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**CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES**  
**Committee on Science and Technology**  
**Ninth session**  
**Buenos Aires, 22–25 September 2009**

**Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda**  
**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)**  
**Report of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference**

## **Report of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference**

### **Note by the secretariat**

1. By its decision 13/COP.8, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided that every future session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) shall be organized in a predominantly scientific conference-style format by the CST Bureau in consultation with the lead institution/consortium, which is qualified in and has expertise in the relevant thematic topic selected by the COP.
2. By decision 18/COP.8, the COP stated that the priority theme to be addressed by the CST at the ninth session of the COP would be 'Bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management'. This decision should also be seen in the context of strategic objectives (SOs) 1, 2 and 3 of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy), that is:
  - SO1. To improve the living conditions of affected populations
  - SO2. To improve the condition of affected ecosystems
  - SO3. To generate global benefits through effective implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
3. In addition, operational objective 3, which addresses science, technology and knowledge, is also of relevance. The CST bureau, in its communication, "Call for expression of interest" to assist the CST in the conference planning tasks

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([http://www.unccd.int/science/docs/call\\_expression\\_of%20interest.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/science/docs/call_expression_of%20interest.pdf)), stated specifically “the conference is expected to produce sound scientific outputs and policy-oriented recommendations ... that inform policy formulation and dialogue at the Conference of the Parties. This would also provide a clear picture of available options and possible solutions to the questions of decision makers on monitoring and assessment of desertification/land degradation.” The communication further stated “ the lead institution or consortium shall provide an interface with the larger global science community to foster communication and the flow of new ideas through enhanced knowledge-sharing processes.”

4. As reported in document ICCD/CST(S-1)/3, that was presented at the first special session of the CST in Istanbul, the CST Bureau developed the terms of reference and selected the Drylands Science for Development (DSD) as the consortium to co-organize the ninth session of the CST (CST 9). The DSD is a consortium of five research institutions and networks: the European DesertNet, the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, the European Commission Joint Research Centre - Institute for Environment and Sustainability and United Nations University International Network on Water, Environment and Health.

5. The preparation of CST 9 up to June 2009 is extensively described in document ICCD/COP(9)/CST/2/Add.2.

6. Pursuant to its mandate, international working groups (WGs) were convened by the lead consortium, the DSD. Each of these working groups conducted extensive discussions by email and two meetings, plus a synthesis meeting, between March and July 2009, in order to review available knowledge on three interlinked facets of the conference topic:

- WG1: Integrated Methods for Monitoring and Assessment of Desertification/Land Degradation Processes and Drivers
- WG2: Monitoring and Assessment of Sustainable Land Management
- WG3: Monitoring and Assessment of Desertification and Land Degradation: Knowledge Management, and Economic and Social Drivers

Additional information on the working groups and on documents produced by the working groups can be found at [www.drylandscience.org](http://www.drylandscience.org) or at [www.unccd.int](http://www.unccd.int).

7. The synthesis and recommendations of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference are attached as an annex to this document.

## Annex

### **Synthesis and Recommendations**

1. The eighth Conference of the Parties (COP 8) of the United Nations Conference to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) decided to strengthen the scientific basis underpinning the Convention and instructed the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) to conduct its future sessions in a predominantly Conference format, addressing specified themes.
2. The theme “*bio-physical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision-making in land and water management*” was chosen as the first priority theme. The UNCCD 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) (2008–2009 biennium) 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.
3. In order to prepare for the Conference, the Dryland Science for Development (DSD) consortium convened three global working groups of scientists to analyze and summarize the leading scientific knowledge on the priority theme in order to generate practical recommendations.
4. This document provides the key findings of the three Working Groups having taken into account comments received during the Conference, organized into eleven key messages/recommendations.

### **Summary of Key Messages/Recommendations**

5. Desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) as defined by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) results from dynamic, interconnected, human-environment interactions in land systems, where land includes water, soil, vegetation and humans — requiring a rigorous scientific framework for monitoring and assessment, which has heretofore been lacking.
6. To be sufficiently realistic and insightful in light of this complexity, monitoring and assessment must make use of a wide range of analytical methodologies, and distil their lessons into forms useful for decision makers through integrated assessment modeling.
7. Public land-use and land-management decisions are taken mainly at national and subnational levels, and so a UNCCD global monitoring and assessment strategy should be designed to be compatible and synergistic with these levels.
8. Sustainable land management (SLM) is imperative to address the UNCCD core mission to *combat* desertification; therefore SLM monitoring and assessment should be fully integrated into DLDD monitoring and assessment.

9. DLDD/SLM monitoring and assessment should include the collection of information relating it to climate change and biodiversity, and to other land-related issues that are the focus of multilateral environmental agreements.

10. To aid decision makers in setting priorities, monitoring and assessment should collect information on the economic, social and environmental costs of DLDD, and the benefits of SLM. The potential role of economic modeling should be explored to develop policy mechanisms that can facilitate sustainable land management decisions.

11. Monitoring and assessment should capitalize on knowledge management to stimulate valuable synergies between different sources of expertise across different spatial and temporal scales and levels, social settings, institutions, scientific disciplines and development sectors.

12. Sharing of local and scientific knowledge, tools and methods will enhance monitoring and assessment and strengthen human and institutional capacities.

13. Coordination and dissemination of new knowledge and methodologies for integrated approaches to DLDD/SLM require the establishment of an independent, international, interdisciplinary scientific advisory mechanism which would include (but not be limited to) monitoring and assessment, with clear channels for consideration of its advice in Convention decision-making.

14. In order to propel principles into action, regular global DLDD/SLM monitoring and assessment and early warning mechanisms should be organized and implemented based on agreed standards protocols, and open data access policies, to harmonize with other efforts worldwide and minimizing duplication of effort.

15. The UNCCD community would benefit from a science networking mechanism so that the large yet dispersed body of DLDD/SLM knowledge and expertise worldwide could be more effectively accessed, used and shared.

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