



**Convention to Combat  
Desertification**

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**Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties:**

**Consideration of the overall report on the fourth reporting and review process**

**Improving the procedures for communication of information  
as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to  
the Conference of the Parties: Overall report on the fourth  
reporting and review process**

**Report by the Executive Secretary**

*Summary*

This document contains an assessment of the fourth reporting and review process, prepared in response to decision 14/COP.10.

The assessment is the result of the analysis of the existing reports, analyses, surveys and evaluations relating to the reporting and review process, information and statistical data available in the secretariat, and feedback provided by Parties and other reporting entities during the current fourth reporting cycle (2010–2011 and 2012–2013).

Parties may wish to take into account the conclusions and recommendations contained in this report while deciding on possible adjustments on the current reporting and review process under the Convention.

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## **I. Introduction, background and methodology**

### **A. Legislative mandate**

1. By its decision 14/COP.10, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the Executive Secretary to submit an overall report on the fourth reporting and review process to the twelfth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), including on its procedures and outcomes, human and financial resource requirements, and the lessons learned and feedback received from Parties and other reporting entities through their reports.

2. The present document relies on the analysis commissioned by the secretariat to external consultants. Due to time limitation, the analysis has been performed as a desk study, based on prior reports, analyses, surveys and evaluations relating to the reporting and review process, information and statistical data available in the secretariat, and feedback provided by Parties and other reporting entities during the fourth reporting cycle (2010–2011 and 2012–2013).

### **B. Background**

#### **1. Reporting provisions in the Convention**

3. According to article 26 of the Convention, each Party shall communicate to the COP reports on the measures taken for the implementation of the Convention. In particular, affected country Parties (ACPs) shall provide a description of the strategies and priorities to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought, and a detailed description of the national action programmes (NAPs) and of their implementation, if they have established such programmes. Developed country Parties (DCPs) shall report on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes, including information on the financial resources they have provided, or are providing, under the Convention. Any group of ACPs may make a joint communication on measures taken at the subregional and/or regional levels in the framework of action programmes.

#### **2. From descriptive to quantitative, indicator-based reporting**

4. Reporting under the Convention started in 1999, and four reporting cycles have been completed to date (1999, 2002, 2004 and 2010–2012).

5. The reporting system employed during the first three reporting cycles used qualitative information on activities and progress at the national level provided by Parties as the primary source of information on the implementation of the Convention. These reports have proved useful, to some extent, for assessing the capacities of individual countries in addressing desertification, but made comparison of results across regions and over time impossible.

6. Progress in more systematically monitoring the implementation of the Convention started in 2001 with the establishment of the CRIC. However, it was only in 2007 with the adoption of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) that a systematic review of implementation of the Convention became possible. The performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) and its methodological tools (performance and impact indicators), as well as the new terms of reference of the CRIC adopted by the COP in 2009, opened the door to

a quantitative assessment of progress in the implementation of the Convention and evidence-based decision-making by its governing bodies.

7. Parties and other reporting entities are requested to report against performance indicators every two years and against impact indicators every four years. This enables the CRIC to conduct a full assessment of implementation every four years, the first of which (at the eleventh session of the CRIC (CRIC 11) in 2013) included a trend analysis for the achievement of global targets for the OOs, and a baseline assessment of strategic objectives (SOs) and their associated impact indicators.

8. Under the current reporting and review provisions, the second full assessment would take place in 2017 with the aim of providing the COP with sufficient material for an informed decision on a possible second term of The Strategy.

### **3. Adjustments in the reporting process**

9. The assessment of implementation of the Convention is focused on the review of indicators for the SOs and OOs, and other relevant information. While progress in the implementation of The Strategy is measured against performance indicators and their global targets, no targets have been identified with regard to the SOs and their impact indicators. A list of currently adopted indicators and targets and their current status is provided in annex IV.

10. The COP requested the secretariat, together with the Global Mechanism (GM), to use an iterative process to develop proposals for consideration at future sessions of the COP, starting with the tenth and eleventh sessions, in order to refine the set of performance and impact indicators and associated methodologies (decision 13/COP 9).

11. The COP also requested the CRIC to review the status of this iterative process during its sessions in 2010 and 2013, and to recommend a minimum set of performance indicators for consideration at the eleventh session of the COP (COP 11) in 2013.

12. The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) was mandated to advise on the best way to assess progress in meeting SOs 1, 2 and 3 during its sessions and to recommend a minimum set of impact indicators for consideration at COP 11 (decision 17/COP.9). In this context, a scientific peer review process for the refinement of the impact indicators was held between September 2010 and May 2011, and the Ad Hoc Advisory Group of Technical Experts on Impact Indicator Refinement (AGTE) was established by the COP at its tenth session in 2011, mandated with continuing the iterative participatory contribution from the scientific community on the refinement of impact indicators and monitoring and assessment of impacts (decision 19/COP.10). AGTE recommendations were issued in June 2013.

13. At the same time, the independent mid-term evaluation of The Strategy (to be conducted by the COP at its eleventh session in 2013), also offers the opportunity to introduce more substantial changes in both the reporting and review processes.

### **4. The transition from qualitative to quantitative reporting**

14. Implementing the new reporting and review system required a number of methodological, organizational and procedural changes that were initially discussed by Parties at CRIC 7, and were implemented soon after the set of key decisions was taken by the COP at its ninth session (decisions 11/COP.9, 12/COP.9 and 13/COP.9). These changes dealt not only with the format of reports, but also with the reporting obligations of all reporting entities, in order to be able to rely on an integrated set of information and data to conduct the global review that the CRIC was entrusted with.

15. Consequently, and in order to facilitate the submission and review of reports according to the new system, a number of products and services were made available to Parties and other reporting entities at the beginning of 2010 in order to prepare for the first leg of the fourth reporting and review cycle.

16. Products included reporting templates, guidelines and a glossary, whereas services included the establishment of an online reporting platform and the training of reporting entities with regard to the compilation of the required data and subsequent submission to the CRIC.

17. Training and technical assistance were offered in 2010 through 14 subregional and regional reference centres. These activities were developed in the context of a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/Global Environment Facility (GEF) project in 2010–2011 aimed at assisting ACPs in meeting the new reporting obligations (the PRAIS project).

18. In order to facilitate the interpretation and the analysis of the information provided by the various reporting entities, an analytical assessment framework was also developed by the secretariat in 2010. The framework has been revised following the fine-tuning of indicators and reporting tools.

19. A pilot tracking exercise involving eleven ACPs on impact indicators for SOs 1, 2 and 3 was carried out in 2011, and led to the finalization of relevant reporting templates for reporting in 2012. Templates for reporting on performance indicators were refined in 2012, based on the results of 2010 reporting and feedback received from reporting entities.

20. Financial reporting is based on a standard financial reporting format (Standard Financial Annex (SFA) used by ACPs and their development partners. The progress in the utilization of available resources and in the implementation of programmes and projects contributing to the Convention's objectives is verified through Programme and Project Sheets (PPSs) that provide detailed information on each programme or project designed, undertaken or completed in the reporting period.

21. At the same time, the compilation and dissemination of best practices has addressed only one of the seven thematic topics of best practices, and gathered a number of comments and recommendations by Parties that have been widely addressed in the documentation prepared by the secretariat in this regard.

22. While the main focus has been put on the assessment of implementation and the required adjustments, less relevance has been given to the performance review of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies. The assessment and monitoring of the performance and effectiveness of the CRIC has not been conducted by the Committee to date – as prescribed by The Strategy – and will be addressed for the first time by the COP as part of the mid-term evaluation of The Strategy to take place at COP 11.

### **C. Scope and methodology of the report**

23. This report provides an assessment of the reporting and review system against four main review criteria:<sup>1</sup>

(a) Relevance: the extent to which the reporting and review system is consistent with the objectives of The Strategy and appropriate to the Parties' and other stakeholders' needs, priorities and policies;

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<sup>1</sup> See annex I for details on the assessment criteria.

(b) Effectiveness: the extent to which reporting and review activities are supporting the achievement of the objectives of The Strategy;

(c) Efficiency: the extent to which the resources/inputs (measured in terms of human and financial resources and time employed) invested in reporting and review have been converted into expected results;

(d) Participation: the extent to which the Parties and other relevant stakeholders are actively engaged in the reporting and review processes.

## II. Reporting process

### A. Elements of reporting

#### 1. Assessment of issues with strategic and operational objectives, impact and performance indicators, and related targets

**Are indicators and targets consistent with the overall goals of The Strategy, its strategic and operational objectives, and Parties' desertification/land degradation and drought-related needs, priorities and policies?**

Yes. In general, indicators and targets are consistent with the overall goals of The Strategy, objectives and targets, as well as Parties' needs, priorities and policies. Nevertheless, further adjustments would be needed to improve their relevance.

24. Current limiting factors include:

(a) The lack of a common and workable methodology for the delineation of affected areas with reference to indicators for SOs 1–3;

(b) The complexity of the relationship between impact indicators for SOs 1–3 and the implementation of the Convention, as there may be several causes for the identified impacts. As an example, poverty may have many determinants other than desertification;

(c) Progress towards SO 3 cannot be measured as impact indicators have not been defined;

(d) Indicators for SO 4 and data on financial flows pose a heavy burden on country Parties and would therefore need to be further clarified and simplified;

(e) Reporting under performance indicators requires considerable resources both in gathering and analysing the data;

(f) The linkages between OOs and SOs and their related indicators are not clearly identified.

**Are indicators and targets, as currently defined, a good way to measure progress towards the objectives of The Strategy?**

Yes. The use of indicators has proven to be an effective tool to measure progress towards objectives and targets of programmes both at the global and national levels. The interpretation of indicator trends could be improved.

25. The use of indicators requires the definition of coherent interpretative frameworks linking the trends of the main variables/indicators to progress. Such an interpretative

framework has not been defined yet and would be particularly relevant for the interpretation of trends in impact indicators.

26. Parties adopted on a provisional basis a set of targets for the OOs with a view to assessing whether global-level achievements can be recorded. Despite methodological constraints, targets and trend analyses of the achievement of targets have become important tools to measure success and identify bottlenecks in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Without targets, analysis at global level would be less focused. It would therefore be advisable to adopt quantitative targets for impact indicators as well.

**Have indicators and targets, as currently defined, achieved the goal of providing a good basis for the quantifiable assessment of achieving the goals set in the Convention and The Strategy?**

Yes, largely. The indicator-based approach adopted in the fourth reporting cycle provides a good basis for quantifying progress towards the implementation of the Convention. Nevertheless, assessment tools can be improved.

27. The analytical framework for impact and performance indicators devised by the secretariat is a considerable step forward when compared with the approach used in the first three reporting cycles.

28. On the other hand, information submitted under the new approach has been mainly used in a static way, for preliminary analysis and the preparation of official documents. This is also due to the fact the PRAIS portal does not include an analytical module. The use of the information could be furthered by making available online the results of the analysis as well as dynamic analytical functions.

**Have Parties and other stakeholders been involved in definition of indicators and targets?**

Yes. Parties and other stakeholders, including UNCCD bodies, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and the scientific community, have been broadly involved in the definition of indicators.

29. Up to 300 experts and 95 ACPs were involved in the refinement of impact indicators for SOs 1–3 (see annex III, table 1, and sections below for further details on the refinement process).

30. In addition, a process for the refinement of performance indicators could be envisaged to enhance the opportunities for Parties and other stakeholders to be involved in the forthcoming reporting cycle. However, time constraints that may impact the timing of official sessions would need to be considered, in particular the intersessional session of the CRIC foreseen for 2014. In fact, an elaborated feedback system in place for Parties to comment and contribute to the refinement of reporting templates may result in a postponement of CRIC 13 to 2015. The secretariat could be requested to elaborate, for Parties' consideration, different refinement scenarios on how to involve Parties in the refinement of performance indicators due to be reported on in 2014.

## 2. Reporting format and templates

**Are the current reporting format and templates appropriate to report on indicators and targets as currently defined?**

Yes, but refinements would be needed to achieve further simplification, as frequently requested in feedback received by Parties and other stakeholders.

31. The current format for templates is rather static and contains much text with explanations which makes the compilation of the reports difficult. This explanatory text could be taken out from templates and made available online by exploiting the PRAIS platform capabilities.

