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Interfacing science and policy, and sharing knowledge

Work programme of the Science-Policy Interface for the biennium 2018–2019

Work programme for the Science-Policy Interface (2018– 2019)

Note by the secretariat

Summary

In line with its mandate as defined in decisions 23/COP.11 and 19/COP.12, the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) has to provide the Committee on Science and Technology (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 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

In order to ensure policy relevance and the uptake of its future work, at its meeting on 19–20 September 2016, the SPI decided to invite Parties and UNCCD stakeholders to submit proposals for topics to be considered for inclusion in the SPI work programme 2018–2019.

Based on the received proposals, the CST Bureau, in collaboration with the SPI, developed a draft work programme for the SPI for the biennium 2018–2019 as contained in this document.

The CST may wish to consider making recommendations to the COP with regard to the proposed SPI work programme for the biennium 2018–2019.

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I. Background

1. In line with its mandate as defined in decision 23/COP.11 and 19/COP.12, the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) has to provide the Committee on Science and Technology (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 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

2. At its fourth meeting, which took place on 19–20 September 2016,¹ the SPI agreed to prepare its draft work programme for the biennium 2018–2019 by: (i) inviting Parties and other UNCCD stakeholders to submit views on potential thematic issues to be addressed by the SPI in the next biennium; and (ii) reviewing received inputs and identifying a limited number of priorities for inclusion in the draft SPI work programme 2018–2019, based on a pre-agreed set of criteria.

3. By its correspondence from 14 December 2016, the UNCCD secretariat invited Parties and stakeholders to submit proposals through a questionnaire for relevant topics to be considered in the SPI work programme 2018–2019. As of 30 March 2017, thirty proposals were received. All received submissions are compiled in document ICCD/COP(13)/CST/INF.2. A summary table of the suggested topics is contained in the annex to this document; all topics have been clustered by the UNCCD secretariat in major thematic groups to facilitate the identification of a limited number of priorities for inclusion in the draft work programme.

4. The CST Bureau, at its meeting on 26 April 2017, and the SPI, at its meeting on 27–28 April 2017, revised the received submissions and screened these clusters of proposals against the following criteria:

(a) Relevance to and added value for the UNCCD: the topic is directly relevant to the understanding of desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD);

(b) Relevance for policymaking: the topic is related to an emerging policy priority;

(c) Relevance for addressing knowledge gaps: the topic has not been dealt with in earlier SPI reports or reports prepared by other scientific panels.

5. This document presents the draft SPI work programme 2018–2019 as adopted by the CST Bureau for consideration at the thirteenth session of the CST and subsequent submission to the COP for endorsement.

II. Draft Science-Policy Interface work programme 2018–2019

6. The draft SPI work programme 2018–2019 consists of two parts: objectives and coordination activities. Objectives target specific topics whereas coordination activities relate to cooperation with external processes and bodies. An overview of objectives and coordination activities is provided in tables 1 and 2. The SPI will select the most appropriate mechanism to carry out the task and will implement it in coordination with the UNCCD secretariat. A budget proposal for the implementation of the work programme 2018–2019 is contained in table 3 and in document ICCD/COP(13)/8-ICCD/CRIC(16)/2.

¹ See the report of the fourth meeting of the SPI (19–20 September 2016). Available at: <http://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/Report_4th-SPI-meeting_19-20Sept2016.pdf>.

A. Objectives

Objective 1: Provide refined guidance for implementation of land degradation neutrality (LDN)

7. Rationale: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 included a target on LDN (SDG 15.3). In order to implement the LDN target, the COP, at its twelfth session, decided to include in the SPI work programme 2016–2017 an objective to provide scientific guidance for the operationalization of the voluntary LDN target (decision 21/COP.12). The SPI developed a scientific conceptual framework for LDN (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/2), taking into consideration decision 3/COP.12 to develop guidance for formulating national LDN targets and initiatives.

8. Building upon the scientific conceptual framework for LDN, there is a need for targeted guidance on LDN implementation to provide:

(a) Advice on how to identify and design scientifically sound, practical and transformative initiatives that bring about multiple environmental benefits and synergies with other Rio conventions. Of particular interest are land-based climate actions addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation actions, including the provision of scientific assistance to the Global Mechanism to support decisions on the technical feasibility of transformative LDN initiatives;

(b) Science-based evidence on the contribution LDN would have on enhancing the well-being and livelihoods of people affected by DLDD. Examples would be provided to show how land-based interventions such as avoiding and reducing new degradation via sustainable land management or reversing land degradation with rehabilitation and restoration measures enhances the well-being and livelihoods of people with the aim of encouraging the use of such interventions.

