



Convention to Combat Desertification

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Reshaping the operation of the Committee on Science and Technology in line with the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)

Assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference

Outcome of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference

Assessment of the organization and the outcomes of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 13/COP.8, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided that each future ordinary session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) shall be organized in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format by the CST Bureau in consultation with a lead institution/consortium, which is qualified in and has expertise in the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP. By its decision 18/COP.8 the COP decided that the priority theme to be addressed by the CST in line with decision 13/COP.8 would be 'Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management'.

The CST Bureau selected the Drylands Science for Development (DSD) consortium to co-organize the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference, which was held in Buenos Aires from 22 to 24 September 2009, during COP 9. The discussions at the Conference gave rise to 11 key scientific recommendations.

By its decision 16/COP.9, the COP requested the secretariat to organize an in-depth assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference in consultation with regional groups. And by its decision 23/COP.9, the COP requested the Bureau of the CST to consult with Parties and regional groups to review the outcomes of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference.

This document presents the recommendations produced by the independent evaluators recruited to assess the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference. The CST may wish to consider these recommendations and provide guidance for the preparation and organization of future UNCCD scientific conferences, including the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference.

This document also contains a summary of the results of a consultation survey organized to gather country Parties' views and perceptions on the outcomes of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference. The CST may wish to further review these outcomes, identify priorities and discuss how to implement them.

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I. General background

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 13/COP.8, decided that each future ordinary session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) shall:

(a) Be organized in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format by the CST Bureau in consultation with a lead institution/consortium that is qualified in and has expertise in the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP;

(b) Focus on one specific thematic topic relevant to the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy), to be determined in advance by the COP;

(c) In relation to the priority theme, provide interaction with delegates and develop and make recommendations, with the lead institution/consortium submitting a report to the COP;

(d) Include presentations by other institutions, other environmental conventions, non-governmental organizations and individuals with experience in the thematic topic concerned, as decided upon by the Bureau of the CST in consultation with the lead institution/consortium, ensuring that there is a global call thereby giving every opportunity for contributions from all regions.

2. By its decision 18/COP.8, the COP decided that the priority theme to be addressed by the CST in line with decision 13/COP.8 would be ‘Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management’.

3. As reported in document ICCD/CST(S-1)/3, the CST Bureau decided to select a consortium of institutions, developed the terms of reference and agreed to the content of the call for expressions of interest (<www.unccd.int/science/docs/call_expression_of%20interest.pdf>).

4. The CST Bureau, at its meeting on 25 June 2008, selected Drylands Science for Development (DSD) as the consortium to co-organize the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference within the ninth session of the CST. DSD is a consortium of five research institutions and networks: the European DesertNet, the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, the European Commission Joint Research Centre – Institute for Environment and Sustainability, and the United Nations University International Network on Water, Environment and Health.

5. A report on the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference is contained in document ICCD/COP(9)/CST/2/Add.2.

6. The DSD raised funds for preparing the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference, including in-kind contributions. The UNCCD secretariat, in consultation with the CST Bureau, secured additional financial resources to support the attendance at the conference by science and technology correspondents from developing and eligible countries who were not already members of a COP delegation. DSD and the secretariat sought voluntary contributions from country Parties and organizations to enable the participation of 50 registered scientists from developing and eligible countries and 10 keynote speakers.

7. DSD proposed that three working groups be formed to address the three facets of the topic:

(a) Facet 1. Integrated methods for monitoring and assessment of desertification/land degradation processes and drivers;

(b) Facet 2. Monitoring and assessment of sustainable land management;

(c) Facet 3. Monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation: knowledge management, institutions and economics.

8. Each working group prepared a white paper on a specific facet, including policy recommendations. These white papers were subject to extensive revision through two global online consultations from 22 May to 30 June 2009 and from 16 August to 31 October 2009. The white papers were then presented and discussed at the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference.

9. The UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference was held in Buenos Aires from 22 to 24 September 2009, during COP 9. The discussions at the conference gave rise to 11 key scientific recommendations which are contained in documents ICCD/COP(9)/CST/INF.2 and ICCD/COP(9)/CST/INF.3.

10. By its decision 16/COP.9, the COP requested the secretariat to organize an in-depth assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference in consultation with regional groups.

11. By its decision 23/COP.9, the COP requested the Bureau of the CST to consult with Parties and regional groups to review the outcomes of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference.

II. Assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference

A. Procedure for the assessment of the organization of the conference

12. Following decision 16/COP.9, the CST Bureau, at its meeting on 1–2 March 2010, discussed how to evaluate the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference and agreed on follow-up steps.

13. In March 2010, two independent evaluators were recruited to evaluate and assess the preparation process, the format and the outcome of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference and to make recommendations for the preparation of the next scientific conference. The terms of reference for the group can be found at <www.unccd.int/secretariat/vacancies/docs/ToR_webpage_format_final.pdf>. The purpose of the evaluation was:

(a) To assess the adequacy of the process followed to select the consortium to achieve the objectives of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference;

(b) To assess the adequacy of the format adopted and the preparation process to achieve the objectives of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference;

(c) To assess the extent to which the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference was able to bring the necessary scientific expertise on board, and to produce sound scientific outputs to inform decision-making.

14. The independent evaluators used the following methods for their assessment:

(a) Face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews were conducted in April and May 2010 with members of DSD, the CST Bureau and the secretariat as they were directly involved in the preparation of the conference;

(b) Online surveys were prepared in English, French and Spanish targeted at conference participants, session chairs, national focal points, members of DSD, the CST Bureau and the secretariat with the aim of obtaining their own assessment. The online survey samples were made available for the period 10–28 May and can be found at the ‘Science’ web page of the UNCCD website¹;

(c) A thorough qualitative and quantitative desk review of the documents listed below was undertaken in April–May:

- (i) COP decisions and reports of CST session (2008 and 2009)
- (ii) Documents relating to the preparation procedure
- (iii) Lists of participants and scientists involved
- (iv) White papers and the book of abstracts of poster sessions
- (v) Syntheses and recommendations produced by the conference
- (vi) Conference proceedings
- (vii) Comments made to DSD and the secretariat by participants prior to and after the conference
- (viii) Peer-review papers

B. Recommendations derived from the assessment of the organization of the conference

15. The independent evaluators analysed the results of the survey, the interviews and the document reviews and produced a final report, which can be found at the ‘Science’ web page of the UNCCD website².

16. Based on the assessment and information received from various stakeholders (the secretariat, DSD, the CST Bureau, country Parties, conference participants etc.), the independent evaluators made the following recommendations for improvements to be introduced in the preparation of future conferences.

1. Conference organization

17. The COP should give clear and well defined guidance to the secretariat about the outcomes expected from the conference and how the knowledge gained at the conference should be transferred to the secretariat, the CST, and country Parties. The process to be used and what kind of follow-up is expected should also be defined.

18. The secretariat should have in place a conference steering committee to coordinate the organization of the conference and to work closely with the host country, the institution/consortium chosen to organize the conference, and other stakeholders, as appropriate.

19. The secretariat should have a clear and well defined time frame for conference organization, which includes the major milestones.

¹ See <www.unccd.int/science/menu.php>.

² See <www.unccd.int/science/menu.php>.

2. Suggested time frames and geographical representation

20. The conference should be held every two years, in the years between COP sessions, to allow enough time to prepare recommendations to be addressed by the COP at its following session. Holding the conference in an intersessional period, preferably following the CRIC session, will ensure the participation of scientists and provide a good opportunity for participation by decision makers.

21. The format of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference was adequate and appropriate and should be followed for future conferences, with some changes in the timing of the outputs. The working groups should have six months to prepare and submit their draft reports for input from the scientific community at large. The working groups should finalize their reports three months before the conference. The format of the conference should be a plenary session followed by breakout groups (working groups) based on the themes of the conference. The conference wrap-up session should be devoted to recommendation reports from each of the working groups.

22. The secretariat should strive for stronger input and participation from the affected regions and for a regional balance during the preparation phase of the conference, as well as during the conference itself. This could contribute to helping pre-conference working groups address the issues and opportunities of affected country Parties.

23. The secretariat should create a conference scientific committee composed of scientists, representing the different regions, who will work on conference topics and procedures. Members of this scientific committee should have staggered terms of three to five years so that information and experiences are carried over from one conference to another. This committee should serve in an advisory capacity to the CST Bureau and the secretariat and provide input for future conferences.

24. The conference should be held in a different region on a rotating basis. The decision on where to hold the conference should be taken by the COP for at least the following two conferences. This will give the hosting countries enough time to prepare for the conference.

3. The organizing lead institution/consortium

25. The lead institution/consortium selected to organize the conference should have experience in organizing scientific conferences. It should receive clear terms of reference detailing conference objectives and expectations.

