



Convention to Combat Desertification

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Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties

Draft template and reporting guidelines for civil society organizations (2012–2013)

Draft template and reporting guidelines for civil society organizations (2012–2013)

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COP) at its ninth session, civil society organizations (CSOs), including the private sector, are invited to provide information on their work towards the implementation of the Convention, especially through the provision of best practices, for transmission to countries' focal points and to the sessions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC).

Pursuant to the deliberations made by the CRIC Bureau in this regard, accredited CSOs were invited to participate in the ongoing reporting cycle and to provide information on best practices in sustainable land management technologies, including adaptation.

Pursuant to the same CRIC Bureau deliberations, the secretariat was requested, in consultation with the accredited CSOs, to prepare draft reporting guidelines for CSOs, for consideration at CRIC 9 and possible adoption at COP 10.

This document presents the draft reporting principles and structure of the reporting tools for accredited CSOs, together with proposals regarding the content and modalities of reporting, as developed by the secretariat, taking into account: (a) relevant COP decisions, (b) guidance given by the CRIC Bureau on CSO reporting, and (c) the outcome of consultations with accredited CSOs.

CRIC 9 may wish to review these proposals and make relevant recommendations on the content and modalities of CSO reporting starting from the next reporting cycle in 2012–2013, as well as on the roles of Parties and international organizations in support of civil society contributions to the reporting and review process.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1–6	3
II. Background	7–11	4
III. Proposed outline of the reporting tools	12–26	5
A. Reporting principles.....	12–13	5
B. Content of reporting.....	14–19	5
C. Modalities for reporting	20–22	6
D. Structure of the reporting tools	23–26	7
IV. Challenges and opportunities	27	7
V. Conclusions and recommendations	28–33	8

I. Introduction

1. By decision 1/COP.9, civil society organizations (CSOs), including the private sector, were included in the reporting entities expected to provide information for the review of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
2. By decision 11/COP.9, accredited CSOs were invited to organize themselves to prepare collaborative reports on their work towards the implementation of the Convention, especially through the provision of best practices, for transmission to the sessions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) held between ordinary sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COP), and also for transmission to countries' focal points.¹ Decision 13/COP.9 specifies, further, that CSOs may also provide additional information relating to the review process.
3. Pursuant to decision 1/COP.9 and the deliberations made by the CRIC Bureau in this regard, accredited CSOs were invited to participate in the ongoing reporting cycle and to provide information on best practices in sustainable land management (SLM) technologies, including adaptation. To this effect, specific reporting tools and online facilities were made available by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) through the United Nations Environment Programme/Global Environment Facility (UNEP/GEF) initiative.
4. Pursuant to the CRIC Bureau deliberations, the secretariat was also requested, in consultation with the accredited CSOs, to prepare draft reporting guidelines for CSOs, for consideration at CRIC 9 and possible adoption at COP 10.
5. This document presents the draft reporting principles and structure of the reporting tools for accredited CSOs, together with proposals regarding the content and modalities of reporting, as developed by the secretariat taking into account: (a) the relevant COP decisions, (b) the guidance given by the CRIC Bureau on CSO reporting, (c) the preliminary advice received from a group of organizations which have volunteered to assist in this process,² and (d) the outcomes of a questionnaire-based consultation with accredited CSOs.
6. Under guidance from the CRIC, draft template and reporting guidelines for CSOs for the 2012–2013 reporting cycle will be developed for possible consideration and adoption at COP 10.

¹ Decision 11/COP.9, paragraphs 10, 11 and 12 of the annex.

² Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which have volunteered to assist in this process are:
 for Africa: Forum international pour l'exploitation forestière (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Environmental Monitoring Group DRYNET (South Africa), Club Unesco du Centre d'Action Femme et Enfant (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Association Koom pour l'Auto Promotion des Femmes du Burkina Faso (Burkina Faso),
 for Asia: Society for Conservation & Protection of Environment (Pakistan),
 for Latin America and the Caribbean: Asociación para el Desarrollo de Zonas Áridas (Argentina), Asociación Peruana Ecologista y de Interés Conservacionista en América (Peru), Universidad Nacional de Loja (Ecuador),
 for developed country Parties: Centre d'actions et de réalisations internationales (France), International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (Germany).

II. Background

7. Parties at COP 9 requested the secretariat, together with the GM and in collaboration with the UNEP/GEF capacity-building initiative, to facilitate the reporting process of Parties and reporting entities and to prepare reporting tools for the fourth reporting cycle in 2010.³ The new reporting guidelines were to include provisions allowing CSOs to provide input to the CRIC, in particular on best practices.⁴

8. For the current reporting cycle, in line with the CRIC Bureau recommendations,⁵ the CSOs accredited to the COP were invited: (a) to report directly to CRIC 9 on best practices in SLM technologies, including adaptation, (b) to communicate information on relevant performance indicators to national focal points (NFPs), and (c) to comment through a specific questionnaire on how effectively to implement the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS).⁶ In 2010, reporting by CSOs on best practices is being done using a specific template and guidelines,⁷ mirroring the tools used by the other reporting entities. The CSO template and guidelines were available on the PRAIS portal, to which accredited organizations have been granted password-protected access.

