

Thirteenth Session of the Committee on Science and Technology

Concluding remarks by the Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology, Hamid Custovic

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the healthy and fruitful discussions of the last three days.

Thank you for your commitment to provide scientific and technical guidance to the UNCCD so that land is optimally managed today, not only to our benefit, but to that of future generations.

Together, we have achieved important results.

This Committee has endorsed a scientific conceptual framework for land degradation neutrality. This conceptual framework is not only a commendable scientific achievement in itself, but it is also a practical tool for decision-makers. It provides robust and practical guidance to scientifically underpin the implementation and monitoring of LDN. It represents a paradigm shift in the global efforts to address land degradation by bringing together the prevention of land degradation and the consideration of potential gains achieved through restoration and rehabilitation interventions. It is a tool in the hands of those Parties choosing to pursue LDN. This Committee has called for Parties to consider this guidance and observe the principles laid out by the conceptual framework, taking into account their national circumstances.

Synergies with intergovernmental scientific panels and bodies have been strengthened. We had the pleasure to welcome in our meetings representatives of the IPBES, ITPS and IRP. This cooperation has already delivered important results, for instance in stressing the role that sustainable land management and soil organic carbon can play in addressing DLDD and achieving LDN, while also contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation. However, this Committee looks forward to further enhancing and formalizing these collaborations. We particularly look forward to the release of the IPBES land degradation and restoration assessment next year and of the IPCC special report on climate change and land in 2019.

None of these results would have been achieved without the work and commitment of the SPI. Allow me, once more, to congratulate my colleagues of the SPI for the concrete results achieved during the biennium and to thank them for their personal commitment to advancing the implementation of the UNCCD.

For years Parties and other stakeholders have demanded efficient and effective provision of scientific guidance to the decision-making processes within the UNCCD. The SPI has proved to be a cost-efficient, flexible, collaborative and responsive interface for the scientific community and policy makers within and outside the UNCCD.

We look at the future with renewed enthusiasm and with the reassurance that an appropriate channel for the provision of scientific advice to the Convention has been identified and

established. We trust that the SPI will successfully bring to completion the bold yet feasible work programme that this Committee has set for the biennium 2018-2019.

On a personal note, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the CST Bureau Vice-Chairs for their support and dedication to achieve our objectives. I must also say that I had fantastic collaboration with my SPI Co-chair, Ms Mariam Akhtar-Schuster. She is an incredible woman with so much energy in her small body. Thank you Mariam for all you have done for all of us.

Special thanks go to the Secretariat for the excellent job they are doing for this Convention. Thank you, Victor, Sara, Lawrencina, Jeroen, Jamal and all the others who are supporting this process.

Without the Executive Secretary it would have been hard to achieve what we presented to you. Thank you Madam Barbut for your commitment to make this Convention different and better than it used to be.

For the first time in this Convention, I am optimistic. I feel that things are moving and land issues are becoming a top priority in many country Parties. With your support, distinguished delegates and colleagues, in coming years we can expect visible results on the ground for the benefit of our people in each of our countries.

Let me conclude by saying that it was an honour to chair the work of this thirteenth session of the Committee on Science and Technology and to be part of the SPI for the last two years.