26. The selection of the institution/consortium in charge of organizing the next conference should be announced at the end of the current conference. This will give the institution/consortium two years to prepare the conference.

27. The lead institution/consortium selected to organize the conference should have a clear management and reporting structure included in its proposal, identifying the person who is authorized to enter into a contractual agreement on behalf of the institution/consortium. This will facilitate communication with the CST, the secretariat, the conference steering committee and the host country, and the signing of a contract between the secretariat and the selected organization without delay.

28. Communication channels between the secretariat and the institution/consortium in charge of organizing the conference should be clear and communication responsibilities well defined to facilitate the decision-making process. The conference steering committee should facilitate this communication.

4. Participation of scientists and funding

29. The funding expectations and mechanisms should be well thought through and communicated to the institution/consortium in charge of organizing the conference in time to allow for timely fund-raising and support of participants from affected countries. To this effect the terms of reference for the following conference should spell out all the fund-raising requirements as well as the qualifications required of the lead institution/consortium and the major milestones with their due dates.

30. The list of countries where participant funding is needed should be established, and the funding mechanisms and responsibilities for fund-raising should be well defined, as early as possible. Fund-raising should take place well ahead of the conference to ensure participation of eligible representatives (scientists and decision makers) from affected regions.

31. The secretariat should encourage the participation of scientists experienced in land degradation and desertification issues. In addition, the conference should serve as an opportunity for capacity-building. Young scientists should be encouraged to participate in the pre-conference preparations and in the conference itself.

5. Conference content

32. The topics to be addressed at the conference, and the white papers, peer-reviewed papers, and presentations at the conference, should not be so broad as to result in only a very general discussion; instead they should focus on specific land degradation and desertification issues relevant to the theme and sub-themes of the conference, and on proposing specific responses to the problems of land degradation and desertification relevant to the UNCCD mission. The conference should result in the elaboration of specific recommendations that can be presented to the COP for action.

33. The conference outputs, such as the book of abstracts, the recommendations, the white papers, the peer-reviewed papers, and the final report, should be made available within a reasonable period of time. These requirements should be outlined in the conference timeline document.

34. The preparation of the conference should involve scientists who have experience in the themes of the conferences. The working group approach is a good approach and should be pursued in future conferences. However, the working groups should be given more time to prepare their reports and to distribute them to a wider audience for comments before the conference.

6. Communication with the press

35. A uniform and coherent message about specific issues should be prepared in collaboration with all the stakeholders for communication to the press.

36. CST Bureau members, focal points and scientists should be enlisted to speak to the press with well thought out talking points. Development of such talking points should involve close coordination between the secretariat, the CST and the lead institution/consortium.

7. Overall assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference

37. The independent evaluators felt that the scientific conference format is a good mechanism to address scientific issues, but that it is not the best mechanism for addressing the issues in the long term and that it does not provide continuity. What is needed is an independent mechanism – an honest scientific broker – such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to allow for continuity within the UNCCD and for a broader

participation of the scientific community. In addition, such a mechanism will promote a “science culture” within the Convention and will sustain the scientific approach to solving the problems of land degradation and desertification in the long term.

III. Assessment of the outcomes of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference

38. By its decision 23/COP.9, the COP requested the Bureau of the CST to consult with Parties and regional groups to review the outcomes of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference.

39. The CST Bureau, at its meeting in March 2010, agreed to launch a consultation survey in order to gather views and perceptions on the 11 key recommendations of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference, which are contained in document ICCD/COP(9)/CST/INF.3. The CST Bureau further agreed to liaise with Parties and regional groups through national focal points.

40. In mid-May 2010, with the agreement of the CST Bureau, the secretariat issued a questionnaire in all six official United Nations languages to national focal points. The following three questions were posed for each of the 11 recommendations derived from the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference:

(a) What are the points in this recommendation that your country would be inclined to support for strengthening the work of the UNCCD?

(b) How would you rate this recommendation in terms of relevance and timeliness (to the work programme of the CST)?

(i) Very important and urgent

(ii) Relevant, but can be deferred

(iii) Marginal and/or not urgent implementation

(c) Do you have any specific comment and/or advice that you would like to make with regard to this recommendation?

41. Country Parties were invited to express their views by 5 July 2010, in their own working language if appropriate.

42. Following a request by the CST Bureau during its meeting on 21 and 22 June, a reminder was sent by the Regional Coordination Units on 29 June 2010 in order to increase the chances of higher response rates. On 9 July 2010 the secretariat sent an e-mail to all national focal points extending the deadline for comments until 2 August 2010. Answers received after that date were not included in the analysis.

