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**COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION**

**Eighth session**

**Buenos Aires, 23–30 September 2009**

**Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda**

**Review of the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)**

**Review of available information regarding the financing of the implementation of the Convention by multilateral agencies and institutions, including information on the activities of the Global Environment Facility**

**Review of available information regarding the financing of the implementation of the Convention by multilateral agencies and institutions, including information on the activities of the Global Environment Facility**

**Note by the secretariat\***

*Summary*

In decision 6/COP.8 the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the Chief Executive Officer/Chairperson of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to report to the COP at its ninth session on the implementation of the collaboration with the GEF as a financial mechanism of the Convention.

The Conference of the Parties, in its decision 3/COP.8, recognized that the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) required the mobilization of adequate, predictable and timely financial resources at national and international level for its effective implementation and, in this context, invited the GEF to consider simplifying its funding procedures in order to ease the access by developing countries to GEF funding, and to report back to the COP on progress in this regard.

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\* The submission of this document was delayed because of the need to receive feedback from country Parties during the regional meetings in preparation for COP 9 and the meetings of its subsidiary bodies conducted in the period June/July 2009.

Since the adoption of these decisions, the collaboration between the UNCCD and the GEF processes and secretariats has been making progress as is reflected in the present note and its addendum, document ICCD/CRIC(8)/3/Add.1 on the GEF report on strategies, programmes and projects for financing the agreed incremental costs of activities relating to desertification. These reports are submitted in accordance with the request made in the said decisions and are consistent with the existing memorandum of understanding concluded between the COP and the GEF Council.

## I. Background information

1. The mandate of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) is to consider reports on collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) with a view to elaborating draft decisions, which, when necessary, will be given further consideration by the Conference of the Parties (COP) and, as appropriate, adopted.
2. By decision 6/COP.6 the COP decided to accept the GEF as a financial mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). In decision 6/COP.7, the COP expressed its appreciation to the GEF Council for its continued support of the implementation of the Convention and its focus on enhancing sustainable land management (SLM) policies and initiatives. The COP further decided to conclude with the GEF Council and adopt a memorandum of understanding, and invited the GEF and UNCCD secretariats to make appropriate arrangements to implement it.
3. In its decision 6/COP.8, the Conference of the Parties expressed its concern about the allocation of funds to combat land degradation under the fourth replenishment of the GEF (GEF 4), invited GEF to effectively and expeditiously implement a Focal Area Strategy on Land Degradation for GEF 4, and urged developed country Parties and invited the GEF Council to provide, in the fifth replenishment of the GEF (GEF 5), adequate, timely and predictable financial resources for the focal area on land degradation. This would include new and additional financial resources.
4. The COP also recognized that the realization of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) required the mobilization of adequate, predictable and timely financial resources at both the national and the international levels for its effective implementation. In this context, the COP invited the GEF to consider simplifying its funding procedures in order to ease the access of developing countries to GEF financial resources. In the same decision, further COP guidance was formulated, and the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD and the Chief Executive Officer/Chairperson of the GEF were requested to report to the COP at its ninth session on its implementation.

## II. Implementation of decision 6/COP.8

### A. Consideration of the collaboration between the processes and secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Global Environment Facility

#### 1. Consideration of the collaboration with the Global Environment Facility Council

5. Since the adoption of decision 6/ COP.8, four GEF Council meetings have taken place in Washington, D.C.

#### *November 2007 meeting*

6. The first GEF Council meeting held after COP.8 took place in Washington, D.C., on 14 to 16 November 2007. Members of the Council welcomed the new Executive Secretary of the UNCCD who had taken over on 1 October 2007. The Council considered the report of the eighth session of the COP (COP 8) in relation to the collaboration between the two processes, and as provided for by decisions 3/COP.8 and 6/COP.8.

