

**Bureau of the Conference of the Parties
Madrid, Spain, 11 March 2008**

Report of the Bureau Meeting

1. The President of the Eighth Session of the COP convened a meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNCCD. The meeting was held in Madrid, Spain on 11 March 2008.

I. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the Agenda

2. The meeting started at 10:00 a.m. with a welcoming remark by H. E. Madam Cristina Narbona Ruiz, Minister of Environment of Spain and President of the COP Bureau. She referred to the outcomes of COP 8 and the ESCOP 1 and congratulated the Executive Secretary for timely follow up actions on decisions taken at the Madrid Conference of the Parties including efforts to translate the Strategy into actions in the form of a draft multi-year work plan. She also referred to the preparation of the 16th session of the Commission of Sustainable Development (CSD) and the High Level Policy Dialogue.
3. The Bureau adopted the agenda taking into account an amendment made by the CRIC Chair

II. Presentation of the final report and of the outcomes of COP 8

The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole presented the final report of COP8. He reminded that COP 8 took important decisions, which aim at enhancing the implementation process of the Convention. These include among others the collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF); the work of the Committee for the review of the implementation of the Convention (CRIC); the functioning of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST); and the 10-Year Strategic Plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention.

He thanked the Government of Spain for its leadership and the exceptional role it played to facilitate the conclusion of the negotiations on the programme budget of the Convention (First extraordinary session, New York, USA, 26 November 2007).

III. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN SINCE THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

1. Follow up Actions on the Ten-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance the Implementation of the Convention (2008–2018):

The Executive Secretary referred to the fact that the 10-year Strategy gives a clear guidance that should be translated into concrete work programmes for the CRIC, the CST, the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism. He also referred to the expected role of Parties in responses to challenges deriving from the Strategy.

He reported on actions taken by the Secretariat since Madrid including the formulation of corporate instruments and the preparation of its draft multi-year strategic work plan and a costed biennial work programme, following a results-based management (RBM) approach. The elements of this process have included, among others,

- Consultations and brainstorming at the level of units on the orientation and priorities of the secretariat in the light of the guidance of The Strategy;
- Training on the concept of RBM and on planning through a logical framework;
- Drafting of the four-year strategic plan and the two-year operational plans;
- Continuous internal exchanges among all staff, including through a retreat, and further development of the plans; and
- Adoption of a new structure for the secretariat.

He informed that in line with decision 3/COP.8, the Secretariat is also engaged in facilitating the strategic planning documents for CRIC, CST, and the preparation of a joint work programme with the Global Mechanism. As far as the latter is concerned several meetings have been organized since COP8 in which the orientation and main features of collaboration have been discussed. The aim is to ensure consistency and complementarity in the delivery of services, and to strengthen coordination and cooperation from headquarters to country level. A draft framework for the JWP has been prepared.

With regard to the orientation of the secretariat he underlined that the move towards enhanced UNCCD implementation phase demands that the secretariat seeks to enhance its responsiveness to related needs of the Parties. This will take place through quality services to the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies and upgrade of the secretariat analytical and knowledge brokering functions. It will also encourage coalition building and system-wide cooperation to deliver the objectives of The Strategy and enhanced political support at all levels. It will further facilitate the treatment of emerging issues, new mechanisms or legislative tools to support sustainable land management.

To demonstrate the new orientation, the secretariat will pursue activities that aim at:

- Raising the profile of land and land-based ecosystem services, notably in the drylands, in the context of adaptation and mitigation to climate change;
- Increasing the importance of CST as a forum for scientific exchanges relating to land and soil conservation;



- Establishing a baseline for desertification monitoring;
- Promoting synergies, notably through the establishment of a UN system inter-agency cooperation network for land and soil;
- Developing and implementing a comprehensive UNCCD communication strategy;
- Providing assistance to affected country Parties through advocacy and consultative processes.

He referred to the new structure of the Secretariat and the preparation of detailed work plans and allocation of tasks within the units. Parties will have an opportunity at CRIC7 to review the entire corporate process and guide the Secretariat as deemed necessary. After CRIC 7 and adjustment of the draft plans of the Secretariat, a desk-to-desk workload analysis will be carried out with the aim to better service Parties.

At the end of 2008 - beginning of 2009, the secretariat will start the drafting of a results-based budget framework for 2010-2011, in accordance with United Nations standards, for submission to COP 9. This will complete the preparations for the move to RBM system.