43. Responses from the following country Parties were received by 2 August 2010 and included into the analysis: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Cameroon, China, Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, France, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Norway, Panama, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Syria, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America and Yemen.

A. Procedure for the assessment of the outcomes of the conference

44. Given that the 11 key recommendations were to some extent connected with each other and/or built upon each other, the recommendations were classified into three themes as follows:

(a) Theme 1. Strategies for monitoring and assessment of desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) and sustainable land management (SLM): recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 10;

(b) Theme 2. The UNCCD as a scientific authority on desertification and the creation of network exchange mechanisms: recommendations 8, 9 and 11;

(c) Theme 3. Areas of synergy between desertification, climate change and biodiversity: recommendation 5.

45. For each recommendation, responses to questions (a) and (c) as listed in paragraph 40 were treated qualitatively, whereas responses to the multiple-choice question (b) were treated quantitatively.

46. Responses to questions (a) and (c) had the general tendency to quote a selected phrase directly from the recommendation as a way to indicate the elements within the recommendation that the respondents were inclined to support, to indicate how the respondent was already making efforts towards fulfilling the recommendation, or to propose ways forward to implement the recommendation more effectively.

47. Responses to questions (a) and (c) were classified and qualitatively evaluated under the three themes presented in paragraph 44.

B. Results

48. A total of 43 out of 192 countries Parties (22 per cent) replied (see table 1).

Table 1

Country replies by region

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number of replies</i>
Africa	10
Asia	11
Latin America and the Caribbean	10
Western Europe and Other	10
Eastern Europe	2
Total	43

49. Table 2 shows a summary of the responses to question (b). Nine of the 43 countries did not provide ratings for some of the recommendations, so the totals in this table are not always 43. Most countries perceived all the recommendations except recommendation 9 as 'very important and urgent'; recommendation 9 was considered as 'relevant but can be deferred' by half of the countries. Recommendations 5, 7 and 10 were perceived as

‘relevant but can be deferred’ by about one third of the respondents (30, 39 and 36 per cent, respectively).

Table 2

Rating of recommendations in terms of relevance and timeliness

	<i>Rec 1</i>	<i>Rec 2</i>	<i>Rec 3</i>	<i>Rec 4</i>	<i>Rec 5</i>	<i>Rec 6</i>	<i>Rec 7</i>	<i>Rec 8</i>	<i>Rec 9</i>	<i>Rec 10</i>	<i>Rec 11</i>
Very important	41	32	37	29	27	31	24	32	18	23	25
Relevant	2	11	4	12	13	9	16	7	20	14	7
Marginal	0	0	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	9
Total	43	43	42	42	42	42	41	41	40	38	41

1. Theme 1. Strategies for monitoring and assessment of desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) and sustainable land management (SLM): recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 10:

Recommendation 1

Desertification, land degradation and drought as defined by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification results from dynamic, interconnected, human-environment interactions in land systems, where land includes water, soil, vegetation and humans – requiring a rigorous scientific framework for monitoring and assessment, which has heretofore been lacking

50. About half of the respondents stated the need for a rigorous scientific framework for monitoring and assessment of DLDD. Some countries were ready to support the acknowledgement that a new paradigm is needed to understand the complex, interrelated human environment factors that cause desertification and land degradation. It was noted that this recommendation is supported by an expanding literature describing why humans are integral to the problem of desertification and its amelioration, as summarized in chapter 3 of the draft white paper³ of DSD working group 1.

51. Some countries pointed out that the monitoring and assessment system should be technically and financially feasible. It should be designed taking into consideration the special needs of developing country Parties where the shortage of financial, human and technical resources could be an obstacle to implementing this recommendation. Some concern was expressed on how to operationally and politically translate this decision. It was also stressed that this recommendation should be backed by evidence of positive cost/benefit ratios of investing in monitoring and assessment.

52. Some countries noted that the establishment of a minimum set of indicators could be a starting point in assessing the impact of the implementation of the Convention. They suggested that the CST should consider this first recommendation when refining the set of impact indicators provisionally accepted at COP 9. The revised set of impact indicators should be supported by an appropriate logical framework and should include both biophysical and socio-economic indicators.

³ Draft white paper of DSD working group 1 “Integrated methods for monitoring and assessing desertification/land degradation processes and drivers”, Version 2, 19 August 2009. See <dsd-consortium.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/WG1_White-Paper_Draft-2_20090818.pdf>.