32. Parties have also requested the format of the report to be adjusted in order to be able to use the report itself as a means of communication, advocacy, awareness-raising and decision-making at national level.

33. The current plans to re-engineer the PRAIS portal would address most of the problems encountered. In addition, the revised portal should make online analytical and reporting functions available for country Parties and other stakeholders in support of their specific needs.

**Have the reporting format and templates been conducive to the improved reporting by Parties and other stakeholders?**

Yes. The current reporting format allows for a systematic collection of data and quantitative analysis.

34. Previous reporting templates were descriptive and did not follow a specific template. This did not allow for measuring progress and making comparisons across countries and reporting cycles.

35. Adjustments made to reporting templates, based on the requests made by Parties, may have had some influence, although limited, on the comparability of data across time.

36. It would be advisable to enhance the functionality of the PRAIS portal to allow Parties and other reporting entities to access already reported data online in the reporting template in order to minimize statistical outliers and methodological difficulties in collecting and processing data at national level.

**How efficient was the delivery of templates for reporting?**

The preparation and refinement of reporting tools has been a lengthy process, which is still ongoing. The refinement of reporting tools, including templates, has in general required many resources and much time (resource statistics are provided in annex III, table 1).

37. Before launching PRAIS, performance indicators were consolidated in order to reduce the number of indicators. A pilot exercise and a scientific review were carried out to fine-tune the templates for the impact indicators for SOs 1, 2 and 3.

38. While deciding on the extent to which refinement of templates and guidelines is necessary, Parties need to be aware of the staff time and financial resources needed to undertake this assignment. Currently, there are several templates for several reporting entities that need to be refined in a coherent fashion for the next reporting leg due for 2014. Staff of the secretariat, including the assistance of external expertise recruited for this purpose, is very limited and may impact the reporting deadlines and the way the CRIC may be enabled to review information.

**Have the reporting format and templates been conducive to the increased reporting by Parties and other stakeholders?**

This is difficult to assess at this stage of development, as only two reporting legs can be compared and the introduction of the new reporting system has been gradual and would need some time before it is implemented in full.

39. Reporting rates, as measured by number of reporting Parties, decreased from the first to the second leg of the fourth reporting cycle. This, however, may be the consequence of a number of other factors, including time constraints, decrease and/or delay in disbursement of funds, and the lack of a specific training programme in the second leg, as reported by Parties themselves. See annex III, table 2, for reporting statistics.

40. On the other hand, several countries have reported after the official deadline and the information they provided has yet to be analysed at the time of the writing of this document. Besides reporting rates, increases in reporting should also be measured by the number of countries for which data are available on a particular question/indicator.

### 3. Iterative process

#### **Have appropriate activities been undertaken to improve the reporting format and templates?**

Yes, to a large extent. In the framework of the iterative process, a number of activities have been undertaken to improve reporting tools. However, further work would still be needed to achieve further simplification and improve coherence between the templates for different reporting entities, as well as improve online reporting tools.

41. Activities which were carried out comprise upgrades and new functionalities added to the reporting tools, including revised and new templates, new layout for easier reporting, functionalities to reduce the need for technical support, and an offline version to facilitate data gathering and compilation at national level. Further details on the iterative process for impact indicators can be found in annex III, table 1.

#### **Has the feedback received on the need for the improvement/simplification of reporting format and templates been considered in the revised reporting templates and guidelines?**

Yes.

42. With reference to performance indicators: reporting format has been simplified, and guidelines for collecting data were prepared following the feedback from the 2010 reporting cycle. The feedback received in the 2012 reporting cycle suggests that further simplification is required (see section below).

43. Further simplification and the improved efficiency of reporting tools will also be achieved by improving online reporting and the PRAIS portal along the lines described in the study commissioned by the secretariat (see section on technical elements below for further details).

#### **Difficulties in reporting on specific indicators**

According to the feedback provided by the reporting entities in the second leg of the fourth reporting cycle through the evaluation of the indicators' e-SMART (economic – Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Relevant – Time-bound) criteria, major difficulties include (1) the measurability of indicators for OO 1, in particular indicator CONS-O-1 on the number of information events; (2) issues with the two mandatory impact indicators for SOs 1–2 (in particular high costs for data collection and processing, lack of standardized methodologies

for their measurement, and difficulties with the interpretation of trends); and (3) the specificity of the four impact indicators measuring SO 4.

44. This analysis is the result of an evaluation carried out in 2012, following relevant provisions on the iterative process. In particular the evaluation focused on the e-SMART criteria used in the development of the indicators. The evaluation included 16 performance indicators, the two mandatory impact indicators for SOs 1–3 and four impact indicators for SO 4. The results are provided in annex II, box 1. Further details are discussed in the relevant sections on national and subregional reporting.

45. In addition, DCPs reported difficulties with the compilation of the Standard Financial Annex and Project and Programme Sheets. Further details are provided in the section on national reporting.

**Can clear progress in the quality and quantity of information provided in reports be detected?**

This is difficult to assess, as there are no quantitative tools in place for the measurement of data quality. Observed problems with data quality are mainly due to the use of different measurement units and the interpretations of specific questions. In addition, few reporting entities have provided inconsistencies and partially contradictory responses in the two reporting legs.

46. A brief discussion on quality issues is reported in the section dealing with national reporting. Detailed statistics on a number of countries reporting for each indicator (completeness of reporting) is not available.

47. Quality can be improved in extending guidelines, providing training and including quality control procedures in the PRAIS portal.

**How efficient was the process of refining impact indicators?**

The process has been lengthy, partially due to the need to involve a number of stakeholders, and it is not yet concluded to date.

48. The resources required for the refinement of indicators for SOs 1–3 and related reporting tools are summarized in annex III, table 1.

49. The thorough process for the definition and the refinement of impact indicators has led to a set of indicators that are based on sound science. However, data requirements under current definitions are very demanding on Parties. This may indicate that data availability and technical capabilities at national level were not sufficiently taken into account in the choice of indicators and related metrics. The AGTE was established in 2011 to address questions relating to impact indicators for SOs 1–3. Its outcomes are being made available at COP 11 in 2013.

**Have Parties and other stakeholders been involved in the improvement of the reporting format and templates?**

Yes, to a large extent. Stakeholders had the opportunity to provide structured feedback on difficulties in reporting under current indicators and reporting templates.

50. Up to 300 scientists and a large majority of country Parties have been consulted on impact and performance indicators. Further feedback was provided by the Parties and other stakeholders at CRIC sessions.

## B. Technical aspects of reporting

### Performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) portal

#### Has the feedback received on the need for the improvement of the PRAIS portal been considered?

Yes, and activities are still ongoing. The secretariat recently commissioned a study to identify activities and resources needed for the improvement of the portal.

#### Has the PRAIS portal facilitated reporting and the availability/use of information contained in reports?

Yes, in broad terms. The delivery of data through the PRAIS portal has presented the possibility of storing the information received and structuring it in a database, thus facilitating its further use and analysis. However, the functionality and performance of both the portal and the information management tools should be further improved. Besides the problems encountered by a large number of reporting entities in using the portal for reporting purposes, a major shortcoming can be identified in the difficulty of accessing the stored information in a dynamic and structured way due to the lack of dedicated database management tools and data browsing functions.

51. Nearly two thirds of all reporting entities experienced difficulties of some kind with the PRAIS portal. The difficulties most frequently reported (60 per cent) relate to technical aspects of the portal, while methodological aspects seem to be less relevant.

52. Parties that had not submitted their reports before the deadline reported difficulties in reporting due to: (1) the overload of the system close to the deadline; (2) slow feedback from the help desk; (3) complexity of the templates; (4) the understanding of the indicators; (5) poor guidelines; (6) poor translation; (7) lack of regional training; and (8) difficulties in uploading files.

53. The internal assessment mentioned above indicated that the technological infrastructure of the portal is not optimal.

#### How efficient has the development of the PRAIS portal been?

Even though the PRAIS portal has enabled the online submission of reports in the fourth reporting cycle and the storage of information in a database for further analysis, the current solution is not optimal and would require a major upgrade.

54. The PRAIS portal was developed as a component of the PRAIS project, and the resources employed in the development of the portal were less than 3 per cent of the total costs of the project (annex II, box 2). Before the completion of the project, the responsibility of portal operation was transferred to the secretariat (mid-2011). Since then, the maintenance and development of the PRAIS portal has not been supported by core budget allocations.

55. The assessment of the PRAIS portal (2013, ongoing) identified several shortcomings in the online application currently employed that would need to be addressed to improve its functionality. It was estimated that carrying out improvements would require over 100 person days altogether.

56. Overall, the solution was found inflexible and over-engineered compared to the actual needs. This is likely to be the reason for the current low performance of the application and the frequent system timeouts.

57. The suggested improvements include, among other things:

- (a) Implementing an alternative software solution based on state-of-the-art tools;
- (b) Improving the database structure;
- (c) Developing data quality protocols;
- (d) Improving the public interface, content management and database structure;
- (e) Allowing for interoperability with other platforms (United Nations and other international organizations);
- (f) Introducing layout management.

**Number of Parties and other reporting entities reporting online**

The reports received and submitted online in the fourth reporting cycle were 131 in 2010 and 98 in 2012 (including reports submitted after the official deadlines), with a decrease by about 25 per cent from the first to the second leg (reporting statistics are included in annex III, table 2).

An overwhelming majority of the reporting entities used online tools to submit their reports.

**C. Organizational aspects of reporting**

**1. Assessment of issues relating to the organizational aspects of reporting, including timing and costs**

**Is the frequency of reporting posing a burden to Parties and other reporting entities that cannot be justified?**

Generally, no. However, simplifications in reporting obligations and reporting templates would help make the burden smaller and/or more balanced. The establishment and regular maintenance of national desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) monitoring systems would also make it possible for Parties to continuously monitor the implementation of the Convention and The Strategy, and to use the data gathered for reporting in a more sustainable manner.

**Are the two- and four-year reporting cycles appropriate for measuring progress on operational and strategic objectives?**

Yes. While the performance indicators mainly deal with activities that can change considerably in a relatively short period of time, impact indicators can serve to measure progress in combating desertification that can be attained only over the medium- and long-term. The current frequency of reporting allows for two full assessments of implementation within the timeframe of The Strategy (2013 and 2017).

**Has the GEF support to the reporting process been timely and adequate?**

No. The single most commonly recurring issue indicated by Parties for not submitting the report in 2012 was the late availability of GEF funding. This led to lacks in capacity or shortages in personnel for the reporting process, which in turn led to no or late submissions of reports. Many Parties initiated the reporting process after receiving the funding, in many cases after the deadline. Furthermore, while no regional/subregional training was delivered, there was limited remote technical assistance; this was also one of the main reported problems with reporting.

58. During the second leg of the fourth reporting and review process, entitled Parties were allowed to receive financial support from the GEF, against the resources available for enabling activities. Funding up to USD 150,000 per eligible country was offered as a contribution for the national costs of reporting and the alignment of action programmes through three different access modalities.

59. A total of 93 of the 144 eligible Parties applied for these funds, the large majority using the umbrella projects implemented by UNEP. Although this modality offered less funding (up to USD 50,000 per country), many countries found the GEF procedures for direct access cumbersome and very lengthy. Other countries claimed lack of capacity to prepare the project portfolio required for direct access, while others were reluctant to apply for these funds altogether, referring to complexity of GEF process and expressing the view that the sums were insufficient. Many countries complained that the delivery of funds took an inordinate length of time (more than 12 months in some cases).

60. The analysis shows that under the direct access modality, no country was able to get funding in time for the reporting process 2012–2013 and, under the umbrella projects, only 20 countries received money (shortly) before the extended reporting deadline.

**Are the financial and human resources for organizing the reporting process by Convention institutions and bodies sufficient?**

Considerable resources were employed by Convention institutions in the fourth reporting cycle, corresponding to over USD 2.8 million and nearly 19 person years. Additional financial and human resources would be needed in order to steer the reporting process and carry out the necessary improvements discussed in other sections of this document.

61. Box 3 in annex II gives an overview of the financial resources used for reporting. The details on resources employed are summarized in annex III, tables 3, 4 and 5.

## 2. Training

**Was the amount of training and the format/content appropriate and commensurate to needs?**

In the first leg, yes. No training was delivered in the second leg.

