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## Convention to Combat Desertification

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### Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

#### Fifteenth session

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Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda

#### Future implementation of the Convention

#### Overall reporting procedures and modalities for reporting by Parties

## The overall reporting procedures and modalities for reporting by Parties

### Note by the secretariat

#### *Summary*

The present document provides information on the proposed overall future reporting procedures and modalities as requested by the Conference of the Parties (COP) in decision 16/COP.12. The document also proposes possible changes to the mandate and functions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) in preparation for its pending review in line with decision 11/COP.9 and as a result of the preliminary work of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG).

Given the initial findings of the IWG on the future strategic framework of the Convention, it is noted that the recommendations contained in the present document would need to be considered along with the recommendations contained in document ICCD/CRIC(15)/2 and with the preliminary reporting template contained in document ICCD/CRIC(15)/INF.3, as provided to the fifteenth session of the CRIC. It is also noted that proposals contained in this document are tentative and pending the final deliberations of the IWG on its work to provide the thirteenth session of the COP with elements for a future strategic approach to the implementation of the Convention.

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## I. Introduction

1. At the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 12), it was decided that the fifteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 15) should review and discuss overall reporting procedures and modalities for reporting by Parties, including, as needed, proposals of guidelines and reporting tools for progress and performance indicators.<sup>1</sup> Bearing in mind that Parties at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) will consider adopting a new Strategy for the implementation of the Convention, it is understood that proposals for improving UNCCD reporting contained in the present document would need to be based on the preliminary findings of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG)<sup>2</sup> and further adjusted, taking into consideration any changes in the strategic orientation to the implementation of the Convention decided upon by Parties by COP 13.

2. Therefore the *raison d'être* of this document is to provide Parties at CRIC 15 with the opportunity to exchange views on the way forward in the implementation and monitoring of the convention on the basis of tentative proposals fed by the initial findings of the IWG and lessons learned from assessing and monitoring progress of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) due to expire in 2018, taking full account of decisions already taken on this subject by Parties to the UNCCD since the adoption of the Strategy.

3. This report has been prepared by the secretariat in response to the relevant provisions of decisions 11/COP.9, 22/COP.11, 3/COP.12, 7/COP.12, and 16/COP.12, and presents an overview of how future UNCCD reporting could be undertaken. Elements contained in the conclusions and recommendation sections of this document are presented to the CRIC for consideration and any recommendations it may wish to make in this regard.

## II. Transition from the current Strategy to the future Strategy and its impact on the reporting and review process

4. In 2018, the current Strategy will come to an end. Since its adoption in 2007, Parties and other UNCCD stakeholders have reported every two years on various aspects of progress made towards achieving the objectives of the Strategy; in 2010, 2012 and 2014 they reported on performance indicators, while in 2012 they also reported on progress indicators. It was decided at COP 12 that the 2016 reporting process would be optional and Parties wishing to engage in reporting were given the option to provide information on both performance and progress indicators.

5. Simplified and in brief, the CRIC, through its intersessional sessions and after each reporting exercise, uses the information obtained from reports submitted by Parties and produces recommendations and draft decisions for consideration by the COP on the implementation of the convention. During sessional sessions held in conjunction with the COP, the CRIC considered additional agenda items and produced draft decisions, for example, on the comprehensive work plan of the Convention, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Decision 16/COP.12.

<sup>2</sup> For detailed information on the initial findings of the Intergovernmental Working Group, please see document ICCD/CRIC(15)/2.

6. The CRIC was given a specific mandate and functions in decision 11/COP.9. The same decision also stipulates that no later than its fourteenth session (COP 14) in 2019, the terms of reference of the CRIC should be reviewed, including its operations and its schedule of meetings, with a view to making any necessary modifications.

7. It is evident from the above that the ongoing work aimed at identifying new elements for a future strategic framework to be considered by COP 13 is impacting the way in which the reporting and the review process will be undertaken in the future, as is the pending review on the mandate and functions of CRIC.

8. However, apart from these future milestone events that will reshape how the convention will be implemented and monitored, Parties already decided on other issues that have had an impact on the reporting and review process in previous COPs, for example, the decision on the definition of land degradation neutrality (LDN) and its related voluntary national targets to be set by Parties wishing to do so, and the decision on the provision of national estimates of progress indicators based on available data sources. These decisions have already significantly altered the future execution of reporting and the review process and it is expected that both the new Strategy and the revised mandate and functions of the CRIC will reflect these new developments, including the landmark decision on the sustainable development agenda agreed upon by the General Assembly that includes elements directly related to LDN.

9. One of the decisions with a clear impact on the next reporting process is decision 15/COP.12 which stipulates that the first review of progress indicators relating to strategic objectives 1, 2, and 3, including information on the LDN target setting and the provision of the default data, should be undertaken at the intersessional session of CRIC that will take place in 2018. This requires that reporting templates, including the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) portal, be adjusted by COP 13 at the latest in order to ensure that the reporting process can commence once COP 13 has decided on the new Strategy.

