



Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.: General
4 July 2011

Original: English

Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

Tenth session

Changwon, Republic of Korea, 11–20 October 2011

Item 6 (c) of the provisional agenda

Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies

Synergies in reporting under the Rio conventions

Synergies in reporting under the Rio conventions

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The importance of enhancing synergies in reporting is emphasized in decision 8/COP.8, which requests the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) secretariat to consult with the other secretariats on the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) and to advise on ways to make reporting more efficient, taking into account the reporting procedures and obligations under each of the Rio conventions.

Several options to enhance synergies in reporting were presented in an option paper for enhanced cooperation among the three Rio conventions, which was prepared jointly by the secretariats of the three instruments, as agreed by the JLG meeting in January 2004. Document ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.9, which was presented at the ninth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 9), analyses the reporting requirements under the Rio conventions and explores the options for synergies in reporting presented in the JLG paper and elsewhere. It concludes that effective ways to enhance synergies in reporting would be to develop mechanisms and cooperative arrangements between the relevant institutions involved in the reporting processes at the national level, and to streamline data collection and compilation. The Committee took note of the document and agreed that an item on synergies in reporting under the Rio conventions be considered at its tenth session, with a view to formulating recommendations for consideration at the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

The present document takes into consideration document ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.9, and considers the outcome of a joint retreat between the secretariats of the Global Environment Facility and the UNCCD held in January 2011 and the outcome of a round table meeting held at the sidelines of CRIC 9 as well as discussions at the JLG meeting in April 2011.

The Committee may wish to consider the options for synergies in reporting contained in the present document in order to forward its recommendations on the subject for consideration at the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties as requested by decision 8/COP.9.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
List of abbreviations.....		3
I. Introduction.....	1–6	4
A. Mandate.....	1–3	4
B. Background.....	4–6	4
II. Elements for achieving synergies in reporting among the Rio conventions.....	7–38	5
A. Overlap of underlying data for reporting on UNCCD impact indicators, UNFCCC greenhouse gas emissions reporting and national communications, and CBD reporting against global headline indicators and Aichi targets	12–17	6
B. Overlap relating to national policy issues as put forward in national plans....	18–20	7
C. Overlap relating to reporting on synergies among the Rio conventions	21–23	8
D. Overlap relating to funding and project activities.....	24–29	9
E. Comparison of reporting entities and capacity-building.....	30–34	10
F. Comparison of reporting schedules, and the collation and analysis of submitted reports	35–38	11
III. Options promoting increased synergies in reporting.....	39–55	12
A. Refinement of the common substance of reporting requirements.....	40–45	12
B. Common glossary or linking of glossaries.....	46–48	13
C. Joint information systems	49–50	13
D. National focal points coordination and process integration.....	51–55	14
IV. Conclusions and recommendations.....	56–63	15
A. Conclusions	56–61	15
B. Recommendations.....	62–63	15

List of abbreviations

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DLDD	desertification, land degradation and drought
EST	environmentally sound technology
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	greenhouse gas
GM	Global Mechanism
JLG	Joint Liaison Group
KP	Kyoto Protocol
NAP	national action programme
NAPA	national adaptation plan of action
NBSAP	national biodiversity strategy and action plan
NCSA	national capacity self-assessment
NFP	national focal point
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPS	programme and project sheets
PRAIS	performance review and assessment of implementation system
SBSTA	Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice
SFA	standard financial annex
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. As a result of the launch of 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (The Strategy), Parties adopted a new reporting and monitoring system at the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 9). Decision 8/COP.8 requests the secretariat to take into account the reporting procedures and obligations under each of the Rio conventions and to consult with the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on ways to make reporting more efficient. The seventh session of the Committee for the Review of Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 7) recommended that facilitating the development of synergies with the other Rio conventions should be a basic principle to be taken into consideration when designing the new reporting system under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and highlighted the importance of enhancing synergies at the national level by integrating existing databases.¹

2. Decision 8/COP.9 requests the secretariat to continue to coordinate with the secretariats of the UNFCCC and the CBD through the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) to facilitate exchanges of information and joint approaches to harmonizing the reporting requirements of Parties. Decision 13/COP.9 invites the JLG, *inter alia*, to provide technical assistance relating to outcome 2.5 and impact indicator (SO) 4-4 of The Strategy. In addition, decision 17/COP.9, paragraph 4 (c), requests the secretariat under the guidance of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) Bureau and using an iterative process . . . to refine the set of impact indicators and associated methodologies, taking account of possible synergies. Furthermore, decision 10/COP.9 urges stakeholders to look for synergies in monitoring . . . through the use of similar indicators and similar methodological approaches relating to data collection . . . in the preparation of national reports.