62. As a part of the PRAIS project, training was offered to national representatives in 2010. The training process started with a ‘training of trainers’ workshop, which was followed by training workshops at the 14 subregional reference centres as well as technical support during the reporting process. As a result, there has been a significant enhancement of national capacity to conduct indicator-based assessments, report progress against comparable indicators and establish systematic national monitoring and assessment systems to inform UNCCD reporting. This increased capacity was reflected in the very high report submission rate by ACPs in 2010.

63. The selected reference centres are specialized institutions in the subregions/regions or at global level with a recognized mandate in sustainable land management and/or regional coordination, and which have recognized experience in UNCCD implementation.

**Can a link be established between training and the number and quality of reports submitted?**

Yes. There was a very high reporting rate in the first leg, in spite of the completely new reporting approach and the short period of time given for reporting. This can to a large extent be attributed to the existence of training and support. This is supported by the fact that the very few Parties that did not submit their report in the first leg indicated that this was because of insufficient training. This is diametrically opposite to the second leg, where an overwhelming majority of the Parties that did not submit their report pointed out the lack of training.

**Financial and human resources made available for training**

The ‘training of trainers’ workshop trained 32 participants from 14 reference centres, along with another 20 from regional agencies. This was a very cost-efficient approach. Altogether, approximately USD 970,000 were spent in training activities.

**Number of reporting entities/persons participating in training**

Altogether, some 350 persons from 143 Parties took part in the training. The training workshops were very effective in fostering cooperation and interaction among Parties.

### III. Reporting issues of relevance to various reporting entities

#### A. National reporting

1. **Assessment of issues the Parties face with regard to reporting: data availability, data accessibility, data quality, data comparability, data management, institutional coordination, time, human resources, capacity and funding**

**Data availability and accessibility at national level**

Counties have reported problems with accessibility of data due to poor coordination at the national level. This is because data are not held in a central data repository, but are distributed across different national organizations. Impact indicators for SOs 1–3 are also quite data intensive, and availability of data is currently perceived as a major issue.

64. The problems that have been reported with regard to accessibility of data seems to be due to a lack of coordination at the national level rather than the lack of monitoring systems, as described below.

**Quality of data provided**

Some problems with data quality have been identified during the analysis, in particular for the impact indicators for SOs 1–2. For most other indicators, quality issues generally include the misinterpretation of questions, reporting out-of-range numeric values, and problems derived from the definition of some performance indicators.

65. Many of the problems identified could be prevented by introducing more effective validation checks in the PRAIS portal. On the other hand, solving quality issues encountered in the analysis of information on impact indicators would require action on several fronts, both at the national and global levels (including the use of additional resources for reporting, implementation of a validation procedure and quality control frameworks, use of international standards, and the further clarification and simplification of current methodologies for the population of specific indicators).

#### **Comparability and representativeness of data provided**

Data comparability has been identified as a major issue, in particular with respect to impact indicators. Major causes include the use of different methodologies, definitions and standards for data collection and monitoring at the national level; demanding or unclear methodologies adopted for specific indicators; use of proxies; and data quality issues. The current low reporting rates limit the representativeness of reported data, which also hampers the comparability of information across regions.

66. It can be reasonably expected that data comparability and representativeness will improve as the reporting process becomes more mature, with the further refinement of reporting tools, improvements in data quality, the achievement of higher reporting rates and the regular use of the information provided in the reports. Training would be key to achieving a progressive harmonization of definitions and methodologies to measure impact indicators, and would significantly enhance the national capacity to report progress against comparable indicators.

#### **Management of data by Parties**

According to the analysis of information reported by ACPs, they seem to have a solid base of information on DLDD to be used for planning and reporting purposes. These systems (both DLDD- and non-DLDD-specific) may not cover all data needed for reporting under the UNCCD and further efforts would be needed to expand their scope.

67. About 70 per cent of the reporting ACPs have monitoring systems which can be used for planning and reporting purposes, but less than half of them could rely on DLDD-specific monitoring systems; the rest have a monitoring system that partially covers DLDD.

#### **Level of institutional coordination**

About 90 per cent of reporting ACPs are satisfied with the coordination with relevant line ministries.

68. Nevertheless, Parties have reported the lack of coordination in national institutions holding the data, the lack of coordination with financing institutions and/or the lack of commitment as reasons which may have led to low reporting rates.

#### **Completeness of reporting**

A detailed analysis on the number of countries which replied to specific questions was not carried out as part of this study. The level of completeness of reports submitted by ACPs in 2012 was 90 per cent, which is similar to the level achieved in the 2010 reporting exercise. With respect to impact indicators for SOs 1–3, out of the 71 ACPs that submitted their

report on time, the majority provided a response on the two minimum indicators and some half of them used the common baselines and methodology as defined by the CST.

69. Detailed information on completeness of reporting is available on impact indicators for SOs 1–3. Forty-two per cent of all ACPs provided information on impact indicators for SOs 1–3. However, not all Parties delivered quantitative information, resulting in a global data coverage varying from 7 to 36 per cent, depending on the specific question. The coverage and comparability of reported national data have in general not been sufficient for obtaining statistically representative results from the analyses.

#### **Timing**

In the 2012 reporting exercise, reports were submitted on time by 71 ACPs and 9 DCPs, while 2 reports were withdrawn after submission. An additional 13 per cent of reports were submitted after the official deadline (9 reports from ACPs and 4 from DCPs). In general, the time required for completing reports spanned 6 to 12 months.

#### **Resources invested in reporting (financial, human)**

Nearly 60 per cent of all ACPs who answered this question reported that they did not have enough resources available for UNCCD reporting, a slight increase with respect to the previous reporting cycle. All responding DCPs could count on enough resources in both cycles.

70. Detailed information on financial resources from national budgets and human resources dedicated to UNCCD reporting is summarized in annex II, box 4. See also annex III, table 3 and figure 1, for supporting data on financial resources.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Access to technical/scientific knowledge**

Over 70 per cent of reporting country Parties could count on sufficient knowledge for UNCCD reporting in 2012, against 85 per cent in 2010. Comparisons can hardly be done, however, due to the lower number of countries reporting on this question in 2012.

#### **Reporting statistics**

The number of reporting country Parties has declined since 2006. The number of country Parties which submitted their reports decreased by about 40 per cent in 2012 with respect to 2006 (95 reports submitted by ACPs and DCPs and subregional entities in 2012, including reports submitted after the deadline, against 158 reports submitted in 2006).

71. It must be said that this decrease does not necessarily indicate a decline in the amount of information available on the implementation of the Convention as the format of previous reporting cycles was mainly descriptive in nature and did not allow for such assessments.

72. A reduction in the number of reports submitted can also be observed in the fourth reporting cycle. The total number of reports from country Parties has declined by about one

<sup>2</sup> This assessment is based on an updated analysis of additional information, which takes into account all countries which reported during the first leg (up to July 2012) and countries which reported during the second leg (up to December 2012).

fourth in 2012 with respect to 2010. In 2012, less than half the total number of reports due were submitted (see annex III, table 2).

73. The likely causes of this decline include less and/or late funding available for UNCCD reporting, lack of training and time constraints. It is also worth considering that the overall reporting burden has increased, especially for ACPs, with the launch of reporting on impact indicators.

#### **Level of participation and consultation in the reporting process**

A participatory approach was applied for nearly all reporting Parties. Nearly two thirds of countries which provided information held validation meetings in 2010 and 2012.

74. In the countries where validation meetings were not held, this was mainly because of time constraints. Similar percentages are reported by ACPs regarding active cooperation at the regional and subregional levels.

#### **Issues specific to reporting by DCPs**

DCPs are challenged in particular by the quantity of information required to complete the SFA and PPS. This is compounded by the burden of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reporting process, which is not completely aligned with UNCCD reporting requirements, in particular in terms of timing.

## **2. Link between reporting and national action programmes and their alignment with The Strategy**

#### **Can the alignment of the NAP with The Strategy improve the quality and completeness of reporting?**

Yes. Considering the current situation with NAP formulation/alignment, it is expected that the alignment of the NAP with The Strategy could contribute to both quality and quantity of reporting. In fact, to date, only less than 7 per cent of all ACPs have reported to have a NAP aligned with The Strategy which included socioeconomic information.

#### **Amount of joint investments for NAP alignment and reporting**

In 2012, for the first time, eligible ACPs could access an average of USD 52,000 through GEF financing for enabling activities, including reporting under the UNCCD, for a total of nearly USD 1.9 million.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> This is based on the results presented in document ICCD/CRIC(11)/15.

75. According to information provided in the reporting process, 40 countries reported that they applied for GEF financing, distributed as follows: 57 per cent through a GEF implementation agency (about USD 1.4 million disbursed); 23 per cent through the umbrella project (USD 270,000 disbursed), and 20 per cent through the GEF secretariat (USD 200,000 disbursed). These percentages are significantly different from the actual commitments as reported by the GEF. Comparing the funding modality with actual reports submitted, it is interesting to note that those countries which were supported by a GEF implementing agency were able to report before the deadline more often than those which applied for the other funding modalities.

## B. Subregional and regional reporting

76. The significance of the evaluation presented here is bounded by the low number of entities which submitted their reports. In fact, in 2012, only 3 subregional entities submitted their reports so far out of the 3 regional entities and 13 subregional entities identified by the Regional Implementation Annexes. However, feedback was received from 3 subregional and/or regional entities that could not submit their report in time; they provided this feedback through the survey conducted by the secretariat.

### 1. Assessment of issues encountered in reporting at subregional and regional levels

#### Data availability and accessibility at subregional and regional levels

##### Quality of data provided

No specific problems were reported on both matters.

#### Comparability and representativeness of data provided

Due to the limited information provided it is not possible to make an evaluation of data comparability.

#### Management of data in subregional and regional action programmes

Only 1 of the 3 reporting subregions has a subregional monitoring system in place, which has been used exclusively in the context of the Convention. There are plans in all 3 subregions to support a total of 25 ACPs in establishing DLDD-dedicated monitoring systems, although many issues have been reported as hampering this process.

#### Level of institutional coordination

Two out of three entities were satisfied with the level of coordination with the relevant ACPs at the subregional level and liaise with the respective Regional Coordination Units. Less developed has been the collaboration with regional committees (where established).

#### Completeness of reporting

No information available.

#### Timing

All three subregional entities reported on time. No other subregional and/or regional entities reported after the deadline.

#### Resources invested in reporting

Regional and subregional reporting has been supported by the secretariat with a total amount of nearly USD 188,000.

With respect to human resources, a total of five people from these institutions were involved in reporting (70 person days at an average of 23 person days per entity).

**Access to technical/scientific knowledge**

Only one entity reported that it could not count on sufficient knowledge.

**Number of institutions designated as subregional and regional reporting entities**

Sixteen institutions have been designated to date. This includes thirteen sub-regional/regional entities and three regional entities.

**Reporting statistics**

For the first time, in 2012, three subregional entities submitted their reports.

**Level of participation and consultation in the reporting process**

The preparation of subregional reports was undertaken in cooperation with relevant ACPs only to a limited extent. However, two subregional entities provided support to the countries of their respective subregions in the preparation of their national reports.

77. Two of the three reports were validated by the relevant ACPs. In some cases, national focal points are not fully aware of all the activities undertaken in their respective region/subregion.

78. This is one of the major drawbacks of reporting in the second leg. During the first leg, 14 subregional and regional organizations were involved in training and technical assistance during the reporting process, without any specific commitments with regard to subregional/regional reporting. Many sources quoted this assistance as very effective in securing countries' participation in the 2010–2011 reporting period.

**2. Link between reporting and regional/subregional action programmes****Can the alignment of the subregional/regional action programmes with The Strategy improve the quality and completeness of reporting?**

Yes, undoubtedly. Unfortunately, none of the subregional entities have aligned their action programmes yet.

79. The reasons for non-alignment include limited availability of baseline information at subregional level; lack of financial resources; lack of coordination with relevant subregional organizations and existing programmes; and lack of institutional clarity on how the alignment process at subregional level should be undertaken.

### C. Reporting by United Nations agencies/intergovernmental organizations, the Global Environment Facility and civil society organizations

**Is reporting as currently conceived of relevance for United Nations agencies/intergovernmental organizations, the Global Environment Facility and civil society organizations?**

Not sufficiently. The low reporting rates of United Nations agencies/IGOs show that they do not consider the UNCCD reporting a priority, which has the consequence that important information on the implementation of the Convention is missing. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are expected to report directly to the CRIC, only on best practices.

