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**Convention to Combat
Desertification**

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Information note on the permanent structure of the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the human resources required to deliver the expected outputs in the programme of work of the secretariat

Introduction and background

1.   In September 2007, the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8) adopted the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy). A restructuring of the secretariat has been undertaken as one of the main outcomes of a corporate review to facilitate the implementation of The Strategy. The new structure of the secretariat 2010 (SNS 2010), which was proposed by the Executive Secretary of the Convention in 2008, is intended to make the secretariat more responsive to the delivery of services to Parties, with greater attention to the need to support the continuum between knowledge management, communication and policy advocacy, and monitoring. As part of this reorientation of the secretariat, and following recommendation 12 of the 2005 report of the Joint Inspection Unit,[1] a desk-to-desk workload analysis took place from 18 January to 28 February 2009. Edgar van Dijk delivered his report on 7 April 2009.

2.   The workload analysis involved a review of the interim staffing structure of the secretariat during the transitional period leading to COP 9 and of the proposed permanent structure of the secretariat after COP 9, and an analysis of the human resources required for delivery of the expected outputs in the programme of work.

3.   This note is based on the findings of Mr. Van Dijk's report. His main conclusion is that the staffing of the secretariat in its present state is below the minimum threshold of resources

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[1] JIU/REP/2005/5.

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necessary to deliver its mission. This situation is not sustainable in the long term. The current staffing of the secretariat consists of a total of 31 positions on the core budget and 49 positions in total, of which 29 are in the Professional category and above, and 20 in the General Service category. By way of comparison, 62 posts were proposed in the internal draft SNS 2010, of which 39 are in the Professional category and above and 23 are in the General Service category. These numbers do not include the 0.25 per cent of a post for an internal auditor, which is shared with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

4.   Based on the review of the workload and functions of the various units under the Strategy, the four-year strategic plan, and the two-year operational programme, a permanent staffing structure is thus proposed with a total of 66 posts, of which 41 are at the Professional level and above, and 25 in the General Service category. These positions will be funded from the core budget, from voluntary contributions, and from programme support costs. The proposed structure, although with distinctly higher staffing levels than at present, represents a necessary response to the corporate mission flowing from decision 3/COP.8.

5.   In the annex to this document, an overview of the proposed permanent staffing structure of the secretariat is provided, with details for each post.

A. Organizational matters that have emerged that have an impact on the staffing structure

6.   In the report it is recalled that COP 3 approved two D1 posts in the secretariat, one for the Deputy Executive Secretary (DES) and one for Policy and Programme Coordination. However, in the present organizational structure the two positions are de facto combined in one post. The secretariat should consider options for bringing its structure in line with the decisions of COP 3. In this respect, the DES could be responsible for fund-raising and partnership building aspects, as well as for the supervision of the two support services, while the other D1 post (Policy and Programme Director) could be responsible for policy and programme coordination, including leadership for the facilitation of the implementation of the Convention through the regional mechanisms, and for special projects such as the scientific knowledge management system (see paragraph 9 below).

7.   In this respect, the ongoing discussion on the regional coordination functions (RCF) of the Convention is of central importance for the new structure of the secretariat. Although some kind of regional mechanism is indispensable in view of servicing the regional implementation annexes to the Convention, the institutional implications need to be clarified now, but the final decision on this matter should depend on the feedback from Parties, and on the outcome of the discussion on the assessment of the Global Mechanism and the regional offices at COP 9.

8.   It would appear that the various substantive units need an electronic scientific knowledge management system (SKMS). Such a system is required for the storage, processing, analysis, dissemination and exploitation of information, and should be put in place urgently. It is recommended that the leadership and coordination of the development of a SKMS should be placed in the Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary. Additionally, as the units will generate a large volume of data input activity, it is recommended that one new support-level post be established centrally, which will be responsible for the input of data for all the thematic sections.

Such an approach is necessary, as the various professionals in the units cannot spend their time inputting data.

