

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### of the Science–Policy Interface

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#### **1) BACKGROUND**

1. In accordance with decision 23/COP.11, paragraph 1, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to establish a Science–Policy Interface (SPI) to facilitate a two-way science–policy dialogue and ensure the delivery of policy-relevant information, knowledge and advice on desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD).

#### **2) MANDATE**

2. In accordance with decision 23/COP.11, paragraph 3, the mandate of the SPI is to:
- i. Establish the approach to deliver each task assigned to it by the Committee on Science and Technology (CST);
  - ii. Analyse, synthesize and translate relevant scientific findings and recommendations from DLDD-related scientific conferences, including upcoming UNCCD scientific conferences, the roster of independent experts, as well as from relevant stakeholders and networks into proposals to be considered by the CST for the consideration of the COP;
  - iii. Interact with existing multiple scientific mechanisms, in particular the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils and other new and existing scientific networks and platforms; and
  - iv. Assist the Bureau of the CST in organizing the UNCCD scientific conferences and assessing their results.

3. In decision 19/COP.12, the COP decided that the SPI mandate, as contained in decision 23/COP.11, paragraph 3, should be extended to enable the SPI, under the leadership of the Bureau of the CST, to:
  - v. Provide the CST with clear and well-defined thematic guidance on scientific knowledge requirements (e.g. thematic assessments, scientific studies and/or user guides) for implementing the UNCCD;
  - vi. Identify the most optimal way forward (e.g. commissioning an individual or group of experts, organizing expert meetings, encouraging the organization of regional meetings by regional scientific institutions or networks) to address these knowledge requirements;
  - vii. Draft terms of reference for the scientific work to be commissioned to external experts or institutes and ensure the quality of content according to the contract administered by the secretariat; and
  - viii. Select experts, including from scientific societies, science and knowledge organizations, and CSOs, and networks known for their expertise in DLDD.
4. The SPI will operate up to the end of the thirteenth session of the COP, at which time it will be reviewed.

### **3) SCOPE AND ACTIVITIES**

5. The SPI shall:
  - a. Identify needs for the scientific and/or technological knowledge requirements for implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and/or making it a global authority on science and technology relating to DLDD issues;
  - b. Explore and select mechanisms to address the prioritized identified needs and/or needs brought to the attention of the SPI by the CST, such as existing and/or new assessment processes, research activities and other mechanisms operated by relevant existing and/or new institutions, organizations and other relevant entities at either global, regional or national level (such as an independent consortium of scientist networks and regional science and technology platforms, among other things);
  - c. Initiate, support and follow up on the implementation of the selected mechanisms for knowledge acquisition;
  - d. Analyse, synthesize and translate the results obtained (see paragraph 5.c.) into a language that is comprehensible to policymakers and decision-makers, thus enabling, promoting and facilitating the use of the scientific and technological findings for DLDD-relevant policy-/decision making; and
  - e. Provide requested support to the Bureau of the CST.

#### 4) COMPOSITION

6. The SPI is composed of 20 members and 3 observers. Taking into account paragraph 3 above, the duration of membership to the SPI will end at the end of the thirteenth session of the COP.
7. In accordance with decision 23/COP.11, paragraph 4, and its Corrigendum, as contained in document ICCD/COP(11)/23/Add.1/Corr.1, the membership of the SPI shall comprise: (1) members of the Bureau of the CST; (2) five scientists, one nominated by each region; (3) ten scientists selected by the Bureau of the CST through an open call taking into account regional and disciplinary balance; and (4) three observers: one from a civil society organization, one from an international organization and one from a relevant United Nations organization.
8. The SPI shall be co-chaired by the Chair of the Bureau of the CST and a scientist elected by all the members of the SPI from among the 15 scientists mentioned in paragraph 6.
9. In the case the scientist who is co-chairing the SPI resigns or is unable to perform or complete her/his assigned tasks and functions, the members of the SPI shall choose another member to replace her/him. Until a new chair is elected, the other Co-Chair serves as the only acting Chair.
10. If a scientist of the SPI resigns, s/he will be replaced by an alternate using the same procedure of appointment.
11. The Rapporteur of the SPI will be appointed at its first meeting.

