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SUMMARY OF THE THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE UNCCD COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION: 25-27 MARCH 2015

The thirteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 13) of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) convened from 25-27 March 2015, in Bonn, Germany. CRIC 13 was preceded in Bonn by meetings of the Regional Implementation Annexes, from 23-24 March 2015. Approximately 200 people, including representatives from governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations, attended the meeting.

CRIC 13 delegates assessed the implementation of the Convention against its five operational objectives: advocacy, awareness-raising and education; policy framework; science, technology and knowledge; capacity building; and financing and technology transfer. Discussions on these topics were informed by a preliminary analysis of the information contained in reports from affected and developed country parties, as well as other reporting entities, where appropriate, on operational objectives of the UNCCD's Ten-year Strategy (2008-2018). The CRIC also reviewed financial support for the implementation of the Convention, and the formulation, revision and implementation of action programmes in view of the post-2015 sustainable development framework.

As he opened the meeting, CRIC Chair Philbert Brown (Jamaica) called on delegates to develop targeted, actionable and measurable recommendations, and stressed the need to take into consideration the ongoing post-2015 development agenda negotiations, in particular the proposed target on achieving land degradation neutrality. While the percentage of reports submitted for the review process was high (approximately 95% of affected country parties and almost 70% of developed country parties submitted their reports through the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS) online platform, the gaps in implementation left some CRIC participants questioning whether the Convention was collecting the right information to spur further action, and whether other tools, such as studies on the costs of inaction in addressing land degradation, enhancing synergies with the Rio Conventions,

or adopting a global target such as land degradation neutrality, could enhance implementation.

The CRIC 13 draft report included 115 paragraphs of recommendations for further consideration at the 14th meeting of the CRIC and the 12th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 12), which will convene in Ankara, Turkey, in October 2015.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNCCD

The UNCCD is the centerpiece in the international community's efforts to combat desertification and land degradation in the drylands. The convention was adopted on 17 June 1994, entered into force on 26 December 1996, and currently has 195 parties. The UNCCD recognizes the physical, biological and socio-economic aspects of desertification, the importance of redirecting technology transfer to be demand-driven, and the importance of involving local communities in combating desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD). The core of the UNCCD is the development of national, subregional and regional action programmes by national governments, in cooperation with UN agencies, donors, local communities and non-governmental organizations.

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NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION: In 1992, the UN General Assembly, as requested by the UN Conference on Environment and Development, adopted resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification (INCD) in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. The INCD met five times between May 1993 and June 1994 and drafted the UNCCD and four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean.

COPs 1-11: The COP met annually from 1997-2001. During these meetings, delegates, *inter alia*: selected Bonn, Germany, as the location for the UNCCD's Secretariat and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) as the organization to administer the Global Mechanism (GM), which works with countries on financing strategies for sustainable land management; approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding the GM; established an *ad hoc* working group to review and analyze the reports on national, subregional and regional action programmes; adopted a fifth regional annex for Central and Eastern Europe; established the CRIC; and supported a proposal by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to designate land degradation as another focal area for funding.

COP 6 met in 2003 in Havana, Cuba. Delegates, *inter alia*, designated the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD, decided that a comprehensive review of the Secretariat's activities would be undertaken by the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), and requested the Secretariat to facilitate a costed feasibility study on all aspects of regional coordination. COP 7 took place in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2005. Delegates reviewed the implementation of the Convention and developed an MoU between the UNCCD and the GEF. An intergovernmental intersessional working group was established to review the JIU report and to develop a draft 10-year strategic plan to enhance the implementation of the Convention (the Strategy).

COP 8 convened in Madrid, Spain, in 2007 and, *inter alia*, adopted a decision on the Strategy. Delegates also requested the JIU to conduct an assessment of the GM for presentation to COP 9. Delegates did not reach agreement on the programme and budget, and an Extraordinary Session of the COP convened at UN Headquarters in New York on 26 November 2007 to conclude this item.

COP 9 convened in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2009. Delegates focused on a number of items called for by the Strategy and adopted 36 decisions, which addressed topics including: four-year work plans and two-year work programmes of the CRIC, Committee on Science and Technology (CST), GM and the Secretariat; the JIU assessment of the GM; the terms of reference of the CRIC; arrangements for regional coordination mechanisms; the communication strategy; and the programme and budget.

COP 10 convened in 2011, in Changwon City, Republic of Korea. Delegates adopted 40 decisions, addressing, *inter alia*, the governance structure for the GM, by which parties agreed that the accountability and legal representation of the GM shall be transferred from IFAD to the UNCCD Secretariat.

COP 11 convened in 2013, in Windhoek, Namibia. Delegates adopted 41 decisions, *inter alia*, to: approve new housing arrangements of the GM; initiate follow-up of the outcomes of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20); establish a science-policy interface (SPI) to enhance the UNCCD as a global authority on DLDD and sustainable land management (SLM); and endorse the establishment of the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal to enhance knowledge management, including on traditional knowledge, best practices and success stories.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION: The CRIC held its first session in Rome, Italy, in 2002, during which delegates considered presentations from the five UNCCD regions, and considered information on financial mechanisms in support of the UNCCD's implementation and advice provided by the CST and the GM.

CRIC 2 (2003) reviewed implementation of the UNCCD, its institutional arrangements, and financing of UNCCD implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions. CRIC 3 (2005) reviewed the implementation of the Convention in Africa and considered issues relating to Convention implementation at the global level. CRIC 4 (2005) considered strengthening Convention implementation in Africa, improving communication and reporting procedures, mobilization of resources for implementation, and collaboration with the GEF.

CRIC 5 (2007) reviewed implementation of the Convention in regions other than Africa, how to improve information communication and national reporting, and the 2006 International Year for Deserts and Desertification. CRIC 6 (2007) reviewed the roles developed and developing country parties should play in resource mobilization, and collaboration with the GEF. CRIC 7 (2008) considered: the work plans and programmes for the Convention's bodies; the format of future meetings of the CRIC; and indicators and monitoring of the Strategy, and principles for improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and format of reports submitted to the COP.

CRIC 8 (2009) reviewed the workplans of the institutions and subsidiary bodies of the Convention and reporting guidelines and indicators. Delegates also recommended adoption of the proposal for an online Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS). CRIC 9 (2011) considered, among other items, preliminary analyses of information contained in the PRAIS reports.

CRIC 10 (2011) discussed the strategic orientation of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies, adopted four operational objectives to assess the implementation of the Convention against performance indicators, and approved an iterative process on reporting procedures and the refinement of methodologies for the review and compilation of best practices.

CRIC 11 (2013) was conducted in an interactive format to facilitate the sharing of country and regional experiences and lessons, with a half-day devoted to dialogue with civil society organizations (CSOs). Panel discussions covered: communication strategies to mobilize action on DLDD; crucial issues of alignment of national action programmes (NAPs); constraints and opportunities for the implementation of national monitoring

systems on DLDD; input from the *ad hoc* Advisory Group of Technical Experts on “operationally delineating affected areas”; current UNCCD funding flows and future prospects, including the role of CSOs; and data access tools and policy frameworks for enhancing accessibility to best practices. CRIC 11 also took note of the input from CST S-3 on how best to measure progress in the implementation of the Convention’s 10-Year Strategic Plan for 2008-2018 in a session on scientific input to the CRIC.

CRIC 12 (2013) approved 12 decisions, including on: best practices in the implementation of the Convention; UNCCD’s interaction with the GEF; multi-year workplans of the Convention’s institutions and subsidiary bodies; assessment of financial flows for implementation; assessing the implementation of the Convention against strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3, and against the operational objectives of the 10-year Strategy; performance and progress indicators, methodology, and reporting procedures; and ways of promoting and strengthening relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations.

