



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

Status of implementation, potential role and need for alignment with The Strategy of subregional and regional action programmes to combat desertification

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Note by the secretariat

Summary

Decision 11/COP.9 requires that information provided by the entities reporting on the implementation of subregional and regional action programmes (SRAPs and RAPs) be reviewed as part of the work programme of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) on the assessment of implementation. By its decision 14/COP.9, the Conference of the Parties decided to include in the agenda of CRIC 9 the assessment of implementation against performance indicators contained in reports from subregional and regional entities.

Building on these provisions, there is a need to nominate the reporting entities to be entrusted with reporting on the Convention's implementation at regional and subregional levels.

The present document contains information on the status of implementation and the potential role of SRAPS and RAPS and the need for their alignment with the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (The Strategy). This document was compiled by the secretariat based on institutional knowledge and through a survey with input from the officers of the Regional Coordination Units in consultation with relevant subregional and regional organizations. The document seeks to provide a factual basis for a preliminary review of SRAP and RAP implementation, and for preliminary CRIC recommendations on enhancing the potential role of these tools in the implementation of the Convention and of The Strategy.

Additional information on subregional and regional implementation could be found in documents ICCD/CRIC(9)/3 to 6 containing the preliminary analysis of information contained in reports from Parties and other reporting entities.

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I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) supports the preparation and implementation by affected country Parties of subregional and regional action programmes (SRAPs and RAPs) as important tools necessary for the realization of its objectives.¹

2. Additionally, the Convention's five Regional Implementation Annexes (RIAs) are essentially frameworks for the promotion of regional and subregional cooperation and its integration into programmes and activities to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought.

3. The adoption of the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention 2008–2018 (The Strategy), led to a need to re-examine all action programmes, one of the main tools for the Convention's implementation. This decision urges affected developing country Parties, and any other affected country Party, within the framework of their RIA, to align with The Strategy their action programmes and other relevant implementation activities relating to the Convention; it also invites Parties, with the assistance of the Global Mechanism (GM), to mobilize international and national resources, both technical and financial, to assist in this alignment.

4. In this regard, the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) recommended, at its seventh session,² (a) to integrate national, subregional and regional action programmes into overarching development plans, (b) to apply and monitor the new and standardized reporting guidelines, (c) to develop a process through which the Parties of a subregion or region could harmonize available information at the national level in order to prepare SRAPs and RAPs as appropriate, within the context of the regional mechanisms, and (d) to develop an indicator system which should go hand in hand with the alignment of action programmes.

5. Additionally, decision 2/COP.9 invited affected country Parties and other relevant stakeholders to use the alignment guidelines³ as the reference tool in the process of aligning their action programmes and other relevant implementation activities relating to the Convention.

6. Relevant decisions of the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 9)⁴ gave clear and complementary mandates to the secretariat and the GM to provide guidance and technical assistance to affected country Parties, in order to facilitate the alignment process at subregional and regional levels. Consequently, both institutions integrated this assistance into their two-year work programmes and multi-year workplans approved by the COP.⁵

7. Decision 11/COP.9 requires that information provided by the entities reporting on the implementation of SRAPs and RAPs be reviewed as part of the work programme of the CRIC on the assessment of implementation. By its decision 14/COP.9, the COP also decided to include in the agenda of the ninth session of the Committee for the Review of

¹ Cf. Articles 4, 9 and 11 of the Convention.

² Cf. the report of CRIC 7 as contained in document ICCD/CRIC(7)/5.

³ As contained in document ICCD/COP(9)/2/Add.1.

⁴ Notably, decisions 2/COP.9 and 3/COP.9.

⁵ Decision 1/COP.9.

the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 9) the assessment of implementation against performance indicators contained in (...) reports from subregional and regional entities.

8. Building on these provisions, there is a clear need for further COP guidance on the content and orientation of subregional and regional reports to the CRIC, as well as on selecting the reporting entities to be entrusted with reporting on UNCCD implementation at these levels.

9. The present document contains information on the status of implementation, the potential role and the need for alignment with The Strategy, of SRAPs and RAPs; this information was compiled by the secretariat based on institutional knowledge and through a survey with input from the officers of the Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) in consultation where necessary with relevant subregional and regional organizations. The document seeks to provide a factual basis for a preliminary review of SRAPs and RAPs implementation, which the CRIC may use for making pertinent recommendations to the COP for enhancing and realizing the potential role of these instruments in the implementation of the Convention and The Strategy at the subregional and regional levels.

II. Status report on the implementation and potential role of subregional and regional action programmes

A. Africa

10. The Regional Implementation Annex (RIA) for Africa (Annex I of the UNCCD) outlines a basic and broad strategy for action. By its article 4, the African country Parties undertake to, among other things: (a) adopt the combating of desertification and/or the mitigation of the effects of drought as a central strategy in their efforts to eradicate poverty, and (b) promote regional cooperation and integration, in a spirit of solidarity and partnership based on mutual interest, in programmes and activities to combat desertification and/or mitigate the effects of drought.