53. About 13 per cent of respondents acknowledged progress made by the Land Degradation Assessment for Drylands (LADA) project in monitoring and assessment of DLDD at global, national and local levels.

Recommendation 2

To be sufficiently realistic and insightful in light of this complexity, monitoring and assessment must make use of a wide range of analytical methodologies, and distil their lessons into forms useful for decision makers through integrated assessment modelling

54. About half of the respondents were in full agreement with, and ready to support, the entire quotation in this recommendation.

55. Nevertheless, some countries expressed reservations on the use of integrated assessment models. While recognizing that desertification modelling is a useful tool to improve problem understanding and create alternative scenarios for decision-making purposes, they consider it as a research activity and not yet as a mature technology to support decision-making. Some respondents suggested that a two-stage process should be applied: first, the monitoring and assessment system should be soundly based on quantitative and analytical methodologies; appropriate integrated assessment models could then be applied. In line with this suggestion, some countries pointed out that, as indicated in this recommendation, “monitoring and assessment based on a minimum indicator set may be only a starting point for assessing the broad impacts of the UNCCD implementation”, but that “the UNCCD community should make progressively greater use of the full range of analytical methods that are available”⁴. To this end, the CST should begin to consider how this shift towards a more rigorous assessment could be operationally implemented.

56. Some countries suggested that the CST, instead of searching for new analytical methodologies, should prioritize existing alternatives such as LADA, which has already been considered by the COP.

Recommendation 3

Public land-use and land-management decisions are mainly taken at national and subnational levels, and so a UNCCD global monitoring and assessment strategy should be designed to be compatible and synergistic with these levels

57. Most of the respondents supported the principle of a bottom-up, participatory approach as a necessary feature to accomplish the immediate national and subnational policy needs for information on the state and trend of desertification/land degradation. Monitoring systems compiled from national sources should be preferred to internationally compiled systems. However, these respondents recognized that a minimum standard or level of consistency is required in order to provide comparisons and allow efficient and robust integration of results at the regional and/or global level. To this end, some countries suggested that national monitoring and assessment systems should be based on a well-accepted methodology recommended by the CST and aligned to The Strategy. One country also stressed the importance of supporting initiatives, such as those developed by the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) aimed at assisting countries to develop national monitoring and assessment systems which are harmonized at the regional level.

58. The idea that a UNCCD global monitoring and assessment strategy should be designed to be compatible and synergistic with strategies at national and subnational levels was supported. The design of the global strategy should be based on the review of existing experiences at all levels. This would be in line with the agreed UNCCD bottom-up

⁴ ICCD/COP(9)/CST/INF.3, paragraph 15.

approach. Nevertheless, one country objected that this global strategy could not result from the simple compilation of national strategies, because they have different aims. Another country suggested that this recommendation should be also considered in the process of refining the set of impact indicators.

Recommendation 4

Sustainable land management (SLM) is imperative to address the UNCCD core mission to combat desertification; therefore SLM monitoring and assessment should be fully integrated into DLDD monitoring and assessment

59. Most of the respondents supported the idea that SLM is crucial to addressing the UNCCD core mission. SLM has also an important role in reducing poverty and achieving food security in drylands. Therefore, these respondents also supported the recommendation that SLM monitoring and assessment should be fully integrated into DLDD monitoring and assessment. One country pointed out that DLDD monitoring and assessment should not only focus on state and impacts, but should also emphasize driving forces, pressure and responses; SLM represents a response and a solution to DLDD problems. In line with this idea, another country noted that the integration of SLM monitoring and assessment would shift the focus from outlining DLDD problems to policymakers to presenting possible solutions, so as to facilitate decision-making. Additionally, some respondents stressed the need to use a participatory approach for SLM monitoring and assessment, to establish a knowledge sharing gateway and to draw on local knowledge.

60. Some countries noted that this recommendation should be taken into consideration in the process of refining the set of impact indicators. An indicator on SLM (i.e.: indicator XI: land under SLM) is already included in the set of impact indicators provisionally accepted at COP 9 (decision 17/COP.9, annex I), but some respondents stressed the need to identify a clear and appropriate methodology.