#### 5) MODALITIES OF WORK

12. The official working language of the SPI is English only.
13. The mode (i.e. physical meeting or teleconference), dates and duration of the SPI meetings are defined by the Co-Chairs of the SPI in consultation with the UNCCD secretariat in line with the available budgetary resources. However, no more than two physical meetings should be held per year and shall take place in Bonn unless a Party/institution makes an offer to host the meeting and bear the associated costs. Physical meetings of the SPI shall also take advantage of the meetings of the Bureau of the CST or any other suitable occasion linked to the schedule of other UNCCD meetings or conferences.
14. Members of the SPI shall attend each meeting physically or electronically. If, due to circumstances beyond their control, a member is unable to attend a meeting fully or partially, s/he shall, through the secretariat, immediately inform the Co-Chairs of this fact. Input from the absent members shall be provided via electronic means.
15. Should any member fail to fulfill her/his assignments and/or to attend three consecutive meetings of the SPI, s/he will be replaced by an alternate.
16. Travel costs and the daily subsistence allowances (DSAs) will be covered for all members in accordance with United Nations rules and regulations.
17. Institutional partners or individual experts might be invited to participate in the meetings/discussions of the SPI on an ad hoc basis and based on a proposal from the Co-Chairs.

18. The Co-Chairs are responsible for coordinating the work of the group during and between meetings and for facilitating a free exchange of views and information among members and between the secretariat and members.
19. Only the Co-Chairs of the SPI are permitted to sign and send letters and other official communications from the SPI to other entities.
20. The SPI will be responsible for developing the work programme for its first biennium of operation (2014–2015). For the biennium 2016–2017, the SPI will present its draft work programme to the CST for submission to the COP for its approval/endorsement.
21. 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.
22. The SPI will communicate updates to the process through UNCCD mechanisms.
23. 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.

## **6) ROLE OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION**

24. The UNCCD secretariat will provide administrative and secretariat support to the work of the SPI, including to its meetings as needed. Tasks include:
  - Inviting the members and observers to the meetings of the SPI pursuant to the date and venue of a meeting of the SPI, arranging the travel arrangements of the members and funded invitees and providing a daily subsistence allowance as required;
  - Preparing the provisional agenda in consultation with the Co-Chairs of the SPI and handling the related substantive documentation prepared by the SPI;
  - Assisting the Rapporteur in the preparation of the reports (including the list of participants) of each meeting;
  - Maintaining, reviewing and continuously updating the SPI website/webpage;
  - Making arrangements for meetings of the SPI;
  - Providing legal support as required; and
  - Communicating with other entities through official channels as required.

## 7) GOVERNANCE

25. The SPI will operate in accordance with COP decisions pertaining to its activities.
26. Decisions of the SPI shall be made by consensus. The Co-Chairs will moderate discussions among the SPI members and help them achieve consensus. If no consensus is reached, decisions on procedural matters shall be taken by a simple majority of the members present and voting. Decisions on matters of substance shall be decided by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. If the question arises as to whether a matter is one of a procedural or substantive nature, the decision shall be taken by a simple majority of the members present and voting. Any other matter not foreseen in this paragraph will be decided in accordance with the standard practice of the United Nations.
27. The two Co-Chairs of the SPI have the same power and will jointly ensure the compliance of all SPI members with the terms of reference. The two Co-Chairs remain, through the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology, under the authority of the COP.
28. All disputes arising out of or in connection with the work of SPI members will be settled in line with the code of conduct and the conflict of interest policy of the SPI. Compliance with the code of conduct and the conflict of interest policy and its implementation procedures is mandatory. An individual is not allowed participate in the work of the SPI if s/he has not complied with the policy and procedures.
29. The Bureau of the CST will review the terms of reference of the SPI as needed.