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COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE CONVENTION ON ITS FIFTH SESSION, HELD IN
BUENOS AIRES FROM 12 TO 21 MARCH 2007**

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I. ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Welcoming ceremony

1. At a welcoming ceremony on 12 March 2007, to open the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 5), the Executive Secretary made a statement. Statements were also made by the Secretary of Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina, Dr. Romina Picolotti, and the Vice-President of Argentina, His Excellency Don Daniel Scioli.

B. Official opening and general statements

2. CRIC 5, convened pursuant to decision 1/COP.5, was officially opened in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on 12 March, by Mr. Franklin Moore, Chair of the CRIC.

3. At the 2nd meeting, on 12 March, statements were made by the representatives of Pakistan, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Germany, on behalf of the European Union; the Syrian Arab Republic, on behalf of the Group of Asian States; Ecuador, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States; Canada, on behalf of JUSSCANNZ; and Uganda on behalf of the Group of African States.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (Agenda item 1)

4. At its 1st meeting, on 12 March, the Committee adopted its agenda as contained in document ICCD/CRIC(5)/1, as orally corrected, as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
2. Designation of the Rapporteur of the Committee
3. 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, as well as decision 1/COP.5, paragraph 10:
 - (a) Review of the reports on implementation of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa, including on the participatory process, and on experience gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of action programmes
 - (b) Review of the reports by developed country Parties on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa, including information on financial resources they have provided, or are providing, under the Convention

- (c) Review of information provided by relevant organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, on their activities in support of the implementation of the Convention in affected country Parties of regions other than Africa
4. Consideration of necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of action programmes, including review of the enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention
 5. Review of available information regarding the mobilization and use of financial resources and other support by multilateral agencies and institutions, with a view to enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency towards the achievement of the objectives of the Convention, including information on the activities of the Global Environment Facility and the Global Mechanism and its Facilitation Committee
 6. Consideration of ways and means of promoting know-how and technology transfer for combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought, as well as of promoting experience sharing and information exchange among Parties and interested institutions and organizations
 7. Consideration of ways and means of improving procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties
 8. Consideration of the interim report on the status of celebration of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification
 9. Adoption of the report of the Committee to the Conference of the Parties, including conclusions and recommendations.
5. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted its organization of work, as contained in annex II to document ICCD/CRIC(5)/1, as orally amended by the Chair.

B. Designation of the Rapporteur of the Committee
(Agenda item 2)

6. At its 5th meeting, on 14 March, the Committee designated its Vice-Chair, Ms. Giselle Beja Valent of Uruguay, as Rapporteur of the Committee.

C. Organization of work

7. The CRIC held 16 meetings from 12 to 21 March and considered reports on implementation of the Convention submitted by affected country Parties from regions other than Africa, as well as relevant subregional reports and regional information.
8. The CRIC also considered reports by developed country Parties on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of national action programmes (NAPs) of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa, including information on financial resources they

have provided, or are providing, under the Convention, as well as information provided by relevant organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, and other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), on their activities in support of the preparation and implementation of NAPs under the Convention.

9. In the light of decision 1/COP.5, the Committee considered documents describing the outcomes of the subregional workshops of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa.

10. In accordance with decision 7/COP.7, and in order to maximize the exchange of best practices, experiences and lessons learned between Parties and observers, seven panel discussions were organized to cover regional and global issues as described in the thematic topics of decision 1/COP.5 and the strategic areas of decision 8/COP.4.

11. Following the provisions of decisions 1/COP.5 and 9/COP.6, the Committee reviewed available information regarding the mobilization and use of financial resources and other support by multilateral agencies and institutions, and considered necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of NAPs, including review of the enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention, ways and means of promoting know-how and technology transfer, experience sharing and information exchange among Parties and interested institutions and organizations, and ways and means of improving procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties (COP).

12. One Global Interactive Dialogue was convened on “Investments in rural areas in the context of combating land degradation and desertification”.

13. The highlights of the exchanges at CRIC 5 are presented in annex I.

14. In accordance with its terms of reference, the CRIC at its fifth session proposed recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the Convention (see chapter III).

D. Attendance

15. Representatives of the following 139 Parties to the UNCCD attended CRIC 5:

Afghanistan	Belize	Colombia
Albania	Benin	Comoros
Algeria	Bolivia	Cook Islands
Angola	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Costa Rica
Antigua and Barbuda	Botswana	Côte d’Ivoire
Argentina	Brazil	Cuba
Armenia	Bulgaria	Czech Republic
Austria	Burkina Faso	Democratic Republic
Azerbaijan	Burundi	of the Congo
Bangladesh	Canada	Denmark
Barbados	Chad	Dominica
Belarus	Chile	Dominican Republic
Belgium	China	Ecuador

Egypt	Madagascar	Saudi Arabia
El Salvador	Malawi	Senegal
Equatorial Guinea	Malaysia	Seychelles
Eritrea	Mali	Slovakia
Ethiopia	Marshall Islands	Slovenia
European Community	Mexico	South Africa
Fiji	Micronesia (Federated States of)	Spain
Finland	Moldova	Sri Lanka
France	Mongolia	Suriname
Gabon	Morocco	Swaziland
Gambia	Mozambique	Switzerland
Georgia	Myanmar	Syrian Arab Republic
Germany	Namibia	Tajikistan
Grenada	Nepal	Thailand
Guatemala	Netherlands	Timor-Leste
Guinea	Nicaragua	Togo
Guinea-Bissau	Niger	Trinidad and Tobago
Haiti	Nigeria	Tunisia
Honduras	Niue	Turkey
India	Norway	Turkmenistan
Indonesia	Pakistan	Tuvalu
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Palau	Uganda
Israel	Panama	Ukraine
Italy	Paraguay	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Japan	Peru	United Republic of Tanzania
Jordan	Portugal	United States of America
Kazakhstan	Qatar	Uruguay
Kenya	Republic of Korea	Uzbekistan
Kiribati	Romania	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Kyrgyzstan	Russian Federation	Viet Nam
Lao People's Democratic Republic	Saint Lucia	Zambia
Latvia	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Zimbabwe
Lebanon	Samoa	
Lesotho	Sao Tome and Principe	
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya		

16. The session was also attended by observers from the Holy See.

17. The following United Nations organizations, offices and specialized agencies were represented:

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
 International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
 United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations Information Centre (UNIC)
World Bank
World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

18. Eleven IGOs and 37 NGOs were also represented.

E. Documentation

19. The documents submitted for the consideration of the CRIC are listed in annex II.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

20. The conclusions and recommendations listed in this report are a summary compilation of ideas, suggestions and proposals offered by various delegations during CRIC 5 to further implementation of the Convention. This report identifies potential action that could be undertaken at the national, subregional, regional and international levels, after consideration and appropriate decisions by the COP, in conformity with the provisions of the Convention.

A. Further steps in the implementation of the Convention in regions other than Africa

1. Participatory processes involving civil society, and non-governmental and community-based organizations

21. The follow-up to the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD) should pursue the trend initiated during the IYDD and facilitate participation in the implementation of the Convention and at the COP and the CRIC, not only by environmental NGOs but also those NGOs that are active in the socio-economic field, community-based organizations (CBOs) and local development associations.

22. Farmers as a major group should be empowered and included as a part of civil society participating in the bodies and work of the Convention.

