



## Convention to Combat Desertification

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### Committee on Science and Technology

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**Reshaping the operation of the Committee on Science and Technology in line with the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)**

**Preparation of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference: “Economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas”**

## Progress report on the preparation of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference

### Note by the secretariat

#### *Summary*

By its decision 16/COP.9 the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) decided that the 2nd UNCCD Scientific Conference shall take place in 2012 at a special session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), in accordance with the provisions of decision 13/COP.8, paragraph 1 (a), (b), (c) and (d). By the same decision the COP requested the CST Bureau, with the support of the secretariat and on the basis of the outcomes of the assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference, to establish terms of reference and procedures for selection of a lead institution/consortium which is qualified in and has expertise in the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP to organize the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference under the guidance of the CST Bureau. The COP also requested the CST Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to select the lead institution or consortium at least two years prior to each future UNCCD scientific conference.

This document reports on progress in the preparation process for the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference up to 22 November 2010. It also includes findings from discussions at the CST 9 Bureau meeting held from 21 to 22 June 2010, and the terms of reference for selection of the lead institution/consortium. Information regarding the decision on the selection of the lead institution/consortium taken by the CST 9 Bureau during its meeting held from 18 to 19 November 2010 can be found in the addendum to this document.

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## I. Background

1. The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) highlights the importance given to the development and implementation of scientifically-based and sound methods for monitoring and assessing desertification, and underlines the need for a holistic view.

2. At the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8), Parties decided to strengthen the scientific basis underpinning the Convention. Towards this end, Parties decided that each future ordinary session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) shall be organized in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format by the CST Bureau in consultation with a lead institution/consortium that is qualified in and has expertise in the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP.<sup>1</sup>

3. As a result, the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference took place during COP 9 from 22 to 24 September 2009 on the theme “Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management”.

4. The effective participation of the scientific community in the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference was ensured through, inter alia, international working groups and a review of the white papers through a global e-dialogue during the preparation process, and a poster session during the conference. A detailed report on the modalities and funding issues relating to the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference can be found in document ICCD/COP(9)/CST/2/Add.2. Eleven key recommendations were made at the conference.<sup>2</sup>

5. By its decision 16/COP.9, the COP decided that the thematic topic to be considered by the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference would be “Economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas”.

6. Also by decision 16/COP.9, the COP:

(a) Decided that the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference shall take place in 2012 at a special session of the CST, in accordance with the provisions of decision 13/COP.8, paragraph 1 (a), (b), (c) and (d) (paragraph 2);

(b) Requested the CST Bureau, with the support of the secretariat and on the basis of the outcomes of the assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference, to establish terms of reference and procedures for selection, taking into account regional balance, of a lead institution/consortium which is qualified in and has expertise in the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP to organize the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference under the guidance of the CST Bureau. (paragraph 6);

(c) Requested the CST Bureau, with the support of the secretariat, to select the lead institution/consortium at least two years prior to each future UNCCD Scientific Conference (paragraph 7);

(d) Directed the CST Bureau to ensure that the selection of the institution/consortium is done in a transparent manner, and in strict accordance with the

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<sup>1</sup> Decision 13/COP.8, paragraph 1 (a).

<sup>2</sup> Document ICCD/COP(9)/CST/INF.3.

established criteria, if any, and to avoid any conflict of interest between the institution/consortium selected and any Bureau member (paragraph 8).

## **II. Progress made on the preparation of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference**

7. In April 2010, in accordance with decision 16/COP.9 and following the recommendations of the CST 9 Bureau meeting held in Bonn, Germany, from 1 to 2 March 2010, the secretariat initiated an assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference in consultation with regional groups. Document ICCD/CST(S-2)/2 contains a report on that assessment.

8. At the meeting of the CST 9 Bureau held from 21 to 22 June 2010, the secretariat and the CST Bureau discussed a road map towards the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference.