CST: The fourth Special Session of the CST and the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference convened from 9-12 March 2015, in Cancun, Mexico, and addressed the theme “Combating desertification/land degradation and drought for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices.” As he opened the meeting, CST Chair Uriel Safriel (Israel) underscored the uniqueness of combining a scientific conference with a meeting of national policy-makers. The Scientific Conference organizers highlighted that the Conference would deploy a new format, reflecting lesson learning from the first two iterations of this novel approach to bridging science and policy. This meeting also marked the first UNCCD meeting with active involvement by the SPI, which was established by COP 11.

CRIC 13 REPORT

CRIC 13 opened on Wednesday morning, 25 March 2015. CRIC Chair Philbert Brown welcomed delegates and, recalling recent concerns that the CRIC is losing its relevance, noted that participation in the regional meetings preceding CRIC 13 and the high number of national reports submitted confirm UNCCD parties’ continued interest in the CRIC. He invited parties to work over the next 72 hours to ensure that CRIC 13 will move the UNCCD forward. He called for targeted, actionable and measurable recommendations, and stressed the need to take into consideration the ongoing post-2015 development agenda negotiations, in particular the target on achieving land degradation neutrality.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Monique Barbut explained the shorter duration of the CRIC session as part of the approach to increase the Secretariat’s efficiency. She welcomed the high number of national reports submitted to CRIC 13, but regretted that a reliable picture of land degradation still cannot be obtained from these reports, and questioned whether the reporting process is adequately addressing the Convention’s objectives. She suggested that national reporting should focus on information that leads to a better understanding of land degradation and should convince donors to increase financing by

demonstrating the importance of land management, in particular for climate change mitigation and adaptation. In this regard, she said work is underway to develop common indicators with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). She noted that land degradation neutrality could become a tangible national objective, if adopted in the post-2015 agenda. She also suggested: a reporting cycle of four years rather than two, in order to focus on measuring impacts and results, aligning the reporting requirement with the GEF’s support for reporting every four years; holding back-to-back sessions of the CST and CRIC alongside major international events such as Global Soil Week; strengthening regional implementation and governance, including by holding annual regional conferences; and strengthening of the CRIC Bureau.

STATEMENTS BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEXES: South Africa, on behalf of the African countries and Chair of Regional Implementation Annex I, reported that 98% of the African parties had submitted national reports. He said the move of the regional coordination unit (RCU) for Africa to Bonn is contrary to COP decisions regarding the RCUs. He highlighted that the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) had discussed strengthening African leadership in the UNCCD, stated their desire for the RCU to be located in Africa, and reported that the UNCCD will be an agenda item at all future AMCEN meetings. He regretted that many important issues were left off the CRIC 13 agenda, including resource mobilization and synergies with other Conventions. He also noted that the review of the CRIC should be properly managed and requested the Secretariat and the GM to uphold the provisions of the Convention and COP decisions.

India, on behalf of the Asian countries and Chair of Regional Implementation Annex II, said his region’s concerns include problems with funding timelines and technical support, and the need for engagement of developing countries on DLDD. He proposed developing an incentive framework that could aid in promoting synergies among the Rio Conventions, and noted the close correlation between the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the objectives of the Convention. On capacity building, he mentioned the disconnect between the number of activities reported and action on the ground, noting the greater role that civil society organizations (CSOs) could play, and that the emphasis needed to be on innovative technology transfer. He suggested that a technical manual could enable greater rigor in data for monitoring systems, and said greater use of social media could assist in disseminating best practices.

Colombia, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC), emphasized: the need for the Convention to play an active role in promoting mechanisms that facilitate, *inter alia*, the sharing of best practices, technology transfer, and promotion of indigenous technologies, as appropriate; the role of the UNCCD in facilitating efforts to search for alternatives and capacity building; the commitment and diligence of the Latin America and Caribbean regional coordination unit; and the need to search for new funding mechanisms.

Portugal, as Chair of Annex IV for the Northern Mediterranean, noted that the Mediterranean basin is known for its challenges related to DLDD and associated security implications such as immigration. He highlighted the relevance of DLDD issues in the post-2015 development agenda negotiations and stressed, among others: the need for countries to declare their priorities and identify the steps they are taking in the NAP alignment process; streamlining the 2016-2017 work programmes based on needs identified from the reporting process; and clearly identifying budgetary implications for any new proposals to ensure parties can make appropriate decisions.

Armenia, for Central and Eastern European countries and as Chair of Regional Implementation Annex V, reported a 100% submission rate of reporting in this region, revealing a high level of interest of countries in the Convention. He expressed concern that the shorter CRIC 13 meeting meant that issues such as best practices would not be discussed. He said the documents related to the reform of the CRIC should be discussed, and land degradation neutrality should be at the heart of the Convention.

STATEMENTS BY REGIONAL GROUPS AND CSOS: Latvia, on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States, stressed the importance of reviewing implementation of the Convention and welcomed the increased number of reports, resulting also from capacity-building efforts by the Secretariat, but said more cooperation and involvement of partners is needed, as well as better use of social media to supplement traditional means of communication. She said greater importance should be given to climate change mitigation and adaptation and more synergies should be sought with the UNFCCC and the CBD. She noted the support provided by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) to the land degradation neutrality project and the JRC's forthcoming publication of the "Global Soil Biodiversity Atlas." She highlighted the relevance of linking financial support to monitoring of implementation, expressed appreciation for the progress made on the integrated investment frameworks (IIFs) and called for good practice guidance on IIFs to be provided.

Forestry Environmental Action, Bosnia and Herzegovina, for CSOs, recalled the CSOs' dedication to the CRIC and regretted the decision by one regional annex not to allow CSO participation in its regional meeting. She emphasized the need for unified messages from governments, scientific institutions and CSOs for more effective advocacy, awareness-raising and education. She cautioned that alignment of NAPs should not hide the urgency of moving to implementation and stressed the need to strengthen national governance and give land degradation the same priority as climate change. Recalling the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference's approach to exploring links between socio-economic and biophysical systems with a focus on vulnerability, she stressed the importance of land-based adaptation through multi-stakeholder partnerships. On financing, she called for reinforcing the capacities of local actors to mobilize financial resources for SLM.

Lütfi Akça, Under Secretary to the Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs, Turkey, highlighted national efforts to combat desertification, including: aligning their NAP with the ten-year Strategic Plan and PRAIS reporting system; afforestation and

erosion control campaigns; and an agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to carry out projects such as training meetings to share experiences with neighboring countries. He said that decisions at UNCCD COP 12 will be critical given that it will convene in the midst of the September meeting of the UN General Assembly to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, the November G20 Summit in Turkey, and the December Paris Climate Change Conference. He said Turkey would launch the Ankara Initiative, which will seek to accelerate the implementation of the Convention and will address climate change, SLM and land degradation neutrality, at COP 12, and indicated that the SLM Business Forum will also be held during the COP.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: The CRIC Chair invited delegates to adopt the agenda. Colombia, on behalf of GRULAC, requested including an agenda item on the consideration of Conference Room Papers (CRP) 1 (Consideration of best practices in the implementation of the Convention: accessibility of information on best practices) and 2 (Additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention), given that they have important implications for the future of the Convention. Swaziland, supported by Tanzania, said it would be difficult to discuss new agenda items, given that appropriate consultations would not have taken place. Namibia said the CRPs had not been negotiated and their status should be changed to information papers. Brazil, on behalf of GRULAC, raised concerns about the limited time available to discuss the CRPs and, supported by Tanzania, requested clarification of the Secretariat's intention in releasing the CRPs immediately prior to CRIC 13. Executive Secretary Barbut clarified that the Secretariat was seeking informal feedback before presenting something to the COP. She said the status could be changed to that of a "non-paper" and suggested that written comments from groups and individual countries could be submitted by 1 June 2015, given that delegates were not prepared to discuss them during CRIC 13.

The Committee then adopted the provisional agenda (ICCD/CRIC(13)/1) as drafted. Delegates appointed Yuriy Kolmaz (Ukraine) as Rapporteur. The CRIC Chair informed the Committee that the CRIC Bureau had decided to facilitate the preparation of the final report of the session with the assistance of an extended CRIC Bureau. After CRIC Chair Brown fell ill, CRIC Vice-Chair Richard Mwendandu (Kenya) chaired the meeting from Wednesday afternoon to Friday.

ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

ADVOCACY, AWARENESS-RAISING AND EDUCATION: On Wednesday, the Secretariat presented the document on "Assessment of the implementation of the Convention: advocacy, awareness-raising and education" (ICCD/CRIC(13)/2), and highlighted that: 28% of the global population had been informed by the end of 2013 about DLDD and DLDD synergies with climate change and biodiversity, which was close to the global target of 30% by 2018; and civil society and the scientific community are increasingly involved in the Convention process. Noting that a large majority of affected parties have set

voluntary targets, consistent with the global targets and based on national priorities established by the NAPs, she concluded parties are now in a position to monitor progress in the implementation of the NAPs at both the global and the national level.

Uruguay, for GRULAC, on the recommendation that support be targeted to countries, subregions and regions that have reported a lack of capacities and instruments, noted the need to account for the respective needs of countries and that they may benefit from technical assistance.

South Africa suggested that affected country parties that have set lower voluntary targets than the global targets should be invited to reconsider them. India, as Chair for Regional Implementation Annex II, noted the progress made but emphasized the need for improving the quality of the information submitted and suggested that stronger language be used in the recommendations to this effect.

Armenia, for Central and Eastern European countries, noted the subjective nature and complexity of reporting on these aspects and suggested focusing on exchange of information and best practices. He emphasized the importance of raising awareness of decision makers and the role of CSOs in the implementation of NAPs.

On Friday, during the discussion on the draft conclusions and recommendations for this agenda item, China, supported by Argentina, Swaziland and Ghana, suggested retaining a paragraph that invites affected country parties to continue monitoring NAP implementation relative to policies, measures and actions undertaken for advocacy, awareness-raising and education, and invites parties to use land degradation neutrality (LDN) as an additional term for advocacy, awareness-raising and educational purposes, and suggested deleting a similar option that did not include the reference to using LDN in advocacy efforts.

Uruguay, on behalf of GRULAC, supported by Argentina, asked for clarification on changes to the text following the conclusion of the extended CRIC Bureau discussion, with Argentina preferring to keep the text as drafted by the extended CRIC Bureau. The Secretariat confirmed that the final report would include the original extended CRIC Bureau's text.

South Africa noted the omission of her suggested invitation to parties that have set lower voluntary targets than the global ones to consider reviewing them to be consistent with the global targets. Cuba, with Tanzania, expressed concern that the language of the draft report created confusion as to whether consensus was reached on some paragraphs or whether several alternatives were proposed and, with Equatorial Guinea, Namibia and China, questioned the meaning of "some Parties" used in several paragraphs to refer to recommendations made, as opposed to "Parties" used in other paragraphs, suggesting the removal of "some". Swaziland, with the US, supported this suggestion, noting that the chapeau clarifies that the document is not a negotiated text.

The US suggested using different formatting to differentiate the recommendations that originated in the documentation for CRIC 13 from amendments that were proposed by delegates at CRIC 13, and adding footnotes to indicate the source of new proposals.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The section in the final report on this agenda item (ICCD/CRIC(13)/L.2) includes 10 paragraphs. This section invites/encourages parties to:

- assess and increase the effectiveness of their advocacy and communication activities through the use of various means, including internet tools and participatory approaches;
- continue monitoring the implementation of their NAPs and, where appropriate, to use LDN as an additional term for advocacy, awareness-raising and educational purposes; and,
- for affected country parties, enter into South-South and triangular cooperation to enhance their efforts in setting and achieving their national targets.

The section also recommends a more country-driven, voluntary approach so as to enable flexibility for affected country parties to specifically request the necessary assistance to support awareness-raising on DLDD. This section also notes that national reports could be further improved as effective tools for advocacy, awareness-raising and education and suggests using success stories for reporting on operational objective 1 (Advocacy, awareness-raising and education) rather than data that may be unreliable.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND KNOWLEDGE:

On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced the document on "Assessment of the implementation of the Convention: Science, technology and knowledge" (ICCD/CRIC(13)/4) and reviewed the results of the preliminary analysis. The proposed recommendations on this issue included: inviting affected country parties to increase their efforts to maintain functional and regularly updated existing monitoring systems, recover those that have been discontinued and eventually expand those systems partially covering DLDD issues; requesting the Secretariat to undertake an in-depth analysis on national, regional and global monitoring systems; inviting developed country parties, relevant technical and financial organizations, including from the private sector, to provide additional support to affected country parties for the establishment and maintenance of national monitoring systems; recalling that affected country parties are invited to establish baselines and concrete targets within their NAPs; and specifying that the Convention's institutions shall include, in their 2016-2017 work programmes, specific actions in support of enabling affected country parties to assess and monitor DLDD, targeting those countries, subregions and regions that reported they lacked relevant capacities and instruments in this regard.

During the discussion on this agenda item, Trinidad and Tobago, for GRULAC, proposed inviting the Convention's "institutions" to analyze the scope and efficiency of monitoring systems, and to specify that the establishment of baselines and targets and assessment and monitoring would be "at the request of the parties."

India proposed calling for the "implementation" as well as maintenance and regular updating of existing monitoring systems. He also highlighted the need to look at comprehensive monitoring systems to address DLDD issues, harnessing private sector capacities, and said the monitoring system should be "robust," which would incorporate high quality, rigorous and comprehensive data.

Belarus, for Central and Eastern Europe, said increasing the level and exchange of knowledge could lead to a platform for a global and regional exchange of information, and supported work on the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal in this regard. He said there should be a fully operational monitoring system for DLDD, and the effectiveness of this work could improve capacity with appropriate funding. He noted that work on this area should give rise to the development of a satellite network to be used for monitoring DLDD. He also highlighted the need for improving the set of indicators to take into account the specific needs of countries.

South Africa, on behalf of the Africa region, highlighted that capacity is a constraint for many countries, and suggested that the reference to support for developing countries specify that it be provided “in a more coordinated manner.” She also proposed adding recommendations calling for South-South and bilateral partnerships. Egypt suggested adding text indicating that “countries should have a national monitoring system in place.”

During the discussion on Friday, Guinea Bissau noted that three paragraphs identify the need to undertake in-depth analysis of national, regional and global monitoring systems. These paragraphs differed over whether the analysis would be conducted by the Regional Coordination Mechanisms, the Secretariat or the Convention’s institutions, whether countries should have national monitoring systems in place, and whether developed country parties and financial institutions are invited to support this effort.

Nigeria noted that two paragraphs requested support for the creation of an enabling environment for affected country parties to become a partner of global satellite monitoring networks. These paragraphs differed in whether the “Secretariat” or “UNCCD” should provide such support.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The section in the final report on this agenda item (ICCD/CRIC(13)/L.2) includes 16 paragraphs and addressed, *inter alia*:

- monitoring systems;
- technical advice on DLDD;
- establishing baselines and concrete targets within NAPs;
- actions by the Convention’s institutions to support affected country parties’ efforts to assess and monitor DLDD, as so requested; and
- focusing on applied scientific solutions, traditional knowledge and innovative approaches.

Requests for Secretariat action include taking additional measures to make the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal functional, and enhancing efforts aimed at developing knowledge-sharing systems on DLDD issues. This section also suggests that the Land Degradation Neutrality Project should be scaled up, that the SDGs should be taken into account in the NAP alignment process, and that the roles of the CST and the SPI should be strengthened.

CAPACITY BUILDING: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced the document on “Assessment of the implementation of the Convention: Capacity-building” (ICCD/CRIC(13)/5). This report’s recommendations call for: developed country parties and international organizations to consider reviewing their capacity-building plans with a view to increasing such support on matters

relating to DLDD; the Secretariat to make available information on any country parties that need further capacity-building assistance according to the 2014 reporting; and the Convention’s institutions to include specific actions on DLDD capacity building in their 2016-2017 work programmes.

