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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

**SYNTHESIS OF THE REPORT ON WAYS OF IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY AND
EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

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CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1 - 3	3
II. BACKGROUND	4 - 8	3
III. SYNTHESIS OF SUBMISSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	9 - 36	4
A. Need for reform	13 - 14	4
B. Size	15 - 16	5
C. Composition and mandate	17 - 18	5
D. Representation and composition of the CST's ad hoc panels	19 - 21	5
E. Proposed options	22 - 26	5
F. Budget implications	27 - 29	7
G. Programme of work	30 - 36	7
IV. CONCLUSIONS	37 - 48	8

Annex

I	Summary of discussions and list of participants from the regional consultations meeting on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology	10
II	Contributions from Parties on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology	12

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) discussions were held among participants regarding the functioning of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST). Recalling article 24 of the Convention, as well as decision 15/COP.1, the Conference of the Parties adopted decision 17/COP.4 on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST.
2. According to this decision, Parties were encouraged to hold extensive consultations on ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, and to transmit their recommendations to the secretariat by 1 May 2001. The secretariat was requested to prepare a synthesis of those recommendations and to facilitate intensive consultations between the regional groups, to consist of two representatives per region, not later than September 2001, and to report to the Conference of the Parties at its fifth session. Consultations between the regional groups were held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 16 to 17 August 2001. As a result of these consultations, regional representatives suggested the options listed in annex I to be taken into consideration by the CST at COP 5.
3. Seven submissions were received from Parties and regional groups, namely Brazil, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, the European Union, the Group of 77 and China, and Switzerland. These submissions can be found in the annex II to this document.

II. BACKGROUND

4. According to article 24 of the Convention, as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties, the mandate of the CST “is to provide it (the COP) with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought”.
5. As stipulated in article 24, the CST “shall meet in conjunction with the ordinary sessions of the Conference of the Parties, and shall be multi-disciplinary and open to the participation of all Parties. It shall be composed of government representatives competent in the relevant fields of expertise”.
6. In order to examine issues in greater detail, as outlined in paragraph 3 of article 24, the Conference of the Parties may, as necessary, appoint ad hoc panels “to provide it, through the CST, with information and advice on specific issues regarding the state of the art in fields of science and technology relevant to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought”. Ad hoc panels are composed of experts whose names are taken from the roster of independent experts (ROE) for the UNCCD, taking into account the need for a multi-disciplinary approach and broad geographical representation.
7. According to paragraph 2 of article 24, Parties nominate to the ROE individuals with expertise and experience in relevant fields, taking into account the need for a multi-disciplinary approach and broad geographical representation. The criteria and procedures used to identify an

expert for nomination to the ROE differs from Party to Party. The number of nominations to the ROE also varies from Party to Party, since no minimum or maximum number has been identified by the Convention.

8. As agreed in decision 17/COP.1, the terms of reference and the modalities of work of ad hoc panels are approved by the Conference of the Parties, based upon recommendations of the CST; the number of members of any ad hoc panel shall not exceed twelve; in principle, the number of ad hoc panels shall not exceed three at any one time.

III. SYNTHESIS OF SUBMISSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9. The need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST is recognized by all Parties which have made submissions in accordance with decision 17/COP.4. In particular, Parties have raised specific concerns regarding: (i) the competence of participants in the CST, (ii) the political nature of discussions within the CST, rather than a focus on scientific and technological issues, (iii) the lack of continuity of representatives to the CST, and (iv) inadequate time within the agenda of the CST to allow for in-depth analysis and debate of the issues.

10. Concern has been expressed that the recommendations of the CST have not been sufficiently integrated into other Convention processes, including the implementation of national, subregional and regional action programmes, and thematic programming networks, as well as with other relevant subsidiary bodies, such as the Ad Hoc Working Group for the Review of Implementation of the UNCCD. The need to make the CST more relevant at the national and regional levels has also been highlighted.

11. The ability of the CST to provide sound technical advice to the COP on combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought has also been raised. Two submissions cited the failure of Parties to establish and use benchmarks and indicators to monitor the implementation and impact of the Convention, as recommended by the CST, as an example of the lack of influence of the CST.

12. In addition, it has been noted that insufficient linkages have been made between the CST and the scientific and technical subsidiary bodies of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

A. Need for reform

13. While recognizing the need to improve the functioning of the CST, there is general agreement that the reform of the CST should be undertaken within its existing mandate, based on the terms contained in article 24 of the Convention. Based on the submissions received, Parties do not wish to reopen negotiations on the Convention, but rather to provide the CST with different mechanisms and tools to enable it to become more relevant to Parties and the COP, and to strengthen its contribution with regard to the implementation of the Convention.

14. A number of factors have been identified which contribute to the less than optimal functioning of the CST to date. Essentially, these are related to the size of the CST, its composition and mandate, and its representation.

B. Size

15. There is general agreement that participation in the CST should remain open to all Parties. However, it is recognized that because of its large size and the differing types and levels of expertise of participants, the CST faces difficulty in undertaking serious scientific debate and effective work planning.

16. Taking into account these circumstances, each submission has recognized the need for a smaller scientific and technical group to supplement and support the work of the CST, although there is no general consensus on the exact number of representatives that would be required. Based on various submissions, a range between 10 and 32 representatives has been suggested.

C. Composition and mandate

17. Parties have noted that many members of the CST are primarily policy advisers who have some scientific background, rather than scientists or researchers who are actively engaged in sectoral-specific research relevant to combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought. It is for this reason that representatives have focused on policy and institutional process issues within the CST, rather than on “pure” scientific and technical issues.

18. While this could be viewed as a weakness, it is also one of the CST’s strengths. Several of the submissions have suggested that the CST should become more of a policy research body, that it should become actively involved in the collection and analysis of information contained in national reports, and that the CST should strengthen its contribution to the review of the implementation of the Convention.

