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The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention

Consideration of the work plans of the Convention bodies

The multi-year work plan for the secretariat and the joint work programme of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism

**The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation
of the Convention**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD in September 2007, Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) adopted the ten-year strategic plan and framework (The Strategy) 2008–2018 to enhance the implementation of the Convention. The Strategy addresses the Convention's key challenges at strategic and operational levels and offers a revitalized common ground for all UNCCD stakeholders.

While Parties carry the main responsibility for implementing The Strategy, the UNCCD institutions and subsidiary bodies are requested to revise their functioning and optimize their role and involvement in bringing it forward vis-à-vis those of the Parties. In this context, the two subsidiary bodies, namely the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), as well as the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM), have each sought to operationalize their contribution to The Strategy by preparing results-oriented multi-year work plans, which are complemented by two-year work programmes. In addition, the secretariat and the GM are requested to prepare two-year joint work programmes.

The main features of these work plans and programmes are presented in this document, accompanied by suggestions to Parties for further action in bringing forward implementation of The Strategy.

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I. Context

1. Developed as a result of the Rio Summit, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is a unique normative framework for tackling desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD). Its strategic importance is now even more significant in view of its ability to address concerns within the emerging global context of climate change, resilience to natural disasters and food security.

2. While its relevance is particularly recognized for the drylands, often characterized by threatened ecosystems and poverty, the UNCCD is increasingly positioning itself as an instrument that can make a lasting global contribution to the achievement of sustainable land management and the continuous delivery of ecosystem services.

3. Ten years after coming into force, the UNCCD operates in a context which has evolved considerably since the Convention was first negotiated. The policy environment has changed considerably since Rio as a result of the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the expectation of increased support to Africa and the least-developed countries, a more pressing commitment for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the necessary return of investment in rural development in the context of a recurring food emergency crisis.

4. The Convention faces evolving opportunities and constraints. The High Level Policy Dialogue on the UNCCD which took place in Bonn in May 2008 recognized that the Convention must play its role in firming up the relationships between soil fertility and food productivity on the one hand and between sustainable land management and the sequestration of carbon in soils on the other. Moreover, beyond skyrocketing food prices, significant factors that shed a much sharper light on the combined effects of poverty and DLDD include extreme weather events, growing flows of environmental migrants and an increased number of conflicts induced by a scarcity of natural resources.

5. The scientific environment has benefited from the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), which have contributed to an improved understanding of the biophysical and socio-economic trends relating to land degradation in drylands, and their impact on human and ecosystem well-being. The Desertification Synthesis of the MA has emphasized that desertification is potentially the most threatening ecosystem change impacting on the livelihoods of the poor.

6. The financing environment has evolved in the past decade, with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) becoming a financial mechanism of the Convention and official development assistance (ODA) flows increasing again after a period of stagnation. Stronger support is envisaged also for rural development and agriculture, after a continuous decline of ODA allocation to these sectors over the past 30 years. Pursuant to the Paris Declaration, donors have refocused their financing strategies to support country-driven priorities, based on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and other country-led development planning instruments. Lastly, various innovative financing instruments have emerged, including payments for global public goods and ecological services, as well as carbon finance, while successive G8 commitments pledge increased support, notably to Africa. Finally, given the economic

importance of combating DLDD in a growing context of natural resources scarcity, the private sector is expected to significantly expand its contribution as a stakeholder to the UNCCD process.

7. Against this background, the ten-year UNCCD strategic plan and framework 2008–2018 (The Strategy), adopted at the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD (COP 8) in September 2007 in Madrid, address the Convention's key challenges at strategic and operational levels and offer a revitalized common ground for all UNCCD stakeholders.

II. The 10-year strategic plan and framework

8. The Strategy was the final outcome of an extensive process which had its origins at the sixth session of the UNCCD Conference of the Parties (COP) held in Havana in 2003. It states as the vision of the UNCCD, "The aim for the future is to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability."

