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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 on implementation of subregional
and regional action programmes**

Summary

This document provides a detailed explanation of the principles for reporting on implementation of subregional and regional action programmes. 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 to provide further guidance to the secretariat on the development of draft reporting guidelines for these entities 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 these entities are included in document ICCD/CRIC(7)/3.

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I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to article 11 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), affected country Parties should consult and cooperate on the preparation, as appropriate, in accordance with regional implementation annexes, of subregional action programmes (SRAPs) and/or regional action programmes (RAPs) in order to harmonize, complement and increase the efficiency of national action programmes (NAPs). The Convention encompasses five regional implementation annexes: for Africa, for Asia, for Latin America and the Caribbean, for the Northern Mediterranean and for Central and Eastern Europe.

2. The regional implementation annex for Africa is the most detailed of the five annexes. Africa is also the region where important progress has been made with finalizing, implementing and reporting on SRAPs. Currently, Africa is covered by 5 SRAPs and one RAP. Overall, 12 SRAPs and 3 RAPs have been established under the Convention.¹ Reporting responsibilities related to the implementation of SRAPs and RAPs are either entrusted to specific institutions and organizations, as in the case of Africa, or based on assembling contributions from diverse stakeholders.

3. Obligations to report by each Party were set by the Convention and by decision 11/COP.1. With regard to subregional and regional reports, the decision allows for joint communications from any group of affected country Parties, directly or through a competent subregional or regional organization, on measures taken at the subregional and/or regional levels in the implementation of the Convention. These communications report on: (a) areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned; (b) the consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the subregional or regional action programmes and the partnership agreement with developed country Parties and other interested entities; and (c) the financial allocations by affected country Parties in the subregion or region in support of implementation as well as the financial assistance and technical cooperation received and required, identifying and prioritizing requirements. The decision also calls for inclusion in these reports of a review and assessment of the benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress.²

4. Four subregional reports were submitted for Africa during the first reporting cycle and five each during the second and third reporting cycle. The only other region to submit reports to the Convention during the first and second reporting cycles was the Northern Mediterranean.

5. The Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) on communication of information, established by the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) with a view to improving the procedures for the communication of information as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Convention, did not systematically comment on the shortcomings of subregional and regional reports, although some of its recommendations specifically referred to subregional and regional reports. These called for compliance with the guidelines to be devised, for revision of reports at regional meetings prior to their submission to the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), and for a consensus on reporting mechanisms, inter alia, on the identification of entities entrusted with reporting.³

¹ ICCD/CRIC(6)/6.

² Decision 11/COP.1.

³ ICCD/CRIC(6)/6.

6. This addendum focuses on the principles for subregional and regional reports. The principles were developed by the secretariat taking account of: the relevant deliberations of the COP; the opinions and recommendations produced by its subsidiary bodies and the deliberations of the AHWG; the advice received from the Global Mechanism (GM); the advice received at the CRIC Bureau meeting held on 26 May 2008; and the advice received from an interagency task force established for this purpose and held on 26–27 June 2008. Finally, the reporting principles were drafted taking account of the institutional weaknesses of the subregional and regional mechanisms, the option of realigning them with The Strategy and the need for more clear and efficient coordination arrangements.

7. Reporting principles are categorized under three main headings: content of reporting, format of reporting and reporting process.

