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**IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF
THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

Interim report of the Group of Experts

Note by the secretariat

1. The Group of Experts (GoE) met in Beijing, China, from 11 to 15 October 2004, to review in depth the results and the activities carried out by its members during the period from September 2003 to September 2004. Following discussions held at the sixth session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) (Havana, Cuba, 2003), decision 15/COP.6 was adopted in which the Conference of the Parties (COP) recommended a framework for a prioritized two-year work plan for the GoE.

2. In accordance with the agenda of the third meeting of the GoE (see annex I), presentations were made by each coordinator on the following framework topics:

- Develop a clear communication strategy between the activities of the GoE, end-users and the research community
- Develop a web-based glossary of terms (through a United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)-hosted server)
- Develop a mechanism for an interactive and thematic data/metadata network
- Develop synergies with other related conventions, organizations and intergovernmental treaties
- Identify and assess existing and ongoing case studies on conservation and rehabilitation for users in implementing the Convention
- Develop an integrative assessment methodology for poverty and land degradation

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- Prepare, taking into account the perceived gaps between biophysical, socio-economic, and cultural knowledge and activities to combat desertification, a report identifying these gaps and recommend possible ways of eliminating them
- Propose effective methodologies for the assessment of desertification at the global, regional and local levels, so that the Convention can be implemented in consultation and interaction with other related ongoing efforts
- Evaluate the state of the art of common benchmark and indicator systems for the monitoring and assessment of desertification
- Evaluate and recommend guidelines for both short-term and long-term early warning systems
- Evaluate guidelines to update the world atlas in consultation and interaction with other related ongoing efforts

3. The third meeting of the GoE also included a number of working groups which deliberated on various agenda topics. These discussions yielded working group summaries, recommendations and conclusions relating to possible proposals for funding which the CST might wish to consider in its deliberations on this item. The list of participants at the third meeting of the GoE is given in annex II. This report will be available on the UNCCD web site.

4. It is envisaged that the GoE will continue to advance its work by, *inter alia*, selecting a number of topics from the above list on which to concentrate its efforts, and preparing a smaller set of products for consideration by the CST. To this end, the European Commission has generously offered to support the convening of the fourth meeting of the GoE. The meeting is scheduled to take place in late September 2005, hosted by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission in Ispra, Italy.

5. The secretariat is hereby submitting the report of the third meeting of the GoE. The Committee may wish to take note of the report, and to give further necessary guidance to the GoE with respect to the various summaries, conclusions and recommendations it contains.

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON ITS WORK PROGRAMME FOR TWO YEARS.....	3
II. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS ON INPUT OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS INTO THE COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE CONVENTION PROCESS.....	19

Annexes

I. Agenda of the meeting.....	22
II. List of participants.....	24

INTERIM REPORT OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS

I. SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS ON ITS WORK PROGRAMME FOR TWO YEARS

Work programme (WP) Activity 1.1: Develop a clear communication strategy between the activities of the GoE, end-users and the research community
(Coordinator Dr. D. Mouat)

1. The objective of the project is to promote the adoption of technological options in the combat against desertification and land degradation by focusing on creating awareness of proven technologies at the local scale and creating interlinkages among national and international organizations in order to encourage the realization of UNCCD goals.
2. The project aims to fill the scientific and technical information gap by providing a mechanism for a thematic network to exchange information about the state-of-the-art and progress made in combating desertification in the affected countries, and will represent an important Internet-based portal for facilitating coordination activities and exchange of data.
3. A global communication strategy based on a network of national coordinating bodies (NCBs) will be established to further the discussion on scientific and technical issues, terms and definitions, success stories on rehabilitation and control of degraded lands, and identifying mapping issues relating to combating desertification and mitigating drought.

WP Activity 1.2: Develop a web-based glossary of terms (through a UNCCD-hosted server)
(Coordinator Prof. R. Debicki)

Summary

4. This project proposal constitutes part of a wider task aimed at building effective communication between the activities of the GoE, the research community and other end-users and stakeholders. The project is aimed at designing, creating and maintaining a web-based, multilingual glossary of terms relating to combating desertification and mitigating drought. Taking into account the role that the glossary of terms, relevant for combating desertification and mitigating drought should play, the following objectives can be underlined: (i) enabling the discussion on terms and definitions relating to combating desertification and mitigating drought, (ii) harmonizing scientific knowledge on desertification, drought and, in general, land degradation, (iii) communicating the glossary in an understandable and easily accessible manner for various end-users, (iv) improving and coordinating the dissemination of information, and (v) helping to facilitate and accelerate the implementation of the Convention through a clear explanation of terms, common and universal understanding, easy access and exchange of information.

Conclusions

5. Referring to the terms of reference of the web-based glossary and based on discussion, comments and remarks relating to the proposal, the following conclusions can be drawn:

(a) Selection criteria for relevant terms and definitions concerning physical, biological, cultural and socio-economic aspects of the UNCCD, as well as the procedure for their acceptance, should be agreed upon; this should lead to the classification of terms into the following three groups:

- (i) terms used in the UNCCD
- (ii) relevant terms generally used in United Nations environmental treaties and international scientific organizations
- (iii) other related technical terms widely used, at the subregional or regional level, by stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Convention.

