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COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION  
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**REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AND OF  
ITS INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 22,  
PARAGRAPH 2 (a) AND (b), AND ARTICLE 26 OF THE CONVENTION**

**Overall review of the activities of the secretariat and of the progress made by  
affected country Parties in implementation of the Convention**

Note by the secretariat

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. By its decision 1/COP.5, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided that the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) shall regularly review reports prepared by the secretariat on the execution of its functions. The purpose of the present document is to provide information to CRIC 4 in this context.
2. The activities of the secretariat derive from the relevant provisions of the Convention, its regional implementation annexes and decisions of the COP. In the period following the sixth session of the COP (COP 6) these activities have focused on four main areas, in accordance with decision 3/COP.6:
  - (a) Service to the COP and its subsidiary bodies;
  - (b) Policy advocacy and awareness raising;
  - (c) Strengthening of inter-institutional collaboration and coordination; and
  - (d) Targeted support to affected country Parties in the implementation of the Convention.

3. In all these areas, progress has been made, although the limited resources available prevented the secretariat from fulfilling its tasks in an optimal manner. When considering the activities of the secretariat, COP 7 may wish to provide guidance to the secretariat on its work in various areas pertaining to the Convention process, including those mentioned above.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the light of provisions of the Convention and decisions of the COP that refer to the reporting on the secretariat activities, this document responds to the various reporting demands made thus far, most notably to article 23, paragraph 2(f) of the Convention, which requests the secretariat to prepare a report on the execution of its functions under this Convention and to present it to the COP. Decision 2/COP.3 also requests overall reporting on the secretariat's programme of activities. By decision 1/COP.5 establishing the CRIC, the COP decided that, at sessions held during the COP, the CRIC shall regularly review reports prepared by the secretariat on the execution of its functions.

2. By decision 11/COP.1, the secretariat was requested to prepare, after the third ordinary session and following every subsequent ordinary session of the COP, a report summarizing the conclusions of the review process. Taking into consideration the deliberations by the Parties made during the first and third sessions of the CRIC, this document attempts to highlight the secretariat's contribution to major developments in the implementation process of the Convention, while a comprehensive assessment is contained in the reports of CRIC 1 (ICCD/CRIC(1)/10) and CRIC 3 (ICCD/CRIC(3)/9).

3. By its decision 5/COP.3 the COP requested the secretariat to provide at forthcoming sessions of the COP a synthesis by each subregion, with the aim of compiling a comparative document on the progress made by affected country Parties in the implementation of the Convention. Such a synthesis is contained, among other matters, in document ICCD/CRIC(4)/3.

4. In several other decisions (notably 5/COP.3 and 3/COP.6), the COP requested the secretariat to report on its activities undertaken together with the Global Mechanism (GM). The related information is given in section III C below and in document ICCD/CRIC(4)/4.

5. The purpose of the present document is to provide a general overview of the secretariat's execution of its functions since COP 6, drawing in particular on decision 3/COP.6. Chapter II presents the background and strategic orientation of the activities of the secretariat, chapter III highlights the main activities of the secretariat, and chapter IV provides conclusions and recommendations for further action for the consideration by the COP. Information on the recent activities of the secretariat can also be found in the budget performance reports contained in documents ICCD/COP(7)/2/Add.3 (A) and ICCD/COP(7)/2/Add.4.

## II. OVERVIEW OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE SECRETARIAT SINCE COP 6

### A. Background

6. COP 6 was held in Havana from 25 August to 5 September 2003. It introduced a variety of new elements to the Convention process, including the decision on further steps on the implementation of the Convention (decision 1/COP.6), recognition of the importance of the implementation of the Convention in eradicating poverty and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (decision 2/COP.6) and the acceptance of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as a financial mechanism of the Convention (decision 6/COP.6).

7. In addition to bringing the above-mentioned new elements to the Convention process, COP 6 continued its work on several key topics, including the guidance to the GM, implementation of the Declaration on the commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the Convention (decision 8/COP.4), consideration of the regional coordination units, strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and organizations, and the priority themes of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

8. The decisions of COP 6 reflect the fact that the Convention process has come to maturity. Decision 1/COP.6 underlines the multidimensional nature of the implementation of the Convention, ranging from field projects for land rehabilitation to legislative measures. This decision, together with decision 2/COP.6 on the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), emphasizes the interpretation of the Convention and its implementation as a wide-reaching process that seeks ultimately to respond in a sustainable manner to the major developmental challenge identified by the international community, namely that of eradicating poverty. While this interpretation is embedded into the provisions of the Convention, the COP 6 decisions, and in particular decision 1/COP.6, present a pragmatically oriented as well as a policy level road map on how to shift the Convention process from the preparatory phase to concrete action.

