



## SUMMARY OF THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: 12-23 OCTOBER 2015

The twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 12) convened in Ankara, Turkey, from 12-23 October 2015. Approximately 6,000 participants gathered for the two-week meeting, which adopted 35 decisions following deliberations on agenda items 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 also considered messages for the Paris Climate Change Conference, which will take place from 30 November-11 December 2015.

From 20-21 October, a high-level segment took place. Following an opening address by the President of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, ministerial roundtables addressed themes of “Translating Land Degradation Neutrality into Action,” “Mainstreaming Drought Management Policy in National Agendas and Mitigating the Effects of Drought,” and “Climate Change Resilience through Sustainable Land Management.” The high-level segment also included dialogues with civil society organizations (CSOs), representatives of the private sector, and parliamentarians.

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), also convened in parallel to the COP. The CST developed six decisions for COP consideration, regarding the outcomes of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference, improving the efficiency of the CST, improving knowledge dissemination, and the work programme of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI), among other issues. The CRIC developed eight decisions for COP consideration, regarding, *inter alia*: collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF); establishment of national-level voluntary LDN targets within National Action Programmes (NAPs) and national reports, including funding to support

national target-setting towards achieving LDN; actions to achieve the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) (the Strategy); procedures for communication of information to be submitted to the COP, including on progress indicators for trends in land cover, land productivity, and carbon stocks; and a results framework against which the CST, CRIC, Global Mechanism (GM) and Secretariat will organize their work for the period 2016-2019.

In addition to adopting the CST and CRIC decisions, the COP deliberated on and adopted key decisions on progress indicators, the scope of the Convention and the definition of and parties’ efforts to achieve LDN, among others. Through these decisions, the COP: proposed the use of progress indicators for trends in land cover, land productivity, and carbon stocks for reporting under the Rio Conventions (UNCCD, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change); noted that a significant proportion of land degradation occurs beyond arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas and recognized that parties may use the UNCCD to guide their policies relating to DLDD; and decided that striving to achieve SDG target 15.3 “is a strong vehicle for driving

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implementation of the UNCCD.” Parties endorsed the definition of LDN as a “state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems.” The COP requested the Managing Director of the GM, in consultation with the Executive Secretary, to develop options to increase incentives and financial support for DLDD activities, including the possible creation of an independent LDN fund.

Participants left the Congressium Ankara International Convention & Exhibition Centre at midnight on Friday, 23 October, exhausted but cautiously optimistic for the path that COP 12 had set for the Convention. Delegates agreed that parties would strive to achieve a single, unified objective and, in the process, would play an important role in the follow-up on the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. During the meeting, the GEF and the host country, through its Ankara Initiative, announced that funding would be available for the establishment of voluntary national LDN targets. Delegates also agreed to convene a special intersessional meeting of the CRIC—dubbed the “methodological CRIC”—to provide further guidance on the reporting and review structure prior to COP 13. Other decisions, such as the recognition and further elaboration of the efforts of the SPI, which had been established at COP 11 as the mechanism to bring scientific advice to the parties, were pointed to as positive, substantive developments for a Convention that has long been mired in the examination of its internal organization. Participants anticipate a busy biennium, as all actors will strive to collectively deliver on SDG target 15.3 and seek to bring tangible results to the drylands as well as to degraded land around the world.

### 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 (NGOs).

**NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION:** In 1992, the UN General Assembly (UNGA), 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 GM, which works with countries on financing strategies for sustainable land management (SLM); 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 (CEE); established the CRIC; and supported a proposal by the 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 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 an SPI to enhance the UNCCD as a global authority on DLDD and 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 the Convention's implementation in Africa, improving communication and reporting procedures, mobilizing resources for implementation, and collaborating 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; indicators and monitoring 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 NAPs 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 the third special session of the CST (CST S-3) on how best to measure progress in the implementation of the Strategy.

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 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.

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 sub-humid 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 (2013) 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.”

## COP 12 REPORT

Pohamba Shifeta, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Namibia, and COP 11 President, opened COP 12 on Monday, 12 October 2015, and led participants in a moment of silence, to express solidarity with those who had been affected by the terrorist attacks in Ankara on 10 October. He highlighted that the adoption of the SDGs would help to raise the profile of DLDD issues on the political agenda, and called for sufficient resources to meet the Convention’s target to achieve LDN.

Delegates then elected Veysel Eroğlu, Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs, Turkey, as COP 12 President. In his opening remarks, Eroğlu stressed that climate change, desertification and drought are amongst the foremost global challenges today, directly affecting 1.5 billion people. He highlighted Turkey’s “Road to Ankara” initiative to engage the business community on DLDD issues. Melih Gökçek, Mayor of Ankara, identified efforts to enhance the city’s green spaces per capita.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Monique Barbut said the Convention is an “organization in motion” and noted the increased recognition of land issues at the global level, highlighting the inclusion of the LDN target in the SDGs and the acknowledgement of the role of land in the climate change negotiations. She stressed that “daring decisions” are needed at COP 12 if LDN is to be a quantifiable target for guiding the Convention over the next 15 years.

Nicolas Hulot, Special Advisor to the President of France, stressed the need to recognize that: living in harmony with nature is a strength; desertification and climate change are linked; and an economic model based on cooperation, justice and fair trade must be developed.

**OPENING STATEMENTS:** South Africa, for the Group of 77 and China (G-77/China), called the goal to achieve LDN by 2030 a “game changer,” noting that it would enable countries to address other SDGs including food security, poverty, health, biodiversity, and climate change. Drawing attention to the forthcoming Paris Climate Change Conference, he called for a strong message from COP 12 on land-based approaches to combat climate change.

Luxembourg, on behalf of the European Union (EU), noted that DLDD remains a complex and largely underestimated global phenomenon, citing estimates by the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative that 50 million people could be forced to migrate within the next 50 years. He welcomed the inclusion of a specific goal and target on LDN in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and highlighted links to other international goals and targets, including: the recognition of women’s empowerment in sustainable development contained in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda; efforts by the three Rio Conventions and the GEF to develop common progress indicators; and the work of the Convention’s SPI in improving coordination with other scientific groups.

South Africa, for the African States (Annex I), welcomed the adoption of the LDN target in the framework of the SDGs and stressed the need for a two-pronged approach to achieve a land degradation neutral world by 2030, including SLM practices and the rehabilitation of already degraded lands through scaling up financial resources and technology, and increased synergies among partners.

India, for the Asia Pacific States (Annex II), underscored the need for COP 12 to ensure that actions aimed at implementing the SDGs and UNCCD are strengthened at all levels and that the role of land-based approaches to climate change adaptation and mitigation are given due attention at the Paris Climate Change Conference. He said the frequency of meetings of the Convention’s bodies should not be reduced, at least until the impacts of the SDG and UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) processes on the UNCCD are clarified.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), acknowledged that the LDN concept has been embraced as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development while calling for clarification of the concept, its methodology and indicators. He expressed concern regarding the proposed re-structuring of the CRIC and disappointment over the lack of support to the Latin American and Caribbean States (Annex III) for holding their regional preparatory meeting.

Portugal, on behalf of the Northern Mediterranean States (Annex IV), noted that each party is affected in different ways and has different capacities. He supported setting a voluntary target on LDN.

Armenia, on behalf of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Annex V), acknowledged the work of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on LDN, and in this context supported the removal of brackets in the text on the LDN definition. He also welcomed the outcomes of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference, and called for further scientific conferences to be held.

TEMA Foundation, for CSOs, welcomed the focus on soils and inclusion of the LDN concept within the SDGs, but noted the need to clarify issues around the measurement of impacts, equity and governance. She stressed that any LDN funding mechanism should “allow communities to improve land management and not promote transfer of land to third parties,” and called for public-private partnerships to adhere to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (Voluntary Guidelines).

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS:** Delegates adopted the agenda and organization of work with minor amendments presented orally (ICCD/COP(12)/1 and Add.1).

Delegates elected the following candidates as Vice-Presidents of COP 12: Skumsa Mancotywa (South Africa) and Jean Muneng (Democratic Republic of Congo) for African States; Sun Guoshun (China) and Mohsen Abdolhoseini (Iran) for Asia-Pacific States; Ashot Vardevanyan (Armenia) and Vesna Indova (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) for CEE; Felipe Costa (Brazil) and Haendel Sebastián Rodríguez González

(Colombia) for GRULAC; and Grammenos Mastrojeni (Italy) and a representative from Turkey for the Western European and Other States.

Delegates then established a Committee of the Whole (COW) to consider the following agenda items: implications for the UNCCD of the post-2015 development agenda; effective implementation of the Convention; programme and budget; and procedural matters including the request by Annex V regarding the mandate and scope of the Convention. Delegates also adopted the document on accreditation of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and admission of observers (ICCD/COP(12)/15), noting, *inter alia*, that 314 CSOs were accredited for COP 12.

Five contact groups were created, to negotiate the COP's decisions. The Programme and Budget Contact Group was facilitated by A.K. Mehta (India). The COW Contact Group on Matters Other than Programme and Budget was co-facilitated by Karma Dema Dorji (Bhutan) and Luca Marmo (EU). The CST Contact Group was facilitated by Matthias Magunda (Uganda). A Joint CST/CRIC Contact Group was facilitated by Richard Mwendandu (Kenya), who also chaired the CRIC Contact Group. The following report summarizes UNCCD COP 12 delegates' discussions and decisions.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

On Tuesday, 13 October, the COP elected Thomas Tichelmann (Ireland) as COW Chair. The COW conducted an initial discussion of most agenda items, and negotiated its decisions in two contact groups.

#### POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION.

**Report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on Land Degradation Neutrality and Integration of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets into the implementation of the UNCCD:** The report of the IWG was discussed in the COW on 13 October. In introducing the document (ICCD/COP(12)/4), the Secretariat referred to paragraph 55 of "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" adopted by the UNGA, stressing that the SDGs and targets are integrated and indivisible and universally applicable, taking into account national contexts and priorities, and that targets are defined as aspirational and global with each government setting its own national targets.

On the proposed definition of LDN contained in the document, the CEE, Turkey, Morocco, Peru, the EU, Tanzania and Egypt supported a definition of LDN for all lands. Brazil noted that the LDN scope is defined as "arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas."

Argentina, Cuba, Colombia, Namibia and Mexico called for technical and financial support for LDN implementation and monitoring. China highlighted the need for scaling up LDN pilot projects. Indonesia preferred a country-driven approach to LDN. The Philippines proposed integrating LDN into NAPs. The US emphasized good preparation to minimize the risk of failure and further degradation.

IUCN called for LDN to be achieved at a scale that maintains biodiversity. Civil Society stressed LDN should not affect land rights.

This item was discussed in the COW contact group on Matters Other than Programme and Budget, from 13-21 October. On Thursday, 22 October, the COW considered a draft decision on integration of the SDGs and targets into the implementation of the UNCCD and the IWG report on LDN (ICCD/COP(12)/L.4). Brazil noted the decision had achieved a "finely-tuned balance," further noting that negotiations on this decision, as well as decision ICCD/COP(12)/L.2, were among the most difficult issues on the COW's agenda. He emphasized that, while LDN can serve as a new tool, parties should not forget established DLDD approaches as they embark on a new path forward. Delegates adopted the decision. On the same day, during the COP plenary, Brazil supported the adoption of the text, noting the novel approach of LDN and its importance in supporting the achievement of the objectives of the Convention. He called on developed countries to provide financial support to affected parties to achieve SDG target 15.3. The COP adopted the decision without amendments.

**Final Decision:** In the decision (ICCD/COP(12)/L.4), the COP, *inter alia*: welcomes the adoption by the UNGA of the outcome document "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" including the SDGs and target 15.3 on combat desertification, restore degraded lands and soils, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation neutral world. The decision also:

- notes that the SDGs are integrated and indivisible and universally applicable and targets are defined as aspirational, with each government setting its own national targets;
- recalls that in striving to achieve SDG target 15.3 it is also important to address wider elements of the 2030 Agenda;
- recognizes the unique role of the UNCCD in addressing DLDD in affected areas and the importance of these efforts to parties in addressing SDG target 15.3 at the national and subnational level, while also recognizing that the full implementation of SDG target 15.3 will require contribution from other bodies and agencies and the Convention should seek to work cooperatively, respecting its scope;
- acknowledges that SDG target 15.3 addresses the Convention's objectives and that striving to achieve LDN would considerably contribute to the three dimensions of sustainable development and that this could potentially involve the development of national targets;
- endorses the IWG science-based definition of LDN as follows: "LDN is a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scale and ecosystems";
- recognizes that for the purpose of the Convention, this definition is intended to apply to affected areas as defined in the Convention's text; and
- decides that striving to achieve SDG target 15.3 is a strong vehicle for driving implementation of the UNCCD.

The decision invites parties to: formulate voluntary targets to achieve LDN according to national circumstances and priorities; use the monitoring and evaluation approach adopted in decision 22/COP.11 including the progress indicators (in the annex to the decision) and additional indicators as needed; explore options on how to integrate the voluntary LDN targets in their NAPs as part of their overall discussion on the implementation of the SDGs; and promote the use of LDN targets, projects and other SLM initiatives as an effective vehicle for mobilizing additional sustainable financing and responsible investments that address DLDD issues. Developed country parties are encouraged to support the efforts of developing country parties in promoting SLM and in seeking to achieve LDN by providing financial resources, facilitated access to appropriate technology and other forms of support.

