



Convention to Combat Desertification

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Review of input from the Committee on Science and Technology - Input from the Committee on Science and Technology on impact indicators for strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of The Strategy

Input from the Committee on Science and Technology on impact indicators for strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of The Strategy

1. By decision 12/COP.9, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) to contribute to the work of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) by reviewing and assessing scientific information from Parties and other reporting entities, in particular on impact indicators relating to strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of The Strategy. The present document is a summary compilation of ideas, suggestions and proposals offered by various delegations during the second special session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST S-2) and tabled at the ninth session of the CRIC (CRIC 9) for any recommendations Parties would like to make.

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Issues associated with the development and implementation of impact indicators related to the measurement of strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of The Strategy

A. Consideration of the status of work on methodologies and baselines for the effective use of the subset of impact indicators on strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3

2. The Committee on Science and Technology took note of the progress made on the work on methodologies and baselines for the effective use of the subset of impact indicators on strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 contained in document ICCD/CST(S-2)/7. It also took note of the preliminary findings of the scientific peer review on the refinement of the set of impact indicators, contained in document ICCD/CST(S-2)/INF.1.

3. The Committee took note that two main alternatives were identified for reporting on “land cover status”: (a) those based on indicators derived from land cover/land use maps, and (b) those using biophysical indicators (also called ecosystemic indicators). The use of biophysical indicators was recommended. Nevertheless, taking into account the different levels of technical capacity of affected country Parties and that the deadline of compliance by 2012 is very tight, the provisional adoption of a stratified approach to reporting on land cover status was recommended. This approach would allow a start to be made using readily-available land-cover data. As technical capacity improves, countries could provide more detailed reports and mapping, reflecting the other classifiers such as “land utilization types” and vegetation cover measurements along with production and biomass data, as appropriate to the type of cover.

4. It was recommended that the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) continue work on methodologies for measuring, monitoring and reporting on the “proportion of the population in affected areas living above the poverty line”, addressing the topics related to the establishment of the poverty line and to the spatial disaggregation of the data in line with the outcomes of the scientific peer review of the provisionally accepted set of UNCCD impact indicators.

5. Based on the findings of the scientific peer review process, the need to clarify the term “in affected areas”, specifically where it is used in the definition of the core and provisional indicators, was emphasized. It was recommended that all the proposed indicators be measured in affected country Parties and that the operational use of the term “in affected areas” should be refined through input from the scientific community and used to interpret the impact indicator measurements. In this approach the related but different challenges of (a) defining, measuring and monitoring the indicators and (b) defining and delineating affected areas would be distinct and therefore more operationally viable. It was recommended that the secretariat further work on this issue in collaboration with the scientific community in view of CST 10.

6. It was recommended that indicators should be compiled as far as possible from sources typically accessible to, and in use by, national actors. Internationally compiled indicators could constitute the basis for default monitoring in the case of data gaps at the national level for the first reporting process.

7. It was recommended that the secretariat, under the guidance of the CST Bureau, produce reporting templates and guidelines for the effective use of the subset of impact indicators to be presented at COP 10. It was also recommended that, in preparing reporting guidelines for the Parties, the secretariat engage stakeholders on a continuous basis to clearly identify their needs. In the reporting guidelines, indicators and their scale of

operation as measurements should be carefully noted and precautions taken if indicator measurements are aggregated to a wider landscape.

8. The importance of reaching commonly agreed definitions for terms used for impact indicators and the potential associated metrics or proxies used to measure those indicators was emphasized. Thus, it was recommended that the secretariat, under the guidance of the CST Bureau, with input from the scientific community, further refine the glossary of terms and definitions for the effective use of the subset of impact indicators.

9. It was recommended that an overview be compiled of the number of affected countries and regions already measuring the subset of impact indicators, the related applied methodologies and the existing experiences and capacities. The capacity needs of those countries and regions should be assessed and the potential for harmonized approaches identified. Regional reference centres could be mobilized in that regard.

B. Progress made on the refinement of the set of impact indicators for strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3

10. The Committee reviewed document ICCD/CST(S-2)/8 on the refinement of the set of impact indicators on strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 and took note of the preliminary findings of the related scientific peer review process, contained in document ICCD/CST(S-2)/INF.1.

