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**PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

Report of the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology

Note by the secretariat

1. Pursuant to decision 20/COP.6 adopted by the Conference of the Parties (COP) at its sixth session, the secretariat facilitated the convening of one inter-sessional meeting of the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) for the review of decisions taken by the COP and other related matters regarding the work of the CST, especially the planning and organization of the next session of the CST.
2. The CST Bureau meeting was convened under the chairpersonship of Prof. Riccardo Valentini (Italy), and was held in Beijing, China, on 15 October 2004. In accordance with the agenda for the CST Bureau meeting, the following topics were addressed:
 - Consideration of interim report of the Group of Experts (GoE)
 - Functioning of the CST in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
3. The Chairperson of the CST presented a set of ideas for the consideration of the Bureau on ways and means of improving the functioning of the CST, and these are submitted as an annex to the report.

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4. The secretariat is hereby transmitting the report of this meeting. The Committee may wish to take note of the report, and to recommend to the COP action that needs to be taken with regard to the proposals put forward in the report, with a view to improving the functioning of the CST.

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REPORT OF THE BUREAU OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Introduction

1. In accordance with paragraph 4 of decision 20/COP.6, adopted by the COP at its sixth session, the secretariat is requested to facilitate the convening of one inter-sessional meeting of the CST Bureau for the review of decisions taken by the COP and other related matters regarding the work of the CST, especially the planning and organization of the next session of the CST.

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING

2. The Bureau meeting was convened under the chairpersonship of Prof. Riccardo Valentini (Italy), who welcomed the members of the Bureau and thanked them for their attendance. He asked Mr. Willem Van Cotthem and Mr. Antoine Cornet to attend the Bureau meeting as observers, in view of their outstanding and well recognized expertise in the scientific and technical aspects of desertification and land degradation.

II. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

3. The Chairperson requested that the item on consideration of the draft report of the GoE be considered as the first item for discussion. The Chairperson also requested that the provisional agenda include under the item on decision 20/COP.6 the programme of work of the CST and particularly the request for case studies illustrating best practices and innovative research relating to “land degradation, vulnerability and rehabilitation: an integrated approach”. It was noted by the Chairperson that the Bureau would also discuss the possible replacement of absent members of the GoE. The provisional agenda was then adopted as amended.

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE INTERIM REPORT OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS

4. The CST Bureau began its discussion by considering the draft report of the third meeting of the GoE. The Bureau took note of the role and functioning of the subsidiary bodies under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and how their experience could assist the CST in the further formulation of its programme of work. In particular the importance of the GoE support in providing scientific and technical elements to any decision endorsed by CST at the next COP.

5. The Chairperson reported that for discussions at the CST during COP 6 the GoE had prepared a broad holistic programme. The COP asked the experts to prioritize this list. The GoE prepared some proposals for their third meeting which concentrated on action on these themes. For some work programme elements there has been some progress, but the Bureau considered that the work was only partially complete. The problem was viewed as being how to transfer the prioritized work programme items into concrete proposals for funding.

6. It was suggested that the Bureau endorse the draft report of the third meeting of the GoE and its programme of work. It was considered necessary to streamline final proposals, particularly for acquiring the necessary funding from donors.

7. The Bureau noted the importance of the work of GoE and that the programme should be extended into the future. It was noted that all ten items in the draft were very relevant to the Convention and that it was not necessary to add other items. However, more clarity is required and a determination of what concrete products would result from these proposals.

8. The Bureau was concerned that most of the activities were “supply side” activities, prepared by experts, and not “demand-driven” activities. This would have implications for the implementation of the activities in the proposals. Some concern was expressed that the national focal points would not be able to use the output or products from the proposals.

9. The Bureau questioned the consequences of work programme activities such as early warning systems, which require high-cost technology. It was noted that traditional knowledge is a bottom-up approach at rather low cost which should therefore be encouraged, but it was also suggested that low-cost technological systems could be made available to the poor, provided a sustainable approach is considered.

10. Regarding the GoE work programme on benchmarks and indicators, the secretariat provided information on previous ad hoc panel reports on benchmarks and indicators, early warning systems and traditional knowledge as contained in documents ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3/Add.1 and ICCD/COP(2)/CST/3, which had been reviewed by the COP. Thus the proposal on benchmarks and indicators should reflect previous work and further elaborate on a consensus for an integrated framework for assessment to be used in supporting national action programmes (NAPs), subregional action programmes (SRAPs) and regional action programmes (RAPs).