9.   The information and communication technology (ICT) capacity in UNCCD is critically weak, and poses a great risk to the ability of the units to perform their mission. For all the ICT technology work required, web design and support, programming, database management, help desk, communication services etc., there is currently only one (P2) Professional with two temporary General Service assistants. Since the demands on the ICT team are already great and growing rapidly, it is clear that the lead post should be upgraded to the P3 or P4 level and that the function will need additional resources. In this respect, it is noted that two Professional ICT posts that were approved by COP have remained vacant for some time, due to the lack of funding. These two posts were not included in the proposed SNS2010. It is recommended that they be revived and filled to provide some relief in the short term.

B. The post structure and the staffing of the secretariat: core duties and responsibilities

10.   Summary table 1 below shows the recommended staffing structure, compared with the one proposed in SNS2010 and the current staffing, with existing and new positions. No distinction is made between posts funded from the core budget, programme support costs (PSC), or extrabudgetary (EB).

Table 1
Recommended staffing structure

	Professional	General Service	**Total**
Recommended permanent staffing, of which:	41	25	66
Currently existing positions	29	18	47
New positions proposed in SNS2010	10	4	14
Existing current positions omitted from SNS2010[a]	0	2	2
Approved vacant posts to be revived, not in SNS2010[b]	2	0	2
Newly recommended posts[c]	0	1	1
Total	**41**	**25**	**66**

[a] One finance assistant and one human resources assistant are existing posts that are encumbered.
[b] Two ICT professional posts were approved, but have remained vacant (see para. 11 above).
[c] One support post for data input for SKMS (see para. 9 above).

11.   It is noted that the numbers in table 1 may vary somewhat in view of the organizational issues discussed in paragraphs 7–10 above. That could affect the positions in senior management in the RCFs, SKMS, and ICT services.

12.   While all positions are considered essential for delivering the services requested, an effort is made to determine which posts are continuous in nature and indispensable for the functioning of the Convention and of the secretariat, and should therefore preferably be funded from the core budget, taking into account the record of legislative guidance on budget matters. Funding from other sources may be considered for positions that could be funded on a voluntary basis until core budget levels can be adjusted to programme delivery requirements, or which relate to duties of a non-permanent nature. Table 2 provides a summary by unit and by (proposed) funding.

Table 2
Core and non-core posts by section, with proposed funding

Organization unit		Total posts	Core funded	PSC funded	EB funded/ unfunded
Office of the Executive Secretary	Prof	3	3		
	GS	3	3		
New York Liaison Office	Prof	2	1	1	
	GS	1		1	
Conference Services	Prof	3	3		
	GS	2	2		
Administrative Services Unit	Prof	7	3	1	3
	GS	9	1	7	1
Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary	Prof	4	4		
	GS	1	1		

Organization unit		Total posts	Core funded	*PSC funded*	EB funded/ unfunded
Regional coordination functions (annexes I, II, III, IV/V)	Prof	8			**8**
	GS	4			**4**
Knowledge Management, Science and Technology	Prof	4	3		**1**
	GS	1	1		
Awareness Raising, Communication and Education	Prof	3	2		**1**
	GS	2	2		
Policy for Advocacy on Global Issues	Prof	3	3		
	GS	1	1		
Facilitation, Coordination and Monitoring of Implementation	Prof	4	2		**2**
	GS	1	1		
Total		**66**	**36**	**10**	**20**

13.   It is noted that the secretariat has a relatively high number of professional posts. This may be explained by its small size and by the nature of the work. Support level work is high in the administrative services of an institution of this kind.

14.   The number of posts proposed in the Administrative and Finance Services (AFS) is 16 (7 Professional and 9 General Service) positions. While this would seem to be a high ratio to the total staff, it should be kept in mind that the number of posts in administration has been reduced significantly over recent years. Inadequate staffing of the administration function would affect its capability to deliver the services that are required, and thereby the overall functioning of the secretariat and the Convention. The high ratio is not unusual for a stand-alone

international organization in view of the small size of the secretariat. The administrative responsibilities require that certain minimum thresholds must be met in a range of specialized areas. The ratio is lower in the Professional category (7 out of 41). In addition, the proposed number of staff in the administrative services also includes 6 ICT posts (3 Professional and 3 General Service) which are essential for the delivery of services to the Parties, as well as to the secretariat.