II. Principles for reporting on implementation of subregional and regional action programmes

CONTENT OF REPORTING

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

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) SRAPs and RAPs should be aligned with The Strategy.</p> <p>(b) To comply with the overall results-oriented approach fostered by the Convention, SRAPs and RAPs should, across the five operational objectives of The Strategy, set targets for a timeframe, specify the range of activities envisaged to reach these targets and identify indicators to measure progress with achieving these targets. However, it should be noted that, at this stage, the substance of the SRAPs and the RAPs may be reviewed in the sense of being more science-based.</p> <p>(c) Reporting by subregional and regional entities will be based on a new reporting format that facilitates compliance of the information provided with the scope of the Convention, The Strategy and its objectives.</p> <p>(d) Within the reporting format, a section will be dedicated to responding to the five operational objectives identified in The Strategy. A regional profile will measure progress against the four strategic objectives of The Strategy.</p>	<p>(a) Consistency between the 10-year (2008–2018) strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (The Strategy) and its objectives and the new reporting requirements will imply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) revision of the SRAPs and the RAPs and a decision on whether they will be driven by scientific or by action-oriented programmes; (ii) revision of the reporting format and guidelines for subregional and regional reports; (iii) definition of a regional profile, in consultation with the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), the Parties and the regional implementation annexes; (iv) definition of indicators at the subregional and regional levels. <p>(b) The revision of the SRAPs and the RAPs should complement the identification of indicators. The targets set at the subregional and regional levels in the SRAPs and the RAPs should be coherent with the indicators for measuring progress against these targets. Thus, clear linkages between the revision of the SRAPs and the RAPs and the identification of indicators should be established.</p> <p>(c) Help guides on revising or preparing SRAPs and RAPs may be necessary.</p>

Rationale

- (a) Since its entry into force in 1996, the UNCCD has progressively shifted its focus from the building of implementation mechanisms and basic obligations (the institutional phase), to the adoption and implementation of its action programmes (the results-oriented implementation phase).
- (b) This change in focus is reflected in the newly adopted 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018). The Strategy outlines four strategic and five operational objectives, defining for each the expected impacts (for the strategic objectives) and outcomes (for the operational objectives). Tentative indicators to measure progress against the strategic objectives are outlined in The Strategy, while preliminary indicators for the operational objectives have been proposed by the Intersessional Intergovernmental Working Group (IIWG) in a separate document.
- (c) According to decision 3/COP.8, affected country Parties, within the framework of their regional implementation annexes, are supposed to align their NAPs, and other relevant activities related to the Convention, to The Strategy. As core tools for the implementation of the Convention at the subregional and regional levels, SRAPs and RAPs should also be considered for revision in the light of The Strategy.

Indicator-based analysis and assessment	
Implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Indicators will be the basis of reporting by subregional and regional entities. The indicators to be used in subregional and regional reports include ‘impact indicators’ to measure progress against the strategic objectives of The Strategy, and ‘performance indicators’ to measure progress against the operational objectives of The Strategy. (b) Performance indicators at the subregional and regional levels should be identified by individual country Parties according to existing resources (information systems and data). (c) Impact indicators are broadly discussed in The Strategy and are to be refined further by the CST (and partially by the secretariat and the GM), building on existing data sources. These indicators will be the basis for a global assessment of the implementation of the Convention, and will be proposed and analysed in the ‘regional profile’. (d) Comparability of information among regions will be achieved through a core set of indicators, common to all country Parties, possibly based on harmonized methodologies for data collection and handling. (e) The definition of a set of indicators common to all regions (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. The consolidation of subregional and regional indicators and, if feasible, the identification of a core set of indicators will be carried out by the secretariat. (f) In addition to the core set of indicators, subregions and regions will have their own specific indicators and data to properly reflect their specificity. 	Implications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Establishment of baseline data against which progress can be measured is important. (b) Impact indicators related to strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 are to be refined by the CST, as per decision 3/COP.8. Indicators for strategic objective 4 should be proposed by the secretariat based on the advice provided by the GM: Given the close linkages among all the strategic objectives, the views of the CST on indicators for this objective should also be considered. (c) According to decision 3/COP.8, the consolidation of national and regional indicators and their harmonization is to be carried out by the secretariat, but the CST may also be requested to advise on these performance indicators. (d) The definition of indicators is a unique opportunity to add to the focus of reporting on UNCCD-related matters. Broad indicators should complement more specific indicators able to measure UNCCD-relevant information. (e) The increased use of quantitative information in the reports should be complemented by the request to quote the sources of the data/information/statistics provided. This request should form part of a more comprehensive quality control system that should be set in the framework of the reporting process to verify the quality of the information provided.
Rationale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Consistency with the scope of the Convention, The Strategy and its objectives implies the adoption of an indicator-based approach to the assessment of progress with implementation, and thus to reporting. The Strategy itself contains tentative indicators to measure the level of achievement of the strategic objectives. Preliminary indicators for the operational objectives have been proposed by the IIWG. (b) This indicator-based approach is meant to improve the quantitative impact assessment of measures and programmes implemented within the scope of the Convention, assessment that so far has been limited or absent. (c) An indicator-based approach implies the systematic analysis of selected indicators at each reporting cycle in order to start identifying and assessing trends. Indicators are common tools to support the monitoring and assessment of implementation and trends. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Millennium Development Goals process all use indicators for monitoring purposes. (d) Along with the need to identify objectives and targets at the national and regional levels, the AHWG also recognized the need to identify indicators to facilitate reporting on measurable impacts. 	