9. For the reporting and review cycle in 2012–2013, the development of reporting tools for CSOs is meant to mainstream civil society input into the UNCCD process through a structured approach. The ultimate goal is to have a coherent and comprehensive reporting system in place within the Convention, where consistency in reporting should be encouraged.

10. In accordance with the CRIC Bureau recommendations, consultations with civil society were initiated in August 2010.⁸ Accredited CSOs were invited: (a) to advise on reporting principles for civil society and on the format of the related reporting tools, (b) to make proposals for the civil-society-driven consultation process on best practices in SLM technologies, including adaptation, to be launched at CRIC 9, and (c) to comment on how effectively to implement PRAIS and contribute to the system.⁹

11. Comments were received from twenty organizations.¹⁰ Their suggestions have been taken into account in finalizing the present document. The process benefited also from the advice of a group of CSOs which had volunteered to assist.

³ Decisions 1/COP.9 and 13/COP.9, paragraphs 8 and 5, respectively.

⁴ Decision 1/COP.9, paragraph 9.

⁵ Cf. the report of the CRIC Bureau at its meetings held in Bonn, Germany, on 1–2 March 2010, available at: <www.unccd.int/cric/docs/report%20of%20the%20CRIC%20Bureau%20meeting%201-2%20March%202010.pdf>.

⁶ UNCCD Executive Secretary's letter of 21 April 2010.

⁷ Document ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.8.

⁸ Consultations were held through an electronic questionnaire made available on the UNCCD website in the three United Nations working languages.

⁹ The comments received from CSOs on topics (b) and (c) are included in documents ICCD/CRIC(9)/9 and ICCD/CRIC(9)/10, respectively.

¹⁰ Some 40 entries were received, but they included double entries by one organization and/or blank questionnaires. Feedback on one or more of the 16 questions of the questionnaire was received from organizations based in five African countries, three Asian countries, three Latin American and Caribbean countries, two Northern Mediterranean countries and one Central and Eastern European country, as well as one developed country Party.

III. Proposed outline of the reporting tools

A. Reporting principles

12. Following decision 8/COP.8 on improving the procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the COP, reporting principles were established for entities requested to report regularly to the COP or otherwise to provide information on support provided to the implementation of the Convention. These principles, categorized under the three main headings (a) content of reporting, (b) format of reporting and (c) reporting process, are outlined in documents ICCD/CRIC(7)/3 and Add.1 to Add.7 for the individual reporting entities, with the exception of the CSOs.¹¹

13. Coherence and consistency with the guidelines devised for the other reporting entities, as requested by the CRIC Bureau, are the main criteria guiding the formulation of reporting tools for CSOs. Accordingly, it is proposed that these tools:

(a) Aim at facilitating the provision of information which could complement and/or supplement the information communicated by the other reporting entities, primarily affected and developed country Parties as well as subregional and regional organizations;

(b) Be structured along the same format as, and include the relevant elements of, the reporting templates and guidelines for the other reporting entities, namely: (i) performance indicators, (ii) impact indicators, (iii) financial flows, (iv) best practices and (v) additional information;¹²

(c) Refer to common terminology and definitions as contained in the glossary of performance indicators for the review of implementation of The Strategy and best practices,¹³ in accordance with provisions contained in decision 13/COP.9.¹⁴

B. Content of reporting

14. For the next reporting and review process in 2012–2013, it is proposed that accredited CSOs be invited to provide:

(a) Information complementary to the national reports of affected and developed country Parties, and as far as possible to those of the other reporting entities, with the aim of providing the CRIC with more comprehensive and complete information;

(b) Information supplementary to the national reports of affected and developed country Parties, and as far as possible to those of the other reporting entities, with the aim of widening the knowledge base of the CRIC.

15. Complementary information from civil society is particularly important for those elements of the reporting guidelines whose compilation requires input from civil society, namely for the computation of relevant performance indicators and financial information and, where applicable, relevant impact indicators.

¹¹ At the time of CRIC 7, CSOs were not yet included among the seven reporting entities referred to in decision 8/COP.8.

¹² As outlined in document ICCD/CRIC(8)/5 and its addenda.

¹³ As contained in document ICCD/CRIC(9)/13.

¹⁴ Paragraph 8 of decision 13/COP.9 invites Parties and other reporting entities to refer to common terminology and definitions.

16. Supplementary information from civil society is particularly significant as it supplies additional information not pertaining to the assessment of implementation on a geographical basis (national, subregional and regional), such as the provision of best practices and/or advice on improvement of the reporting and review process and the iterative process.

