

**Review of the Management, Administration and Activities of
the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat
Desertification (UNCCD)**

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In accordance with Article 11.2 of the JIU Statute, this report has been “finalized after consultation among the Inspectors so as to test the recommendations being made against the collective wisdom of the Unit”.

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ACRONYMS

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
COPSUBLA	Substantive Support to the COP, its Subsidiary Bodies and Legal Advice Unit
CRIC	Committee to Review the Implementation of the Convention
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
EDM	Executive Direction and Management
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism of UNCCD
GoE	Group of Experts
HRM	Human resources management
ICT	Information and communication technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMIS	Integrated management information system
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
JLG	Joint Liaison Group
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NAI	Non-Annex I
NAP	National Action Programme
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
OP 15	Operational Programme on Sustainable Land Management
PMC	Premises Management Committee
RAP	Regional Action Programme
RBM	Results-based management
RCU	Regional coordination unit
SRAP	Subregional Action Programme
TPNs	Thematic programme networks
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHQ	United Nations Headquarters
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOG	United Nations Office at Geneva
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
WEOG	Western Europe and other group
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization

I. Introduction

1. This report has been prepared in response to the decision of the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), at its sixth session, that a comprehensive review of the activities of the UNCCD Secretariat would take place at COP 7, and that this review would be undertaken by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) (decision 23/COP.6). COP 6 proposed guidelines for the terms of reference of the review, which were developed further by the Bureau of COP 6, and subsequently widened by the Inspectors, in consultation with the Bureau, to include management and administration issues. The terms of reference were finalized in October 2004 under the following broad headings:

- The activities of the Secretariat as mandated by the Convention.
- The evolving role of the Secretariat.
- UNCCD in the context of the three Rio Conventions.
- The role of the Secretariat in resource mobilization.
- Specific issues in planning, programming and budgeting.

2. The inspection team adopted a participatory approach in the preparation of this report, encouraging all constituencies to put forward their views in a series of questionnaires and interviews. After the completion of a preliminary desk review, a detailed questionnaire was addressed to the UNCCD Secretariat. The Inspectors then conducted interviews with officials of UNCCD, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Global Mechanism of UNCCD (GM), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Questionnaires were also addressed to the Parties to the Convention, to United Nations partner organizations of UNCCD, and individually to senior staff members of the UNCCD Secretariat, the GM and IFAD. This wide consultation yielded a wealth of information, as well as many different assessments and opinions. The Inspectors' findings and conclusions formed the basis for an initial draft of the report. The UNCCD Secretariat was then given the opportunity to comment on the draft prior to the finalization of the report.

3. The Inspectors would like to commend the staff of the UNCCD secretariat and the Global Mechanism for the full cooperation received during the preparation of this report, as well as the concerned staff of IFAD and other officials who were interviewed or who assisted in other ways. They appreciate the willingness of all concerned to share their knowledge and expertise, and to offer insights into the many challenges that remain for the effective implementation of this important Convention.

II. Policy issues

4. In the course of the review, it appeared to the Inspectors that from the outset there has been a lack of common understanding and recognition of the Convention in its true and proper perspective. It seems unclear whether the Convention is environmental or developmental, or both; whether it concerns problems of only a local nature or worldwide. The very name of the Convention may perhaps be misleading since the fundamental problem is one of land degradation, of which desertification is a key element. The failure and/or unwillingness to recognize the Convention in its proper perspective has inevitably led to undesirable consequences, notably:

- The marked differences in access to financial support by UNCCD and its sister Rio conventions;
- The lack of a clear and stable financial commitment to UNCCD by the developed country Parties;

- The failure to mainstream UNCCD programmes and activities into the respective development support initiatives among development partners; and,
- The lack of UNCCD prioritization in affected country Parties, which have had little success in integrating UNCCD objectives into overall national development plans.

5. In many developed countries the ministry of cooperation/foreign affairs has responsibility for UNCCD, but these ministries are unlikely to see desertification as a priority issue. In contrast, UNFCCC and CBD enjoy the support of the environment and agriculture ministries, respectively, which are likely to be more powerful advocates. UNCCD faces a further disadvantage in the developing countries in that desertification is generally the responsibility of the relatively weaker environment ministries in those countries. In addition, in both developed and developing countries, officials designated as UNCCD focal points may not be sufficiently senior in the ministries or agencies concerned to effectively promote the Convention. These arrangements contribute to UNCCD's difficulties in gaining recognition and support in both the developed and developing countries.

Recommendation 1:

The COP should invite (a) the affected country Parties to integrate and prioritize their National Action Programmes (NAPs) into their national development plans, and (b) the developed country Parties to mainstream UNCCD objectives into their development programmes/projects.

Recommendation 2:

The COP may wish to invite all country Parties to designate high-ranking officials of relevant ministries to be in charge of UNCCD affairs.

Recommendation 3:

The COP should request the Executive Secretary to monitor and report to each session of the COP on the implementation of the above recommendations.

III. Governance

6. The supreme legislative body – the COP – held its sessions annually up to 2001, but biennially thereafter. The COP elects a Bureau for each session (the President, nine Vice-Presidents, and the Chairpersons of the subsidiary bodies – the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee to Review the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)), such that every geographical region is represented by at least two members. The Bureau and the other subsidiary bodies remain in office between COP sessions, but do not have any legislative mandates, so there appears to be a legislative vacuum between COP sessions.¹ No mechanism exists to guide or instruct the UNCCD Secretariat when emergencies arise and it has been facing problems in handling issues between one COP and the next.

7. The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) is expected to play a major role in providing the COP with information and advice on scientific matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. The CST meets in conjunction with the sessions of the COP, which gives rise to logistical problems. More seriously, the results of the deliberations of the CST may not be fully assimilated by the COP in its policy decisions. It was expected that the CST would be composed of government representatives competent in the relevant fields, but there is no procedure in place to ensure the right mix of expertise. Experience has shown that the CST does not always get the scientists it needs.

¹ The provision for extraordinary sessions of the COP in Rule 4 of the Rules of Procedure cannot fill this legislative vacuum in a timely or cost-effective way.

8. The CST works through ad hoc panels, which are formed from the roster of experts, and which focus on key areas, including benchmarks and indicators, traditional knowledge and early warning systems. Recognizing the need to re-energize the CST and improve its efficiency and effectiveness, COP 5 decided to create a Group of Experts (GoE) of 25 individuals drawn from the roster (decision 17/COP.5). The work is being undertaken in five sub-groups, but it remains to be seen if sufficient financing will be forthcoming.