1. Subregional action programmes

Western Africa

11. Parties of the Western Africa subregion adopted the SRAP in 1999 and to date three reports have been submitted to the CRIC (the last being in 2004). This SRAP has been an isolated programme with little or no integration into subregional sustainable development strategies or programmes, and its implementation has been hindered by the absence of adequate funding and significant institutional capacity. The subregional focal point institutions, the Economic Community of West African States and the Comité permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel (ECOWAS/CILSS), are currently spearheading realignment of the SRAP with The Strategy. However, this activity has not thus far included consideration of indicators to measure performance as it relates to the operational objectives (OOs) of The Strategy. Importantly, the survey has highlighted the fact that there is little or no real commitment to pursuing the alignment of the SRAP given the current hindrances to its implementation.

Northern Africa

12. The SRAP was adopted in 1999. Alignment of this SRAP to The Strategy is currently being coordinated under the auspices of the subregional focal point institution, the Union du Maghreb Arabe (UMA). This review should entail, inter alia, the development of indicators to support a results-based management approach as well as the development of a financial strategy.

Central Africa

13. The Central Africa subregional grouping developed its SRAP in 2007 under the leadership of the Communauté économique des États d’Afrique centrale/ Commission des forêts d’Afrique Centrale (CEEAC/COMIFAC). No implementation has begun, however, and to date work has not begun on its alignment to The Strategy.

Eastern Africa

14. The Parties of the Eastern African subregion adopted the SRAP in 1999 and last submitted a report to the CRIC in 2004. The subregional focal point is the Inter Governmental Authority of Development (IGAD) which to date has taken no action to align the SRAP to The Strategy. Implementation has also not begun.

Southern Africa

15. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) worked to formulate the SRAP, which was adopted in 1997. Parties of the subregion have taken no action to align their SRAP with The Strategy and no implementation is being undertaken at this time.

16. In the five African subregions all the SRAPs have been formulated and adopted at Ministerial level. The SRAP formulation has been linked to the national action programmes (NAPs) mainly through a reliance on national focal points (NFPs) who are members of the Steering Committee which formulated the SRAPs. As stated above, no implementation has yet taken place in the African subregions, with the sole exception of Western Africa where the plans are partially implemented with the support of the NFPs. There is evidence, however, of activities being implemented that de facto contribute to the realization of the SRAP even if they are not directly identified as such.

Table 1

Summary subregional action programme key issues (Africa)

<i>Region</i>	<i>Subregions</i>	<i>SRAP</i>	<i>Implemented</i>	<i>Strategic indicators</i>	<i>Financial strategy</i>	<i>Alignment</i>	<i>Revised reporting</i>
AFRICA	Western Africa	√	P	×	√	IP	×
	Northern Africa	√	×	×	×	IP	×
	Central Africa	√	×	×	×	×	×
	Eastern Africa	√	×	×	×	×	×
	Southern Africa	√	×	×	×	×	×

Key: P – partial; IP – in progress

2. Regional action programme

17. The Pan African Conference (Ouagadougou, 1997) laid down the foundation for a RAP process for Africa. By October 1999 the African Ministerial Conference, preparatory to COP 3, adopted a resolution endorsing the RAP process and the creation of six thematic programme networks (TPNs) with the designation of their respective institutional focal points (IFPs).

18. The six TPNs which form the framework for the regional programme are aimed at bringing together institutions, organizations and other interested partners for more effective

consultation and coordination for the development and harmonized implementation of the RAP. These are:

- (a) TPN 1: Integrated Management of International Waters, Lakes and Hydro-geological Basins
- (b) TPN 2: Promotion of Agro-forestry and Soil Conservation
- (c) TPN 3: Rational Use of Rangelands and Promotion of Fodder Crops Development
- (d) TPN 4: Ecological Monitoring, Natural Resources Mapping, Remote Sensing and Early Warning Systems
- (e) TPN 5: Promotion of New and Renewable Energy Sources and Technologies
- (f) TPN 6: Promotion of Sustainable Agricultural Farming Systems

19. The six African TPNs were formally launched from 2000 to 2004. Although work programmes were established and institutional focal points nominated for almost all TPNs, to date there has been no, or very limited, progress in their implementation.⁶

20. A combination of factors has hindered the effective operationalization of the TPNs, among which are: varying levels of commitment by the IFPs, limitations in institutional capacity, ineffectiveness of thematic networks and inadequate financing. Additionally, because of the nature of available funding the only ongoing activity is project- rather than programme-focused which has implications for rethinking the current funding modalities in order to incorporate both project and programme funding strategies.

21. The development of TPNs predates The Strategy, and as a result the RAP has no developed indicators to measure progress on strategic objectives (SOs) or a results-based management system which is compatible with The Strategy's OOs.

3. Conclusions

22. In general the SRAPs and the RAP have not been effectively operationalized. In the one case where a SRAP has really gone beyond the formulation stage, there have not been significant results due to an apparent lack of commitment on the part of the stakeholders involved in its implementation. There is a strong call from the region for more direct secretariat and GM support at both global and local levels, although the role, scope and mechanism for such support have not been fully defined.

23. Note should be taken that some subregional projects and programmes relevant to the SRAPs exist and are being implemented in the different subregions even though no reference is made to the SRAPs themselves.

