

# Ten Steps in the practical organisation of the NAP alignment Process

## Annotations

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### *1. Brief Introduction:*

The UNCCD 10-Year Strategy requires that affected country Parties align their action programmes the same<sup>1</sup>. That decision and several that followed based on it, mandate the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) to assist these Parties in their alignment efforts through the provision of relevant technical assistance comprising inter alia of information products<sup>2</sup>. Pursuant to this mandate the Secretariat and the GM continue to facilitate the alignment process by providing assistance in various forms. Notwithstanding these efforts and those of the country Parties themselves, the alignment process has not proceeded apace as is recognised by the Conference of the Parties (COP) itself<sup>3</sup>. Indeed there is a real danger that the 80% alignment of action programmes by 2014 as foreseen by Decisions 13/COP.9 will not be achieved by the stipulated time unless further urgent action is taken.

Cognisant of the above, and as an additional effort to give greater momentum to the alignment process, the Secretariat has prepared the attached practical step-by-step guide on the **practical organisation** of the NAP alignment process for the use of all countries intending to undertake this process. This is a guide as distinct from a compulsory set of rules, merely proposes to facilitate countries' efforts as regards the practical organisation of the process. They are therefore free to apply it in whole or in part as is relevant to their particular national circumstances.

In preparation of this guide a very conscious effort was made to ensure that it is as simple as possible, and that the steps identified are those which are the minimum necessary for a successful practical organisation of the process. The guide is entirely focused on these practical actions that should/could be taken at various stages to have a properly organised process as regards the alignment of a country's NAP. This focus is deliberate as the theory of NAP alignment is by and large already explained elsewhere<sup>4</sup>. The aim here therefore is to provide the organisational framework for the application of the theory on NAP alignment.

In the application of this guide users must be aware that while it is divided into individual steps, the exercise is one whole and complete process. Each step is a fundamental link representing a definite stage leading to the next and ultimately to the realisation of the entire process.

### **2. Objectives of the guide:**

The main purpose of the guide is to support the country parties in undertaking alignment by explaining in 10 simple practical organisational steps, the keys stages and actions that should be undertaken to successfully align a NAP. Its focus is on practical actions and activities that once realised with the correct application theory, will lead to the correct alignment of the

NAP in accordance with the UNCCD 10-Year Strategy. It aims to simplify the alignment process through explaining the practical organisational measures without which the theoretical/technical information that already exists as regards alignment<sup>5</sup> cannot and will not be realised.

### **3. Concept and nature of the guide:**

Conceptually the guide seeks to divide the entire alignment process into concrete stages or steps where each has:

- i) **An objective/a general yet specific aim;**
- ii) **An accompanying process or series of actions aim at achieving the objective and culminating in the creation of a concrete product;**
- iii) **A product which is the result of the proper implementation of the process/actions outlined within the step itself.**

The steps detail an approach where users would be able to determine not merely what the step is, but also whether each step was effectively realised culminating in the creation of the identified product. Knowing precisely the aim of the step; what actions it entails; what product is intended and how it is linked to the following step and the completion of the entire exercise as a whole, makes for a guide that is simple and easy to follow.

The overall idea is therefore to make the process simple, concise and yet precise, and to ensure a design which is systematic where the stages practically and logically flow from one into the other.

### **4. Scope of application:**

The approach used is that of a general guide meaning that the steps foreseen are generally/ universally and individually/specifically applicable one and the same time. Due to the fact that countries are not only different and individual, but are also at various/different stages in the process of NAP alignment<sup>6</sup> this practical organisational guide must be applied, taking the objective existing situation of the particular country into consideration.

A survey conducted by the Secretariat revealed that as pertains to their status of the NAP alignment process, countries can be classified into four broad categories namely those:

- (a) Where nothing has been really done as regards the preparation of NAP;
- (b) With NAPs that are under preparation;
- (c) With NAPs that have been completed but not aligned;
- (d) With NAPs that have been completed that reflect well the five operational objectives of The Strategy but still need to have their activities aligned to these operational objectives.