**Reporting statistics**

In the first leg, only two United Nations agencies/IGOs reported (both after the deadline), and in the second leg, none. The GEF reported in both legs. Twenty-one CSOs reported in the first leg, and none in the second leg.

80. Undoubtedly, the introduction of indicator-based reporting caused a drastic decrease in the reports from United Nations agencies/IGOs (from 23 reports in the third reporting cycle to only two in the fourth one). This is likely due to the considerable effort that is required for indicator-based reporting as compared to the narrative report previously submitted.

81. Decisions 1/COP.9, 11/COP.9 and 13/COP.9 opened the door for reporting from accredited CSOs. Decision 14/COP.10 further clarified this matter. CSOs are invited to report on best practices and to provide collaborative reports directly to the CRIC. In addition, they are also invited to provide information on relevant performance indicators through national focal points. In 2010, 11 reports were received on best practices (on sustainable land management technologies, including adaptation) before the reporting deadline, and another 10 after the deadline. No reports were submitted by CSOs in 2012–2013. No collaborative reports were submitted by CSOs in either leg. The question as to whether or not CSOs should provide information on some indicators to the CRIC is still in deliberation, whereby the Intersessional Working Group to Prepare Recommendations on the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Strategy (IWG) should revise and propose the content and format of any future reporting process for CSOs. Unfortunately, the IWG did not address this matter in its report to the COP.

82. The GEF reported in both legs. However, there is still room for improvement in the completeness of data submitted by the GEF.

**To what extent can the information submitted by United Nations agencies/intergovernmental organizations, the Global Environment Facility and civil society organizations be used to assess the implementation of the Convention and The Strategy?**

Currently, very little information from United Nations agencies/IGOs is available for the review, apart from that provided by the GEF. Consequently, this information is of very limited use in the review process. The information submitted by CSOs is so far only on best practices and as such is expected to be disseminated but not analysed. There is no evidence of the actual contribution by CSOs in the reporting process through institutional channels; it is possible that the wealth of information that grassroots organizations have available may not reach the review process.

## D. Reporting by Convention institutions

### **Are the consolidated indicators against which the Convention institutions are reporting relevant?**

Currently, the secretariat is requested to report on five performance indicators, and the GM on four. In fact, the secretariat is the only reporting entity for CONS-O-2 (number of official documents and decisions at international, regional and subregional levels relating to DLDD issues) and CONS-O-12 (number of science and technology networks, institutions or scientists engaged in research mandated by the COP). Whereas all these indicators are considered relevant, there is room for fine-tuning and improvements as part of the iterative process. In its 2012 report, the secretariat proposed a number of ways in which this could be achieved.

### **Is the reporting of Convention institutions on the assessment of implementation (through performance indicators) adequately interlinked with the reporting relating to the performance review (work plans and programmes of Convention institutions)?**

Coherence between internal performance indicators of the Convention's institutions and those used in the assessment of implementation is not fully ensured. However, analogies between the sets of indicators for common outcome areas allow the assessment of implementation by the Convention institutions to be linked more closely with the performance review.

### **How efficient was the reporting process at the level of Convention institutions?**

The secretariat developed a very detailed internal protocol on the compilation of information relating to the assessment of implementation. Experience showed that this process was very cumbersome in the past, and there is still room for improvement.

## IV. Conclusions and recommendations

### A. The report as a monitoring tool to support national planning

83. Many Parties recognized that the communication of information in the UNCCD (as well as in other similar intergovernmental processes) is first and foremost a national level output which should be used internally to measure the implementation of NAPs (efficiency) as well as their impact on addressing DLDD (effectiveness).

84. The PRAIS portal has the unchallenged merit of having provided a first assessment of the implementation of the Convention according to the objectives and the targets of The Strategy. The system is clearly linked to The Strategy and its basic elements, and hence mirrors the same opportunities and challenges of The Strategy: measurability and accountability on the one side, and complexity and limited flexibility on the other side. Ideally, an ACP can only report properly and effectively – and measure the national performance in addressing land degradation – if a national planning instrument is in place and structured against the architecture of The Strategy. Unfortunately, the preparation/alignment of action programmes is lagging behind, and less than 10 per cent of the ACPs have such an instrument in place and operational.

85. Each affected Party, even if the NAP alignment process has not been completed yet, should establish voluntary national targets – consistent with the global targets identified by the COP – in order to measure progress in achieving the priorities established in the NAP.

86. National reporting and the process of aligning/implementing NAPs should be linked more closely, particularly when the Convention's institutions deliver training and technical assistance. Capacity development through subregional institutions has shown a very positive impact on reporting in 2010–2011 and should be maintained and associated with training on action programme alignment to ensure added value and positive cost-effectiveness of such an effort.

87. In this regard, the potential of subregional institutions as reference points for capacity development and other forms of assistance to affected countries in meeting their obligations under the Convention has not been exploited in 2012 and should be explored in the future. Subregional reporting entities selected by regions should be given extended responsibilities in the alignment and reporting process. Unfortunately, many of them would require financial support to deliver specific additional tasks, and GEF funding for enabling activities only cover national obligations.

88. In 2012, the secretariat provided financial resources to support subregional and regional reporting, but contributions were disbursed late in the year and had limited impact on the capacity of such institutions to fulfil the expectations. However, provisions for such institutions to assist countries in the region in the alignment of action programmes were not included in the financial allocations. Linking such assistance to reporting and alignment processes, at national and subregional level, would ensure scale economies and better results in terms of completeness and relevance of information provided at both levels.

## **B. Investing in the capital of information**

89. Late release of GEF funding – combined with the lack of training at the time the national report was the most demanding – is undeniably the main cause of the reduction in the number of reports received by the 2012 reporting deadline, compared to those received in the previous leg. As matter of fact, many countries have submitted the report after the deadline or are still preparing the national report.

90. The average cost of a national report is also a significant indicator: in 2010–2011, it was of approximately USD 55,000, while in 2012–2013 only USD 47,000 was invested on average, with fewer reports delivered and a greater incidence of fixed costs (annex III, table 4).

91. GEF funding for enabling activities for the land degradation focal area is much less than funding provided to the other focal areas, particularly when the amount released for the umbrella project is considered. Paradoxically, the reporting rate was much higher in 2010–2011 when only catalytic funding was provided (from USD 2,000 to USD 4,000 per country) and intensive training was provide to almost all countries involved in the first PRAIS reporting process.

92. The GEF and its implementing agencies should consider simplifying and shortening their procedures and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the process through which eligible Parties receive funding for enabling activities under the Convention in order to ensure the timely disbursement of funds. Complementing the enabling activities funding with targeted capacity development is an option that the GEF and other potential donors may consider in order to ensure a satisfactory level of reporting under the Convention and a better rate of return on the investments of human and financial resources being made.

### **C. Reliable information as a precondition for evidence-based decision making**

93. It is largely assumed that the quality of information fed into PRAIS, and hence the reliability of the outcomes of the reporting process, needs to be drastically improved to ensure the credibility of the review process and the efficacy of the recommendations of the CRIC.

94. Although the review system has been conceived as an instrument for a global assessment of the measures to combat desertification (see the terms of reference of the CRIC), its outcome (i.e. CRIC recommendations) is expected mainly at national level. This logical inconsistency has not been addressed so far.

95. To some extent, increasing the quality of information by adopting standard methodologies for the compilation of data is a false objective. First, it is hardly achievable at global level (even in the same regions, national capacity can vary greatly). Second, it would take very long time – much longer than the life span of The Strategy. As a result, it is unlikely that the global baseline assessment under the Convention would be fully reliable. The intergovernmental process would need to adjust (and live with) with this crude reality, at least in the short and medium term.

96. In the UNCCD process, an important step forward has been achieved in analysing the trends in achieving OOs. The inconsistent use of methodologies across countries/regions has been mitigated by comparing national progresses (or possibly trends) over time. Maintaining an imperfect but consistent methodology over time is key because it will allow for a reasonable expectation to achieve (national) targets by the global timeframe set by the COP (i.e. by 2014 for some performance indicators, and 2018 for most of them).

97. The PRAIS system is not meant for publishing statistics on land degradation. However, it succeeded in monitoring the OOs that have global targets set for the end of The Strategy period. Notwithstanding the scope of the PRAIS, the outcomes of the last two reporting processes have been analysed and presented with a statistical approach. While the current reporting process will never be able to gather information from the entire population of reporting entities, there are still uncertainties about the representativeness of the sample. Particularly in 2012, the limited number of reports submitted made some subregional analyses inconsistent, which were thus discarded. This also had a negative impact on regional analysis.

98. Parties should be encouraged to consistently report over the years, particularly at subregional level, in order for the CRIC to base its assessment on representative information. At the same time, the secretariat should assess the representativeness of samples (groups of countries facing similar challenges in the same region), where additional efforts should be made in order to reach the required threshold and ensure constant reporting.

99. Further low-cost improvements in data quality could be achieved upstream by providing more detailed reporting guidelines and training. The cost-efficiency of both options should be assessed. Quality checks on data submitted during the reporting period could hardly provide effective results; with the current frequency of reporting, there is insufficient time to get feedback from reporting entities on outliers unless data upload starts very early in the year. Parties should be invited to make full use of the online facility, including by uploading data as soon as it is available at national level. During the 2012 reporting process, 90 per cent of reports received were submitted during the last two weeks before the deadline, and 86 per cent of countries took less than 80 days from the first login to the submission of the report (30 per cent took less than 20 days). In these conditions,

there is no room for a real improvement of the quality of data in the course of the reporting exercise.

100. Nevertheless, establishing a data quality framework, including validation checks of data received through the PRAIS portal and the use of quality standards and procedures in the analysis of the information, would definitely increase the reliability of information and increase the trust of end users.

#### **D. Limitation of the current analysis of financial flows**

101. More difficult is achieving more meaningful outcomes in the reporting on, and the analysis of, financial flows in the implementation of the Convention, where a statistic approach is hardly applicable in the absence of targets and concrete expectations (or the probability to achieve a target). Such an approach would require that ACPs estimate the resource requirements to implement the NAP (or any other equivalent instrument, such as the integrated investment framework, where established) in a given period of time so that reporting would have some relevance at national level.

102. Notwithstanding these limitations, the GM should propose a more effective analysis of data from the SFA/PPS in order to match the information compiled through the performance indicators on OO 5 and – to the extent possible – the impact indicators on SO 4. Unfortunately, there is very little background on this matter from both ACPs and DCPs as the response is very limited and the global analysis only superficial. The IWG on the mid-term evaluation did not pay sufficient attention to this crucial aspect of the reporting process, which so far has not been able to substantiate the recurrent call for more substantial and predictable financial support to the implementation of NAPs and the Convention at national level.

103. The only reasonable request in this segment of reporting is for a simplification of the reporting procedures and an alignment to the procedure established in similar processes, notably financial reporting under the OECD framework. Far from being the optimal solution, this recommendation would at least increase the data available and its comparability against similar information provided by recipient countries.

104. The GM should be requested to take action in meeting the requests for coherent reporting on financial resources, including simplification of the reporting tools (SFA/PPS) and their alignment with the requirements of similar processes.

#### **E. Advantages of online reporting**

105. The pros of the online reporting make it evident that this practice should be maintained in future reporting processes. Online reporting not only produces digitalized data (at a very reasonable cost and ensuring data integrity at the source), but also creates an interface between the originator of the report and its (both internal and external) end users.

106. To enhance usability and fully exploit the potential of online reports, the format (layout) should be significantly improved. Partial and cumulative data for key indicators should be made available, which would also mitigate the risk of data entry errors. Only summarized information should be visible and ancillary information provided on request (pop-up windows). A simplification of the format would also increase the usability of the report as means of communication (for practitioners, decision-makers and the public at large), which would only be possible if the electronic online format is maintained.

107. The secretariat should drastically improve the performance of the PRAIS database as well as the way data is extracted and classified for the preliminary analysis. This has proven

to be a very weak point of the current platform, which has been designed in a complex and custom-tailored environment. The current system requires constant maintenance and complex improvements that depend on highly specialized and expensive expertise. Similarly, the current public interface should be improved, particularly for those countries that experience internet access and connectivity problems (70 per cent of the queries to the help desk are related to system and login problems).

