



**Conference of the Parties
Committee on Science and Technology
Eleventh session**

Windhoek, Namibia, 17–20 September 2013

Item 5 (a), (b) and (c) of the provisional agenda

Reshaping the operation of the Committee on Science and Technology in line with The Strategy:

Review of the outcomes of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference

Assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference

Assessment of UNCCD scientific conferences

**Review of the preliminary outcome of the UNCCD 2nd
Scientific Conference and assessment of UNCCD scientific
conferences**

Report by the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology

Summary

This document outlines the follow-up to the requests made by the Conference of the Parties (COP) at its tenth session to the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) as set out in decision 18/COP.10, paragraphs 7 to 10, 17 and 18. Pursuant to these requests, this report presents:

- (a) An assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference and a summary of the resultant main recommendations;
- (b) The results of a consultative survey organized to gather the views and observations of Parties on the preliminary outcome of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference;
- (c) The results of the assessment as to whether to hold the UNCCD scientific conferences during intersessional or ordinary sessions of the CST; and
- (d) A proposal on how to maintain the momentum achieved through the format of the Conference.

It is expected that the Committee will take into account these results when making recommendations to the COP at its eleventh session on the organization of future scientific conferences.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Background and mandate	1–6	3
II. Assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference	7–32	4
A. Introduction	7–9	4
B. Overview of the main recommendations resulting from the assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference	10–31	4
C. General conclusions and recommendations on the assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference	32	9
III. Review of the preliminary outcome of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference.....	33–50	9
A. Introduction	33–36	9
B. Review and analysis	37–48	10
C. Conclusions and recommendations on the review of the preliminary outcome of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference	49–50	15
IV. Assessment as to whether to hold the UNCCD scientific conferences during intersessional or ordinary sessions of the Committee on Science and Technology	51–63	16
A. Background.....	51–53	16
B. Analysis of the feedback from Parties	54–60	16
C. Conclusions and recommendations on whether to hold the UNCCD scientific conferences during intersessional or ordinary sessions of the Committee on Science and Technology.....	61–63	18
V. How to maintain the momentum achieved through the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference	64–66	19
A. Introduction	64	19
B. Proposal	65	19
C. Conclusions and recommendations on how to maintain in a sustainable manner the momentum achieved through the conference.....	66	20
VI. General conclusions and recommendations	67–72	20

I. Background and mandate

1. The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) contained in decision 3/COP.8 highlights the importance given to the development and implementation of scientifically-based and sound methods for monitoring and assessing desertification, and underlines the need for a holistic view.

2. At its eighth session, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to strengthen the scientific basis underpinning the Convention. To this end, by its decision 13/COP.8, Parties decided that each future ordinary session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) should be organized in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format by the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) in consultation with a lead institution/consortium qualified in, and with expertise in, the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP.

3. Based on the provisions of decision 16/COP.9, paragraph 7, requesting the Bureau of the CST, with the support of the secretariat, to select the lead institution/consortium at least two years prior to each future United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) scientific conference, the Global Risk Forum (GRF) Davos was selected as lead institution to organize the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference.¹

4. By its decision 16/COP.9, paragraph 2, the COP decided that the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference should take place in 2012 at a special session of the CST, in accordance with the provisions of decision 13/COP.8, paragraph 1 (a), (b), (c) and (d).

5. By its decision 18/COP.10, the COP decided that the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference should take place not later than March 2013. An official proposal was received from the Government of Brazil to host the third special session of the CST (CST S-3) together with its UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference from 4 to 7 February 2013, in Fortaleza, Brazil. However, due to the withdrawal in January 2013 of the Government of Brazil from hosting the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference and following the subsequent decision of the Bureau of the COP to authorize the rescheduling of the events, the Conference was held from 9 to 12 April 2013 in Bonn, Germany,² back-to-back with the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) at its eleventh session (15–19 April 2013).

6. The postponement of CST S-3 with its UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference led to a very tight time frame between CST S-3 and the eleventh session of the COP, scheduled for September 2013. This in turn resulted in having very limited time available to comply with the provisions and requests of decision 18/COP.10, paragraphs 8 to 10, 17 and 18, as presented in the following chapters of this report.

¹ See Report of the meeting of the Bureau of the CST held on 21 February 2011: <<http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/CST/BMR-21-Feb-2011-eng.pdf>>.

² For more information, see ICCD/CST(S-3)/1.

II. Assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference

A. Introduction

7. Pursuant to decision 18/COP.10, paragraph 7, the COP requested the Bureau of the CST, with the support of the secretariat, to present a report at the eleventh session of the Committee on Science and Technology on the organization and outcomes of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference.

8. Paragraph 17 of the above-mentioned decision requested the secretariat to organize an in-depth assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, including the approaches to scientific partnership-building employed in consultation with regional groups. An independent evaluation and assessment expert was therefore selected shortly before the opening of the Conference. The selection was made in a transparent manner, through an open call in accordance with the terms of reference published on the UNCCD website.³ As outlined in paragraphs 5 and 6 above, the time frame for conducting the assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference was also very limited.

9. The following section presents a summary of the main recommendations by the independent evaluation and assessment expert resulting from the assessment undertaken, based on an analysis of the relevant documentation, survey responses and consultations. The recommendations are broken down into the thematic areas of the governing process; role and mandate of the conference steering committee; selection process of the lead institution; funding and fund-raising, resource requirements; preparation process; scientific input (and outputs); participation and the science-policy interface; results and assessments of future scientific conferences. The full assessment report is contained in document ICCD/COP(11)/CST/INF.5 for the consideration of Parties. Further details of the implementation modalities for each of the following thematic areas are also provided in the report, specifically in section IV on lessons learned and recommendations for the preparation of future scientific conferences.

