



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

Windhoek, Namibia, 17–20 September 2013

Item 5 (d) of the provisional agenda

**Reshaping the operation of the Committee on Science and Technology in line with The Strategy:
Consideration of the progress report on the preparation of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference
on “Combating DLDD for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of
science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices”**

**Progress report on the preparation of the UNCCD 3rd
Scientific Conference**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 18/COP.10, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) decided that the 3rd UNCCD Scientific Conference would take place in 2014 at a special session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), in accordance with the provisions of decision 13/COP.8, paragraph 1. By the same decision, the COP requested the Bureau of the CST to include a presentation on UNCCD scientific conferences on the agenda of each of its sessions.

This document reports on progress made in the preparation process for the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference from the third special session of the CST (CST S-3) up to 6 June 2013.

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I. Background

1. The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) 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 the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8), Parties decided to strengthen the scientific basis underpinning the Convention. To this end, by its decision 13/COP.8, the COP decided that each future ordinary session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) would be organized in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format by the Bureau of the CST in consultation with a lead institution/consortium that is qualified in, and has expertise in, the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP.
3. As a result, the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference took place during COP 9 from 22 to 24 September 2009 on the theme “Biophysical and socioeconomic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management”, which was followed by the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference on the theme “Economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas”, which took place from 9 to 12 April 2013 in Bonn, Germany.
4. By its decision 18/COP.10, paragraph 12, the COP decided that the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference would take place in 2014 at a special session of the CST, in accordance with the provisions of decision 13/COP.8, paragraph 1.
5. Decision 18/COP.10 decided that the thematic topic to be considered by the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference will be “Combating DLDD for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices”.
6. A progress report on the preparation of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference up to 31 October 2012 was presented at the third special session of the CST (CST S-3) which was held in Bonn, Germany (see ICCD/CST(S-3)/4). The present document reports on the progress made since the preparation of document ICCD/CST(S-3)/4 up to 6 June 2013.

II. Progress made on the preparation of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference

7. At the meeting of the Bureau of the CST held in Bonn, Germany, on 29 and 30 October 2012, in accordance with the evaluation criteria listed in the terms of reference for the selection of a lead institution/consortium to organize the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference, the consortium “Scientific and Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Development (STK4SD)”, presented by Agropolis International on behalf of its partners, was selected.
8. The consortium STK4SD, which is organizing the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference under the guidance of the Bureau of the CST and with the assistance of the secretariat, was introduced to the Parties during CST S-3. Since the selection of the consortium for the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference, two meetings of the Steering Committee for the Conference have been organized.

9. At its first meeting, held on 13 April 2013, the members of the Steering Committee discussed its terms of reference, as well as the terms of reference of the Scientific Advisory Committee. At the same meeting, the composition of the Steering Committee was also discussed and the conclusion reached that the members of the Steering Committee of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference should include the following: members of the Bureau of the CST, the lead representative of the STK4SD and the representative of the UNCCD secretariat. A host country representative may join the Steering Committee as a member. The final terms of reference for the Steering Committee of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference were adopted by the Bureau of the CST at its meeting held on 30 and 31 of May 2013 and are given in annex I below.

10. At its second meeting, which took place on 29 May 2013, the above-mentioned Steering Committee agreed on the terms of reference of the Scientific Advisory Committee, as given in annex II below. In addition, the members of the Steering Committee discussed and agreed on a call for experts as members of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference and set out a road map and time frame for the organization and preparation of the 3rd Scientific Conference, taking into account lessons learned from the organization and preparation process of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference.

11. A memorandum of understanding between the secretariat and STK4SD is being formulated.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

12. The CST at its eleventh session may wish to take note of the progress made so far towards the organization of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference and provide guidance and further recommendations on the process of organizing the conference, taking into account lessons learned from the preparation and organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference.