23. Parties, governments and donor agencies should consider dedicating special funds to support and promote the participation of NGOs, CBOs and other elements of civil society, such as farmers, particularly from developing countries, in the UNCCD process and enhance their involvement in combating land degradation, desertification and drought. The provision of further useful information to NGOs, CBOs and civil society can greatly help society to resist the pressure to overexploit natural resources.

24. Successful microlevel interventions at the level of local area programmes within the NAPs, if properly documented and shared, can be used in scaling up activities and thereby have the potential to influence national policies.

2. Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements

25. The promotion of sustainable agriculture practices, through strengthening existing national legislative frameworks, and the development of the capacity of national institutions to implement these measures, must be prioritized.

26. National legislative acts and regulatory codes that attempt to redress the often piecemeal nature of existing environmental legislation should, to the extent possible, lend support to improved tenure entitlements, help lessen the negative incentives which encourage overexploitation of sensitive ecosystems at local level, and promote measures specifically designed to address commitments under the Convention.

27. Parties should make a dedicated effort, possibly with support from the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), to review specific critical issues, such as land-tenure regimes.

28. Furthermore, Parties should more consistently make use of existing national legislation, even if it is not specifically aimed at desertification, where it represents a considerable potential for fulfilling obligations under the Convention.

29. National coordinating bodies should implement a multi-stakeholder exercise across several sectors, involving multiple ministries, including ministries of finance and planning. It is important that the focal points serving these bodies have sufficient authority and resources to impact project portfolio management and coordination among ministries.

30. Incentive frameworks for a supportive role by the private sector must be strongly prioritized. UNCCD issues should be represented in international trade forums because trade issues for agricultural and non-agricultural products play a major role in establishing the conditions for economic growth and for sustainable agriculture and ranching production that lead to restored land health and improved productivity.

3. Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements

31. At the beginning of the second UNCCD decade, and in the light of the clear conclusions of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), developed country Parties and agencies are invited to provide adequate, timely and predictable financial resources, including new and additional resources from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), for implementation of activities relating to the Convention, without neglecting any of the Regional Implementation Annexes entitled to assistance.

32. The GEF is invited to strengthen the focal area of land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation; further, donors and the GEF Council are invited to allocate more financial resources to this focal area in the next replenishment.

33. Affected country Parties are invited to make more consistent domestic budget allocation for rural development and advocate a greater focus on the new modalities of aid delivery such as enabling national budgetary, legislative and governance frameworks as they provide the

necessary backing for channelling investments for sustainable land management (SLM) through Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), budget support and basket funding.

34. Affected countries should mainstream desertification/SLM issues among key sectors for assistance in discussions with bilateral and multilateral donors. Ministries of finance and planning should thus be involved in mainstreaming SLM activities.

35. The Global Mechanism (GM) is to play a more active role in mobilizing resources and maintaining a geographical balance so that countries with less capacity are also able to benefit from the resources, which are said to be abundantly available but inaccessible by them. To increase transparency, developed country Parties are invited to work in collaboration with the GM to leverage new and additional resources through mainstreaming SLM into donor programming frameworks.

36. The GM must privilege resource mobilization according to its mandate enshrined in the Convention and subsequent decisions of the COP. Factors leading to the described shift in paradigm must be clarified. The GM's new orientations are important but they should not compromise the mandated focus as the GM was not created for prioritizing capacity-building.

37. The GM should be enabled to adequately fulfil its own mandate, which is to act as a broker and as a capacity builder. The GM should progressively become the centre of the resource mobilization strategy of the Convention, taking into account the appropriate synergies with the draft focal area strategy of the GEF for Sustainable Land Management (OP 15) so as to avoid overlapping and fragmentation of financial instruments.

38. The GM is invited to better capitalize on the demand-driven policy formulation process taking place in the context of the Regional Implementation Annexes and the NAPs to facilitate the response from developed country Parties.

39. It was recognized that the work undertaken by the central Asian countries together with the GM, the Asian Development Bank and development cooperation partners, in launching the GEF Multi-country Programming Partnership entitled "Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management" (CACILM), provides a model of success that could guide action in the other regions.

40. The effort of the GM is acknowledged, and it should be supported and strengthened by donors to fulfil its mandate to facilitate the mobilization and channelling of resources to Parties for combating desertification.

41. Parties should study the OP 15 and convey their views to their GEF Council member or focal point before the GEF Council finalizes the SLM and other area strategies at its next meeting in June 2007.

42. A call is made for enhanced voluntary contributions by developed country Parties and multilateral and non-governmental funding agencies to UNCCD processes, and augmentation of the dedicated portfolio for sustainable land management under the GEF.

43. The Asia and Pacific country Parties take this opportunity to ask for the creation of a specific Desertification Fund to meet the special needs of the Asia-Pacific country partners, particularly the least developed countries and the small island developing States, because under the existing international cooperation efforts it is difficult to distinguish the amounts directed solely towards achieving the Convention targets from those with global aims.

44. Partnership agreements are also being undervalued to the extent that we lose sight of some important initiatives that they offer.

4. Links and synergy with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies

45. The UNCCD potential to be instrumental for adaptation to climate change must be recognized through adjustments to appropriate mechanisms. Investigating scientifically the linkages with biodiversity, carbon sequestration and wetlands protection may close knowledge gaps on the central relevance of land and water conservation issues for synergistic strategies on environmental protection and, more specifically, adaptation to climate change.

46. Land, water management and forest conservation issues in dryland ecosystems should be seen as core elements of UNCCD implementation and linked to related and parallel frameworks if further institutional and process duplications are to be minimized. This is also true for actions sponsored by the GEF.

47. Multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) have distinct objectives, mandates and, most importantly, membership. For that reason there must be respect for the independent legal status of those bodies and conventions, as was recently noted by General Assembly resolution 61/202 concerning the implementation of the UNCCD.

48. Developing countries, especially those in Africa, should be assisted to access new and additional financial resources through complementarities with all other relevant MEAs to successfully address and reverse land degradation. An architecture should be developed at national level that will bring the three Rio Conventions together to combine their strengths, to leverage increased financial resources in the light of their complementary nature.

49. Although emphasis has been on synergies and linkages between the Rio Conventions, synergies between all sustainable development instruments (such as PRSPs) are important. More specifically, linkages with the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands must be emphasized as well because wetlands serve to effectively buffer habitats from drought and desertification.

50. Synergies should not reduce the latitude of decision-making by national authorities. The implications of inter-convention synergies on decision-making at the local level, for example, need to be studied in terms of behavioural and institutional models.

51. There is a need to build capacities for synergies at the systemic, institutional and human levels both nationally and locally. To ensure ownership and effective implementation of the Convention, the rural poor, who have the most at stake, must be part of the design process of linkage and synergistic strategies.

52. At the national level the three Rio Conventions should be coordinated by the same ministry or have a coordinating body, as appropriate.
53. It is important for implementing the Convention to answer the question of where linkage stops and synergy begins.
54. The process of building a regime under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) for the fair and equitable sharing of benefits for genetic resource and associated traditional knowledge should serve as the basis for traditional knowledge within that area for the UNCCD.
55. Nationally, NAPs should receive equal political commitment and funding afforded to other development policies and plans and should synergize with the latter to add value to the NAPs.
56. The 10-year strategic plan should focus on the thematic topics and their implementation.

5. Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought

57. While recognizing land degradation as a cross-cutting issue, the areas identified in the Bonn Declaration must be addressed as multisectoral and multidisciplinary in nature.
58. Priority should be given to preventive policies and activities in the areas of agriculture and forestry, land tenure, and promotion of agriculture trade, and to designing specific project initiatives that directly address agriculture, forestry and rangeland issues.
59. If food production is meant to double in the next 50 years while more pressure is put on land and its productivity by competing demands, the UNCCD could be instrumental in encouraging appropriate market regulations and the introduction of codes of conduct for sustainable land-use management and social equity, in the context of the Regional Implementation Annexes, with the support of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, FAO and other concerned agencies. The promotion of sustainable agriculture practices, however, calls for building capacity as well as strengthening the existing institutions at the national level.
60. To reduce the pressure on forest resources, as a main domestic energy source for the greater part of the population of affected regions, emphasis on the development of new and renewable energy sources such as sustainable biofuels, and private sector investments in these areas, is also recommended.
61. Increased energy efficiency through the reform of the power sector, and the promotion of energy conservation and of new energy sources, must be activated through joint efforts of the public and private sectors and reducing dependency on fossil fuels.
62. Implementation must now translate into action on the ground. The secretariat, in its capacity of serving the CST, is invited to facilitate initiatives leading to transfer of technologies.

63. A spectrum of initiatives should be aimed at promoting sustainable use and management of rangelands, including the promotion of secure livelihoods in the pastoral livestock sector, support through research programmes in effective stockbreeding of pasture animals, and the balanced offering of incentives and disincentives aimed at reducing the number of herders in pasture lands.

64. There is a need for identification of the major aspects of land degradation arising in the various eco-geographical zones and measuring their severity in order to find appropriate solutions. This could be done by developing natural resource management information systems through combining the traditional knowledge of local communities with the new technology as well as a comprehensive participatory monitoring and evaluation system. Priority should be given to outcome-oriented indicators at the national level while including biophysical and socio-economic indicators.

65. Participatory natural resource management is a key solution to preventing land degradation. In this regard promoting the customary land tenures of local communities, strengthening and legalizing their traditional institutions, and facilitating their access to financial resources is recommended.

6. Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment: early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought and access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how

66. Local, national, subregional and regional technological, scientific and research capacities in developing countries affected by land degradation and desertification should be developed and strengthened.

67. Dissemination systems and information-exchange networks should be established that include all role-players such as governments, IGOs, NGOs, local communities and scientific institutions.

68. Resources should be made available for the establishment/expansion of networks of weather stations for early warning of climate-related natural hazards at subregional and regional levels to facilitate observation and forecasting.

69. There should be strengthening of South–South, North–South and triangular cooperation in investment, trade, technology, and research and development (R&D). Regional cooperation should be enhanced through establishment of regional/subregional arrangements, strengthening cooperation between national and regional institutions, and strengthening and facilitating, as appropriate, regional cooperation arrangements.

70. The CST must better service the needs of Parties, and in this respect it would benefit from more independent expertise participating in its deliberations. It should also help in defining and standardizing objective targets and realistic and user-friendly indicators. The Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) on improving the procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the COP, may provide guidelines on how stakeholders could be better informed and made more knowledgeable.

71. Future orientations of scientific and technical cooperation should address the issue of the exploitation of available knowledge. Indeed, the results of considerable research undertaken in the past decades on desertification, notably in a European context, including base-level data, geographic information systems, topical analysis or sectoral studies, risk being lost because there is no proper archiving system or mechanism to transfer the accumulated knowledge to the ongoing decision-making process for natural resource management.

72. The establishment of effective monitoring and assessment systems requires political will as well as access to adequate technology, particularly advanced space technology. There is a need to create an international policy environment for the provision and transfer of such technology to affected country Parties.

73. The CST should accelerate its efforts to establish links with scientific communities in order to make full use of the relevant initiatives of scientists such as those in the areas of soil and water conservation, and provide technical support to the affected countries.

B. Implementation of the Convention at the global level

1. Review process and procedures for communication of information, as well as of the quality and format of reports

74. The CRIC is a peer review process for a number of critical issues relating to land degradation but this function must be supported through strengthened reporting and must promote a greater monitoring capacity at the national level. The results of the work of the Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) will be fundamental for the future mandate and format of the CRIC.

75. As difficulties are encountered in data gathering and management, and information sharing at the national level, the UNCCD secretariat may identify options available through international institutions to facilitate provision of information technology to affected country Parties.

76. National reporting is an important instrument for reviewing the implementation of the Convention for each country Party and for entire regions. It must provide better comparability of financial information between the figures in the reports of donors and in the reports of affected country Parties.

77. The second generation of UNCCD reports should facilitate indicator-based time-referenced and territorially explicit reporting, based on reliable data and information collection over time and between countries, and provide an appropriate focus on what works, lessons learned, positive impacts of action taken, ways and means to evaluate advocated approaches and assist in scaling up best practices and win-win measures so as to enhance information transfer to support decision makers at all levels.

78. In order to establish the new reporting cycle on a sound basis, and also improve the reports from the affected and developed country Parties, a selection of benchmarks and indicators should be proposed by the CST, taking into account existing work done on the subject. Further proposals on the UNCCD reporting process, including country profiles, should be

provided by the AHWG at COP 8 with a view to achieving an agreement on multiscale benchmarks and indicators to monitor progress against an established baseline.

79. The development of national benchmarks and indicators is important. However, the adoption of universal benchmarks and indicators that do not take into account local, national and regional specifics is not acceptable. Furthermore, benchmarks and indicators should not lead to new obligations for developing countries without the provision of new and additional financial and technical resources, in accordance with commitments taken by developed countries.

80. National reports building on data collection, standardization and analysis in the transdisciplinary fields of relevance to the implementation of the UNCCD should build and strengthen national environmental information systems and meet the needs of a wide range of multi-stakeholders' constituencies at governmental, scientific and non-governmental levels.

81. Adequate and predictable funding for national reports should thus be ensured under the fourth replenishment of the GEF (GEF 4) according to the conclusions of the May 2003 GEF Council meeting. Time constraints placed on affected Parties due to late funding arrangements have sometimes hampered the quality of the reports. Beyond this third reporting cycle, the GEF and its implementing/executing agencies, in cooperation with the secretariat, are invited to streamline procedures for providing an adequate and timely financial support in order to facilitate the successful preparation of more substantive reports from affected developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the context of capacity-building for SLM monitoring.

82. In the light of the outcome of the AHWG progress report, the COP should consider issuing guidance on a revised version of the existing Help Guide or on new UNCCD reporting guidelines.

83. Some of the areas where a contribution of the IIWG is expected include proposals for predictable funding, for a more structured contribution from the scientific community and civil society in the CRIC process and for enhancing modalities of country self-assessment.

2. Efficiency and effectiveness of measures in reaching the end-users of natural resources

84. Participatory natural resource management is a key solution to preventing land degradation. In this regard promoting the customary land tenures of local communities, strengthening and legalizing their traditional institutions and facilitating their access to financial resources are recommended. Also, a better understanding of how local authorities are raising revenues is essential.