B. Overview of the main recommendations resulting from the assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference

10. The UNCCD scientific conferences were born out of the efforts of the Convention to reshape the CST as part of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy), with the aim of its becoming a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge (see operational objective 3 of The Strategy), and to bring more science into the decision-making process. Embedded in CST S-3, the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference was held in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format with the objective of producing “sound scientific outputs and policy-oriented recommendations based on the analysis and compilation of peer reviewed and published literature that informs policy formulation and dialogue for submission to and consideration of the COP” (see ICCD/CST(S-2)/3, annex). Despite the challenging circumstances, including late changes in the date and venue, and limited resources, the 2nd Scientific Conference was able to attract an average of 350 participants during each session, from various stakeholder groups.

³ See document ICCD/COP(11)/CST/INF.5 which contains the terms of reference for the selection of the independent evaluation and assessment expert.

Besides UNCCD country Party representatives (mostly scientific and technology correspondents (STCs) and some national focal points (NFPs)), 190 independent scientists also attended in addition to, media representatives, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations (NGO/IGOs), and members of other United Nations bodies. The conference included a series of 4 plenary sessions and 32 parallel panel sessions with a total of 97 oral presentations made by academics, as well as poster sessions and the opening and closing sessions.

11. As part of the assessment, participant surveys were conducted (158 responses) and consultations held with the main stakeholders and organizers, during and directly following the conference. The responses reflected a generally positive experience while also highlighting areas in need of improvement. Suggestions providing the basis for the lessons learned and recommendations are summarized below.

1. Governing process

12. To better meet the objective of the UNCCD scientific conferences, “to produce sound scientific outputs and policy-oriented recommendations”, the profile and priority of these conferences must be raised on all levels, that is, by Parties to the Convention, members of the CST and within the secretariat at the level of the Executive Secretary.

13. The venue and location of the conferences should ideally be decided on and announced at the same time as the date of future scientific conferences in order to facilitate planning and organization. If the venue and location are not known in time to be announced by the COP, decisions should allow for flexibility and might avoid specifying the date which could be left to the conference steering committee to determine. Facilitating measures or requirements might instead be introduced, such as that the venue and host agreement be concluded at least 12 to 18 months before the conference.

14. The date and timing of the scientific conferences, which are currently embedded in official CST special sessions, might be reconsidered. A more independent or decoupled model for the scientific conferences might provide significant benefits in terms of conference organization.

15. The theme and topic of the scientific conferences should be relevant to the current work of the CST, as well as to that of the CRIC and the COP; however, those involved in the substantive preparations of the conferences might also be granted the required flexibility in narrowing down or specifying the conference theme, within the thematic focus determined by the COP and the CST. As such, the CST and the COP may wish to consider specifying a thematic focus, or a selection of topics, instead of a specific conference title, from which the conference steering committee could choose accordingly.

2. Role and mandate of the conference steering committee

16. The conference steering committee (the Bureau of the CST, the lead institution/consortium and the secretariat) should play an enhanced role in securing the budget, venue and location of the scientific conferences. Its role in the conference organization process would be further strengthened if measures were introduced to improve the inclusiveness and transparency, consistency and continuity, and guidance and decision-making ability of the steering committee.

17. **Inclusiveness and transparency:** The nomination/selection of members of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) should be based on academic criteria and transparent, and include the involvement of all members of the steering committee. Once selected, the SAC should be represented on the steering committee, at least through the SAC Chair or acting representative, to ensure consistency in terms of substantive and logistic organization of the scientific conferences, and to strengthen their science basis.

Steering committee meeting reports, once adopted, should be made publicly available on the conference website to improve transparency and follow-up, and possibly included as annexes to the meeting reports of the Bureau of the CST.

18. **Consistency and continuity:** At present, the composition of the conference steering committee changes between and during scientific conferences. This results in a potential loss of know-how and experience as well as a lack of continuity. The only standing member of the steering committee is the UNCCD secretariat, which currently lacks the necessary capacity to ensure continuity. Therefore a standing conference steering committee, with overlapping and possibly extended mandates of the members (Bureau of the CST, former lead institutions/consortium, former and current SAC members, host country (and possibly donor countries)) might be considered. Further efforts to ensure continuity within the secretariat might also include designating or, if resources permit, appointing a scientific conference project manager/coordinator.

19. **Guidance and decision-making ability:** It is important to ensure that the conference steering committee can make timely and relevant decisions to help guide the organization of future scientific conferences in spite of a potentially expanded membership. The role and mandate of the steering committee would be reinforced if its main purpose were to oversee and guide the budget and resource allocations for the scientific conferences. Decisions should be deferred to the Bureau of the CST for a final decision only if the conference steering committee is not able to reach consensus in a timely manner. If neither the steering committee nor the Bureau of the CST is able to reach an agreement, the Executive Secretary might take the final decision, in accordance with the UNCCD rules of procedure.⁴ Thus, in order to avoid repetition of work and the excluding of other steering committee members, sessions of the CST might only include in its agenda issues relating to the organization of the scientific conferences, if agreement on this has not been reached.

3. Selection process of the lead institution

20. It is also important to encourage a high response rate from institutions/consortiums interested in organizing the scientific conferences to ensure that options, from which members of the Bureau of the CST (steering committee) might choose, are available. Suggestions for improving the selection process include the introduction of a simplified, rolling application process and flexible or open submission deadlines; information on, and use of, a transparent and competitive selection process; and early decision on the venue of the conferences and/or a clear role for the lead institution/consortium in determining the venue. The selection process should be clearly defined for all involved, and might best be led by the full conference steering committee, with the inclusion of representatives of the SAC, and possibly other (external/independent) members.

4. Funding and fund-raising, resource requirements

21. Budget uncertainties and constraints, in the absence of an authorized core budget for the 2nd Scientific Conference, had a negative impact on organization and planning. A predictable budget specified early on, out of voluntary or core contributions, for the implementation of the scientific conferences, could be allocated under the oversight and guidance of the conference steering committee. Conference organization activities should be prioritized according to available resources while ensuring that all three phases – preparation, implementation and outcomes/results – are adequately funded.