10. Parties at CRIC 15 are provided with an opportunity to further discuss how the monitoring of the Convention should be reshaped in light of the ongoing work of the IWG and previous decisions taken by Parties. COP 13 will be an important event where Parties will have the opportunity to forge strong links between future required action and the way in which implementation information should be captured for subsequent review by CRIC.

### **III. Overall reporting process**

#### **A. Future reporting timeline**

11. Taking into consideration decision 15/COP.12 and preliminary discussions by Parties at CRIC 13 and 14 on the non-paper 2 entitled “Additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the Conference of the Parties in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention”,<sup>3</sup> it is proposed that UNCCD reporting be undertaken every four years starting in 2018 and that the intersessional session of CRIC adjust to this new reporting schedule. The proposed reporting schedule would coincide with the reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) process and hence ease the reporting burden for those Parties wishing to set voluntary LDN targets in line with target 15.3 of the SDG.

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<sup>3</sup> <[www.unccd.int/en/about-the-convention/official-documents/Pages/SymbolDetail.aspx?k=ICCD/CRIC\(13\)/101&ctx=CRIC\(13\)](http://www.unccd.int/en/about-the-convention/official-documents/Pages/SymbolDetail.aspx?k=ICCD/CRIC(13)/101&ctx=CRIC(13))>.

12. With the assumption that the lifespan of the new Strategy would extend from 2018 to 2030, as proposed by the IWG, Parties to the UNCCD would be requested to produce reports in 2018, 2022, 2026 and 2030.

13. Proposals on how information contained in national reports could be reviewed by the CRIC are contained in chapter IV (F) below.

## **B. Elements of reporting, including reporting tools**

14. As the work of the IWG is still to conclude its deliberations on exactly how reporting could be carried out on future strategic objectives and what used to be the operational objectives, reference is made to document ICCD/CRIC(15)/INF.3 which contains examples from the tentative reporting template.

15. In very general terms, discussions within the IWG tend to favour quantitative reporting for the strategic objectives, while the operational objectives previously reported on through performance indicators would be replaced with a section favouring narrative reporting on the basis of experience gained in the implementation of the Convention. The latter will form the basis of interactive sessions and discussions by Parties on the implementation of the Convention and is intended to enhance the sharing of experience function given to the CRIC and considered instrumental to disseminating information on action by the UNCCD on the ground.

16. Alongside the reporting template, an updated reporting manual and glossary will be made available by the beginning of the reporting period. i.e. as soon as COP 13 has considered and possibly decided upon the new Strategy. Reporting templates and tools will be made available through the PRAIS portal.

## **C. Technical aspects of reporting**

17. As mentioned above, the PRAIS portal will remain the reporting platform for UNCCD reporting. Reporting officers with credentials assigned to them by their governments will receive access to the platform to download interactive PDF files with prepopulated national estimates of each respective metric(s)/prox(y)(ies) of the progress indicators based on available data sources.

18. As stipulated in decision 22/COP.11, Parties can subsequently verify or replace these national estimates using data sourced/computed nationally/locally (aggregated where needed). Parties could complement the set of common progress indicators with formal and narrative indicators at national/local level based on existent data collection systems and databases and from local storyline. They can also provide additional narratives on specific topics still to be discussed and agreed upon by the IWG.

## **D. Organizational aspects of reporting**

19. In line with the current support provided to those Parties wishing to set voluntary national targets for LDN through the Global Mechanism (GM), it is anticipated that further support in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and funded by the GEF will be provided to UNCCD country Parties during the reporting process starting in 2018. This would lead to a first review of information provided on progress indicators and LDN targets by those countries having decided to set them in addition to information provided by Parties on the other aspects of the new Strategy.

20. Modalities for support to be provided for the future reporting process are currently under discussion and feedback received by Parties during CRIC 15 will enable all partners involved, i.e. the GM, the secretariat, the GEF and UNEP, to devise a global support programme to ensure that capacities to monitor and report on UNCCD implementation are provided in time.

## **IV. Mandate and functions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention**

### **A. Mandate**

21. Decision 11/COP.9 decided to establish the CRIC as a standing subsidiary body of the COP to assist the COP in regularly reviewing implementation of the Convention and The Strategy.

22. While this mandate will not be changed according to the initial findings of the IWG, the group highlighted that the interactive nature of CRIC sessions and the specific role of the CRIC in enabling information-sharing based on feedback on actions on the ground is considered key to a successful review of the implementation.

### **B. Functions**

#### **(i) Assessment of implementation**

23. In its terms of reference, the CRIC is requested to undertake an assessment of the implementation of the Convention and the Strategy to enhance the implementation of the Convention through the review of information provided by Parties and other reporting entities, and of information on civil society, including the private sector.<sup>4</sup>

24. As all countries will be invited to provide information on progress indicators to the COP, the emphasis of reporting will be on activities undertaken at national level to implement the Convention. Information on support provided, especially by developed country Parties, is still under review by the IWG. Parties at CRIC 15 will have an opportunity to give feedback on this important aspect of reporting and reference is made to document ICCD/CRIC(15)/5 that outlines options to Parties on how information on financial resources could be captured in the future.

25. As a result, the assessment of implementation will still be undertaken on the basis of national reports provided, particularly information on the progress indicators as part of the strategic objectives.

