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

**Consideration of additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the Conference  
of the Parties in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention**

Note by the secretariat<sup>\*</sup>

**SUMMARY**

By its decision 1/COP.5, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to establish the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) as a standing subsidiary body to assist in its function of regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention. The schedule of work, the mandate and the functions of the CRIC were also defined by the same decision, with the *provisio* that they will be subject to renewal at the seventh session of the COP, in the light of lessons learned during the overall review of the CRIC. To this effect, Parties were invited to submit written proposals to the secretariat no later than 31 January 2003, on criteria against which the CRIC will be reviewed, with a view to determining such criteria at the sixth session of the COP.

Section II of this document provides background information on procedures and institutional mechanisms for reviewing the implementation of the Convention, which have taken shape through various decisions of the COP, written proposals submitted by Parties, the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) to the fifth session of the COP, the report of the CRIC on its first session, and other documents produced by the secretariat to this effect.

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<sup>\*</sup> The submission of this document was delayed in order to include consideration of as many submissions by Parties as possible.

Section III draws the main features in the evolution of the implementation review process and shows the trends and views expressed by Parties on this matter and those key aspects which may constitute the core of future discussions. Section III also contains a synthesis of submissions and an analysis of the views of Parties on various aspects pertaining to the review of the terms of reference of the CRIC, its operations and its schedule of meetings.

Various views were expressed on the way CRIC sessions should be conducted in terms of length, participation of different stakeholders, timetable, and format of reports provided by Parties. Parties' views converged on the necessity and continuity of the CRIC as a positive and learning process. All written proposals support the enhancement, continuity and improvement of the implementation review process of the Convention through the CRIC. Comments and deliberations focused subsequently on the modalities and structure of this process in order best to ensure its efficient performance.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The COP, by its decision 1/COP.5, has established a committee for the review of the implementation of the Convention (CRIC) as a standing subsidiary body of the COP, to assist it in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention.

2. By the same decision, the COP also decided that:

(a) the COP shall, no later than at its seventh ordinary session, review the terms of reference of the Committee, its operations and its schedule of meetings, with a view to making any necessary modification, including reconsidering the need for and modalities of the CRIC as a subsidiary body;

(b) the mandate and functions of the CRIC as contained in paragraph 1(b) of the terms of reference shall be subject to renewal at the seventh session of the COP, in the light of lessons learned during the overall review of the CRIC.

3. By the same decision, Parties were invited to submit written proposals to the secretariat no later than 31 January 2003 on criteria against which the Committee will be reviewed, with a view to determining such criteria at the sixth session of the COP.

4. Eighteen submissions were received from Parties, namely Argentina, Australia, Belarus, Chad, China, Canada, Cuba, Egypt, Greece on behalf of the European Union and its Member States, Indonesia, Morocco, Myanmar, Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Togo, Turkey and Ukraine. This note records the contributions received from country Parties as at 31 May 2003, and also provides a synthesis of proposals pertaining to additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention. Due to directives concerning the length of documents generated in the secretariat, submissions by Parties are not incorporated in this note. They are, however, reproduced in their entirety, as submitted to the secretariat, on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Web site at <http://www.unccd.int/cop/cop6/COPsubmissions.php>.

## II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### A. From a panel review of national reports to the establishment of an ad hoc subsidiary body

5. Article 22, paragraph 2 (a) of the Convention states that the COP shall regularly review the implementation of the Convention and the functioning of its institutional arrangements in the light of experience gained at the national, subregional, regional and international levels, and on the basis of the evolution of scientific and technological knowledge.

6. Article 26, paragraph 1 of the Convention, on procedures for communication of information, provides that each Party shall communicate to the COP at its ordinary sessions, through the permanent secretariat, reports on the measures which it has taken for the implementation of the

Convention. In paragraphs 2 to 5 of the same article, the different obligations of Parties in reporting to the COP are outlined.

7. With regard to the review of the implementation process, it is important to recall that decision 11/COP.1 outlined the specific objectives of the procedures for the communication of information and review of implementation, and defined the format of reports on the implementation of the Convention to be submitted to the COP.

