



Convention to Combat Desertification

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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 22, PARAGRAPH 2(a) AND (b), AND ARTICLE 26 OF THE CONVENTION

REVIEW OF REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION BY AFFECTED LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES, INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES

Addendum

INPUTS FROM THE REGIONAL MEETING OF AFFECTED LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRY PARTIES

Note by the secretariat

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I. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

A. Opening of the meeting

1. The eighth regional meeting of Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) country Parties preparatory to the first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) was opened in Bridgetown, Barbados, on 29 July 2002. The two main aims of the meeting were the following: to present and analyse national reports from country Parties of the region, reports from international organizations and agencies, donor countries and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and to exchange experience in the seven thematic topics identified for the first session of the CRIC.

2. In his opening statement, Mr. Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), underlined the crucial stage of the UNCCD process in which country Parties should combine their efforts to face major challenges and ensure a smooth passage from a conception and policy formulation phase to an often more complex and demanding implementation stage. He highlighted in particular the need to strengthen the national capacity-building process in order to raise the institutional profile of the Convention and improve the effectiveness of the initiatives implemented. H.E. Ms. Elisabeth Thompson, Minister of Physical Development and Environment of Barbados, stressed the necessity to carry out activities to combat desertification, rehabilitate degraded land and mitigate the effects of drought, involving all the stakeholders in a participatory manner. Towards these aims, she pointed out that the Convention represented an important legally binding instrument for promoting the sustainable development of the affected countries of the region.

3. During the opening ceremony, Mr. Hama Arba Diallo and H.E. Mr. Edwin Carrington, Secretary General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the aim of establishing a joint framework for action and cooperation in the Caribbean subregion to fight land degradation, address the problem of drought and water shortage and support the efforts undertaken by the Caribbean country Parties to deal with the causes of these through the implementation of the UNCCD.

B. Election of the chairperson and other officers

4. The participants elected Ms. Karen Smith (Barbados) chairperson of the meeting. Mr. Wilfredo Alfaro (Chile) and Mr. Reynold Murray (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) were elected vice-chairpersons. Ms. Zoraida Fajardo (Colombia) was elected rapporteur of the meeting.

C. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

5. The participants adopted the preliminary agenda of the meeting as proposed by the secretariat.

6. The meeting heard presentations of national reports from the following affected Latin American and Caribbean country Parties:

Antigua and Barbuda	Dominica	Peru
Argentina	Ecuador	St. Lucia
Bahamas	El Salvador	St. Vincent and the
Barbados	Grenada	Grenadines
Bolivia	Haiti	Suriname
Brazil	Honduras	Trinidad and Tobago
Chile	Jamaica	Uruguay
Colombia	Mexico	Venezuela
Costa Rica	Panama	
Cuba	Paraguay	

The presentations were made according to clusters (Southern Cone, Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, the Andes).

7. It also heard presentations of the reports of Germany and Italy as the developed country Parties.

8. It further heard the presentations from the following intergovernmental organizations, United Nations organizations and international and multilateral agencies:

Global Mechanism (GM)
 Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
 World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

9. The meeting also heard presentations by the International Network of NGOs on Desertification (RIOD-LAC) and the Caribbean Network for Integrated Rural Development (CNIRD) which focused in particular on the effectiveness of the process of participation of civil society in the implementation of the Convention.

D. Attendance

10. Thirty-four representatives from 27 country Parties of the region, two developed country Parties, eight intergovernmental organizations, United Nations organizations and international and multilateral agencies as well as 19 NGOs attended the meeting. The complete list of participants is given in annex III to this document.