15.   Based on a review of the mission statements, existing job descriptions, and interviews with managers, and other staff, as required, an analysis was made of the human resources required to deliver the expected outputs in the programme of work. The recommendations in this report, as contained in the proposed structure, reflect this assessment. Once the organizational structure is approved, all job descriptions will be comprehensively reviewed and revised to ensure that they reflect accurately and completely the respective duties and responsibilities.

Detailed recommended staffing structure for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Unit	Post	Functional Title [a]	Level (P) [2)]	Level (G) [2)]	Core [3)]	F	PS C	UC	XB	Inc. Grade	Observation/ comments
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY											
1	1,1	Executive Secretary	ASG		C	F				ASG	
2	1,2	Personal Assistant		G6/7	C	F				G-6	
3	1,3	Senior Adviser	P5		C	F				P-5	
4	1,4	Chef de Cabinet	P5		C	F				P-5	
5	1,5	Registry Clerk		G4/6	C	F				G-4	
6	1,6	Secretary/Team Assistant		G4/5	C	F				G-5	
New York Liaison Office											
7	2,1	Coordinator	P5		C	F				P-5	
8	2,2	Programme Officer (50%)	P3/4				P			P-4	
9	2,3	Secretary/Team Assistant		G4/5			P			G-4	
(3) Conference Services Unit (CoSe)											
10	3,1	Coordinator	P5		C	F				P-5	
11	3,2	Meetings Services Officer	P3/4		C	F					
12	3,3	Documents Officer	P3/4		C	F					
13	3,4	Assistant logistics		G5/7	C	F					
14	3,5	Secretary/Team Assistant		G4/5	C	F				G-4	

Unit	Post Number	Functional Title 1)	Level (P) [b]	Level (G) [b]	Core[c]	F	PSC	XB	Inc. Grade	Observations /comments
(4) Administrative and Finance Services (AFS)										
15	4,1	Coordinator	P5		C	F			P-5	
16	4,2	Secretary/Team Assistant		G4	C		P			
17	4,3	*Administrative Officer*	P4		C			U	**NEW**	new post, included in SNS2010
18	4,4	Admin & Finance Officer	P3		C	F			P-3	
19	4,5	*Finance Officer*	P2/3		C			U	**NEW**	new post, included in SNS2010
20	4,6	Finance Assistant		G4/6	C		P		G-6	
21	4,7	Finance Assistant		G4/6	C		P		G-4	
22	4,8	*Finance Assistant*		G4/6	C		P		G-4	existing post, omitted in SNS2010
23	4,9	*HR Assistant*		G5/7	C		P		G-6	existing post, omitted in SNS2010
24	4,1	ICT Officer (team)	P3/4		C	F			P-2	to be upgraded
25	4,11	*ICT Officer*	P2/3		C		P		*NEW*	existing post to be revived, not in SNS2010
26	4,12	*ICT Officer*	P2/3					X	*NEW*	existing post to be revived, not is SNS 2010
27	4,13	IT Assistant (web)		G4/7	C		P		G-3	
28	4,14	IT Assistant (help desk)		G4/6	C		P		G-3	
29	4,15	*IT Assistant (data input) 6)*		G4/5				U	*NEW*	new post, not in SNS2010
30	4,16	Travel Assistant		G5/6	C	F			G-5	