- (e) The definition of a regional profile – built on the information provided in the country profiles – may allow better understanding of the major processes at the regional level.

Attentiveness to relevant subregional and regional initiatives

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) Subregional and regional reports will be based on a new reporting format that allows reporting on activities relevant to the Convention but not strictly included in the SRAPs and RAPs. Such activities may encompass existing coordination arrangements, regional tools and mechanisms or financing arrangements.</p> <p>(b) In particular, the reports should elaborate on the possibilities of developing synergies or collaboration between these activities and the Convention.</p>	<p>(a) The ultimate aim of the implementation of this principle is the identification of other important ongoing or upcoming initiatives at the subregional and regional levels, which could be coordinated with activities under the Convention. Coordination, synergy or collaboration with complementary or supportive initiatives may positively contribute to the implementation of the Convention.</p> <p>(b) Information on initiatives at the subregional and regional level will also be provided through the reports of United Nations organizations and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). It will thus be necessary for the secretariat to compile and harmonize such information from different sources.</p>

Rationale

- (a) SRAPs and RAPs do not necessarily encompass in their work programmes all the initiatives at the subregional and regional levels that are relevant to the implementation of the Convention. These initiatives may include, inter alia, networks, tools and funding arrangements.
- (b) Compiling and collecting information on initiatives that complement or support the implementation of the Convention at the regional and subregional levels is useful and will assist the secretariat in its servicing function related to the regional implementation annexes. In particular, the secretariat is requested by decision 3/COP.8 to improve regional coordination arrangements, to strengthen dialogue and consultation at the subregional and regional levels, and to facilitate cooperation. The GM, by the same decision, is requested to develop subregional/regional financing platforms.
- (c) The provision of this information by subregional and regional reporting entities in each reporting cycle will allow the secretariat and the GM to be responsive to existing and emerging needs specific to each region, and enable reporting entities to engage in partnership building.
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Coherence, comparability and comprehensiveness of financial information	
Implementation	Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Financial reporting by subregional and regional entities will be based on a financial annex. The adoption of this annex may require the implementation of other accompanying measures, such as improved coordination and information-sharing systems. (b) Facilitation mechanisms for the preparation of the financial annex should also be considered. These could include the distribution to Parties of forms pre-filled with data available from the Creditor Reporting System of the Developmental Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (c) In order to achieve harmonization of the financial information prior to its delivery to the secretariat, it may also be necessary to undertake consultations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Mobilization of resources will be necessary for the implementation of accompanying measures such as regional information systems. (b) The establishment of regional information systems may in future allow systematic financial data flows from subregions and regions to the secretariat, including outside the framework of the four-year reporting cycle. More frequent reporting of financial information would allow the GM to update its central database, the Financial Information Engine on Land Degradation (FIELD), and to produce performance reports for the CRIC, as recommended by the AHWG. (c) The establishment of regional information systems as part of the RAP, taking advantage, as appropriate, of existing Thematic Programme Networks, may contribute to the creation of centres of excellence, at the regional level, focusing on desertification and land degradation matters. (d) The financial annex will contribute to increased synergies among the Rio conventions by the use of the Rio markers. (e) Guidelines should be drawn up for the preparation of the financial annex.
Rationale	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Several major shortcomings were noted in the reporting of financial information to the Convention in the past three reporting cycles, among which were discrepancies in the information provided by funding Parties and recipients; a low level of detail on financial flows and investments; and double-counting of resources in the case of co-financed projects. (b) The reasons behind the poor quality of the financial information include, inter alia, a lack of standardized reporting procedures and methodologies for the monitoring of financial flows, and insufficient data collection and management mechanisms (incl. databases). (c) Only limited financial information has been provided thus far by reporting entities at the subregional and regional levels. (d) The AHWG recommended the adoption of a standardized financial annex to national reports. Adoption of the financial annex is recommended for all reporting entities, including subregional and regional entities, in order to overcome the above-mentioned constraints and to ensure consistency and comparability of the information provided at the subregional and regional levels. (e) The financial annex should not be a stand-alone solution, but should be complemented by a series of accompanying measures. Among these measures is the establishment of information systems, reporting by all Parties in the same reporting cycle, increased synergies of reporting under the Rio conventions and improved communication and consultations among concerned reporting entities. 	

