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Desertification**

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

**Interim report of the Group of Experts**

Addendum

**Analysis by the Group of Experts of the reports submitted by Parties to the third session  
of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention**

Note by the secretariat

1. By its decision 15/COP.6, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the Group of Experts (GoE) to focus on issues emerging from the review of the national, subregional and regional programmes and other relevant reports, and advise the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), through the Committee of Science and Technology (CST), of the efficacy and adequacy of these programmes for implementing the Convention.

2. The GoE was also requested to provide input to the CRIC process, as defined by decision 1/COP.5 and decision 1/COP.6 (paragraphs 26 and 33), by reviewing provisions of the CRIC report which address participatory processes, benchmarks and indicators, drought and desertification monitoring and assessment, early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought, research, technologies and knowledge and know-how, with a view to proposing appropriate scientific measures while taking into account progress made in the respective regions.

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3. Consequently, the GoE framework for the two-year work plan has included the item “Summarize issues emerging from the review of the national action programmes (NAPs) and regional action programmes (RAPs) and report to the CST on issues which constrain programme implementation”.

4. During its third meeting in Beijing, China in October 2004, the GoE assigned to its members specific tasks for the review of reports submitted for CRIC 3, as reflected in document ICCD/COP(7)/CST/3.

5. Pursuant to this assignment, and in order to assist the GoE in accomplishing the tasks set out by the COP, the secretariat, in consultation with the Chairperson of the GoE and the Chairperson of the CST, prepared terms of reference and criteria for review of national reports for CRIC 3; they are contained in an annex to this document.

6. A synthesis of the analysis of the reports (primarily those of affected African country Parties and developed country Parties) has been prepared by the Chairperson of the GoE and is hereby transmitted by the secretariat for the consideration of the CST. This synthesis provides observations on these reports together with comments, remarks and recommendations as to how to improve them. It also contains some reflections on areas where further action may be taken by the CST and GoE, additional research, renewed interaction among countries, both developing and developed, as well as the United Nations and other international organizations. The full analysis of the reports prepared by the experts is also available on the UNCCD web site at the following Internet address: <http://www.unccd.int/science/menu.php?newch=17>.

## **SYNTHESIS OF THE ANALYSIS BY THE GROUP OF EXPERTS OF THE REPORTS SUBMITTED BY PARTIES TO THE THIRD SESSION OF THE CRIC**

1. The GoE of the CST has been asked by the COP through the CRIC to provide scientific and technical advice and comment on reports of affected African country Parties and other reports.
2. The African country Party reports were largely very well developed and comprehensive. They also referred to each of the seven thematic topics on which they were to report.
3. Developed country Party reports were narrower in scope and typically not as comprehensive. Reports of the United Nations organizations and other international organizations were highly variable with a single summary page submitted by some of them and comprehensive reports submitted by others. This synthesis provides observations on these reports (primarily those from affected African country Parties and developed country Parties), together with comments, remarks and recommendations as to how to improve these reports. Several members of the GoE, experts included in the Roster of Independent Experts, and others, assisted in the review process.
4. The reviews were diverse yet consistent. Reports from most countries were reviewed, some by more than one reviewer.

### A. Thematic issue comments

5. Desertification assessment and monitoring: Most countries provided diagnoses and causes as well as baseline information. A few countries provided no information. Many countries mentioned that a lack of established systems, quantification and funding were constraints on progress. There is a lack of technology and experience in the development of monitoring systems and very few countries have used monitoring systems for decision-making. Channels for information sharing are needed.
6. Benchmarks and indicators: Progress has been slow. About one third of the countries did not report on benchmarks and indicators. Another one third reported that they were under discussion. About one third are making some progress. Ecological indicators are mentioned as still undeveloped.
7. Early warning systems: Most countries either did not report on this or had no operational system. A few countries are working on early warning systems and two either have such a system or it is under development.
8. Rehabilitation of degraded land: Most countries have programmes for rehabilitation and also cite lack of funding as a primary hindrance.
9. Traditional knowledge: There is a clear lack of connection between traditional knowledge and scientific understanding of the same phenomena. Such an understanding would help to understand practices and aid in technology transfer. Access to traditional knowledge is limited, and unless these issues are addressed urgently and immediately, much traditional knowledge will be lost.

