



Convention to Combat Desertification

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Committee on Science and Technology

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Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda

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)

Preparation of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference, “Combating desertification/land degradation and drought for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices”

Progress report on the preparation of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference, “Combating desertification/land degradation and drought for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices”

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 18/COP.10, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) decided that the 3rd UNCCD Scientific Conference would take place in 2014 at a special session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), in accordance with the provisions of decision 13/COP.8, paragraph 1. By the same decision, the COP requested the Bureau of the CST, with the support of the secretariat and on the basis of the outcomes of the assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, to establish terms of reference and procedures for selection of a lead institution/consortium which is qualified in and has expertise in the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP to organize the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference under the guidance of the Bureau of the CST.

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I. Background

1. The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) (see decision 3/COP.8) highlights the importance given to the development and implementation of scientifically-based and sound methods for monitoring and assessing desertification and underlines the need for a holistic view.
2. At its eighth session, by decision 13/COP.8 the Conference of the Parties (COP), decided to strengthen the scientific basis underpinning the Convention. To this end, Parties decided that each future ordinary session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) should be organized in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format by the Bureau of the CST in consultation with a lead institution/consortium that is qualified in and has expertise in the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP.
3. As a result, the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference took place during the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 9) from 22 to 24 September 2009 on the theme “Biophysical and socioeconomic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management”; followed by the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference “Economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas”, to be held in Fortaleza, Brazil, from 4 to 7 February 2013.
4. By its decision 18/COP.10, the COP decided that the thematic topic to be considered by the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference would be “Combating desertification/land degradation and drought for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices”.
5. Further, the COP:
 - (a) By its decision 18/COP.10, paragraph 12, decided that the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference would take place in 2014 at a special session of the CST, in accordance with the provisions of decision 13/COP.8, paragraph 1;
 - (b) By its decision 18/COP.10, paragraph 14, requested the Bureau of the CST, with the support of the secretariat, to establish terms of reference and procedures for selection, taking into account regional balance, of a lead institution/consortium which is qualified in and has expertise in the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP to organize the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference under the guidance of the Bureau of the CST;
 - (c) By its decision 18/COP.10, paragraph 15, requested the Bureau of the CST, with the support of the secretariat, to select the lead institution/consortium at least two years prior to each future UNCCD scientific conference.
6. By its decision 16/COP.9, paragraph 8, the COP directed the Bureau of the CST to ensure that the selection of the institution/consortium is done in a transparent manner, and in strict accordance with the established criteria, if any, and to avoid any conflict of interest between the institution/consortium selected and any Bureau member.

II. Progress made in the preparation of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference

7. As one of the initial steps, the Bureau of the CST at its meeting in February 2012¹ discussed how to proceed, in terms of the modalities and time frame, with the selection process of the lead institution/consortium bearing in mind that it is expected, in accordance with decision 16/COP.9, paragraph 8, that the selection process of the lead institution/consortium will be undertaken two years in advance.

8. At its meeting on 29 and 30 May 2012, the secretariat, with the agreement of the Bureau of the CST, issued a call for candidature of a lead institution/consortium interested in organizing the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference. The call for proposals included terms of reference for the selection of the lead institution/consortium detailing the procedure and requirements for the organization of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference. The terms of reference took into account the results from the assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference (ICCD/CST(S-2)/2) and are contained in the annex to the present document.

9. The call for candidature of a lead institution/consortium to organize the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference was launched for three months from 10 June 2012 until 15 September 2012 with an extended deadline up to 30 September 2012. The call for candidature and the terms of reference were posted on the UNCCD website and circulated to Parties, observers and scientific institutions, as well as to other interested and relevant stakeholders.

10. The secretariat prepared a compilation of applications received from candidates applying as a lead institution/consortium for the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference. At its meeting on 29 and 30 October 2012, the Bureau of the CST assessed all the applications received before the deadline, based on the selection criteria listed in the terms of reference:

- (a) Innovation and approach;
- (b) Organization and benefits;
- (c) Organizational capacity;
- (d) Staff and position specifications;
- (e) Proposed budget and budget justifications;
- (f) Partnership building.

