



Convention to Combat Desertification

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Revised procedures for the accreditation of civil society organizations and representatives from the private sector to the Conference of the Parties and their participation in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

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Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 5/COP.10, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification agreed on a set of measures concerning the procedures for the accreditation of civil society organizations (CSOs) and business and industry entities, including the composition of the CSO Selection Panel. Parties also requested the secretariat to take measures regarding the list of organizations proposed for accreditation to the COP, the membership of the CSO Selection Panel and the implementation of an online accreditation system.

The same decision requested the Executive Secretary to report at the eleventh session of the COP on the implementation of that decision and the results achieved.

The present document contains the report of the Executive Secretary on the measures undertaken by the secretariat to implement the above-mentioned decision and provides some recommendations for future actions in this regard, including Parties' views expressed during the eleventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention.

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I. Introduction and background

1. With the adoption of decision 5/COP.10, Parties introduced a number of important amendments to the procedure of accreditation of observers to the Conference of the Parties (COP), among which were: (a) a request for civil society organizations (CSOs) accredited to the COP to reconfirm their accreditation status and to submit a report to the COP every five years; (b) the granting of observer status to those business and industry entities that fulfilled specific requirements; (c) a request to the secretariat to update the list of accredited CSOs and to deploy an online accreditation system; and (d) the modification of the composition of the CSO Selection Panel¹ and entrusting it with additional tasks.

2. The present document contains the report of the Executive Secretary to the Conference of Parties at its eleventh session (COP 11) on the implementation of the above-mentioned decision.

II. Implementation of the revised procedures for the accreditation of civil society organizations to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

3. By its decision 5/COP.10, the COP requested accredited CSOs to comply with a number of obligations in order to maintain their observer status and participate in the official meetings of the governing bodies of the UNCCD. Following the procedure established by that decision, by 30 March 2012, 184 organizations had expressed their interest in remaining accredited to the COP. Seven hundred and fifty-three organizations had failed to comply with the above-mentioned obligations and had lost their observer status in the UNCCD process. These organizations may nevertheless request accreditation following the customary procedure as for any organization wishing to attend the sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies.

4. As a consequence of the procedure described in paragraph 3 above, the secretariat has updated the list of accredited organizations, which is available on the UNCCD website.²

5. Between March 2012 and June 2013, an additional 78 CSOs requested accreditation to the COP and submitted the documentation required. The list of organizations proposed for accreditation at COP 11 is contained in document ICCD/COP(11)/20.

6. In order to facilitate the accreditation process for CSOs, the COP requested the secretariat to deploy, within the existing resources, an online accreditation system. In accordance with this request, the secretariat has been working towards the establishment of such a system in the framework of its knowledge management strategy. A prototype of the online accreditation system is currently being developed to the extent possible within the secretariat's limited financial resources.

¹ Decision 5/COP.9, annex, requested the Executive Secretary to convene a selection panel in order to select candidate participants from eligible CSOs according to a set of agreed criteria, so as to ensure equitable participation of the CSOs at the meetings of the COP and its subsidiary bodies.

² Available at <www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/CivilSociety/List-of-civil-society-organizations-having-confirmed-their-interest-in-remaining-accredited.pdf>.

III. Procedures for the accreditation of business and industry entities to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

7. By its decision 5/COP.10, the COP decided to grant observer status and participation in official meetings of the governing bodies of the UNCCD to those business and industry entities that comply with a number of requirements.

8. By paragraph 6 of the same decision, the COP requested the secretariat to ensure the participation of the business and industry entities and to establish formats, guidelines and other tools that might be required for this purpose. Against the provisions of decision 5/COP.10 and on the basis of procedures established by other United Nations organizations and similar processes, the secretariat requested that the following information be submitted by business and industry entities while requesting accreditation to the COP:

(a) Completed “Accreditation Form” with contact information of the entity and of a designated contact point for official communications;

(b) Letter of application on the entity’s letterhead, addressed to the Executive Secretary of UNCCD, stating the motives for the application and indicating how its work could contribute to combating desertification and land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought;

(c) Information on programmes and activities undertaken by the entity that shows its expertise in matters relating to the UNCCD.

