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Desertification**

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CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Sixth session
Havana, 25 August – 5 September 2003

**ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES**

Preliminary information for participants

Note by the secretariat

The sixth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 6) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) will be held from 25 August to 5 September 2003 in Havana, Cuba. The present document contains general information which may be helpful to participants.

1. Conference secretariat

The head of the Conference secretariat is Mr. Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the Convention's secretariat.

The secretariat can be reached at the following address:

Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
Haus Carstanjen
Martin-Luther-King Strasse 8
D-53175 Bonn, Germany
Tel. no.: (+ 49 228) 815 28 02
Fax no.: (+ 49 228) 815 28 98/99
E-mail: secretariat@unccd.int

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2. Host country authorities

The Republic of Cuba has established a National Preparatory Committee, in charge of preparation for COP 6. Participants may contact its Logistics Commission for additional information:

Mr. Wenceslao Carrera Doral
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment
Tel. no.: (+ 53 7) 867 06 20
Fax no.: (+ 53 7) 862 65 28
E-mail: wenceslao@citma.cu

or:

Mr. Jorge L. Fernández Chamero
Director, International Cooperation
Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment
Tel. no.: (+ 53 7) 867 06 06
Fax no.: (+ 53 7) 33 80 54
E-mail: chamero@citma.cu

3. Venue of the session

The sixth session of the COP will be held at the Palacio de Convenciones in Havana, Cuba, at the following address:

Avenida 146 e/11 y 13, Playa (approximately 20 km from the city centre)
Ciudad de la Habana, Cuba
Tel. no.: (+ 53 7) 208 04 50 / 208 75 58 / 202 60 11 to 19, extensions 1210 and 1211
Fax no.: (+ 53 7) 202 83 82

The session will open on Monday, 25 August 2003, with informal consultations in the morning and the official opening at 3 p.m. in the Plenary Hall. Meeting rooms will be made available for informal meetings without interpretation, subject to arrangements being made with the secretariat. Working hours will normally be from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

4. Registration

Pre-registration for national delegations, United Nations specialized agencies and programmes and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as for the media, will take place at the Palacio de Convenciones on:

- Friday, 22 August 2003 from 3 to 6 p.m.
- Saturday, 23 August from 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 3 to 6 p.m.
- Sunday, 24 August from 3 to 6 p.m.

Registration will start on Monday, 25 August at 8 a.m. and continue throughout the first week of the session according to a schedule to be provided by the secretariat. Identity badges will be issued at the time of registration, and participants are requested to wear these at all times, since they will be allowed access to the session venue only upon presentation of their badges.

The secretariat has upgraded its registration system in order to harmonize it and ensure its compatibility with the procedures used in the United Nations system. One of the major changes in that regard will be the use of photo badges for COP 6.

Accordingly, it is of the utmost importance to accompany credentials with a passport-size photograph of each member of delegations attending COP 6. This will ensure a speedy pre-registration procedure, which will greatly reduce waiting time for delegates at the session venue.

5. Credentials

The credentials of representatives of Parties and the names of alternate representatives and advisers must be communicated to the secretariat either by the Head of State or Government or by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. To ensure full participation in the work of the Conference, it is recommended that representatives of Parties should be provided with full powers to participate in the session and, if necessary, to serve as officers of the COP at its sixth session and any sessional committees or working groups, as well as to serve as officers of the subsidiary bodies established under the Convention.

Credentials must be submitted to the secretariat of the Convention. The Bureau of COP 6 will examine the credentials and report to the session. Observer States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations must also be accredited.

It is strongly recommended that participants fax their accreditation in advance to the secretariat in order to facilitate their registration during the Conference:

Fax no.: (+ 49 228) 815 28 98
(+ 49 228) 815 28 99

6. Information for the media

Accreditation and information relevant for press representatives

For entitlement to cover COP 6, press representatives should submit relevant application forms to an Embassy or Consulate of Cuba, accompanied by an official letter from the press representatives' employers appointing them to cover that assignment. These documents should be submitted by 15 July 2003, and a list of the items of professional equipment the representatives will be carrying with them should also be provided. The forms can be obtained at the Convention Web site <http://www.unccd.int>.

