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**The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)
Report on the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of
the Convention (2008–2018)**

**The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of
the Convention (2008–2018)**

Report by the Executive Secretary on the implementation of The Strategy*

Summary

By its decision 3/COP.8, the Conference of the Parties (COP), at its eighth session, adopted a 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (referred to as “The Strategy”). The present document contains the report by the Executive Secretary to COP 9 on the implementation of The Strategy as requested by the Parties in the aforementioned decision.

According to The Strategy, Parties have a lead role in delivering all its objectives and outcomes. First reports of Parties and other stakeholders are expected to be available during the biennium 2010–2011. In this regard, the present document focuses on steps taken by the Convention bodies and institutions to support Parties in implementing The Strategy. The corporate review process provides implementation support to Parties in such key areas as development of the reporting and review system, communication strategy, coordination mechanisms in the context of the regional implementation annexes and alignment of action programmes.

* The submission of this document was delayed in order to provide Parties with the latest available information.

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I. Background

1. By its decision 3/COP.8¹, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) adopted a 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (referred to as “The Strategy”). The vision of the Parties is set out in The Strategy which states that “the aim for the future is to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.” The Strategy defines four strategic objectives to guide the actions of all UNCCD stakeholders and partners towards achieving the aforementioned vision:

- (a) To improve the living conditions of affected populations;
- (b) To improve the condition of affected ecosystems;
- (c) To generate global benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD;
- (d) To mobilize resources to support implementation of the Convention through building effective partnerships between national and international actors.

2. The Strategy further states that the mission of the UNCCD is “to provide a global framework to support the development and implementation of national and regional policies, programmes and measures to prevent, control and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought through scientific and technological excellence, raising public awareness, standard setting, advocacy and resource mobilization, thereby contributing to poverty reduction.” Furthermore, it presents five operational objectives to guide the actions of all UNCCD stakeholders and partners in the short and medium term (3–5 years), with a view to supporting the attainment of the vision and strategic objectives. These operational objectives are the following:

(a) Advocacy, awareness raising and education: to actively influence relevant international, national and local processes and actors in adequately addressing desertification/land degradation and drought-related issues;

(b) Policy framework: to support the creation of enabling environments for promoting solutions to combat desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought;

(c) Science, technology and knowledge: to become a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought;

(d) Capacity-building: to identify and address capacity-building needs to prevent and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought;

¹ Decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its eighth session are contained in document ICCD/COP(8)/16/Add.1.

(e) Financing and technology transfer: to mobilize and improve the targeting and coordination of national, bilateral and multilateral financial and technological resources in order to increase their impact and effectiveness.

3. For each operational objective, a group of outcomes is defined, which represent the short- and medium-term effects intended by the operational objectives.

4. In addition to setting the objectives, The Strategy contains a framework that presents the roles and responsibilities of the UNCCD institutions, bodies, partners and stakeholders in meeting them.

5. Also by its decision 3/COP.8, the Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary to report to COP 9 on the implementation of The Strategy; this report is contained in the present document.

II. Implementing The Strategy: introduction

6. The Strategy seeks to enhance the implementation process of the Convention in a comprehensive manner that addresses the interaction between people and ecosystems, building on the provisions of the Convention. The focus on desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) responds to the diverse challenges of scarcity of natural resources in the various conditions of the Convention's regional implementation annexes. The Strategy as a framework for implementation enables an explicit recognition of global benefits as a result of measures taken, regardless of whether such measures have targeted causes of desertification, dryland ecosystems, specific geographical areas or any other aspect of the Convention.

7. According to The Strategy, Parties have a lead role in delivering all its objectives and outcomes. In order to monitor progress, a reporting and monitoring system is being developed for the consideration of Parties, involving impact indicators for the strategic objectives and performance indicators for the operational objectives. Regarding the operational objectives, it is expected that first reports of Parties and other stakeholders will be available during the biennium 2010–2011. First reports on the strategic objectives are expected to be available during the following biennium together with information on operational objectives. In this regard, the present document focuses on steps taken by the Convention bodies and institutions in supporting Parties to implement The Strategy.