3. Following this mandate, the secretariat prepared document ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.9, which was noted by the ninth session of the CRIC (CRIC 9) with a request to consider the item of synergies in reporting under the Rio conventions at the tenth session of the CRIC (CRIC 10) with a view to formulating recommendations for consideration at the tenth session of the COP (COP 10).

B. Background

4. Calls for synergistic reporting among the three Rio conventions were included in Agenda 21. Chapter 40 of Agenda 21, "Information for Decision-Making", mentions a possible need to "reduce the differences regarding data and . . . improve access to information". The chapter also recognizes major differences in developing nations' capacities to gather and process data adequately for "informed decision-making".²

5. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, Rio+20), which will take place in June 2012, marks the 20th anniversary of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). It offers an opportunity for

¹ ICCD/CRIC(7)/3.

² See also document A/53/463, annex, and General Assembly resolution 53/242.

renewed political attention and revitalized action to achieve enhanced synergies in planning and reporting at the national level towards the achievement of the objectives of the Rio conventions as part of the discussions on the institutional framework for sustainable development. Seizing this opportunity, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) secretariat and the UNCCD secretariat agreed at their joint retreat to prepare a document for Rio +20 on the feasibility of joint reporting under the three Rio conventions, including a proposal for a joint reporting template.

6. Issues and options for synergies in reporting were outlined at great length in an option paper for enhanced cooperation among the three Rio conventions, which was prepared jointly by the secretariats of the three conventions as agreed at the JLG meeting in January 2004.³ The JLG option paper was presented as a document to the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA)⁴ and tabled at UNCCD COP 7.⁵ Furthermore, a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/GEF medium-sized project, “Piloting Integrated Processes and Approaches to Facilitate National Reporting to Rio conventions” (FNR-Rio project), was launched in February 2010 to test options for synergies in reporting through integration at the national level.

II. Elements for achieving synergies in reporting among the Rio conventions

7. This chapter compares the reporting requirements under each of the Rio conventions and discusses the overlap in reporting objectives, reporting processes, reporting areas, reporting entities and capacity-building elements. When considering options to increase the synergies in reporting among the three Rio conventions, finding similarities among the objectives and mandates of the three instruments is an obvious starting point, noting specifically that objectives and mandates are: (a) particularly broad in overall scope; (b) focus on ecological issues; and (c) ultimately focus on environmental conservation or protection and sustainable development. The reports of the Rio conventions are thus all based on data and information on a relatively similar group of natural-resource sectors.

8. There are, however, significant differences among the three Rio conventions. Under the UNFCCC/Kyoto Protocol (KP), reporting provisions have become highly controversial in the light of the use of UNFCCC/KP reporting data as the primary justification for national commitments regarding emissions reductions and other key components of the operation of the Convention. CBD reporting focuses on biological issues relevant to the Parties’ duties to monitor the status of various components of biodiversity,⁶ and of the changes in the threats faced. The reporting process under the UNCCD has been developed to reflect the clear mandate to set and achieve goals for national or regional activities and monitor the achievement of the objectives of the Convention.

9. In all three Rio conventions, reporting systems are evolving within convention-specific contexts and negotiating processes. This inward looking, context-specific approach to reporting could complicate the process of finding areas for harmonization, but also provide flexibility to gradually integrate changing reporting requirements across convention processes, with the aim of increasing the level of collaboration, particularly in relation to the development and use of common data and indicators and consistent glossaries. The on-

³ Hereinafter referred to as the JLG option paper.

⁴ FCCC/SBSTA/2004/INF.19.

⁵ ICCD/COP(7)/5/Add.1.

⁶ Convention on Biological Diversity, article 7. CBD Parties are required to conduct inventories and monitoring, but are not required to share that information as part of national reporting.

going iterative process of the UNCCD was devised to provide flexibility in the process and to benefit from further exchanges between the three conventions.