(b) Design, organization and legal aspects of the web-based glossary should follow United Nations rules and procedures.

(c) The use of Internet technology should be in line with the procedures of the UNCCD secretariat.

(d) Continuous updating of the glossary should be carried out under UNCCD coordination.

6. These are the basic elements of the web-based glossary. Their realization, and its workload and timetable in line with the work plan, are indispensable to achieve the objectives of this task.

Recommendations

7. The project proposal has been positively reviewed and approved by the GoE. Recognizing this strategy, the GoE recommends the following:

(a) The procedure for selection and approval of related terms and their definitions from paragraph 1(iii) (other technical terms) should be as follows: (i) compilation of terms by regional GoE coordinators, (ii) screening of terms by the Working Group criteria, (iii) proposals for definitions by the relevant experts of the GoE, and (iv) verification and review by the GoE at its next meeting.

(b) The CST should review and endorse the proposal regarding terms and their definitions. This, in turn, would be submitted to the next COP for consideration.

(c) The CST Bureau should explore possible funding for the proposed activities.

WP Activity 1.3: Develop a mechanism for an interactive and thematic data/metadata network
(Coordinator Dr. M. Sciortino)

Summary

8. The main thematic data/metadata network (THEMANET) objectives are the following:
 - (a) To assess the status and needs of information and communication technology in the UNCCD NCBs.
 - (b) To prepare an information and communication technology strategy;
 - (c) To facilitate the exchange of information, data, experience and results among the NCBs;
 - (d) To facilitate information flow among NCBs and United Nations agencies and bodies during the COP inter-sessional periods.
9. The implementation of THEMANET will be carried out in three phases: (i) feasibility study and web-based information portal development, (ii) pilot implementation, and (iii) global implementation.
10. The milestones for the feasibility study are:
 - (a) Identification of priorities in terms of the information and data needs of NCBs and developing terms of reference (TORs) for the web-based information portal;
 - (b) Preparation of a prototype web portal;
 - (c) Preparation and dissemination of a questionnaire for “end-users”;
 - (d) Preparation of a master plan for a pilot implementation phase, including criteria for selection of participating countries and a budget for the financial requirements of the project.
11. The pilot and the global implementation phases have not been addressed at this stage.

Conclusions

12. The project has been evaluated and positively approved by the GoE. The members of the GoE recognize the strategic relevance of setting up a network for the diffusion of information, and have committed themselves to activate the network. In order to provide tangible results, the GoE has decided to proceed with the feasibility phase and to implement a web portal dedicated to science and technology.
13. Three additional conclusions of the GoE are as follows:
 - (a) There is a necessity to involve the members of the Roster of Independent Experts in the development of the network.

(b) The project represents an opportunity to enlarge the community of end-users and recipients beyond the UNCCD NCBs.

(c) The GoE has recognized a potential difficulty in attracting the full participation of national focal points. The involvement of the focal points requires careful planning.

Recommendations

(d) In parallel with the network, a web portal should be implemented dedicated to the activity of the CST and the issues of science and technology.

(e) The sustainability of the network and the information portal should be considered in advance.

(f) The host organization for the portal should be identified.

(g) The role of the scientific community within the UNCCD should be increased. This would serve to empower the members of the CST.

(h) The GoE recommended that the CST Bureau should explore the possibility of funding the proposal.

WP Activity 2: Develop synergies with other related conventions, organizations and intergovernmental treaties
(Coordinator Dr. D. Mouat)

Summary

14. Synergy is considered an important and strategic topic for the UNCCD. Synergy refers to benefit resulting from mutual interaction. Synergism is developed with related conventions, organizations and intergovernmental treaties (such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) in order to avoid duplication of effort. Thus, matters relating to biodiversity and climate change, for example, which are critical components of much work in desertification, might be found to be products of past or ongoing work in their respective conventions. Assessments of desertification might be of critical use to those undertaking work in the areas of biodiversity and climate change.

15. The GoE took note of the work done in the context of synergism among multilateral environmental agreements, especially the workshop in Espoo, Finland, and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) interlinkages report. The GoE also took note of the final report from the Viterbo workshop, "Forests and forest ecosystems: Promoting synergy in the implementation of the three Rio conventions", organized by the UNCCD and CBD secretariats, in cooperation with the UNFCCC secretariat. The workshop encouraged efficient communication between the national focal points of the three Rio conventions and other relevant stakeholders at the national level. Effective consultation and mutual cooperation should be promoted under the national action programmes (NAPs) (UNCCD), National Biodiversity

Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs) (CBD) and national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs) (UNFCCC). The GoE discussed the possible development of a white paper on synergy taking into account the results of the Viterbo workshop.

Conclusions

16. The work to be accomplished will centre on two major themes:

(a) Determination of opportunities for synergism among conventions, and the identification of specific areas and criteria for project development and assessment in which synergy would be appropriate.

(b) Development of mechanisms for synergy between the UNCCD and other conventions and organizations.

Recommendations

17. To this aim the GOE recommends the development by COP 7 of a white paper which highlights areas where the UNCCD can expand its interest by linking its goals with those of other environmental or more general sustainable development mechanisms.