This guide is mainly concerned with countries grouped in (a), (b) and (c) above. However, it is applicable to all countries *mutatis mutandis* once the necessary minor and specific adjustments are made to meet the specific needs of the particular country during application.

## **The Steps**

### **STEP I: Preliminary organization**

No process can come to successful fruition without basic planning and leadership, so too it is with NAP alignment. This step is about initial planning and leadership for the process and lays the foundation for the same. The real task here is ensuring the establishment of a small organ/body comprising of people that will spearhead the initial practical organisation of the process. This group will of necessity by and large be made up of people who are already aware and convinced of the need to undertake the alignment. It should be structured with a composition that is broadly representative of the key stakeholders who must be prepared to reach out to the rest of the nation by use of a well-designed programme of communication and advocacy.

The identification and bringing together of this initial group is generally the role of the National Focal Point (NFP) as the designated government body with direct responsibility for the UNCCD process in the country. Based on this particular fact, it should not seem too strange that this initial group may be mostly populated with representative of various relevant government ministries and departments. What is important is that in the end, this group is competent and capable to move the process forward and that it is broadly representative as regards the involvement of key stakeholders and is determined to reach out to the others.

**N.B. Involvement of the media in this first step is very crucial and should therefore be stressed.**

## **STEP II: Practical start of the process**

This step is totally in the hands of the initial body established in Step I. The main task is to design a plan to effectively raise awareness that will create sufficient national momentum to cause the alignment process to become a much broader concern, thereby bringing on board all key stakeholders to be incorporated into and form a National Coordinating Body<sup>7</sup>. Their job therefore is to make the plan, take the actions, and create the national atmosphere paving the way for moving to Step III. The central challenge of this group is making sure that its created plan is executed most effectively.

**N.B. Feasibility of the plan is the watchword in this second step.**

## **STEP III: Reaching/involving the Public**

While a plan moves one from beginning to progress, success is the efficacious realisation of that plan. Accordingly, Step III is about that organisational stage that sees the putting of the plan in motion in an effective and efficient way, and this is the charge of the initial body. For this charge to be carried out the initial body must:

- i) Work together in a focused manner
- ii) Ensure that the linkages and initial partnership are built that will ultimately lead to popular ownership of the process
- iii) Be determined to drive the process forward

This step is significant for making the alignment process an exercise truly national in nature. UNCCD implementation is driven by a bottom up approach where partnership at all levels is a key ingredient to success. The successful completion of this step must result in awareness-driven popular participation in the process from here onwards, spearheaded by a permanent

coordinating body. In short, this step leads to the creation of the National Coordinating Body and the transfer of responsibility from the initial coordinating body.

**N.B. Achieving demonstrated popular and committed participation is central to this step**

#### **STEP IV: Initiating actual alignment**

Here the organisational process is now in the hands of a duly constituted National Coordinating Body which should be sanctioned by, and has the full support of the government. This is the body that will take permanent charge of the alignment process seeing it through to completion. And later, will spearhead the implementation of the aligned NAP.

This step is concerned with ensuring the collection of correct data; identification of available resources; and that the machinery and processes are all in place so that the exercise can move to the preparation of the draft aligned NAP. All of these actions must be taken using a synergistic and partnership approach, thus ensuring that the issue of mainstreaming and synergies are addressed from the genesis of the preparation of the aligned NAP.

A NAP in essence is made up of two fundamental parts: There is a diagnosis which outlines the nature of the problems of desertification, land degradation and drought and their causes. It is absolutely essential that this diagnosis is as comprehensive and exhaustive as possible as the second part, namely the prescription could only be right if the diagnosis is correct.

The prescription details inter alia the solutions to be taken, the time they will be taken, how they will be taken and how they will be financed. This therefore means that careful planning covering all aspects of the process must be the central preoccupation at this stage of the process. This step is where the true essence of the content of the aligned NAP begins.

