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Desertification**

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OTHER MATTERS

UNCCD Fellowship Programme

Note by the secretariat

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Conference of the Parties (COP) in its decision 1/COP.6, paragraph 29, invited the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), with the support of relevant institutions, to continue to promote the development of thematic programme networks (TPNs) and best practices to combat desertification and, in particular, to bring more support to activities such as the networking of scientific institutions, technology transfer to developing countries, training at universities, internships and scholarships in the process of the development of subregional and regional programmes.

This proposal introduces some of the benefits, characteristics and funding aspects of establishing a UNCCD fellowship programme. In general, the fellowship programme is intended to provide specialist training for people who work in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones. The programme is designed for awardees to take part in short-term training, such as short-term courses, internships, participation in key international conferences and seminars, intensive study tours relevant to combating desertification and land degradation, and the preparation of technical documents. In contrast to the fellowship programmes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UNCCD programme would be intended to target field operations with a simple application procedure and to be pro-active, initially aiming at 20 to 40 awardees per year by the second year of operation of the project.

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Introduction

1. The Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) during its inter-sessional meeting held in Beijing, China on 15 October 2004, considered the formulation of the UNCCD fellowship programme and made the following recommendation in its report: "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 modalities of the programme and keep the CST Bureau informed of progress."

2. During its discussion on ways and means of promoting know-how and technology transfer the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) during its third session also supported the formulation of a fellowship programme initiative. The report of CRIC 3 contained in document ICCD/CRIC(3)/9 has recommended that donor support for research should be more clearly aligned with the UNCCD objectives as spelled out by the CST work programme and that fellowship programmes for postgraduates and young scientists make fuller use of the various academic institutions specializing in land degradation and desertification and should also be supported.

3. After reviewing the fellowship programmes within the United Nations system and the widespread role that these programmes play within United Nations organizations, the secretariat has formulated this proposal which introduces some of the benefits, characteristics and funding aspects relating to establishing a UNCCD fellowship programme. The proposal at this stage is intended to present some general views on the objectives of the intended programme as well as the general framework for its administration. Pertinent information is also provided on similar programmes under the CBD and UNFCCC and others (see chapter II below), with a view to familiarizing the Committee with what other institutions offer on the same subject.

I. PROGRAMME ELEMENTS

4. The following chapter describes the main characteristics of the fellowship programme.

A. Programme objective

5. The main thrust of the fellowship programme is to support the development of political, legal and technical matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. The key activities would include support to the development of human resources, the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and enhancement of professional expertise in affected developing country Parties in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones, agriculture and agro-pastoral-forestry industries and related disciplines. The development objective of fellowship activities is to promote the sustainable management of natural resources in the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones.

B. Fellowship definition

6. As defined in the Final Report of the Meeting of Senior Fellowship Officers of the United Nations System and Host Country Agencies in Vienna, Austria in November 2002,¹ a fellowship in the United Nations system is a specially tailored or selected training activity which provides a monetary grant to a qualified individual for the purpose of fulfilling special learning objectives; such training, which may be of at least 30 days' duration and may take place in an appropriate training institution, usually abroad, should be in response to nationally approved human resources policies and plans, and should aim at impact and relevance for all stakeholders involved.

C. Proposed eligible activities

7. (a) Participation in international/regional conferences, short-term training courses, training internships industry, research and educational institutions, study tours and lecture/demonstration tours
- (b) Preparation, publication and dissemination of technical documents such as manuals and monographs
- (c) Mobilization of small grants for post-graduate studies

D. Proposed award amount

8. The proposed maximum amount for a fellowship is US\$ 10,000. The amount under the UNCCD fellowship would provide tuition/training/conference fees, travel costs, daily subsistence allowance, book allowance and other allowances. For post-graduate studies, only a partial tuition fee or a small research grant would be provided. Approved fellowships would not be transferable to other programmes or institutions.

E. Eligibility

9. (a) Only nationals of UNCCD country Parties are eligible to apply.
- (b) Awards are to be made to individuals, not to institutions.
- (c) Previous UNCCD fellowship awardees would not be eligible to apply for another UNCCD fellowship within two years of receiving the first award and submitting to the secretariat a final report on the activity for which the award was made.
- (d) UNCCD staff and their families would not be eligible for fellowship awards.

¹ Final Report. Meeting of Senior Fellowship Officers of the United Nations System and Host Country Agencies, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations. November 2002, IAEA, Vienna.