Ensuring consistency with the work of the CST

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) Any recommendation or ad hoc request emanating from the CST should be made in accordance with the revised reporting format.</p> <p>(b) Streamlining the CST input through the standard reporting process will require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) a decision on the extent to which SRAPs and RAPs will be science-driven in the future;(ii) the timing of CST requests be aligned to the reporting cycles;(iii) requests to be supported by clear terms of reference. <p>(c) Furthermore, the CST should elaborate on the information it receives from reports and provide feedback to the CRIC.</p>	<p>(a) As is envisaged in The Strategy, the CST should focus its reviews on one or two priorities each biennium. CST requests to subregional and regional reporting entities are thus likely to be made every two years, while the reporting cycle has so far been every four years. This lack of congruence between the reporting obligations of the CST and reporting at the subregional and regional levels needs to be addressed by Parties at the ninth session of the COP (COP 9), together with a decision on the future terms of reference of the CRIC.</p> <p>(b) COP decisions should ensure consistency between CRIC and CST processes. The possibility of synchronized CST and CRIC sessions, as envisaged in The Strategy, works in this direction.</p> <p>(c) If the implementation of CST-related requests implies the need for additional financial and technical resources for reporting, the availability of such additional resources should be taken into account.</p>
Rationale	
<p>(a) Decision 3/COP.8 redefines the role and the responsibilities of the CST. The CST is given primary responsibility for fulfilling operational objective 3 of The Strategy, on science, technology and knowledge. Outcomes 3.5 and 3.6 envisage knowledge-sharing systems and science and technology networks, both of which may also be intended at the regional level. The CST is further asked to strengthen its linkages with the thematic programme networks and with other initiatives occurring at the regional level.</p>	

FORMAT OF REPORTING

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

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) A new reporting format and guidelines need to be produced and agreed. These include a financial annex. The development of a regional profile may also be considered.</p> <p>(b) Maximum length limits will be set for each section of the report. Setting such length limits is expected to focus reporting on UNCCD-relevant matters.</p> <p>(c) The use of quantitative information will be encouraged throughout the reporting format, to increase reliance on information that can be easily and systematically classified.</p>	<p>(a) Deadlines relating to the adoption of reporting guidelines should be respected and the whole approval process should be finalized on schedule, in order that the new reporting cycle can be based on the new reporting principles and formats.</p> <p>(b) Work relating to regional profiles needs to be coordinated with the CST.</p>

- Rationale**
- (a) Simplification of the reporting format and its increased effectiveness in delivering the information necessary for the review and assessment of the Convention is prioritized by decision 8/COP.8.
 - (b) The need for new and better structured reporting guidelines is also commonly acknowledged.
 - (c) The complexity of the review process should be balanced by a simple reporting format that allows for:
 - (i) effective participation in the process by reporting entities at the subregional and regional levels;
 - (ii) facilitation of comparison among regions;
 - (iii) logical and rational presentation of information, minimizing and, if possible, removing repetition;
 - (iv) respect of the particular characteristics of regions;
 - (v) the capacity to accommodate specific reporting needs.
 - (d) Simplicity should not, however, be achieved by jeopardizing comprehensiveness.
 - (e) A common format for reporting is proposed – following common reporting guidelines – for all regions. This represents the most efficient way to foster comparison, simplicity and effective compilation and analysis of information by the secretariat and the GM. Regional indicators will allow a focus on regional aspects and characteristics, and reflect the differences between the different annexes.
 - (f) Emphasis should be put on the need to develop user-friendly guidelines, possibly developed with the advice of communication specialists.