61. While agreeing on the recommendation that SLM monitoring and assessment should be fully integrated into DLDD monitoring and assessment, some countries felt that the implications of this integration ought to be clarified. One country noted that full integration of SLM monitoring and assessment into DLDD monitoring and assessment is a complex, challenging and long-term goal. This is partially due to the difficulties in defining SLM that, for a particular piece of land, depends on a large number of factors, many of which (e.g. climate change, technology and social and political infrastructure) are dynamic. Consequently, this country considered that the immediate universal implementation of this recommendation through the impact indicators is likely not to be possible. Another country suggested following a two-stage approach, giving priority to the establishment of the core elements, which constitute the needed scientific basis, and incorporating SLM monitoring and assessment at a later stage.

62. Some countries mentioned the need to focus more on actions to achieving SLM and less on its monitoring and assessment. One country suggested that funding of local and regional participatory development projects could assist in establishing demonstration plots on the farmers' or municipality lands and transferring knowledge and skills to support SLM.

63. Another country noted that many initiatives, such as the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) and LADA, have worked on the integration of SLM monitoring and assessment into DLDD monitoring and assessment; therefore this recommendation does not reflect a substantial contribution made by the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference.

Recommendation 6

To aid decision makers in setting priorities, monitoring and assessment should collect information on the economic, social and environmental cost of DLDD, and the benefits of SLM. The potential role of economic modelling should be explored to develop policy mechanisms that can facilitate sustainable land management decisions

64. Most of the respondents were inclined to support the idea that the provision of information on costs of DLDD and benefits of SLM, and the evaluation of costs of action against costs of inaction, are essential to support decision-making and give these issues greater political weight. One country noted that the economics of DLDD had been neglected for a long time for two main reasons – insufficient data and weakness of the conceptual basis of environmental economy, the latter being partially overcome through the development and acceptance of concepts of, among other things, ecosystem services and natural capital. Some countries underscored the role that the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference will have in the implementation of this recommendation. Addressing the theme “Economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas” (decision 16/COP.9, paragraph 4), the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference should help in mobilizing the scientific community as well as policymakers on this issue.

65. Some countries recognized the importance that economic modelling can have for financial policy decision-making. One country underscored that modelling is essential because of the lack of sufficient resources to collect and analyse the required volumes of data at national and larger scales. Another country stressed the need to ensure that economic modelling takes fully into consideration ecological value, whose underestimation may mislead policymakers. Three countries indicated that an effective legislative base should be in place to enable access to financial resources to combat DLDD.

66. Some countries underlined the importance of organizing training and capacity-building activities in the fields of environmental economics, environmental sociology, and the development of models and indicators.

67. Some other countries called for the UNCCD to draw lessons from “The Economics of Climate Change. The Stern Review.”⁵ and the anticipated impacts of “The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study”⁶.

Recommendation 7

Monitoring and assessment should capitalize on knowledge management to stimulate valuable synergies between different sources of expertise across different spatial and temporal scales and levels, social settings, institutions, scientific disciplines and development sectors

68. Most of the countries supported this recommendation, even though some of them found it to be either too generic and unclear on how monitoring and assessment should capitalize on knowledge management, or not always realistic and difficult to operationalize. One country suggested that this recommendation should be viewed as a long-term goal.

69. Most of the countries underscored the importance of applying a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach. Some countries mentioned the need to encourage the exchange of knowledge and expertise, including traditional knowledge, among the UNCCD, the scientific community and local actors both at the level of the Convention and at the national

⁵ The online document can be accessed at <<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk>> and <www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/stern_review_report.htm>.

⁶ See <www.teebweb.org/>.

level. One country stated that the UNCCD should, through its subsidiary bodies, take a lead role in facilitating the exchange of theoretical and applicable science and technology, particularly for monitoring and assessment. Another country mentioned the important role that networks dealing with DLDD issues might have as knowledge brokers, and suggested involving them, as well as organizations and specialized agencies working on different aspects of DLDD, in the process of refining impact indicators. Another respondent advocated using the experience and knowledge already gained through WOCAT/LADA and continuing to work with these networks, building on these investments and the already available instruments instead of creating new ones. Concerning the national level, another respondent proposed the setting up of a national monitoring and assessment network comprising universities, research institutions, the targeted sectors, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The importance of involving the private sector was mentioned by a couple of respondents; putting more effort into involving the private sector in the funding of applied and multidisciplinary research oriented to the water, energy, and food sectors can help alleviate the funding problems of advanced and applied research programmes.

70. One respondent suggested that in order to effectively use systems for knowledge management, important factors are identifying suitable systems, and building the necessary infrastructure and capacity (within agencies and countries). Along the same line, another country suggested that thematic workshops and training courses should be organized to reflect outcomes of relevant projects on monitoring and assessment.

