

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR OPERATIONAL CSO PARTICIPATION

FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNCCD

CRIC9- Bonn – February 2011

The objective of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is to support the development and implementation of national and regional policies, programmes and measures to prevent, control, reverse and mitigate desertification and land degradation.

The 9th Session of the Convention Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC9) is being held from February 21st to 25th 2011 in Bonn, Germany. Discussions will focus upon the analysis of Convention signatory state reports, associated financial flows and the compilation of the best practices provided by signatory states, international organisations and civil society organisations (CSOs).

Civil society participation ?

CSO implication at the grassroots level, alongside local populations, justifies their full participation in the decisional process, at all levels of the Convention.

CSO participation appears to be at a turning point, as highlighted in the UNCCD's 2008-2018 Strategic Plan, which effectively states that *“civil society organisations and the scientific community of both the North and South are increasingly and more widely associated as stakeholders in Convention activities; their advocacy, awareness-raising and education initiatives bringing land desertification/degradation and aridity issues to the forefront.”* During the 9th Conference of the Parties (COP9), held in Buenos Aires in September 2009, a series of decisions was taken « to facilitate active CSO participation » in the decisional process, and in the « strategy and work plan application process » (Dec.5/ COP9), focussing on CSO assistance with best practice reporting and with operational implementation. **The term CSO, and exactly what it refers to, remain an source of obvious confusion**, despite it having been explicitly stated that CSOs include the private sector, that the scientific community is considered a separate entity and that NGOs have been very active within the Convention. A specific accreditation allows CSOs to be observers at Convention meetings. There are approximately 800 accredited CSOs.

Recently, the decisions taken at COP9 have recognised **accredited CSOs as «entities able to report upon civil society initiatives taken to combat desertification»**, through participation in national report preparation, or through elaboration of their own reports. This is a tangible step forward for CSO contribution to the Convention's decisional process, and, as such, can serve as a starting point for reflection concerning effective implementation of the commitments made at COP9.

Many questions, however, remain unanswered, including: How can the Convention mobilise the whole of civil society? How will CSO reports be used? How shall the best practice results provided by NGOs be integrated constructively? **How does CSO implication translate into strategy and work plan implementation in practice, at country levels?**



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TO IMPROVE CSO CONTRIBUTION AND FACILITATE ACTIVE CSO PARTICIPATION

The Desertification Workgroup (GTD), the Sahel Desertification Network (RéSaD) and Drynet call :

- **The precise definition and delineation, as understood by the Convention, of the areas of response pertinent to combating desertification**, to enable more accurate evaluation of investments, as well as the definition of quantifiable objectives to be reached by 2018. This would facilitate the establishment of connections with the two other environmental conventions.
- **The remobilisation of all Convention actors**, with a methodology better tailored to each type of actor. In addition to NGOs, other groups of society should be represented, including: community grassroots organisation collectives, peasant organisations, local municipalities, as well as, generally speaking, all actors involved in territorial development. To this end, we propose that **accreditation procedures be reviewed, taking into account the characterisation of the CSOs active in Party States to the Convention**, to foster their efforts to combat desertification in affected countries and their organisation within the UNCCD.
- **Valorisation of the CSO and Party State reporting** that has already been undertaken and made available on the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS) portal created by the Convention, through better communication regarding the objective and use of this work, and, in particular, through making the connection with existing sites and tools providing a similar service.
- **In collaboration with CSOs, development of a report format adapted to their activities.**



Half the planet is affected by land degradation. There, two billion people continue to live below the poverty threshold, and are amongst the populations most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change already upon them. Sixteen years after its creation, and already three years following adoption of its 10-year Strategic Plan, the UNCCD would be wise to take these recommended steps in order to implement an action plan able to effectively combat desertification.

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