8. The first biennium, 2008–2009, is largely characterized by setting the scene for a successful implementation of The Strategy. An important issue in this regard is the development of the reporting and monitoring system that includes the newly adopted terms of reference of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC). Another such issue is the corporate review (or reform) process, that involves the move by Convention bodies and institutions to results-based management (RBM) and related programming and budgeting as well as to the reshaping of the operation of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST). Furthermore, several specific issues, which derive from The Strategy and influence its implementation from different perspectives, are to be put before the Parties at COP 9 for their consideration. These issues include the regional coordination mechanisms, the participation of

civil society organizations (CSOs) in UNCCD processes, the comprehensive communication strategy (CCS), and the alignment of action programmes with The Strategy.

9. Considering that the above-mentioned issues relating to the implementation of The Strategy are presented in detail in other documents submitted to the COP, the CST and the CRIC, the present report aims at providing only an overview of their salient aspects. The primary purpose of this document is therefore to provide a brief but comprehensive outline of progress so far and thereby to facilitate Parties' understanding of the overall process of implementing The Strategy, including the first step of establishing "the enabling environment" during the first biennium. As information on Parties' progress in implementing The Strategy becomes available, the nature of this report will change to become a more substantive record.

III. Reviewing achievements under strategic objectives

10. During the biennium 2008–2009, major steps have been taken to develop tools and approaches, particularly the impact indicators, to measure progress in meeting the four strategic objectives of The Strategy. Similar progress has been made in measuring performance and investment flows and regarding proposals for collecting and disseminating best practices.

11. With reference to impact indicators, the COP, by its decision 3/COP 8, requested the CST to provide advice on how best to measure progress on strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of The Strategy. In response, the CST implemented a consultative process to identify and recommend a minimum set of impact indicators that could be used both by affected country Parties and globally to measure achievement of the three strategic objectives. Through that process, a minimum set of 11 impact indicators was identified. These indicators are considered to be measurable, reliable, specific and applicable at the national and global levels, and cost-effective. In order to facilitate their use by Parties, information on baselines, targets, tracking frequencies, the data and information requirements and potential sources for such data, as well as an assessment of related capacity-building needs of Parties, has also been prepared. Further work in supporting the use of the indicators for the first reporting cycle is expected to take place after COP 9.

12. The minimum set of impact indicators is not considered exclusive; rather its main aim is to allow for a measure of comparison and to facilitate sharing of information. Parties with the capacity to do so are encouraged to use other indicators as long as these fit into the underlying logic of measuring the impact of activities carried out within the ambit of the UNCCD on affected populations, their ecosystems and the global community at large through the generation of global benefits. Detailed information on the development of impact indicators for strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 is contained in document ICCD/COP(9)/CST/4.

13. With regard to strategic objective 4, Parties at CRIC 7 highlighted the importance of launching intergovernmental exchanges on how to approach the achievement of this objective and requested the secretariat to initiate action together with the Global Mechanism (GM) on this matter. A draft set of impact indicators was subsequently developed by the two institutions,

taking into account advice provided by the inter-agency task force on reporting (IATF)² and guidance received from the bureaux of the CST and the CRIC.

14. The basis of the proposed impact indicator set for strategic objective 4 is the understanding of this objective as a reflection, or assumption, of institutional policy and the financial weaknesses that constrain the mobilization of resources for UNCCD implementation. In this regard, measuring progress towards this objective translates into information on whether removal of any structural impediments has taken place, focusing on two major components: “mobilization of resources” and “effective partnerships”. Detailed information on the development of impact indicators for strategic objective 4 is contained in document ICCD/CRIC(8)/5/Add.7.

