TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consultancy to facilitate the virtual meetings of the UNCCD Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology and the Science-Policy Interface

Consultancy reference number: CCD/20/STI/36

Background

The objective of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought, through effective action at all levels, supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements, in the framework of an integrated approach which is consistent with the 2030 Agenda, with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. In line with Article 24 of the UNCCD, the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) is established as a subsidiary body of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to provide it with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. The CST meets in conjunction with the ordinary sessions of the COP. It is meant to be multidisciplinary, open to the participation of all Parties, and composed of government representatives competent in the relevant fields of expertise. The CST is served by the UNCCD secretariat through its Science, Technology, and Innovation Unit (STI) as its secretariat.

The mandate of the CST Bureau

Following paragraph 9 of the terms of reference of the CST, as contained in decision 15/COP.1, the Bureau of the CST is responsible for the follow-up of the work of the CST between sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COP), which typically occur every two years. The COP has also assigned the CST Bureau with direct responsibility for the implementation of the CST work plan, and attainment of its objectives. This work plan includes, but is not limited to, focus on the objectives and coordination activities identified in the work programme of the SPI for the same biennium.

The mandate of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI)

As a means to strengthen the CST, by its decision 23/COP.11, and as amended by decision 19/COP.12, the COP of the UNCCD established a Science-Policy Interface (SPI) to facilitate a two-way science–policy dialogue and ensure delivery of policy-relevant information, knowledge and advice on desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) to all interested Parties. The SPI

1 For more details about the CST Bureau, please see: https://www.unccd.int/conventioncommittee-science-and-technology-cst/bureau-cst
2 The most recent UNCCD Conference of the Parties was COP 14 (https://www.unccd.int/conventionconference-parties-cop/cop14-2-13-september-new-delhi-india). It took place in New Delhi in September 2019 and included sessions of the CST. COP 15 is currently planned for December 2021.
3 The webpage for the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface (SPI): https://knowledge.unccd.int/science-policy-interface
4 For more details on the mandate of the SPI, please see: https://knowledge.unccd.int/science-policy-interface/mandate-and-tor-spi
provides the scientific subsidiary body of the UNCCD, the 5th with clear and well-defined thematic guidance on scientific knowledge requirements (e.g. thematic assessments, scientific studies and/or user guides) for implementing the UNCCD.

The composition of the SPI and its support from the UNCCD secretariat
The composition of the SPI is designed to provide independent scientific perspective from the full range of relevant disciplines to the UNCCD, taking into account regional and global issues and policy considerations. The SPI therefore includes 10 globally selected independent scientists, 5 regionally nominated independent scientists, 5 elected CST Bureau members (science-focused policy makers drawn from each region), and 5 observer organization representatives (including UN organizations involved in the implementation of UNCCD policies as well as a representative of civil society organizations (CSOs). There are two co-Chairs of the SPI, one who also serves as the Chair of the CST Bureau and thus brings a policy perspective, and one elected among all the independent scientists. The SPI is supported in its work by the secretariat of the UNCCD through the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) unit, including 1-2 people providing logistical support, and 2-3 providing substantive guidance, and 1 providing overall scientific direction.

How the SPI works
Between and during SPI meetings, all 25 SPI members and observers work together towards meeting the tasks assigned to the SPI by the COP (Figure 1).

Figure 1. How the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface works.

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5 [https://www.unccd.int/convention/committee-science-and-technology-cst](https://www.unccd.int/convention/committee-science-and-technology-cst)
The primary focus of SPI work is to translate relevant scientific findings and recommendations into policy proposals resulting from assessment and synthesis of current science. The advice and guidance of the SPI is then transformed into policy-oriented recommendations in official documents to be considered by the CST, which prepares draft policy decisions that are ultimately considered by the COP.

This process begins with a two-year work programme for the biennium, the core of which focuses on scientific assessment, synthesis and translation, and typically results in the production of peer-reviewed technical reports as well as science-policy briefs designed to support policy development. The SPI also collaborates with and leverages the products of other scientific panels and bodies and supports them through the peer-review of relevant scientific assessments and science-based communications. In addition, the SPI communicates with the larger scientific community about the scientific knowledge requirements of the UNCCD and associated policy implications, encouraging relevant and salient research.

The work programme of the SPI
For the biennium 2020-2021, the work programme for the SPI includes 2 thematic objective scientific assessments and 7 coordination activities with other scientific mechanisms. Each thematic objective assessment is guided by one working group which is coordinated by 3 co-leads, with support of 1 or 2 observer organization representatives, respectively. The 7 coordination activities established with other scientific mechanisms are each addressed by interested SPI members under the leadership of two SPI members with relevant expertise and experience. Each SPI member contributes to one SPI objective working group but may be engaged in multiple coordination activities.

