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Agenda item 13

Special segment: interactive dialogue sessions

The Changwon Initiative

Summary

Taking into account decision 3/COP.8 on the Ten Year Strategic Plan and Framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention. Recalling also decision 36/COP.9 which agreed that the tenth session of the conference of the parties would be held in Changwon City, Gyeongnam Province, the Republic of Korea, the present document represents a contribution to the UNCCD COP 10 achievements by the Republic of Korea in its capacity as President of COP 10.

Taking into account activities already underway including the definition of impact indicators as agreed upon at COP 9 held in Buenos Aires, this document named the Changwon Initiative is mainly based on decisions adopted by Parties. It aims at complementing activities in line with The Strategy and subsequent COP decisions. It will address focused areas, which include enhancing the UNCCD scientific process; providing a framework for resource mobilization and facilitation of partnership arrangement; engaging the business community and giving recognition to the work and initiatives, which have made a significant and innovative contribution to Sustainable Land Management through the establishment and launching of the Land for Life Award.

The Government of the Republic of Korea plans to contribute to the activities of the Changwon initiative. It will also galvanize efforts towards the mobilization of targeted stakeholders in order to foster interactions in the context of the UNCCD Strategy. A large consultation process will be needed during and after COP 10 to further work on following up actions relating to the implementation of the “Changwon Initiative”.

At the High Level Segment of COP 10, Parties may wish to review the proposed actions under the “Changwon Initiative” and provide further guidance as deemed necessary.

I. Background

1. By its decision to initiate the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (The Strategy), the Conference of the Parties spelt out the strategic objectives formulated to guide the actions of all stakeholders and partners of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) for the next ten years. The Strategy is considered a blueprint for fostering the implementation of the UNCCD and helping to prevent, control and reverse desertification/land degradation. The strategy also has the potential to contribute to the reduction of poverty while promoting sustainable development.

2. The Changwon COP includes the first comprehensive review of progress made so far in implementing The Strategy, looking at the actions taken by affected countries and their partners, by intergovernmental organizations and agencies and by the Convention institutions and bodies, and on this basis drawing conclusions on future priorities in the process.

3. COP 10 is expected to discuss the next phase in the development of the monitoring and assessment system. In Changwon, Parties are expected to agree further on a key set of indicators and related methodological approaches that can be used to assess the overall impact that UNCCD implementation has on the world’s drylands. They will also consider the framework for the mid-term review of The Strategy.

4. There are other key issues on the agenda for COP 10, such as the preparation for the Rio+20 summit, synergies with other conventions, implementation of the UNCCD comprehensive communication strategy (CCS), and actions taken in the context of the United Nations Decade of Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020), and the arrangements for the second UNCCD scientific conference.

5. The High Level Segment of COP 10 to be held on 17 and 18 October under the auspices of the Republic of Korea as the host country will be devoted to Ministers and other high-ranking authorities. An increased level of ministerial participation from both developed and developing as well as affected and non-affected countries will bring a political momentum to the deliberations of Parties and guide negotiators as may be appropriate, and the High Level Segment will serve as the venue for the launch of the Changwon initiative.

II. The rationale of the Changwon initiative

6. The adoption of The Strategy and the subsequent definition of the nature and type of implementation indicators have prepared the way for an improvement in the process’ ability to measure Convention implementation on the ground and the overall performance of its tools and mechanisms. This, together with recent moves by the Global Environment Facility to fund enabling activities under the UNCCD, has further improved the capacity of

affected developing country Parties to engage in strengthened implementation of their action programmes under the Convention.

7. Following a path initiated in Madrid with the adoption of The Strategy and further strengthened in Buenos Aires by the definition of impact indicators, it is anticipated that UNCCD COP10 in Changwon will bring additional value to support efforts to implement the UNCCD

8. On the one hand, the UNCCD process has reached a level of maturity that enables a paradigm shift. At the same time, the persistent land-related issues such as food insecurity, dust and sand storms, recurrent drought cycles and speculation on food commodities should clearly demonstrate the relevance of the Convention as a tool contributing to global sustainability.