108. The use of the information provided in reports could be further enhanced by making the results of the preliminary analyses available online on the PRAIS portal and allowing for dynamic analytical functions. This may also help improve the consistency and comparability of analyses carried out at different points in time as well as facilitate the use of the information in support of the specific needs of country Parties and other stakeholders.

109. In addition to the current plans to re-engineer the PRAIS portal to address most of the problems encountered with reporting formats and templates, the functionality of the PRAIS portal should be further enhanced to allow Parties and other reporting entities to access already reported data online in the reporting template in order to minimize statistical outliers and difficulties in collecting and processing data at national level. The revised PRAIS portal should support version management of both datasets and single data points.

## **F. Need for simplification**

110. The call to simplify the reporting process is so loud that it cannot be left unattended. It is also evident that reducing the reporting burden – particularly for affected developing country Parties – would theoretically increase the number of reports received (and the statistical significance of data) and very likely enhance the quality of information available.

111. After two rounds of reporting (first and second leg) under the revised procedures, it is time for the secretariat to perform an in-depth analysis (including a cost-efficiency analysis) of the information currently requested, the level of response by Parties and other reporting entities (real completeness of sections of the report), its actual use according the analytical framework, and its utility in the review process – both at national and global level.

112. In this regard, the recommendations of the IWG should also be taken into account, as they relate to the pertinence of such information to the overall review of implementation (performance indicators in particular). The analysis should lead to a reasonable simplification of the reporting templates with regard to both the quantitative as well as qualitative information required.

## **G. Tracking the impacts of the implementation of the Convention**

113. The first reporting against impact indicators for SOs 1 and 2 – and to some extent for SO 4 – has yielded very limited outcomes. The preliminary analysis document issued by the secretariat on SOs 1–3 concluded that the coverage and comparability of reported national data have in general been insufficient to obtain statistically representative results from the analysis. No indicators on SO 3 have been retained as mandatory for reporting purposes, and only three countries provided information on two optional impact indicators relating to this SO.

114. Because of the limited information available and its nature, as well as the methodology used in the compilation of relevant indicators, the first reporting process against the SOs did not allow for any reliable baseline assessment. As matter of fact, the CRIC was unable to provide any substantive recommendation and only provided advice –

as the CST did – on ways and means to improve methodologies to compile impact indicators. It is evident that this is one of the major flaws of the current reporting process. In short, there is no evidence that – even if properly implemented – the Convention and The Strategy would have concrete effects in the field.

115. The AGTE devised a number of recommendations on how to improve the relevance of current sets of indicators and targets, which are contained in document ICCD/COP(11)/CST/2, and are not reproduced here for sake of conciseness. Parties may wish to advise on the effectiveness of measures proposed by the AGTE in the short run (those aiming at improving information for the next reporting cycle against impact indicators in 2016) and those with long-term effects (application of more sophisticated procedures as national capacities are improved).

116. Developing national capacity to compile specific data on land degradation would definitely improve internal assessment and planning in the long run, but it would take a long time, and meeting the obligations of the next impact reporting (scheduled for 2015–2016) might not be possible. Missing this opportunity – the last before the end of the term of The Strategy – might undermine the credibility of The Strategy itself and counter the positive momentum created by its adoption in 2007. A realistic compromise between short- and long-term objectives should be reached by Parties in making a decision in 2013, which is the mid-term point in implementing The Strategy.

## **H. Final conclusions**

**117. The information submitted by countries and compiled through the PRAIS is the only quantitative source that the UNCCD can rely on. As the matter of fact, it has been used not only for the two global reviews conducted by the CRIC (in 2011 and 2013) but also for the mid-term evaluation of The Strategy.**

**118. Maintaining the internal consistency of the PRAIS and implementing limited adjustments in the methodological structure of the system – while drastically improving its performance and user-friendliness – is essential in order to obtain coherent information in four years' time. In 2017, the second complete sets of reports will be available, including the much needed assessment of baselines for the strategic objectives. This will form a solid and consistent knowledge base against which the Parties would decide on a second term for The Strategy and the required adjustments.**

## Overview of assessment criteria

<i>Area</i>	<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Element</i>	<i>Qualitative issues and quantitative parameters addressed under main criteria</i>
Reporting process	Elements of reporting	Assessment of issues with strategic and operational objectives, impact and performance indicators and related targets	<b>Are indicators and targets consistent with the overall goals of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy), its strategic and operational objectives, and Parties' desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD)-related needs, priorities and policies?</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Are indicators and targets, as currently defined, a good way to measure progress towards the objectives of The Strategy?</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Have indicators and targets, as currently defined, achieved the goal of providing a good basis for the quantifiable assessment of achieving the goals set in the Convention and The Strategy?</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Have Parties and other stakeholders been involved in defining indicators and targets?</b> (qualitative)
	Reporting format and templates		<b>Are the current reporting format and templates appropriate to report on indicators and targets as currently defined?</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Have the reporting format and templates been conducive to the improved reporting by Parties and other stakeholders?</b> (qualitative)
			<b>How efficient was the delivery of templates for reporting?</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Have the reporting format and templates been conducive to the increased reporting by Parties and other stakeholders?</b> (qualitative, partly quantitative, based on number of Parties and other stakeholders reporting based on agreed format)
	Iterative process		<b>Have appropriate activities been undertaken to improve the reporting format and templates?</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Has the feedback received on the need for improvement/simplification of reporting format and templates been considered in revised reporting templates and guidelines?</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Difficulties in reporting on specific indicators</b> (according to e-SMART criteria) (quantitative, based on reports by Parties)
			<b>Can clear progress in the quality and quantity of information provided in reports be detected?</b> (qualitative, partly quantitative, based on reporting statistics)

<i>Area</i>	<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Element</i>	<i>Qualitative issues and quantitative parameters addressed under main criteria</i>
			<b>How efficient was the process of refining performance and impact indicators?</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Have Parties and other stakeholders been involved in the improvement of the reporting format and templates?</b> (qualitative)
	Technical aspects of reporting	Performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) portal	<b>Has the feedback received on the need for the improvement of the PRAIS portal been considered?</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Has the PRAIS portal facilitated reporting and the availability/use of information contained in reports?</b> (qualitative, partly quantitative, based on comparison of reporting statistics/reporting formats and feedback from reporting entities)
			<b>How efficient has the development of the PRAIS portal been?</b> (quantitative, based on information made available by the secretariat: resources employed for developing and maintaining the portal (financial, human, other))
			<b>Number of Parties and other reporting entities reporting online</b> (quantitative, based on information in the PRAIS portal)
	Organizational aspects of reporting	Assessment of issues relating to the organizational aspects of reporting, including timing and costs	<b>Is the frequency of reporting posing a burden to Parties and other reporting entities that cannot be justified?</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Are the two- and four-year reporting cycles appropriate for measuring progress on operational and strategic objectives?</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Has the Global Environment Facility (GEF) support to the reporting process been timely and adequate?</b> (qualitative, based on feedback through the PRAIS project and from affected country Parties (ACPs))
			<b>Are the financial and human resources for organizing the reporting process by Convention institutions and bodies sufficient?</b> (quantitative, based on the information provided by the secretariat)
		Training	<b>Was the amount of training and the format/content appropriate and commensurate to needs?</b> (qualitative, based on feedback received)
			<b>Can a link be established between training and the number and quality of reports submitted?</b> (qualitative, quantitative, based on available statistics)
<b>Financial resources made available for training</b> (quantitative, based on PRAIS project information and information made available by the secretariat)			
<b>Number of reporting entities/persons participating in training</b> (quantitative)			
Reporting issues of relevance to various reporting entities	National reporting	Assessment of issues Parties face with regard to reporting: data availability,	<b>Data availability and accessibility at national level</b> (quantitative, based on reports by Parties)
			<b>Quality of data provided</b> (qualitative)

<i>Area</i>	<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Element</i>	<i>Qualitative issues and quantitative parameters addressed under main criteria</i>
		data accessibility, data quality, data comparability, data management, institutional coordination, time, human resources, capacity and funding	<b>Comparability and representativeness of data provided</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Management of data by Parties (existence of DLDD-specific monitoring systems)</b> (quantitative, based on reports by Parties)
			<b>Level of institutional coordination</b> (quantitative, based on reports by Parties)
			<b>Completeness of reporting</b> (number of Parties providing information on specific indicators)
			<b>Timing (percentage of Parties reporting by and after the deadline)</b> (quantitative, through available statistics)
			<b>Resources invested in reporting (financial, human)</b> (quantitative, based on reports by Parties)
			<b>Access to technical/scientific knowledge</b> (quantitative, based on reports by Parties)
			<b>Reporting statistics</b> (quantitative, based on number of reporting Parties)
			<b>Level of participation and consultation in the reporting process</b> (quantitative, based on reports by Parties)
			<b>Issues specific to reporting by the developed country Parties (DCPs)</b> (qualitative, based on the feedback received)
	Link between reporting and national action programmes and their alignment with The Strategy	<b>Can the alignment of the national action programme (NAP) with The Strategy improve the quality and completeness of reporting?</b> (qualitative, based on existing documentation and statistics)	
		<b>Amount of joint investments for NAP alignment and reporting</b> (quantitative, based on information made available by the GEF and the secretariat)	
		<b>How many countries have reported a NAP, and how many have an aligned NAP?</b> (quantitative, based on information available through reports)	
	Subregional and regional reporting, and reporting under joint action programmes	Assessment of issues encountered in reporting at subregional and regional levels	<b>Data availability and accessibility at subregional and regional levels</b> (quantitative, based on reports on subregional action programmes (SRAPs)/regional action programmes (RAPs))
			<b>Quality of data provided</b> (qualitative)
			<b>Comparability and representativeness of data provided</b> (qualitative)
<b>Management of data on SRAPs/RAPs</b> (quantitative, based on reports on SRAPs/RAPs)			
			<b>Level of institutional coordination</b> (quantitative, based on reports on SRAPs and RAPs)

<i>Area</i>	<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Element</i>	<i>Qualitative issues and quantitative parameters addressed under main criteria</i>	
			<b>Completeness of reporting</b> (quantitative, based on number of subregional and regional entities providing information on specific indicators)	
			<b>Timing (percentage of subregional and regional entities reporting by the deadline)</b> (quantitative, through available statistics)	
			<b>Resources invested in reporting</b> (financial, human) (quantitative, based on reports on SRAPs/RAPs)	
			<b>Access to technical/scientific knowledge</b> (quantitative, based on reports on SRAPs/RAPs)	
			<b>Reporting statistics</b> (quantitative, based on number of reporting subregional and regional entities)	
			<b>Number of institutions designated as subregional and regional reporting entities.</b>	
			<b>Level of participation and consultation in the reporting process</b> (quantitative, based on reports on SRAPs and RAPs)	
		Link between reporting and regional/subregional action programmes		<b>Can the alignment of the SRAPs/RAPs with The Strategy improve the quality and completeness of reporting?</b> (qualitative, based on existing documentation and statistics)
	Reporting by United Nations agencies/intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), the GEF and civil society organizations (CSOs)	Assessment of issues encountered during reporting by IGOs and CSOs		<b>Is reporting as currently conceived of relevance for United Nations agencies/IGOs, the GEF and CSOs?</b> (qualitative)
				<b>To what extent can the information submitted by United Nations agencies/IGOs, the GEF and CSOs be used to assess the implementation of the Convention and The Strategy?</b> (qualitative)
				<b>Reporting statistics</b> (quantitative, based on number of reporting United Nations agencies/IGOs, the GEF, CSOs)
	Reporting by Convention institutions	Assessment of issues encountered during reporting by Convention institutions on assessment of implementation		<b>Are the consolidated indicators against which the Convention institutions are reporting relevant?</b> (qualitative)
<b>Is the reporting of Convention institutions on the assessment of implementation (through performance indicators) adequately interlinked with the reporting relating to the performance review (work plans and programmes of Convention institutions)?</b> (qualitative)				
<b>How efficient was this process at the level of Convention institutions?</b> (qualitative)				

## Text boxes

### Box 1: Feedback from reporting entities based on e-SMART criteria

#### *Performance indicators*

Affected country Parties (ACPs) reported on 14 performance indicators. In both reporting exercises, they experienced the most problems with the measurability of performance indicators, while their relevance and time-bound criteria were found the least problematic. In 2012, performance indicators CONS-O-1, CONS-O-3 and CONS-O-4 (measuring OO 1: Advocacy, awareness raising and education) remain the most problematic to report on. In particular, they reported problems with CONS-O-1 (“number of information events”).