The COP directs the UNCCD Secretariat, as the lead organization for DLDD, to take the initiative and invite other relevant agencies and stakeholders, such as UN agencies, international organizations, financial institutions, CSOs and the private sector, to seek cooperation to achieve SDG target 15.3. It requests the Secretariat and appropriate UNCCD bodies, within the scope of the Convention, to: develop options for scaling up and scaling out successful LDN initiatives and other SLM practices; explore partnerships to provide support to parties by developing a “user guide” for implementing LDN at the country level; develop guidance for formulating national LDN targets and initiatives, including the identification, development and implementation of policy reforms, investment and incentive mechanisms, and capacity building to address DLDD; make options available to integrate LDN targets and initiatives in the NAPs; further develop, keep under review and facilitate, including through pilot projects, the use of the UNCCD indicator framework as a contribution to the monitoring, evaluation and communication of progress towards national LDN targets; and improve the effectiveness of collaboration with the other Rio Conventions and other partners to support the implementation and monitoring of LDN targets and initiatives.

The COP requests the GM Managing Director, in consultation with the Executive Secretary, to develop options for increasing incentives and financial support, including assisting in the possible creation of an independent LDN fund, and requests the Executive Secretary to report to COP 13 on progress made in implementing this decision.

The annex to the decision identifies six progress indicators: trends in population living below the relative poverty line and/or income inequality in affected areas; trends in access to safe drinking water in affected areas; trends in land cover; trends in productivity or functioning of the land; trends in carbon stocks above and below ground; and trends in abundance and distribution of selected species.

**Intergovernmental Working Group on the Future Strategic Framework of the Convention:** This item was initially considered by the CRIC contact group and subsequently forwarded to the COW contact group on Matters Other than Programme and Budget. On Friday, 23 October, COW Chair Tichelmann invited delegates to adopt a draft decision on this

item. The decision was adopted by the COW and subsequently by the COP without amendments.

**Final Decision:** In this decision (ICCD/COP(12)/L.22), the COP, *inter alia*: decides to establish an Intergovernmental Working Group on the future strategic framework of the Convention (IWG-FSF) within the scope and mandate of the Convention to: assess the Strategy, including the effectiveness of its implementation and the relevance of progress indicators for the future period; consider options for the possible future strategic approach for the Convention, including whether the current Strategy should be extended or revised, or whether a new strategy should be adopted; and propose an approach the Convention should adopt for its future strategic direction and elements to be included therein.

The COP also decides that the IWG-FSF will take into consideration the Convention text and the Strategy, the mid-term review of the Strategy, the role of a multi-year strategy, relevant aspects of SDG 15 and SDG target 15.3, relevant COP decisions, and the limitation of parties’ ability to increase financial resources provided to the Convention. The COP requests the Secretariat to prepare a preliminary scoping paper for the first meeting of the IWG-FSF to inform its work, and decides that the IWG-FSF will consist of a maximum of five representatives from each region, three of which will be funded by resources from the Programme and Budget for 2016-2017 and the remaining representatives to be funded from voluntary resources. The COP requests the IWG-FSF to present its initial findings for comment to CRIC 15 and its proposals to parties for consideration at COP 13.

**Implementation of the Comprehensive Communication Strategy and the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020) (UNDDD):** On Monday, 19 October, the Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/2, noting the increase in public interest in land degradation issues globally and the unprecedented opportunity to build on the momentum created by the adoption of the SDGs to structure the communication strategy around key themes.

Brazil said it should also be geared towards reaching the final users of knowledge, who may not be connected to the internet, such as farmers in arid lands and lands prone to desertification. Argentina asked about the budget for the communication strategy and requested the Secretariat to provide a priority ranking of activities.

This item was also discussed in the COW contact group on Matters Other than Programme and Budget, which met from 13-23 October. On Friday, 23 October, the draft decision on the review of progress in the implementation of the comprehensive communication strategy and the UNDDD was adopted by the COW and subsequently by the COP without amendment.

**Final Decision:** In this decision (ICCD/COP(12)/L.18), the COP, *inter alia*: encourages parties, CSOs and other stakeholders to promote the importance of combating desertification and land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought to achieving the SDGs, through awareness-raising events and activities including World Day to Combat Desertification, UNDDD and the Land for Life Programme. Parties are encouraged to identify opportunities such as the National Dryland Champions programme where the

best SLM practices at the grassroots level are recognized in order to share them beyond the national level, and they are invited to support the training of national and community-level journalists to report on DLDD issues in an informed manner.

The Secretariat is requested to: structure communications around key strategic themes; identify stories and testimonies from SLM projects for dissemination through the Land for Life Programme in order to build awareness for addressing DLDD; and continue coordinating the implementation of the comprehensive communication strategy and the UNGA-mandated resolution on UNDDD. Parties are invited to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity to use social media and web-based communications, and, where relevant, traditional media to strengthen advocacy and outreach to affected communities for implementation of SLM, LDN and addressing DLDD.

**EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AT NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL: Trends in the implementation of the UNCCD, including the review of the report of the CRIC and its recommendations to the COP; Improving mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention:** On Monday, 19 October, the Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/12, highlighting progress on strengthening institutional frameworks, regional cooperation and regional implementation.

Turkey informed delegates about an initiative to establish a regional coordinating unit (RCU) in Turkey for Annex IV countries, also to be coordinated with Annex V countries. The African Group expressed concern at the move of the RCU for Africa to the Secretariat in Bonn, and recalled the call by the 15th Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment to establish the RCU in a suitable host institution in Africa. CSOs called for more emphasis on the involvement of Indigenous Peoples' organizations when developing partnerships at regional and subregional levels. Delegates took note of the document.

**Leveraging of synergies among the Rio Conventions, including land-based adaptation to climate change and related advice from the Science-Policy Interface:** On Monday, 19 October, the Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/17. In the discussion on this item, several delegations supported work on synergies among the Rio Conventions and on common indicators for the UNFCCC, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and UNCCD. Argentina, with El Salvador, called for a group composed of experts from the three conventions to further consider these indicators. The CEE called for monitoring common indicators to address duplication of efforts and inefficient resource-use among the Rio Conventions. India highlighted that if the common indicators are not taken up by all the Conventions, there would be an additional financial burden on parties and requested additional clarification on the definition of the three proposed indicators (trends in land cover, land productivity and carbon stocks). Niger suggested the development of reference scenarios to monitor synergies at the national level, proposing that these scenarios be published to encourage sharing lessons learned and best practices.

Jordan suggested allocation of adequate financial resources and enhanced technical capacities to guarantee success in implementing cooperation among the conventions.

Brazil underlined that synergies are key to avoiding duplication and expressed hesitancy at including references to the Convention addressing "security issues." Turkey and Iraq called for including a socio-economic indicator on human migration in the proposed bio-physical indicators. Egypt noted the need to identify how to leverage synergies among indicators, and called for proposals on financing synergies. Cuba expressed concern at reduced funding for regional meetings. Mexico drew attention to a proposal to include discussions on synergies at CBD COP 13, in Cancún, Mexico, in 2016. El Salvador commended the efforts of the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) between the CBD, UNFCCC and UNCCD Secretariats and called for the identification of common indicators to address issues such as mitigation, adaptation, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and SLM. The CBD Secretariat highlighted the work of the JLG, noting that the use of common indicators represents a means to reduce the reporting burden on parties, and stressing that these indicators are "low hanging fruit" for collaboration.

Australia called for the conventions to take account of ongoing programmes of relevance to the SDGs and pledged to continue supporting the Secretariat. Kuwait stressed practical SLM synergies on the ground, such as expanding plant coverage. Cambodia said it is important to demonstrate to the other conventions that "with our success we can help solve their problems as well." The African Union discussed the recent establishment of specialized technical committees to enhance cross-sector collaboration. Indonesia highlighted a GEF-funded project on watershed development that aims to strengthen policy-making, institutional development and awareness of global environmental affairs. Eritrea noted the need for synergies at all levels, including planning and implementation.

On Thursday, 22 October, the draft decision on leveraging of synergies among the Rio Conventions and promoting partnerships with other international agencies and bodies was adopted by the COW and subsequently by the COP without amendment.

**Final Decision:** In this decision (ICCD/COP(12)/L.1), the COP, *inter alia*: welcomes initiatives undertaken by the Rio Convention Secretariats and the GEF to develop common indicators; proposes the use of the three land-based progress indicators (on trends in land cover, land productivity and carbon stocks above and below ground) for reporting under the Rio Conventions; requests the Secretariat to continue working with the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) to define indicators for SDG target 15.3; requests the Secretariat and the GM to continue to fulfil their respective roles in strengthening partnerships to further enhance the implementation of the Convention; and further requests the Secretariat to continue improving partnerships fostering capacity development in drought preparedness, early warning, risk and vulnerability assessment and mitigation, and participate within the scope of the Convention in partnerships fostering capacity development to respond to dust storms and floods.

**Securing of additional investments: Relations with financial mechanisms: (i) Global Mechanism, including its vision and future direction; (ii) Collaboration with the GEF:**

On Tuesday, 13 October, the Secretariat presented proposed amendments to the MoU between the UNCCD and the GEF (ICCD/COP(12)/18). Brazil, the EU and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia requested access to the MoU before considering amendments.

Markus Repnik, Managing Director, GM, introduced the GM's vision and future direction (ICCD/COP(12)/6-7 and ICCD/CRIC(14)/2), focusing on: scale and impact, strategic partnerships and tapping finances; trust; and accountability.

The MoU with the GEF was discussed in the COW contact group on Matters Other than Programme and Budget. On Friday, 23 October, the draft decision on the MoU between the UNCCD and the GEF was adopted by COW and subsequently by the COP without amendments.

**Final Decision:** In the decision (ICCD/COP(12)/L.19), the COP, *inter alia*: invites the Secretariat to continue working with the GEF to revise the MoU in light of the text of the Convention including its objectives as well as decisions ICCD/COP(12)/L.1, L.2 and L.4; and requests the Secretariat to report on progress to the COP Bureau and through the Bureau consult with parties on the draft MoU and to submit the draft MoU to COP 13.

**PROGRAMME AND BUDGET:** The COW considered the agenda items on the programme and budget and the financial performance for the Convention trust funds, including an update on the arrangements of the GM on Tuesday, 13 October. A contact group on programme and budget, facilitated by A.K. Mehta (India), was established on Wednesday, 14 October, and met for the remainder of the COP. A decision on this issue was adopted on Friday, 23 October.

In the meetings of the COW, the Secretariat introduced documents ICCD/COP(12)/5-7, INF.4-5 and ICCD/CRIC(14)/2, highlighting its proposal for a zero nominal growth budget. The African Group emphasized matching the budget to the proposed activities and, with China, called for increased efforts by the Secretariat to secure voluntary contributions. Swaziland, Brazil and others requested reviewing all planned activities before adopting the budget. Swaziland, Argentina, Iraq, Jordan and China called for regional balance in Secretariat posts. Swaziland and Argentina cautioned against reducing senior staff positions. Argentina, India and others called for financing regional meetings through the budget. The EU, Japan, China and the US welcomed the zero nominal growth budget. Brazil, Cuba and others noted that the budget did not provide for capacity-building and technology transfer activities. India underscored the importance of funding to achieve the LDN target.

In contact group discussions during the first week, participants sought and received clarifications from the Secretariat on several issues, including: the placement of capacity-building activities in the budget; the reclassification of posts in the Secretariat and the GM; finances allotted to implementation activities; the need to raise the Working Capital Reserve from 8.3% to 18%; and the cost of hosting meetings of the subsidiary bodies. The group also considered the multi-year workplans for the Convention and its

subsidiary bodies, focusing on UNCCD results framework for 2016-2019 contained in the annex to the document.

On the issue of the reclassification of posts, the Secretariat explained that the Executive Secretary was exercising her "delegated authority" in the appointment of UNCCD staff and had fulfilled all due process requirements in reclassifying certain posts within the staffing table. The group also discussed the cost of the CRIC meeting in Bonn, Germany, with some requesting more information on the host country contribution and others pointing to the Bonn Fund as a means to cover the costs.

During the second week of contact group meetings, participants considered the draft decision on the multi-year work plans for the Convention and its subsidiary bodies, as well as the programme and budget draft decision. They also considered the staffing structure of the Secretariat, and the treatment of parties in arrears; and carried out informal discussions on this and other matters, including financing for regional meetings and meetings of the Convention's subsidiary bodies.

On the treatment of parties in arrears, participants discussed the arrangements for these parties to complete payments within an agreed timeframe. Some supported a proposal for the Secretariat to send notification to these parties to encourage timely payment. They also debated a proposal to qualify the type of positions to be established as "temporary appointments" and authorizing the Executive Secretary to establish lower-level positions "in addition to" the approved staffing table.

Some concern was expressed that the budget document focused on issues more related to climate change, security and LDN than to the Convention's mandate. Other participants expressed satisfaction with the new formulation of the budget. They then reviewed and discussed the staffing table and related issues in a closed meeting on Wednesday, 21 October.

In plenary on Friday, 23 October, the COP adopted the programme and budget for the biennium 2016-2017 without amendment.

