



Convention to Combat Desertification

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

Improving mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention

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Note by the secretariat

Summary

The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy), adopted by the Conference of the Parties (COP) in its decision 3/COP.8, recognizes that regional coordination is an important component in implementing the Convention, and that coordination mechanisms must be responsive to existing and emerging needs, capacities and the specific issues of regions. In its decision 3/COP.9, the COP called upon the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism (GM) to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of Regional Coordination Mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of the Convention, as requested in The Strategy. And in its decision 3/COP.10, the COP called on the Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the GM to, inter alia, strengthen their cooperation at regional level through ensuring the effective implementation of region-specific issues of the joint work programme, and facilitating cooperation among affected country Parties within the regions.

The present documents details the actions taken by the Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the GM in fulfilment of their mandates specified in decision 3/COP.10.

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I. Background

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), by its decision 3/COP.8, adopted the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy). Paragraph 29 of that decision recognizes the importance of regional coordination in implementing the Convention and The Strategy. At its ninth session the COP adopted decision 3/COP.9 calling on the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD and the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism (GM) to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCMs), as requested in The Strategy, so as 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.

2. At its tenth session the COP reviewed the progress made on the implementation of decision 3/COP.9, taking into account the role of RCMs in the implementation of the Convention and The Strategy. It noted document ICCD/COP(10)/MISC.1 containing conclusions and recommendations for improving the effectiveness of existing Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC); on the possibilities of establishing an RCU for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE); and on the need to improve the capacity, effectiveness and efficiency of the RCUs.

3. Based on the above-mentioned review, the COP adopted decision 3/COP.10 that, *inter alia*:

(a) Called on the Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the GM to strengthen their cooperation at regional level through ensuring the effective implementation of region-specific issues of the joint work programme, and facilitating cooperation among affected country Parties within the regions;

(b) Invited the secretariat and the GM to work in a cooperative and coordinated manner within the framework of the RCMs of the regions in order to define and implement their respective common regional priorities as delivered for the consideration of the COP;

(c) Requested the secretariat and the GM to continue to support, within their respective mandates and available resources, the implementation of regional priorities as identified by the regions;

(d) Called on the Executive Secretary, at the request of and in collaboration with the affected country Parties of the regions concerned, to support the effective functioning of the thematic programme networks (TPNs), subject to the provision of the necessary financial and technical support by country Parties;

(e) Requested the secretariat and the GM to facilitate the preparation and submission of reports on the implementation of the subregional and regional action programmes through, *inter alia*, the provision of technical assistance as required to the regional institutions acting as reporting entities as listed in the annex to the decision.

4. Decision 3/COP.10 requested the Executive Secretary to report to the COP at its eleventh session on the implementation of the decision and the results achieved. To this end, this document outlines the activities carried out by the secretariat and the GM in their efforts to comply with these stipulations. It also offers conclusions and recommendations for consideration by the COP. Parties may note that the RCMs are also considered in the context of the mid-term evaluation of The Strategy. This document may therefore be read in

conjunction with the report of the Intersessional Working Group on this evaluation, which is contained in document ICCD/COP(11)/21.

II. Institutional arrangements

5. In carrying out the mandate specified in decision 3/COP.10, and bearing in mind the recommendations contained in document ICCD/COP(10)/MISC.1 as they pertain to the effectiveness and efficiency of the RCUs in facilitating regional coordination, the secretariat reviewed existing host institutions and host country agreements for the RCUs. It also took action to have such agreements concluded where they did not exist. This chapter details these actions and the results achieved.

A. Africa

6. The RCU for Africa is presently hosted at the African Development Bank (AfDB), which is temporarily based in Tunis, Tunisia. It is planned to transfer the RCU to another institution in a country hosting more organizations and institutions with regional mandates.

7. Having considered several options, the secretariat opened discussions with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). UNECA has its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where the presence of several regional institutions would make it much easier for the RCU to carry out its role of facilitating regional coordination. This consultation is expected to be completed by 2014. Once a host agreement is signed with the UNECA, the secretariat will enter into a host country agreement with Ethiopia.

8. The transfer of the Africa RCU to UNECA will create some uniformity in the institutional hosting of existing RCUs, as the RCU in Asia is hosted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the RCU in LAC is hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). With the transfer of the Africa RCU to Addis Ababa, the secretariat is determined to maintain the excellent relations established with the AfDB.

B. Asia

9. ESCAP in Bangkok, Thailand, continues to be the host institution for the Asia RCU. This arrangement has proven to work very well,¹ and continues to be very beneficial to the RCU in carrying out its function of supporting regional coordination with country Parties, United Nations agencies and other organizations, and making communication and ultimately cooperation and collaboration more efficient and effective.

10. Following the recommendation contained in paragraph 110(a) of document ICCD/COP(10)/MISC.1, the secretariat wrote to the Government of Thailand seeking to open discussions on the conclusion of a host country agreement. This process is ongoing. The secretariat will continue to engage the Government of Thailand with the aim to complete an agreement in early 2014.