85. Capacities for lifting key barriers and for expanding the social outreach of NAPs are diverse but generally insufficient in smaller countries. Capacity-building for SLM should cover the legislative and policy formulation process, application of SLM practices at the local level and improved capacity to absorb technical innovations. Targeted support to develop the necessary framework conditions, including secure entitlements and good governance, should be extended to affected country Parties.

86. Further identification of the spatial distribution of poverty, combined with an emphasis on landscape units for assessment of human impact on land systems, must be undertaken in conjunction with local authorities, NGOs and feedback from communities, in order to implement remedial approaches to land degradation and desertification.

87. Emphasis must be placed on promoting indigenous knowledge to enhance the capacity of the individual family in sustainable management of natural resources and improved livelihood.

88. The emerging trend to give more focus to alleviating poverty and increasing attention on indigenous people who depend on natural resources for their livelihood must be encouraged, making renewed efforts to involve NGOs and the private sector.

3. Synthesis of best practices, experiences and lessons learned and ways and means to promote experience sharing and information exchange among Parties and all other interested institutions and organizations

89. Environmental governance and accountability must be supported by information and data. As the follow-up on previous recommendations of the CRIC and consequent decisions of the COP is difficult to document and thus impossible to assess, the AHWG and the IIWG should consider and propose cost-effective modalities to assess progress in the seven thematic topics and the six strategic areas of the Bonn Declaration.

90. The necessary financial support for capacity-building and for knowledge management and monitoring should not, however, be a substitute for needed investments in affected areas.

91. An enabling policy support and mechanism to capitalize on appropriate technologies, traditional knowledge and innovative entrepreneurship must be advocated by the IIWG to address land degradation and desertification in a wider context. Renewed efforts should be made by all Parties to activate technical institutions to build up UNCCD networking, and relationships with the pertinent thematic programme networks (TPNs) should be much better exploited.

4. Emerging and challenging issues deriving from implementation and necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of action programmes

92. The NAPs must establish linkages and combine with driving areas of international support such as food security and the reduction of rural poverty, adaptation to climate change, territorial planning and the prevention of natural catastrophes or forced migrations so as to become more dynamic and iterative tools engaging the SLM policy formulation process.

93. Structural policy changes and land-tenure reforms are often key for NAPs to become building blocks of a consistent national environmental strategy. NAPs should mainstream SLM into new national coordination policies in a manner that synergizes rather than waters down the NAPs.

94. NAPs need a review process to keep them dynamic. The review can build on developments in policies, plans and national and regional programmes. Some affected countries may wish to undertake, on a pilot basis, a strategic UNCCD environmental assessment to provide an in-depth review of the breadth and scope of such links. However, in many countries

the transaction costs of the coordination advocated by the UNCCD must be addressed, including financial support.

95. Private sector involvement and profitability studies of proposed measures are critical to harness their management skills and technical skills. Responses to growing appeals for private–public partnership and for corporate social responsibility are expected to play a major role in the expansion of the implementation process.

96. Reversing soil degradation trends in areas affected by desertification and drought through programmes sensitive to the spatial distribution of poverty emerges as a key issue to successfully mainstreaming sustainable land and water management into national development strategies.

97. In dealing with land rehabilitation, priority should be given to treating lands that still have the potential for rehabilitation.

98. Payment for environmental services, the application of the ‘polluter pays’ principle and resulting green taxation flowing into dedicated environment funds must be expanded to support such purposes as reforestation, soil protection or watershed rehabilitation programmes. Moreover, economic incentives linked to taxation and compensatory schemes should encourage sustainable practices of landowners and land users.

99. The value addition of Regional Coordination Units is emphasized and in this regard it is suggested to support them from the UNCCD budget.

5. Ways and means of promoting know-how and technology transfer

100. Efforts should be scaled up to effectively implement the global partnership for development as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and to effectively operationalize the World Solidarity Fund for Poverty.

101. There is a need for coherent multilateral action and strategy on technology and this should focus on efforts to remove the barriers to adoption of sustainable development technologies.

102. There should be immediate, effective and full implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building.

103. A dynamic and enabling international environment supportive of international cooperation in the areas of appropriate, cost-effective technology transfer processes to promote know-how, experience sharing and information exchange should be created.

104. It is important that conventions should be fully implemented through increased cooperation and provision of technical and technological resources to affected country Parties for carrying out priority activities identified in their respective NAPs.

105. The digital divide between developing and developed countries should be narrowed to harness the potential of information and communication technologies for development through

provision and transfer of technology on affordable and mutually agreed terms. There should also be the provision of financial and technical support.

106. Innovative options for financing the pilot and large-scale implementation of advanced and appropriate cost-effective and adaptive technologies in developing countries should be established, including addressing the role of international financing institutions in leveraging private investment. For Africa, the role of the GEF Strategic Investment Program for Sustainable Land Management and TerraAfrica Initiative are important and need to be clearly explained and communicated.

107. Support to developing countries for research and development in new technologies, as well as the adaptation or evaluation of existing technologies for country specific conditions, should be provided.

108. For Africa, the primary vehicles for international cooperation are provided by the New Partnership for Africa's Development and other partnerships in the form of South-South and North-South cooperation which require strengthening.

109. For combating land degradation, drought and desertification, African countries have undertaken to strengthen subregional, regional and international cooperation, particularly in the areas of information collection, analysis and exchange, and R&D, and in the transfer, acquisition, adaptation and development of technology. African countries have also undertaken to cooperate within relevant IGOs, make appropriate financial allocations from their national budgets towards the implementation of the Convention, and strengthen reforms towards greater decentralization and participation of local communities in halting and reversing land degradation and desertification.

110. World-class centres of excellence in areas relevant to combating desertification should be established in developing countries through international cooperation. High quality "virtual universities" and virtual means of research could be created to spread knowledge, innovation and technological application.

111. The need for protection, application, and development of traditional knowledge and know-how and sharing of benefits arising from it should be addressed.

112. The important role of indigenous knowledge and practices needs to be acknowledged and new technologies need to be introduced in ways that are non-destructive, accessible and valued. Exchange of information and practices among local communities should be supported.

113. The rights of communities over their traditional knowledge, which constitutes their main wealth, must be safeguarded. Any reference to traditional knowledge under the scope of the UNCCD should clarify that it does not apply to traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources; rather the UNCCD should depend on the outcomes of the ongoing process to build an access and benefit sharing (ABS) regime under the CBD.

114. A pro-active role of the CST and the TPNs is necessary for the dissemination of technology, knowledge and know-how from international and regional levels to the national and local levels.

115. There is a need to strengthen the regional thematic network of the Regional Action Plans as a means of promoting regional cooperation in appropriate technologies and exchange of scientific information.

116. The renewed commitment of the international community, especially financial institutions, is essential to support national efforts of developing countries for capacity-building. In this context, a global campaign should be initiated for human resource training particularly in the area of sustainable development.

117. More direct endeavours should be made to utilize global scientific and R&D capabilities for combating desertification. In this regard the R&D needs and priorities of developing countries should be identified together with possible niche opportunities for specific countries and regions, such as agriculture research that has been identified as crucial to the success of NAPs in most of the developing countries.

118. The CST must think in longer terms (20 years); it must take a lead in making contributions to addressing implementation. Consideration of such things as biofuels, land degradation and climate change should be considered in that light.