15. Once adopted by the COP, the impact indicators would be used by Parties to measure and report on progress in meeting the strategic objectives, starting in 2012. With regard to strategic objective 4, and taking into consideration the existing overlap with operational objective 5 on financing issues, a selected number of indicators derived from strategic objective 4 will also be used to complement information received from Parties for the assessment of implementation undertaken every two years. Results achieved in this respect will strengthen the capacities of national environmental information systems to monitor the state of ecosystems and human well-being.

IV. Reviewing achievements under operational objectives

16. During the biennium 2008–2009, draft performance indicators have been prepared to measure progress in meeting the operational objectives of The Strategy.

17. At COP 8, Parties and the affected country Parties within the framework of the regional implementation annexes of the Convention were invited to develop nationally and regionally relevant indicators for the implementation of The Strategy in the context of the development of new reporting guidelines. At CRIC 7, Parties agreed that a limited set of indicators should be established and integrated into a simple and efficient system for reviewing the implementation of implementing The Strategy.

18. In line with deliberations at CRIC 7, a set of 18 consolidated performance indicators are to be presented to COP 9 through CRIC 8. These indicators would be the basis for future CRIC assessments of implementation in meeting the operational objectives, covering all stakeholders in the Convention process. Detailed information on the proposed performance indicators for measuring progress in meeting the operational objectives is contained in document ICCD/CRIC(8)/5/Add.1.

19. In pursuit of a common understanding of the process and of the implementation modalities by all reporting entities, the performance indicators are complemented by both a draft

² Pursuant to decision 8/COP.8, this task force was established to assist the UNCCD secretariat in reviewing the reporting principles and guidelines. The IATF is comprised of representatives of the eight organizations, in addition to the GM and the secretariat; a representative of the CST is also a member of the task force.

methodology to guide Parties in their use and a glossary clarifying the terminology and definitions of indicators. Information on these issues is contained in documents ICCD/CRIC(8)/5/Add.2 and Add.3.

V. Corporate review process

20. Through the adoption of The Strategy, Parties guided the Convention process towards a more focused and results-oriented approach, involving a review of policy orientation and the functioning of the Convention institutions and bodies. Related COP decisions have also influenced the planning and presentation of the Convention budget.

21. By decision 3/COP.8, Parties stated that planning and budget cycles would involve the drafting of multi-year (four-year) workplans for the CRIC, the CST, the GM and the secretariat according to results-based management (RBM) principles. These workplans would be presented to the COP for adoption and updated for each COP to cover two subsequent intersessional periods. In addition, biennial costed work programmes would be prepared for the above-mentioned Convention institutions and bodies.

22. During the biennium 2008–2009, which for the Convention institutions and bodies represented a transition phase to RBM, the planning of work was carried out in line with the guidance of the Parties: multi-year workplans for 2008–2011 and costed two-year work programmes for 2008–2009 were drafted as pilot exercises, following an RBM approach, for the CRIC, the CST, the GM and the secretariat. These documents were presented to Parties at CRIC 7, and on the basis of the feedback received, the methodological approach and the substantive orientation were both revised. After CRIC 7, the budgetary aspects of RBM were also integrated into the planning process. Following the thus advanced RBM approach, the workplans for 2010–2013 and corresponding costed work programmes for 2010–2011 of the CRIC, the CST, the GM and the secretariat are to be submitted to the COP at its ninth session (COP 9). Also a two-year joint work programme (JWP) for the GM and the secretariat is to be submitted. The workplans of the secretariat, the GM and the CST, as well as the JWP, are to be reviewed by the CRIC in order for it to prepare recommendations on the action to be taken by the COP; and a similar procedure is carried out by the CST for its workplan.

23. The workplans and programmes, as well as information on related methodology, terminology and structural changes are contained in documents ICCD/CRIC(8)/2 and ICCD/CRIC(8)/2/Add.1–4, ICCD/COP(9)/CST/3 and ICCD/COP(9)/5 and ICCD/COP(9)/5/Add.1–4.

24. Further to RBM, planning and budgeting, The Strategy contains guidance on reshaping of the operation of the CST and the review of the terms of reference of the CRIC.