11. The Bureau stressed the need to prioritize activities, as some donors may be more interested in funding one topic than another. Prioritizing the list was seen by the Bureau as an action of the GoE itself, given that clarification had been provided by the potential donors on the need for short-term recommended actions. It was suggested that some concrete results and deliverables should be available by June 2005.

Recommendations

- After extended discussions, the Bureau endorsed the content of the work by the GoE but recommended further work on integration and adjustment of the proposals.
- The work on streamlining the proposals should be completed by 20 November 2004, at which time the final proposals can be disseminated to the donors in consultation with the secretariat.
- Mandate was given to the Chairperson of the CST, the Chairperson of the GoE and the UNCCD secretariat to evaluate funding possibilities, also in accordance with priorities provided by the donors.

- Concrete results and deliverables should be reviewed by June 2005.
- The Bureau also encouraged the use of the GoE results for improving the country profiles as they serve the needs of the Parties and show a connection to the users.
- The final project portfolio should be transmitted to the focal points.

IV. ACTIVITIES SINCE THE SIXTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES: DECISIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES AND THE WORK OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS

12. The Bureau considered the COP 6 decisions relating to the work of the CST, the relevant decisions proposed by the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) and decision 12/COP.6. The secretariat recalled decision 12/COP.6, "Review of activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and relevant international organizations, institutions and agencies". Paragraph 5 of the decision requests the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and the Tehran Process to promote the strengthening of the capacity of Low Forest Cover Countries (LFCCs) to combat desertification, land degradation and deforestation and to give due consideration to the special needs and requirements of the LFCCs.

A. Roster of independent experts

13. In its decision 13/COP.6, the COP requested the secretariat to revise the format for the curricula vitae of the experts and also requested the GoE to utilize fully the roster in carrying out its programme of work. The secretariat provided information on the activities taken to update the roster of independent experts as requested by the decision. The standardized curriculum vitae format now includes information on non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The database system and on-line query procedures for the web site have now been upgraded. The Bureau further discussed possible methods, procedures and problems associated with updating curricula vitae. The Bureau also discussed the use of the roster and encouraged the GoE to make use of the roster in the further development of its proposals.

Recommendations

- The GoE work programme activities should include, as far as possible, a strategy on how to utilize the roster.
- The GoE communication strategy and the collection of case studies and best practices should fully utilize the experiences of the experts in the roster.

B. Survey and evaluation of existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies

14. In its decision 14/COP.6, the COP took note of the work carried out by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) relating to the "Survey and evaluation of existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies". The secretariat provided the information that Phase 2 of the project would be a pilot in-depth survey in the southern African subregion and would include the maintenance and development of the database developed during Phase 1. The UNEP-led consortium of agencies had submitted a revised proposal for undertaking Phase 2. During the work of Phase 2, consortium members will be able to work with a broad range of southern African countries in the most cost-effective way possible. The secretariat noted that developing, testing and refining the in-depth survey instruments in one language will enable the consortium to cut down as much as possible on potential problems of miscommunication or mistranslation during Phase 2, and to concentrate entirely on developing the best possible survey instruments for widescale use during Phase 3. Once the in-depth survey instruments are fully developed and tested in one language, it will be a much quicker and more cost-effective task to translate these instruments into other languages for use during Phase 3. The secretariat also provided information on the status of the proposal as it had now entered a Global Environment Facility (GEF) pipeline for funding. The Chairperson noted that the decision requested that an interim progress report be provided by UNEP on behalf of the consortium. The secretariat noted that Phase 2 had not begun yet, but would continue to liaise with UNEP on the status of the project.

Recommendation

- Secretariat to request for an interim report from UNEP by June 2005.

C. Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST

15. In its decision 15/COP.6, the COP took note of the work programme of the GoE. The secretariat provided information on the individual status of the members of the GoE. Some experts who had not attended previous meetings, and some who had attended previous meetings but were absent from the Beijing meeting, had not provided explanations for their lack of participation in the Group. The Bureau discussed the process for possible replacement of members and recalled the terms of reference of the GoE in the annex to decision 15/COP.6 and the manner by which alternative members can be selected. An alternative list had been drawn up according to the decision and the secretariat noted that one member had been withdrawn and that an alternative had been selected after consultation with the regional representatives.

