

Meeting of the Bureau of the COP
Milan, Italy
Date: 16 June 2015

Bureau COP/Inf. 11
Item III

III. Outcomes of the CST S-4 (including the 3rd Scientific Conference) and Status of the activities of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST)

Outcomes of the CST S-4, including the 3rd Scientific Conference

1. The fourth special session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) took place from 9-12 March 2015 in Cancun, Mexico, in conjunction with the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference. Its agenda focused on the thematic topic of the scientific conference as agreed in decision 18/COP.10: “Combating desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices”.
2. The UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference was organized by the consortium Scientific and Traditional Knowledge for Sustainable Development (STK4SD),¹ under the guidance and coordination of the Steering Committee.²
3. A Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) guided all scientific activities in preparation for the conference, including the review of abstract contributions and the publication of an ‘impulse report’ titled: “Climate change and desertification: Anticipating, assessing and adapting to future change in drylands”.³ A total of 197 abstract contributions were published in a book of abstracts and presented at the conference during poster sessions.⁴
4. Nearly 300 participants from 90 countries, half of which from the scientific community, and the other half from ministries, government agencies, international organizations and civil society organizations attended the event.

¹ The STK4SD consortium is composed of five major scientific organizations (Agropolis International, DesertNet International, the CGIAR Consortium, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) and the Argentine Institute for Arid Zone Research (IADIZA)), plus two associate partners (the Institute for Environment and Sustainability (IES) of the European Commission’s Joint ICCD/CST(S-4)/2 5 Research Centre and the Desertification Research Centre (NRD) of the University of Sassari).

² The Steering Committee includes representatives of the Bureau of the CST, the STK4SD, the UNCCD secretariat and the host country.

³ The Impulse Report is available at: [file:///C:/Users/minelli/Downloads/3sc.unccd.impulse-report%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/minelli/Downloads/3sc.unccd.impulse-report%20(1).pdf)

⁴ The book of abstracts is available at: [file:///C:/Users/minelli/Downloads/3sc.unccd.book-abstracts%20\(5\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/minelli/Downloads/3sc.unccd.book-abstracts%20(5).pdf)

5. Building upon lessons learnt from two previous UNCCD scientific conferences, the 3rd Scientific Conference used a novel, participatory approach that prioritized discussions over presentations.

6. In addition to experimenting with a new format for facilitating science-policy exchanges, the 3rd Scientific Conference also stood out for the emphasis on synergies with the Rio Conventions. The emphasis on synergies was substantive, and the Impulse Report and keynotes emphasized the complex feedback loops through which land degradation, climate change and biodiversity are tightly interconnected.

7. The preliminary key scientific findings and policy-oriented implications stemming from the conference will be transmitted to the twelfth session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST 12) as contained in the final report of CST S-4.⁵ These preliminary conclusions will be further developed into policy-oriented recommendations by the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) and presented for consideration to the CST12.

8. The CST S-4 also considered an agenda item on the provision of scientific advice on the topic: “Explore the options to achieve land degradation neutrality in the context of sustainable development”. The Committee was informed about progress made on this topic and exchanged preliminary views on the matter. The topic of land degradation neutrality will be considered further at the CST 12.

Report on the Second Meeting of the Science Policy Interface (SPI)

9. The second meeting of the SPI was held in Cancun, Mexico on 7-8 March 2015 in the context of the CST S-4. With the exception of Prof. Orr, all SPI members and three observers attended the meeting.

10. In accordance with the SPI work programme 2014-2015⁶ and the allocation of responsibilities up to COP 12, the team leaders presented the status quo of the deliverables and outlined the way for their further development. The deliverables will be finalized until mid-2015 to be presented at the twelfth session of the CST.

11. The roles of SPI members as session chairs, rapporteurs and facilitators during the 3rd Scientific Conference were discussed. The co-Chairs informed the SPI members that the SPI, together with the Consortium and Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), will have to develop the preliminary conference outcomes in the form of scientific findings and policy oriented implications.

12. The co-Chairs presented the draft elements for the SPI work programme for the next biennium 2016-2017 as prepared by the co-Chairs and amended by the Secretariat. SPI members discussed the relevance and feasibility of the draft elements and proposed further modifications which were incorporated in the draft work programme. An advanced version of the new work programme will be presented at the twelfth session of the CST for submission to the COP for its approval/endorsement

⁵ The report of the CST S-4 is available at: <http://www.unccd.int/Lists/OfficialDocuments/CSTS-4/3eng.pdf>

⁶ The SPI work programme for the biennium 2014/15 is available at:

http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Science/International-Scientific-Advice/Documents/SPI_work-programme.pdf

13. The co-chairs presented the draft of a Collaboration Policy which will facilitate the interaction of the SPI with external partners. A final version of the Collaboration Policy is under development.

14. The next physical meeting of SPI members is planned to take place as a joint meeting with ITPS on 20 April 2015 in Berlin, Germany. However, this meeting will not be an official SPI meeting as it takes place in the context of the Global Soil Week (GSW) and upon invitation of the GSW organizers.

Meeting of the CST Bureau

15. The meeting of the CST Bureau was held on 13 March 2015 in Cancun, back-to-back with the 3rd Scientific Conference. All CST Bureau were present.

16. Pursuant to the provisions of decision 21/COP.11, the Bureau of the CST agreed that it will, in conjunction with the Science-Policy Interface and in consultation with Parties and regional groups, review the outcomes of the 3rd Scientific Conference prior to CST 12. A report on the outcomes, including policy-oriented recommendations, of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference will be submitted to the CST at its twelfth session for consideration and appropriate decisions by the Conference of the Parties.

17. The draft agenda for CST 12, as prepared by the Secretariat, was reviewed and agreed upon by the CST Bureau. Responsibilities for the preparation of agenda items and related documents have been agreed. The SPI will be actively involved in preparing and presenting several agenda items with the support of the Secretariat.

18. The CST Chair presented the first draft of the SPI work programme 2016-2017, as it was discussed and amended during the 2nd SPI meeting on 7 and 8 March 2015 and during a further meeting of the SPI co-Chairs. The CST Bureau agreed to request the SPI to finalize the work programme. SPI members will be asked to comment and further amend the draft work programme.