Once their application is approved, representatives will be provided with a D-6 visa for that assignment in their capacity as press professionals.

Press professionals intending to cover COP 6 will abide by the regulations in force in Cuba, which provide for the issuing of a clearance or accreditation entitling them to work temporarily in the country as journalists.

Such accreditations are issued by the Centro de Prensa Internacional (CPI), located at the intersection of 23rd Street with O Street, in the district of Vedado, Havana, after a payment of US\$ 60. Two photographs should be provided. The CPI is open from 8.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays to Fridays. If required, it can be arranged for the accreditations to be obtained outside these hours. The accreditations entitle journalists to cover COP 6 as well as other press assignments in the whole of Cuba.

Press professionals are advised to contact the CPI as soon as possible after their arrival:

Tel. no.: (+ 53 7) 832 05 26 to 28

Fax no.: (+ 53 7) 33 38 36

E-mail: cpi@cpi.minrex.gov.cu

The fulfilment of these requirements is indispensable for accreditation.

The accreditation for COP 6 will be issued in the Palacio de Convenciones. An accreditation issued by the CPI will be required.

Up to three members of the official press accompanying Heads of Delegations will be provided with courtesy accreditations, free of charge; they should request these from the CPI before they can be accredited for COP 6.

Foreign press representatives with a permanent accreditation for Cuba will be able to obtain accreditations for COP 6 directly at the secretariat for COP 6 by showing their accreditations as permanent correspondents.

Parking and credentials for press members' vehicles

A parking area will be assigned to those press representatives who will need to use their own vehicles. A special car accreditation will be required; it can be requested at the CPI, using the above-mentioned contact numbers and e-mail address.

Press centre

For additional information on the Convention and the Conference, please contact Ms. Cheemin Kwon at:

Tel. no.: (+ 49 228) 815 28 47

Fax no.: (+ 49 228) 815 28 98/99

E-mail: ckwon@unccd.int

7. Transportation

The Government of the Republic of Cuba will ensure that participants in COP 6 have at their disposal an appropriate collective means of transport. This will be available from the date of their arrival, to and from the airport, during and after the event.

During COP 6 a shuttle bus service will be made available to ensure the transportation of delegates between the hotels referred to in the annex to this document and the Palacio de Convenciones. Tickets for this service can be purchased at the tourist bureau of Cubatur in the hotels, at the following prices: US\$ 25 for a 5-day stay, and US\$ 50 for a stay of up to 15 days. The tickets should be requested from:

Cubatur Travel Agency
Tel. no.: (+ 53 7) 860 82 04 / 866 40 82 / 860 26 45
Fax no.: (+ 53 7) 860 26 44
E-mail: cop6@cbtevent.cbt.tur.cu

In order to meet additional transportation requirements, a large fleet of vehicles will be made available through car hire services.

8. Hotel accommodation

Hotel bookings should be made by participants by contacting directly:

Cubatur Travel Agency
Tel. no.: (+ 53 7) 860 82 04 / 866 40 82 / 860 26 45
Fax no.: (+ 53 7) 860 26 44
E-mail: cop6@cbtevent.cbt.tur.cu

A list of hotels is provided in the annex to this document.

9. Medical services and emergency numbers

A medical service will be available at the Palacio de Convenciones for first aid in emergencies. It will be located on the ground floor in room 0617. The telephone numbers for medical emergencies are: (+ 53 7) 208 60 43 and 202 60 11 to 19, extension 617.

The necessary arrangements for admission to hospital will be made if required. The UNCCD secretariat will be responsible only for facilitating access to a hospital.

The Ministry of Public Health of the Republic of Cuba will ensure that any health requirements are met during the stay of participants, Heads of State or Government, senior officers and journalists.

10. Postal, telephone, telefax and Internet services

The centre for international communications, located on the first floor of the Palacio de Convenciones, provides national and international postal facilities, sale of postage, international telephone calls, facsimile facilities, and sale of national and international phone cards. The centre is at the disposal of participants during the official working hours of the Conference.