D. Representation and composition of the CST’s ad hoc panels

19. There is general consensus that the composition of an ad hoc panel, based on nominations from the ROE, is often influenced more by concerns over regional representation than by the scientific or technical merit of the expert. As a result, the usefulness of ad hoc panels has been questioned, given that the analysis and recommendations of their reports to date seem to have had minimal impact on the implementation of the Convention.

20. It has also been noted that the process by which the roster has been developed has not been rigorous, resulting in a varying quality of scientific expertise.

21. There is no agreement with regard to whether ad hoc panels should continue to function according to the existing terms of reference.

E. Proposed options

22. One submission recommends that a core, smaller, permanent CST panel of experts be established, although the number of representatives is not quantified. This panel would be comprised of representatives currently nominated to the ROE; however, the submission identifies the need to institute a more rigorous process of selection of experts to the ROE, and notes that membership of the ROE should be subject to some peer review mechanism.

According to the paper, ad hoc panels would no longer be created by the CST, although they could be formed at the recommendation of the core panel of experts. The submission does not specifically address whether membership of the panel of experts would be based on regional representation.

23. Another submission proposes that “a CST task force should be established to oversee and coordinate issues within its mandate in order to coordinate the work of the ad hoc panels and prepare for the COP”. Four ad hoc panels, consisting of five/six people per panel, would be established, each with a specific responsibility as follows: (i) knowledge, (ii) impact, (iii) mitigation, and (iv) results. Each panel would identify a coordinator “to collect and disseminate the information”. The task force would be composed of the sum of the four panels, constituting some 30 representatives. Membership of panels would continue on the basis of regional representation. The need to update or revise the ROE to complement the task force approach is also noted.

24. The establishment of a “high-level experts and scientists group on desertification and drought” is recommended in a separate submission. The experts group would consist of a maximum of 32 experts and scientists, distributed among the five regional groups within the United Nations system as follows: 8 from Africa, 7 from Asia, 6 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 6 from Western Europe and other States, and 5 from Central and Eastern Europe. It is proposed that the UNCCD secretariat would nominate representatives to the experts group from the ROE, in close consultation with members of the CST Bureau and the chairpersons of the five regional groups. The submission also suggests that at least one expert or scientist from civil society, in particular from non-governmental organizations, would be selected from each regional group. The experts group would report to the CST; the CST would be responsible for drafting explicit terms of reference for the experts group, which would subsequently be considered by the COP for adoption. The experts group would meet at least once a year, before the ordinary sessions of the COP.

25. Two submissions refer to the need to make the CST more relevant to, and better integrated into, the national and regional levels. One of these submissions proposes the establishment of a “permanent work group” of the CST, which would consist of the five regional groups within the United Nations system. Two or three representatives would be elected to each regional group during regional meetings; the submission does not address the link, if any, with the ROE. In total, the permanent work group would consist of 10-15 representatives, and would act as an interlocutor and monitor between respective regions and the CST. The need to develop a short-term to medium-term work plan with clear commitments to the CST by the Parties and other relevant organizations was mentioned in the submission.

26. Another submission proposes replacing the advice provided by ad hoc panels by policy research contracted out to external specialized institutions; however, the same submission recognizes the need for an independent scientific panel, meeting outside the COP, to act as a scientific monitoring and advocacy body. It is proposed that this independent scientific panel would undertake its work in the form of an international conference, and the results would be shared with the COP and the public. This option suggests that the CST would have a shorter agenda and complete its work at the COP within one and a half days.

F. Budget implications

27. Three of the submissions address the subject of the possible budget implications of reforming the means by which the CST carries out its existing mandate. The proposal to create a CST task force is based on the assumption that the current budget allocation for the CST should be sufficient for the reformed CST activities.
28. According to one submission, the financial implications of the meeting of the expert group should be reflected in the regular budget of the Convention, while noting that voluntary contributions should be sought to ensure the participation of experts from developing countries.
29. One submission notes that the current CST programme of work has been delayed because it is dependent upon voluntary support, and proposes that, in order to achieve improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, core financial support is required. This could be “in the form of administrative and incentive financing, as well as communication and publishing budgets”. The submission proposes that the secretariat be tasked with exploring what type of financing would be required in order for a smaller, permanent panel of experts to become a “competitive and credible” scientific entity; it also suggests that the cost savings of holding the CST in conjunction with the COP must be re-evaluated.

G. Programme of work

30. It has been proposed that the programme of work of the CST may need to be revisited, given the proposed changes with regard to the functioning of specialized groups within the Convention. There has also been a suggestion that the duration of a CST meeting in conjunction with the COP could be shortened, if a smaller scientific group were established.
31. One submission encourages the CST to consider adopting innovative scientific networking approaches for advancing the programme of work of the CST, where possible, such as through the creation of a consortium of institutions to tackle specific issues; this approach was used to undertake phase 1 of the survey and evaluation of existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies involved in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought.
32. Another submission encourages the use of modern means of communication for the exchange of information and to minimize the need for face-to-face meetings.
33. The need to ensure that the public has access to the results produced by the CST and its specialized groups has also been noted.
34. Two submissions have noted the need for the CST to become more active with regard to the review of the implementation of the UNCCD. One suggests that scientific and technical issues raised during the implementation review process should be fed into the work programme of the CST and vice versa, “either by connecting the two processes, including scheduling their meetings one after the other, or requesting the participation of designated representatives from each, in the other forums”. Given that the CST has requested Parties to provide more

information on the scientific and technological aspects of implementation, such information to be incorporated into the national reports, according to a second submission, the CST “should look for further possibilities of collecting and analysing this information”.

35. One submission suggests that the CST should, in the framework of its advisory functions, summarize and, where necessary, “convert the latest international scientific, technological, technical, socio-economic and other information” on the global situation or status of desertification and drought provided by the experts group into forms appropriate for the needs of the COP. The CST would regularly compile and synthesize this type of information and data, as well as information on the latest developments in science and technology, and assess the implications for the implementation of the Convention; in addition, the CST would “formulate concrete requests through the COP, to competent international scientific and technical or technological bodies”.