10. Participatory approach: Many countries report workshops and community involvement in the preparation of their NAPs. Capacity building is an urgent need mentioned by more than half the countries (and also by the developed countries, the United Nations and other international organizations).

B. Reviewers' comments on how to improve capacity

- Develop capacity building, including horizontal as well as vertical capacity building.
- Improve the capacity to work with early warning systems and monitoring systems. There is some cooperation among international groups (such as the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) and the Long-Term Ecological Monitoring Observatories Network (ROSELT), but little adoption.
- Information and data need to be standardized. The lack of standardization makes comparisons within country and among countries difficult.
- Throughout the region, participatory mechanisms are weak. Efforts should be made to strengthen them.
- Institutional mechanisms need to be improved. A lack of coordination hinders the general control of desertification.

C. National reports' strengths

11. Awareness of, and achievements in, a number of topics, especially:

- Participatory approaches
- Development of national strategies for poverty reduction
- Sustainable development
- Development of appropriate institutions
- International cooperation
- The data from the country profiles as amended to each national report.

12. Weaknesses:

- Implementation of what is considered important is lacking in the reports themselves
- There is a lack of linkages and synergism
- There is a development of, but lack of use of, benchmarks and indicators
- There is a lack of use of monitoring systems and early warning systems
- There is a lack of connection between traditional knowledge and scientific understanding
- It is nearly impossible to standardize data as they are so variable in scale and detail, even classification systems. It is difficult to correlate data across regions (the recent discussion of the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS) and Global Land Cover Network (GLCN) are positive indications that this can be done).

13. Recommendations:

- Capacity building from a variety of perspectives is needed
- Strengthen participatory approaches
- Information and data need to be standardized
- Improve capacity to work with early warning systems (EWSs) and monitoring systems
- Improve institutional articulation and coordination
- Translate traditional knowledge into scientific understanding.

D. Developed country Parties' reports

14. Eighteen of 29 developed country Parties have presented their reports.

- Developed countries gave a good deal of attention to the preparation of African NAPs and in detail to the nature of their activities and assistance in their preparation
- Financial allocation from the developed countries is highly variable
- Channelling of financial and technical assistance through the Global Mechanism is variable and in the majority of reports is either not given or is non-existent
- Careful attention was given to recipient countries
- The use of benchmarks and indicators for the implementation of the Convention is insufficient although there are excellent examples of activities
- Most countries support and are involved in:
  1. sustainable land use development
  2. development of sustainable production systems
  3. development of conservation programmes
- Less attention is given to:
  1. sustainable use of rangelands
  2. development and use of early warning systems
  3. desertification monitoring and assessment
- The use of appropriate technologies including training and capacity building is a high priority
- Partnerships and consultations are most extensive.

E. United Nations and other international organizations reports

15. United Nations and other international organizations reports gave little attention to most of the thematic topics, concentrating instead on:

- knowledge
- participatory processes
- appropriate technologies.

#### F. Country profiles

16. Country profile responses can be summarized as follows (a report from the CST makes similar observations):

- There appeared to be a highly diverse understanding of the questions asked, together with an equally diverse array of responses (for example, a response of “high, medium, or low” might be given for the degree of desertification, or for the specific values of the degree). As such, there is no standardization of these responses. The responses themselves cannot be tied to any specific numerical value or meaning.
- It appears to be virtually impossible to draw trends or other cross-country inferences from the data as they are so disparate (cf. the comments made previously).
- There is much data on some variables such as climate and water but none or nearly none on other variables such as rehabilitation.
- As a result of these observations regarding the lack of consistency of data or understanding of what is being asked, it is difficult to compare either the status (that is, the condition and extent of desertification) or changes in the status (monitoring over time, or trends).
- There is almost no statistical assessment nor the means to make statistical assessments.