10. UNCCD Parties at COP 9 decided on a new performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) and adopted a set of performance and impact indicators.⁷ One subset of two impact indicators (land cover status and proportion of the population in affected areas living above the poverty line) was identified as the minimum level of reporting, and the remaining nine impact indicators were considered optional for inclusion in reports.⁸ The reporting process is accompanied by an iterative process, which captures the lessons learned during the reporting process and refines the indicators and methodologies applied. The complete set of indicators will be further developed and defined taking account of a pilot tracking exercise and contributions made, inter alia, by CBD and Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS).⁹

11. Annex IV of document ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.9 sets out the basic reporting provisions most relevant to developing countries under the current templates of the Rio conventions, in a “side-by-side” format, reorganizing the templates of the UNFCCC/KP and the CBD according to the operational and strategic objectives of the UNCCD in an attempt to relate them to the format applied by the UNCCD. Annex IV demonstrates the substantial difference in approach among the three conventions – the UNCCD’s reporting process is more specific and concrete than the narrative approach of the CBD, but significantly less technical than the key reporting requirements of the UNFCCC/KP.

A. Overlap of underlying data for reporting on UNCCD impact indicators, UNFCCC greenhouse gas emissions reporting and national communications, and CBD reporting against global headline indicators and Aichi targets

12. Annex II of document ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.9 provides a comparison between the UNCCD impact indicators (II.A) and performance indicators (II.B) and the CBD global headline indicators and a selection of UNFCCC indicators.

13. As is indicated in the table in annex II.A of document ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.9, three global headline indicators of the CBD are of particular relevance to UNCCD reporting.¹⁰ In particular, the CBD global headline indicator “Trends in abundance and distribution of selected species” was recommended as a suitable metric to measure UNCCD general indicator VII “Plant and animal biodiversity” at the global and the national level, and is being tested in the UNCCD pilot impact indicator tracking exercise (see document ICCD/COP(10)/CST/2 and document ICCD/COP(10)/CST/INF.2).

14. With the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, relevant issues in CBD reporting are related to measuring achievement of the 20 Aichi targets, which are set against five strategic goals.¹¹ The Plan has a direct connection to both climate change and desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD), in particular strategic goal B to

⁷ Decisions 11/COP.9, 12/COP.9 and 13/COP.9.

⁸ Decision 13/COP.9 and decision 17/COP.9.

⁹ The GTOS coordinates the development of a framework to prepare standards and reporting guidelines for all terrestrial Earth Climate Variables (ECVs). In 2009 GTOS completed 13 detailed reports on the status of 13 individual terrestrial ECVs.

¹⁰ CBD indicator: Trends in extent of selected biomes, ecosystems & habitats; CBD indicator: Trends in abundance and distribution of selected species; and CBD indicator: Area of forest, agricultural and aquaculture ecosystems under sustainable management.

¹¹ CBD decision X/2.

reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use and its related target 5¹² and target 7¹³ have considerable overlap with objectives of the UNCCD and its related reporting. Target 15¹⁴ contains objectives of both the UNCCD and the UNFCCC, and target 10¹⁵ is specifically related to climate change issues and overlaps with the national reports of the UNCCD Parties.

15. The UNFCCC has not adopted any national or global impact indicators. Nevertheless, substantive work on the development of standard methodologies for measuring essential climate variables (ECVs), encompassing the atmospheric, terrestrial and marine domains, is being carried out in the framework of the implementation plan of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) of the UNFCCC. At its 33rd session in Cancun, Mexico, in 2010, the SBSTA noted “the increased usefulness of the terrestrial ECVs beyond observations of climate change, such as for biodiversity and desertification, and encouraged the GTOS to increase synergy with on-going relevant initiatives”.

16. It is noteworthy that the degree of overlap in the content of the reports of the Rio conventions is dependent on the characteristics of the reporting country, such as its geographic and geomorphologic features or the socio-economic situation. A higher degree of overlap is most likely to occur in a least developed country, where the unsustainable use of natural resources is affecting biodiversity conservation and land degradation and might also be an important source of emissions and increased vulnerability to climate change.

17. Reporting on the three Rio conventions will require the utilization of common underlying data (raw data), which would then be used to produce convention-specific information. This means that there is potential to reduce the reporting burden, while collecting and sharing data and information.

B. Overlap relating to national policy issues as put forward in national plans

18. The Rio conventions also place strong emphasis on the development of national strategies for implementation, which take into account the specific situation of the country (national action programmes (NAPs) for the UNCCD, national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) for the CBD, and national adaptation plans of action (NAPAs) for the UNFCCC). The reporting templates of the Rio conventions, illustrated in annex IV of document ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.9, address the development of national policies in detail and aim to assess the implementation of national plans.

19. It is expected that detailed reporting on activities under planning instruments will overlap to some extent, particularly where planning instruments reflect a high level of interrelationship between DLDD, climate change and biodiversity. In the likely event that national planning processes are integrated or coordinated, reporting on them should also be

¹² Aichi Target 5: By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced.

