



UNCCD COP 12: 12-23 OCTOBER 2015

The twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 12) convenes in Ankara, Turkey, from 12-23 October 2015. Delegates will focus on issues related to desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD), including how to pursue the target to achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN) and how to align the UNCCD's goals and parties' action programmes with the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Parties will also consider messages for the Paris Climate Change Conference, which will convene in late November.

From 20-21 October, a high-level segment will enable ministers and other heads of delegation to participate in round-table discussions and special plenary sessions focused on water scarcity and land degradation and desertification. The UNCCD's two subsidiary bodies, the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), will also convene in parallel to the COP.

Participants in Ankara also will discuss the in-progress publication titled "Global Land Outlook," review a report from the Economics of Land Degradation initiative, and attend events at the Rio Conventions Pavilion, the Business Forum, side events and exhibitions.

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 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.

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 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 a 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 on topics including: four-year work plans and two-year work programmes of the CRIC, CST, GM and 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 (SKBP).

CRIC: 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 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) reviewed progress in alignment of national action programmes with the Strategy. Delegates also considered input from the Intersessional Working Group for the Mid-term Evaluation of the Strategy and the *Ad Hoc* Advisory Group of Technical Experts on "operationally delineating affected areas," and 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.

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; assessment of the implementation of the Convention against strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3, and against the operational objectives of the 10-year Strategy; and performance and progress indicators, methodology, and reporting procedures.

CRIC 13 (2015) 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. 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.

CST: The CST has convened parallel meetings at each COP. At CST 1's recommendation, the COP established an *ad hoc* panel to oversee the process of surveying benchmarks and indicators, and decided that CST 2 should consider linkages between traditional and modern knowledge. CST 3 recommended that the COP appoint *ad hoc* panels on traditional knowledge and on early warning systems. CST 4 submitted proposals to improve the CST's work, and CST 5 adopted modalities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, namely through the creation of a Group of Experts. CST 6 continued discussions on improving its efficiency and effectiveness, among other agenda items. CST 7 considered land degradation, vulnerability and rehabilitation, among other issues. CST 8 decided to convene future sessions in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format, which led to the convening of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference at CST 9 in 2009.

The first Special Session of the CST (CST S-1) (2008) considered preparations for CST 9, elements of the Strategy related to the CST, the CST's four-year work plan and two-year costed work programme, and advice to the CRIC on measuring progress on the Strategy's Objectives.

CST 9 met concurrently with COP 9, during which the 1st Scientific Conference convened to consider the theme "Biophysical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision making in land and water management." CST 9 also developed decisions to review the experience of the 1st Scientific Conference and to organize a 2nd Scientific Conference on the theme "Economic assessment of desertification, SLM and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid areas." In addition, the CST recommended two indicators—the proportion of the population in affected areas living above the poverty line and land cover status—as the minimum required subset of impact indicators for reporting by affected countries beginning in 2012.

CST S-2 (2011) considered the status of work on methodologies and baselines for the effective use of the subset of impact indicators, among other matters. CST 10 established two *ad hoc* working groups: one to continue the iterative participatory process on impact indicator refinement and monitoring and assessment of impacts; and one to further discuss options for the provision of scientific advice to the UNCCD.

CST S-3 (2013) met concurrently with the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, which discussed research and best practices in the face of DLDD and proposed methodologies for evaluating the costs and benefits of SLM.

CST 11 forwarded decisions to the COP recommending, *inter alia*, the establishment of the SPI and the SKBP and the establishment of *ad hoc* working groups on the iterative participatory process on impact indicator refinement and monitoring, and options for providing scientific advice to the UNCCD.

CST S-4 (2015) and the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference convened concurrently, 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."