18. The report should contain areas of interest, criteria for evaluation of the synergetic content of land degradation and desertification projects and proposals for improving the institutional interlinkages. This would also include the types of successes which could be achieved by these linkages.

19. The report should address synergies as they relate to vulnerability at three levels: ecosystems, production systems and social systems.

20. The report should suggest specific and general examples of joint interactive projects, both to illustrate synergies, and to carry out work effectively within the respective conventions. These projects might be carried out at various levels (including nationally) in order to illustrate the opportunities at different levels.

WP Activity 3: Identify and assess existing and ongoing case studies on conservation and rehabilitation for users in implementing the Convention
(Coordinator Dr. H. P. Singh)

Summary

21. Success stories need to be documented in order to demonstrate tangible and intangible impacts on the improvement of natural, physical, social and human capital, which is essential for the sustenance of rehabilitated, degraded and desertified lands. The overall goal of the WP activity is to identify conservation and rehabilitation case studies and technologies which address issues relating to the control of land degradation. Successful case studies are sought which bring the already degraded land back into productive use for creating sustainable livelihoods. Most of the technologies in the case studies will require community participation for their sustainability. A technology, irrespective of its merits, cannot be successful without active participation of the

community or the individual farmer. Community mobilization is thus central to the identification of successful case studies.

22. The expected results of the project include:

- Identification of technological gaps and research and development (R&D) needs in existing systems
- Understanding constraints in, and the promotion of, the adoption of technological options
- Assessment of impact of technological interventions on bio-physical and socio-economic aspects
- Generation of awareness of proven technologies at the local scale
- Dissemination of the process for replicability of the models
- Cooperation among national and international organizations established for furthering the cause of the UNCCD goals.

23. The project proposal was discussed at length with the focus on the main topic that emerged which was the framework to be used for the evaluation of case studies/success stories. After a thorough discussion, an agreement was reached on the objectives, activities, framework, the approach to project implementation and the output.

Conclusions

24. The GoE reached the following three conclusions:

(a) The understanding reached on the framework to be used for determining the success of a project as a case study is the following:

The sustainable livelihood framework (SLF) proposed in the project document as a tool for analysing the success of the project is based on the following set of broad success indicators: natural capital, physical capital, social capital, human capital and financial capital. Each of these has sub-indicators (e.g., soil and water, withing the natural capital). This framework is being successfully used for the evaluation of natural resource management-based projects in the Indian subcontinent and many other developing countries and has since proved quite appropriate and efficient.

(b) Adequate attention will be given to interventions which are based on the refinement of traditional knowledge. It is believed that such technological interventions are more often readily accepted by the community.

(c) Renewable sources of energy will be included as a component of the natural capital group of indicators.

Recommendations

25. The working group recommended the following:

(a) The participatory approach for selection of indicators for information generation should be adopted.

(b) The ability of farmers to replicate the interventions on their own without external support may be taken as an indicator of success and sustainability.

(c) Traditional knowledge should be considered.

(d) Renewable energy at the local scale should be included for assessment as a technological intervention.

WP Activity 4: Develop an integrative assessment methodology for
poverty and land degradation
(Coordinator Dr. G. Febles)

Summary

26. In spite of the fact that the United Nations declared 1996 as the year of poverty elimination, the 21st century has received the enormous inheritance of more than 1.3 billion poor people. One fourth of the world's population is subject to severe poverty. The majority of the poorest inhabitants of the planet are people living in an environment which is rapidly degrading and are living under very difficult and desperate conditions. Within this complex context, the aim of the UNCCD and of this work programme topic is to target poverty, drought and food security in those countries experiencing different degrees of land degradation and desertification.

27. The objective of the project proposal is to provide information about the present situation of poverty and land degradation in the world and to analyse the inter-relationships that exist. The specific activities of the project are to discuss the scientific and technical tools that have to be used in order to develop an integrated assessment methodology for land degradation and poverty. A relationship is proposed in which the intensity of the risks and the response capacity are considered as the essential components of vulnerability. Both are expressed via a group of scientific indicators, such as physical, chemical, biological, economic, social, political and environmental. The project will focus on the development of an integrative assessment methodology.

Conclusions

28. It is not possible in practice to develop a single methodology to measure the relationship between land degradation and poverty. These processes are dynamic and variable. Both degradation and poverty have different gradations, different causes and different effects according to the spatial and temporal spheres in which they have developed. Poverty must be estimated as the result of a group of causes, of which land degradation is one.

29. The theoretical principles developed from practice in the assessment of the degradation/poverty relationship are important. These elements are: the indicators, the spatial/temporal scales of the study, the NAPs, the multidisciplinary and multi-institutional teams, workshops and surveys, participatory monitoring and research projects. These tools are the main factors in which the evaluation methodology is supported and must be linked and used depending on the criteria of the multidisciplinary and multi-institutional teams.

30. The implementation of the methodology according to level must be made from the bottom to the top, that is, from the local to the national. The local-scale assessment involves mobilizing communities to monitor poverty degradations themselves. Poverty and land degradation characteristics may vary from location to location and according to land and livelihood management and policy.