9. It further states that the mission of the UNCCD is "to provide a global framework to support the development and implementation of national and regional policies, programmes and measures to prevent, control and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought through scientific and technological excellence, raising public awareness, standard setting, advocacy and resource mobilization, thereby contributing to poverty reduction".

10. In line with that overall orientation, The Strategy contains the following four strategic objectives, thus bridging more firmly the gap between the reduction in vulnerabilities and the provision of global benefits:

- (a) To improve the living conditions of affected populations;
- (b) To improve the condition of affected ecosystems;
- (c) To generate global benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD;
- (d) To mobilize resources to support implementation of the Convention through building effective partnerships between national and international actors.

11. These strategic objectives will guide the actions of all UNCCD stakeholders and partners during the period 2008–2018.

12. With a view to supporting the attainment of the strategic objectives, The Strategy also contains five operational objectives that will guide the actions of all UNCCD stakeholders and partners in the short and medium term (3–5 years). These objectives focus on:

- (a) Advocacy, awareness-raising and education
- (b) Policy framework

- (c) Science, technology and knowledge
- (d) Capacity-building
- (e) Financing and technology transfer.

13. The documents submitted as addenda to this document aim at translating these objectives into the respective strategic and programmatic frameworks of the Convention's bodies, its secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM).

III. Contribution of Convention bodies and institutions to The Strategy

14. While Parties carry the main responsibility for implementing The Strategy, the UNCCD institutions and subsidiary bodies have revised their functioning and engaged in a strategic planning exercise aiming to optimize their role, contribution and involvement in bringing forward The Strategy, vis-à-vis those of the Parties.

15. In this context, the two subsidiary bodies, namely the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), as well as the secretariat and the GM, are each requested to operationalize their contribution to The Strategy by preparing results-oriented multi-year (four-year) work plans, which are complemented by two-year work programmes. In addition, the secretariat and the GM are requested to prepare two-year joint work programmes (JWPs). The main features of these work plans and programmes are presented below.

A. The Committee on Science and Technology

16. The Strategy envisages the UNCCD as becoming “a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought”. For that to materialize, the CST is focusing on the outcomes to be generated in the course of the coming ten years under operational objective 3 of The Strategy on science technology and knowledge.

- (a) National monitoring and vulnerability assessment on biophysical and socio-economic trends in affected countries are supported;
- (b) A baseline based on the most robust data available on biophysical and socio-economic trends is developed and relevant scientific approaches are gradually harmonized;
- (c) Knowledge of biophysical and socio-economic factors and on their interactions in affected areas is improved to enable better decision-making;
- (d) Knowledge of the interactions between climate change adaptation, drought mitigation and the restoration of degraded land in affected areas is improved to develop tools to assist decision-making;

(e) Effective knowledge-sharing systems are in place at the global, regional, subregional and national levels to support policymakers and end users, including through the identification and sharing of best practices and success stories;

(f) Science and technology networks and institutions relevant to desertification/land degradation and drought are engaged to support UNCCD implementation.

17. The CST will take the leading role in achieving those outcomes while developing its capacity to assess, advise and support implementation, on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis, notably through the further refinement of the indicators contained in The Strategy. With support from the secretariat, it will seek to involve a growing number of institutions and experts with excellence in desertification/land degradation/soil issues; and to produce sound, policy-oriented scientific recommendations that inform COP decisions. With the added help of a consortium identified by its bureau, it will co-organize its next ordinary session during COP 9 in a predominantly scientific conference format, duly keeping in mind the priority theme on biophysical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, in order to support decision-making in land and water management.

B. The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

18. New terms of reference for the CRIC will be considered and, presumably, adopted at COP 9 in autumn 2009. Prior to that time, the work of the CRIC will focus on developing the necessary tools and methodologies, most notably reporting guidelines, which will facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of the Convention and the effectiveness of The Strategy based on information which is comparable across regions and over time. Expected accomplishments, outputs and related activities that will lead to an improved review of the UNCCD implementation are presented in the two-year work programme of the CRIC, while the first strategically oriented multi-year work plan and the next two-year work programme will be submitted for the consideration of COP 9 in time before the fourth reporting cycle will commence.