16. The secretariat also noted decision 18/COP.5, Programme of Work for the Group of Experts, which requests the Bureau of the CST, in consultation with the regional groups and the secretariat, to make the necessary arrangements for selection of the appropriate experts, bearing in mind the programme of work of the GoE as defined by the Bureau of the CST and the procedures outlined in paragraph 11 of the annex to decision 17/COP.5.

17. The Bureau discussed the possibility of contacting missing members to determine whether they were still interested in serving in the GoE, even though the work was entering a mature phase and work assignments and proposal documents had been received. The secretariat

noted that there were no procedures provided in any of the COP decisions relating to the GoE that provided for members' replacement on the grounds of absenteeism.

18. Given that no formal rule existed on the replacement of members, the Bureau explored various possibilities within the accepted process. As the work of the GoE was now entering a critical phase, the Bureau recognized that there was no practical way for new members to be integrated into the work programme. In the absence of a formal established rule, the Bureau noted possibilities such as letting the GoE, through its Chairperson, provide suggestions to the CST. In addition, the Chairperson of the GoE could continue to ask absent members why they were not attending, and the Bureau could take a decision based on their response.

Recommendations

- Given the short time remaining for the GoE work programme, the Bureau decided that there was no need to replace absent members at this stage.
- The Chairperson of the GoE would write to the absent members to ask them whether they were willing to serve and asking them to give their response by 15 December 2004.

D. Traditional knowledge

19. By decision 16/COP.6, the COP requested the secretariat to compile submissions of case studies and lessons learned on how traditional knowledge can contribute to fulfilling the objectives of the Convention, and to submit these submissions to the secretariat no later than six months before the next session of the COP. As at October 2004, no Parties had submitted case studies or lessons learned.

20. The secretariat provided information on steps taken to publish the reports from the two ad hoc expert panels on traditional knowledge as a companion volume to the "Early Warning Systems" publication. The publication would involve the same format, containing the ad hoc reports and the papers presented during the meeting as annexes to the report. Work has already begun on the editing of the publication. The Chairperson encouraged the secretariat to maintain a consistent style in the format and design of future publications.

21. The Bureau discussed in depth the role of the Convention in traditional knowledge and noted the controversial role that traditional knowledge and medicinal plants played in the CBD. The characteristics of the work of the UNCCD were fundamentally different as its work primarily dealt with soil and water conservation and not directly with issues of property rights.

Recommendations

- The Bureau encouraged the secretariat to continue its work on the publication of the traditional knowledge material, and as much as possible to link this work with the glossary of terms as proposed by the GoE.

- The Bureau recommended that this item be maintained for the next CST session and requested the secretariat to renew submissions on case studies and initiatives to be reported to the next session.

E. Benchmarks and indicators

22. By decision 17/COP.6, the COP encouraged further work on the development and testing of benchmarks and indicators.

Recommendations

- The Bureau encouraged the secretariat to provide guidelines on the use of benchmarks and indicators and to focus on providing these guidelines to the next COP as a way of proceeding on this issue.
- The Bureau recommended a follow-up by the GoE of work on benchmarks and indicators which should reflect previous work and should reach a consensus for an integrated framework for assessment to be used in supporting the NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs.
- On the basis of the work of the GoE in June 2005, it will be decided whether a common methodology on benchmark and indicators to be used by countries could be presented for approval at COP 7.

F. Early warning systems

23. By decision 18/COP.6, the COP invited Parties to carry out pilot studies on early warning systems utilizing recommendations from the ad hoc panel, and to report on progress to the CST. The Bureau discussed the decision in depth and noted the importance and relevance of the GoE work. In particular the work on East Asia was considered an important example for the implementation of decision 18/COP.6. The Bureau discussed the possibility of having, at the next meeting of the CST, a presentation which would include a discussion on pilot studies in each region.