7. The Executive Secretary outlined the outcomes of COP 8. He placed particular emphasis on the role of the GEF in the implementation of The Strategy, which was adopted at COP 8. He particularly emphasized the convergence of the four strategic objectives of The Strategy and those of the GEF and drew the Council's attention to the need to reflect the relevance of combating land degradation/desertification and of the integrated water and soil conservation measures to the task of ensuring the continuity of delivery of ecosystem services, protecting biodiversity and adapting to climate change.

8. Members of the Council expressed their support for the implementation of The Strategy and called for a strong collaboration between the Heads of the UNCCD and GEF secretariats in this respect.

#### *April 2008 meeting*

9. The GEF Council met in Washington, D.C., on 22 to 25 April 2008. Even though the Council had no specific UNCCD agenda item, its members addressed land degradation using the report of the GEF Evaluation office on the annual Country Portfolio Evaluation Report. This report stated that, in the African region, two areas of the GEF that had been missing to date provide opportunities to improve linkages: adaptation to climate change and land degradation. The report underlined the importance of these issues, which are now at the top of the continent's list of priorities.

10. The GEF report identified the linkage as having the "potential for providing local incentives to enhance the delivery and sustainability of global environmental benefits". The ensuing debate generated a Council decision requesting the secretariat "to continue to strengthen the concept of integrated multi-focal areas approaches, including transboundary issues, particularly adaptation to climate change and land degradation, to ensure maximization of global environmental benefits".

*November 2008 meeting*

11. The GEF Council met in Washington, D.C., on 11 to 13 November 2008. This was concurrent with the seventh session of the UNCCD Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 7), which took place in Istanbul, Turkey on 3 to 14 November 2008. Members of the Council addressed land degradation under the agenda item on relations with the Conventions and other international institutions. The Council adopted a number of projects of relevance to land degradation on a stand-alone basis or covering multi-focal areas.

*June 2009 meeting*

12. The GEF Council met in Washington, D.C., on 22 to 24 June 2009. As the meeting took place after CRIC 7 and the first special session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST S-1), the Executive Secretary reflected on the outcome of those sessions in an address to the Council. Furthermore, as the second consultation on the fifth replenishment for the GEF was going to meet immediately after the Council, the Executive Secretary took the opportunity to advocate the allocation of more resources to the land degradation focal area.

13. In that respect, the key message of the Executive Secretary to the Council was that the implementation of The Strategy was of utmost importance to optimizing investments in SLM. He added that this is one of the effective avenues for addressing global challenges such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, loss of biodiversity, food crisis, poverty eradication, avoidance of deforestation, water scarcity, renewable energies and forced migration. He concluded that the land agenda must receive due attention during the next GEF replenishment and that land degradation should remain a clearly identified focal area for resource allocation.

2. Reflections by the seventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and by the first special session of the Commission on Science and Technology

14. CRIC 7 and CST S-1 focused mainly on issues related to The Strategy and its results-based management (RBM) monitoring and assessment systems. It also discussed in detail the four-year workplans and two-year work programmes of the CRIC, the CST, the UNCCD secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM), as well as the joint work programme of the GM and the secretariat. The final days of the meeting were taken up with the reporting guidelines for various stakeholder groups including the Parties, international organizations and the GEF.

15. As far as the GEF was concerned, three main issues were relevant: reporting, monitoring through a new indicator-based approach and the development of indicators.

16. The UNCCD secretariat is currently drafting the elements of reporting guidelines, such as a consolidated list of performance indicators, the rationale for collecting and disseminating best practices and information relevant to measuring investment flows. The reporting guidelines will be produced once a decision by Parties on these elements has been taken. These will include requirements for the GEF concerning its report to the COP – in line with the memorandum of

understanding between the UNCCD and the GEF based on the impact and performance indicators in The Strategy – that will be adopted at COP 9.

17. The GEF was requested to enhance its support of the monitoring of UNCCD implementation through a new indicator-based reporting approach. It was agreed to use The Strategy process and the drive for results-based management to develop an approach to national reports that will link The Strategy to national action programmes and the related national reports.

18. Continued interest was expressed in a close collaboration between the GEF and the UNCCD on the development of performance indicators for Convention implementation and for projects and programmes that address land degradation.