9. As part of the initial steps of the road map, the secretariat, with the agreement of the CST 9 Bureau, issued a call for proposals by institutions and consortia interested in organizing the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference. The call for proposals included terms of reference for the selection of the lead institution/consortium detailing the procedure and requirements for the organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference. The terms of reference were based on the results from the assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference and are contained in the annex to the present document. The terms of reference were posted on the UNCCD website and circulated to Parties, observers, and scientific institutions, as well as to other interested and relevant stakeholders. The deadline for applications was set as 16 October 2010.

10. The CST 9 Bureau assessed all the applications received before the deadline. This assessment was based on the selection criteria listed in the terms of reference:

- (a) Innovation and approach
- (b) Organization and benefits
- (c) Organizational capacity
- (d) Staff and position specifications
- (e) Budget and budget justifications

## **III. Conclusions and recommendations**

11. **The CST at its second special session may wish to take note of the selected institution/consortium, as presented in the addendum to this document, and provide guidance and further recommendations on the process of organizing the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference.**

## Annex

### **Terms of reference for the selection of a lead institution/consortium to organize the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference**

#### **I. Collaboration opportunity and description**

1. The secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) announces an open invitation to submit proposals to organize the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference. A lead institution/consortium will be selected for this assignment. In accordance with decision 16/COP.9, this conference shall take place in 2012 at a special session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST). The venue will be decided by the Conference of the Parties (COP) at its tenth session (COP 10), in October 2011. The lead institution/consortium will be selected by the CST Bureau with support from the secretariat based on the criteria listed in this document. As cooperation between the CST Bureau, the UNCCD secretariat and the selected lead institution/consortium is crucial for the successful organization of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, a conference steering committee will be established.

#### **II. Background**

2. The UNCCD established the CST under its article 24 as a subsidiary body of the COP. As indicated by the terms of reference of the CST (decision 15/COP.1), the major role of the CST is to provide the COP with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, in order to ensure that its decisions are based on the most up-to-date scientific knowledge.

3. The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (**The Strategy**), that was adopted by the COP at its eighth session, in September 2007, spells out **the mission** of the UNCCD. The mission is to provide a global framework to support the development and implementation of national and regional policies, programmes and measures to prevent, control and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought through scientific and technological excellence, raising public awareness, standard setting, advocacy and resource mobilization, thereby contributing to poverty reduction.

4. The **vision** of the UNCCD for the future is to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. The operational objective on science, technology and knowledge, which is a central component of **The Strategy**, is for the UNCCD to become a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought, facilitating access to technology by affected country Parties, notably within the framework of South–South and North–South cooperation.

5. Recognizing the need to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, **The Strategy** calls for the reshaping of the CST, strengthening its capacity to process scientific, technical and socio-economic information, and setting up a framework for activities with redefined roles, responsibilities and working modalities.

6. Decision 13/COP.8 set up a framework for CST meetings, which will be held in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format and focus on one priority area. By decision 16/COP.9, the Parties decided that the specific thematic topic to be considered by the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference will be “Economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas”.

7. In order to facilitate the efficient implementation of the scientific and technical conference-style format of the CST meeting, and to address the selected priority theme, the COP further requested the Bureau of the CST in collaboration with the selected lead institution/consortium, and with the support of the secretariat, to involve relevant networks, institutions, agencies, bodies and scientific organizations at the regional and subregional levels, non-governmental organizations and other civil society stakeholders in addressing the priority theme. To this end, wide-ranging expertise from key stakeholders needs to be brought on board and knowledge at various levels mobilized and analysed, in order for the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference to succeed.

8. The UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference is expected to produce sound scientific outputs and policy-oriented recommendations based on the analysis and compilation of peer reviewed and published literature that informs policy formulation and dialogue. These recommendations shall be submitted to the COP for its consideration. The recommendations should also provide a clear picture of available options and possible scenarios for decision makers on the economic assessment of desertification, land degradation and sustainable land management in the affected areas, as addressed and proposed by The Strategy. In addition, these recommendations should clearly outline the mechanisms by which the analysis and transfer of information from national, subregional, regional and global levels can take place cost-effectively and efficiently.