Recommendations

- The Bureau recommended that the next CST session should be provided with case studies of early warning systems, one for each region where this would be appropriate.
- The Bureau requested the secretariat and the Chairperson of the GoE to take appropriate action to collect case studies from the GoE.
- The Bureau recommended that before the next COP the secretariat should work on publication of the case studies, whose content should be discussed in June 2005.

G. Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA)
and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)

24. By decision 19/COP.6, the COP requested the secretariat to follow closely the activities of the LADA and MA. The secretariat provided information on the status of both. It was also discussed how to use better the results of the LADA and MA work for the purpose of the Convention.

Recommendations

- The Bureau recommended that a review of the progress of these two initiatives be provided to the next CST session.
- The Bureau recommended that the next CST session discuss the way forward in making use of the LADA and MA for the purpose of meeting the objectives of the Convention.

H. Review of national reports by affected African country Parties

25. The secretariat noted decision 15/COP.6 (paragraph 4) which requested 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 those programmes for implementing the Convention”. The secretariat informed the Bureau that in preparation for the CRIC, assistance was given to the Africa facilitation unit of the secretariat in the development of country profiles, which contained bio-physical and socio-economic indicators as part of the Help Guide for the preparation of African national reports.

Recommendations

- The Bureau recommended that the country profile be modified to fit SRAPs.
- The Bureau also recommended that, in compliance with decision 15/COP.6 (paragraph 4), the involvement of the GoE in the review of national reports from African country Parties should be ensured, and also that as far as possible the results of the CST work should be utilized, *inter alia*, the work on benchmarks and indicators.

I. Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions
(Viterbo workshop)

26. Within the context of the GoE work programme element on the formulation of a road map for developing synergies (decision 15/COP.6, paragraph 5), as well as under decision 12/COP.6, the secretariat provided some additional information to the Bureau members.

27. The secretariat recalled further work carried out in the context of synergies among multilateral environmental agreements. The Bureau took note of the work of the secretariat and the report prepared after 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 Bureau considered synergies to be an important and strategic topic for the UNCCD, particularly at the scientific and institutional levels, in order to avoid duplication of effort.

28. The Bureau discussed the value and possibility of requesting the GoE under its work programme activity 2 “Developing synergies with other related conventions, organizations and inter-governmental treaties in order to avoid duplication of effort and establish mechanisms for interaction”, to prepare a discussion paper taking into account the results of this workshop. The objective of the paper would be to examine further the recommendations from the Viterbo workshop which were directed at strengthening synergy at the local level.

29. The Bureau discussed the importance of capitalizing on the results of the Viterbo workshop and its relevance to LFCCs under decision 12/COP.6 (paragraph 5). In this respect the Bureau noted the work proposed by the GoE in the context of synergy and requested this work to be continued with a view to preparing specific indicators for the evaluation of projects with a synergetic context, referring also to the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) document on interlinkages.

30. The Bureau further discussed the possibility of convening an ad hoc expert panel to review ways of carrying forward the recommendations from the Viterbo workshop in order to contribute to the CRIC process and more generally to follow the ongoing process between the Rio conventions. It was suggested that the ad hoc panel could evaluate the processes for implementing synergies between conventions with a view to reinforcing the objectives of the UNCCD. It was noted that the convening of an ad hoc panel would have to be requested by the Executive Secretary and the mechanism for input to the panel and the types of presentation materials would have to be evaluated. The panel could be established at the next COP session and meet at the subsequent session of the COP.

31. The secretariat informed the Bureau that during the third session of the CRIC in May 2005, there would be a panel discussion entitled “Launching of reforestation programmes and intensification of soil conservation programmes”. The Bureau discussed the possibility of providing this panel with the recommendations from the Viterbo workshop regarding the potential for synergy in the forest sector.

Recommendations

- The Bureau recommended further action based on the Viterbo workshop, with a possible concrete recommendation to the CRIC.
- The Bureau recommended that the GoE Chairperson convene the ad hoc expert panel on synergies with the aim of preparing a paper on the technical aspects of synergies for the UNCCD objectives. The paper would include a set of indicators for project development and for formulating a process and procedures for the secretariats of the three Rio conventions, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and other organizations, to be included under the promotion activities envisaged in decision 12/COP.6.

- The Bureau recommended that the UNCCD secretariat include in the next agenda of the CST session a discussion on the establishment of an ad hoc panel dealing with implementing synergies within the UNCCD.