Paraguay, on behalf of GRULAC, said there is a need to look at specific mechanisms for capacity building. India requested the Secretariat to provide a list of capacity-building activities to bilateral and multilateral agencies. Armenia expressed hope for further collaboration with the GEF, noting that it is the largest supporter of capacity building for DLDD.

On Friday, during the discussion on the proposed conclusions and recommendations on capacity building, South Africa, for the African Group, requested that the GM not be referred to as a separate entity, noting its key role as a financing mechanism for the Convention. Delegates agreed to refer to “the Convention institutions” rather than “the Secretariat and GM” in the text.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The section in the final report on this agenda item (ICCD/CRIC(13)/L.2) includes six paragraphs. The section recommends review of capacity-building plans to increase coordination of support on DLDD matters, taking into account the post-2015 development agenda, and encourages South-South and triangular cooperation to address lack of capacity for implementation of the Convention. The recommendations also suggest that the Secretariat make available information on affected country parties that need further capacity-building assistance, and the inclusion of targeted actions on DLDD capacity building in the 2016-2017 work programmes of the Convention’s institutions. The recommendations also invite the Secretariat and GM to “engage with developed country Parties to meet their commitments.”

POLICY FRAMEWORK: On Wednesday, the Secretariat introduced the document on “Assessment of the implementation of the Convention: policy framework” (ICCD/CRIC(13)/3), underlining that an analysis of findings from the review points to the fact that implementation still faces challenges, and more worrying than the question of alignment is actual implementation of programmes, and lack of achievement of synergies among the three Rio Conventions. The recommendations in the document included:

- continued efforts by parties to formulate or revise their NAPs so that the global target is achieved by the end of 2015;
- developed country parties and financial organizations to give priority in their allocation of resources to activities included in the aligned NAPs and assist affected country parties in monitoring progress towards achieving national targets;
- requesting the GM to provide advice on the relevance of information on the indicator “number of affected country Parties, subregional and regional entities to have established and supported a national/subregional/regional monitoring system for DLDD” in future reporting exercises; and
- requesting the GM to identify and facilitate access to new funding opportunities to support NAP implementation, including through access to global and regional funds for sustainable development and environmental issues, building on linkages between desertification/land degradation, climate change and biodiversity.

Argentina, on behalf of GRULAC, suggested that affected country parties revise their NAPs to achieve the global target by 2015, and requested the GEF to introduce new funding instruments to build synergies between biodiversity, climate change and land degradation.

Belarus, on behalf of Central and Eastern European countries, called on countries to share their experience with land degradation neutrality programmes, and welcomed the Secretariat's efforts in bi- and multilateral partnerships to share experiences.

Swaziland, on behalf of the African Group, welcomed the document and called for including subregional and regional programmes and strategies. He called on the GM to play a catalytic role in this programme. India called for incorporating an incentive framework into bi- and multilateral funding arrangements to achieve synergies. The US asked the Secretariat to provide examples of synergistic implementation on the ground, and called for considering where synergy at the national level makes sense. Tanzania reminded delegates that the Secretariat is part of the solution, asking that it reflect on its role.

The Secretariat noted that synergy only works when it is incorporated from conception to implementation of a project and has mechanisms that enable broad involvement. He noted that the answer to synergy is not merely more financial resources, but also ensuring enabling conditions to realize synergies. He said land, water and climate change are still viewed as separate issues, and partnerships must consider the broader sustainable development context. Portugal suggested finding out what is preventing countries from aligning their NAPs and that priorities should be drawn from the information presented in the national reports.

The Secretariat said it could facilitate training on what it means to build synergies and related guidelines, which would be similar to the training on NAP alignment. He recalled that the Joint Liaison Group of the three Rio Conventions provides a platform for synergies.

Uganda said the Secretariat could play a more proactive role in facilitating access to information and services for countries to take advantage of funding opportunities to increase synergies. Italy highlighted examples of synergies in her country, such as a section on DLDD in the national climate adaptation strategy and the use of organic soil carbon as a progress indicator.

China described examples of synergies in her country, including annual meetings between the UNCCD and CBD focal points to discuss their respective activities, and a reforestation and restoration project involving the agricultural, forestry and irrigation sectors as well as the national planning council.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) drew attention to a GEF-funded initiative that has supported streamlining reporting for the three Rio Conventions in six countries, and examples of three countries that have developed integrated information systems for multilateral environmental agreements. Oman emphasized the importance of common objectives for synergies.

On Friday, during the discussion on the proposed conclusions and recommendations, India, on behalf of Annex II countries, said that the region originally wanted to adopt more inclusive language in the text. He added that the reference to NAP

alignment by the end of 2015, "if possible, or by 2018 at the latest" constituted a significant change from the original proposal.

Tanzania underlined the need to be clear about the roles of the Convention institutions, referring to the paragraphs referencing the GEF and the GM. He noted the omission from the document of a proposal by the African Group requesting the Secretariat to prepare analyses on aiding countries to make decisions regarding financing and technology transfer. Tunisia noted the similarities of two paragraphs of the document regarding the identification of incentives for implementation of action programmes. One paragraph placed emphasis on ensuring the timeliness of financial and technical support, which, India, for Annex II countries, requested, be retained if the paragraphs were merged.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The section in the final report on this agenda item (ICCD/CRIC(13)/L.2) includes 11 paragraphs and addressed, *inter alia*:

- continuing efforts in formulating/revising/aligning NAPs;
- timelines for the NAP alignment process;
- revision and extension of the Strategy to cover the period 2016-2030 and incorporate developments in processes relating to LDN;
- a proposal that the definition of LDN be applied to all territories and not to drylands only;
- identification of incentives for implementation for action programmes; and
- increased support to the establishment of partnership agreements with affected country parties.

Requests for Secretariat action included preparing a report identifying and addressing difficulties faced by parties in NAP alignment, and requests for the GM to assess the information from the Unified Financial Annexes in an analysis of financial flows, advise on the relevance of such indicators for future reporting exercises, and identify and facilitate access to new funding opportunities to support NAP implementation.

FINANCING AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER: On Thursday, the Secretariat presented the document on "Financing and technology transfer" (ICCD/CRIC(13)/6/Rev.1), and highlighted, *inter alia*: the percentage of countries that have established IIFs increased in all regions; the GEF, the GM and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) reported a total of 164 submitted proposals and 172 funded projects with a total commitment of US\$1.1 billion; and in 2012, US\$13.3 billion was allocated to facilitating technology transfer, more than twice the amount for the 2010-2011 reporting cycle.

The document included recommendations for: parties and multilateral financial institutions to increase efforts for the establishment of IIFs; the GM to continue assisting parties in developing their IIFs and identifying innovative sources of funding; affected country parties to continue their efforts to facilitate access to technology transfer and step up efforts to take advantage of support provided for this purpose, including through the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) of the GEF; and the GEF to consider national needs assessments in allocating resources for the next replenishment.

During the discussion, Uganda, for the African Group, said 37% of countries with IIFs is reasonably good, but could be

better. He said: all regions had inadequate financial allocations; subregional organizations are not well supported; the GEF needs to do more; and there should be more predictable resources for this process, especially in light of the need to implement the SDGs. He called for: a Secretariat-produced report on the amount of financial resources needed to implement the current strategy as well as a revised strategy, which will be needed after 2018; revision of the GEF criteria for the allocation of the STAR resources, which he said currently result in limited allocations to the land degradation focal area; the GM and GEF to organize capacity-building workshops to enable access to these funding sources; and capacity building for the private sector in developing countries.

Brazil, for GRULAC, said funds should not be spent solely on reporting but to support technology transfer and concrete solutions on the ground. He noted that the report indicated that commitments from developing countries were disproportionately higher than funds committed by developed countries. He suggested that developed country parties, the GEF and other international organizations should be invited to take actions to support technology transfer including through concessional grants.

Armenia, for Central and Eastern European countries, noted that national legislation in the region does not always provide the right framework for establishing IIFs, which means that other mechanisms and sources of funding must be identified, and suggested that experience with IIFs should be shared.