**Final Decision:** In the final decision (ICCD/COP(12)/L.23), the COP, *inter alia*:

- approves the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 in the amount of €16,188,082;
- approves the staffing table for the programme budget, subject to the reclassification approval by the Office of Human Resources Management of the post of Deputy Executive Secretary from D-1 to D-2;
- authorizes the Executive Secretary to draw on available cash resources from the core budget to increase the Working Capital Reserve to 10% for the biennium 2016-2017;
- also authorizes the Executive Secretary to establish lower-level positions in addition to the approved staffing table within a budget for staff costs not to exceed €10,581,075;
- approves a contingency budget amounting to €2,073,550 for conference servicing;
- recognizes that holding of UNCCD meetings across all five regions facilitates exchange of relevant experiences among parties, encourages parties to volunteer to host these meetings, and, in this regard, requests the Executive Secretary, where possible, to encourage rotation of the meetings among the

regions, while mindful of the fact that hosting remains voluntary;

- further decides that in instances where the CRIC and the CST are to hold intersessional meetings, such meetings should preferably be held back to back;
- decides to allocate adequate resources for funding the preparatory regional coordination meetings back-to-back to COP 13;
- further requests the Executive Secretary to prepare a results-based budget and work programmes for the biennium 2018-2019, presenting budget scenarios and work programmes in both a zero nominal growth scenario and a scenario based on further recommended adjustments to the first scenario and their associated costs;
- authorizes the Executive Secretary, on an exceptional one-time basis, to use up to and not exceeding €300,000 to facilitate the consideration of the post-2018 strategic priorities for the Convention by parties, through the work of IWG-FSF and within the context of CRIC 15;
- authorizes the Executive Secretary, on a one-time exceptional basis, to use an amount not exceeding €120,000 from the reserves of the Trust Fund for the Core Budget for the purpose of the budget of the SPI;
- requests the Executive Secretary to engage parties with outstanding contributions with a view to the parties entering into a voluntary plan to pay the outstanding contributions; and
- takes note of the proposed 2016-2017 workplan for the UNCCD Evaluation Office.

The decision contains five tables on: the resource requirements by the sub-programme; the GM; staffing requirements; contingency budget for conferencing services; resource requirements for hosting COP 13 in Bonn; and resource requirements for participation in the UNCCD process for the biennium 2016-2017.

Annex I of the decision contains the indicative scale of contributions for the core budget of the Convention for 2016-2017, while Annex II contains an overview of budget use in the context of the UNCCD results framework.

**EVALUATION REPORTS:** The COW considered this agenda item on Tuesday, 13 October. The Secretariat introduced the evaluation office reports (ICCD/COP(12)/5 and INF.4), highlighting evaluations of UNCCD communication activities and partnerships involving the Secretariat and the GM. The EU welcomed the creation of the evaluation office and its proposed programme of work. Further discussion on this item was forwarded to the contact group on programme and budget, with the decision on programme and budget (ICCD/COP(12)/L.23) containing text on evaluation reports. (See discussion above.)

**PROCEDURAL MATTERS: Revised procedures for the accreditation of CSOs and representatives from the private sector to the COP and their participation in meetings and processes of the Convention:** This issue was discussed in the COW on Monday, 19 October, and a decision was adopted on Friday, 23 October.

Introducing this item (ICCD/COP(12)/3), the Secretariat drew attention to the document's annexes on: "The UNCCD and business: Partnership opportunities for SLM"; the CSO Selection

Panel; and Financial requirements for the implementation of the activities to be funded from extrabudgetary resources. Juan Luis Mérega, outgoing President of the CSO Panel, provided an update of activities since June 2015. He thanked the Governments of Switzerland and Turkey for funding the participation of 35 CSO representatives at COP 12. Among lessons learned, he noted challenges related to the varying capacities of CSOs and called for additional funding and capacity building, as well as increased participation of major international NGOs.

On Friday, 23 October, the COP adopted decisions on the participation and involvement of CSOs in meetings and processes of the UNCCD, and on the business engagement strategy and participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the UNCCD.

**Final Decisions:** In the final decision on CSO participation (ICCD/COP(12)L.20), the COP, recognizing the work of the CSO Panel in facilitating CSO involvement, *inter alia*:

- encourages parties that have no or few CSOs accredited to the COP to promote and support the involvement of CSOs in the UNCCD process at the international level to ensure more CSO participation from all regions in COPs and sessions of the subsidiary bodies;
- requests the Secretariat and the CSO Panel to make proposals to the COP Bureau on ways to support the Panel and expand its membership;
- invites parties and other stakeholders to consider contributing substantially and promptly to the Convention's Supplementary Fund and Special Fund to ensure wider participation of CSOs and support the work of the Panel; and
- encourages CSOs to increase the synergies and interlinkages among the CSO communities and networks dedicated to the Rio Conventions.

In the final decision on the business engagement strategy and participation an involvement of the private sector (ICCD/COP(12)L.21), the COP, *inter alia*:

- takes note of the UNCCD business engagement strategy and requests the Secretariat and the GM to continue to implement it when engaging in partnership with the private sector; and
- also requests the Secretariat to submit future amendments of the business engagement strategy to COP 13 for its consideration and approval.

**RULE 47 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE;  
PROCEDURES AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS  
FOR THE RESOLUTION OF QUESTIONS ON  
IMPLEMENTATION; AND ANNEXES CONTAINING  
ARBITRATION AND CONCILIATION PROCEDURES:**

These issues were considered together on Monday, 19 October. The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/14. He noted that the rules of procedure have been an agenda item for discussion since COP 2, but are yet to be resolved. Parties had provided submissions to the Secretariat before the COP, which suggested delaying any decision until a later session of the COP. On the procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation, he noted that the document reiterates the main points of decision 31/COP.11 and provides comments to the recommendations of the open-

ended *ad hoc* group of experts on the matter. On arbitration and conciliation procedures, he noted that decision 32/COP.11 included proposed text as annexes on these matters, to which parties were invited to submit comments.

Indonesia, Brazil, Argentina and India all stated a preference to take a consensus approach on rule 47, and to delay a decision until a future session of the COP. Indonesia suggested that a two-thirds majority could be used only for procedural, but not substantive, matters. With regards to arbitration, Indonesia could not support the optional rules given as submitted by the Permanent Court of Arbitration, since they are not members. The Secretariat was requested to prepare a draft decision. The COP adopted the decision on Friday, 23 October.

**Final Decision:** In the final decision (ICCD/COP(12)/L.16), the COP, *inter alia*:

- decides to postpone consideration of rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure to a future meeting of the COP;
- also decides to postpone consideration of the provisions of Article 27 of the Convention to a future session of the COP; and
- further decides to postpone consideration of Article 28, paragraph 2(a) and paragraph 6 of the Convention to a future session of the COP.

#### REQUEST SUBMITTED BY ANNEX V COUNTRY PARTIES REGARDING THE MANDATE AND SCOPE OF THE CONVENTION:

This matter was considered in the COW on Tuesday, 13 October, and a decision was adopted on Thursday, 22 October, after a brief discussion in the COW. The Secretariat introduced the request by Armenia, for CEE, seeking clarification on the mandate and scope of the Convention regarding land degradation and the legal aspects for its implementation in territories not related to arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas (ICCD/COP(12)/16). CEE, supported by Ukraine, recalled that land degradation occurs in all areas and noted that ambiguity in the term “affected countries and territories” undermines work on LDN. Brazil, Argentina and Colombia stressed that the UNCCD’s focus is on the most vulnerable areas and limited resources should not be diverted from these areas. The African States supported finding a solution without compromising the Convention’s primary focus. Mexico supported extending the land degradation concept to all areas. This issue was then considered in the COW contact group on Matters Other than Programme and Budget.

In the COW discussion on 22 October, Chair Tichelmann invited delegates to adopt the draft decision. In response to a request by Jordan for clarification on preambular text highlighting that “a significant proportion of land degradation occurs beyond arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas,” the Central African Republic, Brazil, Argentina and Ukraine expressed support for this formulation, noting that its purpose is not to expand the scope of the Convention, but to ensure that it accommodates the specific contexts of all Regional Implementation Annexes. Brazil, supported by Argentina, noted the text was “nothing more than a factual statement,” with the EU stressing that “every word, every comma has been thoroughly analyzed” in the contact group. Stressing that 80% of land degradation occurs in areas that fall outside the initial scope

of the Convention, Ukraine, supported by Turkey, thanked parties for their consideration.

**Final Decision:** In the final decision (ICCD/COP(12)/L.2), noting the significant proportion of land degradation occurs beyond arid, semi-arid and dry and sub-humid areas, the COP, *inter alia*:

- recognizes that parties may use the UNCCD to guide their policies to DLDD and voluntary targets when striving to achieve LDN at national and subnational levels; and
- invites the Secretariat, relevant Convention bodies, and bilateral and multilateral parties to provide assistance to parties in that regard.

**PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR COP 13:** On Friday, 23 October, the COP adopted draft decisions on the date and venue of COP 13, and the COP 13 programme of work.

**Final Decision:** In the decision on the date and venue of COP 13 (ICCD/COP(12)/L.14), the COP, *inter alia*:

- decides that COP 13 shall be held in Bonn, Germany, the site of the Convention Secretariat, in autumn 2017, or at another venue arranged by the Secretariat in consultation with the COP Bureau in the event that no party makes an offer to host the session and meet the additional costs; and
- invites the Executive Secretary to accommodate any offer from a party to host COP 13.

In the decision on the COP 13 programme of work (ICCD/COP(12)/L.15), the COP, *inter alia*:

- decides to include the following items in the agenda of COP 13 and, if necessary, of COP 14: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; implications for the UNCCD; effective implementation of the Convention at the national, subregional and regional levels; linking scientific knowledge with decision making; and a review of the report of the CST and its recommendations to the COP; and
- decides to include interactive dialogue sessions with relevant stakeholders, including ministries, CSOs, the business and the scientific community, and members of parliament on relevant agenda items.

#### COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

CRIC Vice-Chair Richard Mwendandu (Kenya) opened the first meeting of the CRIC on Tuesday, 13 October. Following opening statements by regional groups, delegates adopted the proposed agenda and schedule of work (ICCD/CRIC(14)/1 and Annex 2) without amendment. Delegates established a CRIC contact group, facilitated by Mwendandu, and began consideration of draft decisions on Wednesday, 14 October, also holding several joint sessions with the CST during the first week, and meeting daily until Friday, 23 October. The contact group took up eight draft decisions, of which two were jointly prepared with the CST contact group, while the draft decision on multi-year workplans of the Convention’s institutions was discussed by the COW contact group on budget matters. During the CRIC plenary session on Friday, 23 October, delegates recommended eight draft decisions, which the COP subsequently adopted.

**EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AT THE NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS: Trends in Implementation of the Convention, including Review of CRIC 13 Report: Assessment of the implementation of the Convention against the operational objectives of the Strategy:** The Secretariat introduced the CRIC 13 report (ICCD/CRIC(13)/9) on Tuesday, 13 October. Brazil requested a more detailed description of the budget to improve transparency on resource use.

The joint CRIC/CST contact group began consideration of this item on Thursday, 15 October. The CRIC contact group then resumed negotiation on remaining items, finalizing the decision on Thursday, 22 October. The draft decision was adopted during the closing COW and COP sessions on Friday, 23 October.

**Final Decision:** With regard to operational objective 1 on advocacy, awareness raising and education, the decision (ICCD/CRIC(14)/L.3), *inter alia*: encourages parties that have not met their national targets to step up their communication and education efforts, including through the mobilization of resources for the capacity building of social communicators; encourages affected country parties to continue monitoring the implementation of their NAPs with regard to policy measures and actions relating to this objective; and encourages the South-South and South-North and triangular cooperation to enhance countries' efforts.

With regard to operational objective 3 on science, technology and knowledge, the decision, *inter alia*: invites affected country parties to increase their efforts to develop, implement and maintain effective monitoring systems; requests the Secretariat and Regional Coordination Mechanisms, subject to the availability of resources, to undertake an analysis of national, subregional, regional and global monitoring systems with a view to making this information available to national planners and development partners; invites parties to share their experiences in designing and implementing their national monitoring systems; and invites parties and the Convention's institutions to enhance efforts aimed at developing knowledge-sharing systems including traditional knowledge on DLDD issues.

With regard to operational objective 4 on capacity building, the decision: invites parties and international organizations, including those in the UN system and the GEF, to review their capacity-building plans with a view to increasing capacities on matters relating to DLDD in a more coordinated manner, and to enhance the effective use of resources while taking into account the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and requests the Convention's institutions to make available information on affected country parties that, according to the 2014 reporting, need further capacity-building assistance, with a view to the requests being considered by bilateral donors and multilateral agencies.

**Assessment of Financial Flows for the Implementation of the Convention:** The CRIC contact group began negotiating a draft decision on this item on Thursday, 15 October, and finalized the draft decision on Friday, 23 October. In their initial reading of the text, delegates expressed mixed views on whether to include specific references to the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund, with some noting this might exclude other

possible sources. Those in favor of retaining this language noted it makes UNCCD parties aware of new opportunities to access funding for DLDD programmes. Delegates also expressed divergent views on, *inter alia*, whether to: refer explicitly to developed country obligations to provide financial support for NAP implementation, including technology transfer, and South-South cooperation initiatives; "invite" or "request" developed country parties to increase their financial commitments for implementation of the Convention; and differentiate the role of developed country parties and "other country parties in a position to do so" in, respectively, establishing IIFs and Integrated Financing Strategies (IFS). The group agreed to move text referencing a CRIC 13 request to the Secretariat to conduct an assessment of financial needs of affected country parties in implementing a future multi-year Strategy of the Convention to the draft decision on post-2015 action programmes.

