

# Non-Paper 1

12 March 2015

English only

## United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

### **Consideration of best practices in the implementation of the Convention: accessibility of information on best practices**

#### *Summary*

This document was prepared in response to the request of the Bureau of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) that information be provided at its thirteenth session on the status of implementation of the relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties on best practices.

The document contains preliminary reports from the secretariat on actions taken with regard to: (a) best practices on sustainable land management technologies, including adaptation; and (b) the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal.

The CRIC may wish to take note of this document and consider addressing this matter at its next session, including through an overall report prepared by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism in compliance with decision 17/COP.11.

## Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Best practices on sustainable land management technologies, including adaptation	1–14	3
A. Background.....	1–5	3
B. Preliminary report by the secretariat on the sustainable land management best practices.....	6–14	3
II. Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal.....	15–22	6
A. Background.....	15	6
B. Update on the development of the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal ...	16–22	6

## **I. Best practices on sustainable land management technologies, including adaptation**

### **A. Background**

1. By its decision 15/COP.10, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to review the accessibility to information on best practices. It requested the secretariat to identify recommended databases for each thematic topic of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) best practices, to which data and information stored in the database of the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) should be transferred.

2. By the same decision, the COP requested the secretariat to transfer the existing sustainable land management (SLM) best practices in the PRAIS to the recommended database, once it is identified, and then to replace the existing PRAIS best practices with a link to the recommended database.

3. By decision 17/COP.11, the COP requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism where relevant:

(a) To complete the selection of the primary recommended database for SLM best practices;

(b) To identify the services that primary recommended institutions and databases should deliver in order to assist the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) in compiling and disseminating SLM best practices and the tentative period for which such services should be rendered;

(c) To make arrangements immediately after COP 11 on modalities on the operation of the SLM best practices database provided that the arrangements are cost-effective and sustainable;

(d) To conclude the required administrative and legal arrangements in order to transfer data and information on SLM best practices which are stored in the PRAIS database.

4. By the same decision 17/COP.11, the COP invited developed country Parties and technical and financial institutions to contribute to the continued development of the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP) and the recommended databases.

5. The Bureau of the CRIC requested the secretariat to inform the Committee at its thirteenth session on the status of implementation of the relevant decisions of the COP on best practices.

### **B. Preliminary report by the secretariat on the sustainable land management best practices**

6. On 25 November 2013, the secretariat invited the five organizations which were identified through the call for expressions of interest to confirm their commitment to discharge the services that a primary recommended database for best practices should deliver until December 2018, and to indicate the terms and conditions under which such services will be rendered with particular regard to the budget needed. In this regard, the organizations were requested to either cover the entire costs of this operation against their

own human and financial resources or raise the funding required before an agreement is concluded.

7. By the deadline of 10 December 2013, two proposals were received from the following institutions: the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT); and ENDA - Energy Environment Development.

8. On 16 December 2013, the secretariat notified WOCAT that the proposal submitted had been positively considered and rated as the most suitable from the technical point of view. By the same communication, the secretariat recalled that WOCAT should cover the cost of the operation through its own human and financial resources; that appropriate monitoring and orientation mechanisms should be established, such as a steering committee or similar; that the other organizations that have expressed interest in assisting in the compilation and dissemination of information on SLM best practices, particularly those from affected country Parties, should be further involved in the implementation of the initiative.

9. In January 2014, the secretariat initiated consultations with the University of Bern (Switzerland) and WOCAT with a view to concluding the required administrative and legal arrangements in order to transfer the data and information on SLM best practices that are stored in the PRAIS database.

10. An agreement was signed on 15 April 2014 between the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern and the secretariat on improving accessibility to information on SLM best practices. The University of Bern/CDE identified the WOCAT secretariat as executing agency of the agreement, while remaining accountable for the implementation of, and meeting its obligations under, the agreement.

11. According to the said agreement, the University of Bern/CDE shall:

(a) Receive the data on SLM best practices contained in the PRAIS database, and categorize the entries submitted before 2012 according to the classification adopted by the COP;

(b) Maintain the database and ensure the integrity of the data submitted by Parties;

(c) Establish an online facility to allow Parties and other reporting entities to continue uploading information on SLM best practices; and establish standards for quality, relevance and accuracy of information that are in conformity with guidance received from the COP;

(d) Make data and information on SLM best practices available according to the classification adopted by the COP, including through the SKBP, and ensure interoperability with the secretariat's knowledge products;

(e) Abide by the UNCCD policy to access data and information provided by Parties and other reporting entities and in particular by the intellectual property provisions to protect technological innovations submitted as best practices cases;

(f) Facilitate the involvement of the other organizations that have expressed interest in assisting in the compilation and dissemination of information on SLM best practices, especially those from affected country Parties, in the implementation of the initiative.

12. By the same agreement, a Steering Committee was established with the mandate of reviewing compliance by the two parties with the obligations contained in the agreement and providing strategic guidance on the implementation of the agreement, with particular reference to the relevant decisions of the COP and the recommendations made by its

subsidiary bodies and their bureaux. The Steering Committee comprises one representative of the UNCCD secretariat, one representative of the University of Bern/CDE and one representative of the WOCAT secretariat which will serve as secretariat of the Committee.