9. The Committee to Review the Implementation of the Convention was established in 2002 in a revised procedure for the reporting and review process. It considers reports from country Parties and observers, as well as information and advice from the CST and the Global Mechanism, and reports to the COP.

Recommendation 4:

The COP may wish to consider giving the Bureau sufficient legislative power to enhance its authority so as to meet any emergencies when the COP is not in session, and may wish to revise the Rules of Procedure of the COP accordingly.

Recommendation 5:

The COP may wish to (a) schedule the sessions of the CST prior to the sessions of the COP, and (b) request all country Parties to designate officials with relevant expertise as their representatives on the CST and to establish a specific procedure to this effect.

IV. Functions and activities of the UNCCD Secretariat

(a) Differing assessments of performance

10. The functions of the Secretariat are listed in Article 23, paragraph 2, of the Convention, and elaborated in subsequent decisions of the COP. Under the terms of reference of this review, the Inspectors examined the efficiency and effectiveness of the Secretariat in carrying out its mandated functions and activities. To gain a broader view, they also sought the views of the Parties to the Convention in a questionnaire that was distributed to all the country Parties and that elicited 46 responses (the developed group (14 countries and one regional group) and the developing group (31 countries)).² These responses showed some marked differences between the two groups of countries, as well as between countries within each group, in their assessment of the Secretariat in performing its standing functions as mandated by the Convention, as well as specific activities being undertaken.

11. The Secretariat, in close cooperation with the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), provides a number of services in the organization of sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies. The Secretariat unit concerned, Substantive Support to the COP, its Subsidiary Bodies and Legal Advice Unit (COPSUBLA), has only a small staff (three Professional and two General Services) to provide these services, and is supported by temporary assistance and external contractors. As the work of the COP has developed, so the documentation has grown, with the number of pages processed more than doubling between the first COP and the sixth. The Inspectors consider that COPSUBLA is working efficiently and effectively. Its practice of analysing the logistics and organizational processes following each session and documenting lessons learned, with a view to improving procedures, is of particular merit.

12. These services also received the highest approval from the Parties, with more than one quarter of respondents rating performance as excellent and some 44 per cent as very good. For the most part, logistical arrangements were praised, as well as the motivation and

² The World Bank country groups by income have been used for this classification: the “developed group” comprises the high-income economies; the “developing group” comprises the low-, lower-middle- and upper-middle-income economies.

professionalism of the Secretariat staff, despite the heavy workload. This accords with the Inspectors' own assessment. Some Parties voiced concerns, nevertheless, about certain aspects of the Secretariat's role in servicing sessions of the COP and the CRIC. Specific criticisms were made by a few Parties relating primarily to the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the CRIC, in terms of length, scheduling and focus. There was also a perception of a lack of transparency on the part of the Secretariat in certain instances (for example, preparation of budget proposals and of documents relating to regional coordination units (RCUs) for COP 6; application of certain United Nations rules and regulations), as well as a questioning of the impartiality of the Secretariat in respect of different regional groups. These issues would seem to be more the responsibility of Executive Direction and Management (EDM) than COPSUBLA. They are serious concerns that, in the view of the Inspectors, seem to suggest an erosion of confidence among a few Parties.

13. The Secretariat has responsibility for the compilation, synthesis and preliminary analysis of reports received from country Parties, as well as subregional, intergovernmental and United Nations organizations. The volume of work has increased since the establishment of the CRIC, and COPSUBLA has been given the task of helping the regional facilitation units in preparing and processing the reports. It undertakes the preliminary analysis, but is not staffed for the purpose and relies on consultants to do this work. The Inspectors found that there is room for improvement in the quality of this analysis, and consider it unacceptable that consultants are performing core functions, which is contrary to United Nations rules.³

14. The majority of the Parties had a favourable assessment of the Secretariat's activities in the compilation of these reports, with more than one quarter of respondents rating this work as excellent and some 37 per cent as very good. Nevertheless, some 20 per cent considered these activities to be no more than satisfactory. The pattern of assessment was quite even across both country groups, but more comments were made by the developed group, revealing some differences of opinion. While some within this group acknowledged the efforts made in extracting the key messages from a diverse reporting format and the good quality of compilation, others thought that there should be more rigorous analysis and a better balance of views. The Inspectors came to the conclusion that clarification of this role in the text of the Convention would be helpful, a view also expressed by some developed country Parties. The Inspectors also support the suggestion that the evaluation of progress in implementation of the Convention at the national, subregional and regional levels requires a system of clear benchmarks and indicators, as well as periodic evaluations (external, internal and self-evaluation).

15. The Parties are required to communicate to the COP, through the Secretariat, reports on the measures they have taken for the implementation of the Convention (Article 26). And the Secretariat is required to facilitate assistance to affected country Parties, on request, in the compilation and communication of information required under the Convention. "Facilitating assistance" seems to be the most contentious of the mandated functions of the Secretariat. The assessments of the Parties (excellent/very good (35 per cent), good (30 per cent), satisfactory/less than satisfactory (35 per cent)) were spread fairly evenly within both country groups. Lower ratings within the developing group tended to reflect dissatisfaction with the level of funding, while in the developed group they mostly stemmed from the belief that the Secretariat was exceeding its mandate in its activities under this function, an issue that is discussed in the section below.

16. The Secretariat provides financial, advisory and logistical support to affected country Parties in the preparation of their national reports. The Inspectors are of the view that EDM and the regional facilitation units of the Secretariat are carrying out these tasks as effectively as possible given their limited staffing and access to resources. The quality of national reports

³ The Board of Auditors has recently addressed the issue of UNCCD's use of consultants (see paragraph 59 and footnote 29 below).

was an issue that was frequently mentioned to the Inspectors and a review of a sample of these reports confirms that the quality is very uneven. However, the quality of the national reports depends not only on the support provided by the Secretariat, but also on the efforts of the reporting governments and their access to financing. While it may be difficult to fully attribute responsibility in this regard, it seems there is a link between the quality of national reports and the funding that is made available to the affected country Parties for their preparation, which in the case of UNCCD has been very limited. Countries in Africa received some US\$ 11,000 on average in the first round of reporting in 1999, while for all regions the average was a little over US\$ 5,000 for each report in the 2002 reporting round (see annex V). This is in sharp contrast to UNFCCC where the Non-Annex I (NAI) Parties can receive up to US\$ 405,000 each from the GEF for the preparation of their national communications.⁴ It is not even certain that the situation will improve for UNCCD under its new arrangements with the GEF since there remains some question whether GEF funds will be made available for UNCCD-related reporting and action programmes.⁵

17. The assessments of the Parties with respect to the Secretariat's support to national reporting were generally favourable: excellent/very good (42 per cent); good (35 per cent); satisfactory/less than satisfactory (23 per cent). While several countries in Africa commended the Secretariat on the improved reporting guidelines and its efforts to secure additional funding for the third series of reports, some still considered funding levels inadequate to the task. Several developed countries believed that support to national reporting had developed too much into the core business of the Secretariat and that there was insufficient ownership of this responsibility by the affected countries themselves.

