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Improving the procedures for the communication of information as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties: Consideration of draft reporting guidelines as referred to in decision 8/COP.8

Consideration of draft reporting guidelines as referred to in decision 8/COP.8

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

Principles for reporting by the Global Environment Facility¹

Summary

This document provides a detailed explanation of the principles for reporting by the Global Environment Facility. It focuses on the rationale behind these principles, their implementation and the related implications. The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention may wish to consider this information at its seventh session and provide further guidance to the secretariat on the development of draft reporting guidelines for the GEF to be adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its ninth session.

It should be noted that action-oriented conclusions and recommendations relating to reporting principles for the Global Environment Facility are included in document ICCD/CRIC(7)/3.

¹ As required by decision 8/COP.8, this document was prepared in accordance with the memorandum of understanding between the Conference of the Parties and the GEF.

CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1 – 14	3
II. PRINCIPLES FOR REPORTING BY THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY		7
III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	15	19

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) recognizes, as one of its key principles, “the central importance of financing to the achievement of the objective of the Convention”,² and that “the Parties, taking into account their capabilities, shall make every effort to ensure that adequate financial resources are available for programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought”.³ It gives the Conference of the Parties (COP) the task of promoting the availability of financial mechanisms and such mechanisms to seek to maximize the availability of funding for affected developing country Parties, particularly those in Africa, to implement the Convention”.⁴ Similarly, the Convention gives the COP the task of encouraging “the provision, through various mechanisms within the United Nations system and through multilateral financial institutions, of support at the national, subregional and regional levels to activities that enable developing country Parties to meet their obligations under the Convention”.⁵

2. The strategic international funding mechanism in the field of sustainable development, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), is explicitly mentioned in the Convention. Article 20, paragraph 2 (b), of the UNCCD stipulates that developed country Parties undertake to “promote the mobilization of adequate, timely and predictable financial resources, including new and additional funding from the Global Environment Facility of the agreed incremental costs of those activities concerning desertification that relate to its four focal areas, in conformity with the relevant provisions of the Instrument establishing the GEF”.

3. The special relevance of the GEF to the UNCCD process was reiterated in decision 9/COP.1 on the programme of work of the COP, in which the COP decided to include as one of the standing items on its agenda “the review of available information regarding the financing of Convention implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions, including information on the activities of the GEF concerning desertification that relate to its four focal areas, as specified in article 20, paragraph 2 (b) of the Convention.” Furthermore, in its decision 1/COP.5 on the establishment of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), the COP decided that CRIC would, “at its sessions during the COP, consider reports on collaboration with the GEF”. Following these two decisions, the UNCCD secretariat – from the second session of the COP until now – has prepared for every session of the COP and of the CRIC a document containing information on the activities of the GEF relating to the UNCCD process, even though such documents were not explicitly requested by the COP for the inter-sessional sessions of the CRIC. Such reports were prepared by the secretariat without written input being provided by the GEF. These reports also addressed the special requests from the COP to the Executive Secretary to report on GEF-related matters to the fifth session of the COP,⁶

² Convention text, article 20, paragraph 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Convention text, article 21, paragraph 1.

⁵ Convention text, article 21, paragraph 2.

⁶ Decision 9/COP.4.

the seventh session of the COP (COP 7)⁷ and the eighth⁸ session of the COP (COP 8). A similar special request was made to report to the ninth session of the COP.⁹

4. With regard to the reporting by the GEF, COP provisions for the communication of information and the submission of reports to the COP did not single out the GEF in comparison with other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), which were encouraged to provide information as appropriate. However, the COP, in its decision 14/COP.1 on collaboration with the GEF, invited the Council of the GEF to report as appropriate to the COP on matters relating to the issue of land degradation. In neither case was a specific format for such reports specified.

5. The GEF responded to these calls on two occasions: during the first reporting cycle in 2000, by forwarding to the fourth session of the COP (COP 4) its Council document GEF/C.15/Inf.9 on its activities relating to land degradation in all regions;¹⁰ and during the third reporting cycle (the third session of the CRIC) in 2004 on its activities in Africa.¹¹ The two reports were of different sizes, formats and scopes and it is therefore difficult to draw any substantial conclusions on developments between the periods they cover.

6. The evolving relationship between the UNCCD and the GEF was institutionalized by the acceptance, at the sixth session of the COP,¹² of the GEF becoming a financial mechanism of the UNCCD, following the decisions of the GEF Council and Assembly. Two years later, in 2005, at COP 7, the COP adopted the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the GEF and the COP¹³, which serves as the basis for relations between the two bodies in all areas, including reporting. It was agreed that the GEF would prepare a report to be submitted to each regular session of the COP through the UNCCD secretariat on its strategies, programmes and projects for financing the agreed incremental costs of activities concerning desertification. This report should include:

(a) information on discussions within the GEF Council on GEF strategies, programmes and projects for financing the agreed incremental costs of activities concerning desertification;

(b) a synthesis of projects concerning desertification approved by the Council during the reporting period with an indication of the GEF and other resources allocated to such projects;

(c) a listing of the projects concerning desertification approved by the Council, with an indication of the cumulative financial resources allocated by the GEF to such projects;

(d) information on the GEF's experience of integrating activities to address land degradation in other focal areas and on synergies among the focal areas;

⁷ Decision 6/COP.6.