⁴ Specifically, rule 34 on the duties of the head of the Permanent Secretariat, paragraph 2, states “The head of the Permanent Secretariat shall ... provide appropriate support and advice to the presiding and other officers of the Conference of the Parties and of its subsidiary bodies”.

22. It is also necessary to address the resource and capacity requirements of the UNCCD secretariat to meet the additional demands of conference coordination. As noted in paragraph 18, this might be done by either appointing (assuming additional funding is available) or designating (out of existing human resources) a scientific conference project manager/coordinator as the main focal point, internally positioned under the direct oversight of the Executive Secretary to ensure the required institutional profile and priority.

23. Fund-raising and resource mobilization should begin before and during the previous scientific conference, and follow a clearly-defined fundraising strategy, with clear priorities in each of the three phases of organization (for example, in the implementation phase: funding of scientists/participants, based on transparent criteria). It would be helpful to ensure that the venue and location, as well as the date and theme are specified early in the preparation process, as the choice of venue in particular can play a large role in attracting additional contributions. Nevertheless, a minimum budget should be in place to be supplemented by the fund-raising efforts of steering committee members, notably the secretariat and the lead institution/consortium.

5. Preparation process

24. The hybrid conference model of the 2nd Scientific Conference combined a semi-official meeting (the scientific conference) embedded in or “sandwiched between” an official UNCCD meeting (the CST third special session). This proved to be a complicated system to implement throughout conference preparations and implementation, for both the secretariat and the lead institution/consortium.⁵

25. A more independent model might therefore be used for future scientific conferences, by functionally separating the Conference from the CST meeting (special session) to take place temporally back-to-back, but at the same venue/location.⁶

6. Scientific input (and outputs)

26. **Focus on peer-reviewed scientific publications and the role of the SAC:** To establish a reputation and ensure the relevance of scientific inputs, the academic quality of the conference would be enhanced by attracting the participation and involvement of renowned scientists and researchers. The limited funds available might thus focus primarily on the substantive preparation, implementation and results/outputs of the scientific conferences, including the recruitment of high-level speakers, a call for abstracts and the establishment of an academically sound peer review and publication process through the SAC. This would likewise ensure relevance and high quality of the scientific outcomes in the lead-up to the CST and the COP. Instead of being used for working groups and white papers, the limited resources could be dedicated to expanding the mandate and membership of the steering committee to include the SAC, etc. The role of the SAC might be further specified to include assisting in translating the academic work presented during the

⁵ Specifically, the secretariat is bound by its need to adhere to the United Nations rules and regulations, which do not apply to non-United Nations stakeholders, such as the lead institution/consortium, which may be accustomed to more flexibility. This had clear consequences for numerous organizational aspects, predominantly in the management of accredited and non-accredited participants.

⁶ For example, the CST meeting (special session) might be held at the same venue but directly following the scientific conference, on the understanding that Parties invited to the CST will also participate in the scientific conference as officially invited and accredited members of the CST. This could allow the CST members to carry over the results of the scientific conference into their CST discussions, while also allowing the lead institution/consortium more flexibility to implement the scientific conference in a more academic and less multilateral, United Nations conference-style format.

scientific conference, into policy relevant recommendations for the CST and the COP, with feedback from the conference steering committee.⁷

7. Participation and the science-policy interface

27. **Decoupled model:** The introduction of a more independent or separate/decoupled scientific conference model might bring many benefits, such as allowing for more independent academic/scientific discussion, and more time for the conference outputs and results to be processed into a format applicable to the CST and to the COP. Nevertheless, it is paramount that members of the CST actively participate in and contribute to the scientific conferences, as, for example, presenters and/or speakers. To facilitate this, the CST agenda and the theme and programme of the scientific conferences must be complementary and build one upon the other. Specifically, the outcomes of the scientific conference should be discussed in depth during the CST meetings, and recommendations further developed for the COP. There is thus a need for UNCCD Parties, via the STCs, to formulate questions aimed at the scientific community in order to guide discussion and research and to ensure consistency with the work of the CST. The CST might also consider adjusting its work programme and the agenda of subsequent meetings to better reflect the topic and outcomes of the scientific conference, to allow for more follow-up work.

28. **Regional and gender balance:** Efforts should be made to encourage higher active participation in the scientific conference from members of the CST and the SAC, as well as from members of the UNCCD secretariat and the Global Mechanism. Regional and gender balance should be further improved, starting in the conference steering committee, and all those involved in conference preparations. Special consideration might be paid to the gender balance of the steering committee members, including those of the CST Bureau. This might help to ensure better regional and gender balance in the organization of the conference (that is, throughout the preparation, implementation, and outcome process). The introduction of a rotational geographical location of the scientific conference might better facilitate the balance of regional interests. Participant funding was also noted as a good way to ensure regional and gender balance, especially of scientists and non-governmental organizations from developing countries.

8. Results and assessments of future scientific conferences

29. Future COPs may wish to consider whether the introduction of scientific conferences is effective in meeting the scientific demands of the Convention, given their limited scope and time frame. These considerations might be aided through an holistic/integrative assessment following the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference, combining all three phases of the conference (preparation, implementation and outcomes), to gauge how the scientific conferences, taken together, have added value to the UNCCD in terms of strengthening the scientific basis of the UNCCD decision-making process.

