



UNCCD-CST First Scientific Conference and Consultation Working Group Deliberations Underway

Update 8 May 2009

The Scientific Conference and Consultation entitled "***Understanding Desertification and Land Degradation Trends***" will take place during 22-24 September 2009 at the UNCCD Conference of Parties' 9th Session (COP-9) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Conference is in response to the COP's call for improved flows of scientific knowledge into the Convention's processes. COP asked the first Conference to focus on ways that countries could improve their monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation. The Conference is being convened by the Dryland Science for Development Consortium (www.drylandscience.org) under the auspices of the UNCCD's Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and in coordination with the UNCCD Secretariat.

The Consultation that prepares this analysis for the Conference is now beginning its first-draft writing stage. Three Working Groups have held their initial meetings to brainstorm ideas and launch the drafting of analytical white papers leading to recommendations. Their progress is summarized below. The first draft will be placed on the open internet on May 22 for review and comment by any scientist worldwide for one month. The Working Groups will carefully consider all comments received, and will revise the drafts by July 31, 2009. That second draft will also be posted on the internet for reading in preparation for the Conference. The Conference in September will be open to all scientists; pre-registration is required. A competitive poster session will also be organized.

Conference Working Group 1 on Integrated Methods for Monitoring and Assessment

Working Group 1 on Integrated Methods for Monitoring and Assessment of Desertification Processes and Drivers held its first working meeting on the 2nd and 3rd April 2009 at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) in Ispra, Italy. With much-appreciated support from the EC, sixteen scientists from South America, USA, Africa, China, and Europe met to discuss a detailed structure and the contents of the White Paper to be prepared for CCD COP9 in Buenos Aires. Lead authors were selected for the various chapters and the drafting process has been started. In the coming weeks a first draft will be elaborated and contributing authors and reviewers will be assigned. Among other issues, the White Paper will cover the information needs of decision makers, a scientific concept for an integrated analysis of desertification processes, existing and potential monitoring tools, the current practice in monitoring desertification, and potential synergies with the conventions on climate change and biodiversity. It will result in science-based recommendations for policy action to monitor and assess desertification at various scales.

Conference Working Group 2 on Monitoring and Assessing Land Rehabilitation and Sustainable Land Management

Working Group 2, co-convened by ICARDA and ICRISAT focuses on identifying practical ways that countries can improve their monitoring and assessment (M&A) of land rehabilitation and sustainable land management (SLM). Discussions over the internet and in a meeting in Bonn, Germany last week (made possible by support from IFAD and UNEP) helped crystallize some key concepts. Developing countries have the capacities to M&A "land use change" including its components land cover change and to some extent, land management change using practical tools such as remote sensing with ground-truthing,

e.g. shifts from forests to crops and rangelands to crops. M&A of "land management change" requires more intensive sampling e.g. the adoption of reduced tillage, agro-forestry, erosion control landforms, perennial crops etc. M&A indicators can be adapted from available high-quality knowledge bases (LADA, WOCAT, DESIRE, OSS, and others). At the same time, road maps should be developed leading to the capacities and infrastructure needed to M&A underlying drivers of land condition that are more difficult to observe, e.g. soil chemical features and socio-economic dynamics. Though difficult, these are essential for quantitative modelling and predictive forecasting, which is crucial to support policy decisions that affect SLM.

Conference Working Group 3 on Monitoring and Assessment of Desertification and Land Degradation: Economic and Social Drivers and Knowledge Management

Nineteen scientists drawn from a world-wide network met March 12-14th, 2009 at the Biocentre Klein Flottbek, University of Hamburg, Germany to begin drafting the WG3 white paper with financial support from the GTZ CCD Project. The composition of the group attempted to reflect both disciplinary and geographic diversity. The working group is co-convened by UNU-INWEH and the European DesertNet. The group formulated the main chapters of the white paper and determined the lead authors who would expand the contributors list using their own professional networks. The agreed chapters of the White Paper are:

1. Introduction including a typology of drylands
2. Institutional arrangements and capacities including managing knowledge and mainstreaming
3. Economics of land degradation
4. Conclusions and recommendations

Map displaying the current repartition of members of the three DSD Working Groups by country of origin or affiliation.