24. Additionally, based on available data including some from IFPs, a main reason for the underperformance of the SRAPs and RAP is the lack of qualified human resources. Other important factors which influence the present state of affairs include: (a) reduced interest and commitment of members due to lack of tangible results, (b) absence of clear objectives, strategies and work plans, (c) lack of clear decision-making processes, (d) lack of capacity to develop strategic alliances among network members and other relevant partners, (e) lack of wide participation of African partners, as sometimes the IFPs tend to focus on their region of intervention, (f) tendency to focus on a project approach instead of

⁶ The Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources of the African Union (AU-IBAR), the IFPs of TPN 3, is currently implementing a Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded project which is addressing the use of natural resources at the livestock/wildlife interface.

having a subregional and regional programmatic approach and related strategy, (g) poor communication, (h) lack of resources and of resource mobilization strategy and (i) poor institutional support to the network members.

B. Asia

25. The RIA for Asia (Annex II of the UNCCD) recognizes the particular conditions of the region. It calls for activities at the national, subregional and regional level in the form of coordinated and integrated action programmes. Additionally, the integration of activities directly relating to the fight against desertification into other environmental and sustainable development strategies should combine these activities with efforts to alleviate rural poverty.

1. Subregional action programmes

West Asia

26. The SRAP was endorsed by the Parties of the subregion in 2001. While it contains objectives and targets as well as some elements for monitoring and evaluation, including a number of indicators, these do not fulfil the requirement of The Strategy and need to be reviewed against its OOs. A financial strategy needs to be developed even if some funding is available from bilateral and multilateral organizations. It should be noted that no funding has as yet been provided from the governments concerned. Despite the effort which has gone into its formulation, the SRAP has not been implemented, due mainly to a lack of finances. Cognisant of all the aforesaid, the Parties of this subregion are currently in the process of aligning this SRAP to The Strategy.

South Asia

27. Seven country Parties of the subregion prepared “The Framework of the South Asia Subregional Action to Combat Desertification and Promote Sustainable Land Management” in 2004.⁷ The SRAP has clearly outlined objectives, a methodology for implementation and a set of clearly-defined expected outcomes. The issues of institutional set up and arrangements for operations, indicators and monitoring and the mobilization of funding are covered in the SRAP. However, this SRAP needs to be brought into line with The Strategy. Additionally, a comprehensive financial strategy is still to be formulated and implemented.

Central Asia

28. The Subregional Action Programme to Combat Desertification in the Aral Sea Basin was endorsed by a multi-stakeholder grouping from the Parties of the subregion. This document was developed and adopted before the adoption of decision 3/COP.8 and has not been aligned to the same; neither does it have a financial strategy. The SRAP has not yet been implemented, with financing being identified as the major hindrance to moving beyond formulation.

⁷ It included two programme areas in early warning systems for land degradation and drought (PA1), and integrated ecosystem management with emphasis on sustainable pastoral silvo-agriculture (PA2). It also contained three cross-cutting programme areas in information network, capacity-building, and resource mobilization and partnership building.

North-east Asia

29. Parties of the subregion have developed the Northeast Asia Subregional Action Programme to Combat Desertification and Dust and Sandstorm. The SRAP is being partially implemented and since its formulation three reports have been made to the CRIC (from 2007 to 2009). However, no action has yet been taken for alignment with the Strategy. The SRAP does, however, have a financial strategy, which is supported by both governments and donor agencies.

South-east Asia

30. Parties in this subregion formulated and endorsed a framework for a SRAP in 2003, which was reviewed and formally adopted in 2008. Although the SRAP details a number of indicators as well as possible sources for resource mobilization, the process is still not complete; there is still a need to align this SRAP to the OOs of The Strategy. The review should also include the development of a financial strategy, since a lack of this has been identified as one reason why the SRAP has not moved from the formulation to the implementation stage.

The South Pacific

31. The Parties of the South Pacific subregion have considered the possibility of developing a SRAP, but have not yet done so. An outline framework of the SRAP is in place, which provides an opportunity for the development of an aligned SRAP. The further formulation and subsequent implementation of this SRAP has so far been hindered by absence of the required financial resources.

Table 2
Summary of subregional action programme key issues (Asia)

<i>Region</i>	<i>Subregions</i>	<i>SRAP</i>	<i>Implemented</i>	<i>Strategic indicators</i>	<i>Financial strategy</i>	<i>Alignment</i>	<i>Revised reporting</i>
ASIA	West Asia	√	×	√	√	×	×
	South Asia	√	×	√	√	×	×
	Central Asia	√	×	√	√	×	×
	North-east Asia	√	√	√	√	×	×
	South-east Asia	√	×	√	√	×	×
	South Pacific	×	×	×	×	×	×

Key: P – partial; IP – in progress

32. In summary, the SRAPs across Asia — with the exception of the South Pacific — have been developed as strategic documents with the inclusion of time frames, targets, impact indicators and methods of assessment and evaluation, which is a significant advantage to any review and/or alignment process. In the case of South, North-east and South-east Asia there are links between the NAPs and SRAPs together with a strong link to the scientific community which does not conflict with existing regional programmes. The

incorporation of other subregional sustainable development strategies into the SRAPs is still to be tackled.

33. While a financial strategy has been articulated in all but the North-east Asia SRAP, implementation has been stymied by a lack of funding; that is, the existence of a financial strategy has not automatically secured financial support.