18. The Secretariat also provides catalytic support to action programmes and interregional activities, including support to mainstreaming NAPs into development plans and strategies, building partnerships and exploring synergies. In each of the four regions, technical and/or financial support has been provided for a range of activities, and these were clearly described in the Secretariat's report to CRIC 2.⁶ The Secretariat's facilitation of priority implementation processes remains constrained, however, by its limited access to voluntary funding. It is notable that some of UNCCD's trust funds are less well endowed than those for UNFCCC and CBD (annexes II and IV). The Inspectors attach great value to the catalytic role of the Secretariat in its interactions with the affected country Parties. They believe that it should have access to higher levels of voluntary funding to place it in a better position to support the implementation of the Convention.

19. In their responses to the questionnaire, the Parties expressed some reservations about the activities of the Secretariat in providing support for the elaboration and implementation of action programmes, with the developing group emphasizing the scarcity of resources and many of the developed group questioning the legitimacy of the Secretariat's involvement in implementation activities. The distribution of the ratings was generally less favourable: excellent/very good (34 per cent), good (27 per cent), satisfactory/less than satisfactory (39 per cent). As for Secretariat actions in support of the integration of desertification issues into national development strategies, there was a wide range of opinions among the Parties regarding the Secretariat's proper responsibilities, but also some commonalities that stressed the importance of its advocacy role in mainstreaming, which is in line with the Inspectors' own thinking.

20. The questionnaire responses also identified problems with respect to the Secretariat's assistance to civil society, particularly as regards the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the COP and other activities, with some 15 per cent considering this to be less than satisfactory, and countries in both groups pointing to a lack of transparency in

⁴ http://unfccc.int/national_reports/non-annex_i_natcom/items/2819.php

⁵ ICCD/CRIC(3)/6, para. 45.

⁶ ICCD/CRIC(2)/2, sect. IV.

the selection process. The Inspectors were informed, however, that the selection of NGOs is heavily influenced by conditions attached by the donors to the Special Fund for Participation. The Inspectors concluded that the selection criteria should be revised in consideration of developments in civil society and its representative organizations, in order to continue ensuring a balanced participation of NGOs from all regions.

21. The Parties' assessments of the reports prepared for the COP by the Secretariat on the execution of its functions under the Convention were sharply polarized. Nearly half of the respondents rated these as excellent/very good, largely countries from the developing group. In contrast, the 22 per cent that rated them as less than satisfactory were mostly the developed countries. The analysis conducted by the Inspectors indicated that this divergence could at least partly be explained by different interpretations of the function, with the developing group taking a broader approach, while the developed group saw it more narrowly in terms of financial and budgetary reporting. Nevertheless, the responses revealed a serious and consistent level of dissatisfaction in respect of transparency and timeliness of budget and financial documents that needs to be urgently addressed by the Secretariat. (This issue is taken up again in section (c) below.)

22. The Inspectors found that the Secretariat is undertaking all activities required of it under its standing functions, and a large majority of the Parties were also of this view. Some, however, thought that a list of meetings and tasks did not amount to the Joint Work Programme that had been requested of the Secretariat and Global Mechanism. Others pointed to inadequate resource mobilization, which would seem to be more the responsibility of the Global Mechanism than the Secretariat, indicating a lack of understanding by a few Parties in this regard. Several of the developed group questioned the priority setting of the Secretariat, believing that too much capacity was being dedicated to assistance to affected country Parties at the cost of other functions.

23. In their initial desk review for this report, the Inspectors identified several tasks given to the Secretariat by the COP that they judged to be additional activities, including collaboration with the GEF (decision 9/COP.4), tasks related to the CRIC (decisions 1 and 2/COP.5), and the regional coordination units initiative (decision 6/COP.5). The Inspectors commend the Secretariat for its handling of these additional tasks within limited resources.

24. In the same vein, the Parties were asked to identify any specific functions that had been assigned to the Secretariat under Article 23, paragraph 2 (g). Some 40 per cent of respondents were not aware of any such activities. Among the rest, the most frequently cited examples were:

- Facilitating improvement in the CST and support to the GoE;
- Activities relating to the GEF;
- Facilitating CRIC;
- RCU feasibility study.

The views of the Parties on the Secretariat's performance of these additional activities, where expressed, were mixed, particularly relating to the CST and the GEF. In respect of the GEF, there was some criticism that the Secretariat had not yet reached an agreement on the draft memorandum of understanding (MOU). There was greater consensus, however, on CRIC facilitation, with recognition of both the considerable preparatory work done by the Secretariat and the usefulness of the information produced for the implementation process.

Recommendation 6:

In preparing submissions for the COP, particularly those on programme and budget proposals, the Executive Secretary should follow closely the guidance given by the COP, and adopt results-based planning, programming and budgeting, including on the implementation of additional activities called for in the various decisions of the COP.

Recommendation 7:

The Executive Secretary should ensure that the Secretariat focuses on its catalytic role in its interactions with the affected country Parties under Article 23, paragraph 2 (c) of the Convention.

Recommendation 8:

The developed country Parties are invited to ensure that (a) sufficient technical and financial support is provided to the affected developing countries for the compilation and communication of information required under the Convention, in accordance with Article 26, paragraph 7, and (b) higher levels of voluntary funding are provided to UNCCD trust funds to place them in a better position to support the implementation of the Convention.

Recommendation 9:

The Executive Secretary should, as a matter of priority, propose revised procedures for the participation of non-governmental organizations in the COP and other activities, including clear selection criteria and a mechanism to ensure a balance of participants from different regions.

