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**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES**  
**Committee on Science and Technology**  
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**Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda**  
**Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology**  
**Final report of the Group of Experts**

**Report of the fifth meeting of the Group of Experts  
of the Committee on Science and Technology**

**Note by the secretariat\***

*Summary*

The Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) held a meeting with the Group of Experts (GoE), accompanied by the UNCCD secretariat, on 23 and 24 April 2007 at the United Nations Campus in Bonn, Germany. Pursuant to the work programme of the GoE, as approved by the Conference of the Parties (COP) by its decision 15/COP.6, the members of the GoE presented reports of their work, upon which they received comments and suggestions that served to enrich the documents further. These comments covered methodology, form, content, scope and orientation matters, among others. It was agreed that final draft documents be approved as amended, and transmitted to the CST for consideration during its eighth session. The coordinator of the GoE and the leaders of the various task forces will make introductory remarks on the documents during the CST session at COP 8.

\* 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. Introduction

1. The Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) held a meeting with the Group of Experts (GoE) on 23 and 24 April 2007 in Bonn, Germany. The list of participants is contained in the annex.
2. At the opening session, a representative of the secretariat thanked the participants for the work that they had put into the preparation of the draft documents for the meeting, pointing out that the final reports would be submitted to the CST during the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8) pursuant to relevant COP decisions.
3. The Chair of the CST noted that several challenges were posed regarding the work of both the CST and GoE. The newly appointed Facilitator of the GoE indicated that important decisions were to be made regarding issues on the agenda of the meeting, including the reorganization of the GoE. He submitted the draft agenda and programme for the meeting, which was adopted.
4. The former Facilitator of the GoE made introductory remarks regarding the recent work of the group. He noted that the presence and active participation of more than half of the active members of the GoE at COP 7 was widely acknowledged, and that the participation reflected well on the GoE as a whole, and certainly on the CST. He added that in 2006 some members participated in several events convened to celebrate the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD). Other events not officially associated with IYDD also had impressive participation by GoE members.
5. The former Facilitator reported that the GoE had produced a synthesis of the national reports submitted by country Parties to the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 5), which was presented at CRIC 5.
6. Finally, the former Facilitator indicated that members of the GoE publish prolifically in peer-reviewed and other journals. Although they usually represent themselves and their host institutions, the members often refer to the Convention and the CST, and reflect well on it. He concluded that members of the GoE have done quite well and have been remarkably productive despite of a lack of enabling resources.

## II. Presentation of the work programme of the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology and the Group of Experts

7. The secretariat presented the work programme arising from COP 7 and the expected submissions to COP 8, making reference to all the tasks assigned to the CST and indicating the level of accomplishment of each. The outcome of COP 7 had translated into an increased workload for the CST and its GoE, and the tasks assigned to these bodies at COP include the following:

- (a) The CST was requested to advance progress in standardization of systems and data and information for monitoring land degradation and desertification, and to assist in

establishing standardized formats for biophysical and socio-economic indicators to be used in the formulation of country profiles (decision 8/COP.7);

(b) To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, the mandate of the GoE was extended until COP 8, and the Group was requested to continue its priority activities as contained in its work programme (decision 15/COP.7);

(c) The Bureau of the CST was requested to review the functions and work of GoE and report to the COP at its eighth session, and to prepare revised procedures for renewal of the GoE membership, for consideration at COP 8 (decision 15/COP.7);

(d) The CST was requested to consider establishing the nature and need for a UNCCD fellowship programme (decision 15/COP.7);

(e) The secretariat was requested to facilitate the assimilation and development of regional or country-specific benchmarks and indicators (decision 17/COP.7);

(f) The GoE was requested to develop guidelines on utilizing benchmarks and indicators in the preparation of national reports and on the inclusion of benchmarks and indicators in country profiles (decision 17/COP.7);

(g) The GoE was requested to take into consideration all relevant benchmark and indicator initiatives; and to give special attention to participatory and integrated approaches to benchmark and indicator systems for monitoring and assessment of socio-economic and biophysical aspects of desertification, and to report on this work at COP 8 (decision 17/COP.7);

(h) The GoE was requested to carry out its work programme on early warning systems by integrating relevant benchmarks and indicators and monitoring and assessment components (decision 18/COP.7);

(i) On the programme of work of the CST, the issue of the effects of climatic variations and human activities on land degradation was identified as the priority theme for the next session of the CST. All Parties and accredited organizations were invited to provide reports on this theme and transmit them to the secretariat at least by six months before COP 8. The CST Bureau was requested to select three submissions for presentation at COP 8 (decision 20/COP.7);

(j) The secretariat and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) were requested to organize an international workshop on climate and land degradation (decision 20/COP.7);

(k) Work on benchmarks and indicators was identified as the most urgent activity for the CST to undertake in the next two years (decision 20/COP.7);

(l) The CST was requested to pay particular attention to meeting the knowledge needs of African country Parties, including local communities, to combat desertification and poverty and to manage land sustainably by applying a mixture of traditional knowledge and modern technology, including information technology (decision 1/COP.7);