9. In this context, the decisions of COP 6 bring forward various tools and detailed measures for advancing the implementation of the Convention. This is perhaps most notable in the context of financial resources: the designation of the GEF as a financial mechanism of the Convention contributes to the availability and predictability of funding, which is crucial for enabling the full-scale implementation of the Convention. Other significant measures deriving from COP 6 include guidance for the promotion of private sector and economic opportunities in drylands, further actions for strengthening capacity building, the involvement and networking of scientific institutions, awareness-raising (decision 1/COP.6); recognition of the regional meetings organized under each Implementation Annex (decision 8/COP.6); guidance for the next steps in developing the synergistic implementation of the Convention (decision 12/COP.6); and guidance for actions in various fields relating to scientific and technological cooperation such as traditional knowledge, benchmarks and indicators, early warning systems, and monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation (decisions 1/COP.6 and 16/COP.6 to 19/COP.6).

10. While the above-mentioned COP decisions target primarily Parties, many of them contain specific requests for action by the secretariat. Furthermore, by its decision 3/COP.6, the COP provided its overall guidance on the work of the secretariat in various areas, including service to the COP and its subsidiary bodies in relation to policy advocacy, monitoring and assessment; activities for the implementation of the Convention; assistance in the delivery of national reports; cooperation with relevant conventions, organizations and, in particular, the GM; promotion of synergies; and support to the integration of activities of the CST into the programming instruments of the Convention.

11. In general, the decisions of COP 6 represent additional challenges to the work of the secretariat, with regard to both the quantitative increase of tasks and their substantive scope. At the same time, the execution of the secretariat's functions has been affected by severe budgetary constraints. These constraints have resulted in the freezing of three key senior staff posts and consequently reduced the availability of personnel resources for carrying out analytical work and

advisory services. They have also necessitated cuts in travel and consultancy costs, which has limited the secretariat's participation in events relating to the Convention and the use of external expertise to assist with the workload. The budgetary constraints are presented in detail in document ICCD/COP(7)/2/Add.3.

#### B. Strategic orientation

12. In the light of the above, since COP 6 the secretariat has sought to focus its activities on areas that can best serve the Parties in meeting their obligations under the Convention, while taking into account the limited resources available.

13. Deriving from the relevant provisions of the Convention, its regional implementation annexes and decisions of the COP, particularly decision 3/COP.6, the primary orientation of the secretariat's work since COP 6 can be summarized in four areas as presented below. More detailed information on activities carried out under each area is contained in chapter III.

(a) Service to the COP and its subsidiary bodies. The organization of CRIC 3, including facilitation of the reporting process, was the main activity in the period following COP 6 involving a considerable share of the secretariat's staff. The follow-up and support to the work of the CST and its Group of Experts and the preparations for COP 7 have also been important elements in the work of the secretariat.

(b) Policy advocacy and awareness raising. In order to further political commitment to the implementation of the Convention, the secretariat has actively advocated the combat against desertification in relevant international forums and processes, as well as through meetings with key partners. At the level of affected country Parties, the secretariat has promoted the integration of the Convention national action programmes (NAPs) into the mainstream development strategies, and the involvement of a broader representation of political authorities as well as other relevant stakeholders in the Convention process at the national level. Information campaigns and other awareness-raising activities have also been carried out, including in the context of the celebration of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention and the preparations for the 2006 International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD).

(c) Institutional liaison and coordination. Promotion of synergies between the Rio conventions and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements; and support to the development of multilateral initiatives and collaboration for the Convention implementation have been among the focus areas of the secretariat since COP 6. Strengthening coordination with the GM has been an important aspect. Closer cooperation has been sought with specialized organizations that deal with drought, agricultural production and productivity in drylands.

(d) Targeted support to affected countries in the implementation of the Convention. Within the limits of its mandate, the secretariat has assisted affected country Parties, at their request, in advancing the implementation of the NAPs, including their continuing development. Particular attention has been given to supporting collaboration on the priority substantive and thematic aspects particularly at the subregional and regional levels, the development of synergistic implementation at the national and local levels, and the facilitation of partnership building.

### III. MAIN ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT SINCE COP 6

#### A. Service to the COP and its subsidiary bodies

##### 1. Third session of the CRIC

14. Following decision 9/COP.6, CRIC 3 was to review reports on the implementation of the Convention in Africa. At the request of the country Parties of the region and in response to pertinent COP decisions, the secretariat provided the updated Help Guide and secured financial assistance for the reporting in African country Parties. For the first time, these Parties also included a country profile on desertification in their national reports.

15. Forty-nine African country Parties submitted their reports, which were compiled, synthesized and analysed for the CRIC. Further inputs relating to the status of combating desertification in the region was received through three subregional workshops, organized by relevant subregional organizations in February 2005 in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Ethiopia, respectively. The outcomes of each workshop were compiled and delivered for the consideration of Parties at CRIC 3.

16. In addition to the African country Parties, 20 developed country Parties, 10 United Nations system organizations and 11 other intergovernmental organizations submitted their reports on measures taken to implement the Convention in Africa. These submissions were compiled and synthesized by the secretariat for CRIC 3.

17. A major part of the funding for the African reports was secured through a medium-sized GEF project, "Supporting capacity building for the elaboration of national reports and country profiles by African Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)", involving the World Bank as the Implementing Agency and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) as the Executing Agency. This was the first time that support to national reports was availed through a multilateral project, and the finalization of the related arrangements consumed more time than expected. Consequently, the deadline for submission of the reports was extended and CRIC 3 took place in May 2005, instead of in Autumn 2004.