¹³ Aichi Target 7: By 2020 areas under agriculture, aquaculture and forestry are managed sustainably, ensuring conservation of biodiversity.

¹⁴ Aichi Target 15: By 2020, ecosystem resilience and the contribution of biodiversity to carbon stocks has been enhanced, through conservation and restoration, including restoration of at least 15 per cent of degraded ecosystems, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation and to combating desertification.

¹⁵ Aichi Target 10: By 2015, the multiple anthropogenic pressures on coral reefs, and other vulnerable ecosystems impacted by climate change or ocean acidification, are minimized, so as to maintain their integrity and functioning.

coordinated to enhance and strengthen national implementation activities, processes, plans and agencies. The potential to increase synergies at this level is recognized by Parties to the UNCCD which, in decision 13/COP.9, invited the JLG to provide technical assistance with the indicators relating to outcome 2.5, which envisages that “mutually reinforcing measures among desertification/land degradation action programmes and biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation are introduced or strengthened so as to enhance the impact of interventions”.

20. There are many initiatives by the Rio conventions to assess and coordinate the NAP, NAPA and NBSAP processes at the national level.¹⁶ Collection and comparison of base data on policy and planning documents in each country, and coordination of how they are reported, could potentially be valuable tools for enhancing national level coordination and eventually streamlining the reporting processes under all three Rio conventions.

C. Overlap relating to reporting on synergies among the Rio conventions

21. Each reporting framework calls for a discussion on synergies. The most concrete reporting on synergies occurs under UNCCD performance indicator CONS-O-7 for Outcome 2.5: “Number of initiatives for synergistic planning/programming of the three Rio conventions or mechanisms for joint implementation, at all levels”.

22. Parties to the CBD are asked to “describe ... how synergies are achieved at the national level in the implementation of the CBD, the UNFCCC the UNCCD and other relevant conventions”¹⁷ as well as to “[consider] integration ... in terms of: ... (c) other convention processes besides the Convention on Biological Diversity, such as the processes under the four other biodiversity-related conventions (CITES, Convention on Migratory Species, RAMSAR and the World Heritage Convention), the Rio conventions (UNFCCC, UNCCD) and others”.¹⁸

23. Although it does not specify the Rio conventions, the UNFCCC calls on non-Annex I Parties to address possible international/regional/subregional coordination activities, through a call to “provide information on any steps they have taken to integrate climate change considerations into relevant social, economic and environmental policies and actions”. National responses to these questions have included significant information on synergies.

¹⁶ For example, the CBD secretariat is convening in 2011 a series of subregional capacity-building workshops on national biodiversity strategies and action plans and has invited the UNFCCC secretariat and the UNCCD secretariat to use these workshops to support closer coordination. The UNCCD secretariat has taken a similar approach and has invited the CBD secretariat and UNFCCC secretariat to participate in a series of subregional workshops on action programme alignment. Furthermore, for several years an initiative between the UNFCCC and the UNCCD has sought to take advantage of concrete opportunities for the implementation of the conventions to jointly address synergy action that can be implemented at the local level within their respective mandates in affected countries, especially the least developed countries (LDCs), by establishing appropriate institutional arrangements and communication protocols with respect to the NAPAs and the NAPs.

¹⁷ CBD Reporting Framework for fifth National Reports, Part II, Question 5.

¹⁸ Chapter III: Sectoral and cross-sectoral integration or mainstreaming of biodiversity considerations. Purpose. Q2.

D. Overlap relating to funding and project activities

24. All three reporting frameworks include significant elements calling for descriptions of funding and project activities.

25. Under the UNFCCC/KP non-Annex I communication process, non-Annex-I Parties are requested to “provide ... a list of projects proposed for financing ... in preparation for arranging the provision of technical and financial support”, as well as “information on country-specific technology needs and assistance received from developed country Parties and the financial mechanism of the Convention and, as appropriate, on how they have utilized this assistance in support of the development and enhancement of endogenous capacities, technologies and know-how”.

26. In the CBD, financial and project information is not requested in national reports, but numerous countries have provided it under a specific request in chapter II (Current Status of NBSAPs) that calls for “an overview of the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans, or other programmes and plans developed and adopted to implement the Convention”, and “an indication of domestic and/or international funding dedicated to priority activities”. In the early years, funding information from developed countries’ national reports was analysed separately.¹⁹

27. UNCCD reporting against operational objective 5, financing and technology transfer, calls for specific information, such as the “degree of adequacy, timeliness and predictability of financial resources made available by developed country Parties to combat DLDD”, the “number of DLDD-related project proposals successfully submitted for financing to international financial institutions, facilities and funds, including the GEF”, and the “amount of financial resources and type of incentives which have enabled access to technology by affected country Parties”. Furthermore, the Convention receives detailed information on project/programme financing through dedicated templates – the Standard Financial Annex (SFA) and the project and programme sheet (PPS).