30. A holistic/integrative approach to future assessments might allow for causal linkage of the formation, organization and implementation process to the results and outcomes achieved. The COP may thus consider requesting a holistic assessment, which combines the review of the organization and the results/outcomes of the conferences, to be conducted

⁷ Specifically, the SAC should be requested to provide scientific outputs and policy-oriented recommendations as part of the expected outcomes from the conference, instead of being held responsible for the design, guidance and oversight of the working groups. To facilitate this responsibility, the SAC might be called upon to develop a “policy background guide” on the theme or topic of the scientific conference, with feedback from the conference steering committee, based on the abstracts presented during the conference and the ensuing journal publications, to facilitate the appropriate decision-making of the COP.

for future scientific conferences. If time or resources do not allow for such an integrated assessment approach, the COP may wish to consider focusing future assessments (after the 3rd or 4th Scientific Conference) primarily on the medium- to long-term outcomes and impact of these conferences. Indicators might include how the outcomes of the scientific conferences have been considered in COP decision-making, if they have been published in peer-reviewed academic journals, or elsewhere.

31. As some synergies and parallels were noted between the current assessment and the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group to Further Discuss the Options for the Provision of Scientific Advice Focusing on Desertification/Land Degradation and Drought (AGSA) (see ICCD/COP(11)/CST/3), the CST may wish to consider both reports simultaneously to ensure that future decisions and recommendations are consistent.

C. General conclusions and recommendations on the assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference

32. The CST at its eleventh session may wish to consider the recommendations produced by the independent evaluation and assessment expert concerning the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, as outlined in the preceding paragraphs, and make recommendations to the COP for the preparation and organization of future UNCCD scientific conferences.

III. Review of the preliminary outcome of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference

A. Introduction

33. By its decision 18/COP.10, paragraph 8, the COP requested the Bureau of the CST to consult with Parties and regional groups to review the outcomes of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference. Paragraph 9 of the same decision invited Parties to review the outcome of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference before the eleventh session of the CST in order to make recommendations, as they deem appropriate, to the COP at its eleventh session (COP 11).

34. Based on the suggestions of the Bureau of the CST, Parties at CST S-3 requested the secretariat to send out letters to Parties containing the preliminary outcomes of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, as presented by the Global Risk Forum, (GRF) Davos to CST S-3⁸ with a set of key questions inviting Parties to provide their views and feedback. The Committee agreed that, following the receipt of the responses from the Parties, the secretariat would prepare a pre-session document compiling the recommendations from Parties for the consideration of the CST at its eleventh session (CST 11).

35. As mentioned in paragraphs 5 and 6 above, owing to the short time period between CST S-3 and its UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference and COP 11, the review of the outcomes, as requested in decision 18/COP.10, could only be made based on the available preliminary outcomes of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, as presented in the CST S-3 plenary by GRF Davos. The final outcome of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference has been prepared in parallel by GRF Davos, with the support of the SAC and is available

⁸ See ICCD/CST(S-3)/7.

in document ICCD/COP(11)/CST/INF.3 for the consideration and review by Parties before CST 11.

36. Owing to the tight time frame for the preparation of documentation for COP 11, only limited time was available to conduct the survey and review the feedback received from Parties to be included in the present document. In early May 2013, the secretariat launched consultations with Parties by sending a questionnaire in all six official languages of the United Nations to NFPs in order to gather views and observations on the preliminary outcome of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference until 31 May 2013. The Regional Coordination Units also provided their assistance in the follow-up to the process, including through reminders.

B. Review and analysis

37. Out of 195 Parties, a total of 57 (29 per cent) replied from all regional groups (see table 1). The following Parties provided feedback: Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Egypt, Eritrea, European Union and its 27 Member States, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Madagascar, Mali, Moldova, Morocco, Niger, Philippines, Senegal, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, and United States of America.

Table 1
Repatriation of replies by regional groups

<i>Regional group</i>	<i>Number of replies</i>
Africa	14
Asia	6
Latin America and the Caribbean	5
Western Europe and Other	30
Central and Eastern Europe	2
Total	57

38. All responses were considered in the analysis, including those received after the deadline. The questionnaire sent to national focal points focused on the three following chapters of the preliminary outcomes of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference:⁹

- Chapter II: Action and implementation related requirements to guide science-policy efforts (paragraphs 13 to 20),
- Chapter III: Recommendations for enhanced strategic and policy development (paragraphs 21 to 30), and
- Chapter IV: Recommendations related to scientific tools, methodologies, findings and outreach (paragraphs 31 to 44).

39. Three questions as listed below were posed for each above-mentioned chapter of the preliminary outcomes of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference:

⁹ See ICCD/CST(S-3)/7.

(a) Question 1: Which paragraphs/recommendations would be points of interests for policy-makers in your country?

(b) Question 2: What would be the key elements that your country would possibly consider to implement at national level and within which time frame?

(c) Question 3: Which paragraphs/recommendations do you think should be prioritized for the COP to take decisions at its eleventh session?

40. In general, many Parties welcomed the preliminary outcomes as successful results of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference. They appreciated the Conference as an opportunity to discuss costs of desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) as an analytical tool for measurement, payment for ecosystem services as an economical approach to sustainable land management (SLM), and prevention of land degradation as a proactive approach based on risk management.

41. Although Parties expressed their understanding of the short time available for the preparation of the preliminary outcomes of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, some Parties considered that these preliminary outcomes were not clear enough in terms of drawing conclusions on the actual results of the conference and, in particular, did not provide enough recommendations to guide the political process.

42. The responses to the above-mentioned question 1 (see para. 39 (a) above) were analysed quantitatively (see table 2). Paragraphs 18, 19 and 32, 21, 23 and 30 were, in order of decreasing occurrence, the most frequently selected by Parties as being the main points of interest for their policymakers at the national level.