2. Regional action programme

34. During the Beijing Ministerial Conference on Regional Cooperation (1997) the draft RAP for Asia was discussed and a Framework Paper developed. The following are the six TPNs of priority interest for the region.

- (a) TPN 1: Desertification monitoring and assessment
- (b) TPN 2: Agro-forestry and soil conservation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas
- (c) TPN 3: Rangeland management in arid areas including the fixation of shifting sand dunes
- (d) TPN 4: Water resources management for agriculture in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas
- (e) TPN 5: Strengthening capacities for drought impact mitigating and desertification combating
- (f) TPN 6: Assistance for the implementation of integrated local area development programmes (LAPDs) initiatives

35. By and large implementation has been progressing, although variations in the rate of implementation have been experienced.

36. A series of maps of desertification and land degradation at regional and national levels has been produced under TPN 1. However, funding for their publication and support, particularly for ground control for the regional map, has not yet been secured. Under TPN 2 a manual on agro-forestry was published in 2005. TPN 3 was launched in 2002 with funding support through a project office and other activities from the Iranian government. Additionally, civil society organizations (CSOs) from Belgium and China are participating, providing resources to a pilot project and experimental sites set up in Iran and Kyrgyzstan. TPN 4 was launched in 2001. TPN 5 was launched in 2003. Since then there has been no progress as regards their implementation. TPN 6 has supported networking for locally-developed initiatives; allowed for the sharing of information and technical expertise with member countries; strengthened rural villagers in charge of farm and pastoral land management; established and developed local and national mechanisms to address land tenure issues; provided appropriate incentives to individuals and communities for better land-management practices; and organized workshops at local level and the distribution of information kits to local people and communities.

3. Conclusions

37. Key to the success of TPNs has been the leadership and institutional capacity of the IFPs, identified at country rather than subregional institution level. Progress on the RAP, while not reported as optimal when compared to the SRAP, is significant thanks to the host countries of the six TPNs and those cooperation partners that have supported the activities of the RAP.

C. Latin America and the Caribbean

38. The RIA for the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region (Annex III of the UNCCD) strongly emphasizes the need for sustainable development. Unsustainable practices include excessive irrigation and inappropriate agricultural practices, inadequate legal frameworks, inappropriate use of soil, fertilizers and pesticides, overgrazing, and intensive exploitation of forests. These practices, coupled with frequent droughts and forest fires, lead to serious land degradation. Indeed, the sharp losses in ecosystem productivity reduce overall economic productivity and threaten livelihoods in the region.

1. Subregional action programmes

Mesoamerica

39. The Parties of the subregion have formulated a SRAP, which is yet to be adopted. During its formulation, the SRAP was not linked to the NAPs or the RAP despite the favourable subregional enabling environment. The financial, human and technical requirements for SRAP implementation have been only partially addressed. In addition, the SRAP bears at the moment none of the requirements of The Strategy. It is currently undergoing a review and alignment exercise.

The Caribbean

40. The Caribbean Parties have yet to formulate a SRAP. However, answering the call of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean for Sustainable Development (2003) to facilitate further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, a Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) was established for the subregion. This initiative, which aims to provide an overall framework for a cohesive approach to the implementation of the Convention and to support the formulation and implementation of the SRAP, is not yet fully implemented.

South Cone and Andean (Puna Americana)

41. The Puna Americana subregion comprises five countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru) and includes ecosystems of medium and higher elevations of the Andes. After broad consultation among the Parties of the subregion, a SRAP linked to the NAPs and RAP was formulated and is being partially implemented. Countries of the subregion decided to establish a link with the Chaco SRAPs, to approach the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other financial institutions for financial support, and to formulate a “treaty” between the governments, mining industries and indigenous communities and other interested parties in order to identify potential investment opportunities in support of the priorities established within the SRAP. While the subregion has stated its commitment to financing the SRAP, the alignment and implementation process remains a significant barrier to the realization of the objectives of The Strategy in the subregion.

Gran Chaco Americano

42. In 1996, three countries of the Gran Chaco subregion (Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay) initiated the development of a SRAP aimed at promoting initiatives to eradicate poverty in the region, preserve the ecosystem and stop the severe degradation of its natural resources. This SRAP was endorsed by the relevant authorities of the subregion at a meeting held in Argentina in 2001. Since then, guided by the SRAP, efforts have been made to mainstream a sustainable land management approach in an institutional framework for cooperation, and also to promote and develop it. With the support of the Inter-American Democratic Charter of the Organization of American States, the project “Sustainable development and integrated management for combating social, economic and

environmental degradation in the Gran Chaco” was launched, thus creating an institutional and operational mechanism to implement the SRAP.

Trans-boundary action programme in Hispaniola

43. The Dominican Republic and Haiti started consultations in the year 2000 in order to create a planning tool for addressing land degradation and drought in the common watershed basin of the Artibonito River. A two-phase consultation was held in 2003 and 2004, aiming at integrating agro-forestry issues, among others, into the agenda of horizontal cooperation between Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Cuba, and at strengthening exchange of information at the national, bi-national and subregional levels to facilitate the design of the respective NAPs. The agro-forestry experience has been developed consistently, particularly in the Dominican Republic. Due to natural disasters, however, which have strongly affected the island and Haiti in particular over the last four years, the initiative is at present not operational.