F. Appraisal and programme administration

10. Applications are to be appraised by a Fellowship Selection Panel, which will meet during the COP and once during COP inter-sessional periods.

11. There are various options regarding composition of the Selection Panel and its mechanism for approval. All options would be based on a Panel which comprises individuals from developing and developed country Parties and would consider regional balance. The Chairperson of the Panel would be appointed by the COP.

12. The concept and composition of the Selection Panel, its report to the COP, its transparency and its relationship to the COP need to be carefully considered. If the decision is to create a Selection Panel composed of representative members, such as vice-presidents of the COP and vice-chairpersons of the CRIC and CST, then any "project" to create the fellowship programme will need to be discussed and approved at a COP/CRIC/CST session. An additional consideration for programme administration would be for the CST Bureau to recommend having the fellowship programme put on the permanent agenda for the CST. For example, if the priority areas of the programme were to be centred in the fields of science and technology, then it would be appropriate that the fellowships be administered under the work programme of the CST. Guidance on priority areas, selection criteria and appraisal of the programme would be reported under the relevant CST agenda item.

13. The Fellowship Selection Panel would be serviced by a fellowship secretary at G-staff level.

G. Proposed priority areas

14. Based on the goals and cross-cutting strategies identified in the UNCCD national, subregional and regional action programmes (NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs), the TPNs, and the work programme of the CST, eligible activities would aim at developing human resources, institutional capacity and professional expertise in one or more of the following areas (in no order of priority):

- (a) Improving conditions at the local level to combat desertification in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones;
- (b) Promoting efforts to prevent land degradation through sustainably managed sources;
- (c) Supporting activities to mitigate drought;
- (d) Promoting sustainable management through the promotion of agro-pastoral-forestry techniques at the local level;
- (e) Promoting increased and further processing of local community-based commodities from sustainable sources;

- (f) Improving local communities' efficiency of production and utilization of commodities and products coming from sustainable sources in drylands;
- (g) In any of the above areas (a-f), the following are relevant:
 - (i) Enhancing public relations, awareness and education;
 - (ii) Sharing information, knowledge and technology; and
 - (iii) Research and development.

H. Proposed selection criteria

15. Fellowship applications will be assessed against the following selection criteria (in no order of priority):

- (a) Consistency of the proposed activity with the programme's objective and priority areas; particular consideration will be given to those proposals focusing on field activities at the local level.
- (b) Qualification of the applicant to undertake the proposed fellowship activity;
- (c) The potential for the skills and knowledge acquired or advanced under the fellowship activity to lead to wider applications and benefits nationally and internationally;
- (d) Reasonableness of cost in relation to the proposed fellowship activity.

16. Additional consideration will be given to:

- (a) Geographic and gender balance;
- (b) Balance among the UNCCD priority areas as defined by the TPN;
- (c) Competency in the language in which the training will be given, where applicable (e.g. courses, conferences, study tours).

17. The UNCCD fellowships will be awarded mainly to nationals of developing country Parties who propose activities that are relevant to drylands. However, the UNCCD may award fellowships to nationals of developed country Parties when: (a) the activities for which the awards are made are carried out in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones and the activities tend to benefit arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid countries, and/or (b) there is evidence of technology transfer for activities to be carried out.

II. OTHER RELEVANT FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMMES

18. The following section contains a brief overview of a selected number of fellowships within the United Nations and other systems.

A. UNFCCC Fellowship Programme

19. The UNFCCC Fellowship Programme was established in 1998 to provide training opportunities in the field of climate change for young professionals from developing countries or countries with economies in transition who would not otherwise have a chance to gain international exposure. The UNFCCC Fellowship Programme is designed to help overcome the difficulties encountered by many professionals from developing country Parties in gaining international level exposure and experience in fields relating to climate change. Under the programme, a limited number of junior and senior professionals working on relevant issues in governmental and non-governmental institutional settings in the developing world are offered short-term (2-12 months' duration) fellowships at the secretariat's headquarters. The primary focus of these fellowships is the execution of a project developed in response to needs expressed by the Convention bodies and in close cooperation with secretariat staff members. The fellowships, which are awarded on a competitive basis, encompass a travel grant and monthly allowance to cover living expenses.

B. CBD Fellowship Programme

20. The CBD Fellowship Programme was initiated during the 2001-2002 biennium with the aim of offering nationals from developing countries the opportunity to gain knowledge in the area of biodiversity in order to assist their organizations and communities in protecting and promoting the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

21. The selection of fellows has reflected a regional balance in line with general United Nations practice and reflects a gender balance. Selection is based on the applicant's work experience, the relevance of this experience to the work of the CBD, including how the fellow would assist with capacity building and public awareness issues at the community level. The selection has also ensured that each fellow could work on a range of thematic and/or cross-cutting issues.