Objective 2: Provide guidance to support the adoption and implementation of land-based interventions for drought management and mitigation

9. Rationale: A framework on drought preparedness highlighting the potential of land-based interventions, particularly via sustainable land management, could guide multistage and multiscale intertwined processes for adopting and implementing land-based interventions for drought management and mitigation, while also considering sand and dust storms. The framework would consider stages, tools and requirements for implementing land-based interventions and monitoring their effectiveness. Co-benefits of increased resilience and reduced vulnerability of ecosystems and populations should be achieved as result.

Table 1
Objectives and deliverables of the Science-Policy Interface work programme 2018–2019

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Deliverable</i>
1. Provide refined guidance for implementation of land degradation neutrality (LDN)	
1.1 Provide advice on the design and implementation of transformative LDN initiatives that bring about multiple environmental benefits and synergies with other Rio conventions, in particular for climate change adaptation and mitigation actions	(a) Guidance note on how to identify and design scientifically sound, practical and transformative LDN initiatives (b) Provision of scientific assistance to the Global Mechanism to support decisions on the technical feasibility of transformative LDN initiatives
1.2 Provide science-based evidence on the contribution LDN would have on enhancing the well-being and livelihoods of people affected by desertification/land degradation and drought	Report providing science-based evidence of how land-based interventions can improve the well-being and livelihoods of people while simultaneously enhancing environmental security
2. Provide guidance to support the adoption and implementation of land-based interventions for drought management and mitigation	Framework on drought preparedness highlighting the potential of land-based interventions to mitigate the effects of drought by increasing the resilience of ecosystems and populations

B. Coordination activities

10. During the biennium 2018–2019, the SPI will also undertake the following coordination activities:

Coordination activity 1: Follow-up on and contribute to the land degradation and restoration assessment (LDRA) conducted by the Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES), and review the IPBES Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and its associated summary for policymakers

11. Rationale: At the third meeting of the IPBES Plenary, the UNCCD was recognized as a key user of and contributor to the IPBES LDRA, which is being undertaken between 2015 and 2018. The SPI 2016–2017 work programme includes activities supporting the LDRA (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/5).

Coordination activity 2: Strengthen cooperation with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) within the framework of its agenda, particularly regarding its special report ‘Climate change and land’ (special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems (SRCCL)) and the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report

12. Rationale: The IPCC assessment reports have often addressed land degradation and desertification in their chapters on vulnerability. Recently, the IPCC decided to develop a special report ‘Climate change and land’, which specifically considers desertification.² The SPI will further strengthen its cooperation with the IPCC on these topics (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/5).

Coordination Activity 3: Follow-up on current cooperation and explore future means and topics for cooperation with the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS)

13. Rationale: Activities were carried out under the SPI 2016–2017 work programme to further strengthen cooperation with the ITPS (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/5).

14. During the next biennium, cooperation will continue on topics to be jointly agreed by the SPI and the ITPS, as well as on any follow-up activities emerging from the conclusions of the Global Symposium on Soil Organic Carbon.

Coordination activity 4: Cooperate with the International Resources Panel (IRP) of the United Nations Environment Programme on preparing a report on land restoration, ecosystem resilience and their contribution to poverty eradication. The SPI will contribute to the preparation and review of the report

15. Rationale: The IRP considers land as a valuable capital.³ Cooperation during the next biennium will start with contributions by the SPI to the preparation and review of the report on land restoration, ecosystem resilience and their contribution to poverty eradication. Based on this report, the SPI will outline policy-oriented options on how land restoration contributes to LDN in the context of the SDGs.

Coordination activity 5: Contribute to the development of the second edition of the Global Land Outlook (GLO 2)

16. Rationale: The Global Land Outlook (GLO) is a new flagship publication of the UNCCD on the status of land and its use. It will be published periodically. The SPI 2016–2017 work programme included the participation of SPI members in the steering committee and review process for GLO 1 (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/5). This technical and advisory support is to continue for the preparation of the GLO 2.

² <www.ipcc.ch/meetings/session45/Decision_Outline_SR_LandUse.pdf> and <<http://ipcc.ch/apps/eventmanager/documents/43/090320170624-INF.7-SRLandUse.pdf>>.

³ UNEP. 2016. Unlocking the Sustainable Potential of Land Resources: Evaluation Systems, Strategies and Tools. A Report of the Working Group on Land and Soils of the International Resource Panel. Herrick, J.E., O. Arnalds, B. Bestelmeyer, S. Bringezu, G. Han, M.V. Johnson, D. Kimiti, Yihe Lu, L. Montanarella, W. Pengue, G. Toth, J. Tukahirwa, M. Velayutham, and G. Zhang. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Nairobi. Available online: <www.resourcepanel.org/reports/unlocking-sustainable-potential-land-resources>.

