



**UNITED  
NATIONS**



**Convention to Combat  
Desertification**

Distr.  
GENERAL

ICCD/COP(8)/4  
13 July 2007

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES**

**Eighth session**

**Madrid, 3–14 September 2007**

**Item 11 of the provisional agenda**

**Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions  
and international organizations, institutions and agencies**

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**Note by the secretariat\***

*Summary*

Article 22, paragraph 2 (i), of the Convention requires the Conference of the Parties (COP) to promote and strengthen relationships with other relevant conventions. By its decision 12/COP.7, the COP requested the secretariat to report to COP 8 on several ongoing activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies. The present document reports on activities in which the secretariat had an active role, and those in which the secretariat participated. An activity which continues to stand out is the joint work programme with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). In addition, as attention in the climate change process turns to adaptation, an activity that is at the core of survival in dry and sub-humid lands, collaboration with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the CBD is now bound to become a cardinal activity.

Document ICCD/COP(8)/MISC.1 contains responses of Parties to the paper prepared jointly by the secretariats of the UNCCD, the CBD and the UNFCCC (FCCC/SBSTA/2004/INF.19), and submissions received by Parties and observers of success stories of field activities on synergies.

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\* The submission of this document was delayed in order to provide Parties with the most updated information on the matter, in particular the outcome of the UNFCCC workshop on climate related risks and extreme events under the Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation, Cairo, Egypt, from 18 to 20 June 2007.

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## I. Background information

1. By its decision 12/COP.7, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat to report to COP 8 on several ongoing activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions.
2. The present document reports on the latest developments in this regard. Only those activities in which the Convention secretariat had an active role, and those in which the secretariat participated are reported. An activity that continues to stand out is the Joint Work Programme (JWP) with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). However, as attention in the climate change process turns to adaptation, an activity at the core of survival in dry and sub-humid lands, collaboration with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the CBD in this regard is now bound to become a cardinal activity.
3. By its decision 12/COP.7, the COP invited Parties to review the paper prepared jointly by the secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the CBD and the UNFCCC, which is contained in document FCCC/SBSTA/2004/INF.19 entitled “options for enhanced cooperation among the three Rio conventions”, and further invited Parties to submit comments to the secretariat prior to the eighth session of the COP. These comments are compiled in document ICCD/COP(8)/MISC.1.
4. By the same decision the COP invited Parties and civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and research institutions to submit to the secretariat success stories of field activities on synergies, and requested the secretariat to prepare a compilation of the submissions received and to submit it to the COP at its eighth session. This compilation is also contained in document ICCD/COP(8)/MISC.1.

## II. Introduction

5. The strategy adopted by the secretariat towards the promotion and strengthening of synergies among the Rio Conventions and other relevant organizations continued, relying mainly on three pillars:

(a) Strengthening institutional linkages. Towards this end, the UNCCD secretariat has endeavoured to explore ways and means of strengthening the partnership and cooperation agreements that have been concluded among the secretariats of the Rio Conventions. The UNCCD secretariat continued to follow closely the sessions of the COPs to these conventions, as well as those of their subsidiary bodies. The UNCCD secretariat also participated in the workshops organized by its sister conventions, such as the UNFCCC Africa regional workshop on adaptation, held from 21 to 23 September 2006 in Accra, Ghana, as well as events organized jointly with the sister conventions, such as the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) regional synergy workshop on the biological diversity of agroecosystems within dry and sub-humid lands, held in St. Mary's, Antigua, from 20 to 23 November 2006.

(b) Testing operational options, as part of the JWP with other Rio conventions. In this respect, specific indicators of achievement of biodiversity targets are jointly being developed by the UNCCD and the CBD within the activities of the JWP.

(c) Developing common policies and strategies. In this regard, the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) met on 7 June 2007 in order to review recent events and on-going activities, and to sift the options and define mid- and long-term strategies.

6. A fourth pillar concerns supporting country-driven initiatives, but few activities were undertaken under this pillar because of a lack of resources. Efforts were, however, made to solicit funds for this activity, but to no avail to date.

### **III. Collaboration with other relevant conventions and strengthening of relationships**

#### **A. Convention on Biological Diversity**

##### **1. Status of the Joint Work Programme**

7. The JWP contains three main elements: assessments, targeted actions for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and enabling activities, and joint reporting. Each element contains sub-elements detailing joint or shared activities of the two secretariats that aim to facilitate national and local action, such as the development of assessment tools, the promotion of regional and international networks and the harmonization of reporting formats.