22. It is expected that at the end of the programme each fellow should:

- (a) Have a broad knowledge of international environmental instruments and mechanisms, in particular those with relevance to biodiversity, and general knowledge of the overall United Nations system;
- (b) Have a good understanding of the CBD, its objectives and work programmes as well its linkages to other issues, bodies and processes;
- (c) Be capable of giving training within his or her community and organizations in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use/development as it relates to the issues worked on;

(d) Have the tools to understand practical country-specific problems relating to biodiversity; and

(e) Be able widely to disseminate the information and knowledge gained during the Fellowship Programme.

C. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Young Fellows Programme

23. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) has developed a capacity building strategy which includes a young scientists' fellowship programme. At its September 2002 meeting in Frankfurt, Germany, the MA science panel endorsed the aims of capacity building activities in the MA. One of these aims is to enhance the capacity of individual biophysical and social scientists to carry out ecosystem assessments. The first capacity building activity was to be identification of several individuals in the early stages of their careers as recipients of a fellowship to attend working group meetings and become lead authors in the assessment. The aim of the programme was to fund 40 fellows - approximately 10 fellows per working group, in order to learn, in a similar fashion, about the process of conducting global scientific assessments.

D. United Nations - Department of Economic and Social Affairs Fellowship Programme

24. The United Nations Fellowships are a component of the organization's technical cooperation programme and are intended to respond to the needs of Member States for enhanced national skills development and training. Their purpose is:

(a) To promote strategic human resource development to help countries reach national economic and social development objectives;

(b) To assist Member States to address acute shortages in advanced professional skills;

(c) To build national capacity for development in areas that are of a high priority to Member States; and

(d) To enhance national training opportunities.

25. The United Nations - Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA) Fellowships are awarded only to candidates nominated by their respective Governments and are not, in principle, awarded for the pursuit of academic studies leading to degrees or diplomas. They are intended to give persons entrusted with functions important to the development of their countries the opportunity to broaden their professional knowledge and experience by acquainting themselves with advanced methods and techniques.

26. A particular training programme may include attendance at an academic institution where a fellowship holder may be called upon to qualify for a specific professional diploma; however, the main purpose of fellowships is to enable the holders to derive from their training the knowledge and professional competence which will enable them to participate more actively in

the economic and social development of their countries; the purpose of fellowships is also to increase holders' ability to help solve practical problems upon their return home.

III. POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF THE UNCCD FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

27. The UNCCD fellowship programme would address the fundamental concerns of human resource development and capacity building in the recipient countries. The primary benefits of implementing the UNCCD fellowship programme are the following:

(a) Support to the enhancement of technical and scientific cooperation activities for NAP implementation and project development at the local level.

(b) Assistance in the promotion of effective desertification mitigation techniques and land degradation field activities.

(c) Facilitation of manpower development, training and capacity building in the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones would be expanded into relevant fields such as agricultural sciences, animal science, anthropology, atmospheric sciences, ecology, economics, education, geography, geology, hydrology, information systems, natural resource management, plant sciences and soil science.

(d) The programme would address the need to redirect resources allocated by bilateral donors for technical assistance to human and capacity building in Africa as requested under the priority activities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

(e) The development of the UNCCD fellowship programme would fall in line with the consolidated approach on fellowship administration and management as stipulated by major United Nations conferences. It would closely follow the discussion, report requirements concerning transparency, accountability, integrity, standardized procedures and definitions as issued by UN-DESA and further outlined in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Vienna report "Meeting of Senior Fellowship Officers of the United Nations System and Host Country Agencies (November 2002)".

IV. SUSTAINABILITY AND BUDGET OF THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

28. During the inception phase of the programme a two-year commitment to funding would have to be secured. With a target goal of awarding 20-40 fellowships each year, it is anticipated that a budget of approximately US\$ 513,000 (see budget provided below) would be required for an initial two-year implementation period. This could be effectively translated into approximately 50 fellowship awards. The budget would include the salary of one GS-level fellowship officer.

29. The approach to and mode of funding would be based on a consortium of funding actors and sponsors (donor countries, universities, agencies and the private sector). An advisory group to the Executive Secretary would be established to consider among other things the linkages

between multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and private investment, other United Nations agencies' experience with fellowship programmes and the administrative implications of establishing such a programme. The advisory group would also be tasked with development of an initial strategy for securing the required budget.