The nature of typical physical meetings of the CST Bureau taking place prior to a SPI meeting
The CST Bureau often meets for part of or all of one day aiming at assessing progress and determine next steps for all CST-relevant issues and implementation of the CST work plan between sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COP). This generally includes a few brief presentations by UNCCD staff followed by discussions. As noted above, the SPI work programme is part of the CST work programme, as the SPI serves the CST and includes the five CST Bureau members in its ranks. To ensure this interlinkage is effective, a CST Bureau meeting is often set immediately prior to a SPI meeting, and such a meeting may lead to a refinement of the substance of and logistics behind the forthcoming SPI meeting. The agenda for a CST Bureau meeting is determined by its the members and typically looks like the one outlined in Table 1. Usually, the Deputy Executive Secretary or his representative gives the welcome address in the CST Bureau meeting. The CST Bureau meeting is chaired by the CST Chair and facilitated by the Secretary of the CST, who is a member of the UNCCD STI staff.

6 The substance and list of deliverables for the 2020-2021 SPI Work Programme is documented in decision 18/COP.14. This also includes specific activities of all 7 SPI coordination activities.

7 For examples of past CST Bureau meeting reports (which include the agenda), please see “Bureau Meeting Reports” on this webpage: https://www.unccd.int/conventioncommittee-science-and-technology-cst/bureau-cst
Table 1. Breakdown of a typical CST Bureau Meeting agenda based on past meetings occurring at a similar half-way point in the timeline leading up to the next COP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Welcome address and adoption of the agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Progress against the objectives of the SPI work programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Coordination activities of the SPI with other scientific bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Key milestones towards the next COP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Other Matters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: A 1-day meeting physical CST Bureau meeting takes place prior to a 3-day physical SPI meeting as described in the next section.

The nature of typical physical meetings of the SPI

When occurring physically, a typical SPI meeting spans three days (Table 2). While SPI meetings provide an opportunity for information exchange, the primary aim is to advance the collaborative work of the SPI with respect to all facets of its work programme. In this regard, these meetings are predominately dedicated to work (e.g., planning, scientific assessment, scientific discussion/debate, writing). The expected outcomes for each meeting are determined by the participants, particularly the SPI co-Chairs and the SPI working group co-Leads, prior to the meeting.

Each SPI meeting is chaired by one or both SPI co-chairs with procedural and substantive support from the UNCCD secretariat. The three days the SPI meets in its entirety typically consist of plenaries and working group sessions. The opening plenary is designed to provide the SPI with an update on major issues confronting the SPI, which is generally provided by an address from the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD. This opening is usually followed by one or more segments which are designed to bring all SPI members up to date on the progress of all relevant activities. These are following by parallel break out working sessions (generally 2 or 3 running coincidently) focused on specific SPI objectives and/or coordination activities. Plenary is used for reporting back on the progress made in the break-out working sessions. If needed, plenary is also used to briefly bring all participants back together at the end of each day and/or the beginning of the following day to ensure continuity. Because the work itself is variable, the co-Chairs of the SPI can call for additional sessions of working groups and/or plenary, adjusting the schedule as necessary. At the end of the meeting, other business, next steps and closing remarks provided by the Deputy Executive Secretary occur in plenary.

All 25 SPI members and observers participate in plenary and in their respective working sessions. The UNCCD secretariat designates one person to facilitate each working session and another to take notes. Consultants (~2 per objective) may join the SPI for all relevant parts of the SPI meeting. Additional secretariat staff, and upon invitation on occasion, external experts, join the meeting for selected periods to provide specialized inputs on specific topics. Overall, 35-40 people are in attendance at any given time during an SPI meeting.

8 For examples of past SPI meeting reports (which include the agenda as an annex), please scroll down to SPI Meeting Reports on this webpage: https://knowledge.unccd.int/science-policy-interface/mandate-and-tor-spi
Table 2. Breakdown of a typical SPI meeting agenda based on past meetings occurring at a similar half-way point in the timeline of a biennium SPI work programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Welcome address Adoption of work</td>
<td>Plenary</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work</td>
<td>Plenary</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Status of the objectives of the SPI Work Programme</td>
<td>Plenary 60 mins for 2 presentations by co-Leads 30 mins for Q&amp;A</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Status of the coordination activities of the SPI Work Programme</td>
<td>Plenary 105 mins for 7 status presentations (~ 10 mins each, with 5 more mins for questions) (given by the secretariat or co-Leads) 15 minutes for overall discussion on next steps</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Working sessions on the objectives of the SPI Work Programme</td>
<td>Break-out Working Sessions (2 concurrent) (typically spread over 2 days)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Report back to Plenary</td>
<td>Plenary (short presentations by the co-Leads followed by discussion)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Working sessions on the SPI coordination activities</td>
<td>Break-out Working sessions (3 concurrent) (typically spread over 2 days; intensity of work on each of the 7 coordination varies, impacting the division of labor and time)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Report back to Plenary</td>
<td>Plenary</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Other business</td>
<td>Plenary</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. Next steps (meetings, etc.)</td>
<td>Plenary</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. Summary and closing remarks</td>
<td>Plenary</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other things allotted time at a physical SPI meeting</td>
<td>Coffee breaks (2 per day, 15 mins each) Lunch break (1 hour each day) Logistics (15 minutes at end of day 1 and 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total hours of a typical 3 day physical SPI meeting:</strong></td>
<td><strong>24 hrs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: A 3 day physical SPI meeting is usually preceded by a 1 day CST Bureau meeting as described in the previous section.