31. Measuring the degree of vulnerability to food insecurity is the first step in poverty assessment. Sufficient food availability is directly dependent upon, among other factors, elements linked to the natural physical environment, its degree of integrity or degradation in its exploitation and management, and thus its protection and improvement with time.

32. Vulnerability is an essential element and is obtained from the “participatory reasoning” model. Within this component, the risk intensity is considered as the negative or harmful processes with different intensities that occur mainly as a consequence of natural phenomena, or as the environmental reaction to inadequate management. The response capacity deals with a group of indicators referring to the main natural resources and their use with the present food production capacity.

33. Risk intensity and response capacity will be separately analysed and the results will be linked to the vulnerability intensity. The real situation must be defined through workshops or working sessions in which different specialists from diverse scientific institutions, policy makers, users, owners and stakeholders take part, as well as representatives from civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

34. Vulnerability components, risk intensity and response capacity, with their particular indicators, form the basis for the integral assessment of land degradation and poverty. The participation of the people and institutions will be very important in the decision-making.

Recommendations

35. The presentation of the working group summary contributed the following recommendations:

(a) The concepts, tools and methods attributed to the knowledge developed and discussed by the GoE, such as indicators and other subjects, should be gathered with the aim of obtaining a basic assessment methodology for poverty and land degradation.

(b) In order to validate the poverty assessment model, the development of an appropriate project or programme to be carried out by the GoE or other organizations should be considered.

- (c) The final product should be an integral part of the NAPs.

WP Activity 6: Prepare, taking into account the perceived gaps between biophysical, socio-economic and cultural knowledge and activities to combat desertification, a report identifying these gaps and recommend possible ways of eliminating them

(Coordinator Prof. A. Ornas)

Summary

36. There are ongoing and past projects from which to draw practical experience on how to proceed with the proposed method of filling the gap between expert and community-based knowledge. In these projects an interaction process is set up between different layers of stakeholders with the participation of decision makers. Overall, the core of this project proposal is to invite large numbers of ongoing projects to test the proposed methodology.

37. The method is to offer a process which takes into account the criteria of stakeholders at the community level who list, in a workshop aimed at building consensus, their own priorities regarding desertification and poverty issues. The stakeholders thus create a conceptual map including their priorities and also their views as to how to solve these problems. The map is then analysed by the technicians (researchers), who later inform the community about the scientific knowledge available to solve their specific problems. An informed consensus is then built up locally before being discussed with other groups at regional levels. Of key importance is the participation of local decision makers.

38. In terms of the GoE activities, it is suggested that workshops at the national level be organized as a pilot activity aimed at training some members of the GoE and the UNCCD focal points. Trained experts should then take part in a community-level workshop in each country, oriented toward building an informed consensus and then presenting available scientific solutions. The product of this first phase would be interim material for a handbook. The second phase would consist of a meeting of both GoE members involved in this activity, in order to generate a final version of a handbook that would compile the lessons learned from the series of workshops developed as a pilot experience. The final handbook should be distributed to countries' focal points.

Conclusions

39. Working group reported on gaps between biophysical, socio-economic and cultural knowledge and activities to combat desertification through the proposal of May 2004 and an elaboration of it in a paper of October 2004. The title of both proposals is "Human and natural resource poverty: Connecting stakeholder and expert knowledge". The topic was presented to the GoE as one of two contributions within the theme of poverty and land degradation.

40. The fundamental argument for the proposal is that the two perspectives, the knowledge base of scientific experts and the experience of stakeholders, need to be integrated. By setting up a process of dialogue and consensus building, a road is opened towards identifying gaps between biophysical, socio-economic and cultural knowledge and activities to combat desertification. The proposed project does not fill these gaps, but presents a method that has been applied in case studies, and by doing so in a systematic manner it identifies activities and methods for

eliminating knowledge gaps. The focus is on poverty reduction within the frame of combating desertification. The background paper develops the arguments and outlines the techniques for how the process can be established.

41. The plenary discussion elaborated on the methods of assessing knowledge gaps, the format of a conceptual map, ways of interacting with stakeholders, identification of stakeholders and communication of results. The proposal from Activity 6 was accepted.

42. The workgroup discussion focused on integration of the knowledge gaps with the problem of how to deal in a broader sense with the interconnections between communities and stakeholders. The proposal deals with informed consensus building about how human and natural resource poverty affects human and land vulnerability. It was noted in the discussion that the presentations concern the matter of stakeholder interaction in the process of addressing desertification and poverty, and that there is a need for integration in order to avoid the GoE working in an extremely compartmentalized fashion.

Recommendations

43. The following recommendation should be considered:

(a) Despite the methodology outlined above, the GoE should attempt to outline a proposal combining several of the themes that have been addressed by individual groups. The overarching topic is "Poverty and land degradation" and it is suggested that the following proposals be included:

- Knowledge gaps (coordinated by Ornas)
- Integrated assessment for poverty and land degradation (Febles)
- Benchmarks and indicators (Abraham)
- Early warning systems (Castillo)
- Methods of assessing desertification (Takeuchi)
- Case studies on conservation and rehabilitation (Singh).