Table 2

Overview of the frequency of responses provided under question 1 on interest for policymakers at the national level, with reference to relevant paragraphs

Chapter II of the preliminary outcome: Action and implementation related requirements to guide science-policy efforts	Number of Paragraph	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20						
	Frequency of selection	37	41	36	10	3	47	46	10						
Chapter III of the preliminary outcome: Recommendations for enhanced strategic and policy development, of the preliminary outcome	Number of Paragraph	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
	Frequency of selection	45	37	44	9	2	10	5	20	40	44				
Chapter IV of the preliminary outcome: Recommendations relating to scientific tools, methodologies, findings and outreach	Number of Paragraph	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44
	Frequency of selection	2	46	7	36	12	32	6	9	7	5	36	36	4	7

Quoting of most frequently selected paragraphs 18, 19, 21, 23, 30 and 32

“para 18. Economic productivity without degrading the nature is compulsory. Lessons on SLM in poor countries where some degradation took place in the past show some improvement with time. Deliberate efforts to invest in enhancing traditional and local institutions, government effectiveness, efforts to achieve zero land degradation and economic incentives. Thus SLM needs to be embedded in sustainable, productive and comprehensive strategies, so food security matters can be addressed in a sustainable way. Action strategy needs to be developed without imposing pressure on natural resources. Actions need to consider the rights of the people directly involved in the management of land. Ecotourism is a possible action.”

“para 19. Education of the populations living in semi-arid, desert, and degraded land is an essential element in combating DLDD. If people do not understand what they are protecting and what they have to improve, there will be no sustainability. Society and stakeholders from government should promote education on causes of and measures against DLDD. Semi-arid areas and other environments vulnerable to desertification should be presented as a positive place in order to foster sustainable development within these regions. Re-education of family agriculture and sustainable practices will combat desertification. Education will also

promote a sense of pride and land identity within these communities.”

“para 21. The elements that need to be considered for effective policies and strategies that guide the implementation of the UNCCD at the national, regional and global levels include policies and strategies for land, forest, water and other natural resources management, developed as part of an overall national policy framework to improve land management and promote sustainable development. These policies must be based on the best available science and knowledge relevant to the local, national and regional conditions and circumstances. Thus, it is important that there is greater investment in scientific research on DLDD in order to better develop and formulate effective policies. In addition, attention needs to be paid to the science policy interface and the structures and processes through which scientific knowledge reaches policy makers. The Conference welcomed further scientific investigation into the prospective development and potential of the Zero Net Land Degradation approach (ZNLD), which appears to be a promising and underpinning strategic approach.”

“para 23. We cannot look at land degradation just as an environmental problem. We have to understand and assess policies for reducing land degradation. It will be less costly to prevent land degradation than to deal with its consequences. We need better evidence for better policies. Efforts to enhance food security need to reach out well beyond the confines of individual sectors, instead the efforts need to be combined into a more complex system. Rural development should not only increase resilience in economic, but also reduce social and environmental risks. Better evidence is needed to improve knowledge. Better knowledge is needed for informed debates, informed policy making, and informed planning. Developmental and environmental policies need to minimize risks, reduce exposure to hazards and reduce vulnerability by improving coping and adaptive capacities, building resilience, and fostering growth.”

“para 30. Due to continuing land degradation, loss in biodiversity and changes in climatic patterns, harnessing synergy between the three Rio Conventions (UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD) is vital when working on terrestrial ecosystems. The development of synergistic approaches together with the creation of an enabling policy and institutional environment is important for the strengthening of the Rio Conventions. In general, options for building synergies among the Rio Conventions in specific cross-cutting areas includes capacity-building, technology transfer, research and monitoring, information exchange and outreach, reporting and financial resources. Developing and practicing synergies among the Rio Conventions in a fully operationalized manner requires (i) improving interactions at regional, national and local levels; (ii) reducing potential conflicts between independent activities; (iii) reducing duplication of efforts through improved knowledge transfer; and (iv) sharing financial resources in a more efficient and balanced way. Promoting synergies at regional, national and local levels requires also stronger collaboration among the National Focal Points (NFPs) that serve each of the Convention and play a key role in bridging the differences between involved parties especially at the policy level.”

“para 32. There is a wide consensus that research plays an essential role in the combating DLDD. Moreover scientific activities greatly increase a country’s adaptive capacity and resilience to climate change. This leads to the call that research should be extended to all parts and regions of the world. To strengthen the scientific foundation for sustainable dryland and drought risk management, there is a need for a system approach based on transdisciplinarity with emphasis on participatory research and involvement of practitioners as well as scholars from different scientific disciplines to address problems in an integrated manner. Science has to contribute to an integrated management of land. Economics should have a stronger role in desertification and land preservation. Scientific integration is needed as is a realistic picture of combined socio-economic-environmental aspects.”

43. The responses to the above-mentioned question 2 (see para. 39 (b) above) on key elements considered for possible implementation at the national level and within which time frame, were analysed qualitatively. Some recurrent proposals, concerns and recommendations were noticeable in the feedback received from Parties (see paras. 44, 45 and 46 below).

44. The following trends could be highlighted as far as “the action and implementation related requirements to guide science-policy efforts” (chapter II) are concerned:

(a) Many Parties selected “economic productivity without degrading nature” as a key element to be considered for implementation at the national level. Setting advanced and consolidated environmentally integrated management of natural resources at the national level, such as payments for ecosystem services, development of ecotourism, prevention of DLDD by SLM through national policy, would be considered of interest by policymakers;

(b) Many Parties pointed out the need for broadening education on the causes of and measures to tackle DLDD, in particular for rural, poor populations in affected areas by emphasizing rehabilitation activities through family farming and sustainable practices;

(c) Parties also stated the need to develop tools at the national level to reduce the vulnerability of populations to DLDD and support decision-making on issues relating to food insecurity, poverty, unemployment and migration.

45. The following trends were highlighted as far as “Recommendations for enhanced strategic and policy development, of the preliminary outcome” (chapter III) are concerned:

(a) Many Parties considered as very important the science-policy interface as well as the structures and processes through which scientific knowledge reaches policymakers;

(b) Many Parties pointed out the need to further investigate the “Land Degradation Neutral” approach with the participation of scientists;

(c) Some Parties emphasized that policy must not only be based on the best available scientific evidence but should also be relevant to local, national and regional circumstances and knowledge;

(d) Most Parties stressed that the implementation of the Rio conventions must be optimized at country level, through the development of synergistic approaches and the creation of an enabling policy and institutional environment. Collaboration/synergy between the three Rio conventions should also be considered in the areas of research, monitoring and sharing of financial resources.