11. Progress made in the refinement of the set of impact indicators through the scientific peer review was welcomed. It was recommended that a role be built into the UNCCD process for periodic scientific peer reviews as a means not only to facilitate integration of new ideas in response to evolving science, user needs and specific objectives arising from the implementation of the Convention, but also to build credibility for the indicator system, as well as other scientific issues addressed by the Convention.

12. The scientific community was called upon to continue providing inputs to the refinement of the set of impact indicators and encouraged all interested stakeholders to contribute to the review process by participating in the global e-forum launched by the secretariat (<http://eforum.unccd.int>).

13. It was recommended that the secretariat also carry on the review process through official channels.

14. Some alignment between the Global Environment Facility (GEF) portfolio level indicators and the UNCCD set of impact indicators would be beneficial to the two institutions and to Parties that would be requested to use or report on the selected impact indicators. Thus, a closer involvement of the GEF was recommended, through its Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), in the iterative process for the refinement of the UNCCD set of impact indicators, with a view to harmonizing objectives and methodologies for collecting and reporting on indicators.

15. Interest was expressed in the establishment, subject to the consideration of financial implications, of a geographically balanced ad hoc advisory group of technical experts to be tasked with continuing the iterative, participatory contribution from the science and technology community to the impact indicator refinement process.

16. Interest was also expressed in the establishment of an institutional partners group, made up of the organizations that would be contributing to the generation and management of the data sets based on the impact indicators of desertification/land degradation and drought and the success of remedies to address it.

17. It was recommended that the secretariat develop proposals for the establishment of the ad hoc advisory group of technical experts and the institutional partners group for consideration at COP 10 and, especially, provide information on the financial implications of these proposals.

18. The use of the term “impact indicators” was discussed. Based on the findings of the scientific peer review process, the term should suggest that the complete set of indicators, when taken together, should provide insights into the progress made towards the achievement of strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 of The Strategy. In this sense, some of the indicators in the set may not be, strictly speaking, “impact” indicators (e.g., they might be drivers). However, when considered with the other indicators, their inclusion in the set would aid in understanding impact.

19. The Committee also discussed the use of the terms “harmonization” and “standardization”. Based on the findings of the scientific peer review process, harmonization means to make comparable (harmonize) the same variable measured in different ways. Standardization means to agree on and use only one single common methodology for the same variable or indicator. The causes and consequences of dryland degradation have multiple characteristics and vary in space and time. Hence, the indicator selection needs to accommodate these particularities while following coherent principles and criteria. The pursuit of harmonization was recommended, with the potential for standardization when appropriate and feasible.

20. The Committee discussed the intent behind proposing a “minimum” or “limited” set of indicators. There is a demonstrable need for harmonized measures that are comparable across countries and regions. However, this approach is not meant to limit monitoring, evaluation and assessment. To functionally address this concern, it was recommended initiating the development of a mechanism where the minimum set of globally harmonized indicators can be systematically complemented by regionally, nationally, and/or locally relevant and developed indicators.

21. It was recommended that the initial framework be an amended driving forces-pressure-state-impact-response (DPSIR) framework integrated with ecosystem services provisions. The framework selected initially should be regularly re-evaluated for appropriateness as monitoring and evaluation efforts mature, for its usefulness for the decision-making processes, and because needs may change.

22. It was recommended that a scheme for categorizing indicators be adopted, based on their “readiness” for operational use. Such a scheme would ensure a place for indicators that are currently challenging to measure, but are viewed as essential to monitoring impact.

23. It was recommended that tests be undertaken as soon as possible in order to assess the feasibility of the proposed refinement impact indicators in meeting the objectives of the indicator set under the hierarchy resulting from the refinement process. The pilot impact indicator tracking exercise should be linked to existing research projects.

24. In line with decision 17/COP.9, paragraph 3, and considering the results of the scientific peer review of the indicators, and resource availability, the necessity was emphasized of offering the possibility to affected country Parties to report voluntarily on impact indicators from the entire set, in addition to the two required for the fourth reporting cycle in 2012. To that end, minimum reporting tools should be made available.