The EU welcomed the positive trends in establishing IIFs and suggested that, following the recent evaluation of IIFs, good practice on IIFs should be developed. India, for the Annex II countries, emphasized that IIFs should be also be maintained and improved, and their efficiency should be taken into account.

Portugal, for the Annex IV countries, noted that IIFs are valuable instruments, but internal national considerations should be taken into account when establishing them. He supported other speakers regarding the need to consider a wider spectrum of resources for the IIFs and said that developed affected countries in his region should be invited to step up efforts to mobilize internal resources to combat DLDD.

Colombia emphasized the importance of long-term country ownership in technology transfer. Thailand noted the process for establishing IIFs has been slow and more on-the-ground work is needed, and suggested inviting UNDP and UNEP to supplement the activities done by the GM.

Tanzania called for a programmatic approach to address the increasing challenges of land degradation and dwindling resources, requesting the Secretariat to undertake a study clarifying the amount of resources required to address the problems faced by Annex I countries, and requested the GEF to approach the problem in a more organized manner other than mentioning resources already provided.

On Friday, during the discussion on the draft conclusions and recommendations for this section, Brazil proposed amending a recommendation on recognizing practical technology innovations to indicate that it would extend to, for example, rainwater collection systems and underground water reservoirs that are often not difficult to implement. Morocco and Tanzania said the

section would be improved if it were divided into subsections, such as recommendations related to IIFs, GEF, etc. Tanzania also pointed out that two paragraphs calling for a sustained increase in the provision of resources were similar, except that one called for provision of such resources by “governments in a position to do so” and indicated that adequate support should be extended to subregional organizations as well. He also noted similarities in three paragraphs calling on affected country parties to “step up their efforts in submitting project proposals,” except that two referred to these efforts as a way to take advantage of resources allocated under the GEF and its STAR, two indicated these efforts should relate to the Green Climate Fund, and one indicated the action should also focus on the Investment Fund for LDN and the UNFCCC’s Adaptation Fund.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The section in the final report on this agenda item (ICCD/CRIC(13)/L.2) includes 30 paragraphs. The section recommends action with regard to IIFs, financial institutions and the Convention’s institutions, the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism. On IIFs, efforts are called for to achieve the 50% target and to provide best practice guidelines on the development of IIFs. The Global Mechanism is requested to continue assisting affected country parties and subregions in developing their IIFs, and UNEP and UNDP are identified as possible actors to assist the GM in establishing IIFs. On the GEF, recommendations suggest that: the criteria used under STAR should be clarified; support for South-South initiatives at subregional, regional and interregional levels should be provided; and a review of quality of the GEF criteria for the allocation of funds to land degradation in light of concern over whether there is consistent equity in the allocation of funds to this focal area should be conducted.

The recommendations also suggest that the GM should focus more on on-the-ground projects, and the Secretariat and the GM should include, in their 2016-2017 work programmes, specific actions that are in accordance with COP decisions that target priority issues that emerged from the 2012-2013 reporting process, such as NAP alignment and IIFs, monitoring systems, partnership agreements, and synergies among the Rio Conventions. All countries’ work should incorporate technology transfer, according to one recommendation, and the understanding of technology transfer should be clarified for reporting purposes and should be expanded to include practical technological innovations on the ground.

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

On Thursday, the Secretariat introduced the document on “Review of the financial support for the implementation of the Convention” (ICCD/CRIC(13)/7/Rev.1) and highlighted key findings, including: increases in reporting rates, which reached 95% for affected country parties and 69% for developed country parties; financial commitments for the 2012-2013 biennium were US\$65 billion/year; increases in South-South cooperation flows; a significant number of activities reported addressed multiple policy objectives across the three Rio Conventions; and, while parties mainly used more traditional funding instruments, there has also been growth in the range of innovative funding mechanisms used.

Belarus, for Central and Eastern European countries, noted the trend in reduced spending on DLDD, called for a more effective review of resources and re-distribution of funds, and cited a need to further simplify reporting on financial flows. He called on the GM to review and verify the data in the report, and expressed hope that a LDN target in the SDGs would strengthen financial flows to affected country parties. India, as Chair for Regional Implementation Annex II, underlined the importance of ensuring equity and fairness when developing public-private partnerships to promote innovative funding, and suggested that workshops could enable parties to learn about various financial frameworks and how community interests can be fairly addressed.

Brazil, for GRULAC, highlighted that the reporting indicated that developing countries had committed more funding to DLDD than developed countries had, stressed that the LDN concept would increase the demands placed on developing countries without a corresponding increase in funding, and emphasized the need to, and value of, a focus on initiatives taking place on the ground.

Uganda stressed the importance of evaluating financial systems that relate to the implementation of the Convention, and emphasized the need for a long-term study of the impacts of the Convention. Argentina, on behalf of GRULAC, endorsed Brazil's statement and said efforts should be made at meetings of the GEF Assembly and Council to highlight how activities under the land degradation focal area will contribute to the achievement of targets under other conventions.

The GM noted delegates' emphasis on financing and technology transfer as central components for the implementation of the Convention, the need for more capacity-building efforts, and the need to diversify financing sources. On the imbalance noted on resources committed by developed and developing country parties, he highlighted that only 69% of donor country parties had reported thus far, meaning that data from 15 donors are not included in the report. He also said it was not possible to disaggregate data reported by affected country parties regarding the sources of their financing, which means that some of their reported funding is from external, not domestic, resources. He also said the GM is collaborating with the Economics of Land Degradation (ELD), Offering Sustainable Land-use Options (OSLO), and other initiatives that are studying the long-term costs of inaction.

On Friday, during the discussion on the draft conclusions and recommendations for this section, Uganda requested further clarification of how the African Group's views were reflected in the document. After consultation with the Secretariat, the African Group submitted an agreed-upon proposal. Referring to the previous sub-section on capacity building, Tanzania requested clarity on the provision of guidance on how parties can access resources. He suggested edits to the text encouraging parties to develop and submit proposals to other funding resources "including the Green Climate Fund, the Investment Fund for Land Degradation Neutrality, and the Adaptation Fund." Uganda, supported by Tanzania, asked for the inclusion in the document of a previously agreed-upon paragraph proposed by the African Group requesting the GM to facilitate workshops to assist parties in increasing access to financing. Ghana requested merging

two paragraphs referring to the need for urgent global action to address the steady level of nominal commitments and decreasing weighted commitments as they carried the same message.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The section in the final report on this agenda item (ICCD/CRIC(13)/L.2) includes 20 paragraphs. The section deals with simplification of reporting on financial flows and improvements to the PRAIS platform, synergies with other reporting initiative and with the other Rio Conventions, and innovative funding sources, including the private sector. It requests the Secretariat to undertake a study of the long-term global impacts on non-action regarding land degradation, particularly with regard to NAPs, subregional and regional action programmes, and requests the GM to explore the options to provide default data on financial flows to countries for their verification.

The section notes, *inter alia*, that obligations of developed country parties to "actively support affected developing country parties, particularly those in Africa, and the least developed countries to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought" are not being met, and that more should be done in terms of financing initiatives to combat land degradation. The main problem of inadequate resources to properly implement the Convention might not be properly addressed by the LDN approach. It suggests that efforts be made at the upcoming GEF Assembly to address the issue of unequal distribution of funds among the Conventions and that further efforts should be made to harness synergies with regard to budgeting and project-level implementation.

FORMULATION, REVISION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES IN VIEW OF THE POST- 2015 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

On Thursday morning, the Secretariat presented findings from a recently concluded evaluation of the effectiveness of NAPs to implement the UNCCD, carried out by an external consultant. She highlighted that: the NAPs are not used as a framework for action at the country level; UNCCD activities tend to focus on preparing and refining NAPs rather than on implementation, and have not attracted commitments from decision makers; setting and monitoring a substantive target could help revive interest in the Convention; information on the cost of inaction and other facts on why DLDD should be presented to decision makers; and the Secretariat should improve its technical expertise in DLDD.