The group also finalized two complementary paragraphs calling for financial support for an assessment of priority needs for the 2018-2030 Strategy, agreeing to move them to the appropriate decision on NAPs.

**Final Decision:** In this decision (ICCD/CRIC/(14)/L.6), the COP decides to, *inter alia*:

- urge affected country parties to increase their efforts in establishing, maintaining and improving the efficiency of their IIFs with a view to mobilize resources for restoring degraded lands and implementing SLM and other Convention objectives, including through engaging with development partners;
- encourage parties eligible for the Green Climate Fund and other climate funds to develop project proposals that harness national-level synergies between addressing DLDD and climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- invite developed country parties and multilateral institutions to increase the adequacy, timeliness and predictability of resources provided to affected parties and relevant organizations responsible for the implementation of national, subregional and regional action programmes;
- invite affected country parties to step up their efforts in submitting project proposals to multilateral financial institutions and to take advantage of the support provided for this purposes, including under the GEF and its System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR);
- invite parties and multilateral institutions, particularly the GEF, as appropriate, to support South-South, North-South and Triangular initiatives at national, subregional, regional and interregional levels to improve cooperation on technology; and
- urge developed country parties to increase their efforts to report on financial support as an obligation under the Convention.

**Multi-year Workplans of the Convention Institutions and Subsidiary Bodies and Performance of the Convention Institutions and Subsidiary Bodies:** The Secretariat introduced this item (ICCD/COP(12)/6, ICCD/CRIC(14)/2) on Tuesday, 13 October, noting the reports have been streamlined into one results-oriented document focusing on the Convention's Strategic

Objectives. The Secretariat also introduced the document for the 2014-15 biennium (ICCD/CRIC(14)/3).

Brazil expressed concern that some of the priority areas in the Strategy were not reflected in the work programme and questioned the rationale for expanding the Convention's remit towards resilience, security and trade issues. Argentina noted the need to first arrive at a consensus on the concept of LDN, and cautioned against prejudging the outcomes of other Rio Convention COPs in discussions on synergies.

During initial consideration of this item in a joint session of the CRIC contact group and the COW contact group on budget matters on Wednesday, 14 October, the Secretariat clarified the placement of capacity-building activities in the budget, among other issues. Participants also requested more information on hosting considerations for CRIC meetings and the amount of funding allocated to implementation activities. Further discussion of the draft decision was taken up by the COW contact group on budget matters. The final decision was adopted by the CRIC and COP on Friday, 23 October.

**Final Decision:** In this decision (ICCD/CRIC/(14)/L.8), the COP, *inter alia*:

- approves the strategic orientation of the Secretariat, GM, CST and the CRIC as contained in the UNCCD results framework for 2016-2019;
- requests the CST, the CRIC, the GM and the Secretariat to use the UNCCD results framework for 2016-2019, organizing their work in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Convention and the decisions taken at COP 12 in line with guidance outlined in the Strategy; and
- requests the Secretariat and the GM to prepare a multi-year workplan for the Convention (2018-2021), using the results-based management approach to be considered at COP 13.

**Formulation, revision and implementation of action programmes in view of the post-2015 development agenda:**

On Tuesday, 13 October, the Secretariat introduced document ICCD/CRIC(14)/4, on the NAP alignment process and options for streamlining it with the SDGs. He stated that a decision on LDN could provide a "systematic and coherent method" to monitor and evaluate progress, and highlighted a GEF pledge of US\$431 million towards this end. Countries noted linkages between the agendas of the COW and the CRIC on the LDN target and suggested that they address the issue jointly. Turkey noted that it would be difficult for countries to finalize their LDN targets within two years, since they first need to establish baselines. Colombia suggested that national LDN targets should focus on a 2030 timeline, and include relevant parameters and indicators. Brazil called for LDN goals that are country-driven, aspirational and voluntary, with sufficient means of implementation. Argentina said it was premature to take definite decisions and cautioned against the adoption of market mechanisms to the detriment of social or environmental goals. Switzerland stressed that any LDN fund should support local communities and adhere to the Committee on World Food Security guidelines on responsible financial investments.

The CRIC contact group considered this item on Wednesday, 21 October. During initial consideration of the text, delegates expressed divergent views on the process, as well as the final

form of a follow-up strategy for the Convention, that ranged from: establish an Intergovernmental Working Group to develop a new strategic framework for 2019-2030; revise and extend the Strategy to 2030; and undertake a review of the Strategy in the context of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development before deciding on further actions. Delegates were unable to reach agreement on the way forward and agreed to hold informal consultations. On Thursday, 22 October, following information from the Secretariat that it was beyond the mandate of the CRIC to decide on the establishment of an Intergovernmental Working Group to consider follow up arrangements for the Strategy, delegates agreed to forward the negotiation text on this matter to the COW contact group on Matters Other than Programme and Budget. The final decision was adopted by the CRIC and COP on Friday, 23 October.

**Final Decision:** In this decision (ICCD/CRIC/(14)/L.2), recalling, among other issues, Articles 6, 9, 10 and 11 of the Convention and decision 3/COP.8 pertaining to the Strategy, and recognizing that only 20% of parties have thus far aligned their NAPs with the Strategy, the COP, *inter alia*:

- invites affected parties to continue their efforts to formulate, revise, and align their action programmes with guidance from the COP so that the strategic and operational objectives set by the Strategy could be achieved by 2018;
- requests the UNCCD and GEF Secretariats to continue consultations on the arrangements for funding enabling activities for GEF-6, to secure technical and financial support for the next reporting exercise, including progress reporting and national target-setting to achieve LDN;
- requests parties at COP 13 to consider adding a first view of LDN voluntary targets and their implementation to the agenda of the intersessional CRIC/CST meeting prior to COP 14; and
- requests the Secretariat and the GM to enhance their technical and financial support to country parties to implement SDG target 15.3 through NAPs, including the LDN approach at the national level, engage with international organizations, funds, and other multilateral and bilateral donors to mobilize additional resources to implement SDG target 15.3 through the NAPs, including the LDN approach at the national level, and report to the next CRIC session on the implementation of this decision.

**Securing of additional investments: Relations with financial mechanisms: Report by the GEF on its strategies, programmes and projects for financing the agreed incremental costs of activities concerning desertification:**

On Wednesday, 14 October, the GEF presented its programmes and projects for financing the agreed incremental costs of desertification activities (ICCD/CRIC(14)/5), highlighting: the increase in allocations to the land degradation focal area under GEF-6 to US\$431 million; the allocation of US\$346 million to individual countries through its System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR); and progress in SLM synergies with the GEF adaptation trust funds. Many delegates called for an allocation to this focal area comparable to that for climate change and biodiversity, while others underscored the importance of the GEF Small Grants Programme. Pakistan and Eritrea

requested simplification of the GEF procedures for accessing funds.

The CRIC contact group began consideration of this item on Saturday, 17 October, and finalized the text on Tuesday, 20 October. The group did not reach agreement on language calling on the GEF to consider putting in place a multi-year funding programme, “in order to reverse the cost of land degradation, which amounts to US\$66 billion annually,” that includes a request to the Executive Secretary and the Managing Director of the GM to mobilize additional financial resources “for its development and implementation.” The final decision was adopted by the CRIC and COP on Friday, 23 October.

**Final Decision:** The decision (ICCD/CRIC(14)/L.1) takes note of the concerns regarding the allocation of resources across different focal areas, as considered in the GEF Report in ICCD/CRIC(14)/5, and the conclusions and recommendations of CRIC 13. The decision, *inter alia*: welcomes continued support for the Convention’s implementation and the increase in resources for the land degradation focal area under GEF-6; invites GEF donors to consider providing increased support to address country priorities *vis-à-vis* the Convention’s implementation in light of SDG target 15.3; and encourages parties to engage in South-South cooperation under GEF-6. The decision also invites the GEF, among other issues: to continue support to the Convention’s implementation in light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG target 15.3; to consider enhancing support to the GEF Small Grants Programme; and to consider technical and financial support for voluntary national LDN target-setting.

**CONSIDERATION OF BEST PRACTICES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION: Promoting the analysis and dissemination of best practices:** On

Wednesday, 14 October, the Secretariat highlighted the work of the SKBP and referred to SLM technologies, access to data and cooperation between the CRIC and the CST (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/7-ICCD/CRIC(14)/6).

Argentina called for secured funding for the SLM best practice database. Brazil highlighted the SKBP’s role in knowledge sharing. China pointed to language discrepancies. Moldova called for further expansion of the SKBP. Eritrea and Burkina Faso shared examples of their best practices. The Gambia shared stakeholder engagement processes. ENDA-TM, for CSOs, shared examples of land regeneration, agroforestry and sanitation, and efforts to develop “communities of practice” to ensure sustained interaction.

The joint CRIC/CST contact group began consideration of the draft decision text on Wednesday, 14 October, completing a review of the draft text on Thursday, 15 October. This decision is summarized in the CST section (see page 18).

**THE UNCCD REPORTING AND REVIEW PROCESS IN VIEW OF THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA:**

**Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the COP:** On Wednesday, 14 October, the Secretariat introduced ICCD/COP(12)/CST/3-ICCD/CRIC(14)/7, noting the examination of trends in land cover, productivity and carbon stocks within the 14-country LDN pilot project. Namibia and

Grenada identified lessons learned, including the need for: science-based national data, or in its absence, global data; political motivation; and progress indicators. Brazil lauded the focus on arid and semi-arid areas. Namibia, Senegal and Bhutan highlighted their experiences in LDN target-setting and implementation. Several countries called for capacity building, technical support and funding, including from the private sector. Central African Republic and Ghana requested clarification on the global applicability of the pilot indicators, while Iran sought clarification on the difference between the LDN and previous SLM projects. China suggested developing uniform technical guidelines and, with El Salvador, urged the Secretariat to collaborate with other Convention bodies on a LDN monitoring system. Peru underscored the need to integrate LDN indicators within national, regional and local plans. Thailand suggested highlighting LDN benefits for livelihood improvement and food security. India stressed developing bottom-up indicators in line with the SDG process.

The GM presented document ICCD/CRIC(14)/8 on the refinement of the progress indicators under Strategic Objective 4. Brazil suggested that COP 12 consider a document presented at CRIC 13 (ICCD/CRIC(13)/7/Rev.1), which estimated the financial contributions of developed countries at 10% of those of developing countries.

The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/CRIC(14)/9, on feedback from the 2013 performance reporting exercise. There was no discussion on this item.

Consideration of draft text under this item initially took place in the joint CRIC/CST contact group on Wednesday, 14 October, before being finalized by the CRIC contact group on Friday, 23 October. The final decision was adopted by the CRIC and the COP.

**Final Decision:** The COP, in its decision on the refinement of the set of progress indicators relating to Strategic Objectives 1, 2 and 3 and assorted methodologies, and the adjustment of reporting procedures, including financial support for reporting (ICCD/CRIC/(14)/L.7), *inter alia*:

- decides as a means to understand the status of land degradation and the potential for land restoration, that reporting is required for three progress indicators: trends in land cover, trends in land productivity or functioning of the land, and trends in carbon stocks above and below ground;
- indicates that reporting depends on countries having sufficient national data to report, or validate national estimates derived from global data, and that reporting should be provided primarily from national data;
- requests the Secretariat, in cooperation with relevant institutions to, *inter alia*: compile and make available to affected parties national estimates of metrics associated with these indicators; prepare methodological guidelines and provide technical assistance to affected parties on the compilation and use of such default data; and undertake measures to strengthen the capacities of affected parties to validate, replace or reject the default data;
- decides, considering national circumstances and the availability of methodological guidelines, capacity building and financing, that affected parties should provide timely

feedback where possible on the default data and the proposed methodology to formulate national voluntary LDN targets using the monitoring and assessment indicators framework, and complete the reporting and target-setting exercise for review by the CRIC at its intersessional meeting that will take place after January 2018;

- requests the Secretariat to develop a user guide for practitioners and decision makers to operationalize the Strategy's progress indicators with respect to national monitoring and reporting, to be submitted to COP 13;
- requests the CST Bureau, with support of the SPI, to explore options to further harmonize progress indicators across the Rio Conventions, contacting relevant experts associated with the other conventions to create synergies, simplify reporting and reducing the burden on parties, to be submitted to COP 13 for consideration;
- requests the GM and the Secretariat to: develop a data collection template on the financial indicator under Strategic Objective 4 and include it in the common reporting template along with the land cover/productivity indicators under Strategic Objectives 1, 2 and 3; develop a methodology for data analysis to compare and monitor trends in land cover/productivity indicators and the financial indicator; provide technical assistance for the collection and presentation of financial data to the UNCCD according to the reporting template;
- requests the Secretariat, in consultation with the GM, to, *inter alia*, introduce improvements to the electronic template for compilation of financial data to allow for the disaggregation between internal and external funding sources and other data mining functionalities, and post the proposed adjustments to performance indicators and financial flows, as well as relative tools and guidelines, on the UNCCD website and PRAIS portal; and
- requests the Secretariat and the GM to clarify the definition of technology transfer and criteria for the identification of technologies to address DLDD.

**Additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention:**

On Wednesday, 14 October, the Secretariat introduced document ICCD/CRIC(14)/10, noting it builds on: parties' feedback to the CRIC 13 Non-paper 2; relevant provisions in Decision 18/COP.11; and recommendations by the IWG on LDN as well as parties (ICCD/CRIC(13)/9 and (ICCD/COP(12)/4). She said the aim is to, *inter alia*: direct reviews of the Convention towards substance rather than institutional processes, and adjust their frequency accordingly; integrate the CRIC with scientific advice; and ensure regional governance and continuity.

Swaziland, with Uganda, Moldova, India, Turkey and others, said a decision on this issue was "premature," stressing that the CRIC's workload is likely to increase in light of LDN discussions. While supporting greater integration of the CRIC and CST, Argentina, with China and others, expressed concern that the proposals were not based on a COP mandate and did not reflect discussions at CRIC 13. Supported by Colombia, Uganda said regional meetings should not "undermine" the CRIC.

Noting there is "no global target for the Convention," Brazil called for a consensus-based definition of LDN, and opposed the "earmarking" of resources for LDN reviews, considering their voluntary nature. India, Pakistan and others highlighted possible contradictions between national and international data. China, with Moldova, called for the COP to reconsider financing for its subsidiary bodies. Iraq noted the need to bridge the gap between scientific conferences and UNCCD policy making.

The CRIC contact group began initial consideration of draft text on this item on Tuesday, 20 October, and finalized the decision on Friday, 23 October. Responding to requests for clarification on the proposed "reshaping" of the Convention's subsidiary bodies, the Secretariat explained that the objective is to streamline national reporting on progress indicators and financial flows, in view of the COP 9 decision calling for a four-year interval for reporting against performance indicators. Several delegates questioned the proposal's timing, noting, among other concerns: the lack of clarity on the procedure to be adopted for reporting on SDG target 15.3; the short time remaining for reporting under the current strategy; ongoing discussions on how to align a future strategy with the LDN target; continuing problems with submitting reports via the PRAIS portal; and the additional burden that the proposals would impose on affected country parties, who have already made investments to fulfil their reporting requirements under the current strategy. Several delegates called for postponing discussion of this item to COP 13.

Following extensive consultations in regional groups, several parties said they were not ready to negotiate the draft decision, and requested clarification from the Secretariat on any specific mandate in the draft decision that is required from this COP. The Secretariat noted that the bulk of text in the decision could be considered at the next COP, but requested guidance on items to be discussed at the CRIC intersessional meeting in 2016. Delegates requested the Secretariat to prepare a revised draft decision, modeled on the COP 8 decision, for their consideration. On the final day of COP 12, following protracted discussions, the contact group finalized two draft decisions relating to procedural arrangements.

**Final Decisions:** In its decision on the programme of work for CRIC 15 (ICCD/CRIC/(14)/L.4), recognizing, among other concerns, that regional meetings play an important role in reviewing progress and make a useful contribution to the implementation of the Convention and the Strategy, the COP, *inter alia*:

- decides that CRIC 15 should, in the form of a special intersessional session, review and discuss, *inter alia*: inputs from regional meetings to prepare for CRIC 15; LDN target-setting exercises and pilot projects; initial findings from the Intergovernmental Working Group on the future strategic framework of the Convention and the aim of assisting its work; the Secretariat's report on the overall reporting procedures and modalities for parties' reporting, including, guidelines and reporting tools for progress and performance indicators; improvements to the procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and formats of reports;

- requests the Secretariat to, among other issues, facilitate an interactive discussion among parties wishing to discuss their results; and
  - requests the Secretariat to circulate, in all UN languages, at least six weeks prior to CRIC 15, a provisional annotated agenda and appropriate documentation for that session.
- In its decision on the date and venue of CRIC 15 (ICCD/CRIC/(14)/L.5), the COP, *inter alia*:
- decides, subject to resources available, that CRIC 15 should be held three to five days as soon as possible after July 2016, but before March 2017, at the most cost-effective venue in either Bonn or other UN conference facilities, if no party makes an offer to host the session and meet the additional costs;
  - invites the Executive Secretary, in consultation with the COP Bureau, to accommodate any offer from a party to host CRIC 15; and
  - requests the Executive Secretary to take the necessary measures to prepare for that session, including the conclusion of a legally binding agreement at the international level with a host country.

**CLOSING OF THE CRIC:** The final meeting of CRIC 14 was chaired by Raymond Baptiste, Acting Chair of the CRIC (Grenada). Delegates adopted all eight CRIC decisions by acclamation. The meeting also elected four Vice-Chairs to the Bureau of CRIC 15 and 16: Bukar Hassan (Nigeria); A.K. Mehta (India); Yuriy Kolmaz (Ukraine); and Barbara De Rosa-Joynt (US).

In his closing remarks, Acting Chair Baptiste noted that CRIC 14 had reached important milestones that need to be translated into real action on the ground. He urged delegates to extend efforts beyond the COP by becoming the drivers of the action, to “ensure that our decisions yield desired results.” He then declared CRIC 14 closed at 10:11 pm.

#### COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

On Tuesday, 13 October, CST 12 Chair Uriel Safriel (Israel) opened the CST and reviewed the UNCCD’s history in grappling with how to develop science-based recommendations for land use issues, which led to the COP 11 decision to develop the SPI. Delegates adopted the agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/1/Rev.1) without comment, and established a contact group with Matthias Magunda (Uganda) as its facilitator. The CST also agreed that the CST and CRIC contact groups would discuss progress indicators and best practices and knowledge management together.

**OUTCOMES OF THE UNCCD 3RD SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE:** The CST considered the report of CST S-4 and the report from the CST Bureau on the outcomes and recommendations from the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/2). Delegates adopted the report of CST S-4 without comment.

Barron Orr (US), Rapporteur of the SPI, facilitated a discussion with the organizers of the Scientific Conference and SPI members. Richard Escadafal, Scientific and Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Development (STK4SD) Consortium, and William Payne, Scientific Advisory Committee Chair, reviewed the collaborative and peer review processes involved

with the Conference and its findings. Elena Abraham (Argentina) and Joris de Vente (Spain) presented the SPI’s process to identify findings from the Conferences and reviewed the policy-oriented recommendations, including: strengthening the SKBP; analyzing drought management experiences; and exploring the potential for a Global Drylands Observing System.

Liberia noted that the report does not offer recommendations on translating policy into local-level action and indicators. Morocco and Argentina commented that the recommendations were not being addressed by the CRIC. Argentina also applauded the progress towards a real interface between science and policy under the Convention. With Senegal and Benin, she suggested that economic studies should consider more than just the cost of inaction. Switzerland said more work is necessary to develop stronger policy-relevant recommendations. Senegal suggested that greater efforts were needed to address concerns from specific regions. Mexico, supported by the Dominican Republic, suggested presenting the recommendations to the COP 12 High-Level Segment and in a side event at CBD COP 13.

Kuwait said the three focal areas of the 3rd Scientific Conference—diagnosis, responses and monitoring—were covered to differing degrees, and called for more focus on responses. Benin suggested a study on the social impacts of desertification. Brazil emphasized including adaptation measures, in particular on water security. The US requested the Secretariat to provide information on the cost implications of the proposals. India suggested that the use of NAPs be reflected in a proposal on land-based adaptation interventions to address climate change. CSOs called for greater involvement of CSOs in future scientific conferences.

**Options for improving the CST inputs to decision-making:** The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/CST/4 and INF.2. Matthias Magunda (Uganda) and Mariam Akhtar-Schuster (Germany) presented the proposed mechanisms to integrate science into the policy-making process. Recommendations included having the COP decide specific Scientific Conference themes and independent peer review.

On Friday, 16 October 2015, the CST adopted the draft decision on outcomes of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/L.1). On the same day, COP 12 Vice President Kadioğlu invited delegates to adopt the decision, stating that the Scientific Conference had gone beyond the mandate provided by COP 11. Brazil, Cuba and others called for the COP to “take note” rather than “endorse” the scientific findings, with the US proposing the term “welcome.” Several delegations also favored referencing CSOs in a paragraph calling for the strengthening of national networks. Brazil opposed references to climate change mitigation and payments for ecosystem services in paragraphs referring, respectively, to the types of policy advice to be provided by the SPI, and policies to be developed by parties. Due to a lack of consensus on the new language proposed, further discussions took place informally during the second week of the COP.

On Thursday, 22 October 2015, COP 12 Vice President Kadioğlu invited delegates to consider the revised draft decision. Brazil supported the revised text, noting the importance of the

decision and the deliberations it took to reach agreement. The decision was adopted without amendment.

**Final Decision:** In the decision (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/L.1/Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*, calls for: the engagement of the SPI with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other relevant bodies and initiatives; parties' use of policies and strategies that support both LDN and climate change adaptation; and greater input from CSO networks to support knowledge sharing on DLDD and SLM, including through the SKBP.

**WORK PROGRAMME OF THE CST FOR THE NEXT BIENNIUM: Follow up on the post-2015 development agenda; Monitoring progress towards a sustainable development goal on land degradation and associated target; Monitoring the contribution of sustainable land use and management to climate change adaptation/mitigation and to the safeguarding of biodiversity and ecosystem services; and Options for improving the CST inputs to decision-making, including through synergies with other relevant scientific conferences:** On Wednesday, 14 October, the CST discussed follow up on the post-2015 development agenda. Alganesh Gellaw (Ethiopia) and Guido Bonati (Italy) presented the lessons learned from using three indicators through the LDN pilot project. Mali asked if the global data are sufficient to develop robust indicators at different scales. Belarus, Switzerland and the Philippines responded that national data support this process, but may be limited or require additional capacity. Belarus drew attention to the cost of national monitoring. Morocco noted potentially false readings in global remote sensing data from invasive alien species.

Switzerland advised on the inclusion of a review of ecosystem services, including the social trade-offs arising from policy decisions. South Africa said the cost of remote sensing can vary significantly. Turkey noted the importance of information on the water economy and green economy, among others. The US supported using existing data sets to avoid delays in LDN assessment and monitoring. Mexico said the results of the pilot schemes need to be made available. Grenada highlighted the value of high-resolution data in the LDN evaluation. Namibia suggested that methods can be complemented with ground truthing. China regretted not being one of the pilot projects. Turkmenistan asked if feedback has been provided from a decision-maker's point of view. Egypt asked how the report could reach decision makers. Tanzania asked about "leakage," noting that if a project is conserving one forest but people are moving to another forest, the net result should be accounted for. FAO stressed that those without remote sensing skills should be informed about what the indicators can reveal about LDN trends. The Secretariat acknowledged that global data are seen as complementary to national monitoring.

Barron Orr and Annette Cowie, SPI, introduced the agenda item on the contribution of SLM to climate change adaptation/mitigation and to the safeguarding of biodiversity and ecosystem services, based on documents ICCD/COP(12)/CST/3-ICCD/CRIC(14)/7 and ICCD/COP(12)/CST/INF.1. They noted that SLM is pivotal to obtaining multiple global benefits simultaneously and that there is scope for synergy in the joint implementation of the three Rio Conventions. They suggested

considering the development of a Global Drylands Observing System.

The US and Switzerland asked how a Global Drylands Observing System would add value without further financial burden. Argentina and Mexico suggested case studies could aid in closing gaps in the monitoring framework. Turkey said adaptation is not the same as resilience, while Morocco said the former affects the latter. Switzerland highlighted the relevance of the SDG indicators process. Kenya noted the complexity of such synergies across the Rio Conventions owing to differing national institutional responsibilities. Niger highlighted challenges from differing convention reporting guidelines.

Responding to comments, Orr and Cowie said the proposal is to ensure drylands observations are considered by the Rio Conventions. On joint reporting, they noted efforts to ensure scientific aspects are actionable from the policy perspective.

On Wednesday, 14 October, delegates discussed options for improving the CST inputs to decision-making, including through synergies with other relevant scientific conferences. Tanzania proposed a sub-component to establish a scientific peer-reviewed journal under the UNCCD focused on DLDD and LDN. The EU, China and Turkey supported decoupling the Scientific Conferences from official CST sessions, while Morocco questioned how this would operate. The US acknowledged progress on the science-policy interface over recent years and, with Norway and Japan, said the SPI is inadequately leveraging the use of existing knowledge and mechanisms. Argentina, Cuba, Switzerland and Senegal supported regional mechanisms. The Russian Federation suggested that a regional approach could support the translation of COP decisions into local action. Ukraine and Mali said national coordinators could identify relevant experts, and Italy called for turning decisions into practice. Argentina and Turkey raised the lack of gender balance in the roster of experts. Kenya suggested creating a link between the roster of experts and the work of the SPI. CSOs said the Convention should avoid creating redundant validation and monitoring processes.

Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, SPI Co-Chair, responded to comments, recalling that the SPI is not independent of the UNCCD, and that it comprises 10 independent scientists, the five CST Bureau members, five regional representatives, as well as three observers from CSOs and intergovernmental organizations. She said the recommendation is to adopt a flexible approach within the scientific work of the CST, based on the most efficient way for the SPI to look into issues forwarded to it by the COP.