18. CRIC 3 started with regional consultations among the country Parties of the Convention's regional implementation annexes, and continued through consideration of thematic topics relating to the implementation of the Convention in Africa and selected global issues. Four panel discussions on thematic topics and two interactive dialogues on global issues were organized during the session. On the sidelines of CRIC 3, a large number of parallel and side events were also held.

19. Twenty-nine pre-session documents were prepared with a total of 651 pages. Also four in-session documents and two post-session documents, including a comprehensive report with conclusions and recommendations, were provided.

20. CRIC 3 was attended by 360 participants from 130 country Parties (out of 191), one country observer, eight United Nations organizations and specialized agencies, 15 intergovernmental and 25 non-governmental organizations. Through contributions to the Special

Fund for Participation and the Supplementary Fund, the secretariat facilitated the participation of 99 representatives of developing country Parties and four representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Owing to the limited funding available for this purpose, and despite efforts made by the secretariat, the financial resources were not sufficient to cover the funding needs for the participation of representatives of all eligible country Parties, and only four representatives of NGOs could be supported to participate in CRIC 3.

## 2. Service to the CST

21. As the emphasis of the Convention process has moved towards the implementation of action programmes, the COP, and particularly the CRIC, have highlighted the need for scientific and technological inputs and cooperation. In accordance with the relevant COP decisions, the CST and its GoE have taken a more active role in the review process and intensified the work in many of the core areas of the Convention process, most notably in developing monitoring and assessment. The role of the secretariat has been to coordinate, facilitate and prepare for the activities of the CST.

22. Since COP 6, the secretariat has serviced the CST with the aim of ensuring appropriate follow-up to decisions taken by the COP. With limited means, various activities have been undertaken in support of the CST programme of work, including the organization of the third meeting of the GoE and the intersessional meeting of the CST Bureau.

23. Following decision 15/COP.6, the GoE was requested to prioritize its work programme and focus on issues emerging from priorities set forth in the action programmes as well as from the review of national reports and other relevant reports, and to advise the COP through the CST of the efficacy and adequacy of the programmes for implementing the Convention.

24. The third meeting of the GoE was held in Beijing in October 2004. The main task of the meeting was to consider in detail the matters included in the work programme. As a concrete outcome of the meeting, the members of the Group outlined seven projects that seek to operationalize the priority areas of its work. These projects focus on the following:

- (a) Establishment of a communication strategy
- (b) Development of a strategic framework for enhancing synergy approaches
- (c) Development of an integrative assessment methodology
- (d) Identification of gaps between biophysical, socio-economic and cultural knowledge and activities to combat desertification
- (e) Development of methodologies for desertification monitoring and assessment, in interaction with other related ongoing efforts
- (f) Evaluation of benchmarks and indicators for the monitoring and assessment of desertification
- (g) Guidelines for early warning systems.

25. Since the Beijing meeting, the secretariat has promoted the GoE projects towards potential financial partners. The European Commission has agreed to support the work of the GoE by convening the fourth meeting of the Group in the second half of 2005.

26. The GoE, as requested by the COP, provided its inputs to the review conducted by CRIC 3. A presentation by the Chairperson of the Group, summarizing and analysing the scientific and technological aspects of the national reports, triggered substantive discussions on the further steps to be taken in these areas.

27. With regard to the priority themes of the CST, the secretariat has continued to collect and report on related best practices and pilot studies as requested by the COP.

28. In response to decision 19/COP.6, the secretariat has continued to follow closely the activities of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) and Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA), including the provision of comments and inputs to documents prepared in the two processes, participation in the meetings of the Technical Advisory Group of the LADA, the Executive Committee and the Board of the MA. The secretariat also participated in the preparation of the MA synthesis report on desertification. This work is now completed and relevant reports will be disseminated to the Parties in due course.

### 3. Preparations for COP 7

29. As at mid-July 2005, preparations for COP 7 have included negotiations on the host country agreement with the Government of Kenya, and consultations with the United Nations Offices at Nairobi and Geneva. Among the matters discussed have been the meeting and exhibition rooms and related facilities, provision of documentation, security, questions relating to immigration requirements and local transportation.

30. An intensive fundraising campaign among developed country Parties has been carried out, in the hope of securing adequate financial resources to facilitate participation of representatives of eligible country Parties and NGOs at COP 7.

#### B. Policy advocacy and awareness raising

31. Although the international community has recognized the importance of the UNCCD in eradicating poverty and meeting the MDGs, as demonstrated by the outcome of the WSSD, the Convention and its action programmes are yet to be fully streamlined in this context. The secretariat has actively promoted the Convention in relevant international forums and processes and through contacts with individual countries, in order to foster the translation of the political recognition of the UNCCD into concrete action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels.

32. In the context of the United Nations system, the secretariat has substantially contributed to the sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Conferences of the Parties of the other Rio conventions, and the United Nations Forum on Forests, as well as to the meetings and high level events on small island developing States and financing for development. Outcomes of these events reflect the Convention's objectives and thrust.