J. Programme of work of the CST

32. By decision 20/COP.6, the COP requested that the CST continue to discuss its priority topic on “Synthesis of reports submitted by the country Parties on case studies illustrating best practices and research relating to land degradation, vulnerability and rehabilitation: an integrated approach”. The Bureau noted that the CST, through the GoE, would select three or four representative case studies from the contributions from the Parties and would present these at the seventh session of the CST. The Bureau discussed the possibility of utilizing selected case studies under GoE activity 3 “Identify and assess existing and ongoing case studies on conservation and rehabilitation for users in implementing the Convention”. The Bureau noted that it was important to include a broad range of success stories which could be applied to all continents.

Recommendations

- The Bureau recommended a review of representative case studies for provision to the CST at its next session.
- The Bureau recommended that the secretariat work on publication of the case studies before the next COP; the content of this publication should be discussed in June 2005.

V. FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

33. The Chairperson presented a draft document of his recommendations for improving CST functioning within the UNCCD. This document, after discussion with the Bureau members, was endorsed and will be attached to the present report as an annex.

The Chairperson discussed three major critical issues in the functioning of the CST, namely:

1. The lack of inter-sessional (between COPs) communication with the Parties;
2. The mechanism of election of Chairperson and Bureau members;
3. The work of the GoE and its relationship to the UNCCD. Some proposals are indicated in the document which try to address the critical issues previously discussed.

34. In the general discussion on these elements that followed, the Bureau commented on the general awareness and knowledge of CST activities within the UNCCD and the relationship of the CST with the CRIC. To address this, a logical construction of the CST and its relationship to the focal points and other groups is required. The substance of each of the work programme elements should be forwarded to these groups so that they understand the CST work programme. It was also noted that awareness of the CST within the other conventions is either very low or non-existent. In future the CST work programme should reinforce synergy awareness.

35. The Bureau also discussed the possibility of holding its own regular annual meetings. The secretariat recalled decision 20/COP.6 (paragraph 4) which states that the COP “further requests the secretariat to facilitate the convening of one inter-sessional meeting of the CST Bureau for the review of decisions taken by the COP and other related matters regarding the work of the CST, especially the planning and organization of the next session.” The last meeting of the CST Bureau occurred in November 2002. The secretariat provided additional information on the procedures for holding regular annual meetings.

36. The Bureau also discussed whether Parties should appoint a representative at the country level who would assume the role of a CST national focal point and be considered as the country representative to the CST. This was considered a good suggestion to forward to the next COP.

37. The Bureau discussed in detail the financing of the CST in the core budget and recommended that a detailed report be prepared on whether the CST should have its own budget line items. The secretariat explained that this request should be forwarded to the COP Bureau under the agenda item of finance. The decision envisaged would have to invite the Executive Secretary to take this recommendation into consideration.

38. The Bureau also acknowledged the usefulness of invited resource persons in bringing constructive elements and new dimensions to discussions in the CST.

39. Further to its discussion of the CST input to the third session of the CRIC, the Bureau endorsed the recommendations of the GoE regarding the assignment of GoE reviewers to the national reports from Africa.

Recommendation

- The Bureau took note of the critical issues for the CST and the means of improvement contained in the Chairperson’s document (see annex) and recommended forwarding the document to the COP Bureau and secretariat for discussion.

VI. AGENDA AND DATES FOR THE NEXT SESSION OF THE COP AND THE CST

40. The Bureau discussed the agenda and dates for the next session of the COP and the CST. The Bureau recommended that the dates for the next Bureau meeting should be in June 2005, and it was preferred that the meeting took place in order to review submissions by the GoE. The

next CST agenda should be based on the results of this Bureau meeting and further discussed at the Bureau meeting in June.

VII. OTHER MATTERS

41. The Committee considered an additional item relating to a secretariat initiative on the creation of a fellowship programme.