46. The following trends were highlighted as far as “Recommendations relating to scientific tools, methodologies, findings and outreach” (chapter IV) are concerned:

(a) Most of the Parties emphasized the importance of strengthening research and development on DLDD in all regions of the world by giving more weight to the synergy between researchers, policymakers, technical services and populations in integrating science and economics into the successful management of land resources;

(b) Most Parties are in favour of working further on the topic of “Economics of Land Degradation”, in particular in considering the indirect values of land more than the direct values. Applications of the Total Economic Value framework, the economic valuation of changes to ecosystem services and the integration of these values into a social cost-benefit analysis is considered providing decision makers with a sounder basis for making decisions on land use.

47. The responses to the above-mentioned question 3 (see para. 39 (c) above) were first analysed quantitatively (see table 3) and then translated qualitatively in possible elements to be considered by Parties in their discussion at CST 11 and further recommendations through a draft decision for COP 11. Paragraphs 30, 14 and 21, 15–18 and 38, 19, 23–42 and 32, in order of decreasing occurrence, are the most frequently selected by Parties as being the major points of interest for their policymakers at the national level.

Table 3
Overview of the frequency of responses provided under question 3 as priority for COP 11, with reference to relevant paragraphs

Chapter II of the preliminary outcome: Action and implementation related requirements to guide science-policy efforts	Number of Paragraph	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20						
	Frequency of selection	36	40	39	35	2	39	38	6						
Chapter III of the preliminary outcome: Recommendations for enhanced strategic and policy development, of the preliminary outcome	Number of Paragraph	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
	Frequency of selection	40	35	37	35	1	5	36	14	36	49				
Chapter IV of the preliminary outcome: Recommendations related to scientific tools, methodologies, findings and outreach	Number of Paragraph	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44
	Frequency of selection	2	37	33	32	35	33	5	39	33	5	36	37	6	12

Quoting of the most frequently selected paragraphs 14,15,18,19,21,23,30,32,38 and 42

14. The impacts of DLDD include food insecurity, poverty, unemployment and migration. Yet there are gaps in our understanding of the socio-economic impacts. The direct and indirect values of land, however, are vital for resilient societies and economic growth. In order to restore degraded land worldwide, we need a clearer picture of available options and create a ‘toolbox’ for stakeholders and decision makers. We need to make smart investments yielding socio-environmental resilience.

15. Poverty eradication is the first and most fundamental Millennium Development Goal. DLDD causes food, water and energy scarcity, which are among the main drivers of poverty. Therefore land is the key and scientific knowledge is a tool to eradicate poverty. SLM is a focus of this tool. It has to be considered that poor, youth and women are social groups most affected by DDLDD. We need a stronger focus on DLDD prevention (by SLM) rather than land rehabilitation.

Para 18, 19, 21, 23, 30 and 32 could be found under the table 2 above.

38. Scientific approaches have to consider more the indirect values of land because they contribute to a resilient society and to economic growth. Therefore a tool-kit of available options for restoring degraded land should provide to stakeholders and decision makers. We need a nexus perspective across sectors to address food security, energy security, water security, and land quality is underpinning all of these aspects. Inaction to combat DLDD is more costly than action. Land degradation is a consequence of market failures and partly a consequence of poverty. Land users must receive direct benefits for adopting sustainable land management practices. The strategy of ELD assessment is to build and inform policy debate, improve open collaboration and communication, and to increase awareness and commitment.

42. Transformative land regeneration requires understanding first what the drivers of land crisis are; and second identifying grassroots solutions to build resilience. Moving to a climate-smart agriculture and building more productive and growth resilient farming systems at various scales, empowering women, improving food security and nutrition are important contributions.

48. Although it was difficult to identify a specific decision, some recurrent concerns were noticeable in the feedback received from Parties as found in the above-mentioned “priority paragraphs” to be considered as elements for discussion for a possible priority decision at COP 11. It will be for the Committee to decide if it would be done either through a specific decision on the outcome of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference or

channelled through each draft decision on the various activities of the CST, thus ensuring coherency and cost efficiency of their implementation:

(a) *To increase the development of synergies between the Rio conventions on the terrestrial ecosystem linked to the specific topic of the conference: through capacity-building, monitoring and assessment, information exchange, reporting and sharing financial resources.* It would imply that the CST be invited to further discuss, under each of its activities, how to integrate this specific thematic synergetic approach between the Rio conventions, through, for example, the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP); the work done on the impact indicators that could be relevant to the economics of terrestrial ecosystems; the provision of scientific advice taking into account the cooperation with the scientific subsidiary bodies, and a mechanism to provide scientific advice on the other Rio conventions, as well as recommendations on the results of the work of the AGSA. Reporting on the economics of desertification and on the financial resources would need to be considered by Parties in the political arena of the CRIC;

(b) *To launch cost-benefit analysis on how the costs associated with DLDD and the benefits of sustainable land management are distributed across stakeholders. Focusing on the cost of action versus inaction, to develop a tool-kit for stakeholders and decision makers with available options for restoring degraded land and that will take into account the indirect values of land.* It would imply that the CST be invited to find ways and means to identify and promote options to restore degraded land worldwide and to create a 'toolbox'. It could be integrated in the framework of its work programme of the next biennium, particularly through the partnerships under the SKBP and the activities related to the implementation of the COP decision on the outcomes of the AGSA work;

(c) *To further investigate at scientific level the Land Degradation Neutral (LDN) approach to support the development at the national, regional and global levels of effective policies and strategies that guide the implementation of the UNCCD.* It would imply, among other things, that the COP decides on the ways and means to implement LDN, including through recommendations of the CST;

(d) *To promote DLDD prevention through sustainable land management rather than land rehabilitation will contribute to poverty eradication and building resilience. SLM needs to be embedded in sustainable, productive and comprehensive strategies taking into account lessons learned in land management practices.* It would imply, among other things, that the CST and the CRIC be invited through their work on best practices to take into account the recommendations of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference;

(e) *To extend research and scientific activities on DLDD, in particular on the socioeconomic-environmental aspects of sustainable dryland and drought risk management and the understanding of the drivers of land crisis and the identification of grassroots solutions to build resilience.* It would imply, among other things, that the CST, in providing scientific advice on these specific themes, be invited to take into account how the results of the work of the AGSA will be implemented.