36. With regard to other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), it is advised that the smaller “core” panel of experts should work closely with the respective subsidiary scientific bodies of MEAs, in particular with the Climate Change and Biodiversity conventions, in identifying concrete items for the joint programmes of work.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

37. While recognizing the need to improve the functioning of the CST, there is general agreement that the reform of the CST should be made within its existing mandate, as described in article 24 of the Convention. There is also general agreement that participation in the CST should remain open to all Parties, but that there is a need to establish a smaller scientific and technical group to supplement and support the work of the CST. A variety of names have been proposed for this smaller scientific group, which would report directly to the CST.

38. Although there is no general agreement on the number of representatives that would be required, a range of between 10 and 32 representatives has been recommended, based on various submissions.

39. There is a general consensus that nominations to the smaller scientific group would be based on geographical representation, using the accepted regional groupings of the United Nations system, but there is no consensus about the number of representatives per region.

40. Several of the submissions have highlighted the need to revise the process for identification of experts to the ROE, instituting a more rigorous process to ensure the nomination of highly-qualified and internationally-recognized scientists. The majority of submissions propose that nominations to the smaller scientific group be drawn from the ROE.

41. However, there is no agreement with regard to the process used to select the experts from the ROE: through election at regional meetings, by nomination from the UNCCD secretariat in consultation with the CST Bureau and the chairpersons of the five regional groups, or by nomination through the CST Bureau and/or the chairpersons of the regional groups.

42. None of the submissions have recommended the length of term to be served by members of the smaller scientific group. With the exception of one submission, which proposes that the scientific group would need to meet at least once a year before the ordinary sessions of the COP, the matter of when the scientific group should meet, and how often, has not been addressed. With the establishment of a smaller scientific group, the duration of the CST meetings within the COP may be affected.
43. The majority of submissions recommend that the work of the smaller scientific group should be included under the core budget of the UNCCD secretariat.
44. There is no general agreement on whether ad hoc panels should continue to function according to the existing terms of reference.
45. The majority of the submissions recommend that innovative means, such as electronic mail, be employed by members of the smaller scientific group for communicating and the exchange of information, thereby reducing the need for face-to-face meetings.
46. With regard to the programme of work of the CST, the majority of the submissions have highlighted the need for the CST to become more involved in the implementation of the Convention, including its review processes, as well as to play a greater role in the collection and analysis of information and data contained in national reports.
47. There is also general agreement that the advisory functions of the CST to the COP should be strengthened, to ensure that the COP bases its decisions to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought on the most up to date scientific and technological information available.
48. Several of the submissions have recommended that concrete linkages between the CST and the scientific and technical subsidiary bodies of other MEAs should be established.

Annex I

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AND LIST OF PARTICIPANTS FROM THE REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS MEETING ON IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

In response to decision 17/COP.4, Parties were encouraged to hold extensive consultations on ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, and to transmit their recommendations to the secretariat, which was requested to prepare a synthesis of the recommendations. The secretariat was also requested to facilitate intensive consultations between the regional groups, to consist of two representatives per region, not later than September 2001, and to report to the Conference of the Parties at its fifth session.

In accordance with this decision, consultations between the regional groups were held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 16 to 17 August 2001, at which time document ICCD/COP(5)/3/Add.2 was considered. As a result of these consultations, regional representatives suggested that the following options be taken into consideration by the CST at COP 5:

- (1) there is a need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST in accordance with the spirit and the letter of the convention;
- (2) the reform of the CST should be considered within its existing mandate;
- (3) under the authority of the CST, [a group of high-level experts] [a task force composed of the sum total of the ad hoc panels] in the area of combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought should be established;
- (4) the programme of work of the [group of experts] [task force composed of the ad hoc panels] should be pluri-annual in nature [3 years minimum, 5 years maximum] [4-6 years];
- (5) the composition of the [group of experts] [task force composed of the ad hoc panels] should be limited to [21] [25] members;
- (6) the composition of the [group of experts] [task force composed of the ad hoc panels] should be based on an [equitable] [equal] geographical distribution;
- (7) the experts should be selected from the roster of independent experts by the CST Bureau, in consultation with the regional groups and the secretariat; the selection of experts should be finalized by the Bureau of COP 5 at the latest [three months after the conclusion of the meeting of the CST]; the competence of the experts presented by each regional group will be determined on the basis of a curriculum vitae, which should include a paper on a specific issue contained in the programme of work;

- (8) the programme of work of the [group of experts] [task force composed of the ad hoc panels] and the terms of reference should be defined by the CST [based on themes, activities and issues of relevance to the convention] [using four approaches: knowledge; impact; mitigation; results];
- (9) the [group of experts] [task force composed of the ad hoc panels] should use existing means of communication, such as through electronic means, face-to-face meetings, etc.;
- (10) the [group of experts] [task force composed of the ad hoc panels] should meet at least once per year [for one week];
- (11) the duration of the meeting of the CST should remain unchanged;
- (12) the financial implications of the activities of the [group of experts] [task force composed of the ad hoc panels] should come from the regular budget; in order to maintain the independent nature of the [group of experts] [task force composed of the ad hoc panels], the participation costs of all the members should be covered, regardless of whether the member comes from a developed or developing country; a decision will only be made when all financial considerations have been taken into account;
- (13) the CST should play a role in the review of national reports, using the synthesis and summaries of the reports prepared by the secretariat ;
- (14) there is a need to better integrate the activities of the CST into national and regional activities;
- (15) CST representatives need to play a more active liaison role between the CST's activities and those of the regional groups, as well as during the review of national reports.