Coordination Activity 6: Cooperate with the Global Land Indicators Initiative (GLII) of UN-Habitat to ensure the harmonization of land indicators developed by the GLII to measure land tenure security globally and at country level with land indicators used for measuring progress towards LDN

17. Rationale: The GLII was set up to develop a set of core land indicators to measure land tenure security globally and at country level. The SPI will explore means of cooperation to ensure harmonization of land indicators developed by the GLII with land indicators used for measuring progress towards LDN.

Table 2

Coordination activities of the Science-Policy Interface work programme 2018–2019

<i>Coordination area</i>	<i>Activity</i>
1. Follow-up on and contribute to the land degradation and restoration assessment (LDRA) conducted by the Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES), and review the IPBES Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and its associated summary for policymakers	<p>The SPI will review the LDRA and analyse its key messages relevant for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) for presentation at the fourteenth session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST 14).</p> <p>The SPI will also review the key messages of the IPBES Global Assessment relevant for the UNCCD regarding options to protect and use biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as the benefits they provide for people, for presentation at CST 14.</p>
2. Strengthen cooperation with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) within the framework of its agenda, particularly regarding its special report on climate change and land (SRCCL) and its Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)	<p>In accordance with the procedures established by the IPCC, the SPI will contribute to the SRCCL and the AR6.</p>
3. Follow-up on current cooperation and explore future means and topics for cooperation with the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS)	<p>Cooperation with the ITPS will be based on topics to be jointly agreed by the SPI and the ITPS.</p> <p>The SPI will be involved in any follow-up activities emerging from the conclusions of the Global Symposium on Soil Organic Carbon, including the organization of a possible second meeting, in cooperation with IPCC and other organizations.</p>
4. Cooperate with the International Resources Panel of the United Nations Environment Programme on preparing a report on land restoration and ecosystem resilience and their contribution to poverty eradication	<p>The SPI will contribute to the preparation and review of the report.</p> <p>Based on this report, the SPI will outline policy-oriented options on how land restoration contributes to LDN in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.</p>
5. Contribute to the development of the second edition of the Global Land Outlook (GLO 2)	<p>SPI members will participate in the steering committee and review process for GLO 2.</p>
6. Cooperate with the Global Land Indicators Initiative (GLII) of the UN-Habitat to ensure the harmonization of land indicators developed by the GLII to measure tenure security globally and at country level with land indicators used for measuring progress towards LDN	<p>The SPI will provide input to the GLII to ensure the harmonization of land indicators developed by the GLII with land indicators used by the UNCCD on the basis of existing data sources and standards that are globally collectible and comparable.</p>

C. Budget

18. The total budget needed for the implementation of the SPI work programme 2017–2018 is EUR 515,000. Information on the estimated cost of the work of the SPI is contained in table 3 and in document ICCD/COP(13)/8-ICCD/CRIC(16)/2. Parties may note that the proposed core budget for the SPI and the available extra budgetary resources cover just EUR 310,000 of the total estimated budget of EUR 515,000 needed for the full implementation of the work programme. Parties may therefore decide to either make additional resources available or prioritize the proposed objectives and activities based on available resources.

Table 3

Budget of the Science-Policy Interface work programme 2018–2019

<i>Objective/Activity</i>	<i>Source of funds</i>	<i>Cost (euros)</i>
Objectives and coordination activities	Extrabudgetary	400 000
Annual meetings of the Science–Policy Interface	Core budget	115 000
Total		515 000
Proposed core budget		115 000
Available extrabudgetary resources		195 000
Budget gap		205 000

III. Proposals

19. The CST may wish to recommend that the COP:

(a) Adopt the SPI work programme for the biennium 2018-2019 and decide on priorities;

(b) Request the Executive Secretary to:

(i) Present a synthesis report, including policy-oriented recommendations, on objective 1.1 included in the SPI work programme 2018–2019 at CST 14;

(ii) Present a synthesis report, including policy-oriented recommendations, on objective 1.2 included in the SPI work programme 2018–2019 at CST 14;

(iii) Present a synthesis report, including policy-oriented recommendations, on objective 2 included in the SPI work programme 2018–2019 at CST 14;

(iv) Report on the coordination activities conducted by the SPI during the biennium 2018–2019 to the CST 14.

Annex

Summary of topics proposed for inclusion in the Science-Policy Interface work programme 2018–2019

The proposed topics are presented in alphabetical order by proposing Party/stakeholder. All topics have been clustered in the following major thematic groups to facilitate the identification of a limited number of priorities for inclusion in the draft work programme:

- (a) Refined methodological guidance for implementing land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets:
 - (i) Methodologies for LDN monitoring, reporting and verification (e.g. LDN index, target-setting, local and global scale indicators, standardized methods for LDN assessment);
 - (ii) Further guidance on defining and implementing transformative LDN projects and on scaling up land-based interventions and policies that contribute to the achievement of LDN (e.g. integrated land use planning, soil carbon storage, agroforestry interventions, conservation agriculture, and sustainable cattle farming);
 - (iii) Social aspects of LDN (e.g. critical migration points, land rights, governance and gender issues, capacity-building for small-scale farmers);
- (b) Identification of land-based interventions for drought management (e.g. integrated water nutrient management and assessment of sand and dust storms);
- (c) Costs of land degradation and benefits of sustainable land management.