9. Considered in this context, COP 10 could provide the basis for the so called “Changwon initiative”, which aims at capitalizing on the potentials of the UNCCD implementation process at national, sub-regional and regional levels.

III. The objectives and purpose of the Changwon initiative

10. COP 10 will provide an excellent context for renewing Parties’ resolve to support the Convention. The vision of the Parties to forge a global partnership for reversing and preventing desertification and land degradation could materialize in Changwon if, through collaborative effort, a concerted approach could be agreed to addressing the fourth objective of The Strategy (SO4), regarding “mobilizing resources to support the implementation of the Convention through building effective partnerships between national and international actors”.

11. In Changwon, we could see a paradigm shift in the UNCCD process as Parties agree on the framework required to complement The Strategy through setting baselines and targets for the Convention and the mobilization of all stakeholders for an effective implementation of the Convention. In this regard, the “Changwon initiative” could lead to an agreement on the setting up of global targets towards “zero net land degradation” as a commitment to build a land degradation neutral world. These should build upon the potential opportunities emerging within the UNCCD process, to anchor the Convention firmly into action-oriented approach.

12. The objective of the “Changwon initiative” is therefore to complement The Strategy through target-setting and the consolidation of effective partnerships, in order to enhance the implementation of the Convention.

13. The Government of the Republic of Korea, as the host of COP, champions the initiative through, *inter alia*, facilitating the implementation of some COP 10 decisions related to its three components. Through the Korea Forest Service (KFS), the Government of the Republic of Korea also intends, as COP 10 President, to galvanize efforts towards the mobilization of targeted stakeholders in order to foster their interactions for the effective implementation of the UNCCD.

IV. The main components of the Changwon initiative

14. In order to maximize its potential for change induction, and to complement activities being undertaken in line with The Strategy and in accordance with COP 10 decisions, the “Changwon initiative” encompasses focused areas, which include the three following components:

1. Enhancing the scientific process of the UNCCD

(a) Accompany the ongoing dialogue towards an agreement on specific target setting.

(b) Support the activities of the ad hoc advisory group of technical expert as established by COP 10 to refine the set of impact indicators for monitoring and assessing desertification/ land degradation and drought (DLDD) processes

(c) Support also the ad hoc working group as established by COP 10 to discuss options for the provision of scientific advice focusing on DLDD.

15. This part of the proposed initiative is further described under component I of this note.

2. Mobilizing additional resources and facilitating partnership arrangements

16. Success in achieving long-term UNCCD objectives rests to a great extent on the ability of affected countries to mobilize the necessary human, institutional, scientific, technological and financial resources to implement The Strategy.

i. Partnership arrangements

17. Main activities under consideration would include, inter alia, enhanced support to national action programme (NAP) alignment processes; where appropriate, preventive policies and mitigated activities against the effects of dust and sand storms; promotion of sustainable land management (SLM) synergistic activities with climate change and biodiversity processes at national level; and support initiatives on SLM through South-South and North-South cooperation.

ii. Engagement of the private sector

18. Taking into account operational objective 5 of The Strategy, the “Changwon initiative” provides opportunities for greater engagement of the business community in the UNCCD overall implementation process.

19. Bearing in mind the important role of the civil society organizations (CSOs), the “Changwon initiative” will also further engage this category of actors in the implementation of the identified focused areas.

20. This part of the proposed initiative is further described in component II of this note.

3. Supporting a global framework for the promotion of best practices: the Land for Life Award

21. It is proposed to anchor the “Changwon initiative” into the UNCCD Comprehensive Communication Strategy (CCS) and to structure it around a strong message to the world emphasizing that drylands are assets and present opportunities for solving some of the major global, national and local challenges. In this regard, the establishment of a “Land for Life Award” is expected to provide further impetus to the process. Such an award should be structured to acknowledge SLM-related actions, which have brought visible change towards sustainable development in the drylands including possible benefits in other parts of the world.

22. This aspect of the proposed initiative is further described in component III of this note.

Component I

Enhancing the scientific process of the UNCCD

1. Background and context

1. Land degradation, or the depletion of soil nutrients, is not just a local problem. There are links to other issues such as biodiversity loss, climate change, food insecurity and poverty. Policy response to date has been national action (for example, by-laws on soils and national programmes and policies). The only existing international and legally binding framework is the UNCCD.