119. The reform of the CST should include consideration of the bottom-up demand-driven process with the UNCCD and include locally perceived needs for research and technology.

120. Community-driven priorities should be acknowledged. Policies for effective rehabilitation of land should include the users of such land, who take decisions on that land several times a day.

121. Parties should earmark a part of their budgets for technology development.

122. Environmentally sound technologies that are easily available and affordable must be prioritized for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, notably in Africa. The CST should display technologies (such as renewable energy) through the COP so that delegates can clearly understand the opportunities and challenges.

123. Access to technology should rely on consistent private sector involvement while at the same time national administrations may put in place programmes and incentive packages, notably targeting rural development.

124. Harmonization of existing fragmented efforts and wider exploitation of results of pilot projects should be encouraged through more consistent technical and financial support to the existing instruments of the UNCCD process at subregional and regional levels.

125. Developed country Parties should fulfil their obligations under the UNCCD and provide adequate, timely, predictable resources and cost-effective, proven and appropriate technology to developing countries to reverse and prevent land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought by establishing early warning systems.

6. Recommendations on financing Convention implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions, including the Global Environment Facility

126. Addressing land and water issues under the UNCCD framework is essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and maintaining essential ecosystem services; therefore the UNCCD potential for a synergistic added value must be recognized in the resource allocation patterns of the GEF context. In this respect the GEF secretariat should make explicit how projects outside OP 15 reported to contribute to SLM actually relate to the UNCCD process.

127. The Paris Declaration and new modalities for allocating resources for overseas development assistance (ODA) are acknowledged, but the political deficit leading to insufficient funding in meeting the intertwined global challenge of rural poverty and land-based ecosystem degradation must be addressed by a joint effort of all Parties. This necessity was reflected in the JIU report and should be addressed in the context of the work of the IIWG.

128. Funding mechanisms available for the implementation of projects and programmes relating to land degradation and desertification, including the GEF, the Adaptation Fund of the Kyoto Protocol, and the clean development mechanism, should be easily accessible to affected country Parties, particularly those in Africa, and support their efforts to combat desertification.

129. Synergies have been recognized to be important in enabling the UNCCD to draw from available funds from other related conventions, such as the potential for adaptation funds. Such funds should not replace the need to mobilize specific funds for UNCCD/NAP implementation.

130. Strengthening South–South partnerships, including through public–private partnership as well as North–South partnerships, must be systematically pursued for efficient and effective resource mobilization for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought.

131. There is an urgent need to provide microcredit schemes for income-generating activities, especially for women, who are the social group most affected by desertification and the effects of drought.

132. There is agreement on the need to prioritize strategies and streamline procedures. In this context, the ongoing policy harmonization for ODA and other funding must not bypass the issue of land/soil degradation, desertification and drought, because the negative impact of these threats combined with climate variability is increasingly reaching a global dimension. For least developed countries and countries with extensive debt, lending is not the preferred option.

133. With respect to aid coordination modalities, the Chef de File resource mobilization mechanism must be maintained and expanded as it is very important, notably for African countries, which seek the full support and involvement of developed country Parties.

7. Political commitment and awareness raising

134. Further to the completion of 2006 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, follow-up action is required at all levels to promote political engagement, advocacy and awareness-raising for promoting a stakeholders' alliance in the context of the

Convention. The cost of inaction and returns on investments for SLM must be more systematically documented.

135. Parties are invited to provide guidance at COP 8 on the desirable contribution of the UNCCD process to the Commission on Sustainable Development 2008/2009 cycle of review on agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification.

136. The focal point, in the context of the national coordinating body, must be able to promote more active interdepartmental interactions to promote common vision and joint action. From the national focal point down to the local end-user of resources, the attitude of stakeholders must respond to the growing land-degradation emergency with a sense of ownership and responsibility and must be more informed, involved and inclusive.

137. Documentaries and other forms of communication of success in combating desertification should be undertaken and made available to interested Parties.

8. Investing in rural development

138. Reducing poverty calls for a common direction in approaches to improve rural livelihoods and enhance economic growth in rural areas. Country ownership, alignment, harmonization, and mutual accountability with their partners should help affected country Parties to exercise leadership in strengthening rural development and protecting drylands ecosystems.

139. Farmer-managed tree planting schemes supported by foreign aid in the Sahel should be emulated as they restored vegetative cover and successfully reestablished more complex and resilient production systems.

140. Climate change, which is likely to exacerbate desertification, may at the same time drive economic opportunities in drylands, given the international commitments to reduce emissions and increase sinks of greenhouse gases. Most of the dry sub-humid and semi-arid areas are used by dryland people, but much of the vast arid and hyperarid areas are hardly used. The latter drylands have the highest solar irradiation and vast uncontested land for intercepting sunlight to derive renewable energy that can be exported, thus reducing global emissions. The arid and some of the semi-arid drylands can provide afforestation that would not compete on space with other uses. Trees would thrive on low-quality groundwater and/or harvested run-off. They will sequester atmospheric carbon in their biomass and subsequently in the underlying soil. The amount sequestered can be large enough to generate global benefit in spite of the low productivity of these drylands, due to their large expanse.

141. Similarly, dryland space offers an enormous potential that can facilitate the hosting of national parks, communal conservancies, wildlife farming, indigenous biodiversity production and other forms of ecotourism-related developments that do attract gender-sensitive income generation for local populations.

IV. CONCLUSION OF THE SESSION

A. Adoption of the report of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, including conclusions and recommendations
(Agenda item 9)

142. At its 16th meeting, on 21 March 2007, the Committee adopted the draft report on its fifth session (ICCD/CRIC/5/L.1), as orally amended, and authorized the Rapporteur to finalize it, with the assistance of the secretariat.

B. Closure of the session

143. Statements were made by the Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry of Environment, Territory and Sea of Italy, Mr. Bruno Dettori, and the Secretary of the Environment and Sustainable Development of Argentina, Dr. Romina Picolotti.

144. The Executive Secretary of the UNCCD made a statement.

145. Statements were made by the representatives of Pakistan (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), Germany (on behalf of the European Union), the Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda (on behalf of the African Group), Kenya (on behalf of the Presidency of COP 7), Albania (on behalf of the Eastern European Group), Honduras (on behalf of the Latin America and the Caribbean Group) and Nigeria.

146. A statement was also made by the representative of the NGO Yonge Nawe Environmental Action Group (Swaziland).

147. The Chair declared the fifth session of the CRIC closed.

Annex I

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EXCHANGES BY THE COMMITTEE FOR THE
REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION
AT ITS FIFTH SESSION**

**I. SPECIFIC THEMATIC ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION
PROCESS IN REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA**

A. Participatory processes involving civil society and non-governmental
and community-based organizations

1. Among all the Rio Conventions, the UNCCD can be most responsive to community-driven priorities. It is increasingly recognized that desertification in affected regions translates into poverty. Decentralization policies and shared environmental management with community-based organizations (CBOs) or indigenous people help in delivering the benefits of multi-purpose land-use planning. Participatory soil conservation measures or grassroots plantation campaigns in rural areas are sometimes backed by direct governmental investments.

2. Stakeholder participation from central or federal authorities to regional councils down to district or municipal level and grassroots organizations achieves a cultural balance and can offer additional opportunities through the UNCCD process. Legal or regulatory measures, incentive devices, technology transfer, and pooling of resources are helpful in articulating decentralized mechanisms of cooperation and promoting an implementation alliance among stakeholders.