**N.B. Getting the correct data is paramount in this step**

#### **STEP V: Preparing the aligned NAP**

This is where all the previous work is brought together and put down in black and white for the establishment of the overall blueprint for sustainable land management. In short, this is the actual writing of an aligned NAP. This is a very concrete exercise that must be very directly managed as regards its concrete product. In this step information is not merely collected and recorded but expressed as a policy where actions would be systematically taken to address desertification, land degradation and drought, and consequently sustainable land management as a whole.

For the alignment to be done properly, key national and development policies must be carefully considered at this stage. Issues such as synergies, mainstreaming and relevant indicators among others must be watch words guiding this step. If done properly, the resulting product shall be truly reflective of the national reality. And, shall be a programme that is feasible, practicable and financially supported while remaining accessible (as regards use) to all stakeholders and the public at large.

**N.B. Coordination and cooperation between those responsible for the various sections is key**

## **STEP VI: National Review of the first draft**

Once the first draft of the aligned NAP is prepared it must be publicly disseminated so that it is available to the entire nation for their perusal, review, comments and suggestions leading to additions and/or subtractions. This step is important not only to ensure popular participation, but more importantly, to encourage people's full ownership of the NAP development, alignment and implementation process.

During this step careful consideration must be given to all responses received, and consequent upon the same, adjustments made where required. This work is to be carried out by the national coordinating body using all forms of communication including the mass media. This therefore is a process where there must be a very high level of interaction and exchange between the National Coordinating Body and the public on the draft aligned NAP. The National Coordinating Body must of necessity be very proactive in encouraging very open participation from the public. This stage culminates in the production of a refined draft to be considered during Step VII.

**N.B. This is a key step as regards promoting peoples' ownership of the process and its results**

## **STEP VII: Expert/technical review of the refined draft**

The aligned NAP must be done taking into consideration certain key issues covering inter alia:

- Synergies
- Mainstreamed in all relevant sectoral/development policies
- Socio-economic baselines
- Performance and impact indicators
- Tools for monitoring and evaluation
- Being based on the proper legal and policy framework
- Has a feasible IFS
- Is aligned in accordance with the guidelines

These are all issues that require specific technical and expert knowledge if they are to be properly handled as regards the alignment process. This step is aimed at providing the organisational element that allows this type of expertise into the process. It is the organisational step that allow for "control" to ensure that the refined /second draft is technically and expertly in line with the content, structure and nature required for an aligned NAP in accordance with the UNCCD 10-Year Strategy. Here the aligned NAP is counterchecked against all relevant national policies and programme as well as the guidelines for action programmes alignment to ensure that it is technically and expertly done.

From a content standpoint, this step foresee the formation of a small group of persons with the relevant capabilities – in particular as regards the issues of socio-economic baselines, mainstreaming, synergies and indicators and the like- to adjust in a precise manner, the second draft in accordance with the 10-Year Strategy and the national priorities of the country concerned. In many cases it is possible that this group would/could be led by a capable national consultant and/or can be a selection from the broader National Coordinating Body. This group shall work for a period of between one and two months.

At the end of this step the NAP in principle should be technically and correctly aligned, synergistic to other relevant processes and mainstreamed in all the relevant sectors including the national development and budgetary plans.

**N.B. The priority here is the issue of quality control**

### **STEP VIII: Finalization and national approval of the aligned NAP**

A series of local exercises and at least one national exercise should be held to present the final version of the aligned NAP to the local and the national community. Again this step is geared at cementing national and popular ownership of the NAP. Therefore, generation of aggressive national support that must be sustained over the long run; securing full popular legitimacy; and final agreement that the aligned NAP be sent to Step IX are all crucial issues at this stage.