The Secretariat then introduced its note on formulation, revision and implementation of action programmes in view of the post-2015 sustainable development framework (ICCD/CRIC(13)/8), jointly prepared with the GM. He noted that SDG 15, and its target 15.3, currently reads "by 2020, combat desertification, and restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world"; and highlighted the elements of a plan for the NAP alignment process vis-à-vis the SLM goals:

- affected country parties complete the revision of NAPs by the end of 2015;
- the Secretariat provides national estimates for the progress indicators and a baseline is established in 2016;

- affected country parties revise national estimates and set national voluntary targets for LDN within their NAPs in 2016-2017;
- developed countries, intergovernmental organizations and the GEF provide support to facilitate the assessment against progress indicators and target-setting in 2016-2017;
- at COP 13, parties agree that every country adopts a national voluntary target to achieve LDN and periodically reports to the COP on NAP implementation and progress made in achieving the targets; and
- by 2020, a global assessment of progress in implementing the Convention, trends and the likelihood of achieving land neutrality targets at national, regional and global levels is made.

The GM introduced the proposed LDN Fund, a multi-stakeholder financial instrument designed for investments in land restoration by the public and private sectors, to support SLM business models with a specific focus on large-scale projects. She outlined other funding options, such as: the Green Climate Fund, which currently has pledges for US\$10.2 billion, of which 50% is earmarked for adaptation; the sixth replenishment of the GEF (GEF-6), with pledges for US\$4.43 billion, of which US\$431 million is allocated to the land degradation focal area for 2014-2018; and “Initiative 20x20,” which was launched at the Second Global Landscape Forum during the Lima Climate Change Conference.

Namibia, for the African Group, noting the high vulnerability of Africa to land degradation, suggested that: monitoring of land degradation should be explicitly targeted under GEF-6; the Secretariat should establish a programme for capacity building to address land degradation mitigation; the Secretariat should be requested to continue facilitating pilot projects to assist countries that wish to implement a LDN approach in the formulation, alignment and implementation of NAPs; and the LDN goal should be translated into national voluntary targets.

Cuba, for GRULAC, did not support a recommendation on LDN, stating that it would prejudice the work of the Intergovernmental Working Group on LDN that was established by COP 11. She also did not support the notion that the Green Climate Fund could provide a financial solution for the UNCCD. She emphasized that funds should not be linked to LDN only and that the Convention should focus on technology transfer and on-the-ground solutions for arid and semi-arid affected lands. She suggested that developed country parties and UNCCD institutions be invited to consider the establishment of new and additional funds for affected country parties with a view to the implementation of SLM practices and LDN goals.

Belarus, on behalf of Central and Eastern European countries, called on the Secretariat, the GM and international partners to ensure the timely provision of global data on progress indicators and support affected country parties in validating the data. He remarked that attaining land degradation neutrality must be the basis for efforts at the national level, and that countries account for UN General Assembly resolutions on sustainable development, particularly proposed SDG 15 and target 15.3 and

appropriate indicators. He asked the Secretariat and the GM to consult with the Green Climate Fund and to provide countries with more details on financing possibilities.

India, on behalf of the Annex II countries, took note of the sustainable development framework, but said that more time was needed for further discussion. Portugal, on behalf of the Annex IV countries, proposed considering the sustainable development framework in the future. Swaziland said time should not be wasted in tackling the recommendations, given that the SDG negotiation process is ending.

The US raised concerns about referring to the SDGs before they have been adopted by the UN General Assembly. She also noted that more understanding is needed on the linkages of the work of the Convention to new emerging funds. Brazil noted that new demands are being placed on developing countries to implement DLDD activities, including through LDN, and noted that LDN negotiations are taking place in other fora.

Syria stated that, despite its status as an affected country party and with 50% of Syrian land affected by drought and desertification, no funding had been received from the GEF. Azerbaijan asked how preventative measures could be undertaken to address DLDD if the LDN concept is not considered in NAPs.

Argentina stated that, *inter alia*, the LDN concept is not based on clear definitions and options for synergies with the Green Climate Fund can be identified once the Fund’s definitions are adopted. Costa Rica said the Secretariat needs to do all it can to ensure that GEF funding is spread more equally among the Rio Conventions.

IUCN highlighted that: land degradation is a major threat that does not receive enough attention; commitment to strive towards LDN should be vigorously supported; and there is a risk in moving towards national target setting, which should only be carried out through discussions with stakeholders and in consideration of the full diversity of landscapes. He also welcomed the LDN project being implemented by the Secretariat. Brazil asked for more information about the LDN project and whether it is being carried out within the UNCCD framework.

The Secretariat reported that GEF members decide how each replenishment is divided among the GEF focal areas, and the Secretariat does not have the power to increase the GEF’s allocation to the land degradation area. He said the LDN project is being implemented with voluntary contributions from the Republic of Korea, and examines how to integrate the concepts of LDN in the context of NAP alignment through a 17-country pilot project.

The GM noted that it had presented information to COP 11 on IIF effectiveness, which has also been investigated by the UNCCD evaluation office. Both examinations noted that the process to develop IIFs is expensive and lengthy, and the GM has taken the recommendations on board as areas for improvement. On the proposed LDN Fund, the GM noted that the objective is to mobilize resources from the private sector and investors, and would seek to promote SLM and actions related to land restoration.

On Friday, during the discussion on the draft conclusions and recommendations for this section, delegates adopted the relevant paragraphs without changes.

Conclusions and Recommendations: The section in the final report on this agenda item (ICCD/CRIC(13)/L.2) includes 20 paragraphs. The section recommends actions for parties, the Secretariat and the GM. It stresses the importance for the Convention to make use of opportunities that are opening up within a changing international environment, and notes that parties raised concerns that the Convention is prejudging outcomes of ongoing international consultations and negotiations relating to LDN. This section invites affected country parties to continue consultations on a global plan for NAP alignment with “any relevant goals” that may emerge from the SDG process, and suggests that LDN goals should be included in NAPs or, at the discretion of parties, in other relevant programmes.

The Secretariat is requested to continue facilitating pilot projects to assist countries that wish to implement the LDN approach in the formulation, alignment and implementation of the NAPs. In this regard, participating countries are requested to translate the LDN goal into national voluntary targets, assess the extent and trends of land degradation, identify realistic targets for integrating LDN in their NAPs, monitor progress, and adopt their own voluntary targets to achieve LDN by 2030. The GM is requested to: explore the engagement of the broadest possible spectrum of investors for scaling up SLM, and incentivize land restoration and rehabilitation as well as landscape approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation and biodiversity; and continue to provide support in establishing national-level IIFs and explore additional mechanisms to support countries in the mobilization and leveraging of domestic and external resources, as the development of IIFs and Integrated Financing Strategies is not suitable for all countries due to cost implications and legal constraints. The section notes that new funding options should not be seen as replacing funding mechanisms established in the Convention and the mechanisms and financing sources for the future work of the Convention should be implemented at national level, be based on voluntary targets, and should not only be linked to the concept of LDN.

CLOSING PLENARY

On Friday morning, CRIC 13 rapporteur Yuriy Kolmaz presented the documents “Draft report of the thirteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, held in Bonn 25 to 27 March 2015” (ICCD/CRIC(13)/L.1) and “Conclusions and Recommendations” (ICCD/CRIC(13)/L.2).

Brazil recalled that the general statements from the Regional Implementation Annexes were not yet reflected in the draft report. The Secretariat clarified that, as per past practice, general statements are not included in the final report but they could be added as annexes in the language in which they were submitted, if the Committee agreed.

Cuba, supported by Namibia, noted that the paragraph referring to the statements made by several countries before the adoption of the agenda did not reference the themes discussed, which were the “Consideration of best practices in the implementation of the Convention: accessibility of

information on best practices” (Non-Paper 1) and the “Additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the Conference of the Parties in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention” (Non-Paper 2). She said the discussion should be included in the report. The Secretariat responded that the final report will include the agreement by the Committee to provide feedback on the non-papers by 1 June 2015.