⁸ Decision 6/COP.7.

⁹ Decision 6/COP.8.

¹⁰ Summarized in ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.5.

¹¹ Summarized in ICCD/CRIC(3)/4.

¹² Decision 6/COP.6.

¹³ Annex to decision 6/COP.7.

(e) information on GEF replenishment agreements and the funding programmed for land degradation;

(f) information on the GEF monitoring and evaluation activities related to projects concerning desertification.

7. It was also agreed that the GEF would provide the COP with the reports of the GEF Office of Monitoring and Evaluation relevant to GEF activities in the area of land degradation. In turn, the UNCCD secretariat committed itself to prepare a report for information, to be submitted to the GEF Council through the GEF secretariat after each regular session of the COP, on the decisions taken by the Parties of relevance to the GEF. The report is supposed to contain information on discussions within the COP on GEF activities for financing the agreed incremental costs of activities concerning desertification.

8. Additionally, the COP invited the GEF as a financial mechanism of the Convention to provide support to developing country Parties for the implementation of national action programmes (NAPs), and to report to COP 8 in this regard¹⁴; as well as to consider simplifying its funding procedures in order to ease access by developing countries to GEF funding, and to report back to the COP on progress in this regard.¹⁵

9. The first report of the GEF in line with the provisions on obligatory reporting was submitted to COP 8 and the sixth session of the CRIC.¹⁶ The reports of the GEF Office of Monitoring and Evaluation relevant to GEF activities in the area of land degradation were not officially submitted. Reference was made to the fourth overall performance study (OPS-4) of the GEF, which was supposed to take place in 2008. The attention of Parties was also drawn to other GEF documents and to the GEF website. The call made in decision 1/COP.7 was briefly addressed.

10. Although there has been only one report so far based on the provisions of the MOU, it is clear that there is room for improvement in its format to enable comparative analysis with the information provided by affected and developed country Parties, as well as with the reports submitted by other reporting entities. In its deliberations, the Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) on improving the procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports submitted to the COP, established by decision 8/COP.7, recognized the need for more in-depth assessment of the support provided by the GEF.¹⁷ Difficulties involved in synergistic implementation and reporting were acknowledged, inasmuch as they refer to the achievement of the mutual objectives of the Rio conventions and their reflection in UNCCD reporting. It was also stressed that reports from the GEF should include information on best practices and lessons learned, gap analyses according to its own experience, and information and analysis of sectoral and regional issues.¹⁸ Affected country Parties were requested to report in a more consistent manner on activities financed by the GEF, in order to streamline the information provided to the CRIC. Similarly, GEF implementing agencies which avail themselves of GEF funding in the

¹⁴ Decision 1/COP.7.

¹⁵ Decision 3/COP.8.

¹⁶ Included in document ICCD/CRIC(6)/5/Add.1.

¹⁷ ICCD/CRIC(6)/6.

¹⁸ ICCD/CRIC(5)/9.

area of land degradation were invited to report on the support provided for implementation of the UNCCD in such a way that this information is collected and discussed at the level of the CRIC. The GEF implementing agencies were also invited to involve UNCCD focal points in their monitoring activities and reporting, where this has not been done before. In this way, resources spent on UNCCD-related matters would be duly and comprehensively documented in national reports.

11. The COP, in its decision 6/COP.8, recognized that the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (The Strategy)¹⁹ required mobilization of adequate, predictable and timely financial resources at all levels for its effective implementation and, in this context, reiterated the special role of the GEF in enabling the access of affected developing country Parties to financial resources.

12. In its decision 3/COP.8, the COP invited the GEF to take The Strategy into account when planning and programming for the next replenishment period (GEF-5) and to align its operations accordingly. The Strategy itself explicitly mentions the GEF in its operational objective 5, financing and technology transfer: to mobilize and improve the targeting and coordination of national, bilateral and multilateral financial and technological resources to increase their impact and effectiveness; and the related outcome 5.3: Parties increase their efforts to mobilize financial resources from international financial institutions, facilities and funds, including the GEF, by promoting the UNCCD/sustainable land management (SLM) agenda within the governing bodies of these institutions.

