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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,
AS WELL AS DECISION 1/COP.5, PARAGRAPH 10**

**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**

**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**

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

**Outcome of the regional meeting of Northern Mediterranean and Central and
Eastern European country Parties and other affected country Parties**

Summary

1. The third regional meeting of focal points from Northern Mediterranean (NM), country Parties (Annex IV of the UNCCD) and Central and Eastern European (CEE) country Parties (Annex V of the UNCCD) and other affected country Parties in preparation for the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 5) was held from 24 to 27 July in Bonn, Germany. The meeting was attended by 46 participants, with

representatives from 23 Parties, including the European Community, and from United Nations bodies, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. A total of 31 presentations were made, including presentations on national reports from NM, CEE and other affected country Parties. Two developed countries presented reports on the assistance they were providing to affected CEE countries. Participants noted that eight country Parties had adopted national action programmes (NAPs), but that these countries still have different capacities to implement the Convention.

2. The meeting adopted conclusions and recommendations on the thematic topics to be considered at CRIC 5, i.e. participatory process, legislation and institutions, synergy, mobilization of resources, measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land, access to and promotion of the transfer of technology and know-how, and drought and desertification monitoring and assesment.

3. NAPs and joint subregional, regional and international level activities, and the reporting process, were also discussed. Finally the participants took decisions on which countries from Annexes IV and V will make presentations at the panel discussion at CRIC 5, and expressed their ideas on future actitivities in the next 10 years.

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I. MANDATE

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 1/COP.5 on additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist in the review of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), requested the secretariat (annex, paragraph 15) to take advantage of its ongoing work and activities at the regional and/or subregional levels to disseminate information stemming from its preliminary analysis and seek to obtain feedback with a view to enriching the work base of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) (ICCD/COP(5)/11/Add.1).

2. In accordance with that decision, and decision 9/COP.7 on the programme of work of the fifth session of the CRIC (ICCD/COP(7)/16/Add.1), the secretariat organized regional meetings of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa in preparation for CRIC 5. The present document contains the required feedback obtained through the regional meeting of Northern Mediterranean, Central and Eastern European and other affected country Parties.

II. REGIONAL MEETING OF NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN AND CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRY PARTIES AND OTHER AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES

A. Organization of the meeting

3. The third regional meeting of focal points from Northern Mediterranean (NM), Central and Eastern European (CEE) and other affected countries, held to enable those country Parties and their partners to formulate and provide a regional input to the fifth session of the CRIC, took place from 24 to 27 July 2006 in Bonn, Germany.

4. On the first day, the secretariat organized consultations, chaired by Mr. Viorel Blujdea (Romania), of focal points from Central and Eastern European country Parties on progress made on regional cooperation activities under Annex V; and consultations, chaired by Mr. Sajmir Hoxha (Albania), of focal points from NM country Parties on progress made on regional cooperation activities under Annex IV.

5. Participants elected Mr. Hoxha as Chairperson of the meeting, Mr. Blujdea as Vice-Chairperson, and Ms. Evisa Abolina (Latvia) as Rapporteur. The participants adopted the provisional agenda as proposed by the secretariat.

6. The meeting was attended by 46 participants, including representatives from 23 Parties, including the European Community, the United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) and the World Bank. Representatives of four non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and three research projects also attended. The Global Mechanism (GM) provided inputs to the meeting.

7. A total of 31 presentations were made during the meeting. The following 16 participating countries presented their reports at the meeting: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey. Croatia and Ukraine presented information on their

national reports, which were still in the process of preparation. Bosnia and Herzegovina provided information on the UNCCD process in its country.

8. Lithuania, which declared itself as a not-affected State, presented information on its national activities relating to the UNCCD process.

9. Two participating developed countries (Czech Republic and Italy) presented their reports on the assistance they provided to CEE affected country Parties in the implementation of the UNCCD.

10. Representatives from UNEP/MAP, the GM and the World Bank presented information on their activities in NM and CEE affected countries.