**Consultant’s tasks and deliverables**

Due to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the next CST Bureau (originally anticipated: 22 September 2020) and SPI (originally anticipated: 23-25 September 2020) meetings will be held virtually.

Under the supervision of the Lead Scientist of the UNCCD in coordination with the CST Secretary, based in the Science, Technology and Implementation (STI) unit, overseen by the Chief of the Unit, substantively guided by the CST Chair and the SPI co-Chair, and technically supported by the IT department, the consultant will assist with the technical design, preparation, and facilitation of the virtual CST Bureau meeting (see Table 1) and the virtual SPI meeting (see
Table 2) including the plenary and a series of virtual working group sessions with appropriate time and working hours arrangements to enable a comprehensive discussion and progress towards the completion of deliverables, with the aim of have similar progress on deliverables and other impacts obtained in physical meetings.

Recognizing that a one-to-one conversion of a physical meeting to a virtual event is neither possible nor advisable, the UNCCD secretariat has been asked by the CST Bureau and the SPI to envision and design a compelling and unique virtual experience, using past physical meeting designs as the foundation. Maintaining the high impact of past physical meetings where face-to-face contact was key will require restructuring the programme so that it is viable online. This may be achieved through a combination of techniques recommended by the consultant, including but not limited to,

The tasks and responsibilities of the consultant are to:

1. Develop, in consultation with relevant UNCCD secretariat staff and the Chair of the CST Bureau, the co-Chairs of the SPI, as well as the co-Leads of SPI working groups, options for the co-design of a virtual CST Bureau meeting and SPI meeting. These options should include, but not be limited to, consideration of:
   - employing best practices for physical-to-virtual meeting conversion;
   - adjusting workflows leading up to and following the main event to fit the needs of a virtual meeting;
   - planning and scheduling core live sessions in timeframes optimal for effective plenary discussions and working groups, taking different time zones into account;
   - shortening session length in the main event to keep attendees engaged (while perhaps expanding the total number of days of the main event);
   - incorporating more and longer breaks;
   - incorporating methods to keep meeting participants focused on workshops while minimizing distractions incorporating, as appropriate, interactive online collaboration methods to reach consensus in the working groups;
   - co-developing on on-demand content hosted by the UNCCD secretariat (MS SharePoint and MS Teams) (e.g. pre-recorded video presentations associated with workshops).

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| “Hospitable” time zone range for CST Bureau virtual meeting participants |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
|                        | Bonn (CEST)       | Buenos Aires (ART) | Thimphu (BTT) |
| Start                  | 13:00             | 08:00            | 17:00          |
| Finish                 | 18:00             | 13:00            | 22:00          |

| “Hospitable” time zone range for SPI virtual meeting participants |
|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
|                        | Bonn (CEST)      | Colorado (MDT) | Beijing (CST) |
| Start                  | 14:30            | 06:30           | 20:30          |
| Finish                 | 18:30            | 10:30           | 00:30          |
with background reading necessary to accelerate the work planned for the main event);
- employing unobtrusive formative evaluation techniques to illicit participant feedback after each meeting segment in order to improve the subsequent segments;

2. Develop, in consultation with relevant UNCCD secretariat staff and the Chair of the CST Bureau, the co-Chairs of the SPI, as well as the co-Leads of SPI working groups, options for the conduct, moderation and documentation of a virtual CST Bureau meeting and SPI meeting. These options should include, but not be limited to, consideration of:
   - employing best practices for virtual meeting conduct and moderation;
   - optimization of the application of virtual meeting platform functionality (the UNCCD has licenses for Zoom and MS Teams), such as security (e.g., waiting room), in meeting controls to help manage participants (e.g., sound and camera control), recording, screen, camera and application sharing (including multi-share and whiteboard), breakout rooms, chat (for ongoing discussion, documenting ideas, etc.), Q&A, polls and end reports;
   - preparation of guidance materials/slides (pre-meeting and within-meeting) designed to anticipate and overcome barriers to effective participation and common “how do I?” disruptions common to online meetings;
   - training (virtually) presenters to ensure effective engagement with the SPI;
   - respecting the intercultural composition of both the CST Bureau and SPI;
   - ensuring that all aspects of the approach selected for the design and running of the virtual meetings, are tested prior to the actual meetings.
   - ensuring effective facilitation and moderation of the live meetings (NB: this may be through some combination of training others and direct participation/support provided by the consultant during the meeting, as deemed appropriate after consultation with UNCCD secretariat and the CST Bureau Chair and the SPI co-Chairs);
   - advising on ways to effectively capture essential in-session contributions from participants and contributing to the organization of such information and its communication back to the participants;
   - providing a session-concluding opportunity of an informal summative evaluation of the virtual experience by the participants;
   - contributing, through documentation via the different tools employed during the meeting, to the production of meeting reports (outcome documents, revised timelines, etc.)
   - similar support to any pre-event and post-event engagements agreed in the approach agreed in point 1 above.