In the Palacio de Convenciones a room will be provided, for shared use by delegations, equipped with all necessary facilities, including computers with modem (Internet, e-mail), printers, fax, telephones, and copying machines.

To use the telephone facilities, participants may purchase prepaid cards. To place automatic international calls, please dial 119 followed by the country code, the location code and the number required.

Cellular telephone services

For information on cellular telephone services and rates in Cuba, please access the Web sites <http://www.cubacel.com> or <http://www.ccom.cu>.

Fixed telephone facilities

Cuba's telecommunications company (ETECSA) will provide telecommunication services for COP 6.

- PIN cards for local, national or international calls; their face values are US\$ 10 and US\$ 25.
- Public telephone services using prepaid phone cards; their face values are US\$ 5, US\$ 10 and US\$ 20 for calls to any part of Cuba and the rest of the world through the 'Smart Public Phones' network.
- Fax reception: US\$ 1 per sheet.

Press centre

A press communications centre will provide computers with Internet access and posts for the connection of personal computers. International telephone lines and an international fax service will also be available. Such lines, operated by ETECSA, will be used on a commercial basis.

In the Press Centre, an RF signal will be received featuring the main daily activities open to the press, which will be shown on monitors.

Television transmissions will be made through Cubavisión Internacional, a unit of the Radio and Television Institute of Cuba. To make any reservations for a transmission, please contact:

Ms. Sofia Ulianova
Tel. no.: (+ 53 7) 333 717

11. Cafeteria and restaurants

El Bucán: Located in front of the main entrance to the Palacio de Convenciones, this restaurant can accommodate up to 1000 people.

Opening hours: 12 noon – 3 p.m.

Cafeteria: The Palacio de Convenciones has a self-service cafeteria providing quick meals for delegates and exhibitors during lunchtime hours.

Opening hours: 12 noon – 3 p.m.

In addition to these restaurants, several snack bars providing a fast service of light meals, as well as rooms for cocktail parties, food tasting, private luncheons and dinner parties are available at the conference venue.

A large number of restaurants in the immediate vicinity of Palacio de Convenciones is also available.

12. Payment modes and banking services

Banking facilities at the Palacio de Convenciones

There will be limited banking facilities within the Palacio de Convenciones. Entitled participants will receive their DSA payments in US\$ at facilities in the Palacio de Convenciones during the official working hours of the Conference.

Payment modes

In addition to the Cuban peso, which can be used for any payment in that currency within the territory of Cuba, tourist and other commercial and public service facilities have their prices set in United States dollars, and it is therefore advisable to pay in cash with that currency. It is also possible to change any currency that is convertible to United States dollars. The most widespread credit cards (Mastercard, Visa, Cabal, BFI) are normally accepted in hotels, restaurants and commercial facilities; however, American Express traveller cheques and American Express credit cards, as well as other credit cards issued by United States banks and financial institutions are not yet operational in Cuba. Travellers cheques are not normally accepted for commercial transactions, and may only be cashed in banks.

Currency exchange

At the date of release of this Information Note, and for indicative purposes, the exchange rate of the Cuban peso against the United States dollar is:

1 United States dollar = 26 Cuban pesos

Main foreign currency exchange offices are open Mondays to Fridays, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

13. Immigration formalities and customs regulations

In those countries where the Republic of Cuba has a diplomatic representation, participants will be able to obtain a relevant visa after submitting their letter of invitation to COP 6.

To facilitate this procedure, participants are advised to notify the secretariat of their intention to attend at least 30 days in advance.

Participants from countries where there is no Cuban diplomatic representation will be able to collect an appropriate visa at the international José Martí Airport, Havana, Cuba. In such cases, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba should be contacted at the following electronic addresses or fax number:

Dirección de Colaboración Internacional
Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología y Medio Ambiente
Fax no.: (+ 53 7) 867 06 01
E-mail: jorge@citma.cu
E-mail: lucia@citma.cu

To obtain the airport visa, the following information should be sent to the address above:

- First and last name
- Birth date
- Birth place
- Nationality
- Passport number
- Passport type
- Place of issue
- Date of issue
- Date of expiry

In advance of their arrival, participants will be sent a copy of their visa by fax.