E. Documentation

11. The following documents were made available for consideration by the meeting:

ICCD/CRIC(1)/4	Review of reports on implementation by affected Latin American and Caribbean country Parties, including on the participatory process, and on experience gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of action programmes
ICCD/CRIC(1)/4/Add.1	Synthesis and preliminary analysis of information contained in reports submitted by affected Latin American and Caribbean country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(1)/6	Review of reports by developed country Parties on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes of affected country Parties of all regions, including information on financial resources they have provided, or are providing, under the Convention
ICCD/CRIC(1)/6/Add.1	Synthesis and preliminary analysis of information contained in reports submitted by developed country Parties
ICCD/CRIC(1)/7	Review of information provided by relevant organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, on their activities in support of the preparation and implementation of action programmes under the Convention

II. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

12. The representatives of 27 LAC country Parties presented their national reports according to subregional clusters with the aim of facilitating the debate on issues that could have common features due to the geographical proximity of the countries. The majority of the countries highlighted achievements and shortcomings at the national level in the fields identified by the seven thematic topics selected for review by the CRIC.

13. Among the main issues discussed during the meeting was the need to make use, in an efficient manner, of the comparative advantages that some countries have in certain sectors, such as for instance, the development of socio-economic as well as biophysical benchmarks and indicators, early warning systems, integrated watershed management, techniques for biomass production, rehabilitation of degraded lands, national action programme (NAP) formulation, and organizational process for guaranteeing stakeholders' participation. The constant exchange of scientific and technological information as well as lessons learnt among all the actors involved in the UNCCD implementation process appeared fundamental in order for all the

countries of the region to benefit from them. Participants unanimously pointed out how the strengthening of the LAC Information Network on Desertification (DESELAC) could be very instrumental in promoting the information flow, especially with regard to successful experience based on reliable and monitored data. In this context, the full involvement of local communities and civil society was defined as essential due to the contribution they could give in terms, among others, of traditional knowledge and experience matured directly in the various fields of implementation of the Convention.

14. Participants also put particular emphasis on the importance of creating and taking full advantage of the synergies existing among the different environmental and sustainable development issues, highlighting how these cross-cutting issues can reduce costs, avoid overlapping of efforts and maximize results with a spill-over effect. For that purpose, the meeting underlined the priority of building technical and financial strategic alliances to foster and strengthen effective regional and international cooperation and partnership, including in its South-South dimension, and of implementing projects and initiatives integrating the Convention into national development strategies and plans, poverty eradication programmes and other environmental instruments. The approach, in fact, would be very beneficial to the formulation and application of the NAPs, ensuring consistency and coherence with the overall process for realizing the objectives of real sustainable development.

15. The countries of the region affirmed that the current implementation stage of the UNCCD needs, at the national level, a set of policies and measures, which should be fully implemented and financed, to prevent and reverse the process of drylands degradation as well as to reduce the extreme vulnerability to drought of vast areas in the region. Accordingly, participants decided to call upon the international community, including intergovernmental organizations, to lend their support to the implementation of the UNCCD by ensuring the provision of new and additional financial resources and technical assistance to affected Parties of the region. In this regard, they welcomed the latest developments in the Global Environment Facility (GEF) process and reiterated the position of the region, as already expressed at the Conference of the Parties and in other relevant international bodies, in terms of full support for the establishment of land degradation, particularly desertification, as a new and fully fledged focal area of the GEF, and the identification of the GEF as a financial mechanism of the Convention.

16. Finally, in accordance with decision 1/COP.5 on the procedures for the communication of information and review of the implementation of the Convention, participants unanimously adopted the conclusions and recommendations, contained in chapter III, to be submitted for consideration by the Parties at the first session of the CRIC, to be held from 18 to 29 November 2002.

17. Participants also acknowledged the people and the Government of Barbados for having hosted the meeting and the other governments for having supported its organization.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Monitoring and reporting of the implementation of the Convention

1. National reports for the UNCCD assessment process

18. The selection of the seven topics designated in decision 1/COP.5 for the review of the implementation of the Convention has enabled the governments and stakeholders to undertake a more focused second cycle of national reports on UNCCD implementation. However, some countries' insufficient compliance with the Help Guide and a lack of analytical consideration of progress made in the period under review could have limited comprehension of the present status of UNCCD implementation in the LAC countries. Furthermore, limited use of scientific and technological information in the reports has made it difficult to assess progress in these areas.