11. Conclusions and recommendations were adopted at the closing meeting on 27 July. The proceedings of the meeting, including the conclusions and recommendations, and the list of participants, are posted on the UNCCD website at <www.unccd.int>.

B. Conclusions and recommendations

1. National level

General status of national reports and national action programmes

12. National reports from 17 NM, CEE and other affected country Parties were received before 15 July 2006, the date of the synthesis contained in document ICCD/CRIC(5)/4/Add.1, as follows: 2 from NM countries (Spain and Turkey), 11 from CEE countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), 2 from country Parties covered by both annexes IV and V (Albania and Slovenia) and 2 from other affected country Parties (Canada and the United States of America). Three national reports were received at the regional meeting (Israel, Italy, Portugal).

13. Of these 20 national reports, 5 were submitted from countries reporting for the first time (Latvia, Russian Federation, Slovenia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United States of America), 5 were second submissions (Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, Hungary) and the other 10 were third submissions (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Israel, Italy, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Spain, Turkey). Three reports were received from other affected country Parties, i.e. country Parties not covered by Regional Implementation Annexes (Canada, Israel, United States). And 2 countries (Italy, Spain) each submitted two separate reports: one report as an affected country and one as a developed country (the latter with details of assistance to other affected countries).

14. Participants welcomed the decision of the Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to fund the preparation of the national reports of eligible CEE affected country Parties on implementation of the UNCCD. The participants noted the process of transmitting the funds from the GEF and the International Fund for Agricultural Development to eligible country Parties through the UNCCD secretariat.

15. Participants noted that since the last reporting process in 2002 only one additional national action programme (NAP) had been prepared and that, to date, eight countries have adopted NAPs (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Turkey from NM; Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Romania from CEE). Some other countries informed the meeting that they were in the process of finalizing NAPs or have launched the process of preparation.

16. The number of NAPs is still below the targets of the Bonn Declaration (decision 8/COP.4. Because of limited participatory process in NAP preparation and structural changes in some countries, some countries expressed their intention to revise and update the NAPs.

17. Participants recognized that countries in the NM and CEE regions still have different national capacities to implement the UNCCD.

Substantive issues at national level, based on the seven thematic topics

(a) Participatory processes

18. Participants agreed to review and enlarge, where appropriate, as well as to update the list of NM and CEE NGOs accredited to the COP. More financial and institutional efforts are required to meaningfully involve NGOs in the activities of the UNCCD.

19. Participating NGOs suggested that more civil society participation is needed and that new paradigms are necessary to increase communication between different actors, to ensure the integration of cultural considerations into the UNCCD implementation processes, and to bring an innovative approach into the implementation process.

20. The bottom-up approach was recognized as being crucial in the implementation of the UNCCD, and links with the Aarhus Convention were acknowledged as important in creating the environment for effective participation. Participants noted an increasing responsiveness to environmental issues.

(b) Legislation and institutions

21. Participants from affected countries highlighted the increase in the numbers of policies and laws dealing with issues relating to land degradation and desertification. Participants reported weak institutional support for focal points and for national coordinating bodies (NCBs), and a lack of coordination between relevant ministries. The issue of focal points which belong to different types of institutions was also raised. Participants also emphasized the need to clarify the role of the focal points and how they coordinate with the NCBs.

(c) Synergy

22. Synergy between the Rio Conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements is being pursued. At the national level, coordination and collaboration among ministries and other institutions responsible for the implementation of the Rio Conventions still needs to be improved and strengthened. When Governments of country Parties are identifying priority national projects

for funding and international financing instruments, they should support synergy-oriented programmes and projects.

23. The national capacity self-assessment processes should also assess and generate synergy. Efforts should be made to raise awareness, at the national level, on the need to ensure this synergy, and the organization of relevant activities and workshops in affected country Parties, with assistance from developed partners from the region, would be welcomed.