2. As stated in The Strategy, the aim for the future of the UNCCD up to 2018 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.

3. At scientific level, the UNCCD is to become a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought. This is in recognition of the fact that the global dimension of soil degradation needs international acknowledgement. Without protecting, restoring and managing soils sustainability,

- We shall miss biodiversity and climate change targets;
- We shall not alleviate rural poverty/hunger, ensure long-term food security, or build resilience to drought and water stress, with implications for social and political stability and geopolitical conflict.

4. Under The Strategy, the operational objectives for the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) include the following:

- National monitoring and vulnerability assessment on biophysical and socio-economic trends in affected countries are supported.
- A baseline based on the most robust data available on biophysical and socio-economic trends is developed and relevant scientific approaches are gradually harmonized.
- Knowledge on biophysical and socio-economic factors and on their interactions in affected areas is improved to enable better decision-making.
- Science and technology networks and institutions relevant to DLDD are engaged to support UNCCD implementation.

5. As a main priority, the CST is requested to develop, in cooperation with relevant institutions, tools and methods, biophysical and socio-economic baselines on desertification/land degradation at the national level as well as methodologies and guidelines for monitoring and assessment of desertification/land degradation trends.

6. The current process of the CST focuses on the success of major activities that would assist in the achievement of this aim. Two long-term scientific achievements could be supported through the “Changwon initiative”, namely, an intensive and continuing refinement of the impact indicators in order to propose a full set of impact indicators for

setting up targets, and the implementation of a mechanism to provide international, interdisciplinary scientific advice focusing on DLDD.

2. Intensive continuous refinement of the impact indicators in order to propose a full set of impact indicators for setting up targets

7. Several steps have been taken to identify and define suitable indicators for the monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the Convention and the impact of NAPs to combat desertification. In support of UNCCD requests to enhance consistency and coherence, these steps have included (a) determining what benchmarks and indicators country Parties were already using to monitor and assess desertification and drought mitigation, and identifying synergies (especially commonly-used basic indicators) across countries and regions, (b) identifying methodologies for measuring these provisional indicators, (c) identifying relevant data sources. These efforts formed the basis for the provisionally-accepted set of UNCCD impact indicators adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its ninth session in September 2009 (decision 17/COP.9). At the same time, the Parties required the UNCCD secretariat to review the relevance, accuracy and cost-effectiveness of the set of provisional impact indicators and to develop proposals and alternatives for their refinement, revision and improvement through an iterative process.

8. The initial phase of this iterative process consisted of the production of a white paper on the scientific review of the provisionally accepted UNCCD impact indicators to measure the implementation of strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3. The white paper is based on the results of a review of technical documents and the scientific literature. It was compiled through input from the scientific community and through a participatory and iterative process. The engagement of the scientific community has been essential to the credibility of the review process, and recommendations and conclusions drawn enabled the outlining of further steps on the refinement of the UNCCD set of impact indicators.

9. The “Changwon initiative” will support the functioning of an ad hoc technical expert group (AHTEG) as recommended by CST 10 to continue intensively the iterative, participatory contribution from the science and technology community to the process of indicator selection, development and refinement and to advise on the monitoring and evaluation of the information collected from the indicator applied locally and regionally.

10. The “Changwon initiative” could further support the creation of a global UNCCD indicators task force/partnership, which would bring together data providers and international organizations working on indicators of DLDD and the good practices to address it. This taskforce/partnership, in close collaboration with the AHTEG, would provide guidance towards setting up and monitoring a target of “zero net land degradation rate”.

3. Arrangements for implementing a mechanism to provide international, interdisciplinary scientific advice to the UNCCD

11. Decision 18/COP.9 relates to measures to enable the UNCCD to become a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought

12. The last COP acknowledged the need to mobilize scientific and technical expertise to address the problems of desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought. It requested the CST to conduct an assessment of how to organize international interdisciplinary scientific advice, taking into account the need to ensure transparency and geographical balance, and to consider options for determining agreed channels within the

Convention process for consideration of the advice. In achieving this goal the CST would benefit from the involvement of institutions, consortia, relevant civil society organizations and individuals with the greatest scientific expertise in these areas.