30. The project will be administered by the UNCCD secretariat through voluntary contributions that would be sought from as wide a range of donors as possible. Except where specifically provided for in the budget, as for example in the case of publications and publicity, all costs of communications, bank charges on remittances and other administrative costs will be drawn from the programme support charge. The project will be reviewed before the end of its two-year duration, and may be renewed for another two years upon approval and recommendation by the CST and the COP following independent review. Until such time as appreciable increases in funding become available in the supplementary or voluntary trust funds, additional methods of funding (such as private sector partnerships and university consortiums) to cover awards, programme support and other costs for the 2006-2007 biennium would be envisaged.

Annex I**CONSOLIDATED TOTAL AND ANNUAL PROJECT BUDGET**
(United States dollars)

| | | TOTAL | YEAR 1 | YEAR 2 |
|-----|--|----------------|---------|---------|
| 10. | Project personnel | | | |
| | 14. Fellowships and training ^a | 280,000 | 140,000 | 140,000 |
| | 16. International Consultant - Project review in year 2 | 18,000 | | 18,000 |
| | 19. Component total | 298,000 | | |
| 20. | Subcontracts | | | |
| | 21. Subcontract (GS-4 level officer) | 106,000 | 53,000 | 53,000 |
| | 22. Subcontract (Publication of research reports) ^b | 30,000 | 15,000 | 15,000 |
| | 29. Component total | 136,000 | | |
| 50. | Consumable items | | | |
| | 51. Raw materials – Publicity poster and mailing costs | 10,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 |
| | 59. Component total | 10,000 | | |
| 60. | Miscellaneous | | | |
| | 63. Contingencies ^c | 10,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 |
| | 69. Component total | 10,000 | | |
| | SUBTOTAL | 454,000 | | |
| 80. | UNCCD monitoring, evaluation and administration | | | |
| | 83. UNCCD programme support costs (13%) | 59,000 | | |
| | 89. Component total | 59,000 | | |
| 100 | GRAND TOTAL | 513,000 | | |

^a Based on 28 awards per year with a mean award of US\$ 5,000 and a two-year period.

^b Selected reports and research papers only; assumes that 20% of the reports submitted are published.

^c Based on the average value of one award per annum.

Annex II

**DRAFT GENERAL GUIDELINES AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF A SAMPLE FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION**

The following represents a selected set of guidelines that will be utilized to develop the application form for the UNCCD fellowship programme and its requirements for supporting documentation.

(a) Applicants must submit with their applications two letters of recommendation and letter(s) of acceptance from participating institutions.

(b) Applicants are also requested to submit the following supporting documents. Please provide copies of all supporting documents and not the originals, as the documents submitted by applicants cannot be returned.

- i. In the case of short-term training courses and training internships: documents giving the course description and the course fees;
- ii. In the case of delivering a paper at a conference: documents giving the conference description and the conference fees, and an abstract of the paper;
- iii. In the case of study tours and lecture/demonstration tours: a detailed schedule of visits;
- iv. In the case of technical document preparation, publication and dissemination: an outline of the technical document or a draft of the document;
- v. In the case of post-graduate study: documents giving the programme description, the tuition fees and a research proposal;
- vi. For those who are non-native speakers of the language to be used in the fellowship activity: a certificate indicating proficiency in the language.

(c) Applications received after the suggested deadline will be not be forwarded to the Selection Panel which meets during a subsequent COP session or inter-sessional meeting for consideration. If an applicant is interested in having his/her application considered for a subsequent round, a new application should be submitted.

(d) Applicants should comply with the Budget Guidelines contained in the proposed application form.

(e) In the event where an applicant requires more than the maximum of US\$ 10,000 which the UNCCD would provide to carry out a proposed activity, the applicant is required to list in the budget section of the application form the other financial sources and the amount secured or to be secured from the sources; applicants should submit evidence of funding from the other financial sources, and applications without such evidence will not be considered. Applicants who indicate funding from personal or family sources need to provide satisfactory proof. Applicants should be aware that activities requiring more than US\$ 10,000 will receive additional scrutiny from the Fellowship Selection Panel.

(f) Only successful fellowship applications will be acknowledged. Receipt of applications and results of unsuccessful applications will not be acknowledged. Applicants who wish to receive acknowledgement of the receipt of their application and information on the results of the Fellowship Selection Panel should enclose two self-addressed envelopes (without stamps) with their completed application.