11. At the meeting of the Bureau of the CST held in Bonn, Germany, on 29 and 30 October 2012, in accordance with the evaluation criteria listed in the terms of reference for the selection of a lead institution/consortium to organize the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference, the consortium “Scientific and Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Development (STK4SD)”, presented by Agropolis International on behalf of its partners, was selected.

12. The Bureau of the CST decided to have the first meeting of the Steering Committee of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference back-to-back with the next meeting of the Bureau of the CST.

¹ See the report of the CST Bureau meeting held on 17 and 18 February 2012. Available online: http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/CST/BMR_17-18Feb2012.pdf.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

13. The CST, at its third special session, may wish to take note of the selected consortium “Scientific and Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Development (STK4SD)” and to provide guidance and further recommendations on the process of organizing the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference, taking into account lessons learned from the preparation and organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference.

Annex

Terms of reference for the selection of a lead institution/consortium to organize the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference

1. These terms of reference outline the selection process of a lead institution/consortium, which is qualified in and has expertise in the relevant thematic topic selected by the Conference of the Parties (COP), to organize the 3rd Scientific Conference of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

I. Background

2. The aim for the future of the UNCCD is to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. The operational objective on science, technology and knowledge of the UNCCD is to become a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought.

3. Recognizing the need to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) contained in decision 3/COP.8 calls for the reshaping of the CST, the strengthening of its capacity to process scientific, technical and socioeconomic information, and the setting up of a framework for activities with redefined roles, responsibilities and working modalities.

4. Decision 13/COP.8 sets out a framework for CST meetings, and states that they shall be held in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format and focus on one priority area. Decision 18/COP.10, paragraph 13, states that the specific thematic topic to be considered by the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference shall be “Combating desertification/land degradation and drought for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices”.

5. In order to facilitate the efficient implementation of the scientific and technical conference-style format of the CST meeting and to address the selected priority theme, the COP recalled the provisions of decision 16/COP.9 which requested the Bureau of the CST, in collaboration with the selected lead institution/consortium and with the support of the secretariat, to involve relevant networks, institutions, agencies, bodies and scientific organizations at the regional and subregional levels, non-governmental organizations and other civil society stakeholders in addressing the priority theme. To this end, wide-ranging expertise from key stakeholders needs to be brought on board and knowledge at various levels mobilized and analysed, in order for the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference to succeed.

6. The UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference is expected to produce sound scientific outputs and policy-oriented recommendations based on the analysis and compilation of peer reviewed and published literature that informs policy formulation and dialogue. These recommendations shall be submitted to the COP for its consideration.

II. Aim and scope of the conference

7. The conference will be organized by the lead institution/consortium selected by the Bureau of the CST, with the support of the UNCCD secretariat.

8. The main aim of the selected lead institution/consortium shall be to ensure that the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference is held in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format, to contribute to the CST special session in 2014 with scientific information drawn from the outcomes and recommendations of the conference, and to publish and disseminate the results after the conference. The scope of this assignment is to bring on board key scientific institutions and scientists from around the world, taking into account regional balance, and to ensure that the scientific community participates effectively in the conference. State-of-the-art research findings and best practices in the field, relevant to the theme of the conference, need to be presented at the conference with the goal of engaging the best possible scientific and technological expertise in the search for information. At the same time, recommendations should be developed, based on these research findings, to be presented at the next Conference of the Parties, in 2015, in order to assist decision makers to address the issues of desertification and land degradation in the context of the theme of the conference.

9. In addressing the theme of the conference, the selected lead institution/consortium shall provide an interface with the global scientific community to foster effective communication and the flow of new ideas by enhancing the knowledge-sharing process. This shall be carried out in collaboration with the Bureau of the CST and the UNCCD secretariat.

III. Organizing committees of the conference

10. A steering committee, composed of members of the Bureau of the CST, the UNCCD secretariat and the selected lead institution/consortium, will be established in order to coordinate the organization of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference.