17. Conclusions are:

- Data is available but its accuracy is not known.
- There are numbers but little ability to draw correlations. The detail and scale are highly variable from one data set to another.
- There is a need to understand the data that are available but this need is hindered.
- There is a need to understand whether or not the measures that are being implemented are having their intended effect.
- Basic science is critical to the ability to understand both the phenomena and the efforts to affect the phenomena.
- There is a need to guide the “help guides” so that the results can be compared and evaluated.
- The countries have made a tremendous contribution toward understanding the phenomena, on the part of both themselves and scientists.
- The bottom line is that while someone may be making good progress, he may not know that he is doing so. The perception is that progress is not being made.

18. The task, then, is to break down the barriers of inaction and connect existing capabilities with developing interventions. Otherwise, only talk and discussion will take place where action could take place and should do so.

Annex

**TERMS OF REFERENCE AND CRITERIA FOR REVIEW OF NATIONAL  
REPORTS FOR THE THIRD SESSION OF THE CRIC**

Background

Decision 1/COP.6 requests that “future sessions of the CRIC be organized in such a manner as to facilitate inputs from scientists such as those involved in the work of the CST” (paragraph 26); it also requests the CST “to review the provisions of the report of the CRIC on participatory processes, benchmarks and indicators, early warning systems, 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 the respective regions” (paragraph 33). Decision 15/COP.6 also requests the GoE “to focus on issues emerging from the review of the national, subregional and regional programmes and other relevant reports and advise the CRIC through the CST of the efficacy and adequacy of these programmes for implementing the Convention.” It was further clarified that the third session of the CRIC would be dedicated to a review of the Annex I (Africa) national reports.

The secretariat has prepared the Help Guide for the national reporting process and has assisted in development of the country profiles to be submitted by each Party as an annex to its national report. The country profile contains information on both the biophysical and socio-economic indicators relating to desertification and drought. Additional information can be found in the Help Guide on the UNCCD web site:

For English: <http://www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cric3/pdf/inf3eng.pdf>

For French: <http://www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cric3/pdf/inf3fre.pdf>

In support of the third session of the CRIC, the GoE shall provide the following:

1. A review of the relevant sections of the national reports which address participatory processes, benchmarks and indicators, early warning systems, research, technologies and knowledge and know-how. The review shall be carried out with a view to proposing appropriate scientific measures while taking into account the progress made in this respect in the respective regions.
2. The GoE shall provide written comments on the information, data, evaluation parameters and remarks which will be provided in selected tables and annexes of the national reports. This relates to the following:
  - (i) The tabular information that reviews benchmarks and indicators utilized to measure progress and an assessment thereof. This information further addresses the “operational mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation”;
  - (ii) The tabular information which contains indicators of “scientific and technical desertification and control activities”;
  - (iii) The table containing indicators on the “implementation of the recommendations of the CST”; and
  - (iv) The annex containing the UNCCD country profile.

3. During this review the GoE should bear in mind the specific thematic and sectoral areas stated in decision 1/COP.5 and favour a bottom-up perspective and participatory approach in its analysis. The review should note the extent to which the information in the national reports addresses the following areas:

- (i) Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought;
- (ii) Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment; and
- (iii) Access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how.

4. Through its review, the GoE should also identify in the national reports the ways and means of promoting know-how and technology transfer, in particular from the developed countries to the developing countries, for combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought.

5. The review should also focus on the degree to which efforts have been applied at the national level for the promotion of traditional knowledge to combat desertification.

6. The GoE shall also provide guidance to the CRIC to ensure that the activities of the scientific communities and institutions are better reflected in the national reports.

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