



**UNITED  
NATIONS**



**Convention to Combat  
Desertification**

Distr.  
GENERAL

ICCD/COP(8)/13  
12 July 2007

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES**  
Eighth session  
Madrid, 3–14 September 2007

**Item 10 of the provisional agenda**  
**Arrangements for regional coordination units**

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**Note by the secretariat\***

*Summary*

1. By its decision 11/COP.7, the Conference of the Parties (COP) established an open-ended group to review available reports and information received from Parties and other entities and to make recommendations to the COP at its eighth session on options for cost-effective and efficient regional coordination, and in particular on how to make the best use of existing regional coordination units (RCUs) and other relevant regional and subregional entities.
2. This document contains the recommendations by the open-ended group.
3. The COP may wish to take a decision on the role of, and institutional and budgetary arrangements relating to, the RCUs at its eighth session, taking into account also relevant recommendations made in the draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

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\* The submission of this document was delayed due to the short time available between the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties.

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## **I. Background information**

1. The subject of regional coordination units (RCUs) is an item pending from the third session of the Conference of the Parties (COP). Progress was made at the sixth and seventh sessions of the COP, but a final decision on this matter is still to be taken.
2. By its decision 11/COP.7, the COP decided to establish an open-ended group to review available reports and information received from Parties and other entities and to make recommendations to the COP at its eighth session on options for cost-effective and efficient regional coordination, and in particular on how to make the best use of existing RCUs and other relevant regional and subregional entities, and to take a decision at its eighth session on the role of, and institutional and budgetary arrangements relating to, the RCUs.
3. Pursuant to paragraph 5 of the same decision, and under the guidance of the President of the COP, a meeting of the open-ended group reviewed reports and available information on this matter. The recommendations of the group are contained in the following section of this document for consideration by the COP.
4. Parties may wish to take a decision at COP 8 on arrangements for the RCUs.

## **II. Recommendations by the open-ended group**

### **A. Introduction**

5. The multisectoral and cross-cutting nature of combating desertification calls for the establishment of coordinating mechanisms to fully implement the provisions of the Convention at national, subregional and regional levels.
6. Previous discussions by the COP regarding arrangements for the RCUs acknowledged the importance of having, where appropriate, adequate back-up facilities to support the subregional and regional action programmes.
7. The open-ended group underlines the general trend in the United Nations system, including in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), towards decentralization of technical and development assistance programmes within a framework of regional cooperation based on shared needs and similar cultural and geographical circumstances – a trend that enables the UNCCD to be implemented more effectively.
8. The report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment, entitled "Delivering as One", stated that the activities of some United Nations organizations confirm the fact that decentralized offices and regional representative offices contribute to enhanced cooperation between agencies and beneficiary countries.
9. The regional implementation annexes of the Convention stress the need for regional cooperation, particularly in the context of regional action programmes (RAPs).

10. In this context, the RCUs have been recognized as one option that may assist Parties from affected developing regions in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention, including for the development and implementation of thematic programme networks. It is also acknowledged that regional coordination may vary based on the particular circumstances of each region.

### **B. Elements from previous decisions on regional coordination units**

11. The COP took a number of decisions on regional coordination units, which were taken into consideration by the open-ended group in its deliberations. The COP, inter alia:

(a) Recognized the need of affected developing country Parties and other country Parties for consistent and cost-effective support in promoting regional approaches and coordination in the implementation of the Convention (decision 11/COP.6);

(b) Noted with appreciation the efforts undertaken so far by existing RCUs to assist, inter alia, in elaborating programmes and networks in their respective regions for the implementation of RAPs (decisions 11/COP.6 and 11/COP.7);

(c) Noted also the cost-effectiveness and efficiency that could be achieved in providing assistance to affected developing countries through the location of existing RCUs in the regions (decision 11/COP.6);

(d) Noted the request of Central and Eastern European country Parties to explore the possibility of the establishment of regional coordination arrangements, inter alia an RCU (decision 11/COP.7);

(e) Recognized the potential of regional coordination in linking activities under the UNCCD with those of other regional frameworks relating to sustainable development issues, and the role that could be played by the RCUs in this regard (decision 11/COP.6);

(f) Welcomed (...) the efforts made by institutions hosting the RCUs, various country Parties and multilateral agencies to support the activities of the RCUs, and invited hosting organizations to continue supporting the running costs of the existing RCUs (decision 11/COP.7).

### **C. Regional coordination units in the framework of the draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the UNCCD**

12. The importance of coordinating efforts to ensure efficient implementation of the Convention has been acknowledged by Parties through a decision to draw up a long-term strategic framework for the UNCCD. It is expected that the draft ten-year strategic plan to be considered at COP 8 may reflect on arrangements for the RCUs. In this regard Parties may wish to take into account the following elements:

(a) The secretariat should continue to support regional coordination mechanisms with a view to facilitating the implementation of the Convention.

(b) From an institutional point of view, RCUs can be considered as part of a restructured secretariat. This may be done through decentralization of facilitation units from Headquarters to the regions;

(c) In order to promote the sustainability of the RCUs, the secretariat is requested, as soon as its staffing structure so permits, to decentralize, jointly with the Global Mechanism (GM), relevant posts to the respective RCUs, ensuring adequate financial support under the Convention;

(d) Strengthened RCUs can support the secretariat, the subsidiary bodies of the COP and the GM in efficiently servicing affected country Parties in the regions;

(e) As soon as the draft ten-year strategic plan is adopted, the medium-term plan to be developed by the secretariat may include new terms of reference and a programme of work for RCUs.

13. In view of the fact that the functions and activities of the secretariat, the subsidiary bodies of the COP, the GM and RCUs are being discussed by the Intergovernmental Intersessional Intergovernmental Working Group (IIWG), the open-ended group invited the President of the COP to transmit these recommendations to the Chair of the IIWG for consideration at the meetings of the IIWG<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In response to this invitation, the President of the COP transmitted the recommendations of the open-ended group to the Chair of the IIWG on 21 May 2007.