(b) Differing views on mandated functions and activities

25. As has been indicated in the previous section, the responses of the Parties to the questionnaire revealed conflicting views on whether or not the Secretariat has been acting strictly within its mandate. The majority of the developing group considered that the activities undertaken were within the mandate, while many – but by no means all – of the developed group believed that the Secretariat was exceeding its mandate by engaging in implementation activities that amounted to an operational role.

26. As is the case for all the Rio Conventions, the functions of the Secretariat of the UNCCD are set out in very general terms, leaving some room for interpretation (see annex I). The questionnaire responses indicate that among the Parties themselves there are quite different views about the appropriate scope of activities under certain functions, particularly those that require the Secretariat to interact with the affected country Parties. This perhaps stems from different interpretations of the “facilitation” role of the Secretariat. “Facilitate”, in the true sense of the word, means “to make easy or easier”, “to promote” or “help forward”.⁷ Theoretically, therefore, any attempt or action on the part of the Secretariat to promote or make easy the implementation of the UNCCD objectives are within its mandate. In practice, however, ambiguity and dissension continue to surround the facilitation role of the Secretariat.

27. The functions of the Secretariat that are set out in Article 23 of the Convention are further elaborated by the decisions of the COP. A systematic review of those decisions has shown that far from clarifying the boundaries of the role of the Secretariat, the uncertainties have been reinforced. A few examples from decisions of COP 6 are shown in table 1 below: the Secretariat is requested to “facilitate”, “liaise with” and “bring support to”, all open-ended terms that can be interpreted in different ways.

⁷ Webster’s New World Dictionary; Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English.

Table 1

UNCCD Secretariat activities as requested under selected COP 6 decisions

Decision/ Main heading	Text <i>(bold added for emphasis)</i>	JIU comments
<p>Decision 1</p> <p><u>Further steps in the implementation of the Convention</u></p>	<p><u>Promotion of private sector and economic opportunities in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid regions/countries</u></p> <p>16. <i>Requests</i> the secretariat to liaise with those concerned institutions which are exploring measures to facilitate opportunities for dryland products to access international markets;</p> <p><u>Monitoring and assessment, including the improvement of the reporting process</u></p> <p>29. <i>Invites</i> the secretariat with the support of relevant institutions, to continue to promote the development of thematic programme networks (TPNs), best practices to combat desertification and, in particular, to bring more support to activities such as the networking of scientific institutions, technology transfer to developing countries, training at universities, internships and scholarships into the process of the development of subregional and regional programmes;</p>	<p>What is the exact purpose of the “liaison”? The request is not clear or unambiguous.</p> <p>Secretariat is invited to bring more support to activities in the process of the development of SRAPs and RAPs. Meaning of “bring more support” is not specified, but could include technical and financial support as well as direct involvement in training programmes.</p>
<p>Decision 3</p> <p><u>Overall review of the activities of the secretariat and of the progress made by affected country Parties in the implementation of the Convention</u></p>	<p>6. <i>Also invites</i> the secretariat to support the integration of the activities of the Committee on Science and Technology into the programming instruments of the Convention, such as national, subregional and regional action programmes, and to liaise actively with the international scientific community.</p>	<p>Support to programming activities (NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs). “Liaise actively” suggests a proactive role for the Secretariat, which could involve activities of an operational nature.</p>
<p>Decision 4</p> <p><u>Implementation of the Declaration on the commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the Convention</u></p>	<p>6. <i>Invites</i> the secretariat to facilitate the updating of the help guide on drafting reports on the implementation of the Convention, so as to allow the country Parties to integrate fully into their reports the thematic areas specified in the Declaration on the commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the Convention, working towards harmonizing the reporting system with other multilateral environmental agreements;</p>	<p>In practical terms, what is meant by “to facilitate”?</p>

28. Faced with instructions couched in such general terms, the Secretariat has tended to choose the proactive approach, within the limits of the resources available to it. The Inspectors consider this to be understandable since the officials of the Secretariat are deeply committed to the Convention and are dedicated to pushing forward the implementation phase. However, as noted above, many developed countries have strong reservations about the activities of the Secretariat in its support to action programmes at the national, subregional and regional levels. The questionnaire responses showed that a particularly contentious issue was its support to implementation, with the Secretariat engaging in project-type activities that went beyond the typical role of a secretariat. It was recognized, however, that there was a lack of clarity in respect of the Secretariat's role with regard to NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs. One suggestion put forward – which the Inspectors support – would be to incorporate these programme activities in the work planning, so that they would be reviewed and approved by the COP, leaving no room for interpretation. It should be noted, however, that in their own review, the Inspectors found no clear evidence of Secretariat involvement in project implementation.

29. The examples given in the questionnaire responses of the Secretariat overstepping its mandate came almost exclusively from the developed group. The most frequently cited case was the creation of regional coordination units (RCUs), an issue that has been controversial for some time. RCUs have been established in three regions (Africa, Asia and Latin America and Caribbean) funded from voluntary contributions. The Secretariat's handling of this issue at COP 6 has drawn sharp criticism from some developed countries. The Inspectors note, however, that the RCUs were established at the request of country Parties as the outcome of Regional Conferences. Other issues raised in the questionnaire related to the number of meetings that the Secretariat was involved in, which was seen by some Parties as excessive in relation to resource constraints. It was also considered that some workshops organized by the Secretariat in developing countries could have been organized by other agencies.

30. As noted above, the Inspectors attach considerable value to the catalytic role of the Secretariat in its interactions with the affected country Parties. But at the same time they recognize the difficulties of defining a clear boundary between a strictly catalytic role and activities that amount to an operational role in implementation.

31. There is no mistaking the strength of opinion of countries in both the developed and developing groups about the current interpretation by the Secretariat of its proper role and responsibilities. The Inspectors are of the view that, to some extent, this stems from political differences – some rooted in the very origins of the Convention – that can only be resolved by the Parties themselves. They also believe that implementation of the Convention risks sliding into sclerosis as long as these differences are prolonged. What is required is agreement between the Parties on the exact role of the Secretariat at this point in the life of the Convention, as discussed below.