On Friday, 16 October, the CST forwarded the draft decision to the COP. COP 12 Vice President Kadioğlu invited delegates to adopt the decision on improving the efficiency of the CST. Brazil sought clarification on the recommendation to "decouple" UNCCD Scientific Conferences from official CST meetings. CST Chair Safriel informed delegates that the proposal emanated from an analysis of the three conferences. Expressing concern that the views of parties would not be reflected in scientific findings published in the UNCCD's name, Brazil, with China, proposed calling for the COP to consider the outcomes of scientific conferences prior to their publication. Others, including the US, the EU and Switzerland, expressed concern that this

might affect the academic freedom of scientists linked to the SPI, and proposed that the COP Bureau undertake such reviews. Plenary delegates adopted the draft decision as orally revised.

**Final Decision:** In its decision (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/L.2), the COP, *inter alia*, calls for: future scientific meetings on DLDD to be decoupled from official sessions of the CST; the SPI mandate, as contained in decision 23/COP.11, paragraph 3, to be extended to enable the SPI, under the leadership of the CST Bureau, to *inter alia*: provide the CST with clear and well-defined thematic guidance on scientific knowledge requirements for implementing the UNCCD; identify the most optimal way to address these knowledge requirements; select experts known for their expertise in DLDD; and the CST, with the support of the SPI, to regularly monitor the short-, medium- and long-term impacts of the scientific work carried out for the UNCCD.

**LINKING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE WITH DECISION-MAKING: Work programme of the SPI for the biennium 2016-2017:** On Wednesday, 14 October, the Secretariat introduced documents ICCD/COP(12)/CST/6 and ICCD/COP(12)/CST/INF.4. Martial Bernoux, SPI, presented the collaboration between the SPI and the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils, highlighting the LDN target of the SDGs, the need for indicators to address soil and land issues under the three Rio Conventions, and soil organic carbon.

Eritrea and Italy emphasized the importance of soils. Brazil cautioned against the SPI going beyond the Convention's objectives, saying it should avoid addressing soils and climate issues. Senegal stressed identifying the most important elements of LDN to improve monitoring and synergies and, with Mexico, welcomed steps by the SPI to partner with other processes. Bernoux said the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils is looking at improving soil monitoring techniques and making them more cost-effective.

During an evening joint CRIC/CST contact group meeting, the participants began an initial exchange of views on the draft decision on communication and reporting procedures, which covers, *inter alia*: progress indicators and associated methodologies for reporting on Strategic Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4, and adjustment of reporting procedures, including financial support provided to reporting.

On Thursday, 15 October 2015, Hien Ngo, Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Secretariat, presented the IPBES ongoing global Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment, due to be completed in 2018. She stated that IPBES compiles and analyzes existing knowledge, and provides capacity building and policy support tools, based on requests from members and conventions. Turkey sought clarification on how the Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment fits into the SPI work programme, with IPBES responding that the request originated from an earlier COP decision. Mali suggested a joint CBD and UNCCD validation process. The US asked about input on tools and approaches. Ngo responded that they will be selected by the experts.

CST Chair Safriel, in his role as SPI Co-Chair, presented the draft SPI work programme for the 2016-2017 biennium. He said the work programme focuses on addressing LDN, land

degradation/SLM and climate change interlinkages, and lands that are already degraded, and that the SPI would also coordinate with IPBES, the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils, IPCC and the Global Land Outlook.

The EU encouraged the SPI to forge further partnerships with other organizations working on LDN in relation to the SDGs. Morocco queried the role of the CST in discussions on the linkages between the UNCCD and the UNFCCC. Lauding the SPI's partnership with the Global Soils Partnership, Turkey highlighted the importance of coordination activities as they relate to soil services. Iraq underscored the links between land, livestock, water, and the prevention of degradation. Egypt underlined the need to investigate ways to safeguard non-degraded lands, as well as encourage investment in land to prevent degradation. Ethiopia highlighted the need to consider livelihoods in land-use planning activities. Switzerland suggested giving the SPI the mandate to further refine the LDN concept. Norway suggested the CST should inform national experts about the timing of the IPBES assessment to increase their participation and the relevance of the assessment to countries. Japan requested clarification on the scope and methodology for operationalizing LDN. Namibia emphasized examining extreme events and maximizing land productivity. Noting the SPI aims to demonstrate science-based synergies between SLM and climate change, the Philippines queried whether the UNFCCC is also moving in this direction. Italy suggested coordinating the SPI's work on extreme climate events with existing international programmes and organizations. Indonesia highlighted the link between smoke and haze in land degradation in his country. FAO said its vision on sustainability includes improving efficiency of resource use, improving rural livelihoods and social well-being, enhancing resilience of people and ecosystems, and enhancing effective governance of natural and human systems. CSOs emphasized their role in gathering and disseminating knowledge on local and traditional practice, for example in the SKBP. Safriel responded, *inter alia*, that the LDN concept must encompass bringing productive land back into use, as well as restoring broader ecosystem services.

Facilitated by Matthias Magunda (Uganda), the CST contact group met throughout the morning on Friday, 16 October, to conclude negotiations on its remaining draft decision. Following initial concerns by participants that the draft decision text did not give clear instruction to the SPI, the work programme of the SPI was revised to, *inter alia*: expand the Secretariat's role in facilitating and supporting the SPI; engage further with IPBES, IPCC and the Global Land Outlook; and broaden the review of resilience-based assessment frameworks beyond the initially proposed Resilience, Adaptation Pathways and Transformation Assessment framework.

On Friday afternoon, 16 October, the CST forwarded the draft decision to the COP. COP 12 Vice President Kadioğlu invited delegates to adopt the decision on the work programme of the SPI (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/L.4). Brazil requested: adding "voluntary" before "LDN target" in references to its operationalization; replacing "managing land degradation" with "combating DLDD" and, opposed by Ukraine, deleting reference to "non-dryland areas" throughout the text. Cuba,

with Brazil, requested adding cost figures to the objectives of the work programme. The EU requested maintaining reference to climate change mitigation and adaptation in accordance with the Strategy. Action on this decision was postponed to allow for revision of the text following informal discussions.

On Thursday, 22 October, COP 12 Vice President Kadioğlu invited comments on the revised draft decision on the work programme of the SPI. While supporting the new text and welcoming the LDN approach, Brazil emphasized that the original objectives of the Convention are still relevant and, noting the importance to the livelihoods of affected communities, he said attention should be equally given to mitigating drought and combating desertification. Turkey supported the SPI work programme and highlighted that the “user guide” deliverable would support bringing science and policy closer together. The decision was adopted without modification.

**Final Decision:** In its decision (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/L.4/Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*, calls for the SPI to: continue its engagement with IPBES, especially on the Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment; encourage greater involvement from the roster of experts; and develop policy briefs, including policy-oriented options, on the topics covered in the work programme.

**Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal and promoting the analysis and dissemination of best practices:** On Thursday, 15 October, the Secretariat introduced documents ICCD/COP(12)/CST/7-ICCD/CRIC(14)/6 and ICCD/COP(12)/CST/INF.5. Hanspeter Liniger, World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) Secretariat, presented the WOCAT reporting system for SLM best practices, and encouraged an increase in the reporting rate among parties. The UNCCD Secretariat presented a progress report on the SKBP, which is designed to be a “bridge to bridges” by facilitating access to best practice information in existing DLDD knowledge bases.

Ecuador said it had submitted information via PRAIS and requested assistance in uploading it via WOCAT. Argentina asked for clarification on submitting national reports through WOCAT, and called for linking the SKBP to existing national knowledge platforms. South Africa requested information on: the selection criteria of the 15 countries chosen for the WOCAT pilot; the advantages of being a WOCAT consortium partner; and the quality control methods used by WOCAT and the SKBP.

FAO said the following countries are involved in the WOCAT pilot programme: Lesotho, Nigeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Bangladesh, China, Thailand, the Philippines, Argentina, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. She called for additional funding to roll out the WOCAT programme in other countries. Tanzania called for capacity building for submitting reports on the new system.

Liniger reported that the PRAIS information is available and searchable via the WOCAT website and welcomed feedback on whether the material in the WOCAT database meets users’ needs. The Secretariat said it channels information, but stated that reliability depends on the partners.

When the draft decision on improvement of knowledge dissemination, including traditional knowledge, best practices and success stories was first discussed in plenary, China, opposed by the EU and the US, suggested deleting “and other parties in a

position to do so” in the paragraph inviting developed parties to provide financial resources. The discussion was taken up by the joint contact group on CRIC and CST.

The CST forwarded the revised draft decision to the COP, which, on Thursday, 22 October, adopted it without amendment.

**Final Decision:** In its final decision (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/L3/Rev.1), the COP, *inter alia*, calls for: the further use and strengthening of the WOCAT reporting system; an enhanced “capacity-building and awareness-raising” thematic topic by the Secretariat through the Capacity Building Marketplace; and continued development of the SKBP.

**PROCEDURAL MATTERS: Roster of independent experts:** This issue was taken up by the CST on Thursday, 15 October, and briefly in the contact group on Friday, 16 October, where the draft decision on the roster of independent experts was forwarded to the CST with minor textual clarifications.

In the CST discussion, the Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(12)/13. The US suggested that experts be identified through alternative sources, such as Google Scholar, noting that the roster is underutilized. Argentina expressed concern that the roster is nothing more than a list of experts who are not playing a role in the Convention. Morocco suggested that each country should select experts who will apply best practices. Kenya noted the need to generate interest in the Convention among roster experts. The Secretariat noted that the Convention itself requires the Secretariat to maintain the roster. South Africa urged all countries to update their lists of experts.

In CST plenary on Friday, 16 October, delegates considered a draft decision (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/L.5). Brazil suggested text to restrict scientists on international panels from speaking on behalf of the UNCCD. He also called for better regional balance in the roster. Switzerland highlighted that parties nominate their experts, which ensures regional balance. The US said there is no “selection” process, and suggested that the proposed new text could imply an alternative system for generating the roster. The Secretariat clarified that Article 24 of the Convention defines the roster of experts as being formed by a nomination process, and any selection to participate in assessments is done by organizations or systems outside the control of the Convention. With an amendment stating that scientists would speak in their own name on international panels, the decision was adopted by CST, and by the COP without amendment.

**Final Decision:** In the decision (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/L.5), recalling Article 24, paragraph two of the Convention, the COP, *inter alia*, requests the Secretariat to facilitate the notification of experts from the roster of independent experts of the activities and opportunities to, among others: participate in scientific events, including technical expert meetings and international and regional conferences; and act as reviewers of science-based products elaborated under the SPI; participate in international expert panels and assessments on DLDD. The decision notes that experts shall express their views in their own name and not in the name of the UNCCD. The decision also requests the Secretariat to integrate the roster of independent experts database into the SKBP and encourages parties to propose new experts in order to achieve a better gender balance, and to include more

experts from the social and economic sciences, especially experts on traditional and local knowledge, know-how and practices.

**Programme of work for CST 13:** On Friday, 16 October 2015, the CST forwarded the draft decision on the programme of work for CST 13 (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/L.6). COP 12 Vice President Kadioğlu invited delegates to adopt the decision that calls for further review of the work of the SPI and for consideration of the policy implications of SPI outputs. Brazil asked for clarification on the review function by CST on the work of the SPI. The decision was adopted without amendment.

**Final Decision:** In the final decision (ICCD/COP(12)/CST/L.6), the COP calls for CST 13 to focus, *inter alia*, on the review of the work conducted by the SPI during the biennium 2016-2017 and on its overall achievements since its establishment in order to decide on the future functioning of the SPI. The decision also calls for CST 13 to be organized in such a way as to facilitate a thematic dialogue between the parties and the SPI regarding the policy implications of the scientific outputs, and to enable the formulation of policy-relevant recommendations.

**ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE CST:** On Friday, 16 October, Mattias Magunda (Uganda), CST Vice-Chair and Rapporteur, reported on the six decisions adopted by the CST that were transmitted to the COP. Delegates elected the Vice-Chairs for CST 13: Foued Chehad (Algeria); Farah Ibrahim (Kuwait); Jorge Luis García Rodríguez (Mexico); and Jean-Luc Chotte (France). The CST approved the draft report of the session, on the understanding that the Rapporteur would complete it with the assistance of the Secretariat.

### HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

The High-Level Segment took place from 21-22 October, and included an opening session, three parallel roundtables, and three dialogue sessions.

**OPENING SESSION:** On Tuesday morning, delegates heard an opening address from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of Turkey, who, among other issues, emphasized Turkey's promotion of climate smart technologies and investments in land rehabilitation. On behalf of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Gyan Chandra Acharya, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, urged parties to support LDN as it promotes climate change resilience. Monique Barbut, UNCCD Executive Secretary, noted the speed and dedication it took to build the Giza pyramids, emphasizing that parties have to be ambitious and build "metaphorical pyramids" of SLM.

Further coverage of the High-Level Segment is at <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04264e.html>.

**HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLES: From global to local: translating LDN into action:** This roundtable was chaired by Mahama Ayariga, Minister, Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ghana, and moderated by Paddy Woodworth, *The Irish Times*. In a video message, GEF CEO and Chairperson Naoko Ishii announced US\$3 million for country-based LDN target setting. During the roundtable, countries noted that land degradation drivers include population pressures, poverty, climate change, and conflicts. Many others highlighted that LDN

has become a global objective with the adoption of the SDGs. Some shared national-level actions. Many called for, *inter alia*: effective tools and policy measures; scientific and technical projects; and financial resources to mobilize efforts to address land degradation. CSOs emphasized preventing land degradation rather than land rehabilitation.