Table

Summary of topics proposed for inclusion in the Science-Policy Interface work programme 2018–2019¹

<i>Number</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Cluster</i>
1	Argentina	A new set of indicators, conceptual frameworks and methods, including local scale indicators more adequate to monitor land degradation neutrality (LDN) actions	a.i
2	Armenia	Estimation of carbon sequestration in areas with different land cover	a.ii
3	Bangladesh	Temporal and spatial changes of soil profiles (Physical, chemical and biological) in different agroecological zones and socio-economics in Bangladesh	a.ii
4	Belgium	Review of Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) work programme deliverable 3(b)(i): Thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration to find synergies	*

¹ These proposals are included here as submitted by Parties, except for minor editorial changes. Also, the proposals from Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Sao Tome and Principe and Togo were unofficially translated from the language in which they were submitted.

* To be addressed as a coordination activity.

<i>Number</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Cluster</i>
5	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Strategies and measures to moving forward towards LDN from critical migration points in rural areas to urban and peri-urban areas in drylands	a.iii
6	Burkina Faso	National assessment of the costs of land degradation	c
7	Cabo Verde	Mapping of desertification	a.i
8	Chad	Pastoralism in dry areas	a.ii
9	Chile	Causes, impacts and costs of inaction for the overall objective of LDN	a.iii
10	Colombia	Strategies and actions to reduce, mitigate and stop the increasing degradation of soils and lands in the world	a.ii
11	Cuba	The water–land relationship as it relates to land degradation and processes of severe droughts	b
12	Djibouti	Reforestation and the fight against desertification	a.ii
13	Dominican Republic	a) Effects of climate fluctuations and their impact on productivity and socioeconomic aspects in arid and semi-arid areas	c
		b) Adjustments and updates on land use and coverage, including distribution of forest cover. Pilot studies in affected regions on land adjustments	a.ii
14	Ecuador	Early warning information system for land degradation	b
15	Eritrea	a) Impact of interventions made to mitigate desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) in Eritrea and its long-term implication for sustainability	a.ii
		b) Alternate energy sources to mitigate DLDD to achieve LDN	a.ii
16	Guyana	Support the preparation of a country-specific definition and indicators of land degradation	a.i
17	Indonesia	a) Development of payment for environmental services mechanism in watershed management between upstream and downstream areas	c
		b) Institutional development in watershed management between upstream and downstream areas	a.ii
		c) Development of bamboo in order to conserve soil and water	a.ii
		d) Agroforestry demonstration development	a.ii
18	Libya	Programme for the development of the Al Jaghub Oasis	–
19	Madagascar	Local governance of sustainable land management	a.iii
20	Malta	No topics	–
21	Mexico	a) Development of standardized methods of rapid assessment and identification of national needs for work and actions to improve the sustainable management of lands susceptible incorporation for LDN	a.i
		b) Integrate and publish the most effective methods of action for adapting lands to climate change, including approaches to regenerative and sustainable land management, agroforestry restoration technologies and holistic livestock, to increase the productivity and biodiversity of lands	a.ii

<i>Number</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Cluster</i>
		c) Develop methods of measurement, reporting and verification to monitor the effective progress of sustainable land management actions to achieve voluntary national LDN goals by 2030	a.i
		d) Develop measurement, reporting and verification methods to monitor the implementation and anticipated needs for national and international funding to implement sustainable land management actions to achieve voluntary national LDN targets by 2030	a.i
22	Namibia	Analysis of the development of a long-term sustainable cattle farming system in the Kunene region	a.ii
23	Philippines	Explore the possible development of a Unified Land Degradation Index	a.i
24	South Sudan	Conservation agriculture and the use of indigenous plant species to build climate resilience in post-war South Sudan	a.ii
25	Sao Tome and Principe	a) Capacity-building for small farmers	a.ii
		b) Training and awareness-raising for different land users on good agricultural practices in rural areas to ensure farmers are better informed, trained and sensitized on desertification and land degradation	a.ii
26	Slovakia	Sustainable and intensive management of agricultural production (plants and livestock) by implementing of soil and water resources protection and their proper use under climate change	a.ii
27	Syrian Arab Republic	Integrated assessment of sand and dust storms	b
28	Togo	Analysis of land degradation in relation to land-use systems and dynamics	a.ii
29	Turkey	A detailed report on direct and indirect drivers of land degradation	a.ii
<i>Number</i>	<i>Stakeholder</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Cluster</i>
30	Civil Society Organization Panel	Guidelines for the operationalization of LDN: land rights and sustainable land management practices	a.iii