C. Latin America and the Caribbean

11. In accordance with the recommendation contained in paragraph 110(b) of document ICCD/COP(10)/MISC.1, and in keeping with the mandate granted in paragraph 5 of

¹ Document ICCD/COP(10)/MISC.1, paragraphs 54 to 57.

decision 3/COP.9, the secretariat considered all options for institutional arrangements for the LAC RCU, including keeping the RCU in Mexico City. The conclusion was that the headquarters of ECLAC in Santiago, Chile, would be best suited to house the RCU. A host agreement was therefore concluded with ECLAC, and the RCU was transferred on 25 February 2012. It started effective functioning on 5 March 2012.

12. As ECLAC has a host country agreement with Chile that covers all organizations of the United Nations system housed at its headquarters, there is no need to conclude an additional host country agreement between the secretariat and Chile relating to the RCU.

D. Northern Mediterranean

13. Some country Parties of this region had in the past indicated that the establishment of an RCU for this region was not a priority. They had therefore not requested the assistance of the secretariat to establish one. Notwithstanding this general position, the Government of Turkey, on the occasion of a recent coordination meeting of members of the region, expressed an interest in hosting an RCU for this region. The secretariat in turn expressed its willingness to assist in the establishment of this RCU, once there is general agreement among the concerned Parties on the acceptance of this offer.

E. Central and Eastern Europe

14. Although there is broad agreement among the Parties of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) on the need for an RCM for that region, none of the offers made for the hosting of this institution met all of the basic requirements for doing so.²

15. The secretariat has restated through official communications to the Parties its commitment to carry out its mandate, given in paragraph 6 of decision 3/COP.9, to assist the region to establish an RCM. The secretariat has however appointed an officer with responsibility for providing services to this region. The appointment is at P-4 level and the officer is based at the secretariat's headquarters until the location of the RCM is decided.

F. Staffing

16. Except in the case of the LAC RCU, staffing has been maintained at the levels reported at COP 10. The staff member appointed to the LAC RCU by the GM did not move to Chile when that RCU was transferred there. At the time of the compilation of this report the GM was addressing this issue.

III. Support for the enhancement of regional cooperation

17. Paragraph 3 of decision 3/COP.9 recognises that the RCMs, may include regional committees (RCs) and in this context requests the secretariat and the GM to provide support to these committees. This chapter details the actions of the secretariat and the GM to support the functioning of the RCs, through the respective RCUs.

² Document ICCD/COP(10)/21, paragraph 105.

A. Support to regional committees

1. Africa

18. The RC for Africa held its first meeting in 2010, having received, through the RCU for Africa, technical and financial support from the secretariat and the GM to facilitate this exercise.³ Since then the secretariat and the GM have continued, within the limits of their resources, to provide solid technical support to this RC. For the period under review, i.e. from the holding of COP 10 to the present, the RCU has worked with the RC on:

- (a) Providing support for the alignment of subregional action programmes (SRAPs);
- (b) Ensuring that the Africa group has a clear and common understanding of main agenda topics of the sessions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) and COP, thereby facilitating their development of a common position on these topics;
- (c) Facilitating representation of the Africa group in the ad hoc working groups for the mid-term review of The Strategy and in contact groups for negotiations;
- (d) Mobilizing resources to organize a training workshop for African negotiators, held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in November 2012;
- (e) Initiating resource mobilization, through the Chair of the African group, to support the holding of the Africa regional meeting preparatory to COP 11;
- (f) Facilitating relevant knowledge and information sharing among Parties and their organizations.

2. Asia

19. In Asia there have been suggestions by some Parties that there is a need for an RC to help support cooperation and collaboration through better coordination, but the region has still not taken any concrete steps to establish such a committee. The secretariat has advised the Chair of the region that it is ready to support the Parties' efforts if and when they decide to establish an RC.

20. Working through the Chair and Parties, the RCU facilitated:

- (a) Through cooperation with the GM and other institutions, provision of support and mobilization of resources for the action programme alignment process;
- (b) Orientating country Parties on main topics of the agendas of the sessions of the CRIC and COP;
- (c) Guidance to effectively integrate the national action programmes (NAPs) into national strategies and other national development plans;
- (d) South–South cooperation and partnership agreements, particularly at subregional level;
- (e) The promotion of opportunities for bilateral and multilateral exchange under the umbrella of the UNCCD.

³ Document ICCD/COP(10)/21, paragraph 24.

3. Latin America and the Caribbean

21. The secretariat and the GM, through the RCU, continue to work closely with the LAC Regional Executive Committee (REC). During the period under review the RCU supported the REC in the organization of several consultative processes on specific matters relevant to the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the CRIC. The RCU also supported the REC in effective participation in the CST and CRIC Bureaux meetings, and in the dissemination of relevant information to country Parties.

4. Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe

22. The country Parties of both the Northern Mediterranean (NM) and CEE regions have determined that establishing RCs is not a requirement at this time, as they are satisfied that the services of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs are adequate for facilitating coordination among their country Parties. The secretariat and the GM therefore support efforts at coordination within these regions through working closely with their Chairs and Vice-Chairs when the circumstances so demand. In October 2011 the secretariat and the GM each appointed an officer with specific responsibility for supporting the CEE country Parties. In the case of the secretariat, this officer is further charged with assisting the coordinator of the Regional Coordination Functions unit at the secretariat's headquarters in supporting the NM country Parties.

23. The RCs can play a crucial role in supporting the regional coordination process by being a country-Party-driven centre for strengthening RCMs. The RCUs have very limited staff and resources, so it is of real importance for country Parties to become more involved through the RCs and the existing relevant regional institutions if the RCMs are to be more effective.

B. Support to facilitate the implementation of regional priorities

24. Even though each region has identified specific issues it wishes to address, there are many commonalities in the priorities identified, such as the alignment and implementation of NAPs and enhancement of capacities to facilitate the implementation process. This section outlines the actions undertaken by the secretariat and the GM in accordance with their mandates specified in paragraphs 2 and 3 of decision 3/COP.10.

1. Identification of regional priorities and adjustment of the work programmes of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism

25. At the beginning of the period under review the secretariat and the GM, through the RCUs, worked with the RCs of Africa and LAC, and with the Chair of Asia, in trying to define the regional priorities of Annexes I, III and II, respectively. For the CEE, the secretariat organized and hosted at its headquarters in December 2012 a meeting of the representatives of that region in the Bureaux of the COP and its subsidiary bodies. These representatives discussed, inter alia, the defining of the region's priorities, and also agreed on the composition of a task force to oversee the development of their regional action programme (RAP).

26. In compliance with paragraphs 2 and 3 of decision 3/COP.10, the secretariat and the GM revised and adjusted their individual and their joint work programmes, incorporating the priorities identified by the regions. This adjustment was done bearing in mind the resources available for the activities needed for implementing these priorities, and so the secretariat and the GM focused on activities that were feasible with the resources available.

2. Facilitation of national action programme alignment

27. The alignment and implementation of NAPs were identified as top priorities for the regions. In response, the secretariat and the GM cooperated and collaborated in the organization of a first series of workshops on the alignment process in all regions in September 2011.⁴ In 2013 the secretariat and the GM, together with other partners including the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and relevant subregional organizations where they exist, began a second series of workshops focusing on capacity-building to facilitate NAP alignment. These workshops are held at the subregional level, and six more are scheduled to be held by the end of 2013.

28. These exercises are complemented by the secretariat and the GM in several ways: by providing technical advice and support to individual country Parties upon request (subject to the availability of technical expertise and human and financial resources); through development of a series of technical documents including a pedagogic tool (being finalized) on the national action programme/integrated financial strategy (NAP/IFS) process; and by the establishment of an online help desk on the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) portal.

29. The actions of the secretariat and the GM relating to SRAPs and RAPs were limited by many factors, especially limited financial resources.⁵ Some SRAPs did benefit from technical assistance provided by the secretariat and the GM both from headquarters and through RCUs. The secretariat is also providing technical guidance for the further development and alignment of the RAP for Asia and the CEE.

30. The level of country Party commitment to the SRAP and RAP process generally still leaves much to be desired. Country Parties being proactive in driving the RCM process and supporting their effective functioning will no doubt benefit the SRAP/RAP development and alignment process.

3. Support for building capacity and partnerships

31. As well as supporting capacity-building to facilitate the alignment process, the secretariat launched, at CRIC 11, the capacity-building marketplace on sustainable land management. This marketplace is a virtual one-stop-shop on all capacity-building issues relevant to the implementation of the Convention and The Strategy. It offers a wide range of opportunities including partnership building, fellowships, scholarships, practical training, e-learning and volunteering. Over the period under review the GM organized a number of subregional capacity-strengthening workshops on resource mobilization for affected country Parties in Africa, Asia, LAC and NM.

32. The secretariat and the GM are strengthening and developing their cooperation and collaboration with several regional and/or subregional organizations and institutions (see table 2 below). The aim is to get these bodies to support the capacity-building process at all levels, with the broad goal of enhancing partnership at the subregional and regional levels. These actions are slowly bearing fruit as some of these organizations actively support alignment and implementation, as well as the reporting process.

33. The secretariat has developed an idea for a capacity-building fair to be held regularly at COP sessions. This fair will demonstrate to the public the specific capacities required for implementation of the Convention, while at the same time promoting the application of existing capacities, and helping to spawn the development of additional necessary capacities. The first of these fairs is scheduled for COP 12.

⁴ Document ICCD/CRIC(11)/6, paragraphs 10–16.

⁵ Document ICCD/CRIC(11)/6, paragraphs 17–23.

34. In Africa, the secretariat and the GM, through the RCU, collaborated with the Government of Burkina Faso, the African Union and the UNEP Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (UNEP/DELIC), in organizing a training exercise on “Negotiations on Multilateral Environmental Agreement.” This exercise, held in Ouagadougou in November 2012, focused on improving the participants’ skills for negotiations within the UNCCD process.