33. The potential of the UNCCD has been brought up in several other events, such as the Second South Summit of the Group of 77 and various regional conferences and summits relating to sustainable development. Key aspects of the UNCCD have been introduced also to relevant

processes of the Organisation of Economic Development and Co-operation, the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries collaborating with the European Union, and the European Parliament, among others.

34. The participation of the secretariat in the above-mentioned events and processes has often contributed to the inclusion of UNCCD-related provisions in the respective conclusions. While these provisions may be considered to reflect a stronger awareness of the Convention and of the developmental tools that it offers, they are also expected to result in broader-based cooperation and support for the implementation of the UNCCD.

35. In order to support the identification of potential ways and means for stronger involvement of these countries in the implementation of the UNCCD, the secretariat has had bilateral contacts with donor countries and has thereby been able to consult with stakeholders from different line ministries and provide information on activities carried out and planned in the context of the Convention. Where appropriate, messages received from donor countries have been communicated back to the affected developing country Parties concerned. The consultations with donor countries have been particularly relevant to activities in Africa, in accordance with article 18 of the respective regional implementation annex. Since COP 6, the *chef de file* position of Norway in Ethiopia and the preparation of a multi-country project on gum arabic, are illustrative of the outcome of these policy advocacy activities.

36. With regard to policy advocacy towards affected country Parties, the secretariat has facilitated the integration of NAPs into the overall national development frameworks, strategies and programmes. Furthermore, linkages between the NAPs and relevant international and regional initiatives, such as the Environment Action Plan of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Country Pilot Partnership Initiative of the GEF Secretariat and the developing TerrAfrica partnership platform, have been fostered together with the GM. The secretariat has also assisted in strengthening the involvement of political authorities, the academic community, parliamentary officials and the private sector in the implementation of the NAPs.

37. In many countries the national level advocacy functions of the secretariat have furthered the inclusion of combating desertification into the agendas and work programmes of governmental bodies, scientific institutions and other national stakeholders.

38. In the field of public information, the secretariat, since COP 6, has intensified its activities in providing material for awareness-raising and educational purposes. Particular efforts were taken to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention in 2004. The following public information activities have been carried out:

- (a) Publication of the newsletter Down to Earth
- (b) Updating and printing of the UNCCD information kit in English, French, Russian and Spanish languages in collaboration with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- (c) Publication of two volumes of success stories from local communities
- (d) Preparation of the Environmental Education Kit on Desertification in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

- (e) In the context of 2004 festivities, the launching of a public information campaign, including new promotional tools: the “UNCCD Anniversary Brochure: Ten Years On” and the 2004 poster edition “Skin Erosion”
- (f) Strengthening of media relations and the provision of an electronic journalist database and media briefs
- (g) Re-designing of the UNCCD website
- (h) Strengthening of the library services and relationships with relevant institutions, such as German universities and other United Nations organizations’ libraries in Bonn.

39. With regard to the preparations for the IYDD, the secretariat, as the focal point for the IYDD, has invited its institutional partners to develop a joint strategy paper with a view to exploring viable options and identifying possible activities for the successful celebration of the Year. Official communications concerning the celebration of the IYDD have been sent to all UNCCD national focal points and efforts towards resource mobilization are ongoing.

40. In order to bring higher visibility to the IYDD, Professor Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and H.E. Mr. Cherif Rahmani, Minister of Land Planning and Environment of Algeria, have been nominated as Honorary Spokesperson and Ambassador for the Year, respectively.

#### C. Institutional liaison and coordination

41. Since COP 6, coordination and collaboration with relevant organizations and institutions has evolved, particularly with the secretariats of the other two Rio conventions, the GM, major United Nations system organizations and agencies and other relevant organizations working on matters relating to the Convention.

##### 1. Collaboration between the secretariats of the Rio conventions

42. Through their Joint Liaison Group, the secretariats of the three Rio conventions are collaborating and coordinating their approaches in order to develop synergies between the conventions. The Group has prepared a paper on options for enhanced cooperation among these three conventions. The paper identifies several potential areas of collaboration between the secretariats for advancing the synergistic implementation of the three conventions, including capacity building, education and outreach, research and monitoring, technology transfer and reporting to the bodies of the three conventions.

43. Another specific outcome of the work carried out in the Joint Liaison Group was the organization of a synergy workshop in Viterbo, Italy in April 2004. The emphasis of the workshop was on a demonstration of synergy approaches among the various concerned parties through forests and forest ecosystems, which were seen as a natural resource whose sustainable development could promote the convergence of objectives under each convention through concrete activities.

44. Several follow-up initiatives to the Viterbo workshop are currently being considered, notably a recommendation of the Viterbo panel on traditional forest knowledge, and another relating to forest fire prevention and management. The latter has contributed to the collaboration between the convention secretariats and the Global Advisory Board of the Wildland Fire

Network of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Furthermore, the recommendations on sustainable forest management support the preliminary work on the Joint Approach to Low Forest Cover Countries (LFCCs) that is linked to decision 12/COP.6. Moreover, the regional thematic programme networks (TPNs) concerning sustainable agriculture in Africa and agroforestry in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have drawn on lessons resulting from the Viterbo workshop.