Developed country Parties (DCPs) reported on 10 performance indicators, often experiencing problems with their measurability. In particular, the indicators which posed the most problems were CONS-O-1 and CONS-O-4 (“number of desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD)-related education initiatives”).

Subregional entities reported on 13 performance indicators. They found all indicators to be specific and indicated that CONS-O-11 and CONS-O-13 fully meet the e-SMART (economic – Specific – Measurable – Achievable – Relevant – Time-bound) criteria. Two subregional reporting entities found particular aspects of the other performance indicators problematic. It must be considered, however, that only three subregional entities submitted their reports in 2012.

#### *Mandatory indicators for strategic objectives 1–3 and their associated metrics*

Only a few Parties provided specific comments on the effectiveness of the indicators on strategic objectives (SOs) 1–2 (“proportion of the population living below the poverty line” and “land cover status”) and their associated metrics (“poverty rate”, “land cover” and “land productivity”). In particular, 34 ACPs commented on “poverty rate”, 28 on “land cover” and 17 on “land productivity”, thereby only allowing for the formulation of specific recommendations.

The most frequently reported problems include the high costs for data monitoring and data collection, the lack of financial resources, unclear methodologies for data collection, frequency of the updates (most datasets have longer update cycles than the indicators), difficulties in establishing clear links between the indicator/metrics and the implementation of the Convention.

#### *Impact indicators for strategic objective 4*

Both ACPs and DCPs found the specificity criterion of the e-SMART methodology the most problematic for indicators relating to SO 4, in particular indicator SO-4-2 (reported as problematic by one third of DCPs). In addition, almost one third of ACPs found the most problematic indicators to be SO-4-3 and SO-4-6. Since four DCPs and no ACPs provided further comments on one indicator for SO-4, only limited conclusions can be drawn.

**Box 2: Resources employed for developing and maintaining the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) portal<sup>a</sup>**

*Performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) project, component 3: Knowledge management system, monitoring and evaluation, and dissemination*

Cost of component 3, including portal: EUR 655,000, corresponding to nearly 27 per cent of total costs of the project funded by the Global Environment Facility

Cost of web portal: EUR 71,000 (11 per cent), corresponding to less than 3 per cent of the total costs

Duration: January 2010–December 2012

Total cost of the project: USD 2.4 million

Planned funding: GEF: USD 2.6 million; secretariat, GM and national contributions from Parties: USD 5.4 million; European Commission = EUR 600,000; United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre: USD 50,000

Total disbursed (resources mobilized): about USD 7.4 million

<sup>a</sup> Source: Terminal evaluation of the PRAIS project by the Evaluation Office of the United Nations Environment Programme. December 2012; secretariat.

**Box 3: Financial resources used for reporting**

Sources: secretariat; performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) reports.

2010–2011 budget: EUR 72,000 (about USD 95,000), each available to the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) and the Committee on Science and Technology (CST)

2012–2013 budget: EUR 76,000 (about USD 100,000), each available to the CRIC and CST

**Human resources and financial resources used by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) for reporting**

Sources: secretariat; PRAIS reports.

**Human resources (data are only available for the fourth reporting cycle):**

An average of 35.5 people were involved in each leg of the fourth reporting process at the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) for a total of 4,084 person days or about 18.6 person years. The secretariat contributed with 4,077 person days and an average of 20.5 people, while the GM contributed with 15 people and 7 person days (the latter only refers to the resources made available in the second leg). Most of the resources were employed in the first leg (about 90 per cent of all resources). These accounts include additional resources which were made available by the secretariat for the refinement of impact indicators, corresponding to over 9 per cent of all resources or about 374 person days.

**Financial resources (data are only available for the fourth reporting cycle):**

Over USD 2.7 million were dedicated to the fourth reporting process by the secretariat and the GM. This includes about USD 550,000 for the refinement of impact indicators and templates for strategic objectives 1–3. Most of the resources (nearly 60 per cent

of all resources) were made available in the first leg. About 76 per cent of the total financial resources were deployed by the secretariat, while the GM provided 24 per cent or USD 650,000.

These accounts include additional resources which were provided by the secretariat for the refinement of impact indicators, corresponding to nearly 20 per cent of all resources made available.

#### **Box 4: Resources invested in reporting under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**

##### *Financial resources*

The total amount of resources from national budgets employed for reporting under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) has decreased by about 25 per cent from nearly USD 2 million in 2010 to just over USD 1.5 million in 2012.

However, the average amount of national budget invested per country has increased by 20 per cent to just over USD 26,000. On the other hand, developed country Parties (DCPs) have on average used less of their national budgets with respect to the previous reporting cycle (–25 per cent), while affected country Parties (ACPs) have increased their budget by nearly 30 per cent. These averages have been calculated considering only the Parties which provided information on invested amounts.

In addition, Global Environment Facility (GEF) funds were also made available to a number of eligible affected country Parties (ACPs) for a total of USD 1.9 million (an average of USD 52,000 per country; 40 countries reported to have received GEF funds).

The total amount disbursed from national budgets, the GEF and UNCCD institutions decreased from nearly USD 7 million to about USD 4.5 million, corresponding to a drop of 36 per cent with respect to 2010. External resources also decreased from USD 3.4 to 1.9 million, corresponding to a drop of about 45 per cent.

Similarly, the average total resources invested per report decreased by 15 per cent in the second leg with respect to the first leg, from over USD 55,000 to about USD 47,000. This was mainly due to the decrease of the average contributions from UNCCD institutions (–10 per cent) and external sources (–27 per cent), part of which were used for capacity development. These estimates were derived by averaging the total costs by the number of reports from country Parties and subregional entities.

This analysis seems to indicate a clear link between the amount of resources made available by UNCCD and other institutions for reporting and the number of country Parties, in particular ACPs, which submitted their reports.

##### *Human resources<sup>a</sup>*

In 2012, over 2,800 persons were involved in UNCCD reporting, 47 persons on average for ACPs (about the same as in 2010) and 12 for DCPs (more than halved with respect to 2010).

An average 82 person days were invested for ACPs (nearly the same as in 2010), while 55 person days were invested for DCPs (almost halved with respect to 2010).

<sup>a</sup> This assessment is based on the results of the analysis of additional information presented in ICCD/CRIC(11)/15.

## Annex III

[English only]

### Tables and figures

Table 1  
Activities and resources for the refinement of impact indicators for strategic objectives 1–3

<b>Scientific peer review</b>	
Duration	9 months (9/2010–5/2011)
Financial resources	EUR 98 000
Human resources	110 person days
Participation	104 experts (scientists, Parties, United Nations agencies and representatives from intergovernmental organizations (IGOs))
<b>Pilot impact indicator tracking exercise</b>	
Duration	4 months (07/2011–10/2011)
Financial resources	EUR 319 000
Human resources	approx. 154 person days, 2 persons (secretariat)
Participation	11 affected country Parties (ACPs), 1 institution
<b>Ad Hoc Advisory Group of Technical Experts on Impact Indicator Refinement</b>	
Duration	14 months (7/2012–8/2013)
Financial resources	EUR 89 000
Human resources	110 person days
Participation	15 members of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group of Technical Experts on Impact Indicator Refinement (AGTE), consultations: participants in the third special session of the Committee on Science and Technology (representatives of 95 Parties, 5 United Nations agencies, 4 IGOs and 10 civil society organizations, as well as 189 scientists) and 20 stakeholders (Parties and representatives of institutions)

<b>Total support to technical and scientific activities</b>	
Duration	36 months (9/2010–8/2013)
Financial resources	EUR 506 000
Human resources	About 374 person days (ca. 1.7 person years)
Participation	Wide participation from the scientific community and stakeholders (over 300 scientists and technical experts from a wide representation of ACPs and other stakeholders (including Members of the Ad Hoc Group on Technical Advice - AGTE: representatives of 95 country Parties or about 60 per cent of ACPs were consulted).

Table 2  
Reporting statistics

Reporting entity	First cycle		Second cycle		Third cycle		Fourth cycle, first leg		Fourth cycle, second leg		Number of reports due or expected
	Nr. of reports	%	Nr. of reports	%	Nr. of reports	%	Nr. of reports	%	Nr. of reports	%	
ACPs	120	72 %	139	83 %	138	83 %	112	67 %	80	48 %	167
DCPs	18	40 %	22	49 %	20	44 %	14	31 %	12	27 %	45
IGOs	20		17		23		2		0		
CSOs	1		2		1		21		0		
GEF							1		1	100 %	1
GM							1		1	100 %	1
UNCCD secretariat							1		1	100 %	1
RAPs									0	0 %	3
SRAPs									3	23 %	13
<b>Total reports</b>	<b>159</b>		<b>180</b>		<b>182</b>		<b>152</b>		<b>98</b>		<b>231</b>
<b>Total reports from country Parties and subregional entities</b>	<b>138</b>		<b>161</b>		<b>158</b>		<b>126</b>		<b>95</b>		<b>212</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>61%</b>		<b>71%</b>		<b>69%</b>		<b>55%</b>		<b>42%</b>		

*Abbreviations:* ACP = affected country Party; CSO = civil society organization; DCP = developed country Party; GEF = Global Environment Facility; GM = Global Mechanism; IGO = intergovernmental organization; RAP = regional action programme; SRAP = subregional action programme; UNCCD = United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

*Notes:* Reporting percentages have been calculated using the current list of UNCCD reporting entities (2012).

Reporting statistics have been compiled from various sources: first three reporting cycles (source: secretariat); fourth reporting cycle (source: PRAIS portal).

Table 3  
**Financial resources invested for reporting**  
 (United States dollars)

<i>Item</i>	<i>ACP national budgets<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>DCP national budgets<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Total national budgets<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>GEF</i>	<i>European Commission (EC)</i>	<i>UNEP-WCMC</i>	<i>GM</i>	<i>UNCCD secretariat<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>Additional funds made available by the secretariat<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>Total UNCCD institutions</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total excluding external resources (GEF, EC, UNEP)</i>
First leg <sup>d</sup> Total	1 667 766	298 052	1 965 818	2 545 454	789 474	50 000	500 000	1 123 000	0	5 007 928	6 973 746	3 588 818
Per country	20 590	33 117	21 982	NA								
Second leg Total	1 343 027	177 317	1 520 344	1 856 455	0	0	150 000	400 000	548 684	2 955 139	4 475 484	2 619 029
Per country	26 334	25 331	26 203	52 000								
Change Per country	28 %	-24 %	20 %	NA								
Total	-19 %	-41 %	-23 %	-27 %			-70 %	-64 %		-41 %	-36 %	-27 %
Fourth reporting cycle <b>Total</b>	<b>3 010 794</b>	<b>475 369</b>	<b>3 486 163</b>	<b>4401909</b>	<b>789 474</b>	<b>50 000</b>	<b>650 000</b>	<b>1 523 000</b>	<b>548 684</b>	<b>7 963 067</b>	<b>11 449 230</b>	<b>6 207 847</b>

<sup>a</sup> Amounts from national budgets are derived from national reports; averages are calculated only considering country Parties which have provided information on invested amounts.

<sup>b</sup> Amounts received by reporting subregional action programmes (SRAPs) are included in the secretariat budget (one SRAP reported USD 15,000).

<sup>c</sup> Additional sources include the costs of the refinement of impact indicators (peer review and pilot tracking exercise).

<sup>d</sup> Data for both legs are based on reports delivered as of December 2012.