35. The RCMs can be a mechanism to assist in capacity-building through South–South cooperation and the development of bilateral and multilateral partnership at the regional level. Apart from Africa and some tendencies shown for interregional cooperation between the CEE and NM, Parties are not using the RCMs to facilitate the process of building capacity and partnerships.

4. Awareness-raising

36. The secretariat and the GM continue to place emphasis on supporting awareness-raising, which was identified as a priority in most regions. Most of the actions undertaken covered all regions. These included:

- (a) The publication and widespread dissemination of various awareness-raising materials;
- (b) Participating in radio and television interviews;
- (c) Strong support for national awareness-raising activities such as the celebration of the World Day to Combat Desertification, through the provision of various forms of informational material;
- (d) Participation in the celebration of the World Water Day and World Environmental Day jointly with partners;
- (e) Continuing the production and dissemination of the news link “UNCCD Alert.”;
- (f) Participating in round table exchanges at regional and global levels;
- (g) Attending meetings and consultations of regional organizations and institutions to promote awareness of the UNCCD at the policy and technical levels;
- (h) Public lectures at universities and other institutions;
- (i) Creation of regional pages on the UNCCD website;
- (j) The use of social media (Twitter and Facebook) to reach a wider public at all levels;
- (k) Special publications relating to specific issues of the UNCCD process including financing implementation at the country level.

37. The secretariat launched a new version of the UNCCD website in March 2012. This website contains designated pages for each region that provide a basis for presenting various types of information, ranging from news and success stories to detailed country profiles relevant to each region. These pages are yet to be fully developed, and the secretariat will involve countries as well as regional and subregional organizations in building and updating the content. According to a recent website analysis conducted by the secretariat, these pages are among the most visited within the website, so it seems that there is a demand for their further development.

38. Two regional workshops for environment journalists were organized, one for Asia (23–25 May 2012, Chifeng City, China), and the other for Francophone Africa (29–31 May 2012, Algiers, Algeria). These workshops helped build capacity among journalists on issues relating to desertification/land degradation and drought as well as a network of journalists

in each region. A regional workshop for LAC is planned for later in 2013. Details on these workshops can be found in document ICCD/COP(11)/2.

5. Support to facilitating the involvement of civil society organizations in the regional processes

39. For the period under review efforts by the secretariat and the GM to promote participation by civil society organizations (CSOs) in regional meetings were seriously constrained by a lack of financial resources. This issue of resources must be addressed if a sustained participation of CSOs in regional meetings and technical exercises is to be guaranteed in the future. CSOs have, however, been invited – and in eligible cases and where resources allowed, sponsored – to attend CRIC 11.

40. The capacity-building marketplace is a new and real opportunity for CSOs to become more involved in the UNCCD process at all levels. They have equal opportunity to take full advantage of the offers and possibilities presented on the marketplace (see paragraph 31 above), which targets the CSO community as a special partner, and the secretariat has so advised them.

41. In the case of LAC, the RCU supported the non-governmental organization Earth Action in the preparation of a proposal to be submitted to the European Union aimed at strengthening CSOs in Latin America. The RCU also follows the meetings of the CSOs, and supports the dissemination of their information in the region. The secretariat also collaborated with the accredited CSOs from CEE to promote awareness-raising among CSOs in that region through information exchange, thereby expanding CSO networking.

6. Support to the facilitation of the development of a knowledge management/sharing system

42. The secretariat has developed country databases that are regularly updated. The LAC RCU has been collecting information and organizing databases at country level in specific areas, such as scientific and monitoring institutions and parliamentary commissions. Much information along thematic lines, including forestry, agroforestry and best practices in sustainable land management (SLM), has been organized in databases, manuals and guides.

C. Facilitating cooperation among affected country Parties within the regions

43. Paragraph 1 of decision 3/COP.10 called on the secretariat and the GM to facilitate cooperation among affected country Parties within regions as a way of ensuring the effective implementation of region-specific issues of the joint work programme. This chapter highlights the actions undertaken to facilitate this cooperation.

1. Regional and other meetings

44. In accordance with decision 11/COP.9, the secretariat organized and held regional meetings for all five Annexes of the Convention in Bonn in April 2013, immediately before CRIC 11. These meetings allowed Parties and other interested regional stakeholders to come together, inter alia:

- (a) To discuss and form regional positions relating to the agenda and issues of CRIC 11;
- (b) To share their experiences and exchange information on the second cycle of the fourth reporting process, particularly relating to the PRAIS;
- (c) To discuss regional priorities for future implementation.

45. The secretariat also facilitated and supported the organization of the regional consultations that took place every day during CRIC 11. These provided further opportunities for affected country Parties to discuss ways and means to deepen their communication, cooperation and collaboration at regional level.