A. UNCCD fellowship programme

42. The secretariat provided information on a proposal for the creation of a UNCCD fellowship programme. After reviewing the fellowship programmes in the other Rio conventions and the widespread role that fellowship programmes play in numerous United Nations organizations, the secretariat has developed a proposal which introduces some of the benefits, characteristics and funding aspects relating to establishing a UNCCD fellowship programme. The secretariat noted that the proposal at this stage was intended to serve as a document presenting some general views on the objectives and administration of the proposed programme. Information was also provided on similar programmes within the CBD and the UNFCCC. In general terms, the programme is intended to provide specialist training for people who work in the arid and semi-arid zones. The programme is designed to enable awardees to undertake short-term training, internships, participation in international conferences and seminars, intensive study tours relevant to combating desertification and land degradation, and preparation of technical documents.

Recommendation

- The CST Bureau endorsed the initiative of the secretariat as an important element for the secretariat to develop, and further recommended that the Executive Secretary provide his views on the procedures of the programme and keep the CST Bureau informed on progress.

B. Technical meeting on drought preparedness in the Balkans

43. The secretariat reported on a forthcoming meeting entitled “Technical workshop on drought preparedness in the Balkans within the context of the UNCCD” to be held 25-26 October in Poiana Brasov, Romania. The workshop objectives are to discuss and make recommendations on the drought phenomena occurring in Central and Eastern Europe and to make recommendations relating to a regional drought monitoring centre. The workshop will provide an overview on the drought situation in the Balkans and its socio-economic consequences. Case studies from Bulgaria and Hungary will be presented, together with response strategies to mitigate the effects of drought and lessons learned from establishing and implementing strategies at the national and regional levels. An important aspect of the workshop will be discussion of the role and involvement of scientist in the integration of drought issues into the NAPs and/or national strategies. The European Regional Work Team on Drought (EWTDRO) as well as other international organizations will present work on drought and will discuss their activities.

Recommendation

- The secretariat to report in June 2005 on workshop results.

C. Two emerging topics for consideration

44. The Bureau also discussed two emerging topics for consideration as important new items for the Convention and for the work of the CST.

Creation of a task force on renewable energies

45. The Bureau discussed the possible creation of a task force on renewable energies. The Chairperson demonstrated that in the light of the sustainable development issues and the Millennium Development Goals, the energy needs of the poor could fit very well with the current discussion on renewable energies and mitigation strategies. Indeed, dryland areas of the world are mostly remote areas where distribution of energy by national companies would never arrive. In this respect renewable energies (solar, wind, biomass etc.) could meet the needs of local communities and serve as a basis for improving the standard of living and the economy. However, a thorough study and concrete cases should bring this subject to the attention of the UNCCD, and for this reason a task force to address the problem is urgently required.

The effects of crime and conflict on the environment

46. The process of land degradation and desertification is greatly exacerbated by the continuous exploitation of land by several activities connected with crime and conflicts. Several examples are occurring worldwide, such as illegal logging of forests, the cultivation of drugs in land prone to degradation and desertification, and migration across regions in response to conflicts. The impact of such activities has not yet been fully investigated and few studies are being carried out to understand the process and the quantitative extent of such phenomena. To this end an urgent initiative on the part of the UNCCD is requested, starting from the work of the CST and its GoE. Also envisaged is closer cooperation on this topic with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

47. The Bureau discussed the role of the CST in relation to youth and how to motivate young people and women to participate in the UNCCD process.

D. Participation

48. The Bureau meeting was convened under the chairpersonship of Prof. Riccardo Valentini (Italy). The participants were the vice-chairpersons of the CST elected during COP 6 in Havana, Cuba: Mr. Georges Rigondja (Gabon), Mr. Pavel Bielek (Slovakia) and Mr. Sapon Chomchan (Thailand). The elected Vice-Chairperson from the Latin American and Caribbean region, Mr. Julio Curruchiche (Guatemala), was replaced by Mr. Galindo Arevalo, who was absent from the meeting.

Annex

**FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY:
MEANS OF IMPROVEMENT**

(Prepared by the Chairperson of the CST)

I. BACKGROUND OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1. According to article 24, paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of the Convention on the establishment of the CST, the following are its major functions:

(a) Providing guidelines for country submissions on the status of desertification, land degradation and socio-economic conditions under a common format;

(b) Providing methodological reports on the science and technology of desertification;

(c) Evaluating and reviewing NAPs for their scientific and technological feasibility and providing inputs to the CRIC;

(d) Establishing links and interactions with other institutional mechanisms (multilateral environmental agreements);

(e) Providing consultation to research and technology funding agencies;

(f) Promoting science and technology projects to understand, assess and mitigate desertification, land degradation and poverty;

(g) Improving capacity building on science and technology.

