowship programme. According to the report of CRIC 3 (ICCD/CRIC(3)/9), the Committee recommended that fellowship programmes for postgraduate and young scientists that aim to make fuller use of the various specialized academic institutions on land degradation and desertification should be supported.
3. The UNCCD secretariat, in its document ICCD/COP(7)/CST/INF.1, presented a first proposal of a UNCCD fellowship programme, including the benefits of such a programme, its proposed characteristics and funding aspects. The proposed fellowship programme was intended to provide specialist training for individuals working in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas and consisted of short-term types of training, such as short-term courses, internships, or intensive study tours, among others.
4. By its decision 15/COP.7, the COP invited the CST Bureau to establish a need for a specific UNCCD fellowship programme, taking account of existing fellowship programmes and reports of the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA), an activity funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) with the aim of assisting countries to assess their capacity for meeting their obligations under multilateral environmental agreements. The Bureau was also invited to present its findings to the eighth session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).
5. Following up on decision 15/COP.7, the CST Bureau surveyed 152 institutions from developed country Parties that had awareness-raising and training activities in order to seek their views on the establishment of a fellowship programme. The Bureau also reviewed the fellowship programmes of several other international organizations. In line with the aforementioned COP 7 decision, the Bureau also considered the main conclusions and recommendations of 10 action plans developed under the NCSAs. The outcome of these activities and a proposal for the creation of a UNCCD fellowship programme are contained in document ICCD/COP(8)/CST/5.
6. By its decision 16/COP.8, the COP requested the secretariat to establish a UNCCD fellowship programme, subject to voluntary funding, according to the terms of reference contained in document ICCD/COP(8)/CST/5. Pursuant to this decision, the UNCCD secretariat sent a letter of enquiry to representatives of over 150 organizations worldwide in order to request support for the fellowship programme. Nineteen responses offering support were received.
7. In document ICCD/COP(9)/CST/6, it was proposed that the fellowship programme be revised to align it more closely with the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy).
8. At its ninth session, the COP, by its decision 20/COP.9, requested the secretariat, under the guidance of the CST Bureau, to take the necessary actions to further develop the proposal for a revised UNCCD fellowship programme. It also requested the CST Bureau to develop, with the support of the secretariat, detailed criteria and mechanisms for selection of scientific institutions and fellowship candidates in line with the revised programme.

II. Revised vision for the participation of institutions and individuals in the fellowship programme

9. Following COP 9, capacity-related limitations prevented the secretariat from continuing to consult widely with potential partner institutions, requesting and fielding recommendations, and compiling wider ranging inputs. However, with voluntary support from various partners, progress has nevertheless been made, as detailed below.

10. On a bilateral basis, the UNCCD secretariat has been able to facilitate fellowship activities created by Parties wishing to receive fellows from affected developing countries.

11. A number of agencies of the United Nations, intergovernmental organizations and other institutions with the capacity to promote the involvement of scientific institutions in contributing to the implementation of a UNCCD fellowship programme have expressed interest during this biennium in partnering with the UNCCD secretariat on the further development of the UNCCD fellowship programme. These include the United Nations University (UNU), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the Global Network of Dryland Research Institutes (GNDRI).

12. The secretariat has received a formal expression of interest from the United Nations University (UNU), containing an offer to partner with the UNCCD secretariat in the further development of the UNCCD fellowship programme. UNU has a mission to function, *inter alia*, as an international community of scholars, a bridge between the United Nations and the international academic community, a builder of capacities in developing countries. The UNU Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH), based in Canada, has developed a model for the engagement of institutions in affected developing countries through its existing educational and diploma programmes on integrated dryland management.

13. As mentioned above, following COP 8, the secretariat sent a letter of enquiry to over 150 organizations worldwide in order to request support for the fellowship programme. The letter outlined two main practical modes of assistance required, on the one hand voluntary contributions and targeted donor support, and on the other hand additional support via fellowship opportunities from the sponsoring institution. Nineteen responses offering educational support were received, with one offering additional limited financial support.

14. Following the support and encouragement of the CST Bureau to start building institutional partnerships, the secretariat is exploring, in line with its internal capacity, ways and means on how to collaborate with UNU, UNESCO, GNDRI and other institutions that had already expressed their interest in involving fellows. The secretariat seeks to build partnerships with international institutions that have the scientific and human resource capacity to support the secretariat in the development of the UNCCD fellowship programme. In line with this approach, possible options for the future of the UNCCD fellowship programme would include either a centrally managed partnership model with pooled resources, as foreseen in previous proposals, or a multi-stakeholder model.