44. In LAC there has been a relatively slow uptake of SRAPs; where the SRAPs have been formulated and are being implemented, however, there is a marked difference in the approach and the level of progress.

45. It should be noted that there are neither financial strategies nor government funding for SRAPs, which have been implemented mainly by multi- or bi-lateral funding for projects within the SRAPs. The major hindrance to SRAPs operationalization has been identified as financing. Given the slow pace of implementation, this commitment must be bolstered by strategies to accelerate effective alignment and implementation of the SRAPs; these strategies must go beyond the mere provision of financial resources.

Table 3
Summary of subregional action programme key issues (LAC)

Region	Subregions	SRAP	Implemented	Strategic indicators	Financial strategy	Alignment	Revised reporting
LAC	Caribbean	×	×	×	×	×	×
	South Cone and Andean	√	P	√	×	IP	×
	Meso America	√	×	×	×	×	×
	Gran Chaco	√	IP	IP	x	x	x
	Hispaniola		IP	IP	x	x	x

2. Regional action programme

46. The RAP was formulated in 1998 and subsequently assessed, reviewed and updated in 2003 for enhanced coordination with the NAPs and the subregional programmes. The RAP includes six cross-cutting TPNs:

- (a) TPN 1: Identification and use of benchmarks and indicators of desertification and drought
- (b) TPN 2: Information Network on Desertification and Drought (DESELAC)

- (c) TPN 3: Integrated water resource management and water efficiency programmes in LAC
- (d) TPN 4: Promotion of agro-forestry and combating poverty
- (e) TPN 5: Best practices, traditional knowledge and technologies
- (f) TPN 6: Promotion of sustainable renewable energy

47. The LAC region has developed a comparative advantage in the matter of benchmarks and indicators over the past 10 years. Several initiatives have been implemented in the region for the design and development of TPN 1. TPN 2 (DESELAC) was adopted as the information network of the region, and its work programme included a wide range of activities.⁸ However, DESELAC has yet to become the decentralized management tool expected by country Parties. The many shortcomings include the low amount of information exchanged, the obstacle represented by the number of languages used, and the low level of access and participation of the focal points. The implementation of TPN 3 has been stymied by the absence of an official coordinator and IFP. To date, only a comprehensive background paper on water and watershed management in LAC has been published. TPN 4 was launched in 2004. However, to date there has been no concrete offer to coordinate the work of the programme. For TPN 5, an Internet forum on best practices and traditional knowledge was implemented through DESELAC with the aim of contributing to the establishment and strengthening of a network serving as a preparatory activity for launch of the TPN in 2006. However, the regional support from NFPs was below expectation and the network is yet to be set up. The implementation of TPN 6 was scheduled to begin in 2006–2007, but despite the effort of the proposed host country no financial resources have yet been mobilized.

48. The RAP is administratively supported by the LAC Regional Executive Committee, with input from NFPs and a number of other stakeholders including individual experts, academia and CSOs. Implementation has been slow, resulting in a weak implementation record and a situation made more challenging by the absence of a system of review and evaluation of the programme's effectiveness. While financing is an issue for implementation of the RAP, Parties should take increased responsibility and a leadership role in the development of TPNs as far as human, technical and financial resources are concerned. This is due in part to limited capacities concerning human, technical and financial resources coupled with the absence of government backing.

3. Conclusions

49. There is no financial strategy in place or funding for the RAP, through either governments or donor agencies, and no clear governance structure or institutional mechanism to support the programme. Predictable financial resources are critical for effective review, alignment and implementation of the RAP and, through it, promotion of The Strategy.

D. Northern Mediterranean

50. There is no clear identification of subregions in the RIA for the Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV of the UNCCD). The Terms of Reference (ToR) of a RAP were

⁸ Including: the accomplishment of country profiles on the status of desertification and land degradation, a forum on traditional knowledge in order to prepare the launch of TPN5, the electronic publication of the NAPs and other documents, and the finalization and implementation of the DESELAC website.

adopted at ministerial level in 2001. At a subsequent meeting, five Parties expressed their wish to continue as a group.⁹ Since this involved only some country Parties of the Annex, it was decided to name the group the “Subgroup of Annex IV”. Therefore the ToR of a RAP was renamed as the ToR of a SRAP so as to underline the subregional nature of the undertaking.

51. In accordance with this ToR, seven thematic areas for cooperation have been identified:

- (a) Most sensitive areas in terms of desertification hazard;
- (b) Common regional benchmark and indicators for processes and mitigation;
- (c) Collection, analysis and exchange of technical and scientific data;
- (d) Exchange of data and information;
- (e) Involvement of civil society within the RAP process;
- (f) Traditional knowledge and practices safeguarding the quality of the North Mediterranean landscape;
- (g) Connection with other existing regional and subregional initiatives.

52. Notwithstanding the identification of the above-listed important areas for cooperation, there have been to date no further concrete actions for the establishment and implementation of fully-fledged SRAPs among countries of the subgroup of Annex IV.