(d) Mobilization of resources

24. Affected country Parties welcomed the support of the World Bank, the GEF and other donors for projects in the region relating to UNCCD implementation, and looked forward to continuing cooperation in the future.

25. However, affected CEE country Parties noted that so far no projects have been launched in their region with the assistance of the GM. Even consultative or logistical assistance is not being provided to affected countries of the region. Affected countries of Annex V called on the GM to mobilize funds and make available information on points of entry into processes and modalities of multilateral funding for NAP elaboration and implementation.

26. Countries stated that they had put in place a number of different instruments that support the implementation of the activities relevant to the Convention at the national level (incentives, subsidies and other economic instruments). Some countries have established eco-funds in order to undertake and invest in activities relating to environmental problems, including land degradation and drought. The importance of private funding and public-private partnerships was highlighted, as was the use of Kyoto flexible mechanisms.

(e) Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land

27. In order to combat desertification and land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought, many countries are developing and implementing new techniques, technologies and other approaches, as well innovatively using traditional knowledge. These include the development of desalination technology and new methods of irrigation.

(f) Access to and promotion of the transfer of technology, knowledge and know-how

28. The interaction of the scientific community with decision makers was noted to be weak in some countries. The extent of interactions with the scientific community differs across the NM and CEE regions.

29. The need for more research on economic and social aspects of land degradation, drought and desertification was identified. Some countries mentioned the importance of exploring sustainable livelihoods in affected areas through such means as organic agriculture, carbon sequestration and sustainable land management.

30. Countries mentioned the need to address particular land degradation problems caused by the negative environmental pressure of some private-sector economic activities. Other issues in need of further scientific research include fires, forest fires, soil erosion and salination.

(g) Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment

31. There is a need to develop a common system of benchmarks and indicators for UNCCD projects and for assessing land degradation.

National action programmes

32. Many CEE affected country Parties expressed their concern that, because of their national situation, they had focused their NAPs only on addressing processes of land degradation and drought. Some countries also expressed their interest in developing programmes at many different levels (local/country/subnational). Support is still required in CEE affected country Parties for the preparation or updating of NAPs.

33. The majority of participants at the meeting recognized that a bottom-up approach is the most appropriate way to combat land degradation. Parties highlighted the importance of using funding mechanisms such as the European Union (EU) structural funds to support NAP elaboration and implementation in affected areas.

2. Joint subregional, regional and interregional level activities

34. Countries acknowledged the current activities on the establishment of the drought management centre for south-east Europe, the submission of candidatures for hosting the centre from Hungary, Romania, Slovenia and Turkey, and the process of choosing a host country, which should be finalized in September 2006. They also noted the involvement of NM and CEE countries in joint activities.

35. Countries updated the regional meeting on progress relating to cooperation at different levels. It was suggested that further joint programmes and cooperation could be developed at the subregional level in CEE. NM countries highlighted the collaborative work they have been carrying out in the framework of the EU's INTERREG and TACIS programmes, as well as through centres such as the Regional Environment Center (REC).

36. The possible organization of an NM forum for NGOs in 2007 was mentioned. Possible follow-up on a previous proposal on the organization of a meeting with NGOs and focal points from CEE was also mentioned.

37. Both regions recognized the need to work further towards establishing regional action programmes (RAPs). For Annex IV it was recommended to take advantage of the results of the work undertaken under EU-funded research projects, in particular the Concerted Action to Support the Northern Mediterranean Regional Action Programme to Combat Desertification (MEDRAP), in establishing the RAP. RAP implementation could be supported by EU funding lines such as those provided in the context of the Mediterranean or through structural funds.

38. It is necessary to share experiences among countries on institutional frameworks and legislative arrangements, and to disseminate information at the appropriate political level.