46. The GM collaborated with the secretariat in all of these exercises by providing technical assistance and staff.

47. Regional meetings preparatory to COP 11 will be held for all Annexes, providing the regions with opportunities:

(a) To discuss and form regional positions relating to the agenda and issues of COP 11;

(b) To strengthen cooperation and collaboration within the regions through direct exchanges by national focal points;

(c) To discuss broader issues concerning the UNCCD process in their regions.

48. In addition to the actions detailed in paragraphs 42–45 above, the secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), supported and facilitated a special meeting of scientific and technical correspondents from Africa. This meeting, held during CRIC 11, allowed country Parties to discuss the outcomes of the Third Special Session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST S-3), and those of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference. The findings were communicated to national focal points.

49. During CRIC 11 the secretariat also supported and facilitated an interregional meeting between the country Parties of the CEE and NM. At this meeting country Parties considered ways and means of developing interregional cooperation so as to facilitate improved implementation of the Convention in both regions. And, in the specific case of the CEE, in an effort to further promote cooperation between the Parties, the secretariat supported and facilitated a meeting of Bureaux members, as reported in paragraph 25 above.

2. Support to facilitate practical cooperation

50. As outlined in paragraphs 27 and 28 above; and in accordance with decision 1/COP.9 the secretariat and the GM have held, and are holding, a series of subregional workshops to support capacity-building to facilitate alignment of action programmes with The Strategy. A major objective of these workshops is to facilitate exchanges between affected country Parties, which are actively encouraged to share their experiences and expertise, thereby building partnerships and enriching the alignment process at all levels.

51. The establishment of the UNCCD capacity-building marketplace is another means by which the secretariat consciously encourages cooperation among affected country Parties within their regions and beyond. The marketplace is dedicated in part to promoting South–South cooperation, collaboration and partnership in every aspect of capacity-building. It invites affected country Parties to share their success stories, experiences and expertise with others, specifically as these relate to capacity-building.

52. There is much room for more practical intraregional cooperation between country Parties. This could be enhanced through:

(a) The Parties being proactive in seeking this cooperation;

(b) The RCs taking the lead in driving this process;

(c) Better organized and functioning RCMs;

- (d) Implementation of the RAPs, SRAPs and thematic programme networks (TPNs).

3. Support to facilitate synergy

53. Building synergy among the Rio conventions at the national level and mainstreaming the NAPs are two other areas in which the secretariat and the GM have encouraged and promoted cooperation among affected country Parties within regions. Here the focus is on encouraging country Parties to share information on the different approaches they use to ensure that these processes take place at the national level. These issues have been and are being addressed at the action programme alignment exercises discussed in paragraphs 25 and 26 above. The issues of synergy are further addressed through designing and conducting, together with the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CDB), a session on synergy during the GEF extended constituency workshops that gather the national focal points of the three Rio conventions, the GEF political and operational focal points, and representatives of CSOs. These sessions produce recommendations by the very persons leading the implementation of these conventions on the ground, on how to make synergy effective at the country level. Finally, the secretariat is working with the secretariat of the CBD in considering joint exercises where the focus will be on synergy between these processes.

54. Between January and September 2012, the GM organized a series of subregional workshops on integrating climate change financing into SLM strategies. These brought together the UNCCD and UNFCCC national focal points and the GEF operational focal points to exchange knowledge and share lessons learned on the synergistic implementation of the conventions, and on how to make use of the climate change financial mechanisms to promote this process. In Africa, the workshops were held in collaboration with relevant subregional organizations and with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNECA. During CRIC 11, the Africa RCU organized a side event where the outcomes of these workshops were shared. The GM disseminated this information to all country Parties.

4 The thematic programme networks

55. Paragraph 5 of decision 3/COP.10 calls on the Executive Secretary, at the request of and in collaboration with the affected country Parties of the regions concerned, to support the effective functioning of the thematic programme networks (TPNs), subject to the provision of the necessary financial and technical support by country Parties. However, the support was not provided, so the secretariat was unable to carry out the given mandate.

56. Without predictable and adequate technical and financial resources that would allow many of the problems faced with the operation of the TPNs to be addressed (see document ICCD/CRIC(9)/12), these networks would never be able to fulfil the role foreseen for them. Here again, having effective RCMs can play a decisive role in the functioning of the TPNs. Indeed in Africa, there is now an attempt to address the TPN and RAP issues through the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment “flagship programmes” which include “combating desertification for SLM in Africa”. This makes the issue thoroughly regional as regards policy design and implementation.

D. Support in facilitating subregional and regional reporting

57. In accordance with paragraphs 6 and 7 of decision 3/COP.10, the secretariat invited affected country Parties of the regions and subregions which had not, during COP 10, identified a reporting entity to support the preparation of their subregional and regional reports, to do so as soon as practicable. All except the Central Asian subregion informed the

secretariat of their chosen institutions. Africa and Asia also identified institutions to facilitate the regional reports. The CEE Chair informed the secretariat that the region had no RAP or SRAP and would therefore not participate in this part of the reporting exercise.

58. With the exception of the African Union, all of the identified institutions informed the secretariat that they lack the financial resources needed to prepare a comprehensive regional and/or subregional report.