19. Nevertheless, the LAC country Parties completed and timely submitted their national reports for review by the first session of the CRIC. The strong involvement of civil society in this exercise, as advocated by the Help Guide, deserves to be further strengthened and pursued.

20. National reports should concentrate even more on an analytical review of the status of the implementation of the Convention. At the same time, national country profiles within the national reports are needed in order to provide more up-to-date and substantive data covering comprehensive biophysical and socio-economic information relating to causes and consequences of desertification.

21. In this context the financial support rendered by the UNCCD secretariat to country Parties for the formulation of the national reports was acknowledged. The level of financial resources provided for reporting should be increased to meet the need of the LAC country Parties for involving stakeholders, collecting and processing data and managing information.

2. Regional and subregional reports

22. While a regional overview in the LAC region is to be provided on a regular basis, it was noted that the current reporting under the regional action programme (RAP) for LAC did not sufficiently highlight existing linkages with the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) priority areas of thematic focus on national and subregional levels. The subregional action programmes (SRAPs) should be submitted for the consideration of the CST, as regards matters relating to CST priority areas at the regional level.

3. Reports by developed country Parties, regional, international and intergovernmental organizations and agencies

23. Participation by developed country Parties in the reporting exercise of the UNCCD in LAC was rather limited. The input of the few countries present was appreciated as a useful contribution to conducting the review by Parties

required before the CRIC. Indeed, the review process at the regional level is necessary to maximize the results of efforts made by affected LAC country Parties.

24. The meeting appreciated the reports submitted by developed country Parties and regional, international and intergovernmental institutions on the support provided to LAC country Parties as they carry out their obligations under the UNCCD. However, specific information on the UNCCD process itself was not adequately provided.

Recommendations

25. National reporting on the progress of the implementation process should be supported by predictable and appropriate financial resources, notably to secure the participation of stakeholders at all levels, particularly at local level.

26. The UNCCD secretariat, in collaboration with partner agencies, was invited to assist countries to complement the information provided to the CRIC with the preparation of country profiles within the national reports. They should be more oriented towards quantitative data and analysis relating to the biophysical and socio-economic parameters of combating land degradation and desertification and mitigating the impact of drought.

27. The UNCCD secretariat should facilitate a joint assessment of the implementation process of the Convention in the LAC region by developed and developing country Parties. The results of such evaluation should be submitted to the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 7).

28. The UNCCD secretariat was further invited to review the Help Guide on a regular basis according to new circumstances, and to update it as appropriate. A revised format should put emphasis on NAP integration in the national planning system and the development of synergies. Further modalities to ensure the most effective exchange of lessons learned should also be explored.

B. Participatory process involving civil society, NGOs and community-based organizations

29. The creation of an enabling environment to foster decentralization and the involvement of civil society at all levels as well as the promotion of related methodologies to these ends, while pursued within the NAP framework, can contribute to the implementation of sustainable development policies much beyond that specific framework.

30. Awareness-raising and improved communication, especially among the NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), concerned civil servants, the private sector and representatives from the academic, scientific and research communities, should be further encouraged. Some countries reported positive results in associating the private sector to the combat against desertification. Such cases, incentive systems and related best practices deserve to be more widely known.

31. The role of NGOs and CBOs in catalyzing public support has been increasingly recognized at the national level; still further efforts to include civil society are necessary. Some NGOs have been instrumental in bridging the international policy dialogue on UNCCD implementation at the national and regional levels. Some of the national reports were produced with the strong support by national NGOs involved in the implementation process, particularly at the community level.

32. The level of participation of local and indigenous communities in NAP implementation as well as in the formulation of such programmes is still low in many countries of the region.