13. Given the crucial role of the GEF in achieving this objective in particular, and the goals of The Strategy in general, it is clear that the indicators relating to the achievement of the operational objectives of The Strategy, to be adopted at the ninth session of the COP (COP 9) based on the submissions of the Parties, need to be closely related to the information on the support the GEF is providing to affected country Parties. These indicators should be reflected in the reports the GEF will submit to the COP and the CRIC in the future, without changing the scope of its reporting as prescribed by the MOU, and taking due account of the indicators on the impact of land degradation focal area strategic objectives and strategic programme outcome indicators that the GEF itself has adopted.²⁰

14. This document follows the structure of the documents prepared on the reporting principles of affected and developed country Parties as well as the other IGOs and United Nations organizations, the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM), as well as the report on implementation by subregional and regional action programmes (SRAPs and RAPs) (ICCD/CRIC(7)/3/Add.1 to Add.3 and Add.5 to Add.7, respectively). It should be understood as a basis for the seventh session of the CRIC (CRIC 7) to provide further input in order for COP 9 to take the final decision on reporting guidelines for the GEF, as requested by decision 8/COP.8.

¹⁹ Decisions 3/COP.8 and 6/COP.8.

²⁰ Document GEF/C.31/10 "Focal Area Strategies and Strategic Programming for GEF-4 (2007-2010)". The impact indicators for the strategic objectives of the land degradation focal area will be further developed during the implementation of the GEF medium-sized project "Ensuring Impacts from SLM – Development of a Global Indicator System" (Implementing agency: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), executing agency: United Nations University (UNU) – Institute for Water, Environment and Health (INWEH)), which is currently ongoing.

II. Principles for reporting by the Global Environment Facility

CONTENT OF REPORTING

Consistency with the scope of the Convention, The Strategy and its objectives

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) Reporting by the GEF will be based on a new reporting format that facilitates: (a) an assessment of the GEF's contribution to the achievement of the scope of the Convention, The Strategy and its objectives, with specific reference to the operational objectives set by The Strategy; (b) description of the extent to which the Convention and the implementation of the action programmes under it have been supported by the GEF, in particular under the focal area on land degradation; and (c) the provision of information on actions taken to respond to the MOU concluded between the GEF and the COP, as well as other relevant requests of the COP.</p> <p>(b) Particular emphasis will be placed on the provision of information from the GEF on its response to the efforts by the Parties to mobilize financial resources from it, and on promoting the UNCCD/SLM agenda within the GEF governing bodies (Council and Assembly), as requested in The Strategy under the operational objective 5, through expected outcome 5.3.</p>	<p>(c) Reflecting the scope of the Convention, The Strategy and its objectives in the report content, and its coherence with the MOU will imply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the development of a reporting format and guidelines for the GEF; (ii) the definition of indicators for the operational objectives, which are coherent with the indicators for the 'impact of land degradation' focal area and the strategic objectives and strategic programme outcome indicators of the GEF. <p>(d) In common with other United Nations organizations and IGOs, the GEF may also be involved in the review of work programmes and NAPs required for affected country Parties at the national level (decision 3/COP.8).</p>

Rationale

- (a) The GEF is a financial mechanism of the Convention. At the first session of the COP and since COP 4, every COP has produced a decision dedicated to collaboration with the GEF. Reference to GEF-funded activities is made in all reports on financing the implementation of the Convention submitted to the COP and the CRIC.
- (b) The MOU concluded between the COP and the GEF has as its goal enhancing collaboration between the GEF and the UNCCD. The coherence between the goals of the GEF focal area on land degradation and the objectives of the UNCCD is recognized as a basis for mutually beneficial collaboration. This coherence of objectives is a basic principle in developing policies, strategies, programmes and projects for SLM (decision 6/COP.7).
- (c) The GEF was also specifically mentioned in The Strategy. The COP invited the GEF to take The Strategy into account when planning and programming for the next replenishment period, in order to facilitate the effective implementation of the Convention, and to align its operations in order to facilitate effective implementation of the Convention (decision 3/COP.8).
- (d) It is clear that the four strategic objectives and the five operational objectives outlined in The Strategy cannot be achieved without the support of the GEF. The COP recognized that the effective implementation of The Strategy requires the mobilization of adequate, predictable and timely financial resources at both the national and the international levels and invited the GEF to consider simplifying its funding procedures in order to ease access by developing countries to GEF funding (decisions 3/COP.8 and 6/COP.8).

(e) The information on the extent to which the GEF contributes to the achievement of the scope of the Convention, The Strategy and its objectives, and the modalities through which it has responded to the deliberations of the COP, represents valuable information for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention.

