

## - MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COP BUREAU (05 APRIL 2016)-

The meeting of the COP Bureau took place in Bonn, Germany, on 05 April 2016. An overview of the matters discussed and the decisions taken by the Bureau are presented below.

### **I. Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was adopted by the COP Bureau with the further inclusion of two additional sub-items to be addressed under agenda item IX - Other business - as follows:

- Presentation of Ankara initiative results and plan of action for the next two years by Turkey,
- Progress report on the LDN target setting process.

### **II. Presentation of the final report and the outcomes of the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP12)**

One member requested the Secretariat to report on the UNFCCC process. The Executive Secretary gave an overview of what was done to reinforce synergies between UNCCD and UNFCCC since COP12. During UNFCCC COP21, the Executive Secretary succeeded in convincing the President to push forward the recognition of land as a carbon sink playing a key role in mitigation processes, particularly in Africa. The GGW initiative was highlighted as a core programme to be supported during the next years to address climate change issues. The EU group also asked for a joint meeting with the UNFCCC and UNCCD heads to include land issue as an important issue in mitigation and adaptation concerns, which in turn would mean much more financial resources available for the future. A further success was the recognition of the LDN fund as an innovative fund to address land degradation.

Another member asked for more information about decisions 13/COP12, paragraph 15 and Decision 3/COP12, paragraph 9, which were addressed by the secretariat.

### **III. Activities of the Committee on Science and Technology**

The CST Chair informed that the CST Bureau agreed to extend the mandate and activities of the SPI to implement the work programme for the biennium 2016-2017, containing three major objectives and 4 coordination activities as follows:

- Objective 1: provide scientific guidance to the operationalization of the voluntary land degradation neutrality (LDN) target;
- Objective 2: highlight the science-based synergistic potential of sustainable land management (SLM) practices to address DLDD, climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- Objective 3: encourage the development and implementation of specific rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands;

- Coordination activity 1: follow up and contribute to the land degradation and restoration assessment (LDRA) conducted by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES);
- Coordination activity 2: contribute to the development of the Global Land Outlook (GLO);
- Coordination activity 3: follow up on current collaboration with and explore further means of collaboration with the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS) of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP);
- Coordination activity 4: initiate and coordinate interactions between the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The CST also agreed on the modalities for the peer review of SPI products.

One member asked for clarifications about the GSP and SKBP processes. The Executive Secretariat explained that the UNCCD secretariat and the SPI were invited to participate in the fifth working session of the ITPS within the GSP in order to exchange views for collaboration on soil issues. Regarding the SKBP, the Executive Secretariat explained that an overview of new potential partners is ongoing to connect them to the SKBP and improve knowledge sharing, including all available data in the current database.

Another member wondered if IPBES is covering all the issues of UNCCD. The Executive Secretary reminded that Parties considered that there was no need to create a new scientific intergovernmental panel/platform for land degradation issues as they could be addressed by existing mechanisms such as the IPCC and the IPBES. A Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment (LDRA) is currently carried out by the IPBES with a strong focus on the biodiversity aspects. The, SPI will contribute to the review of this assessment in accordance with the procedure established by the IPBES. .

Further information was also requested regarding GLO work. The Executive Secretary reminded that the GLO initiative is funded by different members Parties. GLO will give a picture of all research results looking at all desertification issues including physical, climate and social aspects. The first outlook will be available on 2017.

A member requested the GLO outlook to be submitted to the bureau for review, prior to its publication, as per the provision of decision 19/COP12. The Executive Secretary explained that the provision of decision 19/COP12 was limited to scientific outputs prepared under the supervision of the SPI and did not, hence, cover the GLO outlook. The later could therefore be produced and launched without prior review by the Bureau as it is the case for an extensive range of publications launched by the secretariat, including, brochure, leaflets and awareness raising material, amongst others . Any change in the current practice aiming at submitting to the Bureau all documentation produced by the secretariat will prove very difficult to implement and would require a COP decision.