The President thanked the Executive Secretary for his report. Several Bureau members commended the Executive Secretary for the reforms undertaken, which they found logical and of substance. Some commented on the Ten-Year Strategy and referred among others on the need to spell out the indicators on activities deriving from the Strategy; two Bureau members wondered on how will units in the Secretariat new structure cooperate with Parties in the regions; some said that Parties should tell how they are going to implement the Convention an the 10-Year Strategic plan; One Bureau member recognized the importance of knowledge management and underlined the need to keep the focus on science and technology. Reference was also made on the importance of successful coordination between the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism.

The President of the Bureau stated that land degradation and desertification have had till now a low profile. She added that Spain is working to have this matter being fully considered including at the level of the European Union member States.

The Executive Secretary responded to some queries and informed as follows:
As far as support to affected countries is concerned the Unit for facilitation, coordination and monitoring of the implementation will continue to play a key role but service to Parties will also be provided through regional coordination mechanism. Such support will be included in the working arrangement between the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism.

He confirmed that Science and technology would remain a focus. The Secretariat has also started exploring possibilities to bring the issue of land in the mitigation and adaptation agenda of the climate change negotiations. He referred to ongoing work of a task force established by the two Executive secretaries of UNFCCC and UNCCD.

2. The GM realignment according to the 10 Year Strategy Plan

The managing Director reported on tasks undertaken by the GM to adjust its RBM system in line with the Strategy. He informed that the GM would develop specific relationships to respond to operational objectives under the Strategy where it has a supportive role to play. He made a

presentation on GM expected accomplishments and corporate objectives in the context of its multiyear work plan.

He referred to the Joint work programme being developed with the Secretariat to contribute jointly to the implementation of the operational objectives under the Strategy and in line with COP8 relevant decisions.

He reminded that GM activities would include providing technical backstopping in the development of integrated financing strategies; strategic advisory services to broaden access to financing from various identified sources; build the capacity of national counterparts to navigate resource mobilization processes; contribute to policy and strategy dialogue; cooperate with donor partners, multilateral organizations and financing institutions; develop knowledge products with partners, negotiate agreements with donors and financial institutions in financing national programmes and projects as they relate to SLM.

Some Bureau members reminded that affected developing countries have high expectations in terms of funding for their NAPs. The GM is encouraged to be more responsive to their requests.

3. UNCCD High-level Policy Dialogue Preparatory Activities;

The Executive Secretary reminded that The Strategy recognizes that combating desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) is a global environmental challenge, which deserves a specific momentum and strong international mobilization.

The Strategy aims to rally a global coalition and expresses a call to deliver benefits for people and ecosystems at all levels. In so doing, The Strategy can assist in generating down-to-earth responses to some of the major international challenges of our time.

The High-Level Policy Dialogue will review and advise as to how the mandate given by the Convention to the Parties, the secretariat and the Global Mechanism has been enriched by the responsibilities to be discharged under The Strategy.

Guidance and views from country representatives, including on the necessary scientific assessment on land and soil matters shall also be conducive to an optimal preparation of the forthcoming seventh session of the Committee for the review of the implementation of the Convention (CRIC 7) and the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 9).

The main purpose of the dialogue will be to launch an exchange among Parties on the following:

- What are the conditions for successfully implementing The Strategy at all levels in the context of critical global issues?
- What type of political commitment is needed for this to happen?
- How to engage Parties to the UNCCD early on a range of critical issues related to the implementation of The Strategy and reforms necessitated by and flowing from it?
- How the UNCCD bodies and institutions could help?

Some comments were made by Bureau members including the following: the outcome of the Policy dialogue should be widely circulated to all policy and decision-makers; some NGOs and private sector representatives should be invited; high-ranking officials to attend the HLPD should be informed on recent scientific findings on desertification, land degradation and drought.

The Executive Secretary provided additional information on the format of the HLPD and invited all Bureau members to ensure their relevant political authorities would be able to attend the meeting, which will be organised one day prior to the high level segment of the CBD-COP9.

4. Mechanisms to Facilitate Regional Coordination for the Implementation of the Convention

The Secretariat reminded that the importance of coordinating efforts towards an enhanced implementation of the Convention has been acknowledged by Parties through Decision 3/COP8 on the 10-Year strategic plan. The Conference of the Parties also recognizes at its eighth session that regional coordination is an important component in implementing the Convention and The Strategy.

Decision 3/COP8 calls upon each region to develop a proposal, in collaboration with the Executive Secretary and the GM, on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention, taking into account, inter alia, existing regional coordination activities, tools, and donor and regional funding arrangements, and providing details of staffing, hosting possibilities and other financial resources required, and to define their functions and output and reporting arrangements in terms of implementing the Convention and delivering The Strategy, and to provide these prior to COP 9 for consideration in the context of the budget and the programme of work.