3. Donors are responsive to well-conceived participatory initiatives, but many countries still register fragmented results and serious asymmetries in the enrolment of influential civil society actors in favour of the UNCCD. As television and school programmes can be an effective medium, improved sensitivity to natural resource management and agricultural issues, notably among the young people, remains an important objective. Participation by women, young people and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is not sufficiently facilitated or documented.

4. Community-based rules and regulations on resource utilization, demand-driven research and extension work by government agencies combine to promote more effective resource allocation for farmers, provided that ongoing knowledge- and information-sharing brings more clarity on income-generating opportunities.

5. An important issue in land-use management is the question of tenure. Although potentially challenging for the central government in terms of management control, empowerment through secure tenures, participatory processes, genuine decentralization or fiscal devolution represents an investment in longer-term sustainability gains for livelihoods and resources protection.

B. Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements

6. Improvement of land tenure, legislation, statutory acts and guidelines are at the forefront of the enabling work of national action programmes (NAPs) in many countries. The

encouragement by the UNCCD on the updating and enforcement of environmental laws was better secured through sensitivity to livelihoods and well-being issues.

7. Progress has been achieved through higher entitlements for national focal points, more consistent budgetary allocations in some cases, inter-ministerial working groups or committees of parliamentarians and alliances of stakeholders that have at times supported and expanded the outreach of the UNCCD. National and local governments are now joining hands.

8. Numerous laws, government decrees, physical planning acts, timber regulations, fiscal codes and pricing mechanisms have been issued to support land and water conservation as well as sustainable practices in the other strategic areas of the Bonn Declaration.

9. In countries with economies in transition, new laws on land ownership provide an opportunity to address land-degradation issues. Institutional articulations between the normative framework and the NAP and the establishment of technical networks ensure greater consistency in implementation.

C. Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international,
including conclusions of partnership agreements

10. Progress has been achieved in obtaining commitments from governments to earmark budgetary allocations, rural credit or payment for ecosystem services. Direct allocations for environmental protection are increasing in several State budgets. Funding and cost sharing rest increasingly on governmental responsibility – the ‘user pays’ principle and the ‘polluter pays’ principle. Advocacy NGOs and CBOs play a major role in domestic resource mobilization.

11. Multi-country and multifocus partnership frameworks, notably in central Asia and South America, have successfully tested approaches for expanding finance sources, enhancing donor coordination, harmonizing priorities, knowledge transfer and capacity-building. They assist in mainstreaming sustainable land management (SLM) into donor programming.

12. On the other hand, dedicated funding or mechanisms for implementation of the Convention at national and international level are not systematically developed. Dialogue between development partners, development banks, State authorities and municipalities has been institutionalized. In many cases, however, national and local needs for financial support as identified in the first national reports have not yet been adequately met.

13. Experience from southern European countries highlights the importance of regional structural funding support in meeting environmental protection targets for soil/water conservation and forest rehabilitation in drylands, with the help of the international advocacy role of the UNCCD.

14. Developed country Parties increasingly work in partnership with the Global Mechanism (GM) and the members of its Facilitation Committee and other involved agencies to support measures across several thematic areas together with governments of affected country Parties and representatives of civil society.

15. Nevertheless unease is often expressed about the allocation of funds for land degradation under the fourth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF 4) and the cumbersome procedures for accessing the increasingly hypothetical resources.

16. Parties under regional cooperation frameworks took valuable initiatives, notably for aligning scientific, research and training institutions to the UNCCD objectives, launching scientific cooperation or exploiting best practices. However, the resource needs of these frameworks under the UNCCD do not receive enough attention and this is a matter that could be reviewed in conjunction with the consideration by the Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) of Committee on Science and Technology (CST) issues.

D. Links and synergy with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies

17. In several cases, inter-institutional consultation mechanisms created as UNCCD-related instruments have influenced national land-use planning, promoted synergy and served as platforms to develop joint action with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity or the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

18. NAPs encouraged transdisciplinary research in affected ecosystems while furthering socially sensitive planning in rural areas in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Scientific work on impact indicators backed up these developments on a pilot basis.

19. Remaining challenges include the lack of synchronization among national policies and the lack of baseline data that would legitimize the need for synergies. More attention needs to be given to critical matters of the three Conventions such as soil erosion or drought.

20. National coordinating bodies working with intersectoral committees and legislative processes can alleviate the difficulties of achieving more integrated planning, reduce overlapping and promote cross-cutting issues.

21. National capacity self-assessments identified gaps and potential for a more synergistic implementation of the Conventions at the programme and project level, notably in the sectors of afforestation, land-use improvement and pasture rehabilitation, and advocated the development of such tools as impact assessment, biodiversity prioritization, and technical guidelines.

22. Small island developing States deserve to be assisted on a pilot basis to build up synergistic frameworks for the implementation of the Rio Conventions linking up elements dealing with technology, public awareness and education.

23. The Joint Liaison Group of the Executive Secretaries of these Conventions may advise on ways and means to strengthen the links between the NAPs under the UNCCD and the national adaptation programmes of action under the UNFCCC.

E. Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought

24. Soil degradation and loss of fertility are widespread concerns. Some Parties have undertaken activities covering the rehabilitation of millions of hectares and extensive reforestation, focusing on sustainable agricultural and land-use practices and promoting a scientific emphasis on sound monitoring systems. Critical zones or “hot spots” in arid or semi-arid areas have been identified and given attention. National parks developed in conjunction with ecotourism are seen as income-generating opportunities.

25. Sustainable land-use management includes water and soil conservation, promotion of agroforestry, watershed management, measures to reduce pressure on agricultural land and the associated reduction of overcropped areas. Energy efficiency through diversification of energy sources, including biofuels, has received higher but not sufficient attention with a view, inter alia, to decreasing import of fossil fuels.

26. Anti-erosion infrastructures, improvement of water harvesting, water treatment and irrigation systems, reforestation, improved agricultural practices and packages of socio-economic incentives continue to address major challenges facing the NAPs, such as topsoil disruption, lowering water tables, secondary salination and increasing alkalinity of soils, loss of vegetation, and chemical contamination of soil. Many countries take measures to withdraw overgrazed or cropped areas.

27. Reforestation of critical watershed areas must receive priority attention to maintain mountain ecosystem services, secure integrated landscape protection, prevent soil erosion and flooding, allow larger carbon sinks and protect biodiversity.

28. In the context of high population growth and the increased share of fertile land taken over by urban areas, the planning of urban and transport infrastructures, notably in the drylands, must be thoroughly reviewed to minimize further soil sealing, reduce compaction and avoid further removal of arable land.

29. Under the strategic areas of action of the Bonn Declaration, studies have been undertaken on the productivity of ecosystems, agro-industry, agricultural and cattle production, mountain and watershed management, and water and soil pollution control, sometimes in conjunction with regional programmes. Some countries took the lead in advancing projects on renewable energy. Many individual activities relevant in these areas have taken place under various concerned ministries without much institutional coordination with the UNCCD process.

30. Integrated systems on parameters and indicators for assessing the risks of drought and desertification and establishing scales of vulnerability must be established in support of a strategic framework aimed at reducing vulnerability to both gradual and abrupt environmental changes. By clarifying causal relationships at multiple scales they can enable the course of more informed territorial interventions by regional and local stakeholders.

F. Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment

31. Ten years into the implementation of the UNCCD the setting of objective baselines and of measurable goals supported by impact indicators against which change and progress can be assessed becomes a clear necessity, at both national and international levels. Indeed, links between the UNCCD and reported measures are not always clear, notably because a comprehensive set of assessment indicators is lacking.

32. The UNCCD Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) project supports national monitoring systems. Land-degradation-mitigation measures should rely on a standardized set of indicators for conservation management of environmentally sensitive areas, notably in matters of deforestation, soil erosion and salination.

33. The aggravated impact of natural catastrophes owing to land degradation and deforestation across all ecosystems is alarming. Early warning systems increasingly combine assessment of drought, impact of climate change and food security. They are further mobilized for disaster prevention. Data collection systems have been updated but not standardized. Institutional training on diagnostic techniques relating to watershed management or irrigation systems is provided to affected populations, including aboriginal communities. The practice of environmental impact assessment in ecologically sensitive areas is more widespread.

G. Access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how

34. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment provided an impetus for a more systematic assessment of the economic value of environmental assets. Projects for payment for ecosystem services have been initiated and have brought an additional incentive to resource conservation.

35. Awareness campaigns and educational systems at all levels include measures to adapt to climate change and cope with desertification. Guidelines provided to populations take into account local knowledge. Training has been provided to local authorities. Support was expressed for encouraging multidisciplinary research and developing UNCCD scholarship programmes.

36. If the attitude of stakeholders is to respond to the growing emergency with a sense of ownership and responsibility, stakeholders must be better informed and more involved. In this respect concerns were expressed as to how to improve the effectiveness of thematic programme networks and deliver results under the networks, and there may be a need to undertake evaluations to this effect in the context of the Regional Implementation Annexes.

37. In many countries, however, reliable data collection for land degradation remains a challenge and more work is needed to develop and validate reliable indicators. In this respect identification, standardization and application of indicators still deserve considerable attention.

II. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES UNDER GLOBAL REVIEW

A. General trends

38. The conclusions and recommendations in chapter III of this report are drawn from the review of reports of countries in regions other than Africa covering the period that started with the completion of CRIC 1 in November 2002. They also reflect inputs offered during CRIC 5 to further the implementation of the Convention. Chapter III spells out potential action that could be considered by the CRIC at its sixth session with a view to submitting draft decisions for adoption by the Conference of the Parties (COP) at its eighth session.

39. The outcome of the review of the implementation of the UNCCD in regions other than Africa often confirms the trends and findings identified through the review of developments in Africa that was completed during CRIC 3. This report may thus be read in conjunction with document ICCD/CRIC(3)/9.

40. Measures under the Convention are seen to be relevant across all ecosystems. In national reports modest progress has been registered on improvement of the legal framework, mainstreaming NAPs, institutional strengthening, and the launching of pilot activities. However, against the background of growing environmental degradation and increasing aridity due to erratic weather patterns, progress in the implementation of the UNCCD in Regional Implementation Annexes II to V is real but not yet sufficient.

41. The present review completes the third monitoring cycle of the CRIC. Based on this experience, and drawing from the outcome of the IIWG and the Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) on improving the procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the COP, the COP at its eighth session may wish to take stock of challenges and opportunities on the eve of the second UNCCD decade. The COP may provide further guidance on the implementation process through an agreed set of strategies, objectives and methodologies so as to move the Convention from the earlier institutional phase to the achievement of more concrete goals, associated targets and measurable outputs.

42. In all regions under review, ecosystems are under growing stress. Extreme weather events are reported in all regions. Responses of affected countries to the UNCCD vary widely. Renewed efforts to prevent land degradation are necessary if environmental sustainability is to be ensured (MDG 7).

43. The emergence of Asia as a global production centre with an above-average rate of growth is overstressing the limited carrying capacity of natural resources, notably with respect to the availability of freshwater and arable land. Under present conditions, the region is already living beyond its “environmental needs”. Desertification is confirmed as an overriding threat. Eco-efficiency, innovative socio-economic policies and market-based approaches could move the region from the present unsustainable rate of mining of natural resources closer to a “green growth” paradigm.

44. Latin America also experiences the encroachment of lower income groups into environmentally sensitive areas, extreme climatic events, and massive floods and landslides. In some areas of the continent, the decline of rainfall and the lowering of water tables have severely

accelerated the pace of desertification. Glaciers, the main sources of water in the Andes, are dwindling. Pollution from industrial or mining estates also aggravates water scarcity.

45. In the Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe, irregular precipitation leads to increased intensity of drought and forest fires, and hydrogeological hazards such as flash floods present an aggravated threat. Land-use planning and changes in the tenure regime present an opportunity to address land-degradation issues at all levels. Rehabilitation of polluted land, former military estates or deserted mines is included in the NAPs.

46. Small island developing States, which are threatened by extreme weather patterns and coastal erosion, favour regional coordination and integrated management strategies for coastal areas and watersheds. They develop indicators for drought, coastal/inland erosion and landslides and advocate greater use of geographic information systems (GIS) for UNCCD monitoring but still lack mechanisms for technology transfer and need much capacity strengthening. In this context they see the need to adjust the reporting process to their specific condition, and to avoid “over-consultation”.

B. Adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of NAPs

47. In the context of an ongoing but partial discharge of obligations under the Convention at national level, some visible progress was made in NAP development, although financial uncertainty and insufficient capacity remain sizeable problems. NAPs underscore the need for internal changes to render strategies more effective, and for continued work to integrate the NAPs into national development strategies.

48. In some instances the NAP is not supported by a specific budget of its own but is considered as an integrating strategic tool to enhance efficiency of existing legislation, policies, programmes or projects. It promotes flows of financial support to priority interventions and most affected zones in order to address issues relating to environmental sustainability, actualize the economic potential of rural areas and secure off-farm livelihood strategies

49. Adjustments to earlier versions of NAPs focus on mainstreaming, gap analysis, data management, changes in the legislative and institutional frameworks, and enhanced interaction between the science and research community and decision makers.

50. Against a background of increased climatic variability, the relevance of measures under the NAP for the prevention and mitigation of natural catastrophes such as drought, sand storms, forest fires or flash floods is increasingly acknowledged.

51. Regional action programmes and subregional action programmes have often been seen as effective means to elicit South–South cooperation. They provide inventories, training, customized monitoring methodologies, communications networks and pilot-project development, although their effectiveness is severely hampered by resource constraints and so the implementation phase falls short of expectations.

C. Mobilization and use of financial resources and other support by multilateral agencies and institutions

52. Although direct environmental protection expenditures are rising in several State budgets, developed country Parties and international agencies may wish to respond to the repeated call for streamlining the procedures for access by affected developing country Parties to existing funding sources. The need is for country projects rather than agency projects.

53. The UNCCD process should benefit from synergy with adaptation to climate change, from links with clean energy for development, or from the introduction of a low carbon economy. A range of drivers can open promising opportunities for marshalling new funds.

54. Parties are preparing various projects dealing with natural resource conservation, land protection and rehabilitation, often in conjunction with climate change mitigation or biodiversity protection. However, the fate of such proposals is uncertain owing to the limited funds available to operational programme 15 (OP 15) under GEF 4.