45. Collaboration between the three secretariats has also produced joint public information campaigns under the theme of sustainable development.

46. In the context of the Joint Work Programme (JWP) between the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UNCCD, priorities for the JWP for 2005 have been established, and the Programme is advancing. It is expected to result in successful compilation of information on the status and trends of biodiversity in dry and sub-humid lands, and identification of lands of particular value and/or under threat. In accordance with relevant COP decisions, this constitutes another key area of activity for the secretariat.

47. Also in the context of the JWP, and in close collaboration with implementing agencies of the GEF, the secretariat has contributed to the organization of training courses for the preparation of projects for submission to the Facility. These courses have also considered the requirements under the GEF Operational Programme on sustainable land management. The primary objective of the training courses has been to provide the participants with required capacity for accessing funding under the relevant GEF Operational Programme. The courses were organized in cooperation with the *Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare* (IAO) in Florence, Italy. Representatives of GEF implementing agencies contributed to the courses.

## 2. Cooperation with the GM

48. In accordance with decisions 3/COP.6 and 5/COP.6, a JWP between the secretariat and the GM was prepared for the biennium 2004–2005. This Programme defines the principles of cooperation between the two entities, including effective information sharing and basing delivery of services on COP decisions and decisions adopted regionally by countries under the regional implementation annexes. It lists the modalities of cooperation, such as developing precise and direct channels of information exchange, drawing upon capacities of the regional coordination units, and consultations on the development of communication tools. The JWP states that the GM and the secretariat agree to deliver joint services whenever possible and to ensure that individual services rendered are complementary to the decisions taken by the COP and affected country Parties at the regional level.

49. The principles and modalities guide the joint implementation of a detailed programme of activities contained in the JWP. These activities focus on three main objectives: mobilization of resources for the core activities under the Convention, broadening the funding base for implementation of the Convention; and information systems, knowledge sharing and communication strategy.

50. Through the JWP, in 2004 the GM and the secretariat provided joint support to several African, Asian, and LAC country Parties in finalizing their NAPs and in launching country-driven consultations for partnership building. Also a number of subregional and regional

activities were carried out jointly. Furthermore, joint missions to some developed country Parties were organized.

51. The mid-term review of the JWP was to start at the beginning of 2005 but was somewhat delayed. Thus it may be noted that while the Programme provides a strategic framework for coordination and has strong potential to become an effective instrument for collaboration, the progress in implementing the agreed activities in 2005 has been limited. The main future challenges may be considered to be to further improve the exchange of information and the clarification of task allocation between the two entities.

52. In this regard, provisions contained in many COP 6 decisions may be considered to point towards such collaborative arrangements where the secretariat's emphasis is on the 'demand' side, while the GM focuses on the 'supply' side.

53. By its decision 1/COP.6, the COP requested the GM together with the members of its Facilitation Committee to promote resource mobilization for NAP implementation as a matter of the highest priority. By its decision 5/COP.6, it also requested the GM to focus on mobilizing financial resources, and to foster the supply side of bilateral and multilateral finance and partnership building, among other issues.

54. With regard to the secretariat, particularly through decision 1/COP.6, the COP highlighted the role of the secretariat in servicing the development of various substantive, thematic and scientific dimensions of the implementation of the Convention. In practical terms, most supportive tasks of the secretariat consist of analytical work and advisory services on a variety of policy and substantive matters and processes. Continuous contacts with the national focal points of the affected countries are maintained. The secretariat is essentially the task manager for the flow of information under the UNCCD, which results in first-hand knowledge and expertise on the needs, assets, challenges and potentials in the implementation of the Convention. It also has an important role in advocating for the Convention, as described in section B above.

55. Consequently, in future cooperation between the GM and the secretariat optimal outcomes could be reached through combining the secretariat's policy advocacy activities and expertise in UNCCD substantive matters with the GM's work in mobilizing financial resources.

### 3. Cooperation with other organizations

56. Since COP 6, the secretariat has sought to further develop cooperation with key United Nations system organizations working on matters that relate to combating desertification, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank. The objective of these activities has been to support the strengthening of the involvement of these organizations in the implementation of the Convention.

57. An important aspect in this regard has been cooperation in the context of the GEF and its focal area on land degradation. The secretariat has participated in UNCCD related events organized by the GEF implementing agencies and coordinated through specific steering agencies. It has regularly provided comments to project proposals that are to be submitted to the

GEF, in order to ensure that the specific provisions and requirements advocated by the UNCCD process receive due attention in projects under the focal area on land degradation, and particularly under the GEF operational programme on sustainable land management.