25. In terms of reshaping the operation of the CST, by decision 13/COP.8, Parties decided that each future ordinary session of the CST should be organized in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format by the CST bureau, in consultation with a lead institution/consortium, which is qualified in and has expertise in the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP.

26. Accordingly, the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference is to be organized at CST 9 by the selected consortium, with the assistance of the secretariat and under the lead of the CST Bureau. In accordance with decision 18/COP.8, the priority theme to be addressed will be "Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management". Three facets of the topic have been identified: (a) integrated methods for monitoring and assessment of desertification/land degradation processes and drivers; (b) monitoring and assessing land rehabilitation and sustainable land management; and (c) the impacts of economic and social drivers and knowledge management on monitoring and evaluation of desertification/land degradation. Detailed information on reshaping the CST is contained in document ICCD/COP(9)/CST/2.

27. In line with decisions 3/COP.8 and 7/COP.8, the COP at its ninth session will consider, and revise as necessary, the terms of reference of the CRIC. Through The Strategy, Parties have already expressed their intention to continue to entrust the CRIC with the review of the implementation of the Convention by including this task among the revised CRIC functions, which are defined as follows:

- (a) Determining and disseminating best practices on implementation of the UNCCD;
- (b) Reviewing implementation of The Strategy;
- (c) Reviewing Parties' contributions to the implementation of the Convention;
- (d) Assessing and monitoring of CRIC performance and effectiveness.

28. The CRIC would accomplish these functions by taking up the information provided to it, that would include (i) compilation and synthesis documents of reports submitted by Parties and other stakeholders, including information on best practices and lessons learned, (ii) information on financial flows, and (iii) workplans and performance reports of Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies. It would draw up conclusions and make recommendations through an intersessional session and prepare draft decisions during sessional sessions to the COP. Following deliberations at CRIC 7, three segments are proposed for the intersessional sessions of the CRIC: focusing on the performance review of Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies; assessment of implementation through information received from other reporting entities including the review of financial flows; and exchange of information on best practices. The third segment will ensure an improved involvement of CSOs. Detailed information on the CRIC reform is contained in document ICCD/CRIC(8)/4.

VI. Specific issues

A. Regional coordination mechanisms

29. By its decision 3/COP.8 the Conference of the Parties recognized that regional coordination is an important component in implementing the Convention and The Strategy, and that coordination mechanisms must be responsive to existing and emerging needs, capacities and the specific issues of regions. In this context, the Parties called upon regions to develop a proposal on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination, for consideration at COP 9.

30. By the same decision, Parties further requested the Executive Secretary, taking into account the views of the GM on its regional arrangements, to review the current regional coordination arrangements within the secretariat and the GM with a view to improving them; to develop evidence-based options for improving regional coordination arrangements based on the aforementioned review and the proposals received from regions; and to submit these to COP 9 for consideration.

31. Accordingly, the secretariat and the GM jointly facilitated a process of reviewing regional mechanisms and proposing alternatives. They prepared guidelines to assist Parties in the preparation of regional proposals using a coherent approach and supported the establishment of regional task forces under each regional implementation annex of the Convention. Each task force, benefiting from consultancy services, developed a proposal for a regional coordination mechanism, and these proposals were discussed at a joint meeting involving all task forces in March 2009. On the basis of the regional proposals submitted and the review of the current regional coordination arrangements, evidence-based options for improving regional coordination arrangements were drawn up and are presented in document ICCD/COP(9)/3.

B. Participation of civil society organizations

32. Building upon a recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)³, in The Strategy, Parties directed the secretariat to develop revised procedures for the participation of CSOs in UNCCD meetings and processes, including clear selection criteria and a mechanism to ensure a balance of participants from different regions. In addition, in decision 3/COP.8, Parties requested that input from CSOs be taken into account when formulating the selection criteria for financial support for their participation in UNCCD meetings and processes, consistent with the established rules of procedure of the COP.