28. The two templates, the PPS and the SFA, could serve as a basis for the development of a harmonized reporting system on financial issues for all three Rio conventions. Such a process began with the development of the Rio markers by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in consultation with the secretariats of the three Rio conventions and the Global Mechanism (GM). The markers “not only estimate the ODA [official development assistance] financial flows and identify trends, but can also serve as the basis for streamlining the reporting of aid-related activities under the Rio conventions by the Parties, thus ensuring provision of consistent data and avoiding double reporting”. The Rio markers are an integral part of UNCCD reporting on financing²⁰

29. Another option for increasing synergies in reporting on financing is recognized in decision 13/COP.9 (paragraph 7), in which UNCCD Parties call on the JLG to “provide technical assistance for indicators relating to ... impact indicator SO4-4”, which measures contributions from innovative sources of finance for UNCCD-related activities. Since innovative sources of finance are common to all three Rio conventions, it was suggested that the JLG define and regularly update a list of innovative sources of funding. In response to this call and other decisions of the Rio conventions addressing the JLG, members of the JLG agreed on the need to clarify the terms of reference of the JLG, since the group

¹⁹ CBD-GEF/WS-Financing/INF/2; see <www.cbd.int/financial/innovative.shtml>.

²⁰ Joint letter of the Executive Secretaries of the three Rio conventions to the Chairperson of the OECD/DAC, 2004.

questioned whether such activities should fall within its mandate. The three secretariats have jointly developed Common Principles enshrined in terms of reference, which are presented to the COP in document ICCD/CRIC(10)/18.

E. Comparison of reporting entities and capacity-building

30. The UNCCD distinguishes between seven reporting entities: (a) affected country Parties; (b) developed country Parties; (c) subregional and regional action programmes; (d) United Nations organizations and intergovernmental organizations; (e) the GEF; (f) the secretariat; and (g) the GM.²¹ In addition, civil society organizations are invited to report on best practices, and reporting guidelines for civil society organizations are under discussion.

31. At CRIC 7, Parties agreed that enhancing reporting requirements and procedures “would need to go hand in hand with international support provided for capacity-building on monitoring”. This led the UNCCD secretariat in consultation with the GEF secretariat and UNEP/GEF to provide such support through a UNEP/GEF capacity development project, which started in 2010.²² With the GEF 5 set aside for enabling activities, funding is available for countries for the preparation of national reports and for NAP alignment. Parties can choose to request assistance through a global support programme or to access funding either directly or through an agency.

32. The UNFCCC has distinctive reporting entities for Annex I and non-Annex I Parties. The information submitted differs in scope and content and they have different timetables for submission. Both Annex I and non-Annex I Parties submit national communications according to the timetable set by the COP, providing information on the activities and policies implemented by Parties in order to adhere to the Convention. In addition, Annex I Parties that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol are required annually to submit information on their national emissions to the UNFCCC greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory. Non-Annex I Parties may choose whether, in addition to their national communication, to submit a national GHG inventory, depending on their capacity to satisfy the increasing demand for precise numerical results. Non-Annex I Parties do not need to use the same baseline dates or statistics as Annex I Parties for their GHG inventory, but are encouraged to make estimates and identify/justify any deviations applicable to each estimation process. This provides flexibility for Non-Annex I Parties at the national level to establish mechanisms by which data collection, indicators and baselines for the three Rio conventions can be more easily integrated.

33. The GEF has developed specific funding mechanisms to support non-Annex I Reporting and GHG Inventories. Some Non-Annex I Parties argue that Non-Annex I Parties’ reports – even if they contain competent GHG analyses – are not given the same weight as Annex I inventories. This controversy, coupled with the flexibility of Non-Annex I reporting schedules, has led to a situation in which only few Non-Annex I Parties’ communications have been submitted. To date, the UNFCCC/KP has received 166 national communications, of which 137 were initial national communications, 27 were second national communications but only one was for the third and one for the fourth national communication. In comparison, the UNCCD and the CBD have each received over 400 national reports.

34. Under the CBD, all Parties to the Convention are obliged to report, making use of the reporting guidelines of the specific reporting cycle. Following the invitation of the

²¹ See <www.unccd.int/prais/docs/reporting%20entities.pdf>.