List of participants

Dr. Olanrewaju B. Smith (Canada)
Mr. Mebrahtu Iyassu (Eritrea)
Mr. Rodolfo Martinez Luna (Mexico)
Ambassador Marc Gedopt (Belgium)
Ambassador Rogatien Biaou (Benin)
Ms. Dagmar Kubinova (Czech Republic)
Mr. Juan Torres Guevara (Peru)
Mr. Khaled Al-Shara'a (Syrian Arab Republic)
Mr. Hama Arba Diallo (UNCCD)
Mr. Ahmed Cissoko (UNCCD)
Ms. Jan Sheltinga (UNCCD)

Annex II

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PARTIES ON IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

In response to decision 17/COP.4, seven submissions were received from Parties, namely Brazil, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, the European Union, the Group of 77 and China, and Switzerland.

1. BRAZIL

Regarding the decision on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology, the Brazilian Government suggests that the Committee consider carrying out researches in the field of social psychology in order to assess the factors that may have an influence on the behaviour of the population of dry regions and how to promote changes in their habits and mentality with a view to fostering sustainable development.

2. CANADA

The mandate and modalities of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) are established in article 23 of the Convention, and in various subsequent decisions, particularly decision 15/COP.1 The purpose of the CST is to contribute sound scientific advice and knowledge which can inform decisions of the COP and of Parties in their implementation of the Convention.

Some interest has emerged on the need to further refine and rationalize activities of the CST in order to make a more effective contribution to Convention implementation. As an outcome of COP 4 (Bonn, Germany - December 2000), Parties adopted decision 17/COP.4, which encourages Parties to consider ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, and to transmit their recommendations to the secretariat by May 2001. In addition, decisions on the work programme of the CST, ongoing activities of its ad hoc panels (decisions 10/COP.4 to 16/COP.4) as well as the deliberations of the CST Bureau reflected this desire for reflection.

In terms of timing, a review of the work and modalities of the CST is opportune, as it occurs in parallel to discussions on the creation of institutional measures for implementation review of the UNCCD. As well, Parties are considering how to maintain the momentum of the Convention in light of the transition of the COP from an annual to a biennial event. These, if taken together, provide an opportunity to not only improve the CST's effectiveness, but also rationalize its contribution to the overall success of Convention processes and implementation.

CST effectiveness and efficiency

CST's effectiveness can only be measured by a quality assessment of whether it succeeds in achieving results; whether the outcome of its deliberations is impacting on Convention processes and implementation; and whether the CST provides sound technical advice and knowledge of value to the Convention process and its bodies. Consideration, therefore, of its

work programme and of the procedures for productive exchange between the CST, the COP and other ad hoc bodies and convention instruments (such as the Ad Hoc Working Group for Review of Implementation and the Global Mechanism) are key. Determining the efficiency of the CST is a very difficult assessment to make. In part it must be based on a cost-benefit analysis, on how well resources are being used. In addition, processes of participation and the scientific and technical competence of members of the Committee and its bodies (for example the Bureau, the Roster of Experts, panels) must also be taken into account. Efficiency relates not only to financial input but also to the efficient investment of the time and minds of human resources toward the desired output.

Even a very brief analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the CST identifies a variety of problems in terms of its operation and functioning including: politicization of processes; generalization and superficiality of discussion (both in its own deliberations and that of panels); lack of focus and over-extension of the programme of work; slow progress on the scientific and technical elaboration of identified issues; and the inability to produce actual “products” with direct relevance to inform policy and implementation processes. However, these are in fact largely symptomatic: upon closer scrutiny these challenges hinge on more fundamental structural problems of the CST related to size, representation and the technical composition of the Committee and its other bodies.

Challenges to the CST

Size

The Convention stipulates that participation in the CST is open to all Parties. This has resulted in a large and often unwieldy body. At the time of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Desertification (INCD) negotiations, the prospect of this was raised as a concern. The idea of a limited participation was discussed but was not deemed possible as the alternative led to debate on criteria of composition and issues of regional representation. Since entry into force, experience has demonstrated that, because of its large size, the CST is experiencing real difficulty in undertaking serious scientific debate and effective work planning. Essentially, the large CST suffers from processes which result in its having to arrive at the lowest common denominator position. This presents a serious hindrance to the CST providing quality advice to the Convention.

Cost and frequency

Another aspect which arose in the context of early CST negotiations related to the cost consideration of large versus small scientific bodies. While it was recognized that the costs of a full-participation CST meeting would be significant, it was deemed manageable if the CST was held on a yearly basis, in parallel to the COP. CST costs would be absorbed by the overall COP budget and voluntary fund contributions for least developed country Parties participation. The alternative, a smaller, dedicated scientific body, was perceived to have higher costs likely necessitating earmarked core budget funding. In addition, it was feared that a smaller body of experts, constituted to undertake actual scientific and technical work over the course of the year,

would require regular inter-sessional meetings in order to inform the COP. Therefore the assumption was that a small body would result in significant additional participation and travel costs.

While, the cost-saving assumptions about a parallel CST/COP may well have been valid in the INCD 10 through COP 3 period, COP 5 marks the beginning of biennial meetings. Biennial meetings of the CST will present serious challenges to continuity and the effective management of the scientific and technical work of the CST in the inter-sessional period. Parties should re-evaluate the cost savings versus effectiveness and efficiency losses in light of this transition.

Composition and representation

The composition of the CST, its Bureau, and the nomination process of its ad hoc panels, presents real challenges to the effectiveness and efficiency of CST operations. Specifically, this is centred on the United Nations custom of guaranteeing regional representation on bodies of this nature, in effect ensuring that they are large, cumbersome (and often, as an additional side effect, highly politicized). Of course, the alternative selective participation involves some trade-offs in terms of transparency, more limited learning and dissemination potential, and is contrary to established United Nations representation processes as established in other conventions processes.

The idea of a small, selective CST was considered during the course of negotiations, but was not successfully defended in light of the stronger “cost” and “representation” arguments which sought a full participation CST. However, this discussion was not adequately addressed as it was always framed in an “either-or” instead of an “and” scenario. In fact, cost concerns aside, a small, supplementary scientific body, mandated to inform the full CST, could contribute greatly to ensuring the CST’s effectiveness and efficiency.