#### **(ii) Performance Review**

26. In the course of reviewing the implementation of the Strategy to date, the performance review of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies has become a de facto COP agenda due to its interlinkages with discussions on the Convention's budget to be negotiated by the Committee of the Whole (COW) and approved at the level of the COP. No decision on the performance of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies has been drafted by the CRIC since 2008. Given the close relationship between the performance of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies and the financial

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<sup>4</sup> Terms of reference of the CRIC, decision 11/COP.9.

resources made available for the Convention, including its institutions and subsidiary bodies, it is suggested that performance review be removed from the list of functions to be undertaken by the CRIC and that the current modus operandi – discussion and review of the performance of those institutions and bodies along with discussions on the Convention budget – be maintained.

**(iii) Best practices**

27. In the terms of reference of the CRIC, reviewing and compiling best practices was one of its main functions. Subsequent discussions and decisions taken by Parties reduced the mandate of the CRIC to compiling and disseminating best practices, mainly through the use of the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP) and the identified primary recommended database identified for best practices on sustainable land management technologies, including adaptation. At COP 12, reporting obligations towards the remaining topics for best practices as identified in annex V of decision 13/COP.9 were nullified.

28. While discussions on how to deal with the issue of best practices remains a standing agenda item of CRIC<sup>5</sup> for discussion at its fifteenth session, it is suggested that the review of best practices be removed from the functions of the CRIC in favour of narrative information to be provided through future reporting in order to enable Parties to exchange views on specific topics and information contained in their reports. The section in the reporting template that will capture information on “actions implemented on the ground”, in particular, could lend itself to in-depth discussion during CRIC sessions on activities that further the implementation of the Convention.

**(iv) Assistance to monitor the performance and effectiveness of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention**

29. It is suggested that this function be removed from the functions of the CRIC since Parties have stated frequently that a subsidiary body should not be involved in monitoring its own effectiveness. In fact, the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy undertaken by the previous IWG, which contained, as per its terms of reference, a section on the evaluation of the performance of the CRIC, was an independent evaluation which reported to the COP Bureau and the COP itself and not to the CRIC.

**(v) Recommending methods aimed at improving the communication of information as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties**

30. It is proposed that this function be maintained in view of the need for an iteration on the reporting process, particularly with regard to the narrative sections of the reporting. Emphasis on topics to be chosen within the narratives may change in time and the CRIC may make recommendations to the COP in this regard during sessions in conjunction with the COP.

**C. Composition**

31. It is suggested that the composition section detailing participation in the CRIC sessions and elections of the CRIC Chair and his/her Vice-Chairpersons be maintained, as per decision 11/COP.9.

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<sup>5</sup> ICCD/CRIC(15)/6.

## **D. Stakeholders under review**

32. In the course of the implementation of the Strategy, amendments to the list of stakeholders under review have already been decided upon. For example, it was decided that input from civil societies would be channelled through the national focal point and directly into the national report of a given country rather than allowing civil society to submit information independently. Information from the private sector has never been received directly through the reporting platform, while specific information on private sector initiatives was sought through the collection of information from the standard financial annex.

33. As reporting emphasis will be on national efforts to implement the Convention which also include the Parties that follow the invitation to report on LDN targets and progress indicators, the stakeholders in the review section are likely to decrease and may be reduced to Parties, while supplementary information received from United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations will be welcomed in the future using narrative reports submitted individually.

## **E. Scope of the review process**

34. In sessions held between ordinary sessions of the COP, the CRIC will focus its work on the review of the implementation of the Convention through, inter alia:

- (a) Undertaking an assessment of implementation through progress indicators and progress made in the implementation of related LDN targets;
- (b) Reviewing opportunities for the mobilization of financial resources for the implementation of the Convention;
- (c) Exchanging information on success stories emerging from the implementation of activities on the ground;

with a view to submitting a final report to the COP containing recommendations from the Committee.

35. At sessions held in conjunction with ordinary sessions of the COP, the CRIC will assist the COP in:

- (a) Reviewing the report from the intersessional session;
- (b) Exchanging information on success stories emerging from the implementation of activities on the ground;

with a view to drawing up draft decisions.

## **V. Conclusions and Recommendations**

**36. Parties at CRIC 15 may wish to consider the proposals contained in this document as well as the other document relating to the overall reporting procedures and modalities for reporting by Parties, particularly documents ICCD/CRIC15/INF.2, ICCD/CRIC(15)/5 and ICCD/CRIC(15)/6, with a view to initiating early consultations on draft decisions to be forwarded to COP 13:**

**37. Parties may wish to recommend that:**



- (a) The reporting frequency for UNCCD reporting be adjusted to every four years;
  - (b) Reporting templates and related tools be made available as soon as COP 13 has decided on a new Strategy;
  - (c) The terms of reference of the CRIC be revised by COP 13 in order to ensure that its mandate and functions are adjusted in the event that Parties decide on a new Strategy;
  - (d) The mandate and functions of the CRIC be amended as outlined in this report;
  - (e) Appropriate documentation on the new mandate and functions of the CRIC be provided to COP 13.
-