8. The need to establish additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in its task of regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention has been considered since the second session of the COP. By its decision 10/COP.2, the COP invited Parties to make submissions on the review of the implementation of the Convention.

9. At its third session, the COP initiated the review of the implementation of the Convention and considered the reports from affected African country Parties as well as reports from developed country Parties, United Nations agencies and bodies, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through the means of panel discussions.

10. Further to this first exercise, an ad hoc working group (AHWG) was established as an ad hoc subsidiary body to review and analyse in depth, at the fourth session of the COP, reports submitted at its third and fourth sessions. The AHWG was mandated to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations to the COP on further steps in the review of the implementation of the Convention (decision 6/COP.3).

11. At its fourth session, the COP decided to convene an intersessional session of the AHWG to complete the review of national reports individually prior to the fifth session of the COP and to analyse them by adopting thematic approaches, without neglecting other issues contained in the reports (decision 1/COP.4). The recommendations of the AHWG are contained in its comprehensive report to the fifth session of the COP (ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/6).

B. The first session of the Committee for the Review  
of the Implementation of the Convention

12. By decision 1/COP.5, the CRIC was established as a standing subsidiary body of the COP to assist it in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention.

13. By the same decision, the COP decided that the first session of the CRIC would review updates to reports already available and/or new reports from all regions; and that the second session of the CRIC, to be held during the sixth session of the COP, should carry out its functions pursuant to paragraph 1 (b) of the terms of reference as contained in the annex to the same decision.

14. In this regard, it was also decided that after the sixth session of the COP, the review should be conducted in accordance with the timetable outlined in paragraphs 13 to 15 of decision 11/COP.1 and that it should continue to focus on specific thematic issues identified by Parties. Accordingly, seven key thematic topics were identified for the review, up to and including the seventh session of the COP.

15. Pursuant to these provisions, the CRIC held its first session in Rome, from 11 to 22 November 2002. The implementation review was conducted along the key thematic topics as mentioned above, and was followed by wrap-up sessions for the five Regional Implementation Annexes. A global interactive dialogue (GID) also took place. The conclusions and recommendations of the CRIC at its first session are contained in ICCD/CRIC(1)/10.

### **III. SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS OF SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED FROM COUNTRY PARTIES**

#### **A. Foreword**

16. It was generally recognized that the implementation review process at the first CRIC session bore fruit, given that the many case studies provided an excellent opportunity to learn about successes and challenges in implementation and a clear demonstration of commitment on the part of Parties.

17. A number of country Parties' submissions provided a general assessment, and offered elements and suggestions as to how to improve the implementation review process as a whole. These suggestions are summarized in section B below and are provided for any deliberation that the Conference may wish to undertake further to guide this process.

18. Parties supported the enhancement, continuity and improvement of the implementation review process of the Convention through the CRIC. Comments and deliberations focused subsequently on the modalities and structure of this process in order best to ensure its efficient performance. Various views were expressed as to the way CRIC sessions should be conducted in terms of length, criteria for its evaluation, participation of different stakeholders, timetable and format of reports provided by Parties.

19. The methodology for analysing and drawing major trends from the submissions by Parties follows, to a certain extent, the pattern in ICCD/COP(5)/3/Add.1 in order to facilitate comprehension and comparison of the evolution of the implementation review process of Parties. It is also intended better to follow-up the development of views by Parties during the period since the CRIC implementation review process commenced. Other sections have been added to reflect this progression, as well as suggestions and proposals made by Parties.