(b) In preparing the proposal the GoE should review what has been produced in the past. The connection between poverty and desertification was included in theme 3, Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development (Group 2), in the first (Hamburg, 2002) meeting. It is recommended that the proposed approach to knowledge gaps be implemented.

(c) A proposal on poverty and land degradation was prepared in June 2003 and was delivered at COP 6. Hence, the recommendation is that this work be not only revisited, but be incorporated into the planned integrated approach to community and stakeholder interaction, with a number of case studies to be considered. The scale of impact is proposed to be a key factor in the integration discussions to follow, and one Activity 6 contribution can be a review of the literature addressing social, economic and natural driving forces and pressures on land and the impacts of land degradation on society, including on poverty.

WP Activity 7: Proposing effective methodologies for the assessment of desertification at the global, regional and local levels, so that the Convention can be implemented in consultation and interaction with other related ongoing efforts
(Coordinator Prof. K. Takeuchi).

Summary

44. The proposed project has the following objectives:

- (a) To integrate the assessment of desertification at different spatial scales;
- (b) Establishment of a conceptual framework for integration of benchmarks and indicators (B&I), monitoring and assessment, and early warning systems (EWSs); and
- (c) To initiate a pilot study on the development of an integrated model based on a pressure-status-response framework. Driving forces will be included in the framework at the next step.

45. The methodology to be followed will be based on the following techniques and procedures:

- (a) Remote sensing, geographic information system (GIS) and simulation models will be applied in the development of a monitoring system, on a large scale and longer-term basis.
- (b) Field surveys will be conducted for understanding local-scale desertification status. Traditional knowledge will also be utilized for this purpose. Benchmarks relating to human activities, which can be assessed only by ground-level observation, will be ascertained from field surveys.
- (c) By taking common indicators for both larger and smaller observation scales and by combining them, it will be possible to extrapolate to larger areas. B&I for monitoring and assessment will be integrated for desertification evaluation processes (DEPs).

Recommendations

46. Socio-economic aspects should be fully considered in the process of developing B&I for desertification monitoring and assessment.

47. It is recommended that pilot studies be initiated in the different geographical regions for the development of an integrated model suitable for each region. Appropriate B&I for the specific regions should be validated and applied for such pilot studies.

48. Coordination of ongoing projects relating to land degradation assessment and rehabilitation, with integrated ecosystem managements should take place. The GoE may wish to ask CST Bureau members to organize workshops on desertification assessment for coordinating ongoing projects.

49. For the dissemination of information obtained by desertification assessments and EWSs, the scientific community needs to communicate with stakeholder organizations including national institutions and local extension services.

50. Synergy with other related United Nations conventions is also important in the development of the DEP.

WP Activity 8: Evaluate the state of the art of common benchmark and indicator systems
for the monitoring and assessment of desertification
(Coordinator Dr. E. Abraham)

Summary

51. Complying with the recommendation of COP 6, the working group focused on:

(a) Consulting and evaluating the existing reports on this subject produced by the UNCCD, other United Nations conventions, and other programmes and projects;

(b) Conducting a survey on the application of B&I, in order to obtain in-depth knowledge of state-of-the-art B&I at international level;

(c) Developing a project proposal to contribute to the adoption of a unified methodology framework on B&I.

52. As regards the survey, supported by the Project AID-CCD (Active exchange on indicators and development of perspectives in the context of the UNCCD), a study was conducted of the international state-of-the-art in the use of B&I. The information came from a survey of focal points, key institutions and persons employing the updated format used for the NAPs. The results represented a preliminary diagnosis of the state-of-the-art in the use of B&I at the international level in the four annexes of the UNCCD and permitted the formulation of a project proposal entitled "Guidelines to develop a common B&I system for monitoring and evaluation of desertification".

53. The main objective of the project is to formulate guidelines for implementing, testing and disseminating a common system for using B&I in assessing, monitoring and combating desertification. It should take into consideration the users' demands in order to achieve their objectives at international, regional, subregional, national and local levels. This proposal intends to take advantage of existing experience and to promote personal and institutional synergetic effort oriented towards the project objectives. There are several important aspects:

- (a) The GoE's thematic coordinators and Chairperson will provide the thematic scope corresponding to their working groups;
- (b) The project counts on the support and collaboration of the working group;
- (c) Pilot cases for testing the common methodology will be selected from those which already have support from ongoing projects. Representatives of these projects will be invited to contribute to the project at specific times;
- (d) A team of project assistants will be set up, to work on the technical tasks of the project.

Work plan

54. The tasks of the project can be organized into two major groups during its two-year period:

Technical activities:

- (a) Revision, updating and consensus on concepts and definitions of B&I
- (b) Survey of existing experience and identification of successful experience and best practices (“hot and bright experience”)
- (c) Selection of ongoing projects for testing the unified methodology
- (d) Selection of criteria for gathering pertinent B&I
- (e) Formulation of a framework for a unified methodology to set up a common B&I system with a multi-scale and integrated approach
- (f) Revision and adjustment of the proposed framework and final proposal
- (g) Testing of the proposed methodology with potential users in selected ongoing projects
- (h) Formulation of strategies for capacity building
- (i) Formulation of strategies for dissemination and transfer at all levels.