17. With regard to the content of civil society input to the reporting process, feedback received from CSOs was mainly about best practices, followed by relevant performance and impact indicators. Information on financial flows was suggested by a very limited number of organizations.

18. Most of the organizations deemed it important to report on performance indicators¹⁵ relating to operational objective 1 (Advocacy, awareness raising and education).¹⁶ Some indicated that civil society would also be providing useful input on initiatives for synergistic planning/programming of the three Rio Conventions or mechanisms for joint implementation, on capacity-building initiatives, and on project proposals successfully submitted for financing to international financial institutions, facilities and funds.¹⁷

19. All but one input indicated that civil society could effectively contribute to reporting at the subregional and regional level.¹⁸

C. Modalities for reporting

20. Three options could be considered among the suggested modalities for the accredited CSOs to provide information to the COP:¹⁹

(a) Communication of information through the NFP and/or the institutional focal point as relevant, for integration of the information provided into the reports of the various reporting entities;

(b) Communication of information directly to the COP, through uploading of information to the PRAIS portal;

(c) Communication of information through a joint report where a specific section is prepared by CSOs.

21. For the provision of complementary information, feedback received from civil society indicated direct and joint reporting as possible options. For supplementary information, direct uploading to the PRAIS portal was by far the preferred option.

22. In general, joint reporting or the inclusion of CSO contributions in the national reports were commented on positively, provided that mechanisms for consultation/inclusion exist at the national level and are eventually made mandatory by the COP.

¹⁵ As provisionally adopted by decision 13/COP.9.

¹⁶ Namely, the reference is to indicators CONS-O-1, CONS-O-3 and CONS-O-4.

¹⁷ Indicators CONS-O-7, CONS-O-13 and CONS-O17 respectively.

¹⁸ Among the reasons provided are: CSO involvement in implementation and monitoring at these levels, in particular through a capillary presence that is often not achievable by central authorities, and CSO attention to networking and to developing cross-border synergies for information and experience sharing.

¹⁹ The same options were proposed for comment in the CSO questionnaire.

D. Structure of the reporting tools

23. While civil society may not be requested to report against all the elements of the reporting guidelines as the other reporting entities, it is proposed that the reporting guidelines for CSOs are structured around the same sections as outlined for the other entities, as relevant.

24. Should the assumptions on the nature and content of the information to be provided by civil society (complementary versus supplementary information), and on the modalities for reporting, be retained, two separate reporting tools could be devised for CSOs:

(a) A template and guidelines for a report on complementary information to be transmitted to NFPs and institutional focal points as relevant, containing:

- (i) A section on general information on the reporting entity;
- (ii) A section on relevant performance indicators;
- (iii) A section on relevant impact indicators;²⁰
- (iv) A section on financial flows;²¹

(b) A template and guidelines for the report on supplementary information to be transmitted to the COP, containing:

- (i) A section on general information on the reporting entity(ies);
- (ii) A section on relevant best practices;
- (iii) A section on additional information.

25. Civil society reporting tools would include CSO-tailored templates and templates common to all reporting entities, as relevant. This is consistent with the approach applied while devising reporting tools for the other reporting entities.²²

26. Templates and guidelines for the report on (b) supplementary information would be made available in electronic format, in order to facilitate direct uploading of this information to the PRAIS portal.

IV. Challenges and opportunities

27. A number of challenges and opportunities will be considered when devising reporting tools for CSOs:

- (a) The overall objective of having a coherent reporting system in place for the

²⁰ Since a core set of impact indicators for UNCCD reporting has not yet been agreed upon and nor have the necessary reporting tools been devised, it is not possible to anticipate how CSO reporting on impact, if deemed necessary, will be structured.

²¹ If CSOs are going to be requested to report on financial flows, such reporting should follow the templates and guidelines common to all the reporting entities, namely the standard financial annex (SFA) and the programme and project sheets (PPS).

²² By decision 13/COP.9, paragraph 1, Parties provisionally adopted the indicators, methodologies and procedures described in documents ICCD/CRIC(8)/5 and ICCD/CRIC(8)/5/Add.1 to Add.7. On the basis of the provisions of annexes III, IV and V of decision 13/COP.9, reporting guidelines for affected and developed country Parties were devised. Templates and guidelines referred to in this document which are common to all reporting entities can be found in documents ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.2 and ICCD/CRIC(9)/INF.3.