(c) Strategic orientation: the way forward

32. The Inspectors are of the view that differences between the Parties on the functions and activities of the Secretariat must be swiftly resolved within the framework of formal strategic planning processes, which are clearly lacking at the present time. The need to coordinate efforts and develop a coherent long-term strategy at all levels was identified in the Convention (Article 4, paragraph 1). While the Bonn Declaration on the commitments under the Convention to enhance implementation of the obligations of the UNCCD sets out specific objectives within a longer-term time frame (2001-2010) (decision 8/COP.4, annex), there is a clear need to translate these into a more elaborated long-term strategic framework at the level of the Secretariat.

33. The Secretariat has shown awareness of the need for specific planning horizons. In presenting a medium-term strategy for 1999-2000 to COP 2, it also pointed to the need for a

longer-term perspective.⁸ The Parties, however, had difficulties agreeing on even a medium-term strategic approach for the Secretariat.⁹ In accordance with decision 7/COP.2, the Secretariat submitted a revised medium-term strategy for 2000-2001,¹⁰ which COP 3 “took note of” (decision 2/COP.3), and requested the Secretariat to establish priorities and review and report on its activities to COP 6. While this report to COP 6 clearly outlines the main activities and thrust of the Secretariat’s programme of work,¹¹ it is essentially an ex post review; no medium-term strategic plans have been prepared since COP 3.

34. In recent years, United Nations organizations have been engaged in wide-ranging efforts to reform their management systems and make them more results-oriented in response to demands from Member States for greater efficiency and effectiveness and more accountability in resource use. Results-based management (RBM) systems, that embrace wide-ranging reforms of the planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring, evaluation and reporting cycle and human resources and information management strategies, have been established in the majority of the organizations.

35. The JIU, in its recent report on managing for results in the United Nations system, has identified the starting point for an RBM system as a shared understanding of clearly defined responsibilities among the organization’s main parties and the formulation of clear long-term objectives for the organization.¹² The organization’s programmes, as well as its resources, must be well-aligned with the long-term objectives, an effective performance monitoring system must be in place, and evaluation findings must be systematically fed back into the planning and programming cycle. These are some of the critical success factors identified by JIU as benchmarks for the organizations to measure their progress towards RBM.

36. In 2000, the Secretariat submitted proposals, as requested by decision 3/COP 3, on how the budgeting and reporting process could be improved, taking into account the developments and practices in other relevant international organizations.¹³ One proposal put forward was that UNCCD move to results-based budgeting, including the development of a framework of objectives, outputs, expected results and performance indicators. However, no decision was taken on these proposals at COP 4 and there appears to have been a lack of interest by the Parties at that time. The Inspectors consider that this was a lost opportunity to use RBM as a tool to address the Secretariat issues that were – and still are – a matter of contention. More recently, the Secretariat has had consultations with UNHQ and UNFCCC on results-based management, but no further action has been taken.

37. As regards monitoring and evaluation, the Secretariat considers that these functions are carried out by the COP on the basis of performance reports prepared by the Secretariat, as well as auditors’ reports. However, as noted above, some of the Parties consider that the reporting by the Secretariat is not sufficiently transparent, particularly in relation to budgetary and financial matters. At the level of the Secretariat, monitoring and evaluation take place through management and other meetings, supported by administrative tools such as monthly financial management reports or periodical travel and consultancy plans. Monitoring of activities takes place at the unit and management level, but is not formalized in guidelines. Evaluation of grants and project results are contained in the reports from recipient countries, which amounts to self-evaluation, but the Secretariat lacks resources for ex post or external evaluations (see also paragraph 14 above). The Inspectors consider that in the context of a

⁸ ICCD/COP(2)/6, paras. 59-62.

⁹ See the compendium of submissions by the Parties in ICCD/COP(3)/6.

¹⁰ ICCD/COP(3)/6.

¹¹ ICCD/CRIC(2)/2.

¹² “Managing for Results in the United Nations system: Overview; Part I: Implementation of results-based management in the United Nations organizations; Part II: Delegation of authority and accountability; Part III: Managing performance and contracts” (JIU/REP/2004/5, 6, 7 and 8).

¹³ ICCD/COP(4)/2/Add.2.

move to RBM, the UNCCD monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities would need to be strengthened to bring them in line with the required benchmarks.

38. The Inspectors are confident that, once established, a results-based management system would impose its own discipline on the activities of the Secretariat, since they would be clearly spelled out within the framework of objectives, outputs and expected results, and assessed through performance indicators. It should be possible to move fully to RBM in the 2008-2009 biennium. But, as noted above, what is first required is an agreement between the Parties on the specific functions and activities of the Secretariat at this point in time. The Inspectors see the need to establish a Task Force of all the concerned constituencies with a mandate to devise a clear long-term strategic framework for the work of the UNCCD Secretariat.

39. The Task Force should complete its work in the first half of 2006, and thereafter the Executive Secretary should prepare a medium-term plan. A desk-to-desk review of positions and functions should then be undertaken by independent experts as part of a needs assessment exercise to review the human and financial resources required to deliver the expected results under the medium-term plan. The independent experts should report on the needs assessment exercise within three months and, based on their findings, results-based budget proposals should be drawn up by the Executive Secretary, in line with the benchmarking framework for results-based management.

Recommendation 10:

The COP should endorse the benchmarking framework for results-based management (see paragraph 35 and footnote 12 above).

Recommendation 11:

The COP should approve the establishment of a Task Force comprising the main UNCCD constituencies that would use the results-based management benchmarking framework to draw up a long-term strategic framework for UNCCD that would establish the exact functions and activities of the UNCCD Secretariat and enable the Executive Secretary to draw up a medium-term plan.

Recommendation 12:

The COP should request the Executive Secretary to contract an independent expert entity to conduct a desk-to-desk workload analysis as part of a needs assessment review of the human and financial resources required to deliver the expected results under the medium-term plan.

Recommendation 13:

The COP should request the Executive Secretary to put forward results-based budget proposals based on the findings of the needs assessment review, and linked to a medium-term plan, in line with the benchmarking framework for results-based management.

V. Relationship between the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism

40. In order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of existing financial mechanisms, a Global Mechanism (GM) was established under the Convention to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources to affected developing country Parties (Article 21, paragraph 4). This was a unique approach to funds mobilization and quite different to that adopted for UNFCCC and CBD, for which mechanisms for the provision of financial resources on a grant or concessional basis were envisaged (UNFCCC, Article 11, paragraph 1; CBD, Article 21, paragraph 1).