19. The primary outcome area of the CRIC during the current biennium is defined as “Parties monitor and evaluate the impacts of the Convention and the effectiveness of The Strategy”. Additional outputs will be created in order to provide the CRIC with the capacity and the methodology to drive the comprehensive monitoring process of implementation of the Convention and The Strategy, to measure progress and support improvement and to systematically document and disseminate best practices.

C. The Global Mechanism

20. In the context of The Strategy, the GM has a central responsibility for contributing to operational objective 5: Financing and technology transfer. The expected accomplishments and outputs of the GM will thus contribute to this objective.

21. During 2008–2011 the GM will continue progressively to specialize in the provision of special services to focal point institutions on financial issues - including enhancement of public budget allocations, channelling of development cooperation assistance, operationalization of

innovative sources and mobilization of private investment. As a result of the new policies, modalities and instruments for resource allocation and the increasing importance of national development priorities driving external support to domestic budgetary processes in developing countries, access to development cooperation finance, as well as to private and public specific vertical funds at the international level, such as those created for climate change, food security, agriculture and by the means of foundations, the GM aims to position itself as an innovative entity to enable country Parties to access these sources of finance.

22. Over the next four years, in accordance with its mandate, the GM will offer a range of financial advisory services packaged into national level programmes and/or subregional initiatives which will facilitate increasing flows of finance for sustainable land management (SLM). These include: capacity enhancement and knowledge exchange on developing financing strategies, South-South Cooperation, supporting mainstreaming into national planning and budgetary frameworks for engendering resource mobilization, assist national action programme (NAP) alignment, forming partnerships for the mobilization of resources with key development partners carrying out portfolio analysis of multi- and bi-laterals, and engaging in data collection and analysis of financial flows, exploring new and innovative financial sources and mechanisms, and accessing and operationalizing market-based mechanisms.

23. The main instrument for support of country Parties by the GM is the Integrated Financing Strategy (IFS) which guides the establishment of an investment framework for implementing the UNCCD. The aim of the IFS is to mobilize a blend of financing including from national, external and innovative sources for the implementation of on-the-ground sustainable land management projects and programmes, and which facilitates the enhancement of the enabling policy, legislative, institutional and incentive frameworks which influence resource mobilization, as called for in The Strategy.

24. The GM also has a supporting role in achieving operational objective 1: Advocacy, awareness-raising and education, and operational objective 2: Policy Framework. The GM is contributing to these operational objectives mostly in terms of advocating increased financing for SLM, mainstreaming of the UNCCD into development cooperation frameworks, exploration of governance issues relating to overcoming finance-related bottlenecks, and through partnership building in accordance with its mandate and COP decisions.

D. The secretariat

25. To enhance its responsiveness to the guidance provided by the Parties, the secretariat undertook after COP 8 a comprehensive process of corporate review and structural adjustment. This process has resulted in a revised priority setting of the work of the secretariat. First and foremost it will provide enhanced substantive services to the COP and its subsidiary bodies, and upgrade its analytical and knowledge-brokering functions. It will encourage coalition building and system-wide cooperation in order to enhance political support at all levels. It will further facilitate the treatment by the COP of emerging issues to support sustainable land management and the COP's response to them.

26. Support to the strengthening of the scientific basis of the UNCCD process will be among the main areas of work of the secretariat in the coming years, with a focus on assisting the CST

to bring out scientific and technological excellence and standard setting. An agreed baseline and monitoring methodology for desertification and land degradation will be developed, including impact indicators for the implementation of The Strategy. The secretariat will also explore means of further mobilizing the scientific community to contribute to the UNCCD process at various levels, including the possibility of the establishment of an international panel on land and soil.