Convention will drive decisions on the content and modalities of reporting by CSOs. Only Parties have formal obligations to communicate information to the COP on the implementation of the Convention,²³ and national reports from affected and developed countries will continue to be the main knowledge base for the review of implementation. Hence, there is a need to mainstream information on implementation at national level into national reports as much as possible;

(b) While completeness of information provided by country Parties should be a target in order to make the review of implementation as effective as possible, duplication of the information supplied to the Convention by different actors needs to be avoided. Information and data that can not be compared and/or officially validated would weaken the relevance of the analysis and, ultimately, reduce the effectiveness of the review;

(c) At the same time, civil society at large, and particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating at field level in affected countries, has accumulated experience and knowledge representing exclusive and important added value to the review of implementation, and specifically to thematic and cross-cutting matters, and as such should not be dispersed or neglected;

(d) The Convention recognizes the key role of civil society, and particularly NGOs, in its implementation,²⁴ including with regard to policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of national action programmes.²⁵ With regard to communication of information and review of implementation, the COP has so far prioritized a participatory approach according to which civil society input is to be mainstreamed into national reporting;

(e) Whatever approach is preferred by the COP in terms of reporting modalities, effective mechanisms should be in place to support mutual acknowledgement, collaboration and coordination between civil and governmental institutions in charge of Convention implementation. Feedback from CSOs indicates that relationships with NFPs vary widely, from formal acknowledgment to liaison and coordination of efforts, and this could justify their preference for separate reporting in the absence of such mechanisms;

(f) Civil society encompasses various categories of stakeholders that have different mandates and may contribute differently to the implementation of the Convention, and for which common reporting tools may not be appropriate. This may imply a need to consider different forms of reporting, independent and/or collaborative, depending on what CSOs will be invited to report on. Additionally, while considering the modalities for reporting, it is necessary to distinguish between organizations based in affected country Parties and those based in developed country Parties but operating in developing affected country Parties;

(g) Finally, it is to be considered that the participation of civil society in the reporting process implies the need for CSOs to develop specific skills or capacities in order to contribute, and that some technical and financial support may be required in this regard.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

28. Once adopted, the reporting tools for accredited CSOs would become a mainstay for the regular contributions of civil society to the performance review and

²³ Article 26 of the Convention.

²⁴ In the preamble and Article 3 of the Convention, among others.

²⁵ Article 10 of the Convention.

assessment of the implementation system under the UNCCD. Streamlining these contributions and increasing the knowledge base of national reporting will also give consistency and coherence to the global reporting process.

29. The involvement of CSOs in the Convention reporting process may become a way of ensuring a more effective working relationship between civil society and national institutions, formalized by the COP through the approval of reporting tools for CSOs that clearly determine the status of civil society in the reporting process.

30. The involvement of CSOs in the reporting process and formalization of the role of civil society by means of a COP decision will also be considered in terms of needs and expectations that will arise, relating both to capacity development and to financial support.

31. In this context, the CRIC may wish to consider the following proposals and make relevant recommendations on the content and modalities for CSO reporting starting from the next reporting cycle in 2012–2013, for possible adoption by the COP at its tenth session:

(a) To encourage the CSOs accredited to the COP to communicate to NFPs and institutional focal points of other reporting entities as applicable, information relating to (i) performance indicators relating to civil society involvement in the implementation of The Strategy (notably indicators CONS-O-1, CONS-O-3, CONS-O-4) and other relevant performance indicators as applicable (CONS-O-7, CONS-O-13 and CONS-O17), (ii) relevant impact indicators as decided by the COP at its tenth session,²⁶ and (iii) financial flows towards the implementation of the Convention. Information relating to these matters will be communicated to focal points of affected and developed country Parties, as appropriate;

(b) In addition, to encourage CSOs accredited to the COP to communicate to the COP, through the CRIC, information on (i) best practices as decided upon by the COP at its tenth session, and (ii) additional information on the reporting and review process with particular regard to civil society involvement in the process. Information relating to these matters shall be transmitted using the facilities established for the other reporting entities, including the web-based portal.

32. It is further proposed that the CRIC considers:

(a) Requesting the secretariat to devise templates and reporting guidelines for CSOs on the basis of the reporting principles and structural elements already approved for the other reporting entities and the guiding criteria outlined under the methodological approach section of this document;

(b) Requesting the secretariat to assess and take into consideration capacity-building needs for accredited CSOs in order to comply with the new reporting requirements and participate fully in the reporting and review process;

(c) To invite developed country Parties and financial organizations including the GEF to continue supporting the process, while taking the specific needs of civil society into consideration;

(d) To encourage NFPs and institutional focal points of subregional and regional organizations, and of other reporting entities as appropriate, to facilitate

²⁶ CSO reporting on impact indicators may be determined once a core set of impact indicators is decided by the COP.

exchanges and cooperation with CSOs with particular regard to the reporting and review process under the UNCCD.

33. The CRIC may also wish to clarify whether the call for “collaborative reports” as contained in decisions 11/COP.9 and 13/COP.9 would aim at facilitating the compilation of consolidated reports of CSOs, or at enhancing exchange and cooperation between CSOs and NFPs, as well as the institutional focal points, at subregional and regional levels.