**II. COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROBLEMS AND
POSSIBLE MEANS OF SOLUTION**

2. In order to implement the above-mentioned functions of the CST, there is a need to solve some issues that are currently pending.

Communication and consultation with Parties

3. One of the major problems of CST activity is the lack of communication with Parties. The result of such lack of consultation makes it difficult to review and update the CST agenda for COPs. There is basically no input from the Parties during inter-sessional periods which would enable the Bureau and GoE to work on new items. Most of the decisions taken at COPs are reiteration of past material without inter-sessional analysis of the work carried out and, more importantly, without new input for COP to consider.

Proposed measures

4. The ideal case is to hold inter-sessional meetings of the CST as occurs in other conventions (see UNFCCC and CBD). If this is not possible, however, a regular mechanism of inter-sessional meetings of the Bureau and GoE should be implemented for the preparation work of the COP and proposals for updating COP agendas. A fixed appointment by Parties (at least for the period from one COP to the next) should be requested for their representative at the CST, so that exchange of communication concerning CST material should be channelled not only to the national focal points but also to individuals who are entitled by Parties to follow the work.

5. A network of national focal points for the CST is highly recommended.

6. A web-based portal on science and technology for combating desertification and land degradation is also envisaged (this also refers to point 1 of the prioritized GoE work plan).

Election of the Chairperson and Bureau

7. The election of the Chairperson and Bureau members is currently carried out at times of COP, and they remain in office until the next session, when they are replaced before the work starts. In practice a new Chairperson and Bureau take on at the time of their election the agenda of work already previously formulated by other individuals. Although the group spirit of the Bureau can be relied upon to implement decisions during the two years, it would clearly be better if the agenda were to be followed by the same group of people who had prepared it.

Proposed measures

8. A proposal could be to retain the previous Chairperson of the CST to preside over the COP session and to start the mandate for the new Chairperson at the first inter-sessional COP Bureau meeting. In this way the Bureau and Chairperson will be responsible for both agenda preparation and for carrying on the decision process until the next Bureau.

COP X	First inter-sessional COP Bureau meeting	COP X+1
Election of CST Bureau by Parties and new Chairperson. Previous Chairperson still acting for the session, as well as previous CST Bureau.	The new Chairperson takes over. The new Chairperson prepares the work for the CST and the agenda for the next COP.	Review of work by CST Chairperson and Bureau. Previous Chairperson and Bureau still chair the CST session. Election of new Chairperson and Bureau.

9. This proposal, once accepted by the COP, should enable the proper decision process to be established to change the current situation.

Committee on Science and Technology budget

10. At least in the last inter-sessional period, the budget for CST activities was very limited, seriously affecting the work of the GoE. It is also difficult to extract from the COP budget decision the amount of funding resources available for the functioning of the CST office in the UNCCD and even more difficult to budget for the functioning of the GoE, the Bureau and the Chairperson's activities. This lack of knowledge of resources makes it impossible to plan activities in advance, more critically for the GoE.

Proposed measures

11. A request should be made to the COP to create a funding basis for CST and GoE work within the overall budget of the Convention on the basis of the following activities:

- Basic functions of the CST and the GoE (at least one meeting per year of the Bureau and the GoE)
- Workshops for the GoE to carry on its duties (to be approved by the COP on the basis of a two-year programme with clear results and budgets)
- Maintenance of a CST/GoE secretariat (within the UNCCD).

Group of Experts

12. The GoE is a good instrument of the CST for advice and consultation, and the GoE has a clear strategic role in the CST and the Convention. For several reasons, however, including financial constraints, its work has been slow to produce tangible results.

Proposed measures

13. The work of the GoE should be to develop guidelines in the interest of the Convention, assess existing projects and initiatives to combat desertification, identify gaps in knowledge, and propose areas of intervention by Parties. The GoE should work through workshops, which should be organized taking also into account the roster of experts on a two-year programme, budgeted at the COP session. Additional workshops on specific topics could be considered for funding by donors and also approved at the COP. A clear endorsement needs to be made at COP sessions, however, before activities can start in accordance with a list of priorities for the two years.