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

Implementation	Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Flexibility will be reflected in the new reporting format by means of dedicated sections. (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 notify reporting entities. Necessary revisions of reporting guidelines will be forwarded to the COP for adoption. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Ad hoc COP requests for reporting should be accompanied by specific terms of reference, as recommended by the AHWG.

- Rationale**
- (a) A balance needs to be found between the overall requirement to systematically and comprehensively review the progress of implementation of the Convention, on the one hand, and the broad spectrum of stakeholders, activities and frameworks (policy, environmental, economic, and social) influencing Convention implementation in the regions, on the other hand.
 - (b) Reporting should comply with standards and formats that aim to produce relevant and scientifically sound information; however, these standards and formats should be flexible enough to accommodate:
 - (i) reporting on important matters as perceived by each region and other than those highlighted by The Strategy;
 - (ii) COP deliberations that may supersede existing ones and may imply changes in implementation;
 - (iii) ad hoc COP requests for reporting on specific issues;
 - (iv) specific regional aspects and characteristics.

Enabling the collection of best practices and success stories

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) Reporting by subregional and regional entities will be based on a new reporting format that facilitates the presentation of best practices and success stories related to the implementation of the Convention. Subregional and regional entities will thus take the lead role in identifying positive experiences that deserve to be shared, disseminated and possibly replicated.</p> <p>(b) While respecting the criteria that will be used by entities to identify best practices and success stories, (criteria that are often based on the specificities of given socio-economic conditions), the secretariat should define a common framework for the definition and selection of best practices.</p>	<p>(a) In subregional and regional reports, 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 decisions 1/COP.6 and 3/COP.8, respectively.</p> <p>(b) Regional information systems may also contribute by storing and/or facilitating the identification from existing initiatives of best practices and success stories at the regional level.</p> <p>(c) Strengthened capacities at the regional level may be necessary in order to manage these regional information systems.</p> <p>(d) There is a need to define the topics and areas along which these best practices would be structured and classified. A methodology for and consultations on choosing criteria will be needed.</p> <p>(e) A formal decision would be needed on where the data and information retrieved from the reports will be stored.</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) Although progress has been recorded with information exchange on best practices worldwide, the AHWG recommended that information on best practices and success stories be included in national reports and that case studies at the regional level be identified at regional meetings. The AHWG also called for a methodology to be developed to extract this information.
- (c) To overcome the difficulties previously experienced in identifying and extracting relevant information from reports, a section dedicated to presentation of best practices will be included in the new reporting formats of subregional and regional reporting entities.

Standardized and classified description of projects and programmes

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) Reporting by subregional and regional entities will be based on a new reporting format including a programme and project sheet for the description of projects and programmes relevant to the Convention.</p> <p>(b) The programme and project sheet will have a simple structure that is harmonized with the structure of the financial annex.</p> <p>(c) The main objectives and activities of the programmes and/or projects will be classified against the objectives of The Strategy and against the Rio conventions-specific Rio markers.</p>	<p>(a) The following will be necessary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) the development of the programme and project sheet formats;(ii) the preparation of guidelines, including a description of the codes and of the rules for their attribution. <p>(b) It is also necessary for the GM to review and update the UNCCD-specific Relevant Activity Codes (RACs) in line with The Strategy.</p>

Rationale	
<p>(a) Description of projects and programmes supporting the implementation of the Convention is a common feature of the reports delivered to the secretariat. However, such descriptions have so far varied widely among reporting Parties.</p> <p>(b) In order to produce comprehensive information, common to reporting Parties and entities, a programme and project sheet will guide the description of programmes and projects and of their main activities. The aim is twofold: to ensure that all reporting Parties provide the same type of information, and to standardize its presentation.</p> <p>(c) A balance needs to be found between the several reporting obligations of reporting Parties and entities and the existence of pre-defined formats within each Party/entity, on the one hand, and the requirements of the Convention, on the other hand.</p> <p>(d) This balance may be achieved by keeping the format simple, so that information may be easily retrieved from existing formats. Moreover, the programme and project sheet structure will be coherent with the financial annex structure, thus optimizing the reporting efforts.</p> <p>(e) Information included in the programme and project sheet will be classified according to given codes – the RACs and the Rio markers.</p> <p>(f) This classification will support processing of the financial information provided in the financial annex, and will help 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.</p>	