8. Three specific activities have been identified for immediate action:

(a) Assessment of the status and trends of biodiversity in dry and sub-humid lands and of the effectiveness of conservation measures;

(b) Identification of specific areas of value and/or under threat;

(c) Further development of indicators of the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands and its loss, for use in the assessment of status and trends.

9. In accordance with decision 12/COP.7, in which the COP invited the Executive Secretaries of the UNCCD and the CBD to strengthen the JWP, including efforts to achieve the relevant 2010 biodiversity targets, indicators for the 2010 targets have been developed. Using these indicators as a primary framework, there is a need to identify specific indicators for the JWP.

10. The eighth session of the CBD COP requested a specific document to be developed explaining priority activities to be implemented by the Parties, including supporting activities by the two secretariats, to achieve the 2010 biodiversity targets; and also requested identification of the capacity-building required to implement the above priorities, and of any major obstacles that prevent achievement of the 2010 targets. The document has then to be reviewed by the Parties of both the CBD and the UNCCD.

11. The Government of Italy has offered to organize and host a workshop for the development of this document; the workshop is planned for February 2008.

## 2. Synergy workshops and other events

12. The Regional Synergy Workshop of the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region on the biological diversity of agroecosystems within dry and sub-humid lands, held in St. Mary's, Antigua, in November 2006, enabled the countries of the region to discuss what has been achieved so far in the quest for synergy, and to share the lessons learned. The workshop also highlighted a number of constraints that have to be addressed in order to facilitate synergy. The main conclusion of the workshop was that the combined experiences of the LAC region with regard to the synergistic implementation of the UNCCD could be compressed and simplified into two primary lessons. First, there must be a clear mandate for the use of synergies in the implementation of all multilateral environment agreements (MEAs). And second, appropriate institutional arrangements and communications protocols must be developed to support the mandate for synergies. The results of the workshop were the subject of a panel discussion at CRIC 5 of the UNCCD in Buenos Aires in March 2007.

13. A joint UNCCD/CBD side event was held at CRIC 5, at which the details of the process for the development of the indicators for the JWP were outlined. This process includes events leading up to the aforementioned workshop in Italy in February 2008, as well as follow-up activities after that.

### **B. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**

14. The UNCCD and UNFCCC secretariats have continued to be actively engaged in consultations in order better to articulate the key areas of possible joint activities for the benefit of their respective conventions. Examples are highlighted below:

(a) The UNCCD secretariat made a submission to the UNFCCC negotiation process entitled "Reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries: approaches to stimulate action", based on document FCCC/CP/2005/L.2. In its submission, the UNCCD secretariat highlighted an estimation of the potential of dryland ecosystems to sequester 0.5–1.3 billion tonnes of carbon a year, in the estimated 1,048,700 km<sup>2</sup> of tropical dry forest, of which 97 per cent is at risk from one or more different threats: climate change, habitat fragmentation, fire, human population density and conversion to cropland. The underlying message of the submission is that restoration and enhancement of dryland conditions, if undertaken at a global scale, could have a major impact on global climate change patterns.

(b) The UNCCD secretariat participated in, and made a presentation on, synergies between the UNCCD and the UNFCCC, at the African Regional Workshop on Adaptation, held in Accra in September 2006.

(c) The UNCCD secretariat participated in the UNFCCC workshop on climate-related risks and extreme events, under the Nairobi Work Programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation, held in Cairo, Egypt from 18 to 20 June 2007. The topics dealt with at this workshop – particularly the contribution of traditional knowledge to understanding and managing climate-related risk, the implications of climate-related risks and impacts for sustainable development, and understanding the impacts of, and vulnerability to, climate change – are key activities of the

UNCCD process, particularly in dry and sub-humid lands. The UNCCD secretariat has therefore signed up as a full player in the Nairobi Work Programme.

15. Furthermore, the UNCCD secretariat has previously proposed a number of areas where collaboration with the UNFCCC could be beneficial, including the identification of how the process of the development of national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs) under the UNFCCC could take place in close collaboration with development of the UNCCD national action programmes (NAPs). Incidentally, the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) made an interesting presentation, at a side event on synergies, on the comparison of NAPs with NAPAs, during the twenty-sixth session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of the UNFCCC, held from 7 to 18 May 2007. In conclusion, the presentation reiterated that NAPAs processes can draw on NAP experiences in order to have an impact on policymaking and budget allocation. Another conclusion made by the presentation was that linking adaptation, land management and risk and disaster management at national level offers greater opportunity to reduce transaction costs, have coherent development objectives, and build an interdisciplinary working group for coping with global threats.