Indicator-based analysis and assessment

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) The definition of a set of indicators valid for all stakeholders (a core set of indicators) is a process that needs to be completed as soon as possible, with the ultimate aim of having a well-defined core set of indicators in place at the beginning of the next reporting cycle.</p> <p>(b) Two sets of indicators are proposed: ‘impact indicators’ to measure the progress achieved against the four strategic objectives of The Strategy; and ‘performance indicators’ to measure the progress achieved against the five operational objectives of The Strategy.</p> <p>(c) Following decision 3/COP.8, the secretariat invited Parties to submit their proposals for indicators relevant to the achievement of the operational objectives of The Strategy. These will be consolidated and harmonized and presented to CRIC 7 for review and, following the input received there, to COP 9 for adoption. The CST and the GM will also be asked to advise on these performance indicators.</p> <p>(d) By its decision 1/COP.7, the COP invited the CST to consult with the GEF, its Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel and its implementing and executing agencies to facilitate coherence and consistency in the elaboration of a compendium of benchmarking approaches for SLM, to support the standardization of UNCCD-relevant benchmarks and to strengthen related information systems and processes that should devolve to country Parties and assist them in monitoring the implementation of the Convention.</p>	<p>(a) A core set of performance indicators for relevant international financial institutions, facilities and funds, including the GEF, should be identified to measure their responsiveness to operational objective 5.3. These indicators should be in line with the indicators to be set for affected developing country Parties and with those already established by the GEF.</p> <p>(b) The GEF should, for the sake of consistency and comparability, structure its report using the same indicator-based approach.</p> <p>(c) The GEF should also be in a position to use its own indicators and data to properly reflect its specificity. This is in line with the concern expressed by the AHWG that harmonization in reporting by organizations should not be at the expense of neglecting the specificities of their individual mandates and the roles they play in the UNCCD process.</p> <p>(d) Appropriate attention should be paid to the compatibility of the two sets of indicators.</p> <p>(e) It should also be noted that new strategies (for GEF-5, 2011-2014), and hence new indicators, are to be elaborated in 2008 and presented to the GEF Council in 2009. The impact indicators for the strategic objectives of the land degradation focal area are developed as a part of the GEF medium-sized project “Ensuring Impacts from SLM – Development of a Global Indicator System”, the outcomes of which should be taken into consideration.</p>

Rationale

- (a) The Strategy places a special emphasis on the adoption of an indicator-based approach in the assessment of progress with implementation of the Convention and in reporting thereon. While The Strategy adopted broad indicators to measure the level of achievement of its strategic objectives, to be refined by the CST and the GM/secretariat, it has not adopted indicators for the achievement of the operational objectives. These are to be identified by the Parties.
 - (b) The rationale behind this indicator-based approach is to improve the quantitative impact assessment of measures and programmes implemented within the scope of the Convention, which has so far been limited or absent.
 - (c) An indicator-based approach implies the systematic analysis of selected indicators at each reporting cycle, in order to draw conclusions on trends and make recommendations for action. Indicators are common tools for supporting the monitoring and assessment of implementation and trends in the realm of sustainable development-related multilateral processes. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Millennium Development Goals process all use indicators for monitoring purposes.
 - (d) The AHWG also recognized the need to identify indicators to facilitate reporting on measurable impacts.
 - (e) There are two main long-term strategic objectives of the GEF focal area on land degradation:
 - (i) to develop an enabling environment that will place SLM in the mainstream of development policy and practice at the regional, national and local levels.
 - (ii) to upscale SLM investments that generate mutual benefits for the global environment and for local livelihoods.
 - (f) Each of these two strategic objectives is accompanied by a set of related expected impacts and impact indicators.
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Attentiveness to the impact of the support provided

Implementation	Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) A section of the new reporting format for the GEF will be dedicated to the qualitative and, as far as possible, quantitative, assessment of the impact of support provided by it to affected country Parties. The assessment will comprise an analysis of lessons learned, and of the drivers and the needs behind the drivers. (b) A special section may be dedicated to support in the area of capacity building, and to financial support to the reporting process, as requested by decisions 6/COP.7 and 7/COP.8. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Both The Strategy and the GEF, in its focal area on land degradation, use a results-based management (RBM) approach as the basis for monitoring and assessment of activities and their impact. It would be mutually beneficial if these approaches were to cross-fertilize each other. (b) Information on the impact of investments will (a) improve understanding of the effectiveness of the support provided by the GEF within the framework of the Convention, and (b) encourage a performance-based mechanism for support of activities under the Convention. (c) The impact of financial support may be derived by screening mid-term reviews and/or final evaluations of projects and programmes, information that is usually available to the GEF. (d) This could lead to the identification of best practices, as requested by decision 3/COP.8 and recommended by the AHWG. (e) Independent reviews may highlight important conclusions and provide recommendations. The GEF would thus be encouraged to emphasize these findings in its reporting and to produce assessments of the efficiency and impact of the activities it has supported.