55. Calls were made for the GM to focus on its core mandate, as spelled out in the Convention, and also to expand the breath and scope of its assistance in support of the process unfolding under the various Regional Implementation Annexes under the Convention.

56. For many countries, internationally funded projects are an important catalyst of NAP implementation. However, in many cases, national and local needs for financial support identified in the first national reports have not yet been adequately met. In this context, it is expected that resources allocated to land degradation under the next GEF replenishment would be considerably expanded.

57. In recognition of the economic relevance and cost-effectiveness of SLM preventive measures, international sources of funding for the UNCCD should be expanded to sustain national financial strategies that include coordinated land-use planning, the harmonization of sectoral policies and innovative mechanisms. Mainstreaming processes are critical to maintain a strategic focus on combating land degradation and desertification.

58. External assistance, though limited, acts as a catalyst to mobilize national and local funding.

59. Countries in regions other than Africa recognize that the convening role of multilateral agencies such as the development banks, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) for deploying development resources can foster progress under the Convention's Regional Implementation Annexes, and they call for the establishment of a portfolio of activities directly enhancing on-the-ground-investment in areas of relevance to the implementation of the Convention.

60. New sources of finance for rural areas relating to carbon markets or other market mechanisms for payment of environmental services or the production of biofuel cannot be tapped under the UNCCD without a full range of supportive measures from capacity-building to regulatory schemes, technology transfers or public-private partnership.

D. Ways and means of promoting know-how and technology transfer for combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought

61. The time has come for the COP to consider equipping the CST with the means to deliver advice that will lend more authority and continuity to its work. Technical exchange coordination for service delivery must be strengthened, globally and in the context of the Regional Implementation Annexes. In this respect the Regional Coordination Units should be allowed to pursue and adjust their activities.

62. The contribution of the scientific community should be significant. Establishment of database systems, including GIS, inventories of affected areas, centralized land-use information completed by quantitative and qualitative analysis, and on-site and remote-control monitoring systems have been included as priorities in several NAPs.

63. With respect to new technologies one may note, for instance, that progress in desalination technology has lowered the cost by 50 per cent, so that this technology is well on its way to becoming transferable as a viable option for water-scarce countries.

64. The loss of soil organic carbon pools and related soil degradation processes, often driven by human intervention in forest areas, croplands or rangelands, and the processes leading to the necessary restoration of soil health, are issues that the CST cannot afford to ignore.

E. Ways and means of improving procedures for communication of information

65. Evaluations of the GEF process through UNDP and the World Bank/IFAD medium-sized projects in support of capacity-building for UNCCD monitoring have demonstrated the need for this support but have also shown that there is room for improvement. Compliance with the Help Guide was not systematic and so comparability in substance, coverage and format of national reports is elusive and their quality varies widely. Aggregation of data and cross-country comparison is problematic.

66. The distinction between NAP implementation and generic sustainable land management in related fields is blurred, notably in the reports of developed country Parties, despite the existence of the Rio markers. The complexity of establishing benchmarks and indicators in the UNCCD field of activities should not be underestimated and proposals in this respect must be realistic.

67. Generally reports are still more descriptive than analytical, lacking in comparable quantitative data and could be more helpful in providing information on progress or results. Simplification and capturing results achieved should be a feature of revised reporting guidelines. For small island developing States flexibility in the format is desirable.

68. As the UNCCD reporting process includes a participatory assessment with stakeholders and a national validation workshop, timely and predictable transfer of funds to allow for a careful national monitoring process would contribute to higher quality.

Annex II

**DOCUMENTS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AT ITS FIFTH SESSION**

<u>Document symbol</u>	<u>Title or description</u>
ICCD/CRIC(5)/1	Adoption of the agenda and organization of work. Provisional agenda and annotations
ICCD/CRIC(5)/2	Review of reports on implementation by affected Asian country Parties, including on the participatory process, and on experience gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of action programmes
ICCD/CRIC(5)/2/Add.1	Synthesis and preliminary analysis of information contained in reports submitted by affected Asian country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(5)/2/Add.2	Progress made in the formulation and implementation of subregional and regional action programmes in Asia
ICCD/CRIC(5)/2/Add.3	Outcome of the regional meeting of affected Asian country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(5)/3	Review of reports on implementation by affected Latin American and Caribbean country Parties, including on the participatory process, and on experience gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of action programmes
ICCD/CRIC(5)/3/Add.1	Synthesis and preliminary analysis of information contained in reports submitted by affected Latin American and Caribbean country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(5)/3/Add.2	Progress made in the formulation and implementation of subregional and regional action programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean
ICCD/CRIC(5)/3/Add.3	Outcome of the regional meeting of affected Latin American and Caribbean country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(5)/4	Review of reports on implementation by affected Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European country Parties and other affected country Parties, including on the participatory process, and on experience gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of action programmes

<u>Document symbol</u>	<u>Title or description</u>
ICCD/CRIC(5)/4/Add.1	Synthesis and preliminary analysis of information contained in reports submitted by affected Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European country Parties and other affected country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(5)/4/Add.2	Progress made in the formulation and implementation of subregional and regional action programmes in affected Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe country Parties and other affected country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(5)/4/Add.3	Outcome of the regional meeting of Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European country Parties and other affected country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(5)/5* and Corr.1–2	Review of reports by developed country Parties on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa, including information on financial resources they have provided, or are providing, under the Convention, and synthesis and preliminary analysis of information contained in those reports
ICCD/CRIC(5)/6	Review of information provided by relevant organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, on their activities in support of the implementation of the Convention in affected country Parties of regions other than Africa
ICCD/CRIC(5)/7	Review of available information regarding the mobilization and use of financial resources and other support by multilateral agencies and institutions, with a view to enhancing their effectiveness and efficiency towards the achievement of the objectives of the Convention, including information on the activities of the Global Environment Facility and the Global Mechanism and its Facilitation Committee
ICCD/CRIC(5)/8	Consideration of ways and means of promoting know-how and technology transfer for combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought, as well as of promoting experience sharing and information exchange among Parties and interested institutions and organizations
ICCD/CRIC(5)/9 and Corr.1	Consideration of ways and means of improving procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties

<u>Document symbol</u>	<u>Title or description</u>
ICCD/CRIC(5)/10	Report on the status of celebration of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification
ICCD/CRIC(5)/INF.1	Arrangements for the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention. Preliminary information for participants
ICCD/CRIC(5)/INF.2	List of participants to the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
ICCD/CRIC(5)/INF.3	National reporting process of affected country Parties. Explanatory Note and Help Guide
ICCD/CRIC(5)/INF.4	National reporting process of developed country Parties. Explanatory Note
ICCD/CRIC(5)/INF.5	Status of ratification of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
ICCD/CRIC(5)/INF.6	Draft “Ten-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance Implementation of the UNCCD (2008–2018)”
ICCD/CRIC(5)/MISC.1 and Add.1	Compilation of summaries of reports submitted by affected Asian country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(5)/MISC.2 and Add.1	Compilation of summaries of reports submitted by affected Latin American and Caribbean country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(5)/MISC.3	Compilation of summaries of reports submitted by affected Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European country Parties and other affected country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(5)/MISC.4 and Add.1 and Amend.1	Compilation of summaries of reports submitted by developed country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(5)/MISC.5/Rev.1	Provisional list of participants