Delegates discussed at length the CRIC 13 “Conclusions and recommendations,” with many delegates requesting clarifications on how the drafting process had been approached by the extended CRIC Bureau, expressing concern that it did not incorporate a clear understanding of the comments and recommendations made during the discussions. Vice-Chair Mwendandu and several members of the extended CRIC Bureau explained that the document is not a negotiated text but a compilation of all comments received, and would be considered during COP 12.

Following a full read-through of the 115 paragraphs in the “Conclusions and Recommendations” paper and the draft report of CRIC 13, the CRIC adopted both documents as orally amended. Delegates were then invited to make closing statements.

Portugal, for the Annex IV affected country parties, said there is a need to take better advantage of the Bureau and the experienced staff in the Secretariat. He said that, while it is not our role to anticipate the outcome of the post-2015 negotiations, the Convention should be ready to adopt the swift changes to the international environmental agenda that will be coming at the end of this year. He looked forward to meeting everyone in Annex IV for COP 12.

Armenia, for Central and Eastern European parties in Annex V, emphasized the importance of the regional consultations prior to CRIC 13, and said key decisions to be taken at COP 12 include the role of the Convention in implementation, the SDGs and establishing voluntary national goals for LDN.

Thailand, for the Asian countries in Annex II, acknowledged the hard work of the Secretariat in organizing the meeting and trying to help the Convention move forward in an efficient way.

South Africa, for the 54 African country parties in Annex I, stressed the following issues: assessing the long-term impacts of inaction on land degradation; addressing the global commitment to the Convention; committing financing to the Convention; and focusing on implementation on the ground. He said all parties should follow due process when putting forward ideas for the COP, to allow others the time for adequate consultations on the proposals.

Colombia, for Annex III, thanked the Executive Secretary, the Secretariat and the Chair for their work during CRIC 13. He said the discussions in Bonn were vital for the future of the Convention, and reaffirmed this region’s commitment to the Convention.

The EU acknowledged progress achieved, but emphasized the need to: close remaining gaps in scientific knowledge; increase the efficiency of the review process; and move from a process-oriented to a substantive focus. The EU appreciated the proposals presented for increasing the efficiency and relevance of the Convention, including proposals to achieve voluntary national

targets on LDN. The EU also noted: the annexes and regions make important contributions to the discussions, which should be reflected in the outcome documents; the NAP alignment process is essential, and it may be appropriate to reconsider its timing; if approved by the next COP, the concept of LDN could become the real focus for the Convention from 2016-2030; synergies among conventions should be addressed in the reporting processes; and, with the Paris Climate Change Conference meeting one month after UNCCD COP 12, the momentum from that process should be used wisely. Tanzania congratulated the Executive Secretary for “showing the leadership we want to see in the Convention.” South Sudan said “we are the youngest party: pull us along with you so we will grow old.” He also relayed information about his difficulties in securing a visa to attend CRIC 13.

The Journalist Environmental Association, Tanzania, on behalf of CSOs, said NAP alignment is important, but implementation is more important, and reporting is a meaningful activity because it provides insights into the adequacy of implementation. He said synergies are important, but the different goals and scopes of action for each convention should be kept in mind, especially given that climate change has occupied the policy debate without delivering action. He said the elimination of the best practices session during the CRIC was detrimental, LDN is a tool and should be used appropriately, and the LDN Fund should involve appropriate consultation with local communities.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Barbut said the Secretariat would devote care and attention to the CRIC’s recommendations, and that the Convention needs to be a force for progress. She noted the appeal for tangible and quantifiable results, and said she would ensure that the Convention is a living forum. Barbut thanked Vice-Chair Richard Mwendandu for chairing CRIC 13. Mwendandu thanked Barbut and the Secretariat for their support, and encouraged delegates to translate the CRIC’s discussions into action when they returned home. He declared the meeting closed at 4:49 pm.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE MEETING

UNCCD Executive Secretary Monique Barbut opened the thirteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention noting that the Convention does not have a reliable picture of land degradation from national reporting, even after 20 years of implementation and reporting obligations. She challenged delegates to ask if the current process for establishing and reviewing reports is adequate, and whether it meets the objectives of the Convention.

CRIC 13 delegates had gathered in Bonn to conduct the review of national reporting on implementation aided by an impressive response rate by country parties: approximately 95% of affected country parties and almost 70% of donor country parties had submitted their reports through the UNCCD’s updated, online reporting platform. The Secretariat’s analysis of these reports provided delegates with the most substantive basis to date upon which the CRIC could evaluate implementation. However, this high number of reports led delegates to return to a more fundamental question: does the current review of implementation process under the UNCCD meet the objectives

of the Convention? This brief analysis takes up this question and explores how the information collected and format of the CRIC, as well as the UNCCD’s efforts to develop linkages to the broader sustainable development community, contribute to the answer.

INFORMATION TO DRIVE IMPLEMENTATION

UNCCD Executive Secretary Barbut challenged CRIC 13 delegates to consider the Convention’s needs for information that could be used to convince donors and investors to be partners in combating land degradation, and to determine whether the existing reporting system could achieve this objective. The reporting process revealed many gaps in the implementation of the Convention, and CRIC discussions presented a range of alternatives for further action. Information about the extent of, and solutions to, desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) is the UNCCD’s main tool to spur implementation, so some suggested collecting different information, not necessarily by the parties themselves, as a possible solution. For example, studies of the costs of inaction to address land degradation, or analyses of the extent of DLDD if the Convention did not exist, were proposed.

CSOs at CRIC 13, among others, noted that while reporting is a meaningful activity, as it provides insights into whether implementation is adequate, the analysis of costs reveals that a large percentage of the financing is devoted to reporting. Given this finding, many suggested that the take-away should be a call to shift gears, and to redirect the human and financial resources currently dedicated to reporting to projects on the ground instead.

FINDING SPACE FOR DIALOGUE

The two-and-a-half-day CRIC 13 format resulted from the fact that no country had offered to host the meeting. Some praised the decision to shorten the CRIC as one way to bring efficiency into the Convention, although others regretted that the sharing of best practices was left off the agenda. Looking forward, delegates highlighted examples that demonstrated that the Convention was up to the challenge to improve upon the review of implementation. Some noted that, two weeks before the CRIC, the UNCCD’s Committee on Science and Technology had conducted the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference using a novel, interactive format and ably facilitated by the newly constituted Science-Policy Interface. They suggested that this format was reminiscent of the CRIC’s mandate to have an “experience-sharing and lessons-learning exercise in an interactive format, which will identify successes, obstacles and difficulties with a view to improving the implementation of the Convention.” In addition, the consultations of the members of the Regional Implementation Annexes immediately prior to CRIC 13 were uniformly praised for their interactive and constructive discussions, and the possibility of more regionally-based consultations and workshops was proposed.

Each of these processes were viewed as tools to identify needs, best practices and lessons learned that could be scaled up and addressed at the global level, and then, in turn, implemented on the ground. Delegates recognized that a discussion on changes to the CRIC might be on the horizon, as alluded to by the Executive Secretary in her opening statement and as presented

in the non-papers that were published the week before CRIC 13, and on which delegates were invited to provide feedback to the Secretariat by 1 June. To ensure full participation in, and ownership of, the Convention's next directions, delegates called for due process to be observed in this upcoming discussion.

LINKING TO THE 2015 AGENDA

Of particular interest to CRIC 13 participants were questions about how to capitalize, during the COP 12 in October, on the political momentum that is being generated around the post-2015 development agenda, which is expected to be adopted in September, and the Paris Climate Change Conference, which will take place in December. Several delegates highlighted that the post-2015 development agenda's Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the target to achieve land degradation neutrality, could represent a tangible goal for the UNCCD and could prove to be a turning point that will help the Convention move away from its focus on institutions and processes, and towards implementation on the ground.