33. The meeting welcomed the initiative of the secretariat, the GM, and partner agencies such as International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to foster NGO participation in the UNCCD process in the LAC region, as particularly witnessed at this meeting where more than 25 organizations from the Caribbean, Mesoamerica and South America were present and participated in the elaboration of these conclusions and recommendations.

Recommendations

34. The commitment of a wide range of stakeholders should be encouraged, notably through their participation in the work of the national coordinating body (NCB) and in such areas as local level organization, capacity building, awareness campaigns, research and education.

35. A strengthened commitment for public-private partnership should provide an incentive framework for increasing stakeholders' involvement.

36. More effective participation of women and youth in UNCCD implementation should be promoted.

37. Country Parties were encouraged effectively to include local and indigenous communities in NAP formulation and implementation while drawing on their knowledge systems and appropriate traditional practices.

C. Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements

38. Institutional, legislative and regulatory arrangements with regard to the sustainable management of land-based natural resources including land degradation, desertification and forestry are rarely coherent and updated. Their proper enforcement is often a cause for concern.

39. The crucial role of the NCBs in working with the national focal points was recognized. In particular, participants emphasized the need for a more representative and fully funded institution, backed by high-level political support, that might assist in harmonizing potentially diverging strategic frameworks.

Recommendations

40. Country Parties were encouraged to strengthen NCBs, as appropriate, to enable them effectively to carry out their responsibilities in implementing the UNCCD and in contributing to the harmonization of land management policies.

41. The harmonization, adjustment and/or updating of existing legislative frameworks should help in establishing, at the national level, linkages between the new legal frameworks on forests and ecosystem land management, as well as linkages with food security, poverty reduction strategies, and policies to facilitate the holistic mainstreaming of the issues of the UNCCD.

42. The regional coordinating unit (RCU) of the UNCCD secretariat, together with all involved partners, was called upon to provide support to the countries of the region in achieving greater legal and institutional coherence aimed at implementing the Convention and facilitating the delivery of effective land management policies.

D. Resources mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusion of partnership agreements

43. The wide-ranging developmental and environmental objectives of the UNCCD cannot be achieved without the provision of a substantial and predictable level of financial resources to LAC country Parties, aimed at securing enabling activities, strengthening their capacity for implementation of the UNCCD and covering the costs of priority activities of NAPs, SRAPs and the RAP as well as the activities of the RCU.

44. The inadequate level of external funding in the period under review is a matter of grave concern, since the LAC country Parties have faced severe challenges, such as chronic and deteriorating economic conditions, recurrent drought and increased vulnerability to natural disasters in a context of climate change, biodiversity loss and the further shrinking of natural resources linked to chronic rural poverty.

45. Some LAC country Parties have been facing the dilemma resulting, on the one hand, from increasing land degradation and, on the other hand, from the trend of shrinking official development assistance (ODA), by earmarking provisions in the national budget, by using new cost-effective approaches and by applying strategies for the mainstreaming of the Convention issues.

46. There are opportunities to be emphasized in promoting the design and use of innovative economic instruments such as payment for environmental services that allow the channelling of domestic sources to combat desertification and to mitigate the effects of drought at all levels and placing investment in the rural areas on the political agendas.

47. The LAC country Parties have noted that many developed country Parties, international organizations and multilateral financial institutions have not yet adjusted their procedures for the delivery of programme resources in line with their commitments as Parties to the Convention.

48. The meeting strongly urged the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) to call for, and the GEF Assembly to designate, the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD, in order to provide the Convention with adequate and predictable funding to achieve its objectives in a timely and efficient manner, while recognizing the complementary role of the GM.

49. The meeting acknowledged the collaboration between the UNCCD and GEF secretariats and underlined the necessity for the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD secretariat, the chairperson of the meeting and the chairperson of the Group of Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC), in conjunction with the developed country Parties to the Convention, to take all necessary measures and arrangements to follow up the decisions adopted by the GEF Council in May 2002, as well as those expected to come out of the second GEF Assembly relating to the financing of the UNCCD in the LAC countries.