9. This information was published on the UNCCD website³ in February 2013 and shared via business networks and with the members of the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum.⁴ As at 10 June 2013, eight business and industry entities have submitted the required documentation and fulfil the requirements established by the COP. The above-mentioned document ICCD/COP(11)/20 also contains the list of business and industry entities proposed for accreditation at COP 11.

IV. Implementation of the procedures for the participation of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

A. Renewal of the membership of the Selection Panel

10. According to decision 5/COP.10, paragraph 8, the Selection Panel shall comprise two representatives of the secretariat and one representative of CSOs from each of the five Regional Implementation Annexes of the Convention. Following this provision, and as a result of the consultations conducted with the accredited CSOs in September 2012, the following members were appointed:

- Mr. Emmanuel Seck⁵ (Chair)

³ Available at <www.unccd.int/en/Stakeholders/civil-society/Accreditation-process/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁴ Launched in Changwon, Republic of Korea, on the sidelines of COP 10.

⁵ Environmental Development Action in the Third World (ENDA TM), Senegal – member of ENDA International network and of the International NGO Network on Desertification Africa network. Representative of Regional Implementation Annex I.

- Mr. Sung-gil Lee⁶
- Mr. Juan Luis Merega⁷
- Mr. Massimo Pieri⁸
- Ms. Elena Bivol⁹
- Ms. Anja Thust¹⁰
- Ms. Jamal Annagylyjova¹¹

11. It is important to note that a number of CSOs informed the secretariat that the current membership of the Selection Panel does not allow a balanced representation of organizations from developed country Parties. Furthermore, at CRIC 11, some Parties expressed the same concerns and proposed that the membership of the Selection Panel should mirror the regional and interest groups of the United Nations in order to ensure a more balanced and equitable representation.

12. Since September 2013 the Panel has met three times, by telephone conferencing, in order to deliver its original mandate. The secretariat supported the work of the Panel and prepared the required documents and follow-up as requested by the members.

B. Discharging the original mandate of the Selection Panel

13. During its first two meetings, the selection panel agreed on its *modus operandi* and prepared the programme of work for the next two years that will enable it to fulfil its mandate. The third meeting of the selection process was mainly devoted to the preparation of the eleventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 11) and the third special session of the Committee of Science and Technology (CST S-3).

14. At the request of the Bureau of the CRIC, the Selection Panel decided on the theme of the open-dialogue session¹² at CRIC 11, in consultation with the same Bureau. The Bureau of the CRIC also decided that the statements by the CSO representatives attending CRIC 11 should be included in the final report of the Committee, containing its findings and recommendations. It is worth noting that this is the first time ever in the UNCCD process that views and expectations of the civil society with regard to the implementation of the Convention are included in the deliberations of a subsidiary body.

15. With regard to the identification of organizations whose participation in CRIC 11 and CST S-3 was facilitated, the UNCCD secretariat sent invitations to the accredited CSOs on 20 February 2013. By the given deadline of 4 March 2013, the secretariat had received 55 requests for sponsorship. Due to the limited voluntary contributions made available through the Special Fund, only seven (7) participants out of the total of 20 participating

⁶ Future Forest, Republic of Korea. Representative of Regional Implementation Annex II.

⁷ Fundación Agreste, Argentina, member of the International NGO Network on Desertification (RIOD-LAC) Representative of Regional Implementation Annex III.

⁸ Cooperativa Tecnico Scientifica di Base (COBASE), Italy. Organization with special consultative status to ECOSOC. Representative of Regional Implementation Annex IV.

⁹ NGO Bios, Republic of Moldova Representative of Regional Implementation Annex V.

¹⁰ UNCCD secretariat, Programme Officer and secretary to the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention.