16. In general, adaptation to climate change in dry and sub-humid lands is coincidental with the implementation of the UNCCD process. A panel discussion on synergies during UNCCD CRIC 5 highlighted this fact.

17. Noting the foregoing, and taking into account the existence of various funds that either include a provision for adaptation, such as the Special Climate Change Fund, or are dedicated to adaptation, such as the Least Developed Countries Fund, and the Adaptation Fund of the Kyoto Protocol, the UNCCD secretariat intends to develop three programmes to tap into these funds for the implementation of those aspects of NAPs relating to adaptation. This will be subject to the availability of supplementary funding.

### **C. Joint Liaison Group**

18. The Executive Secretaries of the three conventions met for the fifth meeting of the Joint Liaison Group on 7 June 2007 in Bonn, Germany.

19. At the policy level, consideration of the paper on “options for enhanced cooperation among the three Rio conventions” continued.

20. In terms of the next steps for collaboration among the Rio Conventions, the issues of adaptation and the reduction of emissions from deforestation were identified as priority topics for this meeting.

### **D. Convention on Migratory Species**

21. Pursuant to the memorandum of understanding (MoU) that was signed between the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the UNCCD on 2 September 2003, which outlines modalities for their cooperation and highlights key areas for developing joint initiatives, collaboration between the UNCCD secretariat and CMS/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has received a major boost. The two institutions will collaborate on a cross-

border programme on the conservation and sustainable management of Saharan biodiversity and ecosystems in Termit, Niger, and Egueï, Chad, specifically through activities centring on conserving the approximately 200 surviving antelope.

22. The activities of this effort will result in biodiversity of the Niger–Chad cross-border area's being well conserved through involving pastoral communities in the conservation process. Local communities will be involved in demonstrating that the rehabilitation of wildlife can have a considerable impact on development and on socio-economic conditions.

23. Cooperation will focus on the organization of collaborative joint activities, as specified by article 3 of the MoU, as well as fostering collaboration, at the country level, among the focal points of the conventions and agreements. This is in keeping with article 3 of the MoU, which identifies pilot projects at the regional and national levels as the best means of defining, in a practical manner, the type of collaboration and interaction that should happen between Parties.

#### **IV. Collaboration with other relevant international organizations and institutions and strengthening of relationships**

##### **A. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**

24. The UNCCD secretariat participated, alongside the UNFCCC, CBD and World Heritage Centre (WHC), in the Working Group Meeting on Climate Change and World Heritage Sites, which was held in Paris from 5 to 6 February 2007. The input of the UNCCD secretariat was mainly on issues relating to the development of monitoring and research into the effects of desertification on cultural and natural heritage sites. It is expected that this collaboration will lead subsequently to the development of best practices for adaptation measures.

25. The UNCCD secretariat will also be expected to engage in activities to increase awareness of the onslaught of desertification at World Heritage properties, such as the Chinguetti Mosque (Mauritania) and Timbuktu (Mali), through awareness-raising activities and the development of outreach material.

26. The promotion of sustainable livelihoods at other World Heritage sites in general, while preserving these sites, will be the main activity of collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the future. A case in point is a pipeline project entitled "Fire Management and Post-Fire Restoration with Local Community Collaboration in West Africa", which will involve UNESCO, the UNCCD and the CBD. The project particularly targets those wildland fires that threaten world heritage sites. It builds on the Viterbo Workshop recommendation regarding the potential for a synergistic response to the threat to land degradation posed by wildland fire.

##### **B. Second international symposium on desertification and migration**

27. The first international symposium on desertification and migration was held in Almería, Spain, in 1994, bringing together a group of experts with a two-pronged objective: to revise the current state of knowledge and to foster the debate over migration processes and their

environmental background; and to draw the attention of both the scientific community and decision makers to the strategic and global nature of the relations between environmental degradation, desertification and demographic displacement, as well as to their trends and possible actions to be carried out before the conditions become irreversible.

28. Twelve years after this meeting, and in order to commemorate the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD), the Spanish Government, the Andalusian Authorities and the University of Almeria, as well as the secretariat of the UNCCD, planned the second international symposium in order to highlight the important existing links between land degradation, poverty and one of the most evident consequences of desertification: migration.