Consensus and cooperation activities:

- (a) An initial workshop for reaching agreements among collaborators
- (b) Internal work meetings with the small technical team
- (c) A workshop to discuss the contributions to a unified methodology
- (d) A “think tank” with representatives of the selected projects
- (e) An electronic forum
- (f) A final workshop for the adoption of the framework.

55. For practical and financial reasons, workshops will be planned to take place simultaneously with planned GoE meetings.

Conclusions

56. The work plan will include the production of a report on criteria, successful experience and synthesis of pilot studies (performed at subregional, national and local levels) using B&I in different regions of the world; it will include a preliminary proposal for a unified methodology. If financial support is obtained, a white paper could be presented at COP 7.

Recommendations

57. Considering the approval of the proposal “Developing a common framework of a B&I system for monitoring and evaluation of desertification”, and considering the working group discussion, the recommendations proposed by the GoE are listed below:

- (a) Country profiles available in the new national reports should be used in order to gain an idea of the indicators currently used by Parties.

- (b) The B&I should include indicators for processes.
- (c) The project activities should include the B&I being used by other working groups.
- (d) Specific indicators for different levels should be obtained.
- (e) Indicators oriented towards decision makers should be obtained.
- (f) Indicators concerning civil society, local community participation and traditional knowledge should be included.
- (g) Diffusion of information on B&I in collaboration with THEMANET's group should be considered.
- (h) The B&I should be operational and suitable for use in benefiting the end-users.
- (i) There should be reinforcement of capacities at different levels in setting and using B&I.
- (j) A manual and tool kit for better dissemination of the framework should be published.

WP Activity 9: Evaluate and recommend guidelines for both short-term
and long-term early warning systems

(Coordinator Dr. V. Castillo)

Summary

58. The GoE recognized that B&I, desertification monitoring and assessment and EWSs are integral components of the holistic approach to understanding the factors and spatio-temporal characteristics of drought and desertification processes. The GoE also recognizes that several initiatives have been promoted for the development and implementation of desertification EWSs in the action programmes at national, regional and global levels under the auspices of the UNCCD. No integrated studies, however, have been undertaken so far to standardize these tools for wider applications. From the results of previous ad-hoc panels, it was concluded that knowledge gaps still exist and there are questions pending about translating broadly accepted principles on early warning into action-oriented procedures (NAPs and regional action programmes (RAPs)).

59. The objectives of the proposal are:

- (a) An evaluation of existing EWSs in the context of desertification which should address the following topics:
 - (i) The methodologies used for assessing and predicting desertification
 - (ii) The systems for disseminating information to end-users
 - (iii) The integration mechanisms for an operational use of EWSs in the chain of decision-making to combat desertification.

(b) The production of guidelines on methodology for building multi-scale desertification EWSs.

(c) Development of a proposal for a pilot study comparing the use of desertification EWSs in selected risk areas.

Conclusions

60. After the discussions among members of the GoE and external observers it was concluded that:

(a) There are several platforms and models for monitoring and analysing desertification vulnerability. A comparative assessment of existing efforts is necessary.

(b) There is a need to use a participatory approach in developing, establishing and validating operational EWSs.

(c) Integrated methodologies based on B&I as well as operational monitoring and assessment systems and EWSs are components of a holistic approach to desertification evaluation.

(d) There is a need to improve the assessment methodologies taking into account not only the symptoms of desertification but also the driving forces: climatic, institutional and socio-economic.

(e) There is a need to set up operational EWSs and improve their implementation in the decision-making chain.

Recommendations

61. The GoE made the following recommendations:

(a) Existing EWSs and institutional networks should be fully utilized for the development of operational EWSs for both drought and desertification.

(b) In drawing conclusions, the GoE should make use of analysis of successful and failed stories of implementation of EWSs and ongoing pilot studies.

(c) Pilot studies in different desertification risk areas should be encouraged for the purpose of validating EWSs.

(d) Coordination and integration among the desertification EWSs working group and the other working groups (especially desertification assessment, B&I) should be strengthened within the GoE

WP activity 10: Evaluate guidelines to update the world atlas in consultation and interaction with other related ongoing efforts
(Coordinator Prof. L. Vermes)

Summary

62. According to the work plan of the GoE – determined in the Hamburg meeting of GoE, 2002, one of its tasks is to determine the criteria on the basis of which the new atlas can be accomplished, and to prepare recommendations for the terms of reference for, and the development of, mapping the sensitivity of areas affected by drought and desertification. The first progress report on the task of the work plan reviewed the current status of the atlas as well as of the mapping problems, and summarized the most important steps in the development of a new world atlas. The COP 6, held in Havana, Cuba, 2003, requested the GoE to prioritize the two-year work plan, and in particular the given framework topics, and – among other things – “to evaluate guidelines to update the World Atlas in consultation and interaction with other related ongoing efforts (for example the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) programmes)”. All the above-mentioned preliminaries strengthen the importance of a project to update the World Atlas of Desertification.

Conclusions

63. Taking into consideration the overall criticism of the present atlas, and also the suggestions of experts in the field of assessment and mapping for drought and desertification, there is a definite need for revision and further development of the atlas.