In the light of the interest expressed by several members on the GLO initiative, the Executive Secretary proposed to organize a presentation on the subject at the next Bureau meeting, through the coordinator of the GLO, Mr. Ian Johnson.

#### **IV. Activities of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention**

The Chair of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention presented the main results of CRIC Bureau meeting:

- The CRIC Bureau highlighted the need to send a communication to all Parties, following the letter send by the ES, in relation to optional reporting, requesting Parties to inform the Secretariat on their willingness to engage in optional reporting. More accurate information on the number of Parties participating in the reporting process and submitting a report will allow better preparation for the fifteenth session of the CRIC (CRIC 15),
- The CRIC Bureau agreed to convene CRIC 15 during the last quarter of October 2016 and endorsed a work programme for a 3 days session, considering the agenda items,
- The CRIC Bureau expressed a need for continuously updating Parties through the Convention institutions, on the LDN target setting and LDN related matters in order to increase the number of country Parties participating in the programme,
- The CRIC Bureau stressed the importance to involve CSOs throughout the session of the CRIC and requested for adequate resources allocation to ensure the representation of CSOs during CRIC 15,
- The CRIC Bureau also stressed that Parties should feature strongly during the CRIC 15 through interactive sessions. This will ensure that CRIC is seen as an experience sharing platform that will allow gathering as many different views and opinions as necessary for enabling decision making at the level of the COP.
- The CRIC Bureau endorsed the CRIC 15 agenda, pending a number of amendments that will be communicated to the CRIC Bureau within a month time. Upon, request, the CRIC agenda will be shared also to the members of the Bureau once it is finalized.

Following a question from a member, the Executive Secretariat confirmed that the reporting in 2016 is linked to the current activities of the Strategy (i.e. operational objectives, strategic objectives 1 to 4 and financial flows) and that the 2016 reporting has nothing to do with reporting on LDN, the latter being subject for review by 2018. The decision, taken in Ankara, underlines that the reporting in 2016 is optional and that the IWG will work on new elements for a strategic approach, including a monitoring framework ready to be applied as soon as the COP decides on the Strategy.

#### **V. Follow-up on decision 7/COP.12 on the future strategic framework of the Convention**

The Executive Secretariat presented the scope and modalities of the IGW work to achieve the expected outcomes by the end of October 2016.

Several member raised aspects that need to be to be highlighted in the strategy:

- the need to address SGD 15 and in particular target 15.3 as well as cross- cutting issues and interlinkages with the other SDGs,
- the importance of gender equality, particularly of the role of women in rural development for the implementation of the Strategy on the ground,
- the need to demonstrate that global issues are addressed as part of the Convention work.

Turkey expressed its intention to host one session of the IWG and stressed the importance of the work to be done to refine the Strategy.

The Executive Secretariat also emphasized the need to develop a Strategy that would speak for and be of interest to all those countries that have declared themselves affected and that would clearly underline the linkages with other international processes.

## **VI. Convention Budget: Status of assessed contributions**

Further to the presentation on the convention's budget and the status of assessed contributions, some members raised the issue of the approach proposed by of the Secretariat for the payment of outstanding contributions. While acknowledging the creativity of the approach, the same members underlined that it was not the mandate of the Bureau to take decisions on the matter as budget issues are to be addressed by the COP.

Several members echoed this understanding, but some members agreed with the approach and asked for more time and consultation on the matter before taking a decision.

The Executive Secretary responded by pointing out operative paragraph 26 of decision 10/COP.10, whereby the COP requested the Executive Secretary to report on the implementation of any arrangements regarding outstanding contributions. As such, one could interpret this to mean that any arrangements with Parties would be reported after the arrangements have been implemented but the current approach was taken for transparency considerations. The Executive Secretary highlighted that clearing outstanding contributions through voluntary contribution plans should be considered as a good solution for all Parties.