REPORTING PROCESSES

Clear entrusting of reporting responsibilities

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) A consultation process among the Parties should lead to a clear decision on which entities are entrusted with reporting responsibilities at the subregional and regional levels or on the modalities for reporting.</p> <p>(b) Reporting may be approached in two ways:</p> <p>(i) reporting based on entities, which necessitates the selection of entities and their clear entrustment with reporting responsibilities;</p> <p>(ii) reporting based on modalities, which implies contributions by various stakeholders and a central entity entrusted with the task of compiling these contributions into a single report. This requires the identification of contributors and of a central entity.</p> <p>(c) The Africa region is a positive example of reporting based on clearly identified entities. It would be appropriate to maintain these entities.</p>	<p>(a) Any decision on reporting entities and modalities at the subregional and regional levels should be harmonized with the well defined coordination mechanisms at the regional level including, inter alia:</p> <p>(i) the contribution of thematic programme networks to the reporting process;</p> <p>(ii) the role of regional mechanisms;</p> <p>(iii) the contribution of regional or subregional financial platforms.</p> <p>(b) Parties may wish to consider whether the regional mechanisms mentioned in decision 3/COP.8 should take over some reporting responsibilities, in particular with regard to reporting based on modalities.</p> <p>(c) Capacity-building measures may be needed for the identification of reporting entities at the subregional and regional levels.</p>

Rationale
<p>(a) The Strategy recognizes that institutional weaknesses are among the limiting factors that have prevented optimal implementation of the Convention.</p> <p>(b) Among these weaknesses is a lack of clarity in identifying institutions or mechanisms involved in the preparation of reports at the subregional and regional levels. The absence of subregional and regional entities that could be entrusted with reporting responsibilities was acknowledged by the AHWG, which emphasized the need to agree on reporting mechanisms, including the identification of reporting entities.</p> <p>(c) The loose definition of reporting entities at the subregional and regional levels adds to the difficulties faced in establishing and implementing SRAPs and RAPs.</p> <p>(d) The establishment of reporting mechanisms and/or the identification of reporting entities will need to occur within a well defined framework for regional coordination.</p>

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 the seventh session of the CRIC (CRIC 7) and adopted at COP 9. COP 9 will consider and adopt the terms of reference of the CRIC.</p> <p>(b) The implementation of this principle may be facilitated by setting a sequence for the delivery of reports among reporting Parties and 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 the CRIC, and eventually when the new terms of reference for the CRIC are adopted at COP 9.</p> <p>(b) Included among the implications is the need to revise COP decisions, other than decision 11/COP.1, related to the timing of the submission of reports and the cycle for communicating other information, in order to ensure consistency.</p>

Rationale
<p>(a) Given that the review of reports is guided by indicators, and not by themes, a reporting process involving all reporting entities would give rise to the following positive aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the same reporting conditions for all countries; (ii) the same type of assistance provided; (iii) the opportunity 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>(b) The above positive aspects would allow the CRIC to draw comprehensive conclusions and to make knowledge-based recommendations to the COP, that will ultimately facilitate its decision-making role.</p>

An appropriate interval between reporting cycles	
Implementation	Implications
(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 consider and adopt the terms of reference of the CRIC.	(a) 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.
Rationale	
(a) The length of the interval between two consecutive reporting cycles is mainly determined by the nature of the processes on which countries are called on to report. Desertification and land degradation trends can only be appreciated on a medium- to long-term basis.	
(b) The existing four-year interval between reporting cycles was considered appropriate by Parties and the AHWG.	