*Abbreviations:* ACP = affected country Party; DCP = developed country Party; GEF = Global Environment Facility; NA = not applicable; UNCCD = United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; UNEP-WCMC = United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

Table 4  
**Distribution of financial resources invested by Parties, Convention institutions, the Global Environment Facility and other international organizations in reporting<sup>a</sup>**

(United States dollars)

<i>Item</i>		<i>National budgets</i>	<i>Global Environment Facility</i>	<i>European Commission</i>	<i>UNEP/WCMC</i>	<i>Global Mechanism (GM)</i>	<i>UNCCD secretariat<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>Additional funds made available by the secretariat<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>Total institutions</i>	<i>Total secretariat + GM</i>	<i>Total external</i>	<i>Total</i>
First leg <sup>d</sup>	Total	1 965 818	2 545 454	789 474	50 000	500 000	1 123 000	0	5 007 928	1 623 000	3 384 928	6 973 746
	Per country	15 602	20 202	6 266	397	3 968	8 913	0	39 745	12 881	26 865	55 347
Second leg	Total	1 520 344	1 856 455	0	0	150 000	400 000	548 684	2 955 139	1 098 684	1 856 455	4 475 484
	Per country	16 004	19 542	0	0	1 579	4 211	5 776	31 107	11 565	19 542	47 110
Change	Per country	3%	-3%			-60%	-53%		-22%	-10%	-27%	-15%
	Total	-23%	-27%			-70%	-64%		-41%	-32%	-45%	-36%
Total fourth reporting cycle	<b>Total</b>	<b>3 486 163</b>	<b>4 401 909</b>	<b>789 474</b>	<b>50 000</b>	<b>650 000</b>	<b>1 523 000</b>	<b>548 684</b>	<b>7 963 067</b>	<b>2 721 684</b>	<b>5 241 383</b>	<b>11 449 230</b>
	Per country	15 774	19 918	3 572	226	2 941	6 891	2 483	36 032	12 315	23 717	51 806
	<b>Total in USD million</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>1.5</b>		<b>8.0</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>11.4</b>

<sup>a</sup> Average support per report include all reports received by country Parties and subregional entities.

<sup>b</sup> Amounts received by reporting subregional action programmes (SRAPs) are included in the secretariat budget (one SRAP reported USD 15,000).

<sup>c</sup> Additional funding includes the costs for the peer review, the pilot tracking exercise, but not the costs for the AGTE.

<sup>d</sup> Data for both legs are based on reports delivered as of December 2012.

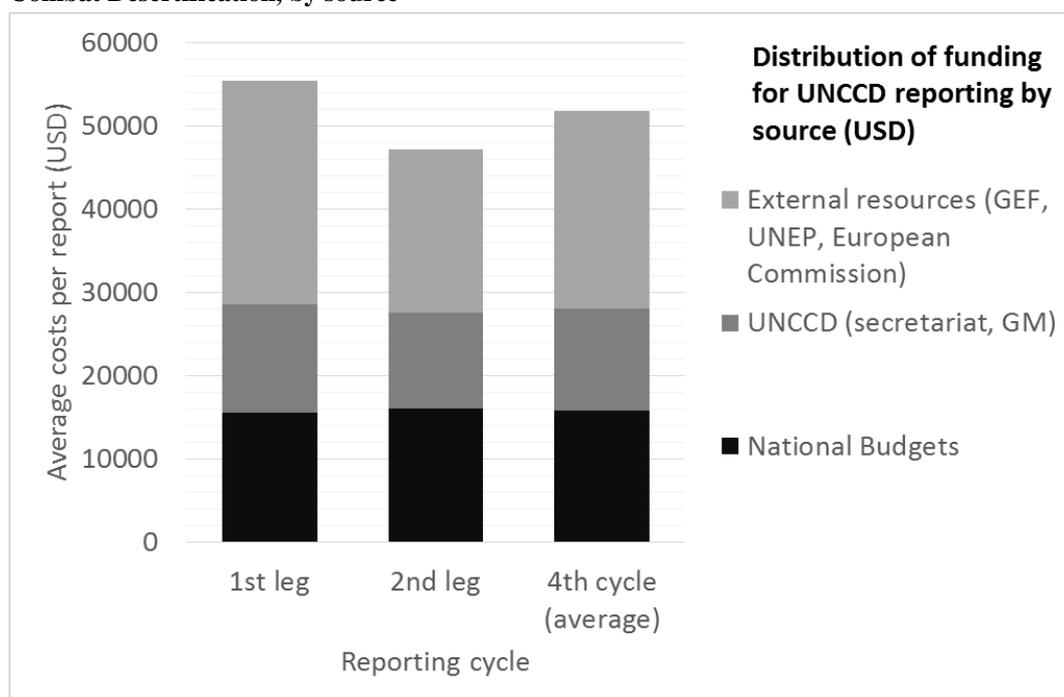
*Abbreviations:* UNEP-WCMC = United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

**Table 5**  
**Human resources invested by Convention institutions for reporting**

		<i>Global Mechanism</i>	<i>UNCCD secretariat</i>	<i>Total</i>
First leg	<i>Number of staff involved</i>	15	20	35
	<i>Number of person days</i>		3 600	3 600
Second leg	<i>Number of staff involved</i>	15	21	36
	<i>Number of person days</i>	7	103	110
Change second leg – first leg	<i>Number of person days</i>	NA	-97%	-97%
Additional activities (refinement of impact indicators and templates for SOs 1, 2 and 3)	<i>Number of staff involved</i>		3	
	<i>Number of person days</i>		374	374
Fourth reporting cycle	<i>Number of staff involved</i>			
	<i>Number of person days</i>	7	4 077	4 084
<b>Total</b>	<b><i>Person years</i></b>		<b>18.5</b>	<b>18.6</b>

*Abbreviations:* NA = not applicable; SO = strategic objective; UNCCD = United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

**Figure 1**  
**Distribution of funding invested in reporting under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, by source**



*Abbreviations:* GEF = Global Environment Facility; GM = Global Mechanism; UNCCD = United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; UNEP = United Nations Environment Programme.

## List of adopted indicators and targets and their current status

Operational objective	Outcome	Indicator number	Indicator name	Affected	SRAPs/RAPs	Developed	United Nations agencies and IGOs	GEF	UNCCD secretariat	GM	Global target	Key messages of the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) 2012–2013
OO 1: Advocacy, awareness raising and education	1.1	CONS-O-1	Number and size of information events organized on the subject of desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) and/or DLDD synergies with climate change and biodiversity, and audience reached by media addressing DLDD and DLDD synergies.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			By 2018, 30 per cent of the global population is informed about DLDD and DLDD synergies with climate change and biodiversity.	Almost 12,000 events were organized in both 2010 and 2011, two thirds in Africa. According to information provided for the last biennium, 38.7 per cent of the global population would be informed about DLDD and/or DLDD synergies with climate change and biodiversity. In developed country Parties (DCPs), the number of information events and the number of participants decreased in 2011 compared with 2010 by 17 per cent and by 19 per cent, respectively. Even though the target has been reached, the variation among regions remains large, however: between 20.5 per cent (Northern Mediterranean) and 42.3 per cent (Asia).
	1.2	CONS-O-2	Number of official documents and decisions at international, regional and subregional levels relating to DLDD issues.						✓		By 2010 the Convention website has been restructured and includes a thematic database on relevant decisions and documents as part of the PRAIS.	While 15 DLDD-related decisions taken by international governing bodies were recorded in 2010, there were only 2 in 2011. Such a decrease is primarily due to the fact that several decision-making bodies relevant to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) processes do not convene annually. One decision was recorded at the regional level, in 2010. In 2010, the secretariat restructured its website and included a thematic database on relevant decisions and documents as part of the PRAIS. Hence, the target is achieved.
	1.3	CONS-O-3	Number of civil society organizations (CSOs) and science and technology institutions (STIs) participating in the Convention processes.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	A steady growth in the participation of CSOs and STIs in the Convention processes is recorded along the implementation period of The Strategy.	More than 6,500 CSOs and 1,900 STIs were involved in DLDD-related projects and programmes in the past biennium, and an increasing trend in the numbers of both CSOs and STIs has been recorded since 2008. The highest number of active CSOs and STIs is reported by Asia followed by Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). At the global level, there was a slight decrease in CSOs (minus 2.5 per cent) and an increase in STIs (plus 6.6 per cent) between 2010 and 2011. The large majority of governments reported that they are undertaking concrete initiatives to increase the number of CSOs and STIs involved in DLDD-related activities. No trends between the 2010 and the 2012 reporting cycles could be captured for the Northern Mediterranean (NMED) and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Even though the participation of CSOs is steadily increasing at the national and global level, the participation of their representatives in the governing bodies has decreased. Compared to the previous reporting cycle, there was a decrease of 37.5 per cent of CSO representatives funded to attend the Conference of the Parties (COP) and a decrease of 72.4 per cent of those funded to attend the intersessional sessions of the subsidiary bodies.
			CONS-O-4	Number and type of DLDD-related initiatives of CSOs and STIs in the field of education.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			A steady growth in the number of DLDD-related education initiatives undertaken by CSOs and STIs is recorded along the implementation period of The Strategy.

Operational objective	Outcome	Indicator number	Indicator name	Affected	SRAPs/RAPs	Developed	United Nations agencies and IGOs	GEF	UNCCD secretariat	GM	Global target	Key messages of the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) 2012–2013
OO 2: Policy framework	2.1 2.2 2.3	CONS-O-5	Number of affected country Parties (ACPs), subregional and regional entities to have finalized the formulation/revision of NAPs/SRAPs/RAPs aligned with The Strategy, taking into account biophysical and socioeconomic information, national planning and policies, and integration into investment frameworks.	✓	✓						By 2014, at least 80 per cent of ACPs, subregional and regional entities have formulated/ revised a NAP/SRAP/RAP aligned with The Strategy.	Only 11 countries had an aligned NAP at the end of 2011. Reaching the target of 80 per cent of affected countries having their NAP aligned with The Strategy by 2014 therefore remains a major challenge, both for those countries and the institutions supporting them, as approximately 120 countries would need to formulate or align their NAP over a period of 3 years. However, those countries that did align their NAPs included biophysical and socioeconomic baseline information and an assessment of barriers to SLM. Only 1 country included its NAP in an integrated investment framework (IIF).
	2.4	CONS-O-6	Number of partnership agreements established within the framework of the Convention between DCPs/United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and ACPs.			✓	✓	✓			By 2014 at least two UNCCD related partnership agreements are active in each ACP.	DCPs reported partnership agreements under the framework of the UNCCD with 52 ACPs, 4 subregions and 3 regions in the last 2 reporting periods. Many DCPs have no such partnership agreements at all, and only 4 of them reported their intention to establish such agreements in the next two bienniums. More than twice the number of such agreements established in the reporting period 2010–2011 were not set within the framework of the UNCCD. These figures are nevertheless of limited significance because of the small number of reports received from DCPs and IGOs. A higher response from these reporting entities would undoubtedly facilitate the understanding and increase the reliability of data regarding partnership agreements.
	2.5	CONS-O-7	Number of initiatives for the synergistic planning/programming of the three Rio conventions or mechanisms for joint implementation, at all levels.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		By 2014, each ACP has either one joint national plan in place or functional mechanism(s) to ensure synergies among the three Rio conventions.
OO 3: Science, technology and knowledge	3.1 3.2	CONS-O-8	Number of ACPs, subregional and regional entities to have established and supported a national/subregional/regional monitoring system for DLDD.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			By 2018, at least 60 per cent of ACPs, subregional and regional reporting entities have established and supported national monitoring systems for DLDD.	ACPs had a solid base of information on DLDD upon which to draw for planning and reporting purposes. 43 out of 115 ACPs (or 37 per cent) have a DLDD-specific national monitoring system. While this falls short of the target to be achieved by 2018, it is encouraging that 38 additional countries (or 33 per cent) have a monitoring system that can partially cover DLDD. It is noteworthy that the overwhelming majority of support by DCPs was directed to monitoring systems that are not specifically dedicated to DLDD, although mainly provided within the framework of UNCCD-related initiatives. In order to achieve the target, further efforts could also be made to expand these monitoring systems to become fully-fledged DLDD-specific systems.