13. With reference to the UNCCD secretariat's obligations, the following actions were taken:

(a) On 17 April 2014, all Parties to the UNCCD were notified through their national focal points that the WOCAT secretariat had been identified as the primary recommended database of SLM best practices. In the same communication, Parties were invited to continue compiling cases of such best practices and reporting them to the WOCAT secretariat;

(b) On 4 July 2014, upon acceptance by WOCAT of the terms and conditions for the use of data and information, including on property rights, data and information on SLM best practices contained in the PRAIS database were transferred to the WOCAT secretariat.

14. The first meeting of the Steering Committee was convened on 28 November 2014 via videoconference. The following matters were addressed, and the following recommendations made by the Committee:

(a) Reception and categorization of data on SLM best practices: data contained in the PRAIS database were received for a total of 400 valid data sets; the 2010 and 2012 data sets were analysed, and the categorization of the 2012 data set was still ongoing at the time the Steering Committee met. Owing to the constraints in the migration of data, the secretariat will facilitate a database dump of 2010 and 2012 data. Some concerns were expressed with regard to the quality and the completeness of the data reported by Parties and other reporting entities,<sup>1</sup> and the need to get back to the submitters was recalled. In this regard, the Steering Committee recommended that the UNCCD original template should be maintained as a minimum format for reporting on SLM best practices, and adjusted<sup>2</sup> in order to improve the quality of data to be reviewed and further compiled;

(b) Establishment of an online facility to allow Parties to continue submitting SLM best practices and retrieving the information: a detailed time line for the SLM best practices mandate has been presented, which includes the development of the online system in early 2015, testing in April 2015 and final release of the system in September 2015, by which time all PRAIS data would be imported into the new system and be available for external query, and the compilation of new data would start;

(c) Involvement of the other interested organizations: the four organizations interested in assisting in the compilation and dissemination of information on SLM best practices should be involved in the testing phase of the reporting template. Furthermore, selected key Parties from all the continents should be involved in the testing of the online facility;

(d) Next meeting of the Steering Committee: it has been agreed that the second meeting of the Steering Committee will take place between April and September 2015.

---

<sup>1</sup> High number of incomplete or duplicated data sets; high number (10–50 per cent) of questions which have not been answered (data gaps); high percentage of misunderstandings and entries which do not refer to the question (unusable or meaningless data); 15–20 per cent of data sets do not refer to technologies but to other types of best practices, such as approaches, methods, tools, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Adjustment would include the categorization/structuring of questions and the inclusion of visual elements and of definitions, explanations and specifications.

## **II. Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal**

### **A. Background**

15. By decision 3/COP.8, the Conference of the Parties mandated the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), in cooperation with relevant institutions, to create and steer knowledge management systems aiming to improve the brokering of scientific and technical information from and to institutions, Parties and end users. This mandate, refined by decisions 21/COP.10 and 24/COP.11 and detailed in document ICCD/COP(11)/CST/6, outlines the concept of a scientific knowledge brokering portal.

### **B. Update on the development of the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal**

16. An SKBP pilot was produced in 2014, with a platform integrating the data and knowledge bases of five collaborating organizations, in addition to many of the materials made available on the UNCCD website. The pilot is a small-scale implementation of the proposed SKBP. A functional prototype was developed to evaluate the long-term feasibility and resources needed to sustain the knowledge brokering tool.

17. The SKBP pilot centralizes knowledge bases that contain relevant land degradation neutrality best practices and scientific knowledge so that users can search for the required data. The search portal has been developed with financial contributions from the Spanish and Swiss Governments as well as with the in-kind contributions of five SKBP pilot partners, including: the Spanish National Research Council, World Soil Information, WOCAT, the Technologies and Practices for Small Agricultural Producers project of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the FAO International System for Agricultural Science and Technology. The Agricultural Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture has contributed expert knowledge and has allowed the UNCCD to leverage many of the tools being developed as part of JournalMap and the global Land-Potential Knowledge System. It has been a leading in-kind contributor to the development of the SKBP pilot interactive web maps.

18. The successful pilot represented the first major milestone in the development of the SKBP. It has demonstrated that it can serve to: (a) increase awareness of national and regional land degradation findings; (b) simplify the information-finding process so that users can consult many land degradation resources from one search portal; and (c) enable the consolidated search results found in the SKBP to potentially link to mobile applications and other “on-the-ground” tools that can be used to make sustainable practices easier to implement on the ground.

19. The SKBP is planned to be a “bridge to bridges”, maximizing the work of the entire desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) community by collaborating with existing data and knowledge bases so as to gather content from primary sources of information and making it available to a wide range of end users, including scientists, policymakers and practitioners.

20. The SKBP pilot has allowed the secretariat to identify long-term and running cost estimates as well as technical constraints for Parties to consider in the future development and maintenance of the SKBP. It has also paved the way for defining the partnership models needed to expand the partner base of knowledge suppliers and users, to recycle and draw increased attention to partner knowledge bases through the SKBP, as a cost-efficient, collaborative and efficient knowledge brokering tool.

21. The SKBP pilot has allowed the secretariat to identify the required next steps, subject to the continued support of the SKBP by country Parties at COP 12, and the estimated annual running costs associated with software, hardware and maintenance of the SKBP.

22. Demonstrations of all the components of the SKBP pilot were given at the fourth special session of the CST, and the same will be given during COP 12 for country Parties to view and experience.

---