### **III. Organizing the conference**

#### **A. Aim and scope**

9. The conference will be organized by the lead institution/consortium selected by the COP under the guidance of the Bureau of the CST and with the support of the UNCCD secretariat.

10. The main aim of the selected lead institution/consortium shall be to ensure that the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference is held in an international scientific-conference-style format and contributes scientific information to the CST special session in 2012. The scope of this assignment is to bring on board key scientific institutions, scientists and, where possible, technology and policy, from around the world, taking into account regional balance, and to ensure that the scientific community participates effectively in the conference. State-of-the-art research findings and best practices in the field, relevant to the theme of the conference, need to be presented at the conference with the goal of engaging the best possible scientific and technological expertise in the search for information. At the same time, recommendations should be developed, based on these research findings, in order to assist decision makers to address the issues of desertification and land degradation in the context of the theme of the conference. These research findings will include the results of specific research projects such as the meta-analysis study produced under the Economics of Desertification Land Degradation and Drought initiative.

11. In addressing the theme of the conference, the selected lead institution/consortium shall provide an interface with the global scientific community to foster effective

communication and the flow of new ideas by enhancing the knowledge-sharing process. This shall be carried out in collaboration with the CST Bureau and the UNCCD secretariat.

12. More specifically, the selected lead institution/consortium is expected to address the issues outlined in each of the sections below.

## **B. Conference modalities and preparation process**

13. The modalities of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference were agreed by the Bureau of CST 9 at its meeting in June 2010, in Bonn, Germany, based on the assessment of the organization of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference. The UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference will be held back to back with the session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention held between ordinary sessions of the COP in order to ensure broad participation of policymakers. The selected lead institution/consortium shall, inter alia:

(a) Develop, in consultation with the conference steering committee, the procedure and approach for the organization of the conference, including:

- (i) Preparation of the conference agenda and programme of work;
- (ii) Preparation of a road map with clearly identified milestones and deliverables and an assignment timeline;
- (iii) Selection of a scientific committee;
- (iv) Identification of subject topics or sub themes;
- (v) Selection of peer reviewers of conference outputs (papers, booklets, etc.);
- (vi) Selection of suitable abstracts from contributors;
- (vii) Development of marketing materials for the conference (flyers, etc.);
- (viii) Identification of the expected outcomes of the conference (scientific papers in peer reviewed journals, documents for policy, etc);
- (ix) Establishment of a website;

(b) Organize working groups to deal with key issues and subtopics of the theme of the conference. The working groups should involve scientists from developed and developing countries of various regions, and especially young scientists, in order to promote capacity-building in the affected countries;

(c) Propose and apply an approach for engaging the various stakeholders in the organization of the conference, including mobilizing scientists, national and international institutions, non-profit organizations, and networks in pre-conference preparations;

(d) Develop and implement guidelines for the preparation and submission of abstracts. These guidelines should also be suitable for use at future conferences, modified if necessary;

(e) Organize a poster session, select posters to be displayed at the conference venue and ensure timely communication with the authors;

(f) Prepare and implement a strategy to distribute the outcomes of the conference (reports, papers, etc);

(g) Develop, in collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat, a communication plan (press release, etc) to promote the conference.

14. It is worth mentioning that at the end of the selection process a memorandum of understanding will be signed with the UNCCD secretariat, which shall specify the administrative and procedural details.

### **C. Deliverables and expected conference results**

15. The selected lead institution/consortium shall strive to bring the necessary scientific expertise to the conference in order to produce sound scientific outputs that will inform decision makers. To that end the selected lead institution/consortium shall, inter alia:

(a) Produce a book of abstracts of all the posters and papers presented at the conference, in accordance with the approved guidelines;

(b) Produce outputs from the conference in the form of papers to be published in peer-reviewed publications, in accordance with the approved time frame;

(c) Produce specific recommendations from the conference based on the outcomes from the working groups and on the conference presentations. These recommendations shall be submitted to the CST for subsequent submission to the COP for review/discussion and action. The time frame for submission shall be determined by the UNCCD secretariat;

(d) Prepare a booklet with recommendations aimed at decision makers and submit it to the CST Bureau and the UNCCD secretariat for consideration.