Expertise

In terms of expertise, it is fair to say that the CST is not a scientific body. This is because true scientific debate is not currently taking place in this venue. This is largely due to the level of expertise of participants, and relates back to size, composition as well as the format of United Nations style deliberations.

CST representatives are government delegates selected to represent and advance national interests of a scientific and technical nature. While these delegates have some scientific background, they tend to be policy advisors with generalist knowledge of the issues. This is particularly true in the case of small delegations which, because the COP and CST meet in parallel, are comprised of generalists capable of covering both (this is the only option as the alternative is to de facto be excluded from one or the other). Consequently, many delegations lack the expertise to engage in substantive scientific debate in this forum and therefore concentrate their attention on policy and institutional process issues within the CST.

Style and format of deliberations

The CST operates under the same parameters as the COP in terms of rules of procedure and protocol which forces it to be a process forum and hinders it from engaging in constructive, substantive debate about science issues. For all intents and purposes, the CST is effectively a scientifically enlightened political decision-making body.

Challenges to the mechanics of the CST

The combined constraints outlined above have resulted in the CST having to develop and rely on a roster of experts and scientific panels as well as various ad hoc processes in order to achieve substantive discussion. However, the effectiveness and efficiency of these mechanisms are in turn constrained by the very challenges which face the CST.

Roster of Experts (ROE)

Currently the CST relies on scientific and technical expertise available to it through a roster of experts. Unfortunately, the process by which the ROE has been developed has not been rigorous. Nominations to the ROE are entirely at the discretion of Parties, and while some Parties have national procedures for selection of candidates, many nominations are unvetted, resulting in the overall level and quality of scientific expertise on the ROE being unverified and inconsistent.

Ad hoc panels of experts

Ad hoc panels are tasked to tackle issues through special studies in order to provide information back to the CST.

To date there have been three such panels and their usefulness is debatable. One problem is that the process by which these panels are constituted gives more weight to considerations of representation than of scientific and technical merit. At best the various panels can be commended for successfully generating reports on the requested theme. However, the utility of these is questionable given that their submission to the CST generates no discussion or debate, and there is little or no subsequent action. More importantly, the analysis and recommendations of these reports have no direct or indirect impact on implementation. We need look no further than the extent to which Parties have identified and used benchmarks and indicators in their national reporting as a litmus test of panel/CST influence.

Both the ROE and the panels of the CST are fundamentally handicapped because they are little known in the scientific community and their products go unpublished and unread outside of the COP. It is perceived that participation will result in significant professional investment and, in the case of developed country nominations, financial costs, with little or no professional benefits to entice senior scientific engagement.

Other ad hoc substantive processes

In part as a result of the limitations of the CST, ROE and panel processes, other approaches for advancing the work of the CST have been evolving. Specifically, CST work programme activities have been commissioned to specialized consortiums, groups or consultants (for example, the survey and evaluation of existing networks and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) led consortium), specialized bodies (for example Italian institution and the technical knowledge theme), or specialized institutions (for example, indicators and benchmarks work by the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)). These trends are very ad hoc but the flexibility and the partnership building approach which is inherent in these alternatives is encouraging. These scientific networking approaches are building and reinforcing the framework for a credible core of scientific knowledge to support the CST and will result in the dissemination of knowledge to the wider audience.

Unfortunately, because of their ad hoc nature, these initiatives are largely unfunded, or must rely on voluntary funding which is unreliable. This has not proved to be a sustainable method for the CST to do business.

Voluntary funding for CST subsidiary panels and initiatives

Unfortunately, these challenges to the CST have resulted in an apparent financial crisis. From the start donors have been cautious about supporting the work of the CST, their hesitation has been reinforced for the various reasons outlined above. The CST programme of work, reliant largely on voluntary support, has as a result been delayed. For example, phase II of the survey and evaluation of existing networks initiative approved at COP 4 is a casualty of these doubts, having to date obtained no voluntary financial support for implementation. This is unfortunate as funding failure casts further doubts on the overall credibility of the CST processes including its ability to effectively identify future programmes of work.

Work programme

In order to address these critical doubts, and achieve real relevance, the CST must identify in its work programme ways to influence and make critical contribution to the implementation of the Convention and to ensure that the critical scientific and technical linkages are being made to and influence the other related multilateral environmental agreements forums.

Naturally, a first step must involve a direct role of the CST in processes for review of implementation. However, to date, the CST has not done so. Rather, identifying items for programme of work have been pro forma, that is issues and themes specifically referenced in the Convention text (benchmarks and indicators, traditional knowledge, early warning systems, etc.). While these themes are relevant to dryland development, even on these it is not clear that the CST contribution has advanced understanding, let alone influenced the implementation of parties on these issues. The future of the CST hinges on two issues: demonstrating topical relevance and contributing to the learning-based processes of the Convention.

Topical relevance and a learning-based process

At COP 4, the CST had its first opportunity to explore what additional topics it should address for its future programme of work. Unfortunately, discussion was sadly lacking on this item. We see decision 16/COP.4 encouraging further monitoring of existing CST programme items (early warning, traditional knowledge and benchmarks and indicators) with the addition of one other new initiative related to identifying “strategies for the communication of information and its use to generate best practices for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought”. Sadly, while an interesting issue, this proposed work item would appear to be strategically disconnected from the exercise that was under way in parallel at COP 4, the Ad Hoc Working Group on review of implementation (AHWG).

The meetings of the AHWG, although certainly not perfect, have demonstrated that substantive discussion can be achieved, provided the right players are at the table and that the discussion is well structured. Parties to the Convention have now witnessed the benefits of an issue-driven, learning-based process, including the potential influence this process can have to inform, and be informed by, the CST.

Captured by the excellent analytical contributions of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the CST which were included in the AHWG Co-Chairmen’s report, critical scientific and technical issues were raised in these discussions. This process demonstrated their topical relevance and the need to address them provides real mandate for the CST to include them in their future programme of work.