²² ICCD/CRIC(7)/5.

eighth session of the CBD COP to provide funding for the preparation of the fourth national reports,²³ the GEF made financial support available through a medium-sized project jointly managed by the United Nations Development Programme and UNEP for national assessment of progress towards the 2010 Biodiversity Target, including the preparation of the fourth national reports. In addition to the common sets of guidelines, the CBD has devised an information portal to provide Parties with consolidated information resources and tools to assist with the preparation of the fourth national report. This portal will also serve to promote the 2010 Biodiversity Target assessment among CBD partners.

F. Comparison of reporting schedules, and the collation and analysis of submitted reports

35. Among the three Rio conventions, reporting cycles, schedules and deadlines are relatively distinct and are difficult to compare. Annex III of document ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.9 shows that there has been almost no temporal link between reporting deadlines of the various reporting processes. However, the work of compiling, interpreting and reviewing submitted reports in the Rio conventions follows similar paths. All three conventions allow submission by both electronic and conventional means. The reports are analysed by the secretariat supported by a subsidiary body or a working group. In addition, all national reports/communications are posted on the Internet electronically to maximize the availability of reported information. However, the bodies involved and the final output of the analysis vary.

36. At the UNCCD, in accordance with The Strategy, analysis of the fourth reporting cycle is undertaken at global level for all regions in alignment with the five operational objectives, resulting in five analytical reports. In addition, information submitted via the PRAIS portal is made available through the query functions built into the PRAIS portal.

37. UNFCCC Parties submit their national communications to the UNFCCC secretariat. The communications are posted on the web and the secretariat synthesizes national communications in separate reports for Annex I and non-Annex I Parties. Those reports are then submitted for consideration to the subsidiary bodies and the COP. The annual inventory of GHG emissions of Annex I Parties is subject to an “in-depth” review conducted by an international team of experts which is coordinated by the secretariat. National communications from non-Annex I Parties are not subject to such a review, but they are considered by the expert group set up by the Subsidiary Body on Implementation to deal with issues relating to these communications.

38. The primary utilization of national reports by the CBD has been the compilation of the Global Biodiversity Outlook. The fourth national report will be used to measure progress towards the achievement of the 2010 Biodiversity Target, as well as to contribute to the third edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook. In addition, the CBD shares reported information and experience through the clearing-house mechanism (CHM),²⁴ which posts all national reports, coded, where possible, to facilitate online analysis and comparison of responses and to draw out particular similarities, differences and lessons.

²³ Decision VIII/18.

²⁴ Publicly available at <www.cbd.int/information/>.

III. Options promoting increased synergies in reporting

39. This chapter further develops options to enhance the synergies presented in the JLG options paper and elsewhere in order to discuss their applicability to the current context of the Rio conventions.

A. Refinement of the common substance of reporting requirements

40. The most radical option proposed to increase synergies in reporting on the Rio conventions is the development of a joint reporting format. The GEF secretariat views a joint reporting format as a great help in advancing synergies in reporting and envisages that the upcoming Rio+20 Conference in 2012 could become a milestone in creating and agreeing a joint reporting template. A first proposal for such a template was prepared in the context of the FNR-Rio project, together with the alternative suggestions outlined below.

41. Other options which head in a similar direction include: (a) the identification of common chapters or issues, and their subsequent integration into a unified “core report” (possibly with treaty-specific add-on reports addressing points that are not common to the three conventions); and (b) the development of modular report components, unifying specific questions on particular sectors or subjects.²⁵

42. In general, it appears that a single unified joint reporting template adopted at the global level would not provide benefits, since the review of reporting requirements under the Rio conventions has revealed relatively little substantive or technical overlap among the three conventions. In addition, the reporting templates are currently designed to fit the information needs of distinct reporting entities, not only between the conventions but also within the conventions.

43. The “core report” approach as applied by the Human Treaty System instead suggests that the conventions develop and agree a unified core report covering the “basic” or “core” information required under all three conventions, which would be supplemented by smaller treaty-specific reports that address the specific information needs of the conventions. Since sustainable development is the major concern shared by the Rio conventions, this suggests that a joint core report should be centred on the state and sustainable development of ecosystems.²⁶

44. Considering that most recent guidelines and templates of the three conventions do not require reiteration of any core information, but only request that Parties note significant changes or updates, it seems that the opportunity to promote the development of a core report has passed.