E. Central and Eastern Europe

53. While the RIA for Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Annex V of the UNCCD) recognizes that land degradation/desertification and drought affect many areas of the region, although with some peculiarity, no clear identification of subregions exists in Annex V. Consequently, no SRAPs have been envisaged under Annex V.

54. At the regional level, the development of a RAP has not yet been decided upon. The Parties recognize, however, that there are advantages in developing mechanisms and programmes for regional cooperation to address issues which impact the entire region, as is the case with the assessment and management of drought. At the regional meeting in 2003, CEE Parties agreed on a number of priority themes for regional cooperation. These include scientific cooperation/networking, technology and training/capacity-building. They further agreed that regional cooperation in these areas could be achieved through the organization of a number of technical workshops and through the establishment of the following regional thematic networks, regional training centres and regional reference centres:

- (a) Regional thematic network: Afforestation in temperate zones affected by drought (Romania)
- (b) Regional training centre: Scientific Institute of Soil Science Nicola Poushkarev (Bulgaria)
- (c) Regional training centre: Forestry Training Centre of Zikatar (Armenia)
- (d) Regional reference centre: Soil Conservation Strategies and Planning (Czech Republic).¹⁰

⁹ Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey.

¹⁰ This centre is already operational.

55. To enhance interregional cooperation, Parties of Annex IV and V established in 2007 a Drought Management Centre for South-Eastern Europe (Slovenia). In addition, the regional initiative on financial resource mobilization for strengthening the implementation of the UNCCD in Central and Eastern Europe was launched in 2008.

56. CEE Parties also expressed interest in establishing a regional coordination mechanism for Annex V.

III. Findings from a global study on subregional and regional action programmes

A. Need to reorient subregional and regional action programmes

57. In decision 3/COP.8, the Parties acknowledged that one of the means of achieving the purpose of The Strategy would have to be the effective implementation of action programmes at the national, subregional and regional levels; these would need to be reoriented to achieve the outcomes under the five OOs.

58. The COP also recognized that monitoring of the implementation of The Strategy would require performance indicators to measure progress against the OOs of the Strategy, and impact indicators to measure progress against the SOs. The COP then requested that affected country Parties revise their NAPs into strategic documents supported by biophysical and socio-economic baseline information, and that affected country Parties integrate their NAPs and sustainable land management and land degradation issues into development planning and relevant sectoral and investment plans and policies.

59. Additionally, decision 3/COP.8 urges affected country Parties to align their action programmes and other relevant implementation activities relating to the Convention with The Strategy by, inter alia, addressing the outcomes under the five OOs.

60. In summary, this decision as it relates to the implementation of The Strategy infers a reorientation of existing SRAPs and RAPs in line with The Strategy in a number of key areas, that is, (a) the translation of action programmes into strategic documents in line with the OOs of The Strategy, (b) the development of impact indicators to measure the performance of the action programmes against baseline socio-economic and biophysical data and (c) the development of reporting tools to facilitate the review of implementation of the Convention and The Strategy.

B. Required changes in the alignment and implementation of subregional action programmes

61. The survey showed that the Parties are operating in various socio-economic and political conditions, and are fulfilling the requirements of The Strategy with regard to subregional action programmes at varying rates. In Africa all of the six subregions have formulated SRAPs, but the implementation process has begun in two subregions while alignment has begun in one only. In Asia five out of six subregions have formulated a SRAP using a strategic framework along with some impact indicators. However, a similar number have not implemented the action programmes and only one of the subregions has begun the process of alignment to The Strategy. In the LAC region most SRAPs are in place and have been partially implemented. SOs have been developed, and plans for alignment are in progress. As regards Annex IV and Annex V there is no clear identification of subregions.

62. While recognizing that many of the SRAPs were formulated before 2007, the current status of review, reorientation and alignment strongly suggests that there is a need for a shift in the approach to alignment and ultimate implementation of SRAPs if The Strategy's objectives are to be achieved by 2018.

63. There are challenges and hindrances which the subregions have consistently identified and which are relevant and of major importance to revision, alignment and effective implementation of the SRAPs. Besides the need for a renewed political resolve, the inadequacies in the following areas need to be addressed:

- (a) Human resources
- (b) Financial resources
- (c) Institutional capacity
- (d) Information exchange
- (e) Communication

64. Each of these barriers will have some influence on the changes to be made in the following areas.

1. Institutional arrangements and operating principles

65. The governance and institutional arrangements for the implementation of the SRAPs are in place in the five subregions of Africa. Steering committees of NFPs working with subregional intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations and technical and scientific organizations form the basis of the governance structure and each subregion has chosen an IFP who has a leadership responsibility for implementation of the SRAP.¹¹

66. Similarly, steering committees and/or technical committees provide the governance and institutional framework for the SRAPs in Asia. The steering committee has administrative, logistical and financial responsibilities while the technical committee for each subregion provides oversight of the programme and its assessment. Yet these institutional arrangements have failed to bring about implementation of the SRAPs in all but one subregion (North-east Asia).

67. In LAC, the Caribbean subregion has created an institutional platform for implementation (PISLM), while the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands project provides an institutional implementation framework for the Andean and Gran Chaco subregions. As stated earlier, there are no formulated SRAPs in either the Northern Mediterranean, or CEE.