C. Conclusions and recommendations on the review of the preliminary outcome of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference

49. Taking into account the above-mentioned feedback from Parties on the preliminary outcome of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, Parties may wish to review the final outcomes of this Conference and discuss them at the regional meetings preparatory to COP 11 or at the regional consultations during COP 11.

50. The Committee, acting as a science-policy interface, may wish to agree on some priority recommendations to be brought to COP 11 as a follow-up to the recommendations from the scientific community participating in the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference.

IV. Assessment as to whether to hold the UNCCD scientific conferences during intersessional or ordinary sessions of the Committee on Science and Technology

A. Background

51. Following decision 13/COP.8, paragraph 1, the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference was organized under the ninth ordinary session of the COP (COP 9). However, following specific decisions made at COP 9 and COP 10, the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference was organized under the special session of the CST S-3 and the UNCCD 3rd scientific conference will be organized under the fourth special session of the CST (CST S-4).

52. At its tenth session, by its decision 18/COP.10, paragraph 18, the COP, bearing in mind decision 16/COP.9, invited the Bureau of the CST, in consultation with regional groups, to conduct, after the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, an assessment of whether to hold the UNCCD scientific conferences during intersessional or ordinary sessions of the CST, and to report at the eleventh session of the Committee.

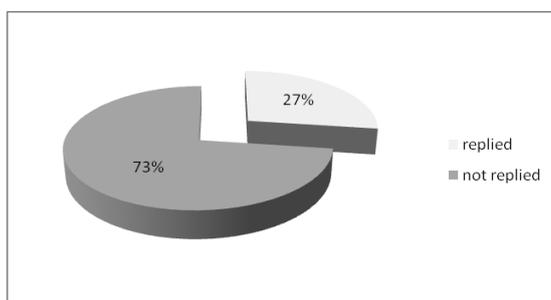
53. As outlined in paragraphs 5 and 6 above, owing to the postponement of CST S-3 and its UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, only limited time was available before CST 11 to undertake the consultations with regional groups. Therefore, as agreed by the Bureau of the CST¹⁰ on how to undertake consultations with Parties on this particular issue, the secretariat sent an email to NFPs with copy to STCs, in order to seek the views of Parties for submission before the 20 May 2013 deadline. The follow-up procedure and the communication of a reminder were supported by Regional Coordination Units.

B. Analysis of the feedback from Parties

54. All responses from Parties, including those received after the deadline, have been taken into account in the compilation by the secretariat. Out of 195 country Parties, a total of 53 Parties (27 per cent) participated in the assessment (see figure 1) as follows: Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cuba, Egypt, Eritrea, European Union and its Member States, Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, Japan, Kenya, Lesotho, Moldova, Niger, Saint Lucia, Saint Tomé and Príncipe, Sudan, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, United States of America and Yemen.

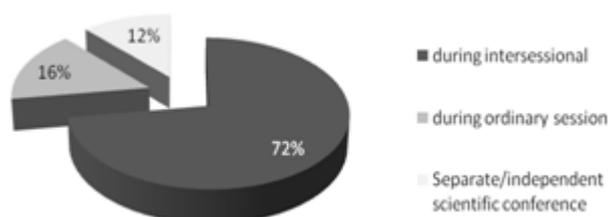
¹⁰ Report of the meeting of the Bureau of the CST on 13 April 2013: <http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/CST/BMR-13apr-2013-eng.pdf>.

Figure 1
Participation of Parties in the assessment of whether to hold UNCCD scientific conferences during intersessional or ordinary sessions of the Committee on Science and Technology



55. The feedback received from Parties was very diverse and a great range of different points of view were expressed. Not all the responses to the question of whether to hold the UNCCD scientific conferences during intersessional or ordinary sessions of the CST argued for choosing one or the other option and in some instances, the reasons given were not clear.

Figure 2
Repartition of the views of Parties on the best timing for UNCCD scientific conferences



56. Out of the 53 responses received, 2 could not be taken into account as they did not state any specific views. Figure 2 shows the repartition of the views of Parties as follows: 37 Parties (72 per cent) would opt for continuing with the current approach of UNCCD scientific conferences and to hold future scientific conferences during intersessional sessions of the CST, while 8 Parties (16 per cent) expressed an interest in organizing future UNCCD scientific conferences during ordinary sessions of the CST; however, 6 Parties (12 per cent) recommended holding UNCCD scientific conferences neither during intersessional nor during ordinary sessions of the CST but organizing “independent scientific conferences”, meaning separated from any official session of the CST.

57. The main reasons for having scientific conferences during intersessional sessions of the CST were as follows:

- **Time:** Several Parties highlighted that conference participants would have more time during intersessional sessions to discuss topics related to the conference theme than they would have during ordinary sessions due to the other issues to be considered. Other Parties indicated that better coordination and focus could be achieved in intersessional sessions. A few other Parties

pointed out that intersessional sessions would avoid competitive timing with the other sessions of a COP, which could result in reduced participation in the scientific conference by members of delegations due to their other responsibilities.

- **Procedural aspect:** As scientific conferences are meant to produce scientific outcomes and recommendations to be translated into COP-relevant decisions, some Parties highlighted the fact that holding them during intersessional sessions gives enough time both to the organizers to finalize their outcomes properly and to the Parties to consider the results before translating them into potential decisions during the following ordinary session of the CST.
- **Independent nature of scientific conferences:** Some Parties consider that the scientific nature of such conferences is better safeguarded in intersessional sessions which give more room for scientific exchanges than it is the case in an ordinary CST session where the focus is placed more on the political aspects.