33. In compliance with the above-mentioned provisions, the secretariat circulated a document entitled “Draft eligibility criteria for funding the participation of civil society organizations in UNCCD processes and events” which went through a broad consultation process with the accredited CSOs. The main purpose in developing these criteria was to ensure an equitable participation of organizations on a rotational basis, guarantee a fair and transparent selection process, and facilitate substantial contributions to the process through targeted participation.

34. The main features of the proposed criteria include geographical balance, with particular attention to Africa; a turnover regime (allowing all accredited organizations, within a regular time frame, to participate in the COP and the meetings of its subsidiary bodies while ensuring consistency of CSO inputs to the process); representation of networks vis-à-vis individual organisations; experience/expertise balance; and gender balance.

35. Further details on the revised procedures for the participation of CSOs in the UNCCD process are contained in document ICCD/COP(9)/4/Add.1.

³ JIU report 2005/5, as contained in document ICCD/COP(7)/4.

C. Comprehensive communication strategy

36. By decision 3/COP.8, Parties requested the secretariat to coordinate the development and implementation of a comprehensive communication strategy (CCS) at the international level with a set of core communications objectives and expected results.

37. The CSS addresses the information and communication needs of the various partners that will be involved in the global partnership called for in The Strategy. These needs will be met primarily through advocacy initiatives directed towards awareness raising and education designed to: (i) strengthen communication support for the UNCCD institutions, subsidiary bodies and national focal points; (ii) influence relevant processes and actors in adequately addressing DLDD-related issues; and (iii) reach out to critical target groups that are not involved or are insufficiently involved at present.

38. The goal of the communication strategy is to accord land/soils, sustainable land management (SLM) and DLDD the attention and priority they deserve in political and economic decisions at the local, national and international levels in order to support the optimal deployment of The Strategy. It will achieve this by setting in place the necessary information basis and providing an exchange capability among stakeholders.

39. Detailed information on the development process of the communication strategy and a summary of the CCS is contained in document ICCD/COP(9)/4/Add.2, and the full CCS can be found in document ICCD/COP(9)/MISC.1 entitled "Land matters".

D. Alignment of action programmes

40. By decision 3/COP.8, Parties urged affected country Parties, within the framework of the regional implementation annexes, to align their action programmes and other relevant implementation activities relating to the Convention with The Strategy by, inter alia, addressing the outcomes under the five operational objectives. Furthermore, at CRIC 7, Parties recommended enhancing the alignment of the implementation of action programmes, and requested joint financial and technical support from the GM and the secretariat, depending on their respective mandates, to undertake the necessary activities.

41. In response to the above request from Parties, the secretariat drafted a roadmap and initiated consultations with the GM on possible approaches and on the process of aligning action programmes, with a view to addressing the issue collectively through the JWP. In the framework of the roadmap, the secretariat commissioned consultancy services to draft guidelines on the alignment, and organized subregional workshops to discuss the alignment. The draft guidelines seek to provide a basis for discussions, and possibly an agreement, as well as coherent action, among Parties on this issue.

42. The draft guidelines deriving from the implementation of the roadmap describe the alignment process as an exercise in improving the quality of national, subregional and regional action programmes, as well as the conditions and modalities of their implementation, in order to achieve the vision articulated in The Strategy. The main objectives of the alignment process would be:

(a) To institutionalize multi-sectoral, participatory and decentralized planning of DLDD and SLM issues;

(b) To revise the action programmes into strategic documents that are mainstreamed within national and sectoral planning;

(c) To create enabling scientific, policy, legislative and investment environments and instruments that promote and support sustainable management of land resources.

43. Detailed information on the draft guidelines for the alignment of action programmes is contained in document ICCD/COP(9)/2/Add.1.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

44. Parties may wish to review the information referred to above and decide on the next steps to be taken to foster implementation prior to the mid-term review of The Strategy that is expected to take place in 2013.

45. Parties may further wish to advise the Executive Secretary on the scope and content of the forthcoming reports on the implementation of The Strategy with a view to obtaining an optimal overview of progress achieved and of the next steps to be taken.