The challenge now before the COP 5/CST must be to take up these scientific and technical issues, as they were identified by the AHWG, and develop policy directions which will ensure that the necessary items and programme of work are identified, strategically planned for, and implemented in an effective and efficient manner, including identifying processes by which to ensure feed-back to the affected countries to assist in their implementation.

Recommendations

- (i) It would be very difficult and inadvisable to reopen the Convention in order to restrict the open participation in the CST. Parties must therefore seek opportunities to provide the CST with additional structure and tools in order to better inform its discussion and direct its decision-making functions (see below).
- (ii) In response to the effectiveness and efficiency challenges faced by such a large body, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a smaller body would be better able to develop an innovation and challenge function to the Convention.
- (iii) It is time to re-evaluate assumptions about the cost savings of parallel COP/CST annual meetings and weigh them against the very real likelihood of losses in the inter-sessional period resulting from inefficiencies of biennial CST work programme implementation as well as the overall costs of a cumbersome and

therefore ineffective full participation CST. Parties should again consider the option of a smaller scientific and technical body to undertake work to supplement and support the CST.

- (iv) A full participation, regionally representative CST could remain the scientific and technical decision body with revised objectives better suited to its composition i.e. to provide scientific and technically-based policy advice to the COP.
- (v) Assuming that for all intents and purposes, the CST is effectively a scientifically enlightened political decision-making body, the current level of expertise on the committee is sufficient. However, the CST must be provided with sound technical advice and scientific capacity to advance its work.
- (vi) In order to do so, the CST should begin to explore what mechanism could be put in place in order for it to establish and be informed by exogenous scientific knowledge of a core, smaller permanent CST panel of experts.

It is understood that this would require core financial support. It is assumed that this would be in the form of administrative and incentive financing, as well as communication and publishing budgets. The secretariat should be tasked to explore what this kind of dedicated body might require in the way of financing in order to be a “competitive and credible” scientific entity.

- (vii) This panel could be comprised of representatives currently nominated to the roster of experts. However, the long-term success of this reform would be reliant on the ROE selection process becoming more rigorous to ensure cutting-edge scientific and technical expertise.
- (viii) Experts membership should be subject to some peer review mechanism to ensure top-notch contribution. One option would be to require members to prepare in writing in advance contributions for the consideration of other members and presentation at panel meetings.
- (ix) These specific contributions could be acknowledged in Convention CST proceedings. Further, the CST should actively encourage contributors to disseminate their research further including through other publications and related scientific forums.
- (x) In the event of the creation of a core CST panel, ad hoc panels would no longer be created by the CST, though they might be formed at the recommendation of the core.
- (xi) Innovative scientific networking approaches for advancing programme of work should be encouraged by the CST whenever possible. The Convention’s science core should actively encourage the creation of consortia and other innovative approaches as it will build, reinforce and expand the credible scientific drylands expertise and knowledge.

- (xii) With regard to other MEAs, particularly the Biodiversity and Climate Change Conventions, the CST, through the active engagement of its core panel, should be working to identify concrete items for joint programmes of work.

A thorough examination of the CST's work programme should be undertaken in light of discussions within the COP and its other subsidiary bodies. Specifically, scientific and technical issues raised during the implementation review process should be fed into the work programme of the CST and vice versa, either by connecting the two processes (including scheduling their meetings one after the other) or requesting the participation of designated representatives from each, in the other forums.

3. CHILE

The Committee on Science and Technology is considered one of the major vectors for the development and progress of implementation of UNCCD at the regional, subregional and national levels.

CST is the body that summarizes, channels and disseminates updated information on possible implementation measures within the countries, in terms of both traditional and cutting-edge technologies, both of which are indispensable to the development of initiatives to halt desertification processes.

In the light of the above, and in response to the request for contributions, Chile makes the following proposal:

(a) Identification of priority topics for consideration by CST

This matter should be discussed at the regional meetings and CST should be informed of regional positions, so that the issue can finally be resolved at the next Conference of the Parties. Implementation difficulties have arisen within countries in dealing with indicators and benchmarks, traditional technologies and in other areas of similar importance, and the situation should be analysed in the regional meetings and at the COPs.

(b) Formalization of a programme of work

Identification of priority topics should be linked to minimum goals for CST and the countries, with technical and financial support from the relevant bodies. Chile suggests, therefore, that short-term (COP 5-COP 6) and medium-term programmes of work should be prepared, on the basis of commitments by the various bodies involved:

- Committee on Science and Technology
- Subregional programmes/projects
- Selected countries on specific topics

- Financial and/or technical support from multilateral organizations for each of the initiatives adopted.

(c) Working group

CST, as the document rightly suggests, should have a standing working group, with regional representation, to act as interlocutor and evaluator between the respective regions and CST. Each regional group could consist of two or three people, to be elected by the regional meetings. The regional groups together would then constitute the CST working group.

4. CZECH REPUBLIC

Referring to the implementation of decision 17/COP.4 concerning the improvement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), the Parties to the UNCCD from the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region are in favour of closer cooperation with other multilateral environmental agreements, mainly with the CBD, UNFCCC and regional agreements to harmonize thematic programmes, to promote the idea and practice of integrated projects with assured multiply effects and to reach a consensus on joint indicators demonstrating the synergy between these three main Rio conventions.

The Parties to the UNCCD from the CEE region support the role of the CST as an independent scientific subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties, composed of the best world experts, elaborating recommendations for political decisions of the Conference. It could be rather useful to make the CST closer to the regional and national levels by organizing, in the period between the Conferences of the Parties, the regional meetings of the CST reflecting, in more complex basis, interlinkages with the activities of relevant subsidiary bodies (scientific and technology) of other global conventions and regional agreements.

For the majority of the CEE region countries not so affected by direct desertification but faced by land degradation and so on, the major tasks are, *inter alia*, to establish and maintain the optimum proportions of arable land, meadows, pastures, forests and water areas in accordance with the principles of sustainable development and the capacity of the environment, to decrease over-cultivation of agricultural land through selective afforestation, bio-corridors or establishment of grasslands.