58. In addition to the medium-sized project that supported the preparation of national reports in Africa mentioned in section A above, the secretariat has been involved, among others, in the formulation of the following projects that have been prepared for submission to the GEF:

- (a) UNDP/GEF-gearred project “Targeted portfolio approach for capacity development and mainstreaming of sustainable land management in least developed and small island developing countries”
- (b) Country Pilot Partnerships
- (c) Project on sand and dust storm control in North-East Asia, that is implemented jointly by the Asian Development Bank, UNEP and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); and
- (d) Development of projects for the implementation of subregional action programmes (SRAPs) in the Gran Chaco and Puna Americana in LAC, to be submitted to the GEF.

59. Collaboration with the GEF is presented in detail in document ICCD/CRIC(4)/5.

60. The secretariat has actively participated in the development of the TerrAfrica initiative geared by the World Bank, and collaborated with various agencies including UNEP and the United Nations Volunteers on specific projects that address desertification and land degradation. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for collaboration with UNDP has been prepared.

61. Cooperation has continued with WMO in the context of enhancing the technical capacity of the UNCCD process and supporting drought preparedness in the Balkans.

62. In order to further the involvement in the UNCCD process of organizations that deal with agricultural productivity and commodity development in developing countries, and that may thus contribute to the development of economic activities in drylands, the secretariat has sought to strengthen its relationship with the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and has created a new partnership with the Common Fund for Commodities.

63. MoUs were concluded between the secretariat and the two entities in October 2004 and February 2005, respectively. These memorandums spell out the shared interests of their signatories, and emphasize information sharing, collaboration on and promotion of projects of mutual interest as the main areas of cooperation. The MoU with ICRISAT refers also to the potential of ICRISAT’s programmes to support the meeting of capacity-building needs under the Convention.

64. The secretariat has actively consulted with the OPEC Fund for International Cooperation and several of its member countries in order to define viable means for developing an enhanced framework of involving the Fund in the UNCCD process and identifying possible options in that regard, including on issues pertaining to institutional and financial matters.

65. Cooperation between the secretariat and the scientific community in Germany has involved universities and specific institutes that work on desertification control, land degradation and sustainable land management. This cooperation resulted in the creation of Desert\*Net, a German competence network for research on desertification. Current activities of the Desert\*Net include the creation of a Dryland Research Center at the University of Hamburg.

66. Other institutional partners have included several major regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union in its capacity as the governing body of NEPAD.

D. Targeted support to affected country Parties in the implementation of the Convention

67. As the number of NAPs ready for implementation has grown, the affected Parties have voiced through the meetings of the COP and particularly the CRIC their need for more structured substantive support. Central challenges in this regard include the strengthening of information exchange, coordination and collaboration among the key stakeholders, improving the coherence of national level activities and strategies, and promotion of stronger financial and political commitment to the NAP process.

68. Since COP 6 the secretariat has assisted affected country Parties, at their request, to strengthen the thematic and scientific base for the implementation of the NAP and related cooperation particularly at the regional level. It has also supported the development of synergistic implementation at the national and local levels and the establishment of country-driven consultative mechanisms to support partnership building.

1. Support to thematic and scientific cooperation

69. The subregional, regional and interregional activities have an important role in advancing cooperation on thematic and scientific issues among affected countries covered by the five regional implementation annexes of the Convention. They promote institutional collaboration, both horizontally between various organizations working on a specific theme, and vertically among stakeholders at the national, subregional, regional and international levels. They can also make a valuable contribution to enhancing the knowledge base of the UNCCD, and support the work of the CST.

70. The SRAPs focus on assisting countries to jointly address problems that characterize their shared ecosystems. They also provide a channel for the country Parties, cooperation partners, relevant institutions and agencies in each subregion to coordinate and link their activities to leverage experience.

71. Since COP 6, the development of SRAPs has proceeded in terms of institutional coordination, although in many subregions progress in delivering pilot initiatives and other planned outputs has been delayed due to lack of funding.

72. The preparation of the fifth African SRAP for Central Africa has made good progress. Priority projects contained in the four existing SRAPs have been included in the Action Plan for the Environment Initiative of NEPAD and were presented at the first Partners Conference held in December 2003 in order to seek the support of Africa's development partners for their effective implementation. The second Partner's Conference of NEPAD held in March 2005 emphasized

the combat against drought and desertification as a priority and called upon the establishment of a regional facility to be housed at the African Development Bank.

73. In Asia, the Central Asian SRAP that was adopted in September 2003 is planned to be started through a joint training and capacity building programme. A GEF project to advance the North-East Asian SRAP focusing on sand and dust storm control was completed at the end of 2004. The South Asian SRAP was launched in July 2004, and the development of joint activities is under way. The South-East Asian SRAP will be launched through two workshops before the end of 2005.

74. In LAC, the secretariat has assisted in the development of activities under the Gran Chaco and Puna Americana SRAPs, the preparation of the framework of the Hispaniola transboundary programme (PAN-FRO) between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and the sustainable land management approach for the Caribbean countries that will constitute the Caribbean SRAP.

75. In Europe, the secretariat is assisting South-Eastern European countries in cooperation with WMO in the establishment of a subregional drought management centre.