**N.B. This step should secure the people's message approval and cement their feeling of ownership**

### **STEP IX: Official adoption**

Without official governmental/administrative and/or parliamentary/legislative approval, the aligned NAP would more than likely remain nothing but a beautifully written wish list. Official sanction is a *sin qua non* if the aligned NAP is to go to the next level which is where it really matters, namely efficacious implementation.

This Step is largely in the hands of the politically leaders of the country. Their acceptance of the NAP and sanction of the same as national policy shall provide the much needed political will, while also giving it the legal authority and framework that will help drive its implementation. This step must of necessary come at this stage as the “bottom-up approach” is a fundamental principle of the UNCCD. Additionally, at this stage the aligned NAP would have already met with the approval of the populace, thereby providing the popular basis for such official adoption.

**N.B. The step is to guarantee political will, legislative backing and administrative support and guidance**

### **STEP X: Circulation of the aligned NAP**

Once the NAP has been officially adopted, it must now be officially shared with all stakeholders at all levels, both internally and externally. This will allow for the adopted programme to be shared with all stakeholders. It must be remembered that while the government is required lead the process, implementation is a national undertaking and could only be done through full national participation.

Sharing the adopted aligned NAP with these stakeholders and partners is also a way of underlining to them (and in particular external partners) the importance that the government places on the implementation of the NAP. It would also provide partners and stakeholders the

information necessary to adjust their own approaches and programmes as regards cooperation with the government and other entities when dealing with NAP implementation.

**N.B. All stakeholders, partners and sections of society are through this sharing intentionally invited to be part of a network to support implementation process**

### **List of Documents**

For proper conceptual guidance of the alignment process a sound knowledge and proper application of some key documents is needed, while knowledge of some others would be useful. These documents include:

- Article 9, 11 and 19 of the Convention
- The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)
- Decision 13/COP.9
- The guidelines for Action Programme alignment
- The pedagogic guide for NAP/IFS alignment
- The additional technical documents produce by the Secretariat and the GM on NAP/IFS alignment
- The final report of CRIC 7 and CRIC 9

All relevant sectoral policies such as:

- Agricultural policy
- Forestry policy
- Water policy
- Poverty reduction strategy
- Land use and zoning policy
- Decision 13/COP.9
- NCSA (where exist)
- The NBSAPs of the country (where they exist)
- The NAPAs of the country (where they exist)
- Other relevant national policy such as does covering mining and infrastructural development

### **Conclusion**

It must always be remembered that NAP alignment is not an end unto itself but leads to an equally important consequential process, namely NAP implementation to ensure sustainable land management. For the true success of the latter process, it is essential that the former is properly done. It must be recalled also that popular participation is essential if both processes are to be successful. This guide was therefore prepared with the idea that alignment must be a peoples' process for beginning to end. Put another way, this guide is meant to address

everyone and not merely the NFP or the consultants that may be hired to help facilitate the process.

As highlighted earlier, each country is unique. This is a crucial point to be always borne in mind in the concrete application of the steps of this guide in any country. Failure to take this uniqueness into consideration will inevitably lead to practical problems as regards application and shall have the consequence of deforming the process, its products, and ultimately end up affecting the efficacious implementation of the NAP.

In short, this alignment exercise should be seen as a national and popular process rallying the nation as a whole to understand, participate in, and execute the process from alignment straight through to implementation. These steps provide a simple and straightforward path which would allow the users to do just that from the standpoint of the practical organisation of the process. As indicated, alignment must not be seen as the end all and be all. Rather it is really an important means to the ultimate end, which is the implementation of the Convention and its Strategy.

<sup>1</sup> Decision 3/COP.8

<sup>2</sup> Decision 1/COP.9 & Decision 1/COP.10

<sup>3</sup> Decision 2/COP.10

<sup>4</sup> See: <http://www.unccd.int/en/about-the-convention/Action-programmes/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> See: ICCD/COP(9)/2/Add.1

<sup>6</sup> See action programme alignment guidelines

<sup>7</sup> This may be called by different names depending on the country