20. It was acknowledged that the criteria as well as the work programme and the schedule of meetings could be improved. In this regard, a supplementary thematic topic was proposed, which would dwell on successful experience, dissemination and transfer of advanced technology from the developed country Parties to the affected developing country Parties. The development of a work programme should include clear objectives, goals and timelines for the implementation of the Convention. Some comments also highlighted the need for more systematic scientific and technical input, especially from the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

21. Some submissions put forth detailed criteria against which the terms of reference, operations and schedule of meetings of the CRIC would be reviewed at the seventh session of the COP, included specific indicators, among which were the following:

- (a) Relevance of the purpose, overall objectives and results of the CRIC;
- (b) Its effectiveness in assisting the COP in the review of the implementation of the Convention and in drawing useful recommendations;
- (c) Impact of the CRIC towards achieving the overall objectives of the Convention;
- (d) Appropriateness of design, providing a learning-based interaction leading to a transparent and flexible implementation review;
- (e) Efficiency in the way outcomes of CRIC in terms of quantity and quality are matched against means utilized.

22. Similarly, a Party believed that the mobilization of financial resources in favour of affected country Parties in combating desertification and drought should also be taken into account when evaluating the contribution of the CRIC report. An example might be the establishment of a dialogue between affected country Parties and the donor community with the aim of timely mobilization of resources.

23. The detailed criteria proposed by country Parties are summarized in section B below. Due to space restrictions, the indicators proposed in some submissions by Parties are not contained in this report. However, they can be found on the UNCCD Web site.

## B. Principles guiding improvement of the review of the implementation process

### *1. Objectives*

24. As recalled by most Parties in ICCD/COP(5)/3/Add.1, the review of the implementation of the Convention and of its institutional mechanisms is a learning-based mechanism designed to assist Parties in enhancing their implementation of the Convention.

25. Parties reiterated their belief that the objectives of the implementation review process for a CRIC should be in line with the goals stated in decision 11/COP.1 on procedures for communication of information and review of implementation.

26. As expressed by one comment, poverty reduction is the objective of the UNCCD and the main focus of the millennium development goals (MDGs). Consequently, there is a need to create a special forum to discuss the development and environment nexus. Country Parties should be given a platform for presenting how they incorporated the MDGs into their national action programmes (NAPs). Likewise, the secretariat, together with implementing agencies, should also make formal presentations on how they have assisted countries to achieve the MDGs within the context of their NAPs.

27. Another submission stressed the need to develop a strategic approach to the implementation of the Convention, which would incorporate:

(a) Synergies in the implementation of the Convention with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in terms of investment and outcomes;

(b) A review of the existing committee structure before developing the terms of reference of the CRIC;

(c) An implementation strategy identifying clear goals, objectives and timelines.

## *2. Participation of stakeholders*

28. Some Parties would like to see a better participation of NGOs since they provide a key dimension in the work and activities of the UNCCD. A way to include NGOs more systematically would be to include more presentations by NGOs at CRIC sessions or to provide time for an official dialogue session. In the view of these Parties, joint presentations by country Parties and NGOs should also be encouraged.

29. The contribution of civil society is critical to the successful implementation of the Convention. In order to improve the involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders, the private sector included, more effort should be made to allow more NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) to participate effectively during the next CRIC session. It would be desirable for their presentations to be guided also by the secretariat. This, however, does not suggest any prescriptions for NGOs; the guidelines should promote flexibility and innovation.

## *3. Role of the Committee on Science and Technology*

30. Almost all Parties agreed that the CST should play an enhanced role in CRIC sessions. It was thus proposed that the participation of the CST, through its Group of Experts (GoE), should be facilitated during CRIC sessions. This could be accomplished, for example, by holding the meeting of the GoE in conjunction with the CRIC sessions.

## *4. Format of reports*

31. There is a general recognition that the format of national reports (as contained in decision 11/COP.1 on communication of information) should be improved, in order to ensure greater relevance of CRIC deliberations. The use of quantitative and verifiable indicators has also been called for in a number of submissions.

32. It was suggested that – in addition to the reports on the measures taken for the implementation of the UNCCD submitted by Parties – a clear, short, and easily comparable format as a supplement to the reports could assist Parties to understand key trends and features, and make comparisons among the different reports. The proposed supplement in the form of a questionnaire containing detailed indicators could be attached to national reports.



33. In the view of the same written proposal, taking into account the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and articles 4, 5 and 6 of the Convention, the questionnaire would contain two sets of criteria appropriately designed for affected developing country Parties and developed country Parties respectively.