50. The GM and its Facilitation Committee shall focus their activities on mobilization and channeling of financial resources in accordance with their mandate in order to accelerate the process of implementation of the Convention in LAC.

Recommendations

51. A decision at the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 6) should invite affected country Parties and developed country Parties to set up, on a voluntary basis, a country-driven consultative mechanism in countries that have finalized their NAPs. Interested multilateral organizations in these affected countries should actively participate in this dialogue among Parties that should be facilitated by the GEF, the GM and the UNCCD secretariat in the light of their respective mandates. The purpose of this mechanism is consensus building with regard to best strategic options and concrete resources mobilization for NAP implementation.

52. Development partners were called upon to reconsider their policies and procedures with a view to participating in a structured manner in the proposed dialogue, and to simplify application requirements and access to their respective bilateral development funding for implementation of the UNCCD programmes.

53. COP 6, in the framework of the review of the policies, operational modalities and activities of the GM as required by the Convention, should assess the performance of the GM in mobilizing and channelling financial resources including financial support for transfer of technology to affected country Parties in accordance with its mandate.

54. Adequate financial resources for the implementation of the UNCCD should be secured in the aftermath of the WSSD so as to contribute to the eradication of rural poverty, particularly in the vulnerable arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid ecosystems. The level of financial resources to this effect should be identified, on an indicative basis, with a view to drawing up a clear plan of resource allocation in order adequately and timely to address the issues of financial support and capacity building prior to COP 7.

55. The UNCCD secretariat, together with interested agencies and institutions, was invited to facilitate studies and sharing of experience on options for sustainable economic activities at community level in affected areas, with a view to presenting opportunities for employment and increased income generation.

56. The meeting urged developed countries to fulfill their financial commitments to UNCCD, considering that the affected developing countries have been allocating resources, although marginally, for the implementation of the UNCCD and have been raising systematically pertinent NAP programming as well as funding issues in their regular negotiations with developed country Parties.

57. The UNCCD secretariat was called upon to provide, in collaboration with interested partner agencies, the support needed to strengthen the negotiating capabilities of affected Parties at the international level, in order to finalize arrangements for the formulation and implementation of the NAPs.

58. The GEF was called upon, at its Second Assembly meeting in Beijing in October 2002, to adopt the recommendations of the GEF Council concerning the designation of land degradation (desertification and deforestation) as a focal area in order effectively to increase GEF support to the successful implementation of the UNCCD, and to identify the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD, taking into account the role of the GM.

59. The Inter-American Development Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, the Andean Development Corporation and other multilateral funding agencies were called upon to provide financial resources and facilitate pre-feasibility studies for investment projects with a view to enabling LAC country Parties to undertake larger investment programmes in the context of the implementation of the Convention.

60. The UNCCD secretariat was called upon to provide information to individual country Parties indicating their financial obligations to the core budget to cover the period including the year 2003.

E. Linkages and synergies with other international conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies

61. The process of strengthening synergies in the region should be understood in the context of the integration of the process of implementation of the Convention into national strategies for sustainable development. The support from the UNCCD secretariat in the organization of targeted national synergy workshops has helped countries of the region to assess options for linking in a more sustained manner the activities regarding desertification, biological diversity and climate change.

62. The definition of a process of establishing synergies among the sustainable development conventions in LAC has been centered on the improvement of procedures and operative integration at the country level, in order to respond to the need for the establishment of sound procedures and

reliable mechanisms and to harness the existing initiatives that satisfy the objectives of the conventions.

63. This process contributed to the identification of possible strategic approaches in the development and launching of joint activities, in avoiding duplication of effort and increasing cost-efficiency, but follow-up activities could not be secured without financial support.

Recommendations

64. The synergies with the UNFCCC, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and other relevant international environmental instruments should be achieved by means of initiatives and actions directed to the implementation of the conventions at the national level. Implementation of integrated, cost-effective programmes and activities to this end can contribute directly to the harmonization of national sustainable development policies.