41. Currently the GEF operates the financial mechanisms for the implementation of UNFCCC and CBD, as well as for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.¹⁴ The adoption by the GEF in May 2003 of its Operational Programme on Sustainable Land Management (OP 15) to operationalize its new focal area on land degradation (primarily desertification and deforestation) has opened up some GEF funding to UNCCD. The initial funding appears inadequate in relation to demand, however, and the role of the GM in resource mobilization for UNCCD implementation remains crucial.

42. In accordance with the request of COP 5, the policies, operational modalities and activities of the GM were the subject of an independent evaluation in 2003, which, together with an evaluation conducted concurrently by the World Bank, was considered at COP 6.¹⁵ This intense scrutiny resulted in a series of findings and recommendations that are fully supported by the Inspectors. One finding of both evaluations was that the GM has addressed issues that hamper funding potential – such as mainstreaming UNCCD objectives into development policy frameworks – that fall outside of its core mandate.¹⁶ The Inspectors note that the GM's Business Plan for 2003-2006 (also presented to COP 6) included, as one of its three pillars, the provision of financial support to both the formulation of action programmes and mainstreaming. And the GM continues to identify mainstreaming, along with partnership building and the multiplier effect of providing catalytic resources, as a main strategic concept for the delivery of its mandate.¹⁷ GM officials believe that mobilization of resources is not possible in isolation from substantive activities. The Inspectors are concerned, however, that at least some of these activities go beyond the mandate of the GM as set out in Article 21 of the Convention.

43. Another issue of concern identified by the independent evaluations of 2003 was the relationship between the GM and IFAD, its host organization. The collaborative institutional arrangements in support of the GM were set out in decision 25/COP.1 and further developed in a memorandum of understanding between the COP and IFAD signed in November 1999.¹⁸ Under these arrangements, the administrative and operating budget of the GM is financed by the COP, and the GM functions under the authority of the COP and is fully accountable to it. However, the Managing Director reports directly to the President of IFAD, with the chain of accountability running from the Managing Director to the President of IFAD to the COP. In an effort to reinforce and clarify the relationship between the GM and IFAD, a GM Advisory Group was established in 2004 comprising all the key players of IFAD (resource mobilization, communication, technical and programme support, administration).¹⁹

44. IFAD sees its role vis-à-vis the GM as support for resource mobilization, ensuring implementation of the Business Plan, and strategic guidance. To the Inspectors, however, the GM appears to be more a part of IFAD than an organ of the Convention, and they are concerned that IFAD plays a predominant role in the functioning of the GM. They are also concerned about the lack of a clear line of responsibility in respect of the UNCCD core budget, which comprises the resource requirements of both the Secretariat and the GM. Under current arrangements, the GM's budget proposal is first reviewed and approved by the President of IFAD before being forwarded to the Executive Secretary "for consideration in the preparation of the budget estimates of the Convention...".²⁰ While lacking the authority to modify the GM budget proposal, the Executive Secretary is nevertheless responsible for its presentation to the COP. As for reporting, the GM's Managing Director presents an activities report – rather than a full performance report – to COP on behalf of the President of IFAD.

¹⁴ "Instrument for the Establishment of the Restructured Global Environment Facility", GEF, May 2004, para. 6.

¹⁵ ICCD/CRIC(2)/5; ICCD/COP(6)/MISC.1.

¹⁶ ICCD/CRIC(2)/5, para. 52; ICCD/COP(6)/MISC.1, p. 8.

¹⁷ ICCD/CRIC(3)/6, paras. 19-23.

¹⁸ ICCD/COP(1)/11/Add.1; ICCD/COP(3)/10.

¹⁹ IFAD, President's Bulletin, 21 January 2004.

²⁰ ICCD/COP(3)/10, sect. III, A(4).

The Inspectors consider that these budgetary and reporting arrangements need to be clarified and strengthened.

45. It is clear from the responses to the questionnaire to the Parties that the mechanisms for resource mobilization are of continuing concern. One issue raised – primarily by developed country Parties – was the need for a much clearer definition of the division of responsibilities between the Secretariat and the GM in order to avoid the present overlapping and duplication of activities that has resulted in competition between the two entities, inadequate accountability in certain areas, and a lack of cohesiveness in relations with external partners. The Inspectors have also identified institutional conflict between the GM and the Secretariat, particularly in respect of resource mobilization, and decisions of the COP sometimes appear to reinforce this competitive relationship. For example, in decision 14/COP.6 concerning the survey and evaluation of existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies, the COP requested “the Global Mechanism and other funding agencies, in close collaboration with the secretariat, to mobilize additional resources for this initiative”.²¹ Collaborate means “to work jointly”, so it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the GM and the Secretariat are to work jointly in funds mobilization in this instance. The division of responsibilities should become a major focus of the Task Force recommended above.

Recommendation 14:

The Task Force to be established under Recommendation 11 above should be requested to:

- (i) Make a clear distinction between the functions, responsibilities and activities of the Secretariat and those of the Global Mechanism.**
- (ii) Review the current administrative arrangements for the GM as contained in the MOU between IFAD and the COP, including the possibility of separate budget submissions and performance reporting to the COP.**

VI. Financial and budgetary issues

46. Under the Convention, the developed country Parties undertook, inter alia, to provide substantial financial resources and other forms of support to assist affected developing country Parties, particularly those in Africa, effectively to develop and implement their own long-term plans and strategies to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought (Article 6). These countries also undertook to promote the mobilization of adequate, timely and predictable financial resources, including new and additional funding from the GEF (Article 20, paragraph 2 (b)). The Inspectors are of the view that the financial resources made available so far to UNCCD cannot be described as substantial; neither can they be considered adequate, timely or predictable.

47. The JIU report on managing for results in the United Nations system emphasizes the importance of the predictability of resources for effective management and programme planning. To achieve long-term objectives, “managers need a reasonable level of resource predictability in order to set their targets and be held accountable for meeting them in a given financial period”.²² However, “[d]ue to highly politicised budgetary processes, the level of predictability of resources for programme planning at United Nations organizations is generally low, making the need to link resources to results even more urgent...”.²³

48. As with many programmes in the United Nations system, UNCCD relies on unpredictable voluntary contributions in United States dollars to fund its substantive work. The Secretariat must also assume additional tasks requested by the COP without necessarily receiving

²¹ ICCD/COP(6)/11/Add.1.

²² JIU/REP/2004/6, para. 44.