Unit	Post Number	Functional Title [1]	Level (P) [2]	Level (G) [2]	Core [3]	F	PSC	XB	Inc. Grade	Observations /comments
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY EXECUTIVE SECRETARY										
31	5,1	Deputy Executive Secretary	D1/2		C	F			D-1	
32	5,2	Personal Assistant		G4/6	C	F			G-5	
33	5,3	Prog. Off, legal & quality control	P3/4		C	F			P-3	
34	5,4	Programme Officer, programme planning, monitoring	P3/4		C	F			P-3	
35	5,5	*Regional Coordinator*	P4/5		C	F				new post, included in SNS2010
Regional coordination functions (RCF)										
36	5,6	Coordinator, Africa (Tunis)	P3/4		C		U		L-3	
37	5,7	*Programme Officer*	P2/3					X		new post, included in SNS2010
38	5,8	*Secretary/Team Assistant*		G4/5				X		new post, included in SNS2010
39	5,9	Coordinator, Asia (Bangkok)	P3/4		C		U		L-3	
40	5,1	Programme Officer	P2/3					X	L-3	
41	5,11	*Secretary/Team Assistant*		G4/5				X		new post, included in SNS2010
42	5,12	*Coordinator, LAC (Mexico)*	P3		C		U			new post, included in SNS2010
43	5,13	Programme Officer	P2/3					X	L-2	
44	5,14	*Secretary/Team Assistant*		G4/5				X		new post, included in SNS2010
45	5,15	*Coordinator, CEE*	P3		C		U			new post, included in SNS2010

Unit	Post Number	Functional Title 1)	Level (P) 2)	Level (G) 2)	Core 3)	F	PSC	XB	Inc. Grade	Observations /comments
46	5,16	*Programme Officer*	P2/3					X		new post, included in SNS2010
47	5,17	*Secretary/Team Assistant*		G4/5				X		new post, included in SNS2010

Knowledge Management, Science & Technology (KMST)

48	6,1	Coordinator	P5		C	F			P-5	
49	6,2	Secretary/Team Assistant		G4/5	C	F			G-5	
50	6,3	Prog.Off, support sc.comm	P3/4		C	F			P-3	
51	6,4	Prog.Off, knowledge management	P3/4		C	F			P-4	
52	6,5	*Prog.Off, monitoring & assessment CST work programme*	P2/3				U			new post, included in SNS2010

Unit	Post Number	Functional Title 1)	Level (P) 2)	Level (G) 2)	Core 3)	F	PSC	XB	Inc. Grade	Observation/ comments
Awareness Raising, Communication, Education. (ARCE)										
53	7,1	Coordinator	P5		C	F			P-4	
54	7,2	Secretary/Team Assistant		G4/5	C	F			G-4	
55	7,3	Prog.Off, public information, media	P3/4		C	F			P-2	
56	7,4	*Prog.Off, on-line information management*	P3/4		C		U			new post, included in SNS2010
57	7,5	Library Assistant		G6/7	C	F			G-6	

Policy on Advocacy on Global Issues (PAGI)

58	8,1	Coordinator	P5		C	F			P-5	
59	8,2	Secretary/Team Assistant		G4/5	C	F			G-5	

	Unit	Post Number	Functional Title 1)	Level (P) 2))	Level (G) 2	Core 3)	F	PSC	XB	Inc. Grade	Observation/ comments
60		8,3	Prog.Off, SLM and climate change	P3/4		C	F			P-4	
61		8,4	Prog.Off, SLM and water scarcity and drought	P3/4		C	F				

Facilitation, Coordination, Monitoring of Implementation (FCMI)

	Unit	Post Number	Functional Title 1)	Level (P) 2))	Level (G) 2	Core 3)	F	PSC	XB	Inc. Grade	Observation/ comments
62		9,1	Coordinator	P5		C	F			P-5	Location RCF to be decided
63		9,2	Secretary/Team Assistant		G4/5	C	F			G-5	
64		9,3	Prog.Off, AP implementation, NAP analysis	P3/4		C		U			
65		9,4	Prog.Off, CRIC support, monitoring, report	P4		C	F			P-3	
66		9,5	*Prog.Off, support CSO*	P3/4		C		U			new post, included in SNS2010

a   Functional titles subject to confirmation at the time of official classification.
b   Post levels are indicative, based on current information, subject to official classification. Correct and complete job descriptions to be prepared.
c   Posts with continuous and essential functions, preferably to be funded from core funds.