71. One country stressed the importance of the role that UNCCD scientific conferences can have in fostering the exchange of knowledge and expertise.

Recommendation 10

In order to propel principles into action, regular global DLDD/SLM monitoring and assessment and early warning mechanisms should be organized and implemented based on agreed standard protocols and open data access policies, to harmonize with other efforts worldwide and to minimize duplication of effort

72. Most of respondents were inclined to support this recommendation, but some countries expressed reservations or made suggestions on how to implement it.

73. On the use of agreed standard protocols, one country specified that the protocols should be established by consensus among country Parties. Some other countries pointed out that different geographical, ecological, economic and social settings might require specific regional/national protocols.

74. One country stated that the open data access policy should be consistent with governmental policy and relevant agreements.

75. On the level of application, some respondents expressed different opinions: some countries stated that regular DLDD/SLM monitoring and assessment and early warning mechanisms should be put in place at all levels (global, regional, subregional and national); but others affirmed that the most suitable levels of application for such mechanisms are the national and eventually the regional level, which would ensure compatibility with the specific local situation.

76. Some respondents stressed the importance of capitalizing on existing mechanisms. One country suggested that the establishment of regional cooperation, as well as collaboration with other international organizations, could speed up and make more efficient the implementation of this recommendation. Another country proposed a staged process, starting with a number of regional pilots and continuing with the development of a suitably robust system to deliver on the complete recommendation; this approach would allow the system to be tested and any deficiencies to be corrected as they arise.

77. On the creation of a UNCCD dedicated observation system, i.e. a Global Drylands Observation System (GDOS),⁷ one country mentioned the need for more information about its possible role and functioning, as well the importance of discussing at CST level its pertinence, appropriateness and added value with respect to existing initiatives.

78. One country felt that this recommendation replicates recommendations 1, 7 and 8. Another country asked how this recommendation is linked to recommendations 1, 2 and 3 and how the coordination and cooperation with the UNCCD should function. The same country also enquired how to ensure the linkages between the advisory mechanism proposed in recommendation 9 and the monitoring and assessment mechanism.

2. Theme 2. The UNCCD as a scientific authority on desertification and the creation of network exchange mechanisms: recommendations 8, 9 and 11

Recommendation 8

Sharing of local and scientific knowledge, tools and methods will enhance monitoring and assessment and strengthen human and institutional capacities

79. Most respondents were inclined to support this recommendation. Such an experience, they stressed, could potentially serve as a basis for the creation of a regional and subregional network.

80. Some countries emphasized the importance of sharing local knowledge for SLM and learning from best practices, and the need to capitalize on local knowledge by using cost-effective or existing approaches such as WOCAT. One country remarked that the LADA project, including the creation of multidisciplinary teams, deserves more appreciation in terms of the substantial contributions made by the scientific community.

81. About a quarter of the respondents stressed the need to strengthen human and institutional capacities while developing regional and international partnerships. Four countries highlighted the difficulty in operationalizing this recommendation. In this context, two other countries suggested that a protocol is needed to provide guidance for information exchange and to ensure data protection with proprietary restrictions.

Recommendation 9

Coordination and dissemination of new knowledge and methodologies for integrated approaches to DLDD/SLM require the establishment of an independent, international, interdisciplinary scientific advisory mechanism which would include (but not be limited to) monitoring and assessment, with clear channels for consideration of its advice in Convention decision-making

82. This is the only recommendation that was perceived as ‘relevant but can be deferred’ by half of the respondents. While recognizing the need for the coordination and dissemination of new knowledge and methodologies for integrated approaches towards DLDD, several countries expressed reservations or made suggestions on the establishment of an independent, international, interdisciplinary scientific advisory mechanism.

83. One country pointed out that such a panel could make a worthwhile contribution only if it acted independently of the UNCCD and was purely scientific in its orientation. Other countries, however, stressed the need for this mechanism to be either integrated into or in close collaboration with the CST. Some respondents suggested that this mechanism could be built on the existing modalities for the provision of scientific advice within the UNCCD, such as the CST, the roster of experts and the UNCCD scientific conferences.

⁷ ICCD/COP(9)/CST/INF.3, paragraph 78.

84. Some countries underscored the need to avoid increasing the burden on the Convention and duplicating efforts made by the CST, or by existing intergovernmental mechanisms for the provision of scientific advice outside the UNCCD such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Some respondents mentioned the need to closely follow the process for the establishment of the IPBES, in order to advocate for DLDD issues to be taken into consideration and to ensure that DLDD experts are included among its members.