Rationale

- (a) The RBM approach – which is at the core of indicator-based analysis and assessment – will be implemented for GEF-4, incorporating monitoring and reporting at three levels: the institutional (organization), the programmatic (focal area) and the project levels. The framework is built on the strategic programming for GEF-4 focal area strategies and their associated indicators and will tie in closely with the new Council-approved project cycle. The key components of the RBM framework will include both planning and reporting instruments. The development of strategic programmes under GEF-4, with clarity on expected results and clear indicators, is an important planning instrument that allows the GEF to focus on clear results that contribute to its overall impact. The second component of RBM is reporting that is linked to implementation. In the context of improved monitoring and evaluation for the land degradation focal area at the project, programme and portfolio levels, the medium sized project (MSP) “Ensuring Impact from SLM: Development of a Global Indicator System” will be of key importance since it will set up a focal area-wide indicator system for SLM interventions (ICCD/CRIC(6)/5/Add.1).
- (b) This approach would help to eliminate the constraints which lie in the difficulty of tracking the flow of GEF funds, in the manner such funds respond to demands from the UNCCD programming process, and the difficulty of assessing the relevance of funded activities with regard to the priorities for UNCCD implementation. These uncertainties were perceived to be hindering efforts to improve coordination and coherence between the GEF and the UNCCD processes. (ICCD/CRIC(3)/6)
- (c) Particular emphasis should be placed on information on the impact of GEF financing on the implementation of action programmes at all levels, especially through the GEF Country Partnership Programme (CPP) for SLM, given that all proposals addressing land degradation and submitted under the land degradation focal area are required to meet the priorities set out in NAPs, SRAPs and/or RAPs.
- (d) The information on the impact of GEF-funded programmes and projects would thus shed a clearer light on the possible need for improvements in project elaboration and implementation, and would thus contribute to the lessons-learned approach taken by both the Convention process and the GEF.

Coherence, comparability and comprehensiveness of financial information

Implementation	Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Financial reporting by the GEF will be based on a new reporting format (financial annex) common to all reporting entities. (b) The financial information required by the Convention should refer to the financial resources mobilized and used (i.e. committed and spent) for the implementation of the action programmes and should encompass both domestic and external resources. (c) In order to improve the coordination and circulation of information at the national and local levels, the AHWG proposed the establishment of national environmental information systems. These would be common to all three Rio conventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The financial annex will contribute to increased synergies among the Rio conventions, since it will require the classification of proposed projects against the three conventions and according to the Rio markers. (b) Guidelines related to the preparation of the financial annex will have to be prepared. (c) The establishment of national information systems in affected country Parties would enable a systematized approach to the collection of relevant information and would consequently allow systematic financial data flows between and among different stakeholders.

Rationale

- (a) Several major shortcomings were noted in the provision of financial information to the COP/CRIC during the last three reporting cycles; for example, discrepancies in the information provided by donors and recipients, a lack of detail on financial flows and investments, double-counting of resources in the case of co-financed projects and discrepancies between the information submitted to the UNCCD and that submitted to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.
 - (b) The reasons behind the discrepancies in financial reporting include insufficient communication among various actors and the lack of a common understanding on the types of UNCCD-related measures.
 - (c) In order to overcome these constraints, the AHWG took up the proposal of the GM to adopt a standardized financial annex.
 - (d) The attribution of Rio markers and of the targeted operational objectives of The Strategy to each project will allow a more precise attribution of resources to UNCCD-related activities.
 - (e) The financial annex should not be a stand-alone solution, but should be complemented by a series of accompanying measures. Among these measures, preliminary consultations between affected country Parties and their development partners, including the GEF, are proposed in order to minimize discrepancies and avoid issues of over- or under-reporting.
 - (f) In its first report submitted according to the MOU, the GEF presented a list of the approved projects in the land degradation focal area in GEF-3, which included information on agency, project type, region, country, project title, total GEF funds, co-financing, date of Council approval and CEO endorsement, GEF co-financing ratio and a short description of the project objectives. Adjustment of the existing format of the annex to the proposed financial annex would enable comparisons between the reports submitted by affected country Parties, as well as with information provided by those IGOs and United Nations agencies which act as implementing and executing agencies of the GEF.
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REPORTING FORMAT

A simple, comprehensive and rational common format for reporting, following clear, logically structured and user-friendly reporting guidelines