Parties requested the executive secretary, taking into account the views of the GM on its regional arrangements:

- (a) To review the current regional coordination arrangements within the secretariat and within the GM with a view to improving them;

- (b) To develop evidence-based options for improving regional coordination arrangements based on the above-mentioned review and the proposals received from regions and to submit these to COP 9 for consideration.

As a follow up to decision 3/COP8, The Secretariat will facilitate the organisation of a consultative meeting on regional coordination arrangements. It is expected on that occasion that meeting participants would discuss the following issues:

- Identification and involvement of key regional stakeholders;
- Regional coordination mechanisms and review of experiences;
- Consider regional meeting proceedings expressing their expectations on regional coordination mechanism and their assessment on the same;
- Develop needs assessment on regional coordination mechanisms;
- Review of existing regional mechanisms;
- Options on regional mechanisms and on bridging / liaising UNCCD and other UN agencies and international institutions detailed with staffing, hosting possibilities, costs, regional funding arrangements;
- Review and adjustment of ToRs for regional mechanisms taking into account the needs defined by, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe;
- Modalities for reporting to Parties.

The consultative meeting will bring together some 20 participants and it will be held in June 2008 at the headquarters of the UNCCD secretariat in Bonn.

One Bureau member reminded that the issue on regional coordination has been before Parties for 9 years and a final decision is yet to be taken. He added that decision 3/ COP8 clearly set a new path that compel all Parties to look into the possibility of finalising the arrangements regarding the work of the regional units.

Another Bureau member stated that there are still some firm diverging views amongst Parties. Many have indicated however that the decision taken at Madrid should lead to a final decision and the planned consultative meeting should elaborate on the stand over the last years. It is expected that subsequent suggestions by the regions concerned would lead to a final decision at COP9.

5. Preparation for the Sixteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD16 and 17)

The Secretariat reminded that CSD-16 will focus on Agriculture, Rural development, Land, Drought, Desertification, and Africa.

The actions towards CSD 16 started with the inclusion of regional inputs on desertification, drought and land degradation through regional consultation meetings (RIMs) held late in 2007 and early 2008.

Inputs were also drawn from the Beijing International Conference preparatory to CSD 16 held in January 2008. The secretariat provided inputs to the CSD draft report based on information drawn from UNCCD national reports submitted at the CRIC sessions, and the Beijing Conference.

During the CSD session the Secretariat will also facilitate the organization of several side events in collaboration with a number of key stakeholders on themes, which include the right to food, securing the ground/grounding security, reducing the risks of desertification and drought and access to Water.

The purpose of the side events is to foster partnership building in the light of the implementation of the strategy.

Bureau members welcomed the planned activities at the CSD and some informed on action taken during the regional meetings to bring the issues of land and soil high on the agenda of policy makers.

6. Road Map to prepare, in line with the Strategy, Work Programmes for CRIC

Bureau members were informed on action being taken as a result of decision 3/COP8, which also requested the secretariat to elaborate among others, a multi year programme of work for the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), using a Result Based Management (RBM) approach.

The Secretariat informed that with regard to the CRIC, there is a need to translate the provisions of the strategic plan and framework together with the existing Terms of Reference and other pertinent decisions of COP 8 into a results-based biennial work programme.

Considering that the Terms of Reference for the CRIC will be revisited at COP 9 with a view to making the CRIC a permanent subsidiary body of the convention, the proposed multi-year work programme will have to be restricted to the years 2008 –2009 up until COP 9 by which Parties deliberate and decide upon CRIC's new mandate and operational modalities.

It is expected that following COP 9, a new multi-year framework and results-based biennial work programme will have to be introduced for the CRIC, taking into consideration the new Terms of Reference given to CRIC by Parties, deliberations on issues such as cross feeding to and from CST, deliberations on indicators for monitoring the implementation of the Convention, as well as the possible commencement of the fourth reporting cycle for the UNCCD after COP 9.

The Secretariat informed on plan to develop a multi-year programme of work for the CRIC in a timely manner and provide Parties at CRIC 7 with a final draft document.

Two Bureau members referred to the need of having regional meetings to discuss on issues on the agenda of CRIC7. The Executive Secretary advised that financial resources have not

been secured for such meetings. Alternative is therefore to facilitate the organisation of regional consultations at the site of the CRIC 7 session.