### **D. Budget and fund raising**

16. Decision 16/COP.9, paragraph 11, requests the secretariat, in consultation with the CST Bureau “to secure adequate funding for the conference and for the attendance of scientists from developing countries and eligible countries in all implementation annexes at each future UNCCD scientific conference and for its substantive preparation”.

17. Institutions and consortia applying for selection as the lead institution/consortium (applicants) shall prepare a cost estimate for the preparation of the conference, covering such activities as the operation of working groups, involvement of scientific participants, publication of conference outputs, and other relevant items. Applicants shall also define the approach to raising the necessary funding.

### **E. Timeline and reporting**

18. The selected lead institution/consortium shall present to the conference steering committee an overall timeline for all the assignment milestones including, but not limited to, the organization of the working groups, the preparation of the papers (outputs from the working groups), and the conference outputs (booklet, peer-reviewed papers, recommendations, etc.).

19. The selected lead institution/consortium shall send regular progress report to the UNCCD secretariat and the CST Bureau on the progress made in the preparation of the conference and on any problems encountered. In addition, representatives of the CST Bureau, the UNCCD secretariat and the selected lead institution/consortium shall hold regular conference calls to monitor progress and address any issues that arise.

20. The selected lead institution/consortium shall provide to the CST Bureau, through the UNCCD secretariat, an assessment report no later than 90 days after the end of the



conference. Such report shall detail lessons learned and make recommendations for the organization of future conferences, and shall address the following topics, among others:

- (a) Assessment of the role of, and collaboration with, the CST Bureau, the UNCCD secretariat and the host country;
- (b) The fund-raising mechanisms used and the achievements of the fund-raising activities carried out in collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat;
- (c) Actual versus projected budget, including in-kind contributions;
- (d) Assessment of the pre-conference preparation activities (working groups, white papers, e-consultations, etc);
- (e) Mechanisms to secure the attendance of scientists at the conference, giving due attention to geographical distribution;
- (f) Information on the geographical distribution of working group participants and preparation of white papers;
- (g) Assessment of the conference set-up including chairpersons, moderators, keynotes, posters and host country organization.

#### **IV. Requirements for submission of applications**

21. Institutions and consortia interested in organizing the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference shall submit, inter alia, the following application material:

- (a) Profile of the applicant institution/consortium. This should include a description of the qualities of the institution/consortium (and of individual members within a consortium) that are relevant to the work of the UNCCD including, but not limited to:
  - (i) History of the institution/consortium, including involvement in the work of the UNCCD;
  - (ii) Actual fields of work;
  - (iii) Any special competence and focus of the institution, particularly in desertification/land degradation and sustainable land management;
  - (iv) Past experience in facilitating and/or organizing international scientific conferences;
  - (v) Past experience with the theme of the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference;
- (b) Short biographies of leading personnel, to include:
  - (i) Name, title, position and full address;
  - (ii) Career milestones;
  - (iii) Key expertise;
  - (iv) Previous participation in work relating to the work of the UNCCD;
  - (v) Any other relevant information;
- (c) Strategy for the organization of the conference addressing the items listed in section 3 above;
- (d) An outline of a plan of action, which describes the scope and detail of how the applicant is going to organize the conference with special attention to fund-raising

activities. Some details are necessary concerning certain activities such as the working groups, the outcome of the conference and the deliverables as stated in section III.C above;

(e) A description of any innovative approaches which are designed to ensure the success of the conference preparation and the organization process, such as working group organization, scientists' participation, and capacity-building activities, as well as any involvement of non-profit organizations;

(f) An application narrative, which should not exceed 10 pages with no more than 10 pages of appendices attached. Each page should be numbered sequentially. Narrative submission should be in Times New Roman font, size 12, single-line spacing. This narrative portion shall address the following:

(i) Capacity of the institution/consortium scientists and staff to address the themes and the organizational needs of the conference;

(ii) Capacity to address scientific issues relating to desertification and land degradation across various disciplines (economics, biophysical, social, agricultural, environmental, sustainable land management, etc.);

(iii) The extent of its network across institution types to facilitate the contributions and participation of scientists and staff from advanced research institutions, national research systems, civil society, academia, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, etc.;

(iv) The extent of its network across geographical areas in accordance with the UNCCD global mandate to engage leading science institutions from countries affected by desertification/land degradation.

