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Follow-up to the Joint Inspection Unit report and strategy development
to foster the implementation of the Convention

Follow-up to the Joint Inspection Unit report and strategy development to foster the implementation of the Convention

Note by the secretariat*

Summary

1. The present document summarizes the various deliberations of the Conference of the Parties (COP) which led to the establishment of the Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG). It also gives full details of its membership, terms of reference, expected output, assistance received by external consultants and the proceedings of the four meetings of the IIWG.
2. The final documentary output of the IIWG, requested by decision 3/COP.7, is contained in document ICCD/COP(8)/10/Add.1 and Add.2. In addition, a synthesis of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) situational analysis conducted as background to the formulation of the draft strategic plan is presented in document ICCD/COP(8)/INF.5.
3. The draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) as contained in document ICCD/COP(8)/10/Add.2 is submitted to the eighth session of the COP for adoption.

¹ Unofficial copy for information purposes only.

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

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I. Background information

1. By decision 23/COP.6, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided that a comprehensive review of the activities of the secretariat, as defined in article 23, paragraph 2, of the Convention, in the relevant articles of the regional implementation annexes, and in the relevant decisions of the COP, will take place at the seventh session of the COP (COP 7). By decision 29/COP.6, the COP included this item in its programme of work for the seventh session. In order to assist this process, the COP requested the Bureau of COP 6 to develop terms of reference, by 1 June 2004, for the comprehensive review of the activities of the secretariat to be undertaken by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations. In paragraph 19 of the same decision, the COP determined the basis for these terms of reference.

2. The terms of reference of the review were developed by the Bureau of COP 6 in consultation with the JIU. The resulting JIU report was submitted to COP 7, held in Nairobi in October 2005. This review focused on a number of issues including the activities of the secretariat as mandated by the Convention, the evolving role of the secretariat, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in the context of the three Rio Conventions, and specific issues in planning, programming and budgeting.

3. At COP 7, the Parties to the Convention adopted decision 3/COP.7 by which they decided to establish an Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) for the purpose of reviewing the report of the JIU in full. This Group was further requested to develop a ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention by addressing, inter alia, the recommendations of the JIU report.

4. Decision 3/COP.7 spells out in detail the process for organizing and launching the work of the IIWG, including among other things the composition of the Group, the development of its terms of reference and the channelling of views from all Parties. The decision further directs the Group to complete its work by 1 June 2007, with a view to submitting its conclusion to the eighth session of the COP.

5. The Group consisted of 18 members, comprising the President of COP 7, the chairs of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), and three members of each of the five regional groups, as per the provisions of paragraph 5 of decision 3/COP.7.

6. In line with decision 3/COP.7, the Bureau of the COP prepared the terms of reference of the IIWG. These terms stated that the main documentary output of the IIWG would include:

(a) A report, based on the IIWG's review of the JIU report, including how best to address the recommendations therein;

(b) A draft ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the UNCCD.

II. Proceedings of the meetings of the Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group

7. The terms of reference of the IIWG mentioned that three or four IIWG meetings should be convened, making use wherever possible of Convention-related meetings and/or according to the availability of resources for which the secretariat was endeavouring to mobilize voluntary contributions. In line with this specification, four IIWG meetings were held, two in 2006 and a further two in 2007.

8. At its first meeting, in May 2006 in Bonn, Germany, the IIWG considered its programme of work. Bearing in mind the scope of its tasks on the one hand, and the limited time available for concluding its work on the other, the Group decided to seek external assistance, subject to the availability of resources.

9. At its second meeting, in July 2006 in Bonn, the IIWG further specified that it would need the assistance of a core consultancy team, consisting of at least two consultants. In addition, the Group considered that short-term assignments would be given to selected consultants for preparing papers on specific technical matters relevant to the development of the strategic plan and framework. As a follow-up, a core consultancy team consisting of a non-governmental organization (NGO) and an independent expert² were recruited by Denmark at the beginning of November 2006. This consultancy team serviced the IIWG and assisted it in drafting its strategic plan and framework, and in the review of the JIU report. In addition, short-term assignments on specific technical matters relating to the strategic plan were given to other consultants. Several technical papers were formulated with additional financial support from the European Commission, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Germany, and were transmitted to the IIWG for consideration. Switzerland provided resources for the secretariat to support the process.

10. An inception meeting took place on 10–11 November 2006 in Montreal, Canada, during which the Chair of the IIWG gave the core consultancy team directions on how to compile its response to the JIU report based on the work of the first two IIWG meetings.

11. At the request of the Chair of the IIWG, the consultants submitted to the Chair on 8 December 2006 an inception report which proposed an approach to presenting the IIWG's consideration of the recommendations contained in the JIU report. In the preparation of their inception report, the consultants fully considered the synthesis of comments on the JIU report prepared for the IIWG. In reviewing the JIU report, the consultants took note of actions already taken by the Executive Secretary, who had already accepted and acted upon several JIU recommendations. The consultancy team also took note of comments made by Parties and of areas where more discussion among IIWG members was warranted. Lastly, the consultants indicated that some recommendations would require additional technical work.

12. The inception report was circulated by the Chair to IIWG members and comments received were forwarded to the consultants for due consideration in the production of the next

² Unisféra International Centre (Unisféra), Canada, and Integrated Environmental Consultants Namibia (IECN), Namibia.

draft ten-year strategic plan and framework, which was submitted to the Chair on 5 February 2007. One member of the core consultancy team then conducted technical consultations at the secretariat on 12–13 February 2007.

13. A version of the working draft of the strategic plan readjusted in the light of the IIWG members' comments was circulated during CRIC 5 for information (ICCD/CRIC(5)/INF.6). Participants at CRIC 5 were invited to share their views on the draft strategic plan with the consultants, the Chair of the IIWG and IIWG members present at the CRIC, and/or in writing to the Chair. Interactions with various stakeholders present at CRIC 5 (Parties, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), the secretariat of the UNCCD and the Global Mechanism among others), including through a side event, were organized at the margins of the session. The Chair of the IIWG also made a presentation to the CRIC on the status of the IIWG process.

14. On 6 April 2007, after due consideration of all comments received from Parties and stakeholders, the consultants submitted to the Chair of the IIWG a revised draft of the "Ten-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance Implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)". The draft was circulated for comment by the Parties through IIWG's regional representatives, and was discussed by the IIWG at its third meeting, held on 26–28 April 2007 in Windhoek, Namibia, together with comments received.

15. On 11 May 2007, based on the discussions of the IIWG at its third meeting, the consultants submitted a revised draft of the strategic plan for further consultation by and through the IIWG regional representatives. This draft, and the comments received on it, was discussed by the IIWG at its fourth meeting held on 29–31 May 2007 in Geneva, Switzerland.

16. During the last two meetings, the IIWG undertook a systematic review of the draft strategic plan and of the proposed JIU response. The final documentary output of the IIWG requested by decision 3/COP.7, is contained in documents ICCD/COP(8)/10/Add.1 and Add.2. A text on tentative indicators for operational objectives prepared by the IIWG Chair is annexed to the draft strategic plan; however, the proposed annex is not a consensus document and does not, therefore, necessarily reflect the views of all IIWG members. In addition, a synthesis of the UNCCD situational analysis conducted as background to the formulation of the draft strategic plan is presented in document ICCD/COP(8)/INF 5.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

17. The COP may wish to adopt the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention contained in document ICCD/COP(8)/10/Add.2, and to provide guidance on its implementation.