45. Modular reporting on agreed reporting modules presents another option in the direction of reporting against a single joint reporting template. Considering the above-mentioned areas of overlap in reporting among the Rio conventions, the areas of funding and financing, reporting on synergies in planning or reporting and impact indicator reporting on land cover, carbon stocks above and below ground or plant and animal biodiversity could be considered and piloted as special common reporting modules.

²⁵ UNEP-WCMC June 2009, ‘Preconditions for harmonization of reporting to biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements’, paragraph 17.

²⁶ UNEP-WCMC June 2010, ‘Evaluation of options for a joint reporting format for the three Rio Conventions’.

B. Common glossary or linking of glossaries

46. The development of a common glossary or the linking of glossaries for better cross-referencing is a critical precondition for any synergy in reporting, since differing terminology might make it impossible for one convention to use the data and report the responses gathered by another. As is noted above, however, the three conventions at present call for varying levels of precision with regard to report responses.

47. Although all three conventions provide glossaries of relevant terms,²⁷ only the UNCCD directly links its glossary to reporting (via the PRAIS portal). In its reporting process, the CBD focuses on broadening input, and as such allows each reporting Party to interpret the reporting terminology as it chooses. By contrast, the UNFCCC/KP includes many very specific reporting elements, such as the components of the GHG inventory. Although these terms must be addressed in a particular fashion, the UNFCCC/KP process clarifies each term's specific meaning through its guidelines, rather than relying on a glossary.

48. An alternative approach is to aim for improved integration of glossaries through improved interlinkages between the terms used in the various glossaries. Interlinked glossaries might allow for more unification or cooperation in the national data collection process, so that all reports could be based on the same underlying data. In this regard the secretariats at the JLG 11 meeting agreed to join efforts in linking their glossaries. As a first step, the glossary presented in document ICCD/COP(10)/INF.9 has taken into consideration the existing glossaries of the CBD and the UNFCCC.

C. Joint information systems

49. The electronic tools of the three conventions, such as the Clearing-House Mechanism of the CBD, the PRAIS portal and the UNFCCC/KP website, provide open access to a large number of reports and other national information. The development of joint systems of information management would allow for a more efficient use of convention resources, giving easier access to information. One way to do this could be the development of the joint information portal promoted by the JLG, which in 2004 decided to "proceed with ... the [implementation of a] portal for accessing national communications and reports", stressing that this work would focus on "the sharing of information and mutual learning, and would not involve the standardization of reporting or reporting formats".²⁸

50. Another option pursued by the JLG is to make the existing portals, websites, databases and other tools of the Rio conventions interoperable. At its fifth meeting, the JLG reported that "technical specifications for connecting databases of the conventions were published and a first test has been successfully made. Common up-to-date information on meetings and focal points related to all three conventions should be available soon on the three respective websites" and will be promoted in the context of the Ecosystem Pavilion at Rio +20 and elsewhere.²⁹

²⁷ See <www.cbd.int/cepa/toolkit/2008/doc/CBD-Toolkit-Glossaries.pdf> and <unfccc.int/essential_background/glossary/items/3666.php>, as well as the PRAIS portal.

²⁸ Report of JLG-5, 2004, available as FCCC/SBSTA/2004/INF.9, 8.

²⁹ Report of JLG-6, 2005, 4 (g).

D. National focal points coordination and process integration

51. A closer look at the institutions in charge of national reporting shows the potential to increase synergy effects through better coordination among the focal points and the various institutions involved. As is documented in annex I of document ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.9, 36 per cent of developing countries have designated all three Rio NFPs within the same ministry, and six per cent in the same agency. Formal cooperative arrangements between relevant institutions are a recognized requirement for the achievement of synergies at the national level. In addition, focal points that are the focal point of more than one convention create an important link between the different COPs. At the side-lines of CRIC 9, a round table meeting on synergies in reporting to the Rio conventions gathered national focal points who are either the focal point to two or three Rio conventions and who recognized their important role in promoting this matter.

52. A further key element to increase synergies in national reporting is the integration of stakeholder consultations, since national reporting processes in all three conventions increasingly emphasize participatory approaches, frequently calling on the same subset of agencies, other conventions' NFPs, civil society organizations and, to a lesser extent, science and technology institutions, to provide input and commentary.

53. The option of modular reporting has been tested successfully in several case studies aimed at a more effective distribution of data, data gathering and reporting responsibilities among national agencies and individuals.³⁰ In this undertaking, the reporting templates of the conventions could either remain entirely separate or be coordinated by the development of modular reporting components, unifying specific questions on particular sectors or subjects.³¹

54. Another option for more effective coordination of reporting at the national level is the development of national mechanisms for better integration of data collection and data management, such as establishing electronic tools for the centralized collection and dissemination of data, information and other materials, or improved coordination of the existing information networks.