76. Under their regional action programmes (RAPs), the African, Asian and LAC country Parties have identified priority areas in which regional cooperation would be most cost-effective and create added value for the NAP processes. The implementation of the RAPs takes place through TPNs, each of which focuses on a specific priority area defined in the RAP, with a view to promote best practices. To date, all six TPNs in Africa and Asia, respectively, and four TPNs in LAC have been launched.

77. In Africa, TPN 5 on the development and promotion of new and renewable energy sources was launched in May 2004. The launching meeting of the network was closely linked with the preparations of the International Conference on Renewable Energies that took place in June 2004. TPN 6 on sustainable agriculture was launched in November 2004, back-to-back with an inter-regional meeting on agroforestry.

78. In Asia, TPN 1 on monitoring and assessment has produced the first draft version of a map on desertification in Asia. An expert review meeting is scheduled to take place in late 2005. TPN 2 on agroforestry has completed its draft manual on dryland agro-forestry. Upon finalization, the handbook will be published for distribution to farmers in dry zones in the affected Asian country Parties and will constitute one of the educational tools for capacity building. TPN 3 on rangeland management established its second field pilot project in Kyrgyzstan in October/November 2004. The first pilot site was established in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2003. TPN 6 on integrated local area development programme initiatives was launched in July 2005.

79. Following up on the Asian regional meeting held in 2003 and the Abu Dhabi Initiative for implementation of the priority activities of the Asian RAP in the period 2003-2008, which was adopted at the meeting, a regional consultation meeting took place in March 2005 to consider potential project concepts for submission to the GEF.

80. In LAC, TPN 1 on benchmarks and indicators, TPN 2 on a desertification information system for the region (DESELAC), TPN 3 on integrated water resource management and TPN 4

on agroforestry and combating poverty were launched after COP 6. TPN 5 on traditional knowledge and TPN 6 on renewable energy are currently being developed by the country Parties of the region, with the support of the secretariat.

81. The Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European affected country Parties have identified priority areas for regional cooperation aiming to develop scientific networking, strengthen the regional exchange of information and documentation, support capacity building and promote exchange of techniques and know how. A regional cooperation process among the countries concerned was launched through two workshops. A portfolio of initiatives for the development of regional cooperation was agreed, including priority areas for scientific cooperation; establishment of TPNs; training centres and reference centres; organization of regional technical workshops and exchange of technologies and know-how.

82. Interregional cooperation has promoted South-South partnerships that reinforce the consistency of approaches under the UNCCD process. Since COP 6, emphasis of interregional cooperation has been on the development of information exchange and joint initiatives in the field of agroforestry.

83. The secretariat has been in continuous contact with the institutions coordinating the SRAP processes and the TPNs, and sought to ensure efficient information delivery and coordination among the members by using the regular communication means and organizing workshops and meetings. The secretariat together with the GM has also facilitated contacts with relevant subregional and regional actors and interested bilateral and multilateral partners. In this regard, the UNCCD regional coordination units have had an important role in supporting the development of SRAPs and RAPs in a manner that is more responsive to the needs of affected country Parties.

84. For future action at the subregional and regional levels, the major challenge lies in the translation of the decisions of their members into clearly defined, concrete actions, taking into consideration the existing strengths and needs of each participating country and institution, while at the same time strengthening regional cooperation and information exchange.

85. Systematic support in the near future will be important in sustaining the potential of subregional and regional cooperation and in assisting the related collaboration frameworks to become fully operational and established in the regions. In this regard, it will be important to ensure that the subregional and regional work programmes have direct bearing on national level activities.

86. Support to other thematic and scientific activities: As mentioned in section C above, the secretariat has contributed, when requested, to the quality control preparatory process of several GEF projects. It has also participated in the development of specific projects that have strong potential to contribute to combating desertification, and promoted them towards potential cooperation partners and relevant scientific and financial institutions.

87. The secretariat has continued to promote a project targeting dryland rehabilitation through the provision of employment and resources to youth. The project was first implemented by the UNDP in Lesotho, with convincing results, and has been since launched in collaboration with the UNDP in Argentina, Benin, Cape Verde, China, Mozambique and Niger. Preparations

for the replication of the project in five Eastern Caribbean countries are under way. The secretariat has assisted in the establishment of working relationships between the affected country Parties and interested partners for the launching of the projects and has provided substantive inputs to the preparation of project documentation.

88. In the course of 2004, a 10-country project on the use of gum arabic for land rehabilitation and economic development in dryland areas in Africa was prepared. The secretariat supervised the project preparation. In this capacity it sought to ensure that the project responds to the primary objectives of the UNCCD, that linkages are built with the NAPs in the countries concerned, and that the respective focal points are fully involved in the project. Contacts were established with other specialized organizations that work on gum arabic issues, including the Common Fund for Commodities, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and ICRISAT. The drafting of the project was completed in early 2005, and it is currently with the GM for financial arrangements.

## 2. Development of synergistic implementation

89. The strategy of the secretariat towards the promotion of synergies among relevant conventions relies on four main pillars, namely strengthening institutional linkages; testing operational options including capacity-building initiatives; developing common policies and strategies; and supporting country-driven initiatives. Activities carried out under the first and third, and to some extent the second, pillar were presented briefly in section C above. A description of the secretariat's activities in promoting synergies at the country level is given below. More detailed information on the development of synergistic implementation is contained in document ICCD/COP(7)/5.