Recommendations

64. Several new aspects, such as scale, land vulnerability and socio-economic aspects, should be discussed and recognized during the updating process.

65. First and foremost, the target audience for the new atlas should be identified and the purposes of compilation should be determined.

66. A new and complex methodology of assessment and illustration for drought and desertification should be worked out, based on more accurate local databases and national scale of evaluation, using a bottom-up approach.

67. A method for the combination of different factors and data on spatial basis should be worked out, and a revision of the related basic terms and concepts has to be made.

68. The use of GIS should be increased, and capacity at the local level should be increased to implement the guidelines.

69. The outcome of the project should be a report with a concrete guideline proposal as a synthesis of the GoE work on the development of an updated World Atlas of Desertification.

70. A smaller ad hoc team, the World Atlas Team (WAT) should be established within the frame of the GoE under the leadership of the coordinator of the work plan task.
71. The formulation of the guidelines proposal should be based on:
- (a) the evaluation of the weakness of the present atlas
 - (b) the detailed results gained in the process of formulation of the different tasks of the GoE
 - (c) the results of the intensive consultations with related ongoing efforts in several international activities.
72. Close contact and personal consultation should take place, especially with the leaders and/or representatives of the MA and LADA projects, but also with those of some other organizations in order to collect their results and activities relating to the updating or revision of the present atlas.
73. The WAT should not only gather and combine results from the different sources, but should discuss and evaluate the collected materials in detail and formulate a standpoint on them; a workshop will therefore have to be organized for the implementation of the project, possibly at the same time and in the same place as the fourth meeting of the GoE.

II. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS ON INPUT OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS INTO THE COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

74. The secretariat recalled the requests made under decision 1/COP.6 that future sessions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) be organized in such a manner as to facilitate input from scientists such as those involved in the work of the CST, and for the CST to review the provisions of the report of the CRIC on participatory processes, B&I, EWSs, research, technologies, and knowledge and know-how, with a view to proposing appropriate scientific measures while taking into account progress made in this respect in each region. The secretariat also noted decision 15/COP.6, which requested the GoE to focus on issues emerging from the review of the national, subregional and regional programmes and other relevant reports and to advise the CRIC through the CST of the efficacy and adequacy of those programmes for implementing the Convention. Information was provided to the GoE on work carried out on the preparation of a country profile as part of the help guide for the preparation of national reports. It was further clarified that the third meeting of the CRIC would be dedicated to a review of the national reports from affected African country Parties.
75. It was agreed that the period February to April 2005 would be the review period for the African national reports to CRIC 3, with overall coordination of the review process being delegated to the Chairperson of the GoE. The following table reflects the individual review assignments as agreed by the GoE during the meeting.

Table 1. GoE assignments for CRIC review of national reports

Region	GoE members	Time period for review	Deadline
Annex I – Francophone	Badroui, Santibanez	February – March 2005	1 April 2005
Annex I – Anglophone	Folorunso, El Bagouri	February – March 2005	1 April 2005
Annex II –Asia	Takeuchi, Al Amoud		
Annex III – Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)	Febles, Abraham		
Annex IV – Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)	Vermes, Debicki		
Annex V – Western European and other States Group (WEOG)	Sciortino, Castillo		
International organizations	Mouat		

76. The secretariat informed the GoE that it intended to facilitate the process by posting the national reports on the UNCCD website. During this review the GoE should bear in mind the specific thematic and sectoral areas relevant to the GoE as stated in decision 1/COP.5. When carrying out this review, the GoE should note the extent to which the information in the national reports addresses these specific thematic and sectoral areas:

- (a) B&I utilized to measure progress for an assessment of success in combating desertification and mitigating drought
- (b) indicators of “scientific and technical desertification and control activities”
- (c) indicators on the “implementation of the recommendations of the CST”
- (d) the annex containing the UNCCD country profile.

77. The GoE concluded that comments from members should be forwarded to the Chairperson of the GoE who would compile a synthesis and, in consultation with the Chairperson of the CST, make this information available to the Parties during the third session of the CRIC in May 2005. It was requested by the GoE that written instructions and review criteria be provided by the secretariat. The review criteria were formulated as were the terms of reference for the GoE work, and are contained in annex to document ICCD/COP(7)/CST/3. The analysis of the reports to the CRIC has already been undertaken; the report is contained in document ICCD/COP(7)/CST/3/Add.1, which has been submitted for consideration by the Committee.

78. The Chairperson of the GoE discussed the timing of the next meeting of the GoE. The GoE discussed procedures for the meeting and possible dates in 2005. The secretariat informed the GoE that an official invitation would be required and that a time limit for receiving the invitation would need to be set. The GoE decided that 15 November 2004 should be considered as the deadline for offers to host the next GoE meeting and that the Chairperson of the GoE would inform the secretariat of the consultations in that regard. The GoE also commented on the importance of field trip opportunities during these types of meetings.