Efficient treatment of information across the reporting process	
Implementation	Implications
(a) Classification – either of numerical or narrative material – is an efficient way to make information retrievable and analytical enough for assessment. More compatible and comprehensive information should be expected after the adoption of the new reporting format, making classification feasible. This would enable a more systematic analysis of information. Once classified, it will be possible to automatically extract or retrieve information from reports.	(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).
(b) Efficient treatment of information will require:	(b) Information systems shared between the two organizations are needed to support the analysis of the classified information obtained from reports.
(i) The setting up of systems for the systematic handling of the information that has been classified, as well as designing environmental databases to support the reporting obligations of environmental conventions/agreements;	(c) The secretariat will need the necessary technical and financial resources to implement the classification work. How these resources will be identified and mobilized will need to be considered, as well as the use of external assistance.
(ii) delivery of reports in an electronic format. The electronic format should be provided to the reporting Parties by the secretariat. Electronic submission of reports will not replace the formal channels for submission.	(d) It may be necessary to establish a comprehensive knowledge-management system at the central level to handle the information meant to be produced throughout the reporting process. The possibility to use processing tools for the analysis and synthesis of the information should also be considered.
(c) Classification criteria will have to be established taking into account the type of output analysis that the secretariat plans to carry out.	(e) The fact that subregional and regional reports are submitted in different languages may add to the complexity of the classification process.
(d) Use of the Rio markers should be considered for all subregional and regional entities. Categorization of projects according to the new strategic and operational objectives of The Strategy should also be performed.	(f) The establishment of information systems within reporting entities implies, inter alia:
	(i) definition of the type of data to be retrieved and stored;
	(ii) determination of data flows from the different sources to the system;
	(iii) definition of data collection procedures;
	(iv) identification of persons dedicated to the system and of their roles;
	(v) definition of activities for recording, storing and managing the data.
	(g) The Strategy calls for scientific and technological excellence to achieve its objectives. Regional information systems may contribute to the creation of

centres of excellence, bringing to the Convention the experience gained within the framework of South-South and North-South cooperation, as envisaged by operational objective 5.

Rationale

- (a) Information retrieval and compilation are the basis of reporting. In particular, the AHWG recommended the establishment of compatible information systems, databases or procedures for collecting relevant information at the country level and for monitoring financial flows. Similar information systems, databases and procedures could be established at the subregional or regional levels. Information systems at the regional level may also store relevant information on existing regional coordination activities and tools, donors and regional funding arrangements, thus creating useful knowledge for the establishment and maintenance of regional coordination mechanisms.
- (b) The GM further recommended a methodology for the identification and weighting of activities related to UNCCD topics within a wider portfolio of development and environmental projects.
 - (i) Narrative reporting – projects described within subregional and regional reports could be classified according to Rio markers and RACs. Classification based on RACs will cover the project’s main objectives and, possibly, the project’s main activities.
 - (ii) Financial reporting – a simple classification according to the new strategic and operational objectives of The Strategy and to the Rio markers will be the responsibility of all reporting entities.

Timeliness and predictability of financial and technical resources, and appropriate time for preparation of reports

Implementation	Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Servicing or facilitating reporting is one of the core activities of the secretariat (decision 3/COP.8). The following is necessary for its implementation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) calculation of financial needs; (ii) modalities for the mobilization of resources, in particular with a view to making these resources available (one year) in advance, as recommended by the AHWG. (b) This information should be made available by the secretariat to reporting stakeholders to allow them to properly organize the reporting process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The secretariat should know in advance the amount of resources needed and which financial institutions may be willing to contribute towards them. (b) Information provided by the secretariat to reporting entities should be part of a more comprehensive package of information on the reporting process, where information is provided on logistics, timing, organization, the sequence of events and the secretariat’s expectations in terms of compliance with the new format, data collection, coordination, consultation, etc. (c) Financing will be made available only for eligible subregional and regional entities.

Rationale

- (a) The COP has repeatedly deliberated on the need for substantial, adequate and timely financial resources for the implementation of the Convention. Specifically, decision 5/COP.8 requests developed country Parties and multilateral institutions to financially and technically support the efforts undertaken in regional cooperation frameworks.
- (b) With regard to predictability, the AHWG requested that information on the availability of funds be made available to country Parties one year in advance, to allow for proper planning. This information would also increase the time available for report preparation, a need commonly recognized. Since reporting at the subregional and regional levels takes place at the same time as national reporting, this one-year preparation time should also apply to subregional and regional reports.