27. The secretariat will service the CRIC in such a manner as to facilitate feedback loops to measure progress and exploit lessons learned, notably by supporting the preparation of national reports and analysing them for the CRIC. It has revised its policy advocacy and awareness-raising functions, with the aim of responding better to emerging global challenges while continuing to serve the unique regional implementation annexes structure of the Convention. The facilitation of consultative processes and cooperation at all levels will ensure consistency and complementarity in the implementation of The Strategy.

28. The Secretariat will coordinate the development of a comprehensive communication strategy in the coming years, and will particularly emphasize the importance of land-based ecosystems and soil productivity in the context of securing food production, adaptation and mitigation to climate change, and fighting rural poverty. High-quality substantive inputs and visibility in various international forums, targeted advocacy and new awareness-raising tools will be among the secretariat's means in this context.

29. The secretariat will also seek to establish and strengthen partnerships with and between relevant organizations and agencies, governments and the private sector for increased substantive and financial support in order to advance land and soil issues in the context of various policies and programmes.

30. In collaboration with the GM, the secretariat will facilitate the development of regional consultation, coordination and cooperation to support the implementation of The Strategy. The secretariat will also strive to assist countries to align their action programmes with The Strategy, and will serve as a clearing house for best practices and success stories.

E. Global Mechanism/secretariat coordination

31. In line with The Strategy, the secretariat and the GM have prepared a JWP, with the aim of ensuring consistency and complementarity in the delivery of services, and of strengthening coordination and cooperation from headquarters to country level.

32. Since October 2007, several meetings have been held between the managements of the GM and the secretariat, in which the orientation and main features of collaboration were discussed. These management-level consultations provided a basis and guidance for the work of a joint GM – secretariat task force which was established in November 2007 with the purpose of supporting and coordinating the preparation of the JWP. The terms of reference of the task force also included the development of tools and mechanisms for strengthening the culture of cooperation between the two entities.

33. The draft 2008–2009 JWP was completed in June 2008. It is part and parcel of the individual work programmes of the GM and the secretariat. Its focus is on undertaking joint

activities which support Parties in advancing the implementation of The Strategy, including collaboration on achieving operational objectives to which both are contributing and on tasks which the COP has requested the GM and the secretariat to undertake jointly, such as the development of new reporting guidelines and consideration of mechanism(s) for regional coordination, and improved cooperation between the GM and the secretariat.

IV. Methodology and documentation

A. Results-based management approach

34. In accordance with decision 3/COP.8, the multi-year work plans and two-year work programmes are prepared following a results-based management (RBM) approach. This approach aims to improve programme and management effectiveness and accountability and is oriented towards achieving results. It uses results as a basis for planning, management and reporting, and supports continuous delivery and quality improvement by comparing and analysing actual achievement against planned results through regular monitoring, reporting, feedback and adjustments.

35. The UNCCD process, including the Parties involved, the subsidiary bodies and Convention institutions, has its focus for the next ten years formulated in The Strategy. From this basis, and in accordance with their respective mandates, the expected results for subsidiary bodies and Convention institutions have been defined. These expected accomplishments have been accompanied by indicators for facilitating performance measurements, as well as outputs and work packages which specify in more detail the content of the work to be carried out.

B. Structure, format and terminology

36. The multi-year work plans and two-year work programmes of the subsidiary bodies and Convention institutions are constructed around the five operational objectives and the respective outcome areas under each objective, as defined in The Strategy, in accordance with their mandates. For example, the work plan and programme of the CST focus on operational objective 3 and the related outcome areas, while those of the secretariat cover to some extent all of them, in line with decision 3/COP.8.

37. The multi-year (2008–2011) work plans provide expected accomplishments for a four-year period, together with related performance indicators. These expected accomplishments represent those strategic outcomes on which the Convention body/institution concerned will focus, and to which its contribution is necessary, although achieving the accomplishments invariably also requires the active participation of other stakeholders. The performance indicators provide tools for measuring the level of achievement of each accomplishment, and often they also indicate the specific involvement of the body/institution concerned.