11. A scientific advisory committee, composed of 12 experts with experience in combating desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) for poverty reduction and sustainable development, will be established in order to make a contribution to reshaping the operations of the CST and strengthening the capacity of the CST to process scientific, technical and socioeconomic information. In addition, the committee will supervise the elaboration process of the scientific input papers.

IV. Task of lead institution/consortium

12. The lead institution/consortium will organize the conference under the guidance of the Bureau of the CST with the support of the secretariat. The selected lead institution/consortium shall, inter alia:

(a) Develop, in consultation with the conference steering committee, the procedure and approach for the organization of the conference, including:

- Preparation of the conference agenda and programme of work
- Preparation of a road map with clearly identified milestones and deliverables and an assignment timeline
- Organization, facilitation and support to the work of a scientific committee

- Identification of subject topics or sub themes
 - Selection of peer reviewers of conference outputs (for example, papers and booklets),
 - Selection of suitable abstracts from contributors
 - Development of marketing materials for the conference (such as flyers)
 - Identification of the expected outcomes of the conference (for example, scientific papers in peer reviewed journals and documents for policymakers)
 - Establishment of a website
- (b) Organize activities as decided by the steering committee (for example, working groups) to deal with key issues and subtopics of the theme of the conference;
- (c) Propose and apply an approach for engaging the various stakeholders in the organization of the conference, including mobilizing scientists, national and international institutions, non-profit organizations and networks in pre-conference preparations;
- (d) Develop and implement guidelines for the preparation and submission of abstracts. These guidelines should also be suitable for use at future conferences, and modified if necessary;
- (e) Organize a poster session, select posters to be displayed at the conference venue and ensure timely communication with the authors;
- (f) Prepare and implement a strategy to distribute the outputs of the conference (such as reports and papers);
- (g) Develop, in collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat, a communication strategy (such as press releases in order to promote the conference);
- (h) Support the UNCCD secretariat in the development and implementation of a fundraising strategy;
- (i) Send regular progress reports to the steering committee containing information on the progress made in the preparation of the conference and on any problems encountered.
13. A memorandum of understanding specifying the administrative and procedural aspects will be signed by the UNCCD secretariat and the lead institution/consortium.

V. Budget and fundraising

14. The COP, by its decision 16/COP.9, paragraph 11, requested the secretariat, in consultation with the Bureau of the CST “to secure adequate funding for the conference and for the attendance of scientists from developing countries and eligible countries in all implementation annexes at each future UNCCD scientific conference and for its substantive preparation”.

15. Institutions and consortia applying for selection as the lead institution/consortium (applicants) shall prepare a cost estimate for the preparation of the conference, covering such activities as the operation of working groups, involvement of scientific participants, publication of conference outputs, and other relevant items. Applicants shall propose an approach to raising the necessary funding and any potential partnership foreseen.

16. The lead institution/consortium shall indicate its possible contribution, in cash and/or in kind within the cost estimate.

VI. Requirements for submission of applications

17. Institutions and consortia interested in organizing the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference shall submit, inter alia, the following application material:

(a) Profile of the applicant institution/consortium. This should include a description of the qualities of the institution/consortium (and of individual members within a consortium) that are relevant to the work of the UNCCD including, but not limited to:

- History of the institution/consortium, including involvement in the work of the UNCCD
- Fields of work
- Any special competence and focus of the institution, particularly in desertification/land degradation and sustainable land management
- Past and current experience in facilitating and/or organizing international scientific conferences
- Past and current experience with the theme of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference
- Short biographies of high-level personnel, to include:
 - Name, title, position and full address
 - Career milestones
 - Key expertise
 - Previous participation in work relating to the work of the UNCCD
 - Any other relevant information

(b) Strategy for the organization of the conference addressing the items listed in sections 2, 4 and 5 above;

(c) An outline of a plan of action describing the scope and details of how the applicant is going to organize the conference with special attention to securing adequate funding. Other details necessary are those concerning certain activities such as working groups, the outcome of the conference and deliverables;