58. The main reasons for having scientific conferences during ordinary sessions of the CST were as follows:

- **Cost factor:** Having a ordinary session of the CST at the same time and place as a scientific conference ensures greater cost-effectiveness and efficiency since it implies the presence of a maximum of representatives of all Parties in both events. Travel costs are also reduced and logistical arrangements are made once instead of twice as when meetings are intersessional
- **More stakeholders:** The COP ensures the participation of more and various stakeholders at the same time and in the same place which implies that a greater number of people could potentially be involved in the scientific conference as well and productively contribute to the exchange of information

59. The main reasons for having scientific conferences in a stand-alone format, independent and separate from any kind of CST session are the following:

- **More attractive to scientists:** scientists would be more interested in participating in conferences decoupled from the policy part with sole emphasis in the scientific aspect
- **Time:** more time would be available in stand-alone scientific conferences for presentations, discussions and information sharing on scientific research and findings as well as for drafting policy oriented recommendations

60. However, the biggest challenge for Parties in this scenario would be the financial implications.

C. **Conclusions and recommendations on whether to hold the UNCCD scientific conferences during intersessional or ordinary sessions of the Committee on Science and Technology**

61. Based on the results of the assessment, the Committee may wish to recommend to the COP that future UNCCD scientific conferences be held during intersessional sessions of the CST and that decision 13/COP.8, paragraph 1, be amended accordingly.

62. The CST may wish to discuss a possible date, venue and theme for the fifth special session of the CST (CST S-5) and its UNCCD 4th Scientific Conference in order to make recommendations to COP 11.

63. The CST may wish to discuss a possible date, venue and theme for the sixth special session of the CST (CST S-6) and its UNCCD 5th Scientific Conference in order to make recommendations to COP 11.

V. How to maintain the momentum achieved through the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference

A. Introduction

64. By its decision 18/COP.10, paragraph 10, the COP invited the GRF Davos, as the selected lead institution, and the Bureau of the CST to present a proposal at CST 11 on how to maintain the momentum achieved through the conference in a sustainable manner. The secretariat accordingly invited GRF Davos and the members of the Bureau of the CST to submit a proposal on how to maintain the momentum achieved through organizing the scientific conferences in a sustainable manner.

B. Proposal

65. The Bureau of the CST and GRF Davos communicated their views on how to maintain the momentum achieved through the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference to the secretariat. The Bureau discussed the issue and put forward its main proposals as follows:

(a) To invite and encourage in particular the lead scientists involved in the 2nd Scientific Conference (such as SAC members, session Chairs, and others) to publish targeted attractive outcomes for all stakeholders, including scientists, decision makers, and the private sector, among others. Publications could include:

(i) A special issue of scientific peer reviewed journal of high relevance to and impact on the conference topic;

(ii) Policy briefs (booklet) for decision makers not only in the immediate UNCCD context but also in the wider range of regional to global environmental and development issues;

(iii) Fact sheets/ summaries on the economics of land degradation based on the white papers and background documents prepared for each scientific conference;

(b) To find ways and means to include in the UNCCD Roster of Independent Experts who participated in the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference. This issue will also be discussed under the CST 11 agenda item 7 based on document ICCD/COP(11)/CST/15 entitled "Report on progress on the maintenance of the roster of independent experts. Note by the secretariat";

(c) To disseminate widely all substantive papers and publications related to the UNCCD 1st and 2nd Scientific Conferences, in particular through the SKBP;

(d) To enhance the multidisciplinary of scientific inputs to the UNCCD debate by encouraging the scientists involved in the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference to contribute to existing networks relating to topics such as Desertnet international and Drynet; and to call upon relevant existing thematic initiatives specifically related to the theme of the 2nd Scientific Conference, such as the Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) and the OSLO (Offering Sustainable Land-use Options) partnerships, in order to engage a process to involve interested scientists who participated in the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference;

(e) To further involve in the UNCCD process, including through partnership with the SKBP, the affiliated scientific institutions which were partners in organizing the 2nd Scientific Conference;

(f) To ensure that decisions on the provision of scientific advice, relating to the recommendations of the AGSA will take into account possible modifications to the UNCCD scientific conferences organizational mechanism with a view to improving the thematic and organizational coherence in the sequence of conferences;

(g) To encourage regional groups and future UNCCD scientific conference organizers to mutually align their science-policy debates under the regional coordination mechanisms, especially by actively contacting conference participants from the regions and involving them in both regional and conference mechanisms.

C. Conclusions and recommendations on how to maintain in a sustainable manner the momentum achieved through the conference

66. The CST may wish to take into account the recommendations of the Bureau of the CST outlined in the preceding paragraphs and translate them into recommendations for the consideration of the COP.

VI. General conclusions and recommendations

67. The CST at its eleventh session may wish to consider the recommendations of the independent evaluation and assessment expert concerning the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, and provide guidance for the preparation and organization of future UNCCD scientific conferences.

68. The CST may also wish to make recommendations to the COP on the priorities identified in implementing the preliminary outcomes of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference.

69. The Committee may wish to recommend to the COP that future UNCCD scientific conferences be held during intersessional sessions of the CST, and amend decision 13/COP.8, paragraph 1, accordingly and make recommendations on the date, place and themes of future scientific conferences.

70. The CST may wish to recommend to the COP a possible date, venue and theme for the fifth special session of the CST (CST S-5) and its UNCCD 4th Scientific Conference.

71. The CST may wish to recommend to the COP a possible date, venue and theme for the sixth special session of the CST (CST S-6) and its UNCCD 5th Scientific Conference.

72. The CST may also wish to take into account the recommendations on how to maintain in a sustainable manner the momentum achieved through the scientific conferences and forward them to the COP for its consideration.