²³ Ibid., box 14.

concomitant funding and must absorb the costs within the core budget if voluntary funding cannot be obtained. The Inspectors find this to be unacceptable and would suggest that the COP adopt and apply similar procedures for its decision-making processes as those contained in Rule 153 of the Rules of Procedure of the United Nations General Assembly,²⁴ which are more comprehensive than UNCCD's own Rule 15.

49. Even the core budget funded from assessed contributions in dollars is subject to uncertainty since a major contributor views its assessment as a voluntary contribution.²⁵ Furthermore, with the budget denominated in dollars, but a significant proportion of expenditures in euros, the financial situation is subject to the vagaries of currency fluctuations. The Executive Secretary's budget proposal for 2004-2005 included a 30 per cent increase to offset the decline in the value of the dollar against the euro. In the event, only a 5 per cent nominal increase was approved by COP 6, representing a sharp decline in real terms. The Secretariat has sought guidance from the Bureau of COP 6 on how to handle this shortfall, but none has been forthcoming. Even after freezing vacant posts and reducing the travel and consultancy budgets, a substantial shortfall in income over expenditure for the core budget is predicted for the biennium. The impact on programme delivery is undeniable.

50. The Inspectors believe that sufficient and predictable financing for the Convention is essential for the good functioning and efficient operations of the Secretariat and the GM. It is important therefore that a mechanism be adopted to address the problems that arise from currency fluctuations. UNCCD is not alone in facing these problems or in seeking solutions. Various approaches to be considered include re-costing the budget proposals to offset both currency and inflation losses (or gains), a reserve account with exchange rate gains/losses paid in/withdrawn, forward purchasing of dollars, a split currency system of assessment or a single currency system of assessment.

51. Some United Nations organizations located in Europe adopt their budgets in a European currency. For example, WIPO's budget is denominated in Swiss francs²⁶ and UNIDO's regular budget is denominated in euros. Prior to the 2002-2003 biennium, however, UNIDO operated a system in which the composition of expenditures formed the basis of the resource requirements for the regular budget and hence of a split currency system of assessment (18 per cent in United States dollars and 82 per cent in Austrian schillings for both the 1998-1999 and 2000-2001 bienniums). UNIDO adopted euro budgeting and a single currency system of assessment for the regular budget from 2002-2003. However, some problems have been encountered, including the continuing obligation to pay pensions and some salaries in dollars, and the need to manage the project cycle in both dollars and euros simultaneously.²⁷

52. UNCCD core budget expenditures denominated in euros include General Service staff salaries, most general administrative expenses, supplies and equipment, joint facilities management costs and travel agents bills (though daily subsistence allowance is denominated in dollars). Professional staff salaries are adjusted for euro/dollar fluctuations by the monthly post adjustment factor. Expenditure on consultants and experts is denominated in both euros and dollars. Thus, while a significant proportion of expenditure is denominated in euros, some dollar expenditures remain. Of the two options – a split currency system of budgeting and

²⁴ Rule 153 states: "No resolution involving expenditure shall be recommended by a committee for approval by the General Assembly unless it is accompanied by an estimate of expenditures prepared by the Secretary-General. No resolution in respect of which expenditures are anticipated by the Secretary-General shall be voted in the General Assembly until the Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee) has had an opportunity of stating the effect of the proposal upon the budget estimates of the United Nations".

²⁵ ICCD/COP(6)/11/Add.1, annex to decision 23/COP.6, footnote 3.

²⁶ The WIPO case is not typical of United Nations organizations since some 85 per cent of the budget comes from fees paid by private sector users and the remaining 15 per cent from contributions of Member States and sales of publications.

²⁷ "Review of management and administration in the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)", JIU/REP/2003/1, annex I.

assessment to reflect the composition of expenditures in dollars and euros, or euro budgeting and a single currency system of assessment – the Inspectors are of the view that the latter is preferable. In this respect, the COP may wish to contract an independent expert to undertake a feasibility study of all the options that are available to UNCCD to minimize the effects of currency fluctuations.

Recommendation 15:

The COP should adopt and apply similar procedures for its decision-making processes as those contained in Rule 153 of the Rules of Procedure of the United Nations General Assembly.

Recommendation 16:

The COP should consider adopting euro budgeting and a single currency system of assessment – the euro – from the 2008-2009 biennium.

VII. Other issues in administration and management

(a) Institutional linkage

53. The institutional linkage between UNCCD and the UNOG appears to be working satisfactorily. The provision of administrative services by UNOG to UNCCD, including reimbursement schedules and modalities, actions required by UNCCD and key performance indicators for UNOG, is set out in an MOU initially relating to 2002, which is renewed annually. The renewal for 2004 has been delayed, however, as issues related to information technology costs have had to be resolved.

54. With the implementation of the integrated management information system (IMIS) in Bonn, the UNCCD Secretariat has assumed more financial functions and responsibilities formerly provided by UNOG, including responsibility for the management of its programme support costs. Further transfers would appear not to be cost effective, however, since there are significant economies of scale in concentrating some services, such as Treasury, in UNOG. As for personnel functions, UNCCD has not been accorded full delegation of authority (unlike UNFCCC) because there is no human resources officer post in Bonn; a proposal to establish such a post was turned down by COP 6.

55. The administrative arrangements are governed by a delegation of authority instrument in the form of a 1998 interoffice memorandum from the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Management to the UNCCD Executive Secretary. While this covered provisional arrangements, it is still valid, and both parties are bound by it. The Inspectors were informed by both UNCCD and UNOG that this is giving rise to some anomalies in respect of, for example, the delegation of authority for procurement and for the disposal of property, that need to be resolved.

56. A fundamental requirement of a system of results-based management is that managers are given full responsibility for the financial and human resources at their disposal and are equally fully accountable for delivering the associated outputs and expected results. The Inspectors consider that it would be timely, therefore, to review and, if necessary, to revise the authorities delegated to the UNCCD Executive Secretary with a view to maximizing those responsibilities. A comprehensive statement of all delegated authorities and associated accountabilities should be drawn up, preferably in a single document, replacing earlier delegation instruments which should be revoked.

Recommendation 17:

The COP should request the United Nations Secretary-General to delegate full authority to the Executive Secretary of UNCCD through a comprehensive statement of all delegated authorities and associated accountabilities, which would replace earlier delegation instruments which should be revoked.