Annex I

Terms of reference for the Steering Committee of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference

“Combating desertification/land degradation and drought for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices”

I. Background

1. The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (The Strategy) that was adopted by the Conference of the Parties (COP) at its eighth session (COP 8), in September 2007 calls for the reshaping of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), strengthening its capacity to process scientific, technical and socioeconomic information. The framework for meetings of the CST to be held in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format and to focus on one priority area was established through decision 13/COP.8.

2. The UNCCD Scientific Conferences are expected to produce 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. These recommendations shall be submitted to the COP for its consideration. The recommendations should also provide a clear picture of available options and possible scenarios for decision makers on the theme of the conference.

3. Decision 18/COP.10 determined that the 3rd UNCCD Scientific Conference would take place in 2014 at a special session of the CST. By the same decision, the COP decided that the specific thematic topic to be considered by the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference would be “Combating desertification/land degradation and drought for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices”.

4. In the afore-mentioned decision, the COP requested the Bureau of the CST, with the support of the secretariat, to select the lead institution/consortium to organize the conference at least two years prior to each future UNCCD Scientific Conference. The terms of reference as agreed by the Bureau were posted on the UNCCD website and circulated to Parties, observers, and scientific institutions, as well as to other interested and relevant stakeholders. The deadline for applications was 15 September 2012 with an extended deadline up to 30 September 2012.

5. During its meeting on 29 and 30 October 2012,¹ the Bureau of the CST assessed all the applications and decided to select the consortium “Scientific and Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Development (STK4SD)” to organize the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference under the guidance of the Bureau of the CST.

¹ Report of the CST Bureau meeting held on 29 and 30 October 2012, available at: <http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/CST/Report%20CST%20BM_29-30Oct2012.pdf>.

II. Guiding principles of the Steering Committee

6. An independent assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference recommended that “the secretariat should have in place a conference steering committee representing the different UNCCD units in order to coordinate the organization of the conference and to work closely with the host country, the institution/consortium chosen to organize the conference and other stakeholders”. The assessment further recommended that “in order to facilitate the decision-making process the communication channels between the secretariat and the institution in charge of organizing the conference should be clear and the responsibilities well defined. The UNCCD Conference Steering Committee should be in charge of this coordination.”²

7. In response to these recommendations, at the Second Special Session of the CST, held in February 2011, in Bonn, Germany, it was recommended that the secretariat should “put in place a conference steering committee to coordinate the organization of the conference. The steering committee should be composed of members of the Bureau of the Committee, the UNCCD secretariat and the selected lead institution/consortium”.³

8. The role of the Steering Committee shall be further discussed at its first meeting. It could be defined by a set of guiding principles:

- The Steering Committee will provide guidance relating to the overall organization and functioning of the conference based on regular reporting by the secretariat and STK4SD
- The Steering Committee will review the progress made regarding milestones, fundraising, and resource allocation to different activities for the preparation and organization of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference, including providing recommendations, if any, for the consideration of the Bureau of the CST
- The Steering Committee will provide an effective channel for the exchange of information between the secretariat, STK4SD and the Bureau of the CST, enabling effective coordination of efforts in the organization of the conference and ensuring effective working relationships
- The Steering Committee will ensure alignment of the actions of each of its members in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in the preparation of the conference with advice from the Scientific Advisory Committee
- The Steering Committee will also provide a systematic process and opportunity for the resolution of any unforeseen problems which may arise during the preparation and organization of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference
- The Steering Committee will approve the terms of reference of the Scientific Advisory Committee
- In addition, the Steering Committee, with the support of the secretariat, will take decisions regarding membership of the Scientific Advisory Committee.

² Available at : <<http://www.unccd.int/Lists/OfficialDocuments/cop10/cstINF3eng.pdf>>.

³ Available at : <<http://www.unccd.int/Lists/OfficialDocuments/CSTS-2/9eng.pdf>>.