#### *5. Thematic approach*

34. All Parties agreed that the thematic topics approach was useful and that it added value and insight to the information provided in the country reports. One submission suggested the inclusion of a new topic: Successful experience dissemination and transfer of advanced technology from the developed country Parties to the affected developing country Parties.

35. One comment suggests that the thematic topics could be refined to provide more focus in the discussions. Similarly, it is recommended that the case studies discussed at the CRIC session should, in future, focus on offering solutions to common problems and on the replication of successful approaches. According to the same view, this would allow a move away from a “progress report” approach to an “action oriented” approach.

36. Another contribution proposes that, although thematic case studies contributed to the sharing of experience, the focus by many projects was largely on rehabilitation actions. In future presentations, affected country Parties should give more attention to preventive actions. Many presentations failed to demonstrate clearly the real causes of failure or success of their projects. The next presentations before the CRIC could thus provide a better analysis of failures and successes with clear quantitative indicators.

37. In contrast to the previous report on the review of the implementation of the Convention and of its institutional arrangements (ICCD/COP(5)/3/Add.1), cost-effectiveness has been recommended in various submissions without any indication of limiting the number of representatives from country Parties or other stakeholders such as NGOs or CBOs at the sessions of the CRIC, nor of the implications of such a measure. On the contrary, participation by civil society has been encouraged and supported.

#### *6. Format and frequency of meetings*

38. There is general agreement that the first session of the CRIC was a positive experience in view of the fact that presentations of case studies provided an excellent opportunity to learn about successes and challenges in implementation, and clearly demonstrated the high commitment of Parties to the implementation of the Convention. Conversely, one contribution points out that the formality of the proceedings hindered the free exchange of information. In this regard, a mechanism should be provided for real interactive discussion within the general debates of the CRIC, as opposed to one semi-formal global interactive dialogue. Arrangements could include the creation of semi-formal, cross-regional thematic working groups, moderated by experts or eminent persons. The cost implications of such proposals were not discussed.

39. One submission expressed the belief that having regional wrap-up sessions at the CRIC was seen as a useful experience which enriched discussions, even though the added value of such sessions was not clearly demonstrated and they duplicated the regional process. This raises questions of cost-effectiveness and should be considered in the future, particularly in terms of the length of sessions.

40. As one comment suggested, arranging the CRIC session in panel format might also save time and financial resources.

41. One Party suggested that CRIC sessions should last no more than ten working days using a panel format.

42. A number of Parties believe that sessions of a subsidiary body for implementation should be organized in parallel with the ordinary sessions of the COP. Due to the quantity of reports for review at COP sessions, others propose intersessional sessions so that questions on implementation can be discussed more extensively and in a more effective manner.

### *7. Outcome and status of the CRIC report*

43. One comment affirms that the legal status of the CRIC report, together with its conclusions and recommendations, is unclear. This led to some confusion when Parties discussed and drafted the recommendations at the first CRIC session. It has been proposed that this aspect be clarified before the third CRIC session.

### *8. Financial implications*

44. The cost-effectiveness of holding intersessional sessions of the Committee was addressed as one of the key criteria, which will facilitate its assessment. In this regard, the added value of regional wrap-up sessions was questioned in a few proposals. Indicators which could assist in assessing cost-effectiveness would show to which extent preparatory regional meetings provide complementary input into the CRIC analysis and discussions, and whether similar results could have been achieved at a lower cost.

## C. Criteria for the review of the terms of reference, operations and schedule of meetings of the CRIC

### *1. Relevance*

45. A number of country Parties suggested that the CRIC should be first reviewed against the extent to which its results, purpose and overall objectives were in line with the needs and expectations of the Parties.

46. Among specific indicators to facilitate the review of the Committee's work to this effect, the relevance of information provided to the Committee (reports from country Parties, inputs from regional meetings and compilations, syntheses and preliminary analyses prepared by the secretariat) was recalled. Also mentioned has been the relevance of thematic topics addressed in the review of implementation, in the light of the current status and trends of the implementation of the

Convention, and the extent to which the CRIC has effectively discussed these topics and proposed concrete actions to improve the implementation of the Convention.