Several members proposed to give flexibility to the Secretariat in order to use the outstanding contributions while not increasing core budget contributions and to find an agreeable solution to implement the Convention in an efficient way. Members also expressed their interest and understanding about the opportunity to finance activities without increasing the core budget. One member reminded that the Secretariat has the flexibility to make changes between budget lines.

The Executive Secretariat will keep working on this issue to find the best solution and report on the matter at the next COP Bureau.

Clarification on auditing process was provided by the Executive Secretariat: two audits have been realized; one by the Board of Auditors of United Nations (internal audit) and one by an external auditing firm namely *Deloitte and Touche*. The second audit has been undertaken to address a specific demand by the UN Board of Auditors, which requested an external audit of the GM accounts. As per that request, the external audit of the GM accounts provided the needed information and conclusions allowing for the final clearance of accounts.

## **VII. Progress in revision of the Memorandum of Understanding between the UNCCD and the Global Environment Facility**

A memorandum was circulated to the Bureau Members containing all proposed amendments. No objections were raised by the Bureau and some suggestions and comments were made to improve the proposal.

One member suggested replacing land degradation issues by DLDD issues in the article 5.1. and 5.2 in order to be consistent within the entire document.

Another member proposed to improve the wording of article 2.01. to make it clearer. Further editorial corrections should be undertaken.

### **VIII. Next term of Office of the Executive Secretary**

The Executive Secretary recalled applicable rules of procedure to extend the term of office of the Executive Secretary. Two documents were sent and circulated. The current term of the ES will end in 30 September 2016.

After closed deliberations, the COP Bureau agreed with the proposal of the UN Secretary General to extend the term of office of the Executive Secretary for three years.

In doing so, the Bureau reached the understanding that the Executive Secretary post will rotate among different geographic regions of the UNCCD, thereafter<sup>1</sup>.

The Executive Secretary thanked the COP Bureau for the confidence expressed and recalled her unflinching commitment to UNCCD process.

### **IX. Other Business**

#### **- Presentation of Ankara initiative results and plan of action for the next two years by Turkey**

The presentation of the Ankara initiative recalled that the initiative was launched at the COP12 in Ankara in September 2015. Its aim is to help achieving land degradation neutrality using UNCCD tools and practical resources from 2016-2019. Turkey has identified three areas in which its experience and expertise would have a particular added value (socio-economic, institutional and policy). The draft action plan is ready and the activities will begin in the course of April 2016. Turkey, supporting the UNCCD process, will pledge USD 5 million for the 4 year period.

#### **- Presentation of the progress on LDN target setting programme**

To this date, 63 countries are involved in the LDN target setting programme, in addition to the 14 pilot countries.

This exercise will be funded through a blend of financial resources:

- USD 3 million from the GEF,
- USD 1 million from the Republic of Korea,
- USD 1,5 million from Turkey,
- Additional bilateral donors which have expressed interest in contributing in the near future.

Inception workshop will be realized in each region according to UNCCD Annexes as follows:

- For Africa, in Konya-Mersin, Turkey from to 28-29 May 2016
- For Northern Mediterranean in Batumi, Georgia to 6-7 June 2016
- For Asia in Bangkok, Thailand to 12-13 July 2016
- For Latin America and Caribbean, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, 20-21 July 2016

New countries wishing to join the exercise will participate in an inception workshop to be organized back to back with the CRIC meeting in October 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> As per the wording provided by the Presidency.

An extensive number of organizations and partners, such as the World Bank, are interested in joining such a process.

The GM Managing Director emphasized that the LDN target setting programme is one of the three flagships programme of the GM that offers an opportunity to jointly address several issues related to land degradation such as climate change, migration and security matters.

The Executive Secretary reported that the GEF is currently preparing GEF 7 including co-financing for LDN target setting.

The Executive Secretary underlined that generally the problem is not the lack of financial resources but the lack of good projects to be financed and insisted, hence, on the need to concentrate efforts in the design of the right projects.

### **X. Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the COP Bureau will take place İstanbul in Turkey in January 2017. This meeting could be of two days duration in order to include the presentation of the GLO report.