Consultative, participatory and coordinated processes	
Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) In the light of the identification of regional coordination mechanisms for UNCCD implementation, it is suggested that reporting at the subregional and regional levels be included as part of their terms of reference. Such mechanisms may become the central entities entrusted with the task of compiling the various contributions into a single report (for those regions relying on reporting modalities). They may themselves be entrusted with reporting responsibilities at the subregional or regional levels, and with quality control responsibilities – or they could be the depository of regional information systems.</p> <p>(b) Subregional and regional reports should reflect the contribution of national reports. These contributions can be verified during the regional meetings.</p> <p>(c) Regional meetings should have a broader agenda encompassing relevant issues in addition to the review of national, subregional and regional reports.</p> <p>(d) The GM should specify modalities for the development of financing platforms at the subregional or regional levels.</p>	<p>(a) The subregional and regional coordination processes relating to reporting will imply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) revision of the SRAPs and the RAPs; (ii) entrusting reporting responsibilities; (iii) the possible linkage of reporting responsibilities with regional coordination mechanisms and the institutions involved therein, to be discussed at COP 9.
Rationale	
<p>(a) Decision 3/COP.8 recognizes that regional coordination is an important component of the implementation of the Convention and The Strategy. Well defined coordination mechanisms are necessary and should comply with the specific needs, capacities and issues of each region. The decision further calls for regional proposals on coordination mechanisms to be prepared by the regions in collaboration with the secretariat and the GM.</p> <p>(b) Regional proposals should take into account existing mechanisms, tools, activities and arrangements at the regional level. This information, once gathered, can be stored in information systems established at the regional level.</p> <p>(c) A parallel process to the review and definition of regional coordination mechanisms is the support provided to the regional mechanisms. The Strategy underlines that such support should be convened through existing regional mechanisms, regardless of the outcome of the definition of regional coordination arrangements.</p> <p>(d) Regional meetings play an important role in the consultative process preceding the delivery of reports to the CRIC. They should provide a platform not only for the review of national reports, but also for the validation of subregional and regional reports, and the identification by the secretariat and the GM of regional case studies.</p> <p>(e) The AHWG recommended that regional meetings should address a broader range of issues than national reports, such as information pertaining to the CST, to allow participating Parties to draw more comprehensive conclusions and to make recommendations to the CRIC.</p> <p>(f) In terms of financial resources and institutions, decision 3/COP.8 requests the GM to support the development of subregional or regional financing platforms to improve coordination (effectiveness, harmonization and alignment) among donor institutions.</p>	

Facilitating the development of synergies with the other Rio conventions

Implementation	Implications
<p>(a) The establishment of information systems at the regional level should be considered.</p> <p>(b) Synergies will be fostered in the reporting process of the Convention through the possible use of Rio markers for the classification of projects reported in the financial annex and in the programme and project sheet.</p> <p>(c) Other mechanisms to increase the synergies among reporting obligations should be investigated. These may include a systematic review and assessment of the technical/thematic overlaps in the reporting requirements of the three Rio conventions.</p>	<p>(a) In order to avoid duplication, it would be appropriate to survey existing information systems, especially those set up within the framework of international projects and international assistance.</p> <p>(b) Through the information included in the financial annex, the GM will be able to undertake some preliminary analysis of the levels of synergy among the conventions, which should be shared with the CBD and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).</p>
Rationale	
<p>(a) An overall framework for harmonized reporting under 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.</p> <p>(b) Nevertheless, coordination among the strategies (CBD), national programmes (UNFCCC) and action programmes (UNCCD) could be facilitated by improving the coordination and circulation of information at the subregional or regional levels, for example by establishing regional information systems.</p> <p>(c) In particular, initiating the setting up of regional 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 processes of the three Rio conventions.</p>	

III. Conclusions and recommendations

8. 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 reporting on the implementation of SRAPs and RAPs in particular. They are before CRIC 7 for review and consideration. The feedback received will be taken into account in preparing draft reporting guidelines to be submitted to COP 9 for any decision it may wish to take on this matter.