Delegates at CRIC 13 were not yet ready to address the concept of land degradation neutrality, however, given that its place in the post-2015 development agenda was still under negotiation in the UN General Assembly process in New York and due to the fact that the UNCCD's own Intergovernmental Working Group on LDN had just concluded its third meeting the previous week, but had not yet completed its report to COP 12. Many speakers noted their support for "voluntary, national" LDN targets, alluding to the potential challenges of incorporating an element from the non-binding SDGs into a decision by the legally-binding UNCCD COP. If approved by COP 12, a speaker noted, LDN could become a "real focus" for the Convention from 2016-2030. Others cautioned, however, against turning the focus on LDN into another reporting process for the Convention or more demands on affected country parties without the corresponding means of implementation.

One month after COP 12 in Ankara, all eyes in the global sustainable development community will turn to Paris, where parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will seek to reach agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. CRIC 13 delegates were encouraged to use the momentum leading up to Paris and to capitalize on the fact that the land sector will also be addressed. As Portugal said during the closing plenary, with regard to the post-2015 development agenda and the UNFCCC, the UNCCD should be ready to adapt to the swift changes that will come to the international environmental agenda later this year.

CHANGE FROM THE GROUND UP

Some cautioned, however, against putting all of the UNCCD's eggs in the synergies basket, pointing out that while climate change has occupied the international policy debate, it has not delivered much in the way of action to date. Echoing the suggestion of many at CRIC 13 to refocus the UNCCD on its roots, CSOs suggested that it might be time to focus efforts to address climate change on the ground, given that soils and the ground are the basis for any potential climate stabilization. From its beginning, the UNCCD has been referred to as a "bottom-up" Convention, that gains strength when it engages with

activities at the grassroots level, and many at CRIC 13 felt that this is still true. The reporting process that informed the CRIC's discussions revealed that gaps remain in implementation, and many suggested returning to the grassroots level to point the way forward to achieve the Convention's purpose—to provide a platform on which to upscale sustainable land management—with an emphasis on the many grassroots pillars supporting the platform.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

3rd Global Soil Week: The 3rd Global Soil Week will provide a platform for discussions on issues related to soils and land, and facilitate the emergence of new initiatives and strengthen existing ones. The event is hosted by the Global Soil Forum at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), in partnership with several UN agencies, intergovernmental and international organizations and German government agencies. **dates:** 19-23 April 2015 **location:** Berlin, Germany **contact:** IASS Potsdam **phone:** +49-331-28822-374 **email:** globalsoilweek@iass-potsdam.de **www:** <http://globalsoilweek.org/>

UN Forum on Forests: The eleventh session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF11) will consider the future of the international arrangement on forests, based on challenges and its effectiveness. **dates:** 4-15 May 2015 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UNFF Secretariat **phone:** +1-212-963-3401 **fax:** +1-917-367-3186 **email:** unff@un.org **www:** <http://www.un.org/esa/forests/session.html>

African Drought Policy Conference: This conference will seek to develop a framework to enhance resilience to drought at the African level, building on the outcomes of the High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy, which took place in Geneva in 2013, and regional workshops. **dates:** 11-15 May 2015 **location:** Windhoek, Namibia **contact:** Government of Namibia **www:** <http://gov.na/>

Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda: The intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda, which will prepare for the UN Summit, will hold the following sessions: 20-24 April (Means of Implementation and Global Partnership for Sustainable Development); 18-22 May (Follow up and review); and 22-25 June, 20-24 July, and 27-31 July (intergovernmental negotiations on the outcome document). **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **phone:** +1-212-963-8102 **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015>

42nd Sessions of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Bodies: The 42nd sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies to the UNFCCC will take place in June 2015 alongside the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action. **dates:** 1-11 June 2015 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228 815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** secretariat@unfccc.int **www:** <http://www.unfccc.int>

48th Meeting of the GEF Council: The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Council meets twice per year to approve new projects with global environmental benefits

in the GEF's focal areas, and to provide guidance to the GEF Secretariat and Agencies. **dates:** 2-4 June 2015 **location:** Washington D.C., US **contact:** GEF Secretariat **phone:** +1-202-473-0508 **fax:** +1-202-522-3240/3245 **email:** secretariat@thegef.org **www:** <http://www.thegef.org/gef/node/10938>

Land Quality Conference 2015: This conference, organized under the auspices of the International Year of Soils 2015, aims to facilitate the exchange of information and views among scientists and stakeholders involved in land resources research, land management and land-use policy planning. **dates:** 2-4 June 2015 **location:** Keszthely, Hungary **contact:** Secretariat **email:** lq2015@georgikon.hu **www:** <http://lq2015.georgikon.hu/>

Désertif'actions 2015: This international civil society forum is organized under the motto "Climate change and the preservation of drylands: time to act!" The conference will address the three themes of: desertification and land degradation – integrating climatic evaluations into decision making and action taking; development sustainability in drylands – creating greater synergy between the three Rio Conventions; and a pluralistic and organized civil society – having a true impact and doing what needs to be done. **dates:** 10-13 June 2015 **location:** Montpellier, France **contact:** CARI **phone:** +33-4-67-55-61-18 **www:** <http://www.desertif-actions.fr/en>

DesertLand II: DesertLand, the Conference on Desertification and Land Degradation, will bring together academics, civil society, governments, scientists and other stakeholders to discuss challenges related to desertification and land degradation and develop appropriate solutions. **dates:** 16-17 June 2015 **location:** Ghent, Belgium **contact:** Secretariat **email:** info@desertland.eu **www:** <http://www.desertland.eu/>

2015 World Day to Combat Desertification: The UNCCD Secretariat has announced that the slogan for the 2015 World Day to Combat Desertification is "No such thing as a free lunch. Invest in healthy soils." National and global observances will convene under the theme, "attainment of food security for all through sustainable food systems." A global observance event will take place in Milan, Italy, during the UN Expo Milano 2015. **date:** 17 June 2015 **contact:** UNCCD Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2800 **fax:** +49-228-815-2898/99 **email:** secretariat@unccd.int **www:** <http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Event-and-campaigns/WDCD/wcd%202015/Pages/default.aspx>

Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly: The third Global Soil Partnership Plenary Assembly will convene in June. **dates:** 22-24 June 2015 **location:** FAO headquarters, Rome, Italy **contact:** Global Soil Partnership Secretariat **email:** GSP-Secretariat@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/globalsoilpartnership/en/>

6th World Conference on Ecological Restoration: This conference will focus on the theme "Towards Resilient Ecosystems: Restoring the Urban, the Rural and the Wild." It will showcase important scientific developments, issues and solutions, as well as cultural, educational and artistic aspects of restoration ecology. **dates:** 23-27 August 2015 **location:** Manchester, UK **contact:** SER 2015 Secretariat **phone:** +44-141-945-6880 **email:** ser2015@meetingmakers.co.uk **www:** <http://www.ser2015.org/>

ADP 3: As agreed in Geneva in February 2015, the third session of the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) will take place in Bonn, Germany. **dates:** 31 August - 4 September 2015 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** secretariat@unfccc.int **www:** <http://unfccc.int/bodies/body/6645.php>

UN Summit to Adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda: The summit is expected to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, including: a declaration; a set of Sustainable Development Goals, targets, and indicators; their means of implementation and a new Global Partnership for Development; and a framework for follow-up and review of implementation. **dates:** 25-27 September 2015 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Division for Sustainable Development **fax:** +1-212-963-4260 **email:** dsd@un.org **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/summit>

UNCCD COP 12: The 12th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 12) to the UNCCD will take place over two weeks in Ankara, Turkey, to take decisions regarding the Convention's implementation. **dates:** 12-23 October 2015 **location:** Ankara, Turkey **contact:** UNCCD Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2800 **fax:** +49-228-815-2898/99 **email:** secretariat@unccd.int **www:** <http://www.unccd.int>

For additional meetings, see <http://land-l.iisd.org/>

GLOSSARY

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
CSOs	Civil society organizations
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
DLDD	Desertification, land degradation and drought
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
GRULAC	Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries
IIFs	Integrated investment frameworks
LDN	Land degradation neutrality
NAPs	National action programmes
PRAIS	Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLM	Sustainable land management
SPI	Science-Policy Interface
STAR	GEF System for Transparent Allocation of Resources
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change