79. It was noted that it would be important to know in advance what the GoE would be discussing at the next meeting and what planned future topics for discussion would be. The GoE further discussed the need to have substantive progress by the next meeting and that contributions to COP 7 would be expected to be ready for review by the CST Bureau. The group targeted June 2005 as a benchmark date in their preparations for COP 7. A review of the results that would be available should take place at that time and decisions made on what results would be presented to COP 7. The group also discussed the procedures for regular GoE meetings.

80. The Chairperson of the CST noted that the CST Bureau would begin discussions on developing a strategy that would address these concerns by examining the feasibilities outlined in the work programme proposals. It was felt that there was substantial material presented in the reports and proposals, which would allow a thorough analysis to take place.

81. The GoE noted that funding the work programme is the most important consideration at this time as funds will be needed to carry out the proposed activities during the eight months before June 2005. The CST Chairperson commented that the material for creating a funding strategy is now available and that the Bureau would work on further developing funding possibilities. The GoE also identified the need for a good communication pattern to be established in order to prepare materials for the donors and to agree on proposal formats. It was felt that more integration work and fine tuning was needed in order to prioritize the proposals for producing concrete results. It was also observed that assisting the people who are experiencing land degradation and providing recommendations for action is the main task of the group.

82. The GoE stressed that its work had reached a limit in the proposal formulation stage, and that there exists an obligation to produce results at the next meeting. To achieve these results would require financial assistance, and the GoE noted that counterpart funding in terms of infrastructure would be available from many of their respective organizations and institutes.

Annex I

[ENGLISH ONLY]

AGENDA OF THE MEETING

Monday, 11 October 2004

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|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 09:00 – 10:00 | Registration of participants |
| 10:00 – 10:15 | Item 1. Opening of the meeting by the Chairperson of the GoE |
| 10:15 – 11:00 | Item 2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work. Review of the deliberations and decisions coming out of the sixth session of the CST |
| 11:00 – 12:00 | Item 3. WP Activity 1.1: Develop a clear communication strategy between the activities of the GoE, end users and the research community (Coordinator Mouat) |
| 13:30 – 14:30 | Item 4. WP Activity 1.2: Develop a web-based glossary of terms (through a UNCCD-hosted server) (Coordinator Debicki) |
| 14:30 – 15:45 | Item 5. WP Activity 1.3: Develop a mechanism for an interactive and thematic data/metadata network (Coordinator Sciortino) |
| 15:45 – 16:00 | Chairperson's summary and assignment of working groups |
| 16:00 – 18:00 | Chairperson's working groups |

Tuesday, 12 October 2004

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| 09:00 – 10:30 | Item 6. WP Activity 2: Develop synergies with other related conventions, organizations and inter-governmental treaties (Coordinator Mouat) |
| 10:30 – 12:00 | Item 7. WP Activity 3: Identify and assess existing and ongoing case studies on conservation and rehabilitation for users in implementing the Convention (Coordinator Singh) |
| 13:30 – 15:00 | Item 8. WP Activity 4: Develop an integrative assessment methodology for poverty and land degradation (Coordinator Febles) |
| 15:00 – 16:15 | Item 9. WP Activity 6: Prepare, taking into account the perceived gaps between biophysical, socio-economic and cultural knowledge and activities to combat desertification, a report identifying these gaps and recommend possible ways of eliminating them (Coordinator Ornas) |
| 16:15 – 18:00 | Chairperson's working groups |

Wednesday, 13 October 2004

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| 09:00 – 10:30 | Item 10. WP Activity 7: Proposing effective methodologies for the assessment of desertification at the global, regional and local levels, so that the Convention can be implemented in consultation and interaction with other related ongoing efforts (Coordinator Takeuchi) |
| 10:30 – 12:00 | Continuation of discussion on Item 10. Methodologies for assessment |

- 13:30 – 15:00 Item 11. WP Activity 8: Evaluate the state of the art of common benchmark and indicator systems for the monitoring and assessment of desertification (Coordinator Abraham)
- 15:00 – 18:00 Chairperson's working groups

Thursday, 14 October 2004

- 09:00 – 10:30 Item 12. WP Activity 9: Evaluate and recommend guidelines for both short-term and long-term early warning systems (Coordinator Castillo)
- 10:30 – 12:00 Item 13. WP Activity 10: Evaluate guidelines to update the world atlas in consultation and interaction with other related ongoing efforts (Coordinator Vermes)
- 13:30 – 15:30 Chairperson's working groups
- 15:30 – 17:00 Chairperson's working groups
- 17:00 – 17:30 Item 14. Discussion by the Chairperson on the conclusions and recommendations for the final report

Friday, 15 October 2004

- 09:00 – 10:30 Item 15. Finalize and adopt the draft report of the GoE meeting
- 10:30 – 11:30 Item 16. Open discussion on GoE input to the CRIC process: decision 1/COP.6, paragraphs 26 and 33
- 11:30 – 12:00 Closing

Annex II

[ENGLISH/SPANISH ONLY]

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Selected members for Africa

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Nigeria

Prof. Mohamed Badraoui
IVA Hassan II
Department of Soil Science
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Selected members for Asia

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College of Agriculture
Saudi Arabia

Dr. Harish Singh
Central Research Institute for Dryland
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Selected members for LAC

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**Selected members for Western Europe and
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European Community

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