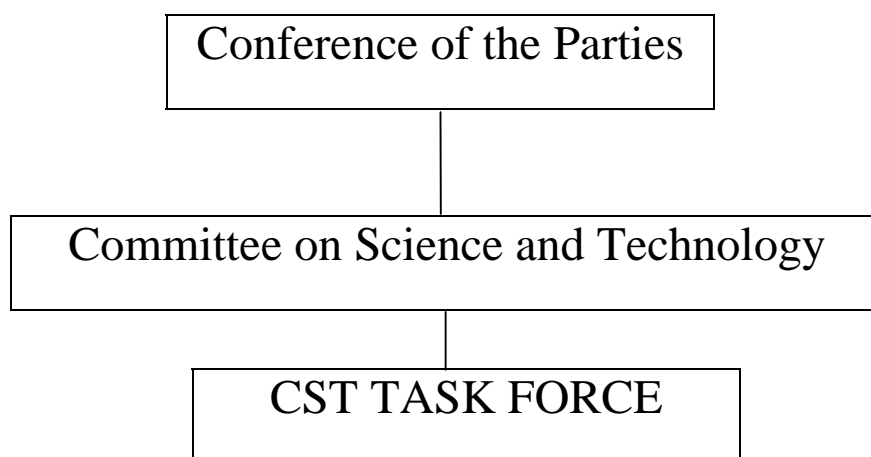
5. EUROPEAN UNION

Based on decision 17/COP.4, Parties have been encouraged to hold extensive consultations on ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, and have been requested to transmit their recommendations to the secretariat by 4 June 2001. The European Union would like to recommend the following:

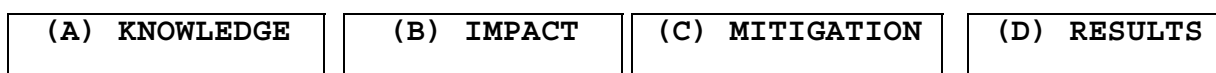
- (a) CST reform can and should be undertaken within the present mandate and terms of reference of the CST. There is, however, a need for change of the manner in which the CST performs its mandate.

Thus, it is essential that the output from CST be freely and publicly made available in the form of specific (thematic) reports. The CST is now asking Parties for more information on scientific and technological aspects of implementation, to be incorporated in the national reports. The reformed CST should look for further possibilities to collect and analyse this information. Additionally, the reformed CST would further improve and strengthen its contribution to the review of the implementation of the Convention.

(b) A CST task force should be established to oversee and coordinate issues within its mandate in order to coordinate the work of the ad hoc panels and prepare for the COP, thus allowing for a deeper scientific and technological approach to the relevant subjects. This task force should be composed of the sum total of the ad hoc panels and hence constitute some 30 representatives. Two co-chairpersons should be elected to serve the task force. Each panel should identify a coordinator to collect and disseminate the information. The Convention already foresees the ad hoc panels and since the task force will be constituted by members of the ad hoc panels there is no need for any change of the mandate and terms of reference of the CST.



composed of four panels with a specific task each:



(c) Work in the current ad hoc panels is sector and/or issue oriented. The work of these panels should be streamlined through a process approach in four stages, for example applicable knowledge (A), impacts (B), mitigation (C) and results (D). The selected members of individual ad hoc panels must together be proficient in the four stages.

Work done by panel members can be easily and effectively coordinated using electronic means, thus allowing for a continuous process with occasional meetings only to discuss progress.

Ad hoc panels should be small (five/six persons) and deal with specific issues, the result of which should be presented in a public report through the task force and the COP, following the four-stage process approach (as applicable).

Membership of panels will continue through regional representation. Members would be expected to demonstrate the necessary commitment to provide an active scientific and practically orientated contribution to the task force. Such a process will limit the number of participants to a manageable number. There may also be a need for an update/revision of the roster of experts in line with the above.

Streamlined process approach in four stages

Current ad hoc panels	(A) Applicable knowledge	(B) Impacts	(C) Mitigation	(D) Results
1. Benchmarks and indicators	Applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Applicable
2. Traditional knowledge	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable
3. Early warning systems	Applicable	Applicable	Not applicable	Applicable
4. Land degradation	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable

The above proposal for a reformed CST would enhance its efficiency. The current budget allocation should be sufficient for the reformed CST activities.

6. GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA

By decision 17/COP.4 on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology, the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties in operative paragraph 1 “encourages the Parties to hold extensive consultations on ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology, and to transmit their recommendations, which should not exceed five pages in length, to the secretariat by 1 May 2001”.

In accordance with the provisions of the decision, Parties should provide recommendations on ways of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST). To do so, the Group of 77 and China would like to consider the issue as follows:

- Role and functions of the CST;
- Status of CST work;
- Objectives of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST;
- How to improve the work of the CST.

Roles and functions of the CST

(a) Role

Consistent with the provisions of the UNCCD, particularly article 24, the role of the CST is:

- To provide the Conference of the Parties with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought; and
- To ensure that its decisions are based on the most up to date scientific knowledge.

(b) Functions

The functions of the CST include the following:

- Advisory functions;
- Data and information functions;
- Research and review function;
- Functions related to technology;
- Evaluation functions.

Status of the CST work

From COP 1 (1997) to COP 4 (2000) the Parties, in general, seem to not be fully satisfied by the work done by the CST. Several issues and difficulties have been raised. The most important are:

- Participants to the sessions of the CST are not, in majority, highly competent in the relevant fields of expertise required;
- Discussions inside the Committee are often more political than scientific and technological;
- Representatives are not, in general, the same persons from one session to another session;
- Time allocated to consider the agenda of each session of the Committee is short to allow deep analysis and debates.

In this context, it is difficult for the Committee to fulfil its mandate and contribute effectively to the implementation of the UNCCD with scientific and technological data and tools.