59. The secretariat, bearing in mind the importance of these reports, responded by deciding to provide a maximum of USD 15,000 to each institution that officially requested financial assistance. These institutions were advised of this decision and invited to submit an official request, with a budget showing the intended expenditure of sums requested. They were also informed that they must sign a memorandum of understanding with the secretariat before receiving the funds. Table 1 shows the results of the grant process, listing the institutions identified, the regions and subregions, and those institutions that received funding.

Table 1
Funding provided to support the subregional and regional reporting process

<i>Reporting entity</i>	<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Regional Implementation Annex</i>	<i>Region or subregion</i>	<i>Remark</i>
Central African Forests Commission	COMIFAC	IGO/SRAP	I	Central Africa	Funds granted
Economic Community of West African States	ECOWAS	IGO/SRAP	I	Western Africa	No request made
Andean Community of Nations	CAN ^b	SRAP	III	Andean	Technical problems in receiving the funds
Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands ^a	ACSAD	IGO/SRAP	II	West Asia	The organization was unable to undertake the exercise. Independent consultant hired instead
Arab Maghreb Union	AMU	IGO/SRAP	I	Northern Africa	No request made
Central American Integration System	SICA ^b	SRAP	III	Mesoamerica	No request made
Intergovernmental Authority on Development	IGAD	IGO/SRAP	I	Eastern Africa	Funds granted
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development	ICIMOD	SRAP	II	South Asia	Funds granted
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme	SPREP	IGO/SRAP	II	Pacific	Funds granted
Southern African Development Community	SADC	IGO/SRAP	II	Southern Africa	SADC official requirements prevented the receipt of funds directly

<i>Reporting entity</i>	<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Regional Implement ation Annex</i>	<i>Region or subregion</i>	<i>Remark</i>
Independent consultant		SRAP	II	Central Asia	No request made, consultant hired ^c
The Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development	CNIRD	SRAP	III	Caribbean	Funds granted
The Center for People and Forests	RECOFTC	SRAP/RAP	III	Southeast Asia and Asia	Funds granted
Northeast Asia Desertification/Land Degradation and Drought Network		SRAP	III	Northeast Asia	Funds granted
African Union	AU	IGO/RAP	I	Africa	No funds required

^a The Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands, even though identified by the Parties of West Asia, and having demonstrated interest in undertaking the exercise, was unable to do so due to prevailing social and political challenges in its host country. In this particular case the secretariat supported the reporting process by hiring a consultant to help facilitate the preparation of the report.

^b In the cases of CAN and SICA it was not possible to transfer the funds due to constraints at the secretariat and at these institutions. These limitations will continue to hinder the participation of the latter in the UNCCD process unless a way is found that allows relevant administrative and financial arrangements to be put in place, so that these institutions may receive funding support when this is offered.

^c The secretariat also financed a consultancy to support the preparation of the Central Asia subregional report as it was ascertained that the identified subregional institution was not in a position to prepare the report in time for submission to the CRIC.

Note: IGO = intergovernmental organization; RAP = regional action programme; SRAP = subregional action programme.

E. Cooperation and collaboration with regional institutions in support of regional implementation

60. For the period under review the secretariat, through the various RCUs and where resources allowed, sought to enhance the commitment of subregional and regional institutions to the UNCCD implementation process. This was done through, inter alia, active cooperation and collaboration with and within various bodies considered to have a stake in SLM issues and the broader objectives of the Convention. This strengthening of direct relations with these institutions redound not only to raise the profile of the Convention, but also to foster the process of regional coordination and broadening of partnerships through the RCMs. Table 2 shows the various subregional and regional meetings/events and or standing bodies and committees in which the secretariat participated during the period under review.

Table 2
Participation of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism in subregional and regional forums

<i>Subregion</i>	<i>Meeting/event/standing body</i>	<i>Organizing institution</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Benefit to the UNCCD process</i>
Africa				
Central Africa	10th Meeting of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP)	CBFP	March 2012	Advocacy on desertification/ land degradation and drought
West Africa	Workshop on national action programme alignment in West Africa	Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)	March 2013	To support the national action programme alignment process in West Africa
Central Africa	6 th meeting of the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC) UNCCD working group	COMIFAC/German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) Global Mechanism (GM)/UNCCD	March 2013	Preparing national focal points for CRIC 11 Discussion on the alignment process. Review of subregional action programme implementation
	11th TerrAfrica Executive Committee Meeting	The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)	April 2013	Strengthening synergies between TerrAfrica and UNCCD implementation
East and Southern Africa	Development Partners' Joint Mission to Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)	COMESA	April 2013	Integrating the sustainable land management agenda in regional agriculture processes
Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP)	CPLP ministerial meeting for Rio+20	CPLP and Government of Cape Verde	May 2012	Advocacy for Zero Net Land Degradation
West Africa	Workshop on subregional action programme alignment	Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)	May 2012	Subregional action programme validation
West Africa	Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) regular meetings	CILSS	July 2012	Strengthening partnerships
	14 th Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN)	AMCEN	September 2012	Consideration of the Rio+20 outcomes for Africa
Central Africa	4th Plenary Session of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP)	CBFP, Government of Chad	September 2012	Mainstreaming of UNCCD/ sustainable land management in CBFP

