



Date: 1 November 2017

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

of the Science-Policy Interface

1. *Goals.* The Science-Policy Interface (SPI) has two overarching communication goals:
 - a) provide clear and balanced information on desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD), including uncertainties, without compromising accuracy;
 - b) explain how the SPI works, the nature of its composition which combines independent scientific perspectives with policy perspectives, and the way the SPI pursues its work in a credible, transparent, balanced and authoritative manner.
2. *Principles.* Communications are an important aspect of the SPI and essential to providing decision-makers with rigorous and balanced scientific information. These principles should guide the SPI's approach:
 - a) *Objective and transparent.* The SPI's approach and activities should be guided by the principles of objectivity, openness and transparency.
 - b) *Policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive.* The presentation of SPI reports, science-policy briefs and other science-based communications and presentations should be in a form that can be readily accessed and used by decision makers while remaining policy-neutral and maintaining scientific balance.
 - c) *Drawn from past SPI results.* In order to maintain consistency and to build from past contributions, SPI communications should reflect the language that has been subject to peer-review, approved and published.
 - d) *Recognizing SPI as a unique entity.* The SPI should always seek to be clear in its communications about what the SPI is and does in order to provide a context to guide the interpretation of its products and to ensure those outside the SPI have unbiased information about the SPI.
 - e) *Timely and audience-appropriate.* In order to be effective, the SPI communications approach and activities should be aimed at ensuring that timely and appropriate information enters the policy as well as the public domain – both proactively to communicate reports and reactively in response to questions or criticism.
 - f) *Consistent messages.* To ensure the SPI delivers consistent messages, it is essential that internal communications and decision-making are disciplined and well-coordinated.
 - g) *Professional and collegial.* All internal and external SPI communications should be clear, constructive and respectful, and should maintain the highest standards of professionalism and collegiality.
3. *Activities.* SPI communications involve:
 - a) day-to-day communications, both proactive and reactive;
 - b) planned activities including the launch of reports and participation in UNCCD conferences, as well as other international conferences;
 - c) rapid responses, which may require particular procedures to ensure they are handled in timely manner that is representative of the SPI;
 - d) provision of scientific and technical advice to the UNCCD;



- e) interactions with other intergovernmental scientific panels and bodies.

4. *Audiences*

- a) The primary target audience of the communications efforts of the SPI is policy makers at all levels, particularly the UNCCD, where the SPI serves as a means to help ensure relevant science can be considered in the formulation of policy.
- b) The secondary target audience of SPI communication efforts is the scientific community, particularly those scientists interested in DLDD issues, where the SPI serves as a means to help the scientific community become aware of salient issues being considered by policy makers, which would benefit from the advances of science. This target group includes other intergovernmental scientific panels and bodies; interactions with these panels and bodies aim at promoting networking and cooperation to avoid duplication of activities, and harness synergies.
- c) Broader audiences such as other UN entities, other international panels and bodies, those working to address DLDD issues from all sectors (public, private, civil society), and the wider public have interest in the work of the SPI. While these are not the primary audiences of the SPI communications efforts, the SPI should look for ways to ensure that information is available and accessible to these audiences, such as supporting (e.g., through review) the UNCCD secretariat science-based communication efforts.
- d) While the SPI itself does not produce derivative products aimed at specific audiences, it may engage with organizations that take elements of SPI products and communicate them in more audience-specific formats. However, such products must not be considered joint productions or in any way products of the SPI unless the activity is approved for such an attribution by the UNCCD secretariat.
- e) Engaging and building relationships with the media is an important way in which the SPI can communicate the information contained in its products, as well as its processes and procedures.
- f) SPI audiences are truly global in extent and are therefore very diverse. In its communications and outreach activities, the SPI will take the specific context of different countries into account, which may require tailor-made outreach activities. For instance, this reflects an understanding that the communications needs of developing countries may be different to those of developed countries.