III. Modus operandi of the Steering Committee

Officers

9. The Chair of the Steering Committee meetings shall be the Chair of the CST. In case of his or her unavailability for a meeting, the Chair may nominate one of the Vice-Chairs of the Bureau of the CST to act as Chair for the meeting. The Rapporteur of the Bureau of the CST shall act as Rapporteur of the Steering Committee.

Membership and participation

10. The members of the Steering Committee shall be representatives of the Bureau of the CST, the STK4SD and the UNCCD secretariat. A host country representative may join the Steering Committee as a member.

Place and date of meetings

11. The first meeting of the Steering Committee shall be organized by the UNCCD secretariat in Bonn, Germany. Any future meetings of the Steering Committee, either in person or by teleconference, will be organized by the UNCCD secretariat in consultation with STK4SD and the Bureau of the CST on an as-needed basis. It would be preferable to hold meetings of the Steering Committee back-to-back with meetings of the Bureau of the CST or other relevant international meetings addressing relevant topics.

Agenda and documentation

12. Provisional agendas and relevant documentation to support the meetings of the Steering Committee shall be prepared and circulated by the secretariat in consultation with STK4SD and the Chair of the Bureau of the CST.

13. Depending on the provisional agenda of the meeting of the Steering Committee, other persons or representatives of institutions, organizations or committees involved in the organization or the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference may be invited on an ad hoc basis.

Decision-making

14. Decisions shall be made by consensus. If no consensus can be reached among the members of the Steering Committee, the matter will be referred to the Bureau of the CST to take a decision in a timely manner.

Reports of the meeting

15. Draft reports of meetings of the Steering Committee shall be prepared by the UNCCD secretariat, approved by the Chair of the Steering Committee, circulated to members of the Steering Committee and adopted at the next Steering Committee meeting. Distribution of the report to all the participating invitees will be at the discretion of the Chair of the Steering Committee.

Annex II

Terms of reference for the Scientific Advisory Committee for the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference

“Combating desertification/land degradation and drought for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices”

I. Introduction

1. The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (The Strategy), that was adopted by the Conference of the Parties (COP) at its eighth session, in September 2007, sets out an operational objective on science, technology and knowledge. Recognizing the need to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), The Strategy calls for the reshaping of the CST, strengthening its capacity to process scientific, technical and socioeconomic information. In the light of this need, by its the decision 18/COP.10, the COP decided that the specific thematic topic to be considered by the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference would be “Combating desertification/land degradation and drought for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices”.

2. The UNCCD Scientific Conferences are expected to produce 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. These recommendations shall be submitted to the COP for its consideration. The recommendations should also provide a clear picture of available options and possible scenarios for decision makers on the theme of the conference.

3. The framework for CST meetings to be held in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format and to focus on one priority area was established through decision 13/COP.8. In accordance with decision 18/COP.10, the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference shall take place in 2014 at a fourth special session of the CST. The Conference will be organized by the selected consortium “Scientific and Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Development” (STK4SD) under the immediate guidance of the Steering Committee and the CST Bureau.

4. In order to facilitate the efficient implementation of the scientific and technical conference-style format of the CST session and to address the selected priority theme, the establishment of a Scientific Advisory Committee should serve the implementation of decision 16/COP.9 which requests the Bureau of the CST, in collaboration with the selected lead institution/consortium and with the support of the secretariat, to involve relevant networks, institutions, agencies, bodies and scientific organizations at the regional and subregional levels, non-governmental organizations and other civil society stakeholders in addressing the priority theme. To this end, wide-ranging expertise from key stakeholders needs to be brought on board, and knowledge at various levels needs to be mobilized and analysed in order for the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference to succeed.