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) New guidelines for reporting need to be produced and agreed. These guidelines will help the GEF with the preparation of its reports. Maximum length limits will be set for each section of the report. Setting length limits will focus reporting on UNCCD-relevant topics.</p> <p>(b) The guidelines will include the programme and project sheet and the financial annex.</p> <p>(c) The programme and project sheet will be used for the description of UNCCD-related projects and programmes that the GEF has supported, or is supporting.</p> <p>(d) The programme and project sheet will be simple and harmonized with the structure of the financial annex.</p> <p>(e) The information included in the programme and project sheet will be classified according to UNCCD-specific Relevant Activity Codes (RACs) and the Rio conventions-specific Rio markers.</p> <p>(f) To complement the qualitative analysis, an additional quantitative element of analysis would be the determination of the “strength of land degradation components”, according to the strength rating methodology followed by the GEF (see the GEF Council Document Status of Land Degradation as a Cross-Cutting Issue under GEF.3 (GEF/C.24/Inf.6)). This methodology helps to identify a project as a project addressing land degradation as a cross-cutting issue.</p>	<p>(a) Deadlines relating to the adoption of reporting guidelines should be respected and the approval process should be finalized on schedule, in order to have the new reporting cycle based on new reporting principles and formats.</p> <p>(b) Existing RACs should be reviewed by the GM in the light of The Strategy.</p> <p>(c) New reporting principles are to be structured around the topics determined by the MOU.</p>
<h4>Rationale</h4>	
<p>(a) The need to establish guidelines for the first time for reporting on the GEF was emphasized by the AHWG and acknowledged by decisions 8/COP.7 and 8/COP.8.</p> <p>(b) The complexity of the review process will be tackled by a simple reporting format that allows for effective contribution by the GEF to the review and assessment of the implementation of the Convention. Simplicity should, however, not be achieved by jeopardizing comprehensiveness.</p> <p>(c) Complementary and coherent reporting guidelines are necessary in order to be able to gather from all the stakeholders information that is comparable both over time and across regions.</p> <p>(d) The new reporting format should be structured in a rational way, allowing for logical presentation of information, and minimizing and, wherever possible, avoiding both repetition and gaps in reporting. Special emphasis should be put on the need to develop user-friendly guidelines.</p>	

Flexibility to accommodate COP decisions, ad hoc COP requests and the specific characteristics of the reporting entities

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) The flexibility required will be reflected in the new reporting format by means of dedicated sections.</p> <p>(b) The secretariat will screen COP decisions, starting with the tenth session of the COP, in order to identify whether new reporting requirements have emerged from COP decisions, and then notify reporting entities. Necessary revisions of reporting guidelines will be forwarded to the COP for adoption.</p>	<p>(a) The specificity of the GEF compared to other United Nations organizations and IGOs will be taken into account, while not neglecting the need to have comparable and complementary information.</p> <p>(b) Implementing/executing agencies of the GEF will have dedicated sections in their reports to report according to their specific roles and on the decisions made by the COP which refer to them.</p>

Rationale

- (a) There have in the past been a number of requests by the COP to the GEF to report to it on various topics.
- (b) Reporting should in future comply with the MOU; however, it should be flexible enough to accommodate where appropriate:
 - (i) reporting on important matters as perceived by the COP and by the GEF;
 - (ii) COP deliberations that may supersede existing ones and may imply changes in implementation;
 - (iii) ad hoc COP invitations to the GEF to report on specific issues.
- (c) The COP emphasized the need for the GEF to take due account of the relevant decisions taken by the COP when financing activities in accordance with the MOU. It also asked the GEF, in formulating strategies, programmes and projects for financing the agreed incremental costs of activities concerning desertification under its focal area of land degradation or through activities that combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in other focal areas, through its secretariat and implementing and executing agencies, to take into account the provisions of the UNCCD and the relevant decisions of its COP relating to policies, strategies and programme priorities (decision 6/COP.7). This cross-fertilizing information circle between the COP and the GEF should be taken into account in the reporting process.

Enabling the collection of best practices and success stories

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) The new reporting format should facilitate the extraction of best practices, success stories and case studies relating to the implementation of the Convention. Case studies may also focus on important lessons learned.</p> <p>(b) The GEF may provide important added value to this knowledge-sharing process by focusing on lessons learned.</p>	<p>(a) A section dedicated to the presentation of best practices and success stories will assist the secretariat and the CRIC in discharging their mandates, as determined by decision 1/COP.6 and decision 3/COP.8, respectively.</p> <p>(b) There is a need to define the topics and areas along which these best practices would be structured and classified.</p> <p>(c) The UNCCD website, where best practices could be collected for sharing among all stakeholders, would need to be adapted to the new categories agreed for the classification of best practices. This would need to be decided by the COP.</p>

Rationale

- (a) The Strategy calls for effective knowledge-sharing systems to be in place for supporting both policymakers and end-users in the implementation of the Convention. Best practices and success stories are considered to be an integral part of this knowledge.
 - (b) The AHWG further recommended that information on best practices and success stories be included in the reports submitted to the COP and the CRIC. It also called for a methodology to extract the information obtained from reports of United Nations organizations and IGOs.
 - (c) The GEF could contribute to this process by reporting on best practices and success stories, and also on case studies and lessons learned and by highlighting those which were obtained during mid-term and final reviews of UNCCD-related projects and programmes.
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Standardized and classified description of programmes and projects

Implementation	Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Reporting by the GEF will be based on a newly established reporting format, including a programme and project sheet. (b) Information included in the programme and project sheet will be classified according to UNCCD-specific RACs and the Rio markers, with possible additional classification according to the GEF strength rating methodology. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The following will be necessary: (b) the development of programme and project sheet formats; (c) the preparation of guidelines on how to use the programme and project sheet, including a description of the codes and the rules for their attribution. (d) It is also necessary for the GM to review and update the RACs in line with The Strategy.