**Drought adaptation: mainstreaming drought management policy in national agendas and mitigating the effects of drought:** This roundtable was chaired by Pohamba Shifeta, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Namibia, and moderated by Saadet Oruç, a Turkish journalist. Delegates discussed, *inter alia*, the costs of drought prevention versus drought management; the need for national prevention policies and plans; the importance of regional forecasting centers supported by the World Meteorological Organization; integrating traditional knowledge with modern technologies; and addressing climate change, disaster risk reduction, SDGs and DLDD together and taking a multi-country approach to implementing sustainable solutions.

**Land-based adaptation to climate change: resilience through sustainable land management:** This roundtable was co-chaired by Abdeladim Lhafi, High Commissioner for Water, Forests, and Desertification Control, Morocco, and Gabriel Quijandria Acosta, Vice Minister of Strategic Development of Natural Resources, Peru, and moderated by Guillermo Altares, *El País*. Many countries reported on efforts to address climate change and land degradation, including through: policy and legislative measures; land use planning and coastal area management; forest conservation and erosion control; and agroecology. Some interventions stressed local finance and establishing financing mechanisms, including the LDN Fund. Some participants underscored the need to strengthen the resilience of local communities.

Detailed coverage of the roundtable discussions is at <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04264e.html>.

**DIALOGUES WITH STAKEHOLDERS:** On Wednesday, 21 October, the High-Level Segment conducted three dialogue sessions with stakeholders.

**Land rights (dialogue with civil society):** This dialogue was chaired by Barbara Thomson, Deputy Minister, Environmental Affairs, South Africa, and moderated by Paddy Woodworth, *The Irish Times*. Kevin Kamuya, Utooni Development Organization, Kenya, outlined an action plan to end "land grabs," including: regularizing tenure of squatters; tackling weak governance and corruption; and undertaking participatory reform of land tenure systems. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Coordinator of the Indigenous Women and Peoples Association, Chad, highlighted the links between land grabs, marginalization, poverty and radicalization. Michael Taylor, Director, International Land Coalition, called on governments to recognize customary land rights, and called for a people-centered process for land management. Participants discussed: tenure security and recognition of customary land rights; community forest management efforts; the responsibility of local farmers in land rehabilitation efforts; community land ownership; and awareness campaigns on tenure security.

**Incentives for investment in sustainable land management (dialogue with the private sector):** This dialogue was chaired by Benedetto Della Vedova, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Italy, and moderated by Peter Bakker, World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). Rifat Hisarciklioğlu, Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges, Turkey, reported on the recently adopted Ankara Declaration, which recognizes the economic impacts of land degradation and the financial and social benefits from SLM. Bey Soo Khiang, APRIL Group, Indonesia, spoke about the company's objective of conserving one hectare of high-value natural forest for every hectare of concession land. Jai Schroff, CEO, UPL, India, said the private sector can provide appropriate technological and capacity requirements to reduce water stress and manage wastewater. Participants discussed: the private sector's role in providing advocacy, outreach and technical support; the difficulty of the small-scale agricultural sector to contribute to the LDN target; and the need for governments to provide "appropriately structured" tax and legal frameworks to incentivize private sector actors to engage in land rehabilitation and restoration.

**Framing of legislation to protect and rehabilitate land (dialogue with parliamentarians):** Lina Dolores Pohl Alfaro, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, El Salvador, and Ravza Kavakçi Kan, Member of Parliament, Turkey, co-chaired the dialogue, which was moderated by Guillermo Altares, *El País*. Haroun Kabadi, President, UNCCD Forum of Parliamentarians, and President, National Assembly, Chad, called for best practices, funding and research to execute land rehabilitation. Joyce Laboso, National Assembly, Kenya, suggested spatial planning at national and local levels to address competing land uses. Ali bin Saad Altokhais, Member of Parliament, Saudi Arabia, stressed the need for clear legislation emphasizing sustainable water use. Maria Lourdes Acosta-Alba, Congresswoman, the Philippines, stated the legislative landscape is "fraught with competing interests and lobbying," referring to a pending law languishing in the senate.

Participants discussed practical steps to deal with DLDD and cooperation among all stakeholders for achieving the LDN target.

**CLOSING SESSION:** Lütfi Akça, Undersecretary, Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, Turkey, on behalf of the COP 12 President, opened the session, and invited the Chairs of each of the sessions to present a summary of the deliberations. More detailed coverage of the dialogues can be found at <http://www.iisd.ca/vol04/enb04265e.html>

### **INCLUSION OF ACTIVITIES OF CSOS WITHIN THE OFFICIAL PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COP: OPEN DIALOGUE SESSION**

On Thursday, 15 October, a plenary dialogue with CSOs was chaired by Sedat Kadioğlu, Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, Turkey, and moderated by Noel Oettlé, Environmental Monitoring Group, South Africa. The UNCCD Secretariat introduced the theme "Demystifying LDN with CSO Contributions."

In a keynote address, Jonathan Davies, IUCN, *inter alia*, called for a focus on strengthening natural resource governance and ensuring human rights, gender equity and tenure security. Aissatou Billy Sow, AGUIPER, Guinea, stressed the need for CSO involvement in NAPs and Integrated Investment Frameworks (IIFs). Marioldy Sánchez Santivañez, AIDER, Peru, emphasized that any LDN initiative must be an opportunity to strengthen NAPs. Tanveer Arif, SCOPE, Pakistan, called for balancing social and ecological approaches, with the consent of affected communities.

Serkan Aykut, Foresters' Association of Turkey, described outreach activities, including student excursions to forestlands and distribution of tree seedlings. Gloria Musowa, Kasisi Agricultural Training Center, Zambia, drew attention to the 2014 Equator Initiative Prize which identified 12 CSO projects covering activities such as ecotourism, community reforestation and water harvesting. Patrice Burger, CARI, advocated for the implementation of the SDGs notwithstanding uncertainties around the LDN concept.

In the ensuing discussion, countries highlighted issues including: on LDN targets focused on reducing bush encroachment and improving livelihoods; the need for a paradigm shift towards LDN in managing degraded lands; LDN as a long-term process; and a focus on community engagement to support SLM in rural areas. Closing the meeting, Kadioğlu called for an "inclusive process" to support LDN.

### **CLOSING PLENARY**

The final sessions of the COP took place on Friday evening, 23 October.

COP 12 Vice President Kadioğlu invited Raymond Baptiste, Acting Chair of the CRIC, to present a brief summary of the CRIC session. The COP adopted eight CRIC decisions without discussion.

COP 12 Vice President Kadioğlu invited delegates to elect officers other than the President. Delegates elected Hamid Čustovič, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as CST 13 Chair, and Bukar Hassan, Nigeria, as CRIC Chair for the 15th and 16th sessions.

The COP next adopted decisions forwarded to it by the COW.

The COP then adopted the decisions on: Credentials of delegations (ICCD/COP(12)/L.8); the Report of the Eleventh Roundtable of Members of Parliament (ICCD/COP(12)/L.3); the Special Segment: Boosting stakeholder engagement in the implementation of UNCCD (ICCD/COP(12)/L.6); the Declaration of the SLM Business Forum (ICCD/COP(12)/L.11); the Declaration of CSOs attending COP 12 (ICCD/COP(12)/L.12); and the Declaration of the Youth Forum (ICCD/COP(12)/L.13).

On the reports of the session, the COP considered draft decisions on: the Declaration of the Trade Union Forum (ICCD/COP(12)/L.10); the Ankara Initiative (ICCD/COP(12)/L.5); the Ankara Ministerial Declaration (ICCD/COP(12)/L.9); and the Expression of gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Turkey (ICCD/COP(12)/L.7). For each of the decisions, the COP took note of the declarations as orally presented.

The COP then adopted the report of the meeting (ICCD/COP(12)/L.17) as orally presented by COP 12 Rapporteur, Grammenos Mastrojeni (Italy).

**CLOSING STATEMENTS:** Monique Barbut, UNCCD Executive Secretary, offered an analogy of the COP being like a game of chess. She said land was like the queen with multiple roles, including for climate change, but noted that it can also be very vulnerable, and said COP 12 has provided a clear message on the importance of addressing land degradation to be brought to the Paris Climate Change Conference. She recalled that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, had said “science is the only reliable guide in life,” and lauded the COP for clarifying and expanding its expectations of the SPI.

Many of the regional groups highlighted the importance of SDG target 15.3 to the Convention. South Africa, on behalf of the G-77/China, welcomed the Ankara Initiative and Declaration, and called on developed country parties to fulfil their commitments of support. The EU stated that they would work with the Secretariat and parties to ensure that the assistance provided is effective to make a difference on the ground. Armenia, on behalf of CEE, said that they would be implementing LDN based on a scientifically-based definition, and looked forward to further guidance. Kenya, on behalf of the African States, looked forward to working with the Turkish COP Presidency and the Bureau during the intersessional period to implement the COP decisions, and called for stronger South-South cooperation to be facilitated by the Secretariat. Bhutan, on behalf of Asia and Pacific States, noted the need to strengthen actions to achieve LDN, with support from the GEF and the GM at global and national levels. Brazil, on behalf of GRULAC, welcomed the Ankara Initiative, and called for its effective implementation.

A Youth representative read the Youth Declaration for Combating Desertification, calling for greater representation of and support for young people in the UNCCD process and in SLM activities. CSOs noted the need for: stronger attention on gender equality; addressing the causal link between DLDD and migration, land tenure and indigenous knowledge in the Convention; and recognizing the potential negative aspects of the LDN approach.

Lütfi Akça, Undersecretary, Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs, Turkey, congratulated COP participants for their achievements and highlighted the importance of the COP’s message to the Paris Climate Change Conference, and emphasized the level of work needed ahead in the intersessional period.

Sedat Kadioğlu, Deputy Undersecretary, Ministry for Forestry and Water Affairs, Turkey, on behalf of the COP 12 President, gavelled the meeting to a close at 11:54 pm.

## A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF COP 12

### **UNCCD: A CONVENTION IN MOTION**

Immediately prior to COP 12, UNCCD Executive Secretary Monique Barbut told journalists gathered at an opening press conference that the true measure of success for the COP would be the adoption of a quantitative target for the Convention. The

UNFCCC has the objective of limiting temperature increases to 2°C from pre-industrial levels and the Convention on Biological Diversity has the Aichi Targets, she noted, and the UNCCD should capitalize on its work to define land degradation neutrality (LDN), which had just been endorsed in SDG target 15.3. What some viewed as an intrepid direction for the UNCCD to pursue in years past turned into a potentially “game changing” accomplishment when COP 12 swiftly adopted a decision deciding that striving to achieve SDG target 15.3 is a “strong vehicle for driving implementation of the UNCCD,” and inviting countries to set voluntary targets to achieve LDN.

The negotiations on this decision, which one delegate said represented a “finely-tuned balance,” revealed that parties at COP 12 were paying close attention to where the Convention has come from as well as recognizing the possibilities for the future. This analysis explores how, as it enters its third decade, the UNCCD seeks a balance between its core mandate and emerging challenges and opportunities to enhance its relevance into the future.

### **2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE PARIS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE: A LIFELINE FOR THE UNCCD?**

COP 12 occupied prime real estate on the intergovernmental sustainable development calendar. Opening one month after a resounding embrace and launch of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, COP 12 also took place one month before the opening of the much anticipated Paris Climate Change Conference. Both of these meetings had a profound impact on the discussions and decisions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies.

In the lead up to the 2012 Rio+20 Summit, the previous UNCCD Executive Secretary, Luc Gnacadja, worked tirelessly to promote the concept of zero net land degradation. This concept was later reformulated as “strive to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world in the context of sustainable development,” in *The Future We Want*, and then incorporated into SDG target 15.3 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted in September 2015.

The numerous references to SDG target 15.3 across the COP 12 outcomes were viewed as significant achievements to those, including the CSOs, who had fought long and hard to get a “land SDG,” especially considering the difficulty of negotiating a global land target just two years earlier at COP 11. The focus on LDN involved unease by some parties about the implications for the Convention’s initial focus on bottom-up action in the drylands. Those hesitant to embrace a global LDN target did, however, acknowledge that the 2030 Agenda situates the UNCCD in a broader development approach and can help to revitalize action on the ground, as expressed in the broadly welcomed language on adopting voluntary national targets. In their final decision, parties reflected the balance between recognizing the “integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable” SDGs, and the need for each government to “decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated into national planning processes, policies and strategies.”

During her first two years as Executive Secretary, Barbut has taken up the LDN baton, not only in the lead up to the UN Sustainable Development Summit, but also heading into the Paris Climate Change Conference in December 2015. In particular, in Ankara, Barbut highlighted the initial findings of the in-progress Global Land Outlook that land rehabilitation of up to 12 million hectares of degraded land a year could help close “half of the remaining emissions gap.” Others highlighted the linkages between the two agendas during the high-level segment, with the French Minister for International Development, in particular, assuring COP 12 delegates that UNFCCC COP 21 would highlight the interlinkages among DLDD and climate, as well as food security. The COP 12 decision on synergies among the Rio Conventions, endorsing the use of three land-based progress indicators across all three conventions, provided a tangible way for the UNCCD to propose to recognize linkages across the sister conventions, and build on years of UNCCD work to develop indicators for monitoring the achievement of strategic objectives in the Strategy.