65. The LAC countries requested the secretariat, in cooperation with secretariats of other conventions and interested agencies, to expand the number of national synergy workshops and to continue facilitating this process at the country level in order further to enhance the decision-makers' capacity fully to implement the Convention in a synergistic manner, and invite developed country Parties to provide the secretariat with voluntary funding to this effect.

F. Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for mitigating the effects of drought

66. Water scarcity, water and wind erosion, loss of soil fertility, forest decline, catastrophes due to extreme weather events and prolonged drought are some of the problems that affect LAC ecosystems, particularly the Andean mountain ecosystem.

67. A wide range of measures is being taken in terms of land rehabilitation and mitigation of the effects of drought in the LAC region. In this context the Convention has yet to make its impact felt as it should now move from the programming to the operational phase.

68. At present, most of the measures taken seem to respond to short-term imperatives and are not linked to the sustainable rehabilitation of degraded lands, nor do they constitute a sustained response to disaster mitigation, prevention and risk management.

69. LAC country Parties need support in training, exchanges and demonstration programmes in order to communicate knowledge of best practices in managing lands in a sustainable manner and to increase the use of science and technology for the mitigation of the impacts of natural disasters, including recurrent drought.

Recommendations

70. Participants stressed the need to strengthen interaction among countries of the region so as to increase the information flow, to promote South-South research ventures, and to stimulate the dissemination of appropriate technology and know-how.

71. The UNCCD secretariat, with other relevant international organizations, was invited to support the efforts to share experience and capacities among countries in the field of forestation, reforestation and watershed management. The countries recommended that the secretariat should make efforts to mobilize financial resources in order to organize a regional seminar and arrange a task group on watershed management.

G. Drought and desertification assessment, monitoring
and early warning systems

72. Some LAC country Parties have a comparative advantage in the development of several sets of benchmarks and indicators on desertification and drought, ranging from diagnosis to monitoring as well as assessment indicators. They are developing several initiatives to identify benchmarks and indicators for diagnosing situations and monitoring, assessing and helping to implement concrete activities.

73. Other LAC country Parties suffer from a lack of sound systems for early warning and drought preparedness.

Recommendations

74. The LAC country Parties exhorted each other to make the best use of the DESELAC network in the field of early warning systems, providing and exchanging valuable technical information and sharing best practices and experience.

75. The LAC country Parties called upon the UNCCD secretariat and interested international agencies to support joint initiatives, experiences, activities relating to development of indicators and benchmarks, interaction with programmes in other regions (Concerted Action to Support the Northern Mediterranean Regional Action Programme to Combat Desertification - MEDRAP), and the holding of a seminar on indicators and benchmarks for LAC in Argentina, as a mechanism to strengthen the RAP.

76. The LAC country Parties requested the UNCCD secretariat, the WMO and interested partner agencies to extend full support for the further development and implementation of a comprehensive programme on early warning systems for the Caribbean and Mesoamerican country Parties, including the strengthening of their technical capabilities and community-based organizational activities to make the programme operational.

77. Initiatives on early warning systems should draw in strong partnerships between the UNCCD secretariat and other agencies, such as WMO and the GEF.

H. Access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how

78. Several best practices, including biomass generation (*quezungual*) and zero tillage, have already been successfully applied in a number of countries of the region, representing valuable alternatives for land users and providing a competitive economic advantage.

Recommendations

79. It is necessary to disseminate and apply, where appropriate, the findings derived from traditional knowledge and best practices. This also applies when such knowledge and practices are combined with modern technologies, and adapted to local conditions.

80. The CST and its group of experts should propose ways and means to strengthen the capacity of scientific and academic institutions in the LAC to develop synergistic programmes based on sound land use practices.