Operational objective	Outcome	Indicator number	Indicator name	Affected	SRAPs/RAPs	Developed	United Nations agencies and IGOs	GEF	UNCCD secretariat	GM	Global target	Key messages of the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) 2012–2013
		CONS-O-9	Number of ACPs, subregional and regional entities reporting to the Convention along revised reporting guidelines on the basis of agreed indicators.	✓	✓						By 2018, at least 90 per cent of ACPs, subregional and regional entities report to the Convention in compliance with the new reporting guidelines.	In 2012, ACPs reported for the first time using impact indicators for SOs 1–3. It is very encouraging that only one reporting Party did not report on these indicators at all, and only 7 countries reported on only 1 out of the 2 indicators considered to be the minimum reporting requirement. A total of 63 countries provided a response to both compulsory indicators, which can be considered a good result bearing in mind that this is the first round of reporting on impact indicators. A total of 43 of the countries used common baselines and methodologies as defined by the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), which is lower than the 90 per cent target set to be achieved by 2018, but is nevertheless a good figure.
	3.3 3.4	CONS-O-10	Number of revised NAPs/SRAPs/RAPs reflecting knowledge of DLDD drivers and their interactions, and of the interaction of DLDD with climate change and biodiversity.	✓	✓						By 2018, at least 70 per cent of revised NAPs/SRAPs/RAPs have successfully gone through a quality self-assessment.	At the end of 2011, out of 11 countries that had their NAP aligned, 10 (91 per cent) had successfully gone through a quality self-assessment. The country that did not fully perform such an assessment stated that it planned to do so in 2014–2015. Nominally, if measured at the end of 2011, the target would have been achieved, but, given the relatively small number of countries, the percentage does not necessarily provide a good gauge, as this indicator needs to be read in conjunction with indicator CONS-O-5, which measures the number of ACPs that have a NAP aligned to The Strategy. Given that the current level of achievement of target associated with that indicator (i.e. “by 2014, at least 80 per cent of ACPs, subregional and regional entities have formulated/revised a NAP/SRAP/RAP aligned to The Strategy”) is very low (12 countries have a NAP aligned with The Strategy, which is approximately 7 per cent of all ACPs), it is very unlikely that by 2018, 70 per cent of all ACPs (approximately 95 countries) will have successfully gone through a quality self-assessment. However, it is encouraging that those countries that did align their NAP also successfully performed the quality self-assessment.
	3.5	CONS-O-11	Type, number and users of DLDD-relevant knowledge-sharing systems at the global, regional, subregional and national levels described on the Convention website.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	By 2010 the Convention website has been restructured and includes a thematic database on knowledge-sharing systems as part of the PRAIS.	As of August 2011, the Convention website includes a database on knowledge-sharing systems as part of the PRAIS. The secretariat compiled all the links to knowledge-sharing systems submitted by Parties and other reporting entities and made them available on the PRAIS portal sorted by region, subregion and country. The target has thus been achieved, although with some delay; the information required for the compilation of the database was made available by Parties and other reporting entities only in late 2010.
	3.6	CONS-O-12	Number of science and technology networks, institutions or scientists engaged in research mandated by the COP.						✓		No target needs to be defined.	For 2010, the secretariat reported that two scientific networks, one scientific and research institution and 84 individual scientists were engaged in research mandated by the COP. In 2011, one scientific network, five scientific/research institutions and 146 individual scientists were engaged in such activities.
OO 4: Capacity-building	4.1 4.2	CONS-O-13	Number of countries, subregional and regional reporting entities engaged in building capacity to combat DLDD on the basis of National Capacity Self-Assessments (NCSA) or other methodologies and instruments.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			At least 90 per cent of affected country Parties, subregional and regional reporting entities implement DLDD-specific capacity-building plans, programmes or projects.	A large number of capacity-building initiatives took place in both 2010 and 2011 worldwide. As reported during the last reporting process, initiatives that were not generated by the NCSA were significantly more common than those that were, despite the fact that the NCSA is by far the most frequently used method in assessing capacity-building needs. It would be interesting to investigate the reasons for this, especially since information provided by DCPs demonstrate that international support is primarily reaching initiatives outside the framework of the NCSA.

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OO 5: Financing and technology transfer	5.1	CONS-O-14	Number of ACPs, subregional and regional entities whose investment frameworks, established within the integrated financing strategy (IFS) devised by the GM or within other integrated financing strategies, reflect the leveraging of national, bilateral and multilateral resources for combating desertification and land degradation.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	By 2014, at least 50 per cent of ACPs, subregional and regional entities have developed integrated investment frameworks.	A positive trend (+92 per cent) was observed in the number of countries having established an IIF since 2008–2009. Within the group of countries that completed their IIF, a positive trend exists for those who did so based on their NAP alignment (+36 per cent). Support from donor groups and institutions has also increased. While these trends are positive, additional efforts are required from those countries not having established an IIF yet, and from their development partners, for the target of 50 per cent to be reached by 2014. At the end of the reporting cycle, 24 countries had an IIF, up from 12 in the last reporting cycle. Fifteen of the countries that had at least one IIF stated that it was based on their national action programme (NAP). ACPs are invited to step up their efforts to submit project proposals to multilateral financial institutions, facilities and funds, and to take advantage of support provided for this purpose.
	5.2	CONS-O-15	Amount of financial resources made available by DCPs to combat DLDD.			✓					No targets have been set for this indicator.	Nine DCPs submitted their report for 2010–2011, compared to 14 in the previous biennium (–35 per cent). They reported a total of USD 1.28 billion made available for DLDD-related activities, compared to a total of USD 2.73 billion for the previous biennium (–53 per cent). Among the main reasons for this decreasing trend, most DCPs indicated that resources for the UNCCD suffered from reductions in the availability of resources for development cooperation in general and from competition from other development cooperation frameworks.
			CONS-O-16	Degree of adequacy, timeliness and predictability of financial resources made available by DCPs to combat DLDD.	✓	✓						No targets have been set for this indicator.
	5.3	CONS-O-17	Number of DLDD-related project proposals successfully submitted for financing to international financial institutions, facilities and funds, including the GEF.	✓	✓		✓	✓			A steady growth in the number of DLDD-related successfully submitted project proposals is recorded along the implementation period of The Strategy.	A total of 302 projects were submitted for financing to international financial institutions in the reporting period, mainly by African ACPs, compared to 295 in the previous reporting cycle. Nearly 500 projects were ongoing in the reporting period, 40 per cent of which are in Asia. Among the reasons for the increasing trend in project proposals, countries reported more transparent application procedures as well as an increased capacity to prepare applications and the existence of an IFS. Multilateral institutions remain by far the most significant partners of ACPs for the financing of DLDD-related projects. The GEF reported having approved 31 per cent more projects than in the previous biennium, for a total amount of approx. USD 2.5 billion. However, 75 per cent of the reporting countries were not satisfied with the level of resources mobilized and reported plans to increase it.

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	5.5	CONS-O-18	Amount of financial resources and type of incentives which have enabled access to technology by ACPs.	✓	✓						<p>A steady growth in the financial resources allocated to facilitate access to technology by ACPs is recorded along the implementation period of The Strategy.</p> <p>A steady growth in the number of economic and policy incentives reported upon is recorded along the implementation period of The Strategy.</p>	Over USD 6 billion were allocated to facilitate technology transfer in each year of the reporting period, representing a three-fold increase from the previous biennium. The establishment of policy, regulatory and financial incentives to facilitate access to technology were reported as having contributed significantly to this result. If compared to the previous reporting cycle, the number of submitted project proposals increased slightly, and both the number of ongoing projects and the total amount of resources mobilized decrease. However, 86 per cent of ACPs considered the resources allocated to the facilitation of technology transfer insufficient, and reported plans to create or reinforce an enabling environment for technology transfer in the coming years and increase support from the national financial and credit systems. The availability of numerous and different types of mechanisms and incentives appears as a positive factor to effectively support the mobilization of resources for UNCCD implementation.

Strategic objective	Outcome	Indicator number	Indicator name	Affected	SRAPs/RAPs	Developed	United Nations agencies and IGOs	GEF	UNCCD secretariat	GM	Global target	Key messages of the PRAIS 2012–2013
SO 1	S.2		Proportion of the population living below the poverty line – poverty rate	✓	✓							A total of 71 countries, or about 42 per cent of all ACPs, provided information on impact indicators on SOs 1–3. However, not all Parties delivered quantitative information, resulting in global data coverage varying from 7 to 36 per cent, depending on the specific question. Due to the highly specialized/scientific nature of the information required, the coverage and comparability of reported national data have in general not been sufficient for obtaining statistically representative results from the analyses. Yet, it enabled a first set of baseline data to be derived and provided useful insights on how to further improve the process in the future.
SO 2	S.5		Land cover status – land cover	✓	✓							
			Land cover status – land productivity	✓	✓							
SO 3												No mandatory indicators have been adopted by the COP for SO 3.
SO 4		SO4-1	Percentage change in multilateral donor contributions for UNCCD-related activities				✓	✓				The GEF reported commitments of USD 8.4 million in 2010 and USD 52.2 million in 2011, with a total amount of USD 60.6 million for the biennium and a fivefold increase from the first to the second year of the reporting cycle. This sharp increase in 2011 is mainly due to a high increase of financial commitments by the GEF in Africa. With one entity reporting for this period, it is impossible to

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												gauge the scale of the total commitments by IGOs and multilateral development finance institutions. Other large investors such as the multilateral development banks should be encouraged to report in the future.
		SO4-2	UNCCD share of bilateral Official Development Assistance		✓							The total financial commitments by those that reported for the period was USD 226.2 million. The data showed that Africa was the region that received the largest share of financial commitments, while Asia was the region with the highest increase of commitments within the reporting period (between 2010 and 2011). Financial commitments by DCPs remained relatively stable or increased from 2010 to 2011, with the exception of one country which made one single large commitment (representing 90 per cent of the total commitment for that country) in 2010. The total amount of bilateral Official Development Assistance for the reporting period 2010–2011 was USD 16.1 billion, mainly targeting Africa (51 per cent), followed by LAC (15 per cent) and Asia (9 per cent).
		SO4-3	Percentage change in domestic financial commitments to UNCCD implementation	✓	✓							The total amount of resources committed by ACPs through their domestic budgets for UNCCD-related activities was USD 52.12 in the biennium. Financial commitments for a total nominal amount of USD 26.38 billion were made for Convention-related objectives from domestic public budgets in 2010; the figure decreased to 25.74 billion in 2011. A slight decrease could be noted in Africa, Asia and LAC. In the CEE region the decrease was more substantial, while Northern Mediterranean was the only region where commitments had increased at the end of the reporting period. The region with the largest share of commitments for the total period (2010 and 2011) was Asia (USD 24.34 billion), followed by LAC (USD 20.16 billion), Africa (USD 7.32 billion), the Northern Mediterranean (USD 194.16 million), and CEE (USD 64.5 million).
		SO4-4	Percentage change in contributions from innovative sources of finance for UNCCD-related activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				Of the seven impact indicators adopted for SO 4, those relating to the resources mobilized from innovative sources of finance and the private sector (i.e. impact indicators SO-4-4 and SO-4-5, respectively), will be compiled through a study to be devised by the GM based on availability of resources, data and existing studies, in conformity with decision13/COP.10 and decision 14/COP.10.
		SO4-5	Percentage change in private sector and other contributions for UNCCD-related activities.									
		SO4-6	Number and type of legal and regulatory frameworks, economic incentives or other mechanisms securing or facilitating the transfer of funds for the implementation of UNCCD, at all levels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				In 2010, a total of 1,136 mechanisms were reported as being in place in ACPs to facilitate the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention. This includes (i) laws and regulation; (ii) economic and financial incentives; (iii) cooperation frameworks; and (iv) sectoral policies. This number increased to 1,166 by the end of the reporting period. Asia was the clear frontrunner in both years as it had in place more than 70 per cent of all the mechanisms, followed by Africa. For both years, the most

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												cited mechanisms were sectoral policies, followed by laws and regulations, economic and fiscal incentives, and cooperation frameworks.
		SO4-7	Clear entrusting of institutional responsibilities for UNCCD implementation, at all levels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		The overall evaluation of effectiveness of the institutional setup, responsibilities and arrangements to facilitate implementation of the Convention was fairly positive, with some fluctuations across different regions and geographical levels (international to local). Minimal differences were reported between the first and the second year of the reporting period. As a general tendency, the level of satisfaction was greater with the international-level institutional arrangements, and slowly decreased as the institutional setups at regional, subregional, national and local levels were considered.

*Abbreviations:* Affected = affected country Parties (ACPs); NAPs = national action programmes; SRAPs = subregional action programmes; RAPs = regional action programmes; Developed = developed country Parties (DCPs); IGOs = intergovernmental organizations; GEF = Global Environment Facility; UNCCD = United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; GM = Global Mechanism.