Rationale

- (a) Descriptions of projects and programmes supporting the implementation of the Convention are a common feature of the reports produced by the GEF. However, such descriptions have been very scarce in the past.
 - (b) In order to produce comprehensive information that is also common to other United Nations organizations and IGOs, a programme and project sheet will guide the description of programmes, projects and activities. The aim is twofold: to ensure that all the organizations provide the same type of information, and to standardize its presentation. A balance needs to be found between the reporting tasks that GEF has, and the format it usually uses for reporting, on the one hand, and the requirements of the Convention and the MOU, on the other hand.
 - (c) This balance may be achieved by keeping the format as simple as possible, so that information may be easily retrieved from existing formats.
 - (d) Classification will be used to support the processing of the financial information given in the financial annex. Such classification aims to overcome the lack of guidance on identifying and classifying relevant activities, which was highlighted by the GM as one of the reasons behind the poor quality of financial reporting.
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REPORTING PROCESSES

The reporting times for the various reporting entities

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) The timing of the submission of reports by reporting entities and the future format of CRIC sessions will be discussed at CRIC 7 and adopted at COP 9. COP 9 will also consider and adopt the terms of reference of the CRIC.</p> <p>(b) Implementation of the above may be facilitated by setting a sequence for the delivery of reports within each reporting cycle.</p>	<p>(a) The implications resulting from a change in the timing of the submission of reports will have to be considered by Parties during their deliberations on the future format of CRIC and eventually when the new terms of reference for the CRIC are adopted by COP 9.</p> <p>(b) Various decisions by the COP would need to be revised in order to ensure consistency.</p>
Rationale	
<p>(a) Before the MOU, the GEF reported together with other IGOs and United Nations organizations according to the reporting cycles. Three reporting cycles have been completed since 1999. The first and third reporting processes alternated reporting on implementation in African country Parties with reporting on other regions. The second reporting process took place in 2002 with reports submitted on implementation in all the affected country Parties. Alternation of reports is based on decision 11/COP.1.</p> <p>(b) Given that the review of reports will be guided by indicators, a reporting process for all affected country Parties would give rise to the following positive aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the same reporting conditions for all reporting entities; (ii) where appropriate, the same type of assistance provided; (iii) the ability to prepare comprehensive analyses of progress and trends at the global, regional and subregional levels; (iv) the ability to significantly (in statistical terms) compare the information compiled and to synthesize. <p>(c) The above positive aspects would allow the CRIC to draw comprehensive conclusions and to make knowledge-based recommendations to the COP.</p> <p>(d) Regular information flows from the UNCCD to other international processes (for example the other Rio conventions) would also add to the reputation of the Convention as a reliable source of data related to desertification/land degradation and drought processes. This is in line with the third operational objective of The Strategy, calling for the Convention to become a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought.</p> <p>(e) From the point of view of the GEF, which is charged by the MOU with financial support to the reporting process of affected developing country Parties, reporting by all affected Parties would imply better use of time and increased cost-effectiveness in comparison with alternate reporting.</p> <p>(f) The MOU requested the GEF to report to each session of the COP. However, the CRIC sessions held during the sessions of the COP, which take up the report of the GEF, do not review the implementation of the Convention based on the reports submitted. This means that, at inter-sessional sessions, the CRIC is taking up the reports of affected country Parties, developed country Parties, IGOs and United Nations organizations, but not those of the GEF, the GM and the secretariat. This negatively affects the comprehensiveness and comparability of information to be taken up by the CRIC and hinders its capability to fully assess the implementation of the Convention.</p>	

An appropriate interval between reporting cycles	
Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) The timing of the submission of reports by all reporting entities and the future format of CRIC sessions will be discussed at CRIC 7 and adopted at COP 9. COP 9 will also consider and adopt the terms of reference of the CRIC.</p>	<p>(a) If the proposal is accepted that GEF reports at the same time as Parties, there should be a clarification by the COP on how GEF reporting should be organized in order for it to be kept in line with the MOU.</p> <p>(b) The implications of the various possible scenarios affecting the review of information provided by Parties and other reporting entities are contained in document ICCD/CRIC(7)/4.</p>
Rationale	
<p>(a) The length of the interval between two consecutive reporting cycles is mainly determined by the nature of the processes to be reported on. Desertification and land degradation trends can only be appreciated on a medium-to-long term basis.</p> <p>(b) The existing four-year interval between reporting cycles was considered appropriate by the AHWG.</p> <p>(c) The GEF is requested to report to each session of the COP, i.e. every two years.</p>	