55. Several case studies provide examples of how a central information collection system could effectively apportion the duty to collect information among many different agencies and officials and then, through the establishment of a central database, make the data accessible to all.³² The coordinated collection of reporting material and centralized data storage also have the benefit that the inclusive consultative process involved could draw together data that otherwise would not have been sourced. Furthermore, such a process would enable enhanced peer review of data by stimulating discussion and exchange among the various agencies involved.³³

³⁰ Case study, Panama, Sep. 2002; case study, Seychelles, May 2002; case study, Ghana (undated);

³¹ Case study, Indonesia, July 2003.

³² Case study, Panama, Sep. 2002; case study, Seychelles, May 2002; case study, Ghana (undated);

³³ Case study, Seychelles, May 2002.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

56. Based on the analysis of the reporting requirements of the Rio conventions undertaken in the present document, this report concludes that, in seeking to avoid substantive overlap in reporting formats, the development of selected common reporting modules, or the development of a core report that is complementary to the convention-specific reports, seem to be the most feasible options. In some areas of reporting, the development of common indicators or common methodologies might be considered, such as standard methodologies for measuring terrestrial ECVs, the use of Rio markers, reporting against a list of innovative sources of funding or reporting on synergistic implementation of action programmes.

57. The involvement of the other Rio conventions as an integral part of the iterative process applied by the UNCCD in the refinement of their indicators is also a feasible way to enhance synergies in reporting at the global level.

58. The outcomes of the JLG 11 meeting as well as the round table meeting at CRIC 9 suggest that there is a strong basis for collaboration on the development of tools for information sharing and joint data management, as well as other tools for streamlined reporting such as the development of a common glossary. The need for clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the JLG may lead to clarification of how the JLG may contribute actively to synergies in reporting.

59. To further advance along this route, a collaborative taskforce could be established to investigate further the value of the various information-sharing, portal-sharing and/or template-streamlining activities that have been suggested in this document.

60. Enhanced coordination between the NFPs and the sectors and line ministries involved, and the integration of data collection, validation and storing processes at the national level are the most effective, practical and feasible options to enhance synergies while making efficient use of available resources. Methodologies for reporting harmonization at the national level might include streamlining and broadening a country's information collection processes through mechanisms such as developing a single-source portal for the provision of report-related information and/or coordinating meetings and processes designed to maximize stakeholder participation in national reports.

61. Coordinated and coherent assistance to develop national capacities in reporting should be considered to support the successful implementation of enhanced synergies in reporting. The provision of joint capacity-building initiatives improves coordination at the national level and decreases the reporting burden while at the same time allowing for the more efficient use of available resources.

B. Recommendations

62. Parties at CRIC 10 may wish to initiate consultations on concrete options to enhance synergies in reporting, and to consider:

(a) Recommending Parties and stakeholders to develop national-level mechanisms for enhanced coordination of reporting, through formalization of information-sharing processes and building institutional linkages between the

ministries responsible for the implementation of each convention, as well as maximization of stakeholder interaction and active participatory processes;

(b) Recommending the establishment of a collaborative taskforce on synergies in reporting, involving NFPs and representatives from the three conventions, to address the range of options to increase synergies and produce concrete proposals for action;

(c) Providing substantive feedback on the terms of reference for the JLG as contained in document ICCD/CRIC(10)/18 in order to clarify the role of the group on issues relating to synergies;

(d) Requesting the CST to continue involving the other Rio conventions in the iterative process for the refinement of the UNCCD set of impact indicators

(e) Requesting the secretariat to assess capacity-development needs, along the lines of the options put forward by the collaborative taskforce, and to formulate a programme to meet the needs of a number of target countries wishing to develop national mechanisms to facilitate increased synergies in reporting;

(f) Inviting developed country Parties and financial institutions, including the GEF, to provide technical and financial support for joint capacity-building initiatives aimed at achieving increased synergies in reporting at the national level;

(g) Request the Executive Secretary to continue to promote synergies in reporting through the JLG and the United Nations Environmental Management Group, as appropriate;

(h) Inviting the JLG to promote the development and use of common terms and definitions, and to continue in its efforts to make interoperable the existing portals, websites, databases and other communications tools of the Rio conventions.

63. The CRIC may also wish to take account of the information and the options to increase synergies in reporting contained in the present document, and ensuing consultations on this matter, with a view to reporting to COP 10 on the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies, as requested by decision 8/COP.9.