I. Priorities at national, subregional and regional levels

1. National level

81. According to articles 9 and 10 of the Convention, country Parties have to prepare and implement their NAPs in a participatory manner and to guarantee the coherence of the UNCCD process and its integration in the respective national policies for sustainable development. Progress in this matter is still too slow when considering the deadline for NAP preparation contained in the Recife Initiative (decision 8/COP.4).

82. Furthermore, the rationalization of the enabling national macro policy and legal frameworks should represent a priority so as to avoid any conflict among provisions and allow the effective implementation of the Convention, promoting, *inter alia*, synergies among the existing sustainable development instruments.

83. Combating poverty requires the adoption of effective measures to operationalize participatory policies and launch concrete measures engineered with the aim of creating an enabling framework for the promotion and development of sustainable and competitive economic alternatives aimed at income generation for affected communities.

84. Participants recognized the need to maximize the multiplier effect of resource allocation to affected areas through an enhanced framework for investment coordination conceived with the aim of ensuring an increased overall coherence for domestic and international operational interventions at the field level.

2. Regional and subregional levels

85. Considering integrated watershed management as the key issue for combating land degradation in the region, LAC country Parties should identify those transboundary ecosystems in which horizontal cooperation can be fostered, with the aim of analysing problems, assessing existing and required capacities and promoting solutions which are both suitable and replicable.

86. There are several positive examples of cooperation among countries of the region, such as the Central American Committee on Desertification and Drought, which bring about economies of scale and coherent negotiations between the participant country Parties.

87. The LAC country Parties emphasized the need to build upon the experience and successes of El Gran Chaco Americano and the Puna Americana SRAPs to define guidelines and methodologies for future sustainable initiatives at the subregional level.

88. RAP and SRAP implementation are hindered by a chronic lack of funding as well as weak partnerships. Participants welcomed the initiative of the secretariat to reactivate its RCU in Mexico City, which will help to enhance priority actions such as DESELAC and RAP/SRAP implementation through capacity building at national and subregional levels.

Recommendations

89. LAC country Parties not having completed their NAPs were urged to continue taking all necessary measures and to accelerate the process for their elaboration and adoption not later than the end of 2005, as recommended by decision 8/COP.4.

90. The successful experience of regional or subregional integration in the negotiations of the UNCCD, such as the Central American Committee on Desertification and Drought, should be replicated also in the Caribbean and the South American countries.

91. The UNCCD secretariat was urged to reactivate and strengthen the work of the RCU, with a view to enhancing priority actions at national, subregional and regional levels such as RAP/SRAP and DESELAC implementation as well as the coordination of GEF integrated initiatives. Particular emphasis should be placed on ensuring adequate and predictable financial resources through budgetary funds and voluntary contributions.

92. LAC countries should make necessary efforts, in coordination with Parties from other regions, for the formal establishment of the RCU during COP 6, considering the need for the allocation of adequate funds for its operation.

93. Regional and subregional institutions were encouraged to continue their integration efforts, particularly regarding the preparation and implementation of SRAPs and transboundary activities.

94. The secretariat of the UNCCD, with the support of the GEF, the GM and partner agencies, was urged to support LAC country Parties in the development of a regional programme on watershed management.

95. The LAC country Parties requested the support of the UNCCD secretariat, in collaboration with interested partners, in the development of a comprehensive regional project on benchmarks and indicators that strengthen the implementation of the RAP and its subregional components, particularly through the instruments already in place in its RCU, such as DESELAC.

96. The UNCCD secretariat, in collaboration with relevant international agencies and organizations, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), WMO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), IDB, IFAD and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN/ECLAC), and bilateral donors, was invited to continue providing support for the implementation of the UNCCD at the national, subregional and regional levels.

J. Global policy matters

97. LAC Parties commended the initiatives facilitated by the UNCCD secretariat in preparation of the WSSD through the Preparatory Conference to the WSSD held in Praia, Cape Verde, and the Africa-LAC Forum held in Caracas, Venezuela.