¹¹ UNCCD secretariat, Programme Officer in Charge of Regional Coordination Function with Annex IV and Annex V.

¹² The theme selected for the open-dialogue session at CRIC 11 was “The role of the CSOs in the mobilization of financial resources to support the implementation of the UNCCD through building effective partnerships between national and international actors”.

CSOs received support (air ticket and daily subsistence allowances) for their participation at CRIC 11 and CST S-3. This represents a 60 per cent decrease compared to the previous session of the subsidiary bodies, and less than 4 per cent of the total number of accredited organizations. It is evident that, with such a limited number of organizations to be selected, it has been particularly difficult to apply the five selection criteria in order to ensure a balanced representation of civil society at these meetings.

16. The current Selection Panel, which will serve until the end of 2013, is expected to meet twice in preparation for COP 11 and to conduct a similar exercise.

17. The Panel also started implementing the additional tasks entrusted to it by decision 5/COP.10.

C. Facilitating consultations among civil society organizations between sessions of the Conference of the Parties

18. The members of the Selection Panel agreed to communicate regularly with their constituencies through electronic mail. To this end, the secretariat set up a group mailing system.¹³ The UNCCD CSO group has been used to facilitate the exchanges among accredited CSOs and to prepare civil society inputs to the CST S-3 and CRIC 11 sessions, including at the open dialogue session.

D. Monitoring the participation of civil society organizations in meetings of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in close consultation with the Bureau of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

19. In collaboration with the Bureau of the CRIC, the Selection Panel also agreed on a set of provisional indicators to monitor the participation and the involvement of CSOs in meetings of the UNCCD. According to these indicators, the participation of CSOs at CRIC 11 could be illustrated as follows:

<i>Provisional indicator</i>	<i>Total</i>
Number of CSOs and CSO representatives attending the sessions of the CST and CRIC	39
Number of CSOs and CSO representatives sponsored by the Special Fund to attend the sessions of the CST and CRIC	7
Number of interventions recorded in the official plenary addressed by CSOs	27
Number of side events organized or co-organized by CSOs	2
Number of press conferences organized by CSOs	0
Number of decisions taken by the COP which focus on the CSOs	N/A
Number of paragraphs of the CRIC reports which are referring to the CSOs	21

¹³ Available at <<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/unccd-cso>>.

E. Reporting to the Conference of the Parties through the secretariat at the conclusion of the term of its mandate

20. As the term of the Selection Panel will expire at the end of 2013, the Panel agreed to prepare an interim report after its last meeting, in order to inform COP 11 on the activities conducted and the results achieved. A final report of the Panel will be prepared after COP 11.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

21. With the aim of encouraging more effective participation of civil society in UNCCD meetings and processes, and taking into consideration the recommendations of CRIC 11 on this matter and the implementation of decision 5/COP10, the COP at its eleventh session may wish:

(a) To encourage those countries which have no or few civil society organizations accredited to the COP to promote the involvement of their organizations in the UNCCD process at the international level, in order to ensure more balanced participation of CSOs to the sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies;

(b) To request the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to further promote the involvement of business and private entities in the UNCCD meetings and processes and to develop a business engagement strategy in this regard;

(c) To urge developed country Parties, international and financial organizations and relevant stakeholders to consider contributing substantially and promptly to the Supplementary and Special Funds of the Convention with the aim of ensuring wider participation of CSOs in UNCCD meetings; and request the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to explore ways and means to raise more funding in this regard, including through specific initiatives based on substantive inputs of CSOs in the intergovernmental process;

(d) To decide that the composition of the CSO selection panel should include two representatives of the secretariat and five representatives of organizations from countries of each regional and interest group of the United Nations;

(e) To request the Executive Secretary to facilitate the renewal of the membership of the CSO Selection Panel on January 2014 according to the paragraph above;

(f) To request the CSO Selection Panel to report to the COP at its twelfth session on the implementation of its tasks;

(g) To request the Executive Secretary to report to the COP at its twelfth session on the implementation of this decision.