85. Some respondents expressed the need for more detailed information on the process for the establishment of this mechanism, as well as on its functionality, mandate, objectives and legitimacy. Along the same line, some respondents recalled decision 18/COP.9, which requested the CST to conduct an assessment at its next two sessions of how to organize international, interdisciplinary scientific advice, taking into account the need to ensure transparency and geographical balance, and to consider options for determining agreed channels for consideration of the advice in the Convention process.

86. Potential funding needed for this mechanism was also mentioned, with seven countries acknowledging the limited scope for implementation due to budget constraint. They also acknowledged that a strong political willingness is required to implement this mechanism.

Recommendation 11

The UNCCD community would benefit from a science networking mechanism so that the large yet dispersed body of DLDD/SLM knowledge and expertise worldwide could be more effectively accessed, used and shared

87. Nine countries were fully in agreement with this recommendation. Most respondents considered the science networking mechanism to be a useful tool for collating and evaluating current data and knowledge more effectively. In fact, one country's experience demonstrated that a formal network of scientists can collate and synthesize disparate (but relevant) data sets, held by different agencies within a country, to report changes in drylands. Other countries provided examples of their own existing networks as potential tools to address this recommendation.

88. On the expertise and human resources required to implement this recommendation, six countries suggested enhancing the tasks of national focal points, assigning the roster of experts as the core network of scientific exchange, establishing regional and global seminars on core topics and establishing a clearing house, web portal and national level consortium/expert group to share and disseminate information.

89. Only one country did not support the establishment of such a mechanism by the secretariat or independently because, in its view, it was not clear that UNCCD is the most efficient body to organize such a mechanism. For this reason, the country supports, instead, cost-effective efforts to increase networking and communication, including the need to encourage the development of already existing networks such as DesertNet. Another country requested further clarification on the exact definition of "network of networks" mentioned in paragraph 82 of document ICCD/COP(9)/CST/INF.3, such as the sort of mandate and legitimacy this mechanism would have compared to existing scientific tools.

90. Additional comments referred to the CST prioritizing the creation of scientific networks, organizing scientific conferences at CST meetings and being a leading entity to implement this recommendation in a cost-efficient way reaching all Parties. In this sense, the UNCCD was seen as the institution to generate long-term cooperation and meet with experts or institutes at regional and national levels on DLDD while focusing on decision 18/COP.9 as the basis for future organizations and network mechanisms.

3. THEME 3. The areas of synergy between desertification, climate change and biodiversity: recommendation 5

Recommendation 5

DLDD/SLM monitoring and assessment should include the collection of information relating it to climate change and biodiversity, and to other land-related issues that are the focus of multilateral environmental agreements

91. A great majority of countries indicated – as a reflection of their support to this recommendation – the importance and relevance of taking into account, information relating to climate change and biodiversity in relation to synergistic effects with the Rio Conventions to address DLDD. Nevertheless, some countries stressed the need for the UNCCD to focus more on its core mission than on achieving synergistic effects, and to avoid duplication of programme activities or other advisory mechanisms within the Rio Conventions.

92. Some countries noted that this recommendation should be taken into consideration in the process of refining the set of impact indicators. While recognizing that two impact indicators addressing issues relating to biodiversity and climate change are already included in the set provisionally accepted at COP 9 (decision 17/COP.9, annex I, indicators VII: plant and animal biodiversity, and X: carbon stocks above and below ground), one respondent mentioned the need to identify other indicators used by the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that could directly contribute to the UNCCD's domain.

93. The following additional comments were made and/or advice was given with regard to this recommendation: to establish data collection measures/requirements for DLDD/SLM monitoring and assessment; to focus on some European Union projects devoted to an information database (e.g. Geo-data) to reach sustainable development goals; to make satellite data more accessible to developing countries, facilitating them with technical skills; and to consider local communities' traditional uses of land, water resources and forestation activities.

IV. Conclusions

94. The CST may wish to consider the recommendations produced by the independent evaluators concerning the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference, and provide guidance for the preparation and organization of future UNCCD scientific conferences, including the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference. To this end, the CST may also wish to take into consideration document ICCD/CST(S-2)/3 which reports on progress in the preparation process for the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference up to 22 November 2010.

95. The CST may further wish to identify priorities among the outcomes of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference, and recommend how to implement them.