68. The survey has revealed that while the governance and institutional framework are by and large in place, these are not proving to be effective or sufficient to drive the alignment and implementation process, for reasons varying from a lack of support to weaknesses in institutional capacity in terms of both human and financial resources. In general terms, the result is an overall lack of coordination and/or overlapping with other relevant subregional activities, lack of effective integration on cross-cutting issues and failure to mainstream the SRAPs into national development plans. The modalities of IFPs should be re-examined with the aim of strengthening their ability to effect leadership and carry out the mandate.

¹¹ These bodies are ECOWAS/CILSS for Western Africa, UMA for Northern Africa, CEAAC/COMIFAC for Central Africa, IGAD for Eastern Africa and SADC for Southern Africa.

2. Need for complementarity between national, regional and subregional action programmes

69. Within Africa, clear links between SRAPs and NAPs/RAPs are not established except in the case of Western Africa. While this is a challenge, within the process of alignment it represents an opportunity to incorporate subregional programmes within the RAP, and should be part of both the NAP and SRAP alignments. In the subregions of both LAC and Asia, the NAPs support the SRAPs, although there is still need for further harmonization in the review of the SRAP and its alignment with The Strategy.

70. In the African region, the RAP is still to be fully implemented. In Asia only three subregions (South, North-east and South-east Asia) have sought to harmonize the SRAP with the NAPs. Implementation remains a challenge for several reasons, including a lack of funds, a lack of integration of these plans into national development plans and a failure to incorporate sustainable land management into economic reform processes, a lack of inter-ministerial coordination and the need for enabling policy and legislative and institutional conditions.

71. The alignment process offers an opportunity to allay concerns about the clear boundary between a RAP and a SRAP. It is agreed that properly thought out and executed RAPs and SRAPs can add value to the NAPs.

72. For Asia, the reason for the lack of action is related to deep-seated structural issues (institutional structure, limited capacity and lack of funding). There is a prevailing view that there is no point in aligning the action programmes until some of the major blocks are removed.

3. Resource mobilization

73. Resource mobilization has been identified by all the subregions as a major barrier to SRAP implementation. The Western Africa subregion, with the largest number of member countries, has a financial strategy in place but has failed as yet to raise the required resources, as is shown by the inadequate subregional, bilateral and multilateral support for the SRAP. None of the other subregions have a documented financial strategy. There is a similar experience with regard to mobilizing funding in Asia; despite the fact that all subregions except the Pacific have prepared financial strategies, none has successfully mobilized the required resources, resulting in no operationalized SRAPs. It is felt that GEF funds are being diverted by the Asian Development Bank or the World Bank to make for more attractive loan packages. However, the financing terms are unattractive and too short term for sustainable land management (SLM) types of programmes. LAC too has stated the need for financing, and CEE has made financing one of the conditions of re-engaging in the SRAP process.

74. Many Parties have urged the secretariat and the GM to provide financial support to promote implementation of The Strategy at subregional level.

75. The GM has developed the concept of integrated financing strategies (IFSs) for UNCCD implementation. The ultimate goal of the IFS is to create an enabling environment for mobilizing internal, external and innovative resources to provide an investment framework for SLM activities. The IFS refers to a long-term process in a situation where funds need to be mobilized relatively quickly, and its implementation requires human and financial resources which are not always readily available to the country Parties.

4. Capacity development

76. Currently, while around 80 per cent of the subregions have prepared SRAPs, more than half have not developed strategic documents with specific impact indicators. The level

of non-compliance suggests a need to develop the capacity to introduce these elements into the SRAPs as part of the assistance needed for the alignment process.

77. LAC and Asia have made some progress in the preparation of strategic documents and the development of indicators. Parties have identified a lack of qualified human resources as potential barrier to the implementation of the SRAP. Effective reporting against indicators will be important for effectively measuring performance in implementing The Strategy and progress made on its SOs.

C. Required changes in the alignment and implementation of regional action programmes

1. Institutional arrangements and operating principles

78. An IFP was appointed for each of the six TPNs which form the framework of the African RAP. IFPs have responsibility for coordinating the activities of each member's own network of organizations from the public and private sectors and relevant international organizations. Since the time of their establishment, the networks have not performed up to the level of expectations, and in many cases they are no longer operational. There is concern that the IFPs have tended to have a local focus, that is, in the immediate subregion where they are located, thereby restricting full participation. Additionally, capacity constraints within the IFPs, the absence of a clearly-defined decision-making process, lack of support and participation on the part of the network partners, the absence of effective communication channels and infrequent meetings have been barriers to more efficient institutional coordination. There is also no clear system of accountability.

79. The Asia Region has also developed TPNs and a framework of IFPs to coordinate and lead implementation of the work programmes. These arrangements are proceeding fairly well, particularly given the strong support of some of the region's governments, although there are some concerns with regard to the South Pacific subregion.

80. In LAC region there is a dearth of organizations willing to take on responsibility for coordination of the RAP through institutional support of each TPN.

81. Other regions interested in formulating RAPs may take the opportunity to draw some lessons from the experiences of regions with RAPs with regard to institutional arrangements. Generally, IFPs and the supporting network will require special focus and support, along with a clarification of roles and clear governance and accountability mechanisms.