38. The multi-year work plans are accompanied by two-year work programmes (2008–2009). These work programmes contain the operational aspects of moving towards the expected accomplishments. They present the main outputs for each expected accomplishment contained in the multi-year work plan, and thus provide information on the concrete deliverables to be produced, as building blocks in moving towards the accomplishments. The work programmes

also include “work packages” which present the nature and scope of activities to be carried out in producing the outputs. Furthermore, an indication of risks/assumptions, that is, aspects that are critical for the delivery of the expected accomplishments, is provided under each outcome area.

39. In line with decision 3/COP.8 which requires the subsidiary bodies and Convention institutions to provide costed two-year work programmes, general costing estimates for carrying out the work programmes are presented in these documents. Considering that 2008–2009 is a transitional period, and that the first budget requirements to follow a results-based budgeting approach will be submitted to COP 9 in 2009, only indications of the resource needs are submitted to CRIC 7. It is understood that the emphasis of the CRIC will be on providing guidance on the methodology and proposed strategic orientations rather than on considering related budgetary issues.

C. Sequencing

40. RBM involves a rolling planning model which enables continuous learning from activities and timely adjustments as required. For the UNCCD process, as requested by Parties in decision 3/COP.8, this translates into a consideration of multi-year (four-year) work plans at every COP. Consequently, at COP 9 Parties will consider work plans for 2010–2013, at COP 10 work plans for 2012–2015, and so on.

41. The multi-year work plans will be accompanied by costed two-year work programmes, which coincide with the budgetary cycle. In practical terms, these documents will provide the content of the budget. At COP 9, two-year work programmes will cover years 2010–2011, at COP 10 2012–2013 and so on. Correspondingly, at COP 9 Parties will review performance reports for 2008–2009, and at COP 10 for 2010–2011. These performance reports will compare the status of implementation of the two-year work programmes with the budgetary information.

V. Conclusions

42. The work plans and programmes introduced in this document represent the contributions of the Convention bodies and institutions to the implementation of The Strategy. Hence a comprehensive framework is presented, spelling out the extent of facilitative action which these bodies and institutions can offer to Parties in a more integrated manner as they discharge the main responsibility for implementation of The Strategy.

43. Parties may wish to study the information contained in this document, in the addenda and in the documents containing the multi-year work plan and two-year work programme for the CST. On this basis, they may wish to provide feedback to the Bureaux of the two subsidiary bodies, the GM and the secretariat, on the orientations and priorities of the proposed work plans and programmes.

44. Indeed, it is suggested that when reviewing the documents, Parties might focus on the broad strategic orientations of each body and institution, instead of dwelling on individual outputs, work packages or costing estimates, bearing in mind that the biennium 2008–2009 is a transitional period for piloting RBM, and that the move to RBM will be completed by COP 9 through results-based budgeting. In the meantime, indications in terms of interest in supporting in

principle some supplementary funding needs of subprogrammes/outcome areas at CRIC 7 would be helpful in preparing the submission to COP 9 of the programme budget for 2010–2011. The secretariat and the GM will review the proposals for expected accomplishments and the details of the resulting work programmes in the light of the comments made.

45. When providing policy guidance, Parties may wish to consider the following activities and recommend the COP:

(a) To recognize thematic focus areas, such as land and water management, in order to achieve the expected long-term impacts intended by the strategic objectives of The Strategy;

(b) To provide guidance on the methodology and proposed strategic orientations contained in the documents, including with regard to the presentation of programmes of work and budget proposals and performance reports in the future;

(c) To identify implementation and impact indicators for country/subregional/regional/global level implementation in relationship with these thematic areas with a view to reaching quantitative targets in combating DLDD;

(d) To propose partnership options between national and international actors and enabling frameworks for securing the financial, technical and technological resources necessary in order to implement The Strategy.