Efficient treatment of information across the reporting process	
Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) Classification - either of numerical or narrative material - is an efficient way to make the information retrievable and analytical enough for assessment. With the adoption of the new reporting format, more compatible and comprehensive information can be expected. Thus, classification may become feasible. This would enable a more systematic analysis of information. Once classified, it will be possible to automatically extract or retrieve information from the reports.</p> <p>(b) With regard to the classification of programmes and projects, the use of the Rio markers should be considered for all reporting entities. The attribution of Rio markers will be undertaken in the financial annex. Programmes and projects will also be categorized according to the new strategic and operational objectives of The Strategy.</p> <p>(c) The use of RACs in the programme and project sheets is recommended to classify the objectives and main activities of the programmes and projects supported by the GEF. The GEF strength rating methodology may also be used.</p> <p>(d) The RACs are updated by the GM. Their review and adaptation to better reflect the strategic and operational objectives of The Strategy will be completed before the beginning of the next reporting cycle, and in time to be included and presented in the revised reporting guidelines.</p>	<p>(a) Analysis of the information obtained from reports will be shared between the secretariat and the GM (the latter being charged with analysing the information relating to financial matters).</p> <p>(b) Information systems shared between the two organizations are needed to support the analysis of classified information obtained from reports.</p> <p>(c) The establishment of information systems implies, among other things:</p> <p>(d) definition of the type of data to be retrieved and stored;</p> <p>(e) determination of data flows from different sources to the system;</p> <p>(f) definition of data collection procedures;</p> <p>(g) identification of persons dedicated to the system and of their roles;</p> <p>(h) definition of activities for recording, storing, and managing the data;</p> <p>(i) capacity building will also be necessary.</p> <p>(j) Classification of the information provided in the reports may be carried out by an independent institution. The classification is intended to attribute codes or key words to the content of the reports, creating a database from which information may easily be retrieved by means of simple search functions.</p>

	(k) The secretariat will need the necessary technical and financial resources to implement this classification. It should be decided how these resources will be identified and mobilized.
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Rationale

- (a) Information retrieval and compilation is the basis of reporting. In particular, the AHWG recommends the establishment of compatible information systems, databases and procedures for collecting relevant information at the country level and for monitoring financial flows.
- (b) The GM recommended a methodology for the identification and weighting of activities related to UNCCD topics within a wider portfolio of development and environmental projects.
- (c) Programmes and projects described by the GEF would be classified according to the RACs and the Rio markers. Classification based on RACs will relate to the project's main objectives and, possibly, to the project's main activities. The GEF strength rating methodology may also be used.
- (d) Financial reporting: a simple classification according to the new strategic and operational objectives of The Strategy and, possibly, also the Rio Markers will be the responsibility of all entities reporting on financial matters.
- (e) The COP deliberated on a number of occasions on the relationship between the GEF and the GM and the role of the two organizations (decisions 24/COP.1, 25/COP.1, 18/COP.2, 17/COP.3, 5/COP.6, 7/COP.7, 6/COP.7, 3/COP.8). The compatibility of the data provided by the GM and the GEF should be ensured.

Facilitating the development of synergies with the other Rio conventions

Implementation	Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Synergies would be fostered in the reporting process of the Convention through the use of the Rio markers for the classification of projects reported in the financial annex. (b) The establishment of national environmental information systems implies several actions to be undertaken by country Parties. It is aimed at increasing synergies in the reporting obligations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The proposed financial annex to the reports envisages the categorization of projects under the three Rio conventions. The GM will be able to derive some preliminary information on the levels of synergy among the conventions and, eventually, to compile this into a database to be shared with the CBD and the UNFCCC. (b) Capacity building for the establishment or adaptation of SLM linked national environmental information systems is needed in terms of financial and technical resources.

Rationale

- (a) An overall framework for harmonized reporting to the three Rio conventions is highly desirable, but unlikely to be achieved in the short term. This is due to national and international complexities at the institutional level.
- (b) Nevertheless, mainstreaming among strategies (CBD), national programmes (UNFCCC) and action programmes (UNCCD) could be facilitated by improving the coordination and circulation of information at the national and local levels, by establishing national committees on sustainable development and national environmental information systems.
- (c) In particular, initiating the setting up of country information systems common to the three conventions may improve the efficiency of reporting obligations under each Rio convention, a topic on which decision 8/COP.8 has requested the secretariat to advise in consultation with the Joint Liaison Group, the aim of which is the strengthening of cooperation on the implementation process of the three Rio conventions.

(d) The COP deliberated on a number of occasions on the linkage between the synergies and GEF financing (decisions 3/COP.6, 12/COP.6). The GEF recognized these needs by deciding that the GEF-4 priority areas would address the three major direct drivers for terrestrial ecosystem degradation identified by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: land-use change, natural resources consumption and climate change. All project proposals will incorporate the effects of climate change as an integral part of measures for SLM.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

15. This document is an addendum to document ICCD/CRIC(7)/3, which includes conclusions and recommendations relating to both the generic reporting principles and those pertinent to the GEF in particular. They are before CRIC 7 for review and consideration. The feedback received will be taken into account in preparing the draft reporting guidelines to be submitted to COP 9 for any decision it may wish to take on this matter.