<i>Subregion</i>	<i>Meeting/event/standing body</i>	<i>Organizing institution</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Benefit to the UNCCD process</i>
Central Africa	Thematic day on “Integrated management of natural resources in agricultural landscapes of Central Africa”. Parallel session on combating land degradation and desertification	CBFP/Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Government of Chad, Global Mechanism (GM)	September 2012	Assessment of status of desertification/ land degradation and drought in Central Africa
East and Southern Africa	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Regional Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) meeting	COMESA	October 2012	Promoting sustainable land management in the regional agriculture agenda
	Africa Development Forum	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)	October 2012	Advocacy on land issues
	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Partnership Platform Business Meeting	The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)	October 2012	Strengthening synergies and links to promote sustainable land management
	African Union Joint Ministerial Trade and Agriculture Conference	African Union	November 2012	Strengthening participation in TerrAfrica Initiative
	10 th TerrAfrica Executive Committee Meeting	The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)	November 2012	Building partnership within the framework of TerrAfrica
	Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) V senior officials meeting	African Union	November 2012	Advocacy on desertification/ land degradation and drought
Central Africa	Inception workshop of the United Nations Environment Programme/ The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (UNEP/NEPAD)/ Economic Community of Central African States(ECCAS) Institutional Support Project for the Promotion of sustainable land and water management in Central Africa	ECCAS/NEPAD/ UNEP	December 2012	Elaboration of a system of the key indicators
	9 th Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Platform Meeting and CAADP Business Meeting	The New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)	March 2013	Strengthening synergies and linkages to promote sustainable land management

<i>Subregion</i>	<i>Meeting/event/standing body</i>	<i>Organizing institution</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Benefit to the UNCCD process</i>
	Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) V ministerial meeting	African Union	March 2013	Advocacy on desertification/ land degradation and drought
Eastern Africa	Regional Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) validation meeting	Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)	May 2013	Strengthening synergies and links to support the sustainable land management agenda
Eastern Africa	Integrating agriculture and food security risk management issues and resilience building programmes in Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) investment plans	The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)	May 2013	Integrating sustainable land management as a risk management strategy for agricultural
	Africa Rural Development Forum	The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)	May 2013	Advocacy/ awareness-raising on desertification/ land degradation and drought
Sahel/ Sahara subregions	Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) regular meetings	OSS	May 2012	Strengthening partnership with OSS
Eastern Africa	Extended constituency workshop (ECW)	Global Environment Facility (GEF)	May 2013	Promoting synergies, sensitizing national focal points on the importance of national action programme alignment
West Africa	Extended constituency workshop (ECW)	Global Environment Facility (GEF)	September 2012	Promoting synergies, sensitizing national focal points on the importance of national action programme alignment
Asia				
Northeast Asia	Desertification/ land degradation and drought northeast Asia annual meetings	Korea Forestry Service	September 2011	Implementation of subregional action programme
Pacific	United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)/UNCCD 2 nd Experts Meeting Forest Financing for Small Developing States	UNFF/UNCCD/ Government of Fiji	July 2012	National action programme initiatives on desertification/ land degradation and drought
Northeast Asia	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Workshop on Agroforestry	FAO/Government of China/ Chinese civil society organizations	May 2012	Promotion of national action programme implementation

<i>Subregion</i>	<i>Meeting/event/standing body</i>	<i>Organizing institution</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Benefit to the UNCCD process</i>
Central Asia	The Regional Dare-to-Share Forum	German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)/Governments of five Central Asian states	November 2012.	Continuity of Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM) project in the subregion
Central Asia	International Caspian Ecological Forum	Government of Turkmenistan/four other Central Asian states	November 2012	Ecology issues caused by desertification/ land degradation and drought/ water scarcity in the subregion
Central Asia	International conference on ecology rehabilitation of the Aral Sea	Governments of five Central Asia states/ concerned United Nations agencies and international institutions	March 2013	Follow up of commitment of the Government of Turkmenistan to Rio+20
Asia-Pacific	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) commission session	ESCAP	May 2013.	Representation of UNCCD at UNESCAP commission sessions
Latin America and the Caribbean				
Meso-america	Bi-national meeting by United States of America and Mexico on desertification and drought	National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR) Mexico / United States Department of State	August 2011	Commitment of these institutions to the UNCCD process of sharing knowledge and expertise on sustainable land management
Andean	Latin America and the Caribbean Forum of Ministers of Environment	Government of Ecuador	January/ February 2012	Fostering development of the regional financing strategy for the UNCCD implementation
Caribbean	Workshop on Forest Financing	United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)	April 2012	Mainstream sustainable land management and UNCCD issues in the UNFF process
South Cone	Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) environmental group	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina	May 2012	Mainstreaming UNCCD issues in the MERCOSUR process
Meso america	Global Environment Facility (GEF) Expanded Constituency Workshop	GEF	February 2013	Promoting synergies, sensitizing national focal points on the importance of national action programme alignment
Northern Mediterranean				
	Final Conference of the Drought Management Centre for Southeastern Europe (DMCSEE) project	Slovenian Environmental Agency World Meteorological Organization	May 2012	Promotion of drought management policy in the region, and data and information exchange

