



**UNITED
NATIONS**



**Convention to Combat
Desertification**

Distr.
GENERAL

ICCD/COP(9)/CST/2/Add.2
1 July 2009

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Committee on Science and Technology
Ninth session
Buenos Aires, 22–25 September 2009

Item 3 (d) of the provisional agenda
Reshaping the operation of the Committee on Science and Technology in line with the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)
Report on the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference

Reshaping the operation of the Committee on Science and Technology in line with the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

Report on the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference

Summary

In decision 13/COP.8, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided that each future ordinary session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) should be organized in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format. This would enable the international scientific community to bring scientific and technological expertise to the CST and the UNCCD.

Against this background the CST Bureau selected the Dryland Science for Development (DSD) as a consortium to co-organize the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference. Three working groups coordinated by the DSD have been working to prepare white papers on three facets of the conference theme: “Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management”.

The effective participation of the scientific community has been ensured through, among other means, international working groups and a review of the white papers through a global e-dialogue in the preparatory process and a competitive poster session side event during the conference. After the ninth Conference of the Parties (COP 9), the preparation procedure, including the roles given to the different actors, will be subject to an independent evaluation.

I. Introduction

1. Recognizing the need to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), the Conference of the Parties (COP), in its decision 13/COP.8, called for a reshaping of the operation of the CST in line with the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (The Strategy).
2. The COP 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 was qualified in, and had expertise in, the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP. This would enable the international scientific community to bring wider scientific and technological expertise to the CST and the Convention process.
3. The COP requested the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, in consultation with the CST Bureau and assisted by the lead institution/consortium, to secure additional funds to support attendance from the developing countries and eligible countries of all implementation annexes, ensuring support for the participation of experts, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders.
4. The COP also requested the CST Bureau to develop the terms of reference for the CST meeting referred to in paragraph 1 (a) of decision 13/COP.8, in consultation with the lead institution/consortium.
5. The priority theme to be addressed will be, as per decision 18/COP.8, “Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management”.

II. Preparation of the ninth session of the Committee on Science and Technology

6. As extensively reported in document ICCD/CST(S-1)/3, presented at the first special session of the CST in Istanbul, the CST Bureau developed the terms of reference and selected the Dryland Science for Development (DSD) as a consortium to co-organize the ninth session of the CST in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format.

7. The DSD comprises five core partner institutions: European DesertNet (EDN), the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the European Commission's Joint Research Centre – Institute for the Environment and Sustainability (JRC – IES), and the United Nations University's International Network on Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH).

8. In October 2008, the DSD submitted to the CST Bureau a costed proposal with regard to support for the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference. Since the COP requested the conference to prepare recommendations to support decision-making, and following a model similar to that used by sister environmental Conventions for such purposes, the DSD proposed that working groups be formed to consider the matter carefully and to draft such recommendations in the nine months preceding the conference. This proposal identified the following three complementary facets of the priority theme, to be addressed by three working groups:

(a) Integrated Methods for Monitoring and Assessing Desertification/Land Degradation Processes and Drivers.

(b) Monitoring and Assessing Land Rehabilitation and Sustainable Land Management Efforts.

(c) Monitoring and Assessment of Desertification and Land Degradation: Knowledge Management, and Economic and Social Drivers.

9. The three working groups shall prepare written analyses (white papers) and an overall synthesis that reflects prevailing scientific consensus on the three facets of the conference topic, with the goal of generating practical and workable science-based recommendations for decision-making.

10. Additional mechanisms have been put in place to ensure the effective participation of the scientific community, including a review of the white papers through an e-dialogue in a preparatory process. A first draft of the white papers was made available for review by scientists and stakeholders worldwide for one month, from 28 May to 28 June 2009. A second consolidated draft, integrating received comments and input, was also made publicly available on the Internet for reading in preparation for the conference. During the conference, the white papers and the overall synthesis will be discussed and draft recommendations prepared for consideration at the CST ordinary session and at the COP.

11. Another opportunity for participation will be provided through a competitive poster session side event during the conference. The deadline for submitting abstracts of posters was set as 30 June 2009.

12. Consultations have taken place continuously between the consortium, the CST Bureau and the secretariat regarding key issues involved in preparation for the conference.

13. The UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference shall be open to registered participants, and to accredited participants of the COP in their individual capacity.

14. The DSD consortium raised funds for preparing, organizing and executing the conference, including in-kind contributions. The key sponsors were the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Global Environment Facility (GEF)/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Global Mechanism (GM).

15. The UNCCD secretariat, in consultation with the CST Bureau, considered the mechanisms for securing additional funds to support the attendance of science and technology correspondents from developing and eligible countries to the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference.

16. In accordance with decision 13/COP.8, the DSD and the secretariat sought voluntary contributions from country Parties and organizations to enable the participation of 50 scientists from developing countries and ten keynote speakers.

17. Opportunities in drylands emerged as the preferred theme of the CST Bureau for the next biennium, exploring several avenues relating to the three strategic objectives of The Strategy.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

18. After completion of the conference, the secretariat will initiate an evaluation. In particular, the ability of the conference to produce sound scientific output and policy-oriented recommendations informing policy formulation and dialogue at the Conference of the Parties needs to be assessed and evaluated. In this process, alternative formats and timing should be considered as well as the ability to bring the necessary scientific and technological expertise on board. For future CST scientific conferences it is also important to assess the preparation procedure, including the roles given to the different actors.

19. The CST might wish to consider a theme for the biennium focused on opportunities in drylands, as recommended by the CST Bureau.