### 3. Consultations between the secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Global Environment Facility

19. During the period under consideration, the UNCCD Executive Secretary and the GEF CEO and Chairperson have been in contact several times. Consultations have also taken place at a working level.

20. The Executive Secretary twice visited the GEF secretariat and the GEF CEO attended the High Level Policy Dialogue held on 27 May 2008 in Bonn, Germany. The theme of the dialogue was "Coping with today's global challenges in the context of The Strategy of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification". Participants invited the GEF to simplify its procedures and specifically to respond to The Strategy through robust funding for projects to combat land degradation.

21. At the working level, the UNCCD secretariat actively participated in the design of the new GEF draft strategy for the land degradation focal area as part of the GEF Technical Advisory Group and the Land Degradation Task Force. Contributions made by the secretariat aimed to highlight The Strategy and its RBM and indicator-based approach to enable the GEF and UNCCD processes to be better linked. This would thus ensure substantive entry points for financial-resource mobilization directly related to the implementation of The Strategy and hence the Convention.

22. The cooperation was also successful in finding a common understanding on how to provide capacity-building to UNCCD Parties within a longer-term framework to support the monitoring of The Strategy. To this effect, a project identification form was submitted and endorsed by the Chief Executive Officer of the GEF, which will enable the United Nations Environment Programme/GEF to extend capacity-building to affected Parties in 2010.

23. Coinciding with the reorganization of the UNCCD secretariat and its related services to Parties, GEF 5 calls for a review, undertaken by an independent evaluation team, of institutional and substantive issues relating to the GEF and its secretariat. The UNCCD secretariat provided comments and contributed to this timely assessment by asserting that the GEF should become more closely affiliated to the UNCCD process, and should gear its support to the implementation of the Convention through an equitable resources allocation framework in an RBM context that

complements and synergizes as much as possible with that of the Convention. In consultations related to the GEF 5 replenishment, some GEF members emphasized the importance of a robust allocation for land degradation.

**B. Consideration by other intergovernmental processes: the sixteenth and the seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-second and sixty third sessions**

1. Reflections by the Commission on Sustainable Development

24. The sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD 16 and CSD 17) and their preparatory meetings reviewed all the core issues of the Convention and adopted policy options to address them. Understandably, the role of the GEF as a financial mechanism of the Convention was the subject of an extensive discussion.

25. As the GEF was embarking on its fifth replenishment, the session called for the mobilization of adequate, predictable and timely financial resources for the implementation of The Strategy in accordance with article 20 of the Convention. Furthermore, the CSD will continue to support the awareness-raising and policy work of the UNCCD secretariat. It encouraged developed countries and invited the GEF Council to provide the GEF with adequate, timely and predictable financial resources, including new and additional financial resources, for the land degradation focal area.

2. Consideration by the General Assembly

26. The General Assembly has been monitoring the implementation of the Convention through an annual report presented by the Secretary-General. The role of the GEF in support of the Convention has been followed closely by the General Assembly since the World Summit on Sustainable Development, particularly since the GEF opened a new focal area on land degradation and became a financial mechanism of the Convention.

27. In its resolution 62/193 of 19 December 2007, the General Assembly emphasized the need for the GEF to continue to allocate adequate financial resources to the land degradation focal area. The General Assembly in its resolution 63/218 reiterated its call on governments, where appropriate, in collaboration with relevant multilateral organizations, including the GEF implementation agencies, to integrate desertification and land degradation into their plans and strategies for sustainable development. It also invited donors to the GEF to ensure that it is adequately equipped during the next replenishment period in order to allow the allocation of sufficient and adequate resources to its six focal areas, in particular that of land degradation.

**III. Recommendations**

28. The CRIC at its eighth session may wish to recommend a series of actions to the COP aimed at strengthening the collaboration between the Convention and the GEF, and that take into account the outcome of the deliberations that have taken place in the past two years and build on the outcomes of CSD 16 and CSD 17.

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