7. Activities of the Committee on Science and Technology

The CST Chair reported on the outcome of the Bureau meeting of the CST held in Bonn on 19 February 2008. The following is a brief outcome of the meeting:

- Substantive preparation of the CST Special Session in November 2008 in Istanbul, Turkey: The Bureau underlined the need to allocate enough time for CST in order to have the best inputs for the CRIC process.
- The Bureau considered the issue of mobilising the scientific community and improving the profile of the CST participation, and decided to involve the science and technology correspondents in the CST meeting in Istanbul.
- Concerning the issue of the submission of a draft costed 2 Year work programme for the CST to the CRIC7 session, the Secretariat is requested to submit the draft document latest by 30 June 2008.
- The CST Scientific Conference during COP9: The Bureau considered a draft document on the terms of reference for the selection of a lead institution or consortium that would assist the Bureau in the preparation of the next regular CST session during COP9. The Bureau decided to select a consortium rather than a single lead institution; to develop a methodology (a matrix) for evaluation of the proposals in order to allow Bureau members to better evaluate the institutions; to ensure that the results of the CST Conference are policy-relevant and oriented to provide synthesis and recommendations for policy makers.

The relevant COP8 decisions on the functioning of the CST, the roster of independent experts, networking of institutions, the Land Degradation in Drylands (LADA) project and the UNCCD fellowship programme, were also considered at the CST Bureau meeting.

A provisional agenda for the CST Special Session in Istanbul was circulated.

IV. Overview of the Preparation of the Seventh Session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 7)

1. Status of consultation with the Government of Turkey;

The Secretariat reported on the results of the first planning mission for the organisation of the CRIC and special intersessional meeting of the CST.

Being the first of its kind since COP.8, the mission was organized around two components, as follows:

- Site finding and assessment in Istanbul, as the designated venue of the Conference, and

- Consultation with the authorities of the Government of Turkey (GoT) on the text of a proposed host agreement and related matters pertaining to expected commitments from the host country under General Assembly Resolution 342.

The initial fact-finding mission has allowed for an all-inclusive assessment of the five locations proposed by the GoT to host the Conference and has provided for an initial exchange of critical information on logistical, technical and substantive matters.

Consultations with the GoT are now expected to enter into a more dynamic phase, marked by the selection of the Conference site and exchanges with relevant authorities on key aspects of the host country agreement. It is proposed to reschedule the Conference from 03 to 14 November.

The Secretariat aims at setting a deadline for signature of the host country agreement by September. The Bureau endorsed the proposal to reschedule CRIC7 from 3 to 14 November. The Secretariat is requested to continue working closely with the Government of Turkey with a view to finalising the necessary preparations for the Conference.

2. Organisation of the Activities at CRIC 7

The Secretariat reported that a draft tentative agenda and a draft programme of work for CRIC7 have been submitted to CRIC Chair for consideration. The same were made available at the COP Bureau meeting

Bureau members were also informed that, as mandated by decision 3/COP.8, CRIC and CST Chairpersons have taken advantage of the meeting of the Bureau of the CST in Bonn, to consult on the substantive organisation of the special sessions of the CST and the CRIC.

The Secretariat elaborated on the proposed programme of work for the CRIC including facilitation of regional consultative meetings; interactions between the subsidiary bodies; and organisation of panel discussions.

The CST and the CRIC Chairpersons have raised concerns with regard to the length of regional consultations and the CST session. Both were considered as too short in order to prepare substantive input and facilitate informed discussions on important agenda items such as the multi-year programmes of work for the respective subsidiary bodies of the COP and the issue on monitoring progress made in the implementation of the Convention using a set of indicators.

The Secretariat informed about a request to facilitate the organisation of a CRIC Bureau meeting back to back with the High Level Policy Dialogue or in the sidelines of the ninth session of the CBD COP to be held in Bonn in May 2008.

3. Financial requirements for facilitating participation of eligible country representatives and NGOs at CRIC7

The Executive Secretary reminded the importance of contributing to the Special Fund for participation at CRIC7. It is anticipated that participation of two delegates from the least

developed and one participant from the other eligible countries to CRIC 7 will be financed through the Special Fund.

Decision 1/COP.ES-1 on Programme and Budget for the Biennium 2008-2009 invites Parties, as well as Governments of States not Parties to the Convention, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations, to make contributions to the Special Fund established under paragraph 10 of the financial rules of the Conference of the Parties, in order to support the participation of developing country Parties, and in particular least-developed country Parties, affected by desertification and/or drought, particularly those in Africa, in the sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies;

Bureau members were informed that the total amount required for the participation of 190 delegates from eligible countries and 30 representatives of NGOs amount to USD 1.104.100.

The Secretariat informed that a notification letter was sent to all developed country Parties inviting them to make voluntary contribution to facilitating maximum participation at CRIC7.

The President of the Bureau informed that Spain will encourage EU member states to contribute to the Special Fund for participation at CRIC 7 and, for those concerned, to pay assessed contribution the core budget of the Convention.

Next Meeting: The Bureau agreed that the next meeting will be held prior to CRIC 7. The exact date will be communicated to Bureau members following consultation between the President and the Secretariat. The President thanked all Bureau members for their participation and declared the meeting closed at 17:45 p.m.