5. An independent assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference recommended creating a conference scientific committee, composed of scientists representing the different regions, to work on conference topics and procedures. This committee should serve in an advisory capacity to the Bureau of the CST and the UNCCD secretariat and provide input for future conferences.⁴ It was also recommended by Parties at CST S-2 that, following its terms of reference, the lead institution/consortium should establish an independent scientific committee composed of scientists representing the different regions, who will plan publications well in advance, provide guidance and inputs to ensure complementarity amongst the working groups and provide a neutral sounding board for the development of messages to be shared with the press on the conference topic and progress made.⁵ The independent scientific committee should regularly inform the conference steering committee about the progress made. At its tenth session, the COP, by its decision 18/COP.10, welcomed the setting-up of a conference steering committee and a scientific advisory committee to guide the organization process and the scientific activities towards the conference, respectively.⁶

II. Scope of activities and requirements from the Scientific Advisory Committee

6. The scope and objectives of the Scientific Advisory Committee are to ensure that the substantive focus and discussions take place during the preparation, organization, implementation and, as appropriate, in the wrap-up, of the conference and will:

- Support scientifically the activities and strategies of the consortium STK4SD with regard to all the phases of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference
- Support state-of-the-art research findings and best practices in the field of the theme of the conference
- Produce 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
- Ensure the flow of new ideas to the Conference, enhancing the knowledge-sharing process.

7. The Scientific Advisory Committee is required to provide advice on the following substantive matters:

- Identification and refinement of subject topics or sub-themes
- Complementarity amongst members of possible preparatory thematic working groups and amongst conference sessions
- Preparation of the terms of reference of working groups, as appropriate, to address key issues and subtopics of the theme of the conference
- Identification of keynote/plenary speakers and scientists for contributions to the conference
- Establishment of a review and selection process of short abstracts for oral, poster presentations or workshops for the conference

⁴ Available at : <<http://www.unccd.int/Lists/OfficialDocuments/cop10/cstINF3eng.pdf>>.

⁵ Available at : <<http://www.unccd.int/Lists/OfficialDocuments/CSTS-2/9eng.pdf>>.

⁶ Available at : <<http://www.unccd.int/Lists/OfficialDocuments/cop10/31add1eng.pdf>>.

- Review of all substantive documents produced for the conference, for example, background documents, white papers, programmes, and so forth
 - Planning of scientific documentation for the conference and follow-up publications in relation to expected outcomes from the conference, including review and publication strategy (such as scientific papers on special issues in peer reviewed journals and policy documents)
 - Messages to be shared with the press on the conference topic and progress made
8. The Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee may be required to contribute to the meetings of the Steering Committee of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference.

III. Composition of the Scientific Advisory Committee

9. The Scientific Advisory Committee shall be composed of a maximum of 12 experts with experience in the conference theme, comprising 2 scientists from each region and 2 scientists with global expertise. A balanced composition will be sought in the membership of the Scientific Advisory Committee in relation to the geographical regions, gender and interdisciplinarity.
10. The members of the Scientific Advisory Committee will be selected by the Steering Committee based on selection criteria that will be included in a call for experts posted on the UNCCD website.

IV. Meetings of the Scientific Advisory Committee

11. The first meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee shall be called by the lead consortium in consultation with the secretariat and the Steering Committee bearing in mind that the place and duration of the meeting must be in line with the available resources. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee shall be elected by the members during the first meeting. In case of the unavailability of the Chair, the Vice-Chair will act as Chair of the meeting.
12. Subsequent meetings of the Scientific Advisory Committee shall be scheduled by the Scientific Advisory Committee and the lead consortium in consultation with the Steering Committee. A maximum of four meetings should be held by the Scientific Advisory Committee. The meetings will be conducted either with members being physically present or by teleconference depending on the availability of funding. Other institutional partners to be engaged through the conference outreach and partnership building process, including those taking part in the meetings of the Scientific Advisory Committee, may offer support to the organization of the meetings, if they wish to do so. The secretariat will have the status of observer to the Scientific Advisory Committee, and working groups if any.
13. Following each meeting, a written report on the discussions and conclusions shall be prepared by the consortium with the support of the Scientific Advisory Committee and sent to the Steering Committee.