98. The effects of desertification and drought should be clearly perceived. Forced migration from affected rural areas to agricultural frontiers and urban dwellings contribute to social marginalization, political instability and conflicts. Desertification and drought are increasingly dominant causes for such forced migratory patterns. The Convention contributes to securing a better long-term balance between urban and rural communities, particularly by recognizing the right of people of the drylands to sustainable livelihood in their habitat. Special emphasis should be placed on land tenure issues.

99. As some of the economic, financial and trade imperatives driving the process of globalization seem, at times, to contribute to growing income discrepancies and to the deterioration of the terms of trade between rich and poor countries, a full implementation of UNCCD programmes would contribute to restoring some global equity, while alleviating increasing concerns that globalization will lead to the irreversible marginalization of people living in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid ecosystems.

Recommendations

100. The meeting recommended that appropriate actions be taken to ensure that the regional representatives of high-level delegations to the WSSD in Johannesburg and to the GEF General Assembly include in their presentations the subject of desertification and the elements of global policy discussed at this meeting.

101. At the WSSD, LAC country Parties should emphasize the need for investment in rural development in the affected areas and highlight in this respect the role that the implementation of the UNCCD may play in achieving greater policy coherence for the management of natural resources.

102. All Parties were invited to review budgetary allocations for promoting participatory and integrated local rural development. While LAC country Parties should earmark a higher proportion of their national budget to this effect, developed country Parties were invited to integrate this priority in the provision of new and additional resources under the forthcoming allocation of ODA.

103. The WSSD was invited to declare the UNCCD as a global instrument for eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development in the most vulnerable areas, in order to ensure that adequate and predictable financial resources and capacity building be provided at national and local levels.

104. Improved access of drylands products to the international markets should be granted as it would contribute to sustainable livelihoods in affected areas and stimulate the involvement of the private sector in combating desertification.

105. The development partners together with the GEF secretariat and GEF focal points in LAC countries were urged to recognize fully the potential of the UNCCD for promoting integrated programmes with genuine local ownership, and for eradicating poverty.

Annex I

PREPARATION OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE CRIC

A. Nomination of the vice-chairperson of the CRIC

1. According to article 4 of the terms of reference of the CRIC, as annexed to decision 1/COP.5, on the composition of the Bureau of the CRIC, Latin American and Caribbean country Parties nominated the representative of Cuba as the vice-chairperson of the CRIC.

**B. List of countries presenting case studies
at the first session of the CRIC**

2. Following decision 1/COP.5 concerning the nature of the review and the methodology used by the CRIC, and in accordance with the provisional agenda of the CRIC (ICCD/CRIC(1)/1), Latin American and Caribbean country Parties nominated the following countries to present case studies at the session:

<u>Thematic topic</u>	<u>Country</u>
1: Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations	Bolivia
2: Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements	Panama
3: Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements	Costa Rica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Uruguay
4: Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies	Antigua and Barbuda
5: Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land	Paraguay
6: Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment; early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought	Argentina
7: Access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how	Honduras

Annex II

REGIONAL MATTERS OTHER THAN THE CRIC

1. As a complement to the recommendations for the review exercise, participants also underlined the necessity to strengthen the institutional structure of the RAP as a means of enhancing coordination and communication capabilities among national focal points. In this regard, they unanimously highlighted the importance of a fully operational and effective RCU, as a unique regional-level instrument for the follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of Annex III to the Convention. They further recalled past recommendations under this agenda item, particularly decision 6/COP.5 which recognizes the importance of regional approaches and coordination in the implementation of the Convention, and the value of efforts at the regional level. Accordingly, participants strongly supported the timely reactivation of the RCU and invited the Conference of the Parties to take a decision for its funding through its regular budget at its forthcoming session.

2. In this context, the participants also invited the secretariat to finalize consultations with an international institution represented in Mexico, a country with which the secretariat has signed a host agreement for the RCU.

Annex III

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