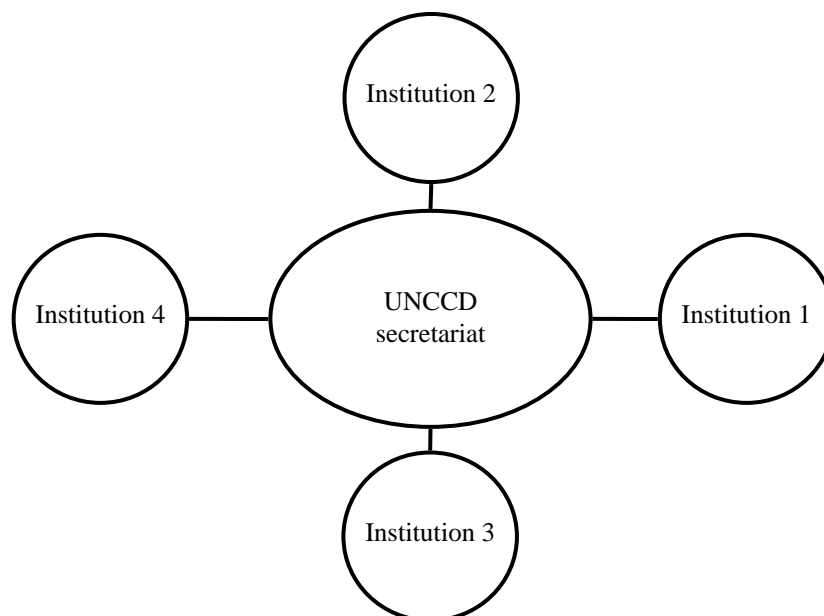
A. Centrally managed partnership model with pooled resources

15. Following a partnership model as foreseen in previous proposals, the fellowship programme would be administered by the UNCCD secretariat and funded by voluntary contributions that would be sought from as wide a range of donors as possible. Until increases in funding become available, additional methods of funding, such as private sector partnerships and university consortiums would be envisaged.

16. A visual representation of the implementation model is provided in figure 1. The figure shows the UNCCD secretariat at the centre of the fellowship programme. Participating institutions and partners would enter into partnerships with the secretariat to become a part of the fellowship programme and to access external resources.

Figure 1

Centrally managed partnership model with pooled resources



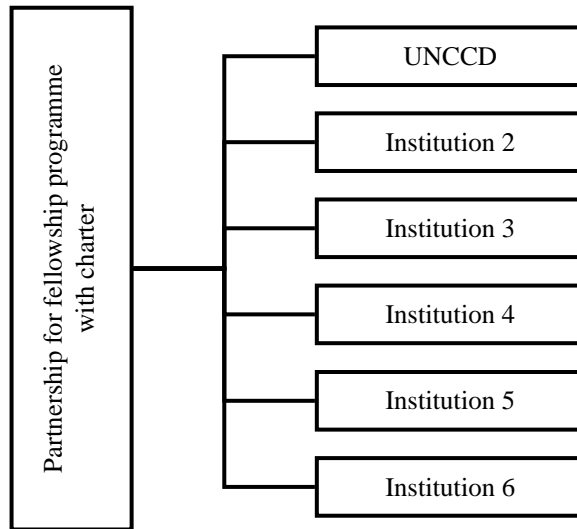
17. The UNCCD secretariat as the hub would be responsible for building a network with participating institutions and partners that complement identified gaps in the fellowship programme. Resources would be mobilized by the centre to manage the partnership and would be awarded to participating institutions and partners based on agreed criteria. The success of the model is dependent on the capacity of the secretariat to provide academic leadership and sufficient resources. This model is resource-intensive at the level of the secretariat.

B. Multi-stakeholder partnership model

18. Following a multi-stakeholder partnership model, the fellowship programme would be administered together with participating institutions. Potential partners to the fellowship programme would come together to develop practical collaborative action-oriented plans under a joint charter including a mission statement on common objectives. In contrast to the previous proposal, this model would work without centralized management or the need to pool funding. The UNCCD secretariat would provide support to establish the multi-stakeholder partnership and to prepare the action plan and then act as one of a number of equal partners.

19. Following this model, partner institutions would commit to delivering a part of the fellowship action plan, either by providing resources or by offering training opportunities to UNCCD fellows. This model would require at least some resources to be allocated by all participating partners from the outset, including the secretariat. A visual representation of this model is presented in figure 2.

Figure 2
Multi-stakeholder partnership model



III. Conclusions and recommendations

20. Considering the COP 8 decision to establish a UNCCD fellowship programme, while giving due regard to decision 20/COP.9, and taking into account that other priorities in the work programme of the secretariat limit the human and financial resources available for the development of such a programme, the CST may wish to make recommendations to the COP concerning next steps towards the establishment of a UNCCD fellowship programme.

21. Specifically, the CST may wish to consider the merits and drawbacks of the options presented and make recommendations on how to proceed in the building of partnerships with international institutions and organizations.