(m) The CST was requested to consult with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP) and implementing and executing agencies, to facilitate coherence and consistency in the elaboration of a compendium of benchmarking approaches for sustainable land management; to support the standardization of UNCCD relevant benchmarks; and to strengthen related information systems and processes that should devolve to and assist African country Parties in monitoring the implementation of the Convention (decision 1/COP.7);

(n) The CST was requested to continue efforts, with the support of the international community, for promoting benchmarks and indicators, which should result in quantified, time-bound and costed targets relating to combating land degradation and desertification in a long-term perspective (decision 4/COP.7);

(o) The secretariat was requested to establish an e-mail network to facilitate distribution among the experts on the roster of independent experts of information on the activities of the CST and GoE, on the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD) and on progress made in the implementation of the Convention (decision 13/COP.7).

### III. Presentation of draft documents

8. Members of the GoE and CST Bureau presented drafts of document they had worked on pursuant to their work programme. The documents listed below were presented and discussed.

(a) Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology:

- (i) Final report of the Group of Experts (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2);
- (ii) Benchmarks and indicators (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.1);
- (iii) Communication strategy: development of a mechanism for an interactive and thematic data/metadata network (THEMANET) (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.2);
- (iv) Developing an integrative assessment methodology for poverty and land degradation (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.3);
- (v) Conservation and rehabilitation of degraded lands: case studies – India (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.5);
- (vi) Effective methodologies for the assessment of desertification at the global, regional and local levels, so that the Convention can be implemented in consultation and interaction with other related ongoing efforts (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.6);
- (vii) Perceived gaps between biophysical, socio-economic and cultural knowledge and combating desertification (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.7);
- (viii) Early warning systems for preventing desertification (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.8);
- (ix) Report and proposal on the evaluation of guidelines to update the *World Atlas of Desertification* (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/2/Add.9);

- (x) Analysis by the Group of Experts of the reports submitted by Parties to the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/3).

(b) Report of the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology:

- (i) Summary of activities of the CST Bureau during the intersessional period (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/4);
- (ii) Establishing a need for a fellowship programme taking into account national capacity self-assessment (NCSA) reports and existing fellowship programmes (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/5);
- (iii) Review of the functions and the work of the Group of Experts, as well as procedures for the renewal of their membership (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/6).

(c) Programme of work of the Committee on Science and Technology:

Priority theme for the biennium 2006–2007. The effects of climatic variations and human activity on land degradation: assessment, field experience gained, and integration of mitigation and adaptation practices for livelihood improvement (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/7 and ICCD/COP(8)/CST/MISC.1).

(d) Report on progress of the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) project:

Report on progress of the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands project (ICCD/COP(8)/CST/9).

9. Presenters received comments and suggestions that served to enrich the documents further. These comments covered methodology, form, contents, scope and orientation matters, among others. It was agreed that final draft documents should be approved as amended, and transmitted to the CST for consideration during its eighth session. The documents would conform to the United Nations editorial guidelines.

#### **IV. Other matters and closure of meeting**

10. A video presentation on desertification in Morocco was given.

11. A short presentation on the European Space Agency DesertWatch project was also given, illustrating the methodology and results achieved in Italy, Portugal and Turkey on the use of remote sensing and models to develop indicators at regional and country scale.

12. A presentation was further given on the ongoing work of the Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) that is working on a long-term strategy for the UNCCD, and also the Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) on reporting. The meeting was informed that the Chair of the CST has been actively involved in the work of these two groups, as mandated by COP decisions, pointing out that the outcome of the tasks of these two groups will be submitted to the COP.

13. The secretariat reported on the other issues on the CST work programme, referring to the CST priority theme and the selection of three representative submissions to be made by the CST Bureau; the WMO/UNCCD international workshop on climate and land degradation held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, in December 2006; synergy with other conventions; and progress on the LADA project.

14. Closing remarks were made by the Chair of the CST, the Facilitator of the GoE and a representative of the UNCCD secretariat.

## **V. Recommendations**

15. The CST may wish to provide further guidance on the work of the GoE on the basis of its review of the reports submitted and the outcomes of the AHWG and of the IIWG.

Annex

**Participants**

Mr. Blujdea, Viorel (Chair of the CST) (Romania)  
Professor Dr. Badraoui, Mohamed (Vice-Chair) (Morocco)  
Mr. Norbu, Chencho (Vice-Chair) (Bhutan)  
Dr. Townley-Smith, Lawrence (Vice-Chair) (Canada)  
Ms. Vargas, Nara Mirei (Vice-Chair/Rapporteur) (Republic de Panama)

Professor Dr. Abraham, Elena Maria (Argentina)  
Professor Akpagana, Koffi (Togo)  
Professor Dr. Castillo, Victor M. (Spain)  
Dr. Gustavo J., Febles Pérez (Cuba)  
Professor Dr. Hjort af Ornas, Anders (Sweden)  
Professor León, Alejandro (Chile)  
Dr. Mouat, David A. (United States of America)  
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