29. In cooperation with partners such as the United Nations University Institute for Environmental and Human Security (UNU-EHS); the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning (ISDR-PPEW); the International Organization for Migration (IOM); the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); and the International Labour Organization (ILO), the UNCCD secretariat pledged to give greater attention to the phenomenon of desertification-induced migration at the local, regional and global levels, by participating in the Almeria process on reducing involuntary desertification-induced migration (see <[www.sidym2006.org/eng/eng\\_doc\\_interes.asp](http://www.sidym2006.org/eng/eng_doc_interes.asp)>). The UNCCD secretariat has requested extra budgetary resources in order to initiate programmes in this regard. Activities will include assessment of the differences between temporary flight and permanent migration, and between internally displaced persons and cross-boundary and transcontinental migrations.

### **C. United Nations Forum on Forests, Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and Low Forest Cover Countries**

30. By its decision 12/COP.7, the COP of the UNCCD requested the Executive Secretary to pursue consultations and closer collaboration with other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and other interested organizations with a view to fostering joint initiatives relating to sustainable forest management. It invited Parties and interested organizations to provide financial and technical support to such joint initiatives.

31. Consistent with that mandate, and resources permitting, the UNCCD secretariat has attended meetings of the CPF and has followed its interaction with its members.

32. The secretariat has also participated in the meetings of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) whose seventh session adopted a non-legally-binding instrument on all types of forests and also the forum's multi-year programme of work.

33. In all these meetings, the secretariat advocated the strengthening of the capacity of low forest cover countries (LFCCs) to combat desertification, land degradation and deforestation. In its advocacy role, the secretariat underlined the fact that forests in LFCCs are poorly known and protected and may require different strategies for forest conservation and protected area management from those countries with a large forest estate.

#### **D. Common Fund for Commodities**

34. Cooperation under the MoU which was formalized in February 2005 between the UNCCD secretariat and the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) has resulted in the preparation of a joint publication entitled *Atlas of Dryland Commodities*. This publication will be directed at commodity awareness-raising, with special emphasis on those crops that are traded as commodities and serve as tools to combat desertification. Furthermore, the secretariat continues to be a member of the steering committee for a CFC project on shea butter production in sub-Saharan Africa. The two entities have developed a CFC project on developing gum arabic production and a UNCCD project on using gum-producing acacias in dryland rehabilitation, with the aim of building links and complementarity between the two projects. A consultant has been recruited, and will commence his work shortly. The publication will be ready by the end of 2007.

#### **E. United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction**

35. Following recommendations relating to wildland fire resulting from the Viterbo Workshop on Forest and Forest Ecosystems (April 2004), the UNCCD secretariat will continue to participate as a cooperating member in the Global Wildland Fire Advisory Group under the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR). To recap, the objective of the Advisory Group is to evaluate the current status of wildland fires globally and to review the consultations of the Regional Wildland Fire Networks together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Forestry Department, the the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the secretariats of the UNFF, the UN-ISDR, the ISDR Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning, the UNU and the Global Wildland Fire Monitoring Centre at the University of Freiburg, Germany. As mentioned in section IV.A above, the UNCCD will participate in the development of a West Africa node for the global regional fire network and the facilitation of opportunities for in-country training on community-based fire management.

### **V. Conclusions and recommendations**

36. The COP may wish:

(a) To reiterate that institutional linkages continue to be strengthened among the MEAs, thereby ensuring synergy in the implementation of their mandates. These linkages should also be emphasized at the country level, where Parties are called upon to ensure that the focal points of the respective MEAs coordinate their work in a more systematic manner, and that the donors are fully engaged in this effort;

(b) To encourage Parties to continue to render their support to the JWP with the CBD in its endeavour to achieve the 2010 biodiversity targets, and in the development of specific indicators for the JWP that could be used to compile information on the status and trends of biodiversity in dry and sub-humid lands, and for identification of lands of particular value;

(c) To encourage Parties to endorse the effort towards capacity-building at the national level, particularly aimed at building capacity to design programmes that recognize the synergy between NAPs and NAPAs, as well as with other adaptation activities. It is

recommended that this training include thorough knowledge of the requirements for tapping into the various adaptation funds that have been established under the auspices of the UNFCCC. This would be in keeping with decision 12/COP.7, paragraph 7. It would also be in keeping with the Ouagadougou Declaration, which calls for synergistic implementation of NAPs and NAPAs, which was issued at the recent meeting of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN), held from 24 to 25 April 2007, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso;

(d) To recommend the establishment of mechanisms, at the national level, which will bring the three Rio Conventions together to combine their strengths in the light of their complementary nature in order to obtain increased financial resources;

(e) To recommend that affected developing countries, particularly those in Africa, be assisted to access both new and additional financial resources through complementarities with all other relevant MEAs, in order to successfully address and reverse land degradation;

(f) To encourage country Parties to implement activities relating to the Almeria Statement on reducing involuntary desertification-induced migration.

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