90. National synergy workshops: A national synergy workshop was organized in Kyrgyzstan in 2004. This workshop was one of several national synergy forums organized in recent years, aiming to generate country-driven processes by which policy makers and other actors will strengthen synergies at the national and field levels.

91. In general, most of the synergy workshops that have been organized so far have represented a first national level opportunity for a large group of relevant stakeholders to discuss the Conventions jointly. The workshops have served to ensure that the synergistic policies and tools subsequently developed under the respective Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) are demand-driven and respond to the needs perceived by the affected country Parties themselves.

92. The main outcomes of the workshops may be summarized as follows:

- (a) Understanding of the main objectives of each convention and the benefits of synergistic implementation that has been increased through the workshops;
- (b) Working relationships among various stakeholders have been strengthened, leading to better coordination and collaboration, particularly with regard to the focal points of the conventions; and
- (c) Geographical and thematic areas of synergistic implementation have been identified.

93. Development of synergistic implementation at the local level: Synergy workshops with particular focus on the local level were organized in Kazakhstan and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The workshops considered strategies for better involvement of local communities in the preparation of synergistic projects on one hand, and on the other, opportunities and hindrances in integrating the synergistic implementation of the Rio conventions into local level planning processes. Among the issues discussed were identification of strategies and methodologies for enhancing collaboration and coordination between local communities and national level actors and scientists; preparation and implementation of local level synergistic projects; capacity-building needs, and provision of incentives for synergistic implementation at the local level.

### 3. Partnership building

94. Building of partnerships for the implementation of the NAP process is one of the central provisions of the Convention and its regional implementation annexes. Although recent developments in the context of the GEF represent a major step forward in securing financial resources, the UNCCD, unlike the other Rio conventions, has not benefited from a clearly identified central funding mechanism. Rather it has encouraged multi-source funding. Hence the focus of financial resource mobilization has been shifted from institution to process: there has been no single institution to provide substantial resources commensurable to the identified needs. Even the GM, without significant resources of its own, can be only a facilitator in a multifaceted fundraising process. CRIC 3 confirmed that continued progress towards more predictable financial resources is a cornerstone of successful implementation of the Convention.

95. Consequently, affected developing countries have sought for a mechanism to promote effective mobilization of multi-source funding for the implementation of the NAPs, and to synchronize national level programming for the combat against desertification with fundraising activities. In close collaboration with the GM and relevant United Nations organizations, particularly UNDP, the secretariat has assisted affected developing country Parties to convoke country-driven consultative processes for partnership building. Since COP 6, several countries have furthered the consultative process, including Armenia, Belize, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Madagascar, Moldova, Niger, Peru, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Viet Nam.

96. In practical terms, the activities with which the secretariat associated itself consisted of workshops, background studies and the preparation of frameworks and strategies for linking the NAP with national development strategies, preparation of concrete projects on the priority areas of the NAP, and identification of potential domestic and external funding sources for the NAP implementation. In some countries, the purpose of these activities was to produce a 'NAP component' for the overall national development plan and related donor round table, while in other countries the activities were aimed at preparing for a consultative donor meeting focusing on NAP implementation.

97. Depending on the countries in concern, the activities carried out resulted in translating the NAPs into a more 'fundable' format, strengthening the integration of combating desertification into the overall national planning and programming framework, and the establishment and reinforcing of institutional modalities for effective implementation.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

98. As a follow-up to the decisions of COP 6, the secretariat sought to focus its activities on areas that can best serve the Parties in meeting their obligations under the Convention, while taking into account the limited resources available. When considering the activities of the secretariat after COP 7, the Parties may wish to guide the secretariat:

(a) To continue assisting affected country Parties covered by the regional implementation annexes other than Africa in preparing for the review of the implementation of the Convention in these regions at the fifth session of the CRIC;

(b) To continue supporting the integration of the activities of the CST and its GoE into the work of the CRIC, and the programming instruments of the Convention, such as NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs;

(c) To enhance its policy advocacy and awareness-raising functions with the aim of furthering and strengthening the achievement of the objectives of the UNCCD and securing the political and financial commitments needed to enhance the implementation of the Convention;

(d) To continue its collaboration with relevant conventions and organizations in order to further develop the potential of sustainable land management for synergistic implementation of the Rio conventions, through, *inter alia*, enhanced partnerships involving the GEF implementing and executing agencies;

(e) To prepare a JWP with the GM for the biennium 2006–2007, with due note on the primary task of the GM in mobilizing financial resources, and the role of the secretariat in advocating political commitment and channelling substantive and thematic information;

(f) To continue its collaboration with other relevant organizations, including at the regional level through the regional coordination units, in order to broaden the support base for the implementation of the UNCCD; and

(g) To strengthen its support to thematic and scientific cooperation at the subregional, regional and interregional levels; and assist affected country Parties, on request, to build partnerships at the national level, with a view to effectively bringing forward the implementation of NAPs.

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