39. At regional level, training programmes, research thematic networks and regional reference centres are of great interest for Parties, and a few countries are in the process of developing such activities using existing capacities.
40. In order to have a common understanding on possible access to fund-raising for CEE countries, participants agreed on the need to organize workshops on resource mobilization.
41. The majority of the countries recognized the possibility of financing sustainable land use, mainly through afforestation/reforestation projects, and the need to further explore at regional level the relationship between land degradation, water scarcity, carbon sequestration and biodiversity.
42. Both regions are looking forward to the next stage of the process of adopting the EU Soil Thematic Strategy.
43. Some countries expressed an interest in following the activities of Parties in other regions, and in developing cooperation with other UNCCD regions, in particular between Annex IV and Annexes I and II in the framework of the Mediterranean area, and between Annex V and Annex II in the context of Central Asia.
44. The development of a regional early warning network on drought and desertification, and holding workshops at regional level for early prediction of drought, were proposed.
45. NM countries successfully shared their experiences at technical level highlighting common problems (for example, forest fires) and solutions. Participants expressed strong support for developing platforms to share experience, data and information on land degradation, drought and desertification and their management.
46. Some countries noted that a regional approach towards desalination is required as Mediterranean countries move to embrace new technology as part of their water management strategy.
47. Regional meetings can serve as a forum for presenting concrete case studies.

3. Reporting process

48. The Help Guide for preparing national reports should be easier to understand and more analytical, with national and regional adaptability.
49. Funded countries acknowledged the usefulness of funding in preparing their reports. Nevertheless, funding was received rather late and did not facilitate the preparation of the reports on time.
50. The self-evaluation process for reporting revealed that most of the countries need more capacity-building, strengthening of focal points and the NCB at national level, wider dissemination of the UNCCD objectives and the framework it offers, and increased political commitment.

51. All countries recognized the usefulness of producing a country profile as part of the reporting process. Nevertheless, they requested more discussion through the Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) on its content and its adaptability to national and regional contents.

52. It was noted that many countries did not respect the deadline for the submission of national reports.

53. Countries reported different and uneven involvement of science and technology in the implementation of relevant activities. There was no specific information relating to the contribution of the experts to the work of the Group of Experts of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

54. Participants noted that equal prominence should be given in national reports to problems and successes in the implementation of the Convention.

55. Countries that will make a presentation during the panel discussions at CRIC 5 are:

(a) For NM and other affected country Parties

- Portugal: participatory process involving civil society, NGOs and community-based organizations
- Albania: legislative and institutional framework or arrangements
- Israel: links and synergy with other environmental conventions and national development strategies
- Spain: resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, and partnership arrangements
- Turkey: measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land, including four strategic area of the Bonn Declaration
- Italy: access to and promotion of the transfer of technology, knowledge and know-how
- Slovenia: drought and desertification monitoring and assessment.

(b) For CEE

- Russian Federation: participatory process involving civil society, NGOs and community-based organizations
- Armenia: legislative and institutional framework or arrangements
- Czech Republic: links and synergy with other environmental conventions and national development strategies
- Ukraine: resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, and partnership arrangements
- Belarus: measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land, including four strategic area of the Bonn Declaration
- Slovakia: access to and promotion of the transfer of technology, knowledge and know-how
- Georgia: drought and desertification monitoring and assessment.

56. Parties discussed how best to bring effective regional inputs to the CRIC. Some of the countries listed in paragraph 55 above volunteered to present the experience of their regional annex in their contributions to the panel discussions at CRIC 5.

57. Some countries suggested that in the next regional meetings consultations among countries of the same Annex should also take place within, instead of before, the meeting.

4. Indications for future activities in the next 10 years

58. Future regional meetings should include on their agendas an item on the 16th and 17th sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, information on GEF replenishment and discussion on the results of the AHWG and the Intersessional Intergovernmental Working Group (IIWG).

59. Both regions recognized that the CST and IIWG should further discuss how to develop an independent and flexible mechanism to improve scientific and technical support to the Convention.

60. Representatives of the NM and CEE countries requested the UNCCD secretariat to continue to facilitate regional, subregional/transboundary and interregional cooperation in Europe in order to complement the NAP process.