<i>Subregion</i>	<i>Meeting/event/standing body</i>	<i>Organizing institution</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Benefit to the UNCCD process</i>
	Workshop on drought in a changing climate – an overview	Portuguese Meteorological and Geophysical Association	November 2012	Promotion of Drought Management Policy
	Building forest landscape resilient to global changes in drylands	General Directorate of Combating Desertification and Erosion Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs	May 2012	Promotion of thematic priorities of forestry. Cooperation with FAO
Central and Eastern Europe				
	Global and Regional Components of Environmental Security: Interaction of Policy and International Law	United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)	April 2012	Advocating UNCCD principles
	Global Environment Facility (GEF) Expanded Constituency Workshop	GEF	September 2012	Capacity-building for the UNCCD national focal points

Note: Where no subregion is shown, the information refers to the whole region.

61. Additionally, the secretariat extended invitations to all relevant subregional and regional organizations, and, where resources allowed, supported the participation of CSOs of the subregions and regions in the activities it organized at these levels. The fundamental idea behind this approach is to solidify the partnership between the country Parties, the secretariat and the GM, and all the subregional and regional institutions in support of UNCCD implementation at all levels. The challenge is to sustain this partnership process so that the ultimate aim of having efficient RCMs, continuously functioning in support of the regional implementation, is realised.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

62. **Some progress has been made with improving the institutional arrangements for hosting RCUs; in LAC the process has been satisfactorily completed, but the same cannot be said for the Africa and Asia. The secretariat needs to increase its efforts to have these agreements concluded as they are of real importance to the institutional status and efficient functioning of those RCUs.**

63. **Where RCs exist – in Africa, Asia and LAC – they must play a more active role in helping to create cohesive and efficient RCMs in their regions. The UNCCD is by nature a country-Party driven process and the RCUs with their limited resources can only do so much and no more. Consequently, a more active role by the RCs to promote efficacious functioning of the RCMs could help increase the effectiveness of the RCUs**

64. **The country Parties of Asia need to determine whether they will proceed with setting up an RC or determine how they can establish an effective RCM for the region.**

65. The country Parties of NM and CEE need to consider ways of improving the effectiveness of RCM.

66. The country Parties of NM and CEE are being serviced from the headquarters of the UNCCD secretariat in Bonn, Germany.

67. Effectively functioning RCs and RCMs can become valuable vehicles in helping to develop some of the tools, and in driving some of the necessary processes, for implementation at all levels. They can play major roles in:

- (a) The RAP and SRAP alignment process;
- (b) The effective functioning of the TPNs;
- (c) Raising awareness;
- (d) Supporting the creation of bilateral and multilateral cooperation at the regional and subregional levels;
- (e) Strengthening and building capacity through encouragement of the transfer of technology, the sharing of expertise and knowledge and the general exchange of information by supporting the creation of subregional and regional knowledge management and sharing systems;
- (f) Becoming involved in the regional reporting process, thus supporting a more comprehensive reporting exercise at that level.

68. Individual country Parties need to be proactive in seeking to use the RCs and RCMs of their regions in efforts to build partnerships and capacity, mobilize resources, and bring more regional and global attention to their national needs for the implementation process.

69. It is clear that the lack of adequate financial resources remains a serious hindrance to the effective participation of CSOs in the UNCCD processes at the subregional, regional and global levels. Supporting CSO participation, at least at the subregional and regional levels, is a matter that could partly be addressed with the assistance of the RCs and through cooperation within the RCMs.

70. There is a clear need for greater participation in the UNCCD regional meetings of the organizations and institutions that make up the RCMs, such as forums for communication and the strengthening of cooperation and collaboration in the implementation process at the regional level.

B. Recommendations

71. The following recommendations are proposed:

- (a) The pending issues concerning the hosting agreements for RCUs in Africa and Asia should be resolved quickly;
- (b) Existing RCs should take the lead in driving and strengthening the effective participation of RCMs in the implementation process in the regions;
- (c) RCMs should facilitate more practical and effective cooperation and collaboration on the key issues of UNCCD implementation, including resource mobilization, capacity-building, reporting and knowledge management and sharing;
- (d) Real, adequate and predictable resources should be allocated to the operation of TPNs;
- (e) The RCs and RCMs should be better exploited in the cause of generating more support for implementation at national, subregional and regional levels;

(f) Adequate resources should be made available to enable CSOs to participate in the UNCCD process at subregional and regional levels;

(g) The cohesiveness of entities involved in the RCMs and the contributions they make to the UNCCD process at the regional level should be strengthened through the use of UNCCD regional meetings as forums for exchange and cooperation.