13. Four possible options are submitted to COP 10 for consideration with the view to decide on the organization of international, interdisciplinary scientific advice, which could build on existing mechanisms or create new ones. These include:

- The use of existing networks
- The establishment of a new network on DLDD
- The use of existing intergovernmental scientific advisory mechanisms (panels or platforms)
- The establishment of an intergovernmental panel on land

14. The “Changwon initiative” could support COP decision on the organisation of international, interdisciplinary scientific advice to the UNCCD.

15. A decision on this matter at COP level would enable the CST to enhance its convening power by adding high-level expertise and systematically peer-reviewing its output on UNCCD-related issues. It will ensure the provision of scientific advice and knowledge sharing at the global, regional, subregional and national levels to support policymakers and stakeholders.

16. More consultation will therefore be needed after COP 10 to work further on follow up actions relating to the decision adopted by parties. The Government of the Republic of Korea plans to contribute to the activities, which would lead to enhancement of the scientific process under the Convention.

17. In its capacity as the COP 10 President, the Government of the Republic of Korea is pleased to encourage the active participation and support of other country Parties and all stakeholders.

Component II

Mobilizing additional resources and facilitating partnership arrangements

1. Partnership arrangements

1. The “Changwon initiative” will be instrumental in mobilizing Parties to provide an operational framework for the fourth strategic objective (SO4) of The Strategy. This would be as a follow-up to commitments made in addressing DLDD including within the context of other related issues.

2. In this regard, the “Changwon initiative” will further support affected country parties in aligning their action programmes with The Strategy of the UNCCD. This effort is to trigger activities already under way by Parties and interested partners. Specific emphasis would be placed on enhanced support to NAP implementation processes, on developing action towards mitigating, where appropriate, the effect of dust and sand storms, on strengthening synergistic activities between NAPs, UNFCCC national adaptation programme of actions (NAPAs) and Convention on Biodiversity National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), on mainstreaming NAPs within the relevant national policy areas, on addressing capacity-building needs, and on promoting South-South and North-South initiatives as they relate to Sustainable Land Management (SLM).

2. Engagement of the private sector

3. Decision 3/COP.8 adopted The Strategy, which creates new opportunities by which governments, investors, private companies and farmers can deal with land, including both its degradation and its potential benefits, in a positive, collaborative and integrated manner. Surprisingly, areas at risk of desertification offer many unexplored and promising opportunities for investment in renewable energies, ecotourism, food production and so on. There is a need to rediscover the drylands and to build on these opportunities, facilitating partnerships to ensure that mutual benefit and closer collaboration among interested partners are fully realized.

Matching sustainable environmental challenges and increasing demand

4. One important element in engaging successfully with potential partners is to be clear on the objectives and areas in which engagement is needed, as this is the first entry point for planning and formulating concrete activities with interested partners. In this regard, there is a need to identify the investors and members of the business community who could be interested in engaging in the UNCCD process.

5. One sector which shares a common interest with the UNCCD is agribusiness since land is its main asset. Agriculture is the largest industry on the planet and employs over one billion people worldwide. Moreover, agriculture plays an important role in the development prospects of the vast majority of developing countries. In addition, the world’s population is expected to rise over the next 40 years, from 6.7 billion in 2009 to 9.2 billion by 2050, which will undoubtedly result in an increase in demand for soil-based food production.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in order to feed this increasing population by 2050, food production will need to increase by 70 per cent. The problem is that while there is a need to increase food production, the land is getting more and more degraded which generates a problem for agribusiness, as fertile land is essential for securing a supply of raw materials.

6. The UNCCD also pools land and soil-related competences and could therefore provide a potential platform for cooperation amongst relevant policymakers, intergovernmental organizations, scientists and other important stakeholders in order to discuss SLM issues.

7. In doing so, the UNCCD could provide two valuable resources to the private sector:

- An enabling environment for facilitating dialogue between governments and the business community, and
- A platform for promoting the creation of opportunities for collaboration and partnership building among all stakeholders.