(d) A description of any innovative approaches to ensuring the success of the preparation of the conference and the organizational process, such as thematic working group organization, participation by scientists, and capacity-building activities, as well as any involvement of non-profit organizations;

(e) An application narrative with a total of 10 pages including appendices. Each page should be numbered sequentially. Narrative submissions should be in Times New Roman font, size 12, single-line spacing. This narrative portion shall address the following:

- Capacity of the institution/consortium scientists and staff to address the themes and the organizational needs of the conference
- Capacity to address scientific issues relating to desertification and land degradation across various disciplines (such as economics, biophysical, social, agricultural and environmental sciences and sustainable land management)

- The extent of its network across different types of institutions to facilitate contributions by and participation of scientists and staff from advanced research institutions, national research systems, civil society, academia, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and others at global regional and national levels
 - The extent of its network across geographical areas in accordance with the UNCCD global mandate to engage leading scientific institutions from countries affected by desertification/land degradation and regions of the UNCCD
- (f) A timeline of the organization process, including chronological milestones and how they will be achieved, with emphasis on who will be involved (such as scientists and others);
- (g) A list of the key personnel and scientists of the institution/consortium and cooperating entities who will work on the organization of the conference, and a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution;
- (h) Information on the institution/consortium and cooperating partners relating to scientific expertise, organizational capacity, experience in the theme and sub-theme areas and other pertinent information;
- (i) A proposed budget and budget justification, in narrative form.

18. If the application is from a consortium, it is important that it provide a written agreement between the members of the consortium showing clear organizational and reporting structures, as well as a main contact person who will have the ability to enter into a contractual agreement on behalf of the consortium. The role of each member of the consortium shall be well defined.

VII. Evaluation criteria

19. Each proposal submitted by a lead institution/consortium under this announcement will be evaluated and rated according to the criteria listed below. These criteria are designed to assess the quality of the proposed approach and to determine the likelihood of its success in organizing the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference. The criteria are closely related and will be considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of a proposal. Proposals will be reviewed on the basis of their completeness, coherence, clarity and attention to detail. Incomplete proposals or proposals submitted after the due date will not be considered.

20. Proposals must include a full description in accordance with the instructions and the specific evaluation criteria listed below. The instructions give a broad overview of what the project description should include while the evaluation criteria provide details of more programme-specific information needed.

(a) *Innovation and approach*: The proposal clearly describes how the applicant will address the issues presented in sections 2, 4 and 5. The proposed approach will be evaluated in terms of feasibility and appropriateness of the UNCCD and its country Parties (20 points);

(b) *Organization and benefits*: The proposal provides the best possible environment for organizing the conference and achieving the proposed results (fundraising, outcomes and so forth). The applying lead institution/consortium demonstrates that it is able to organize the conference in accordance with UNCCD requirements (20 points);

(c) *Organizational capacity*: The applicant has expertise in key organizational areas and demonstrates the ability to engage and work together with local, national, regional and international networks. In case of a consortium, the proposal describes the rationale for the composition of the consortium, with indications of each partner's respective role, and shows how the coalition will achieve results in organizing the conference. The applicant demonstrates a high level of regional and/or country expertise with appropriately qualified staff. The applicant develops a strategy that clearly illustrates the involvement of the scientific community, giving due attention to achieving regional balance (20 points);

(d) *Staff and position specifications*: Each key person whether staff, consultant or volunteer, is described in a biographical sketch and has relevant expertise in either the scientific area relevant to the UNCCD mission or the organization of an international scientific conference (20 points);

(e) *Proposed budget and budget justification*: The applicant provides a proposed budget including a breakdown of any possible funding sources. The applicant outlines its capacity to support and/or work with the UNCCD secretariat to develop and implement a joint fundraising strategy (10 points);

(f) *Partnership building*: The applicant outlines its capacity to mobilize technical and financial partnerships to support the preparation of the conference including, but not limited to, activities of the scientific committee, working group participation, scientific contribution, and website development (10 points).