5. *Governance*

- a) The UNCCD Conference of the Parties (COP), through recommendations of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), is ultimately responsible for approving the work programme of the SPI, which includes the primary products that the SPI has been asked to develop during each biennium with support of the UNCCD secretariat. Decisions regarding fundamental communications issues, according to their importance, should be debated and approved within this framework, guided by the UNCCD secretariat, and when necessary, the CST Bureau.
- b) The SPI will report to the COP at each session on progress made and the status of implementation of its tasks and obligations, including precise and workable recommendations, with a view to seeking guidance for its next steps and activities.
- c) The SPI will regularly communicate updates about its activities and progress to country Parties with the support of the UNCCD secretariat and following the guidance provided by the SPI Communications Strategy.
- d) The five CST Bureau members on the SPI will be the primary point of contact between the SPI and the national focal points (NFPs) and science and technology correspondents (STCs) of Parties in



their respective regions. They will be responsible for regular communication with the countries about the activities and progress of the SPI. They are also the primary conduit of developments in the policy realm that may have bearing on the work of the SPI, and thus will be responsible for communication in this direction as well.

- e) SPI observers share a similar responsibility with respect to the organizations they represent.
- f) Those designated as the co-Leads on any activities of the SPI, such as the work associated with a specific objective or coordination activity in the work programme, are responsible for communication activities around these. However, only the co-Chairs of the SPI are permitted to sign and send letters and other official communications from the SPI to other entities. The co-Chairs of the SPI are responsible for communications about the SPI as a whole. The co-Leads and co-Chairs will be supported by the UNCCD secretariat in these communications when needed.
- g) To ensure objectivity and scientific accuracy, as well as efficiency and timeliness, authorized spokespeople should be designated for various situations. The SPI co-Chairs are the lead spokespeople for the SPI as a whole; co-Leads of SPI work programme objectives and coordination activities are the lead spokespeople for their respective activities; members of the UNCCD secretariat designated to work with the SPI may speak on activities and procedures of the SPI, as well as on institutional matters.
- h) Besides these designated spokespeople, other authors of SPI reports or participants on coordination activities will often be the most appropriate people to speak on their area of science and may be requested by the SPI co to talk to the media or represent the SPI at conferences.
- i) People speaking on behalf of the SPI in an official capacity must focus on communicating a factual, objective presentation of information from the approved SPI reports and refrain from public statements that could be interpreted as advocacy and compromise the SPI's reputation for neutrality. The UNCCD secretariat (including the UNCCD Public Information and Media Officer) can provide advice in support of SPI members who know in advance of an opportunity to speak to the media.
- j) The production of manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed literature, based on work performed in support of SPI objectives by members and observers of the SPI, is strongly encouraged. Institutional attribution in such publications should be associated with the home organization(s) of each author, and not the SPI itself. The role of the UNCCD as a whole and the SPI in particular should be communicated in the acknowledgements section, following confirmation by the UNCCD secretariat. However such manuscripts must also contain the following disclaimer: "The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations."
- k) Presentations and posters at scientific and other conferences are strongly encouraged. While the home institution(s) of SPI member or observer authors should be the primary attribution(s), if the work is directly related to that of the SPI, the SPI should also be attributed and the UNCCD and SPI logos should be included, following confirmation by the UNCCD secretariat. However, the following disclaimer should also be included: "*The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.*"
- l) SPI members and observers are encouraged to summarize and report on key events/milestones (launch of publications, presentations made at conferences, etc.) and capitalize on the UNCCD Knowledge Hub (<http://knowledge.unccd.int/>) as a means to further dissemination.
- m) While the official working language of the SPI is English only, the UNCCD secretariat should ensure that SPI's reports to the COP and CST be issued as official documents in all six official languages of the United Nations. Other SPI products, such as technical reports, science-policy briefs and other



science-based communications and presentations will be translated at the discretion of the UNCCD secretariat and subject to the availability of resources.

- n) The UNCCD secretariat should be made aware of all outreach communications and all communications with the media, including type and extent of the outreach and media communications. The secretariat will evaluate this coverage and will include the aggregated results in its periodic reports to the CST Bureau.
- o) The UNCCD secretariat will be the sole owner and possess all rights, titles and interest in all proprietary intellectual property, including copyrights for methodologies and products developed and delivered by the SPI and its members. The secretariat will duly acknowledge and/or share, as appropriate, any copyright with SPI members that have contributed to a particular output. No special permission from the copyright holder is required for the reproduction, distribution and/or co-sharing of the said methodologies and products, provided that the source is acknowledged and that no alterations are made to the original work. Once the secretariat authorizes the reproduction, distribution and/or co-sharing of the methodologies and products, they will be in the public domain subject to proper acknowledgement of the source and any limitation stipulated by the secretariat as appropriate.