## *2. Impact*

47. Impact has been defined as the extent to which there has been change towards achieving the overall objectives of the Convention that can be attributed to the CRIC, through relevant action taken by the COP on policies, strategies and approaches in order to improve the implementation of the Convention.

48. Specific analysis would include assessment of the extent to which CRIC recommendations have been translated into operational decisions of the COP which have influenced national policy development, the participatory role of civil society and the role of developed country Parties, among others. Feasibility, sustainability and wholeness of the Committee's recommendations have also been mentioned as indicators in evaluating the impact of the deliberations of the CRIC.

## *3. Effectiveness*

49. For the purpose of reviewing the CRIC, effectiveness has been defined as the extent to which the Committee has responded to its mandate and functions as defined in decision 1/COP.5, notably paragraph 1(a) and (b) of the annex to that decision. A number of objective verifiable indicators have been proposed to this effect, in accordance with the terms of reference of the CRIC.

## *4. Appropriateness of design*

50. The extent to which the format of CRIC sessions is conducive to interactive discussions, learning-based interaction, leading to a transparent and flexible implementation review process has also been mentioned in some submissions by Parties.

51. To this effect, the setting of the CRIC sessions would be reviewed, *inter alia*, in terms of interactivity of cross-regional exchanges, integration of NGOs into its deliberations, participation of the scientific community and efficiency of institutional linkages between the CRIC and the COP.

## *5. Cost-effectiveness*

52. According to a number of submissions, the criteria against which the CRIC will be reviewed would also include the extent to which outcomes of the Committee are commensurable to the resources invested, both in terms of quantity and quality of its deliberations.

53. The composition of the Committee, the functioning of its Bureau, the frequency of session and organization of work, including the regional inputs, as well as the nature of the review and methodology used, have been cited among the various indicators to be used.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

54. The COP at its sixth session may wish to consider the relevant background on additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention, and in particular:

- (a) Article 22, paragraph 2(a) and (b), and article 26 of the Convention, on the review of the implementation of the Convention and of its institutional arrangements;
- (b) Decision 11/COP.1 on the procedure for the communication of information;
- (c) Decision 1/COP.5 and its annex on the terms of reference of the CRIC;
- (d) The report of the CRIC at its first session, as contained in document ICCD/CRIC(1)/10 and its conclusions and recommendations.

55. The COP may also wish to consider the written proposals submitted by country Parties and the report prepared by the secretariat, and to determine comprehensive criteria against which the Committee's terms of reference will be reviewed no later than at its seventh session, along the main guiding principles indicated above.

#### V. REFERENCE DOCUMENTATION

<u>Document symbol</u>	<u>Title or description</u>
ICCD/COP(5)/11	Report of the Conference of the Parties on its fifth session
ICCD/COP(5)/3/Add.1	Implementation of the Convention – Addendum – Consideration of additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the Conference of the Parties in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention
ICCD/COP(5)/3/Add.2	Implementation of the Convention – Addendum – Synthesis of the report on ways of improving the efficiency and the effectiveness of the Committee on Science and Technology
ICCD/COP(4)/11/Add.1	Report of the Conference of the Parties on its fourth session
ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.7	Consideration of additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the Conference of the Parties in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention
ICCD/COP(4)/AHWG/6	Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group to the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties
ICCD/COP(3)/20/Add.1	Report to the Conference of the Parties on its third session

<u>Document symbol</u>	<u>Title or description</u>
ICCD/COP(3)/6	Medium-term strategy of the secretariat
ICCD/COP(3)/17	Establishment of additional procedures and/or institutional mechanisms to review the implementation of the Convention
ICCD/COP(2)/14/Add.1	Report of the Conference of the Parties on its second session
ICCD/COP(1)/11/Add.1	Report of the Conference of the Parties on its first session

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