3. Contribute to planning and adjustment sessions convened by UNCCD secretariat and SPI leadership where the preferred options for both points above are selected, completing the co-design process.

4. Contribute to within-event and post-event consultations to ensure the success of the core event and any follow-on activities recommended.
Requirements/special skills

- Minimum of five (10) years’ of dedicated experience in the design, facilitation and moderation of interactive virtual sessions.
- Demonstrated experience in the management of virtual teams in an intercultural environment.
- Demonstrated experience in converting physical meetings to a virtual format, which have led to equal or greater impact than the original physical meeting design.
- Demonstrated experience in advising (including training) designated facilitators/moderators drawn from the client organization.
- Demonstrated experience in optimizing the impact of virtual meeting platforms, with specific examples using Zoom.
- Demonstrated experience in using office software in support of virtual meetings (e.g., MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, SharePoint and Teams);
- Must be able to productively utilize the above-mentioned systems, understanding conceptually the hierarchical organization within each software system for maximum efficiency, and the interactive capabilities and features between software systems and the Internet-based website;
- Ability to organize and carry out complex, multi-faceted meeting sessions in a coherent and efficient fashion;
- Ability to interpret, apply and explain rules, regulations, policies, and procedures of the virtual meeting to the participants;
- Demonstrated competence and experience in cross-cultural virtual leadership, ideally in a global setting;
- Demonstrated ability to work independently and remotely and be adept at managing multiple and frequently changing priorities;
- Verbal communication skills to speak effectively, to engage in fact finding, to convey information clearly and accurately, and to clarify conceptual issues and policy matters related to the program/meeting;
- Skill in setting up, utilizing and training virtual presenters in the working sessions and the ability to organize materials;
- Ability to maintain confidentiality always and to present the meeting in a professional and courteous manner;
- Demonstrated strong analytical, technical, organizational and communication (written and verbal) skills;
- Fluency in English is required (verbal and written);
- Access to stable high-bandwidth internet is required.

Contractual terms

This consultancy will begin and be completed in September 2020. During the first week of September, the options noted above will be proposed and the design of the virtual meetings and how they will be conducted will be agreed. The live virtual meeting will take place beginning no earlier than 22 September 2020, and ending no later than 30 September 2020. Depending on the design proposed and approved, this may involve as much as 4 hours a day for a minimum of 4
and maximum of 8 days in late September. Through the adjustment of workflows or other techniques proposed by the consultant, some work may be possible in smaller working sessions earlier or later, though these should not require the virtual presence of the consultant. Taking the preparatory days, live meetings, and post-meeting work into account, the aggregated time commitment of the consultant is not anticipated to exceed 8 working days. Payment will be made upon the satisfactory performance of the above-mentioned responsibilities and successful management of the CST and SPI meetings and working sessions. Final decisions concerning content and conduct of the meetings will be made by UNCCD secretariat with substantive guidance from the CST Bureau Chair and the co-Chairs of the SPI. The fee will be defined based on the qualifications of the incumbents and may be paid upon the satisfactory performance of the above-mentioned responsibilities and successful management of the CST and SPI meetings and working sessions.

The consultant will be home-based and must be available for conference calls involving members from around the world, during and after normal working hours.

All products developed and delivered through this consultancy shall remain the exclusive property of the UNCCD secretariat and shall not be divulged and/or used without prior written authorization.

**Submission of application**

Applications should be submitted by e-mail to staffing@unccd.int together with a UN Personal History Form and CV9, specifying the position CCD/20/STI/36 in the subject line. Please also submit a cover letter including your expectations for remuneration.

The deadline for applications is **02 September 2020**. Only applications submitted by the deadline will be considered.

Due to the volume of applications received, receipt of applications cannot be acknowledged individually. Please address your application as indicated above and please do not address or copy your application to an individual at the Secretariat or Global Mechanism. Candidates who do not receive any feedback within three months of the deadline should consider their application as unsuccessful.

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