Objectives of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST

The objectives of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST should be:

- To involve more well known or independent experts and scientists in the CST's work, and which are competent in the relevant fields of expertise needed to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought;
- To identify new scientific and technological approaches for consideration of items on the agenda of the CST;
- To launch specialized research on the scientific and technological tools necessary to implement the Convention;
- To ensure that decisions, studies and other works of the CST are based on the most up to date scientific knowledge.

How to improve the work of the CST

The best way to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology is to establish in parallel to the Committee, a high-level experts and scientists group on desertification and drought.

The establishment of such a high-level experts and scientists group on desertification and drought should be guided by the following elements:

(a) Composition

The group shall be composed of no more than thirty-two (32) well known experts and scientists at national, subregional, regional or international levels competent in the relevant fields of expertise. Due regard shall be paid to the need to ensure equitable geographical distribution and adequate representation of affected country Parties.

The distribution among the five regional groups should be as follows:

Africa	8
Asia	7
Latin America and the Caribbean	6
Western Europe and other States	6
Eastern and Central Europe	5

(b) Nomination

The secretariat will receive the nominees of the governments for the membership of the Body, nominated on the basis of their personal capacity, and draw from the roster of independent experts and scientists with expertise and experience in the relevant fields, and will provide the regional groups with the Curricula Vitae, for their consideration and subsequent decision.

It is advisable to select, from each regional group, at least one expert or scientist from civil society, in particular from NGOs.

(c) Mandate

Under the authority of the CST, the high-level experts and scientists group on desertification and drought will provide the necessary expertise in the scientific, technological, technical and other relevant fields, which will contribute or help to fully and effectively implement the Convention.

Well-defined terms of reference of the group will be formulated by the CST and submitted for adoption to the plenary of COP 5 in October 2001.

(d) Organization of work

The group shall meet at least once a year, before the ordinary sessions of the Conference of the Parties. The group should be encouraged to use more innovative means of communication for exchange of information and to minimize the need for face-to-face meetings.

The group will submit the reports of its work to the CST for consideration and approval before adoption by the COP plenary.

In this regard the CST, in the framework of its advisory functions will, inter alia:

- Summarize and, where necessary, convert the latest international scientific, technological, technical, socio-economic and other information provided by the high-level experts and scientists group on desertification and drought, into forms appropriate to the needs of the Conference of the Parties;
- Compile and synthesize regularly scientific, technological, technical, and socio-economic information and data on the global situation or status of desertification and drought provided by the high-level experts and scientists group on desertification and drought as well as on the latest developments in science and technology, to the extent possible, and assess the implications thereof for the implementation of the Convention; and formulate concrete requests through the COP, to competent international scientific and technical or technological bodies.

(e) Financial aspects

The financial implications of the meetings of the group should be reflected in the regular budget of the Convention. But, all efforts should be made to provide adequate voluntary financial assistance/contribution for the participation of experts and scientists from developing countries to the group's meetings.

Conclusion

Based on results and recommendations from meetings and consultations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, COP 5 should adopt a decision establishing a high-level experts and scientists group on desertification and drought in order to support and contribute to improve the work of the CST.

The high-level experts and scientists group should begin its work in 2002. To do so the nomination of experts and scientists should be done just after COP 5, and no later than March 2002.

The Group of 77 and China hope that the improvement of the work of the CST, through the establishment of a high-level experts and scientists group on desertification and drought, will have a positive impact in the implementation of the Convention by affected developing country Parties.

7. SWITZERLAND

(a) Changed terms of reference for CST

According to article 24 of the Convention, the CST is "... to provide it (the COP) with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought" and "the COP shall decide, at its first session, on the terms of reference of the Committee".

The CST has discussed various important strategic and technological aspects concerning desertification, however, without much response. Especially the crucial issue of the establishment and use of benchmarks and indicators in order to be able to monitor the implementation of the Convention was not taken up by the majority of the countries. The impact potential of the CST with its present terms of reference is therefore questionable. Due to the particular socio-economic pertinence of combating desertification, the issue of technology does not, in our opinion, get relevant until on a very high level, being the global level, such as for example remote sensing or the level of policy research. The first issue does not really fit into the mission of the CST, as the Parties have little to carry home for the implementation of their national action programmes. To discuss technology in a political environment does not make much sense, when the implementation is often jeopardized by lacking capacities on a national level. Issues on policy research, however, are probably the only ones that have a similar relevance to all countries, suitable to be addressed in this political environment of a COP. Switzerland therefore suggests to reorient the CST in its present composition, for example a political representation of each party, to be a policy research body, advising Parties to take

particular policy issues identified during the reporting and give support in various desertification-related fields of activities. The CST will have a shorter agenda and finish its work during the COP in one or one and a half days maximum. Questions related to technologies shall not be taken into consideration any more.

The CST operates as of per today, for example with a regional representation of all Parties, and an agenda of identifying solutions and issues that are presented during the COP in a “more scientific conference and workshop manner”, drawing conclusions presented to each COP in terms of policy change and best experiences.

(b) Role of ad hoc panels

Article 24 of the Convention underlines that the COP “may, as necessary, appoint ad hoc panels to provide it, through the Committee of Science and Technology, with information and advice on specific issues regarding the state of the art in the fields of science and technology ...”.

In a new policy function of the CST, the ad hoc panels will get redundant as policy research will be contracted out to institutions with relevant experience, such as the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) or others, if the need to have a profound advice is identified.

(c) Create an independent scientific panel

The need to keep a scientific body of some kind is important in order to have a thorough observation of the implementation of the Convention from a critical and independent angle. Therefore, an independent panel that meets outside the COP should be established and act as a scientific monitoring and advocacy body. Parties and regional representations are not important and composition of the panel is independent from Parties, and should be open to all scientists that have a relevant competence. Such a panel should meet prior to the COP and be an international conference on scientific exchange of topics to be defined. The panel shall make a report to the press and the COP on relevant topics as well as facilitating the publication of reports and research results, relevant to the global community.