(g) A timeline of the organization process including milestones and how they will be achieved, with emphasis on who will be involved (scientists, etc.).

(h) A milestone list in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and their target dates.

(i) A list of the key personnel and scientists of the institution/consortium and cooperating entities who will work on the organization of the conference, together with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution.

(j) Information on the institution/consortium and cooperating partners relating to scientific expertise, organization capacity, experience in the theme and sub theme areas, and other pertinent information.

(k) Budget and budget justification, in narrative form, not exceeding five pages.

22. If the application is from a consortium, it is important for it to provide a written agreement between the members of the consortium showing clear organizational and reporting structures as well as a main contact person who shall have the ability to enter into a contractual agreement on behalf of the consortium. The role of each member of the consortium shall be well defined.

## **V. Application submission and deadline**

23. Application material should be submitted by email to [secretariat@unccd.int](mailto:secretariat@unccd.int). The deadline for receipt of application materials is 12:00 noon GMT on 16 October 2010.

## VI. Evaluation criteria and selection

### A. Evaluation criteria

24. Each proposal submitted by an institution/consortium under this announcement will be evaluated and rated according to the criteria listed below. These criteria are designed to assess the quality of the proposed approach, and to determine the likelihood of its success in organizing the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference. The criteria are closely related and will be considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of a proposal. Proposals will be reviewed on the basis of their completeness, coherence, clarity, and attention to detail. Incomplete proposals or proposals submitted after the due date/time will not be considered.

25. The proposal must include a full description in accordance with the instructions and the specified evaluation criteria listed below. The instructions give a broad overview of what the project description should include while the evaluation criteria provide details of more programme-specific information that is needed.

26. *Innovation and approach:* The proposal clearly describes how the applicant will address the issues presented in section 3 (Organizing the conference). The proposed approach will be evaluated in terms of feasibility and appropriateness to the UNCCD and its country Parties. (20 points)

27. *Organization and benefits:* The proposal provides the best possible environment for organizing the conference and achieving the proposed results (fund raising, outcomes, etc.). The applicant demonstrates that it is able to organize the conference in accordance with UNCCD requirements. (20 points)

28. *Organizational capacity:* The applicant has expertise in key organizational areas and demonstrates the ability to engage and work together with local, national, regional and international networks. In case of a consortium, the proposal describes the rationale for the composition of the consortium, with indications of each partner's respective role, and shows how the coalition will achieve results in organizing the conference. The applicant demonstrates a high level of regional and/or country expertise with staff who are appropriately qualified. The applicant develops a strategy that clearly illustrates the involvement of the scientific community, giving due attention to achieving regional balance. (20 points)

29. *Staff and position specifications:* Each key person whether staff, consultant or volunteer, is described in a biographical sketch and has relevant expertise in either the scientific area relevant to the UNCCD mission or the organization of an international scientific conference. (20 points)

30. *Budget and budget justification:* The applicant provides a provisional detailed budget including a breakdown of any funding sources. The applicant outlines its capacity to work with the UNCCD secretariat to develop a fund-raising strategy and to mobilize funding to support the preparation of the conference including, but not limited to, working group participation and website development. (20 points)

### B. Selection

31. The selection will be made by the CST Bureau at its intersessional meeting to be held in mid-November 2010. The successful applicant selected as the lead institution/consortium will be notified by the UNCCD secretariat.

32. Following the final decision made by the CST Bureau a memorandum of understanding between the UNCCD secretariat and the successful selected lead institution/consortium will be issued in accordance with United Nations rules.

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