The business forum

8. Every year on the occasion of the General Assembly debate, the Secretary-General convenes what is known as the Private Sector Forum, which debates a particular theme. This opportunity is offered in order to enable the private sector to contribute to intergovernmental processes on key topic areas. The United Nations considers this forum to be its primary platform for business leaders and public policy makers; it is designed to inspire further individual and collective commitments from the business sector.

9. So far, the business sector has not been fully involved in the UNCCD implementation process. In order to overcome the lack of business engagement, it is planned to create at Changwon a platform (SLM Business Forum) to promote the involvement of the business community within the UNCCD process with a view to accessing all the potential benefits that such a business forum could offer. It is hoped that the forum will become recognized as a pre-eminent network of global private sector leaders on SLM.

10. The SLM Business Forum will bring CEOs and other business leaders together with policy makers, government representatives, opinion leaders, experts and other stakeholders from all regions of the world to reflect the environmental impact of business on land and to consider ways of exercising corporate social responsibility.

11. In its capacity as the COP 10 President, the Government of the Republic of Korea is pleased to encourage the involvement of the country Parties and all stakeholders, particularly the business community, in the process of implementing the Convention.

Component III

Land for Life Award

1. Introduction

1. Advocacy, awareness-raising and education constitute operational objective 1 of The Strategy. By their decision 4/COP.9, the Parties to the Convention emphasized that the implementation of the CCS is one of the priorities of the Convention, and affirmed that successful implementation of the CCS requires strategic partnerships among relevant groups. Decision 4/COP.9 also invites Parties among others to provide financial and /or in-kind support to ensure effective implementation of the CCS.

2. The effectiveness of the CCS depends on its ability to draw the interest of decision makers, and on the publication of media articles portraying land/soils issues as significant globally and SLM as a solution to major global challenges. In this regard, the establishment of the Land for Life Award is expected to draw attention on the impetus needed to launch publicity on The Strategy with a strong message to the world that drylands are assets which present opportunities for solving some of the major global, national and local challenges.

2. About the Award

3. The Land for Life Award will acknowledge SLM-related actions that have brought visible change towards sustainable development in the affected ecosystems. The Award will be launched during COP 10, and will thereafter be granted every year. This prestigious distinction is meant to highlight the contribution made by those who pioneer SLM related actions, to encourage the emulation of positive action, and to raise awareness on a global scale of the issues at stake and their solutions.

4. The Land for Life Award will be run by a multi-stakeholders partnership coordinated and serviced by the UNCCD secretariat. The Steering Committee of the partnership makes decisions relating to the Award, which will be given to *the three most outstanding* applicants who have been selected through the established criteria. In 2012, three awardees will be granted from a total prize in the amount up to USD 100,000. The use of award money is to support the scaling up of the award-winning SLM activity. Business awardees will receive a “Healthy Soils Gold Medal” label which they can use on related products and for communications purposes.

3. Objectives

5. The objectives of the Land for Life Award include the following:

- providing global recognition to individuals, teams, institutions, businesses, research institutes, public offices, political leaders, decision makers, journalists, the media, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations whose work and initiatives have made a significant contribution to SLM;

- raising awareness of the vital importance of SLM both as an opportunity and as an imperative of our time;
- raising awareness of the situation in the drylands and garner support for SLM and enhancing soil fertility;
- encouraging political measures fostering SLM and enhancing soil fertility;
- encouraging international cooperation in support of SLM;
- helping change the perception of drylands – in particular, to make the public and decision makers aware of the impact of DLDD on their daily life, and cognizant that drylands areas are not a global liability but an asset, not a problem but an opportunity and a potential element in solving some of today’s most pressing global challenges;
- emulating proactive SLM initiatives at all levels of the society;
- generating media coverage on SLM and heightening awareness of the global benefits of soil regeneration and preservation wherever it takes place

6. Information on the proposed activities and timelines for the first Land for Life Award including the establishment of a steering committee, establishment of the jury, launch of the award, decision on the awardees and the final selection by the grand jury will be made publically available by due time.

7. In its capacity as the COP 10 president, the Government of the Republic of Korea will encourage the Land for Life Award to promote the implementation process of the Convention.