Health regulations

Cuba has health regulations which are restrictive only for visitors from countries where yellow fever and cholera are endemic or have been declared as infection areas by the World Health Organization and the Panamerican Health Organization. In such cases an International Vaccination Certificate is required and some information is gathered from the traveller.

In general, participants should contact Cuban diplomatic representations to inquire about any additional health requirements that might be necessary.

The entry of natural products of animal and vegetal origin whose import conditions contravene international plant health regulations is restricted. Live animals may be imported subject to the submission of the appropriate veterinary certification.

Customs regulations

Participants are also invited to check with Cuban diplomatic representations about prevailing import and export restrictions.

Further details can also be obtained through the Web site of the Republic of Cuba's Customs Office (<http://www.aduana.islagrande.com>).

14. Side events

Participants wishing to organize side events during COP 6 are kindly requested to send an application to Mr. Saša Cvijetić at:

Fax no.: (+ 49 228) 815 28 98/99

E-mail: scvijetic@unccd.int

The application form can be downloaded from the UNCCD Web site.

Participants are advised that the UNCCD secretariat will be responsible only for room allocation. No additional services can be provided by the UNCCD secretariat. Time slots and rooms will be accommodated according to availability, on a first-come-first-served basis.

A special calendar of any parallel events to be organized during COP 6 will be published in the Official Journal of the Conference.

15. Exhibition facilities

Space for exhibition facilities will be available to participants. Arrangements can be made through the secretariat on a first-come-first-served basis. Participants wishing to set up exhibits are invited to contact Mr. Antonio Pires at:

Tel. no.: (+ 49 228) 815 28 08/09

Fax no.: (+ 49 228) 815 28 98/99

E-mail: apires@unccd.int

16. General information about the session venue

Airports and tourism

At the international José Martí Airport and at hotels available to official delegations and the press, an Office of Information and Tourism (INFOTUR) will be operating to take care of the interests of participants in COP 6.

An airport departure tax of US\$ 25 is charged.

Climate

The island of Cuba has a temperate subtropical climate. With a yearly average temperature of 25°C, August is the warmest month at around 28°C. Relative humidity is 81 per cent.

Electricity

Electrical appliances using round-spike plugs should be fitted with a flat-spike adaptor to conform to the country's standards. The electricity supply is 110 V/60 Hz, although in the newly-built hotels of the brand Cubanacán the voltage is 220 V.

Local time

GMT + 7

Annex

HOTELS WITH PREFERENTIAL RATES FOR PARTICIPANTS IN COP 6¹

Prices are per person per day in United States dollars

HOTEL	CATEGORY	SINGLE ROOM	DOUBLE ROOM
Melia Cohiba Ave. Paseo e/.1ra y 3ra, Vedado, C. Habana	5 *	190.00	120.00
Melia Habana Ave. 3ra e/. 78 y 80, Miramar, C. Habana	5 *	190.00	120.00
Tryp Habana Libre Calle L e/. 23 y 25, Vedado, C. Habana	5 *	155.00	88.00
Nacional Calle O esq.21, Vedado, C. Habana	5 *	120.00	85.00
NH Parque Centra Calle Neptuno e/. Paseo de Martí y Monserrate, Habana Vieja	5 *	185.00	125.00
Riviera Ave. Paseo y Malecón, Vedado, C. Habana	4 *	85.00	60.00
Copacabana Ave. 1ra, # 4404, Miramar, C. Habana	4 *	80.00	60.00
Plaza Ignacio Agramonte # 267 e/. Zulueta y Monserrate, Habana Vieja	4 *	80.00	60.00
Occidental Miramar 5ta. Ave e/. 72 y 74, Miramar, C. Habana	4 *	110.00	75.00
LTI Panorama Calle 70 esq. 3ra, Miramar, Playa, C. Habana	4 *	120.00	95.00
Hoteles Marina Hemingway 5ta. Ave y 248, Barlovento, C. Habana	4 *	85.00	70.00

¹ Bookings should be made through Cubatur Travel Agency (please refer to section 8 above) making reference to participation in COP 6.