### **RENEGOTIATING UNCCD'S RELEVANCE IN A CHANGING WORLD**

Another discussion at COP 12 that participants pointed to as reflecting the Convention's effort to respond to new realities, while remaining cognizant of its mandate, was the COP 12 agreement on addressing particular regional and national conditions. Similarly, the discussions on the Science-Policy Interface and the Secretariat and GM's programme of work were highlighted as having reflected an evolution in the Convention's institutional structures.

Discussions on LDN moved the UNCCD forward on one of its historical paradoxes: how to marry particularity for African countries within the framework of a global convention. In recent years, Annex V countries especially have stressed the Convention's relevance to land degradation issues beyond arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas in Africa, and have called for the UNCCD to reexamine its scope. The COP 12 decision on this issue addresses “particular regional and national conditions” by recognizing that “a significant proportion of land degradation occurs beyond arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.” This decision was seen by many as a long-overdue solution to recognizing that land degradation extends beyond the drylands while not altering the scope of a legally-binding agreement in a way that could require countries to reevaluate their ratification. Several delegates lauded the contact group for achieving consensus in a process where, as the EU delegate remarked, “every word, every comma has been thoroughly analyzed.”

The structure through which the Convention's scientific advice is conveyed in another area where the Convention has been “in motion.” While recognizing that the three Scientific Conferences had engaged many scientists in the work of the Convention, CST 12 focused on the COP 11 mandated SPI as a better suited mechanism for providing scientific advice to the UNCCD. Delegates requested the SPI to initiate and coordinate interactions on the interlinkages between desertification/land degradation and climate change and their effects on human well-being with the IPCC, and to provide policy briefs on the policy implications of the latest developments in scientific

research relevant to DLDD, land-based adaptation and climate change mitigation. In addition, the Secretariat, supported by the SPI, was asked to “explore progress on the development of interoperable international observatories...in order to ensure that DLDD and LDN monitoring and assessment needs are fully integrated into existing efforts to systematically collect environmental observations.” These examples were among those highlighted as illustrations of the relatively focused and real-time advice that the SPI could bring to specific questions on the UNCCD agenda. In this regard, participants noted the contrast in the SPI's potential to provide nimble inputs compared with the scientific advice that would be possible through a scientific conference organized around a negotiated theme. Nonetheless, some cautioned that the SPI would need to deliver on its promise relatively quickly, given the CST's history of experimenting with new mechanisms.

While some said the negotiations on the Secretariat and the GM's Programme of Work for the next biennium were as protracted as at previous COPs, many delegates sensed a different tone given that they were freed from the institutional debates regarding the Global Mechanism and, perhaps most importantly, they were considering a Secretariat-proposed zero nominal growth budget for the first time. Delegates carefully assessed the proposed work programme and ultimately adopted various initiatives proposed by the Secretariat and the GM, including the extension of the GM-led 14-country pilot project to develop LDN targets and indicators at national level and the possible creation of an independent LDN fund. While some highlighted that the decisions reflected a desire to ensure that the Convention capitalizes on the momentum that the SDG target on LDN and its climate change linkages could give to DLDD issues, others pointed out that the parties did not agree to the proposals for change in all instances. Notably, COP 12 did not act on the proposal to change the frequency of national reporting and the CRIC intersessional meetings from two to four years. Instead, following protracted negotiations in the CRIC contact group, delegates decided to convene a special “methodological CRIC” prior to COP 13, to review the LDN target-setting exercise and pilot projects. In this case, the COP preferred preserving the option to monitor the Convention's work on LDN more frequently, in light of the lack of clarity on the procedure to be adopted for reporting on SDG target 15.3 and ongoing discussions on how to align a future strategy with the LDN target, among other reasons.

### **MAKING COP 12 COUNT FOR THE LONG HAUL**

During the COP 12 closing session, it was clear that exhausted delegates and the Secretariat were gratified at the signals that the Convention is heading in a new direction. In her closing remarks, the Executive Secretary noted that COP 12 and the LDN decisions had given the UNCCD a clear game plan and direction for the next 15 years. The COP 12 decisions were seen as ensuring that the Convention would achieve greater relevance in the global sustainable development agenda, not only through SDG target 15.3 but also through the Convention's relevance beyond arid lands and the relationship between LDN and climate change mitigation. As the COP 12 decision on the integration of the SDGs and targets into the UNCCD noted, the Secretariat

was instructed, “as the lead organization for DLDD,” to take the initiative to seek cooperation to achieve SDG target 15.3. Some further highlighted that LDN has already attracted funding announcements from the GEF and Turkey, through its Ankara Initiative, to help with national LDN target setting, as well as from the private sector, and suggested that these announcements offer evidence that LDN could be a “game changer.” However, others cautioned that these new opportunities would only move the UNCCD forward if the Convention’s roots and its original focus on needs at the local level were respected. Participants left COP 12 cautiously optimistic in this regard, recognizing that they would need to work hard to ensure that the UNCCD can go beyond a set of skillfully negotiated texts in the COP 12 outcomes to collectively deliver on the goal to achieve a land degradation neutral world.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

**IAEG-SDGs Second Meeting:** The second meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the SDG indicators (IAEG-SDGs) is organized by the UN Statistics Division. The meeting’s objectives are to: review the list of possible global indicators; discuss the global indicator framework, interlinkages across targets and critical issues, including data disaggregation; and discuss the work plan and next steps. **dates:** 26-28 October 2015 **location:** Bangkok, Thailand **contact:** UN Statistics Division **fax:** +1-212-963-9851 **email:** [statistics@un.org](mailto:statistics@un.org) **www:** <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-02>

**Fifth Conference on Climate Change and Development in Africa:** The Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA) conference series was conceived as an annual forum to enable linkages between climate science and development policy by promoting transparent discussions between key stakeholders in the climate and development communities. **dates:** 28-30 October 2015 **location:** Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe **contact:** African Climate Policy Centre **phone:** +251-11-551-7200 **fax:** +251-11-551-0350 **email:** [info@climdev-africa.org](mailto:info@climdev-africa.org) **www:** <http://www.climdev-africa.org/ccda5>

**Follow-Up and Review of the Post-2015 Development Agenda at the GLTN 6th Partners Meeting:** This high-level event will discuss next steps for SDG implementation, focusing on the potential role of the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) in assisting national governments to conduct follow-up and review of soil and land-related SDGs. It is co-organized by partners including, the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), UN-Habitat and UNEP. **date:** 2 November 2015 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** Oscar Schmidt, IASS **phone:** +49-331-288-224 31 **email:** [Oscar.schmidt@iass-potsdam.de](mailto:Oscar.schmidt@iass-potsdam.de) **www:** <http://globalsoilweek.org/thematic-areas/sustainable-development-goals/sustainable-production-of-biomass/post-2015-development-agenda-nairobi>

**CBD 19th Meeting of SBSTTA and 9th Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention:** The 19th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA 19) and the ninth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will be held

back-to-back. **dates:** 2-7 November 2015 **location:** Montreal, Quebec, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** [secretariat@cbd.int](mailto:secretariat@cbd.int) **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting>

**GLTN 6th Partners Meeting:** The GLTN is an alliance of global, regional and national partners contributing to poverty alleviation through land reform, improved land management and tenure security. The 6th Partners Meeting builds on former discussions on issues including: partnerships, capacity building and the development and dissemination of pro-poor and gender-sensitive land tools. **dates:** 3-5 November 2015 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** UN-Habitat **phone:** +254-207-623858 **email:** [gltn@unhabitat.org](mailto:gltn@unhabitat.org) **www:** <http://gltn.net/index.php/events/50-6th-gltn-partners-meeting>

**G20 2015 Leaders’ Summit:** The Turkish Presidency of the Group of 20 (G20) will host the G20 Leaders’ Summit. The Summit aims to conclude with practical outcomes on priority areas, such as development, climate change, financing for climate change, trade, growth and employment. **dates:** 15-16 November 2015 **location:** Antalya, Turkey **contact:** Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs **email:** [G20info@mfa.gov.tr](mailto:G20info@mfa.gov.tr) **www:** <https://g20.org/>

**Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2015:** The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) is held every two years as the Commonwealth’s highest consultative and policy-making body. CHOGM 2015 will take place under the theme “Adding Global Value” and discuss how to use the Commonwealth’s strengths in international politics to influence global issues. It will also include youth, women, business and civil society forums. **dates:** 27-29 November 2015 **location:** Malta **contact:** CHOGM2015 Taskforce **phone:** +356-2200-2830 **www:** <https://chogm2015.mt/about>

**UNFCCC COP 21:** COP 21 and associated meetings will take place in Paris. **dates:** 30 November - 11 December 2015 **location:** Paris, France **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** [secretariat@unfccc.int](mailto:secretariat@unfccc.int) **www:** <http://www.unfccc.int>

**World Soil Day 2015:** World Soil Day 2015 is themed “Soils, a solid ground for life.” **date:** 5 December 2015 **location:** worldwide **contact:** Global Soil Partnership Secretariat **email:** [GSP-Secretariat@fao.org](mailto:GSP-Secretariat@fao.org) **www:** <http://www.fao.org/globalsoilpartnership/world-soil-day/en/>

**Second Meeting of the UNEP Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives:** The Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives will prepare for the next meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the UNEP. **dates:** 15-19 February 2016 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies **phone:** +254-20-7623431 **email:** [unep.sgb@unep.org](mailto:unep.sgb@unep.org) **www:** <http://www.unep.org/about/sgb>

**IPBES 4:** The fourth plenary session of IPBES will report on its progress, including the Platform’s work programme 2014-2018, budget and financial arrangements, communication and stakeholder engagement and institutional arrangements. IPBES Stakeholder Days will be organized directly prior to the meeting, on 20-21 February, to provide observers and stakeholders with updates on the process and their engagement.

**dates:** 22-28 February 2016 **location:** Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia **contact:** IPBES Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-0570 **email:** secretariat@ipbes.net **www:** <http://www.ipbes.net/index.php/plenary/ipbes-4>

**CBD SBSTTA and CBD SBI:** The 20th meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice will meet in April, followed by the first meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Implementation in May. **dates:** 25 April-6 May 2016 **location:** Montreal, Quebec, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

**Second Meeting of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA):** The UNEA of UNEP will convene for the second time, representing the highest level of governance of international environmental affairs in the UN system. **dates:** 23-27 May 2016 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** Jorge Laguna-Celis, Secretary of Governing Bodies **phone:** +254-20-7623431 **email:** unep.sgb@unep.org **www:** <https://www.myunea.org>

**50th Meeting of the GEF Council:** The GEF Council meets twice a year to approve new projects with global environmental benefits in the GEF's focal areas, including land degradation, and in the GEF's integrated approach programmes. **dates:** 6-9 June 2016 **location:** Washington D.C., US **contact:** GEF Secretariat **phone:** +1-202-473-0508 **fax:** +1-202-522-3240 **email:** secretariat@thegef.org **www:** <https://www.thegef.org/gef/calendar-date/2016-06>

**High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development:** The Fourth High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), convening under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), will be followed by a three-day ministerial meeting of the Forum. **dates:** 11-20 July 2016 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** Marion Barthelemy **phone:** +1-212-963-4005 **email:** barthelemy1@un.org **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

**World Day to Combat Desertification:** World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is annually observed on 17 June, highlighting the need to curb desertification and to strengthen its visibility on the international environmental agenda. **date:** 17 June 2016 **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/Pages/default.aspx>

**CRIC 15:** Following COP 12 decision ICCD/CRIC(14)/L.5, subject to the availability of resources, CRIC 15 will take place for three to five days between July 2016 and March 2017. The location will be the most cost-effective venue of either Bonn, Germany, or any other venue with UN conference facilities in the event that no party offers to host the session. **dates:** TBD **location:** TBD **contact:** UNCCD Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2800 **fax:** +49-228-815-2898/99 **email:** secretariat@unccd.int **www:** <http://www.unccd.int>

**UNFCCC COP 22:** COP 22 to the UNFCCC is expected to take place from 7-18 November 2016. Morocco has offered to host this COP. **dates:** 7-18 November 2016 **location:**

Marrakesh, Morocco **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** secretariat@unfccc.int **www:** <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

**CBD COP13, Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety COP/MOP8, and Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing COP/MOP2:** These meetings are expected to take place concurrently. **dates:** 4-17 December 2016 **location:** Cancun, Mexico **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <http://www.cbd.int/>

**UNCCD COP 13:** COP 13 is tentatively scheduled to take place in Bonn, Germany, in autumn 2017, or at another venue arranged by the Secretariat in consultation with the COP Bureau, in the event that no party makes an offer to host the session and meet the additional costs. **dates:** final quarter of 2017 **location:** TBD **contact:** UNCCD Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2800 **fax:** +49-228-815-2898/99 **email:** secretariat@unccd.int **www:** <http://www.unccd.int>

## GLOSSARY

CBD	Convention of Biological Diversity
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
COP	Conference of the Parties
COW	Committee of the Whole
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
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
GRULAC	Group of Latin American and Caribbean States
IFS	Integrated Financing Strategies
IIFs	Integrated Investment Frameworks
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IWG	Intergovernmental Working Group
LDN	Land degradation neutrality
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	National Action Programme
PRAIS	Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLM	Sustainable land management
SKBP	Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal
SPI	Science-Policy Interface
Strategy	Ten-year Strategic Plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018)
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	UN General Assembly