2. Resource mobilization

82. The inadequacy of financial resources has been a clear barrier to implementation of the TPNs in all the regions. In Africa many subregions have produced action plans but have been unable to go beyond the formulation stage. One exception is the TPN 3 activities which have received support from the GEF. The concern is that this type of funding, while welcome, tends to have a project rather than a programmatic approach to financing, which is a significant concern/barrier to sustainable financing of action programmes. Additionally, the reach of the African Development Bank with regard to funding projects across the entire region is limited.

83. LAC and CEE have also clearly stated the need to mobilize funding for implementation of the RAPs. Generally, NFPs are experiencing real difficulties in persuading their respective governments of the benefit of desertification control and its impact on the domestic product. Finance and planning ministries often see SLM as

secondary at a time when many governments are dealing with burgeoning problems in health, welfare and education which compete for national budget allocations.

84. The GM has not yet clearly identified sources of funding to support RAPs directly, and the problem of mobilizing funds continues to be a barrier to their alignment and implementation.

3. Capacity development

85. In most regions, with the exception of LAC, the current RAP will need to be revised into strategic documents with appropriate sets of indicators. The level of compliance with the provisions of decision 3/COP.8 suggests the need to provide technical support and capacity- building to introduce these elements into the RAPs, as these are essential to support implementation of the Strategy.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

1. Subregional action programmes

86. The review of the current status of SRAP implementation and alignment has provided the following insights:

(a) Thirteen of the 15 subregions of RIAs I, II and III have formulated a SRAP, which represents 92 per cent compliance. Of those subregions which have developed an action programme, however, only 30 per cent are implementing, to varying degrees, and 36 per cent have commenced alignment to The Strategy;

(b) There is no clear definition of subregions in Annexes IV and V. Hence, there has been no SRAP formulation in these regions.

87. An evaluation of the available data has led to the following conclusions:

(a) Many subregions have the capacity to plan programmes but there are significant barriers to the review, alignment and actual implementation of SRAPs, among them limited and unpredictable financial support and weak institutional and human resources;

(b) There is a mismatch between the IFS approach, which is admittedly long term, and the range of funding requirements and timing needed to support the implementation of SRAPs;

(c) The legitimate concern regarding the limited financial support to SRAPs implementation has resulted in a general reluctance by the subregional institutions to commit time and effort to the review and alignment of the existing action programmes;

(d) SRAP implementation is in many cases a stand-alone activity with direct overlap of some existing subregional programmes, little synchronization with existing programmes, and a lack of mechanisms for linkage with other Rio Convention implementation processes. This situation diminishes the possibility of effectively tackling cross-cutting themes and more efficient use of resources;

(e) The current state of implementation of the SRAPs poses a significant risk to promotion of The Strategy. Failure to provide the necessary financial and

technical support and to re-energize the SRAPs would ultimately threaten the ability of Parties fully to achieve its objectives.

2. Regional action programmes

88. All the regions, excepting the Northern Mediterranean and CEE, have developed RAPs which have TPNs as fundamental elements. The following conclusions were reached based on the data available:

(a) The majority of the TPNs have been launched but, with a few exceptions, have not been implemented;

(b) Alignment of the RAP is taking place in only one of the five regions, which poses a significant threat to promoting and achieving the objectives of The Strategy;

(c) Many IFPs lack the resources to communicate, coordinate and execute TPN activities across their region;

(d) The current institutional framework governing implementation of the TPNs relies heavily on voluntary action and cooperation among its members, with no clear mechanisms for coordination and accountability;

(e) In some instances regional programmes have been implemented in a way which produces limited local, rather than regional, impact;

(f) Funding for the TPNs has tended to be project- rather than programme-based, with no clear mechanism for sustainably financing the operationalization of the RAPs;

(g) Financing of the RAPs is inadequate.

B. Recommendations

89. The recommendations are as follows:

(a) Affected country Parties which have not developed a SRAP and/or a RAP are encouraged to conclude this process within the framework and time frame of The Strategy;

(b) While developing and/or implementing SRAPs, affected country Parties should take into consideration relevant existing subregional programmes, with a view to coordinating SRAPs into these programmes;

(c) Through the regional coordination mechanisms (RCMs), and their executive committees where established, Parties should coordinate more with relevant subregional organizations in an effort to promote SRAP and RAP implementation;

(d) The secretariat should prepare templates and reporting guidelines for the relevant subregional and regional organizations to report on SRAP and RAP implementation, consistent with the templates and reporting guidelines for the Parties and any guidance that the COP may wish to give;

(e) Development partners, and particularly the GEF, should consider providing sufficient and predictable technical and financial support for the implementation of SRAPs in those areas which comprise eligible country Parties, including support towards developing required capacities;

(f) The secretariat, in collaboration with the GM, should assist in developing specific short- and medium-term strategies as they relate to the SRAPs and RAPs;

(g) The GM, upon request, should establish regional investment platforms with a view to channelling funding towards the review and implementation of SRAPs and RAPs;

(h) Through the RCMs and their executive committees where established, Parties should prioritize implementation of the TPNs, with a view to supporting the Committee on Science and Technology work programme, with particular regard to the monitoring and assessment of desertification/land degradation at subregional and regional levels.