(b) Human resources management

57. As the UNCCD Secretariat is subject to United Nations staff regulations and rules, human resources policies and practices for the most part follow those of the United Nations. Some officials of the Secretariat indicated that a human resources management strategy was in place, but there is no strategy document that covers HRM in a formal way. In view of the small size of the Secretariat, and the absence of a human resources Professional in Bonn, this is perhaps not surprising. Nevertheless, in the context of the move to results-based management recommended by the Inspectors, there is a need to develop a comprehensive HRM strategy that addresses, among other things, delegation of authority and accountability within the Secretariat, as well as performance management.

58. The Inspectors noted imbalances in the Secretariat in both the geographical and gender distribution at the Professional level and above, as well as a top-heavy post structure.²⁸ As at 30 June 2003, Africa and the western Europe and other group (WEOG) each accounted for 30 per cent of the filled posts at the Professional level and above. As for gender balance, only 25 per cent of filled posts at this level were occupied by women, while at the P-5 level and above, only 18 per cent were occupied by women. Thus the Secretariat falls well short of the 50/50 gender distribution called for by General Assembly resolution 52/96 of December 1997. In respect of the Professional post structure, 43 per cent of the approved posts were at the P-5 level and above, with 30 per cent at P-5 alone. At least to some extent – and particularly for post structure – these imbalances are linked to the small size of the Secretariat, but efforts should be made to correct them when opportunities arise.

59. The Inspectors also noted the conclusions and fully supported the recommendations of the external auditor regarding the use of consultants by the UNCCD Secretariat.²⁹

Recommendation 18:

The Executive Secretary should elaborate a strategy for human resources management as an essential part of the proposed results-based management strategy.

Recommendation 19:

The Executive Secretary should:

(i) Review the gender balance at the Professional level and above and, as opportunities arise in the Secretariat, make efforts to move towards the target set by the United Nations General Assembly.

(ii) Review the geographical distribution at the Professional level and above and, as opportunities arise in the Secretariat, make efforts to achieve a more equitable distribution.

(c) Information and communication technology

60. The UNCCD Secretariat is supported by a small information and communication technology (ICT) team providing a range of services including the computer network, electronic mail system, web services, conference/meeting servicing, staff training and help desk. As well as providing services that support the administrative processes of the

²⁸ ICCD/COP(6)/2/Add.3, tables 20 and 21.

²⁹ "Report of the Board of Auditors to the Conference of the Parties on the financial statements of UNCCD for the biennium ended 31 December 2003", paras. 80-97 (no symbol).

Secretariat, the ICT team supports the substantive work of UNCCD by designing and developing various databases and providing other software, such as the registration system for conferences which is highly regarded. The quality of ICT services in the future may be impaired, however, by the current budgetary constraints that have limited the update of equipment and technology. There is no replacement policy for computer equipment or software, and support for existing products will be progressively withdrawn by manufacturers as new products are released onto the market.

61. The system of results-based management proposed by the Inspectors in Recommendation 10 above requires the development of a management information system that encompasses all aspects of RBM, including performance management and knowledge sharing. The Secretariat is currently using IMIS for accounting and financial reporting, but the system does not offer the additional functionality required to support RBM. Within the context of the move to RBM, the Inspectors see a need to develop a comprehensive ICT strategy that would set out the electronic applications that need to be developed. As the Secretariat lacks the capacity under current resource levels for the systems development envisaged, the Parties should consider establishing a dedicated ICT Fund preferably within the framework of the core budget.

Recommendation 20:

The Executive Secretary should develop, for consideration and approval by the COP, a comprehensive information and communication technology strategy to support the proposed results-based management strategy.

Recommendation 21:

Following the development and approval of the ICT strategy, the COP may wish to establish a dedicated ICT Fund preferably within the framework of the core budget.

(d) Common administrative services

62. Common services arrangements between the United Nations entities located at Bonn cover facilities management (buildings management, communications, travel, catering, insurance etc.); information technology services; security and safety; other United Nations commonalities (host country issues, language training, medical insurance and pension fund issues etc.); financial aspects of common services; and procurement. These common services, as well as the associated cost-sharing arrangements, are covered by an MOU. By all accounts, the common premises are well managed by the Common Services Unit under the United Nations Volunteers (UNV). There is a decision-making body – the Premises Management Committee (PMC) – comprising the four main agencies, which meets monthly. Review of the minutes of recent PMC meetings indicates that there is open and constructive dialogue. The immediate challenge, however, is that the international agencies located in Bonn are set to move to new premises on a single site in the former parliamentary area. A separate task force has been set up to deal with this, meeting monthly and reporting to the heads of the agencies, but also providing feedback to the PMC. All the agencies will face higher operating costs in the new premises – particularly for electricity – related to office size, elevators, air conditioning etc. The costs of security will also rise sharply following the recent security assessment for Germany as part of the effort to improve security throughout the United Nations. With the tight budgetary constraints already facing the UNCCD Secretariat, there seems little possibility of meeting these higher costs from existing resources.

63. Within the context of the new UN Campus in Bonn, the Common Services Unit has identified a range of possible future common services, including common procurement for basic standard items (office supplies and equipment), common management of photocopiers and fax machine maintenance, common inventory and asset management, management of common shuttle services, common protocol services, an interagency agreement on legal services, etc. However, a common catering service might be difficult to run profitably in the

new premises since it would not be open to the public for security reasons, but a feasibility study was planned. The Inspectors believe that expansion might also be possible in the areas of training, a common travel unit and conference services.

64. As for joint services, UNCCD and UNFCCC already operate jointly a property survey board, a contracts committee and an IMIS fast link with the UNOG server, and there might be opportunities to engage in other joint activities such as training, interviewing etc.

Recommendation 22:

The COP should request the Executive Secretary to make an estimate of the increased operating costs of the new premises and recommend how best to meet these additional requirements.

Recommendation 23:

The Executive Secretary should continue to explore the possibilities for the expansion of cost-saving common and joint services with his counterparts in Bonn and systematically report on progress to the COP.

VIII. Coordination and cooperation

65. The Secretariat is mandated under the Convention to coordinate its activities with the secretariats of other relevant international bodies and conventions. As it is not an implementing agency, it needs to rely on the comparative advantages of relevant United Nations organizations, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for the implementation processes of the Convention. It places particular importance on its relationship with other relevant conventions, notably UNFCCC and CBD, with which a Joint Liaison Group (JLG) has been established. In 2004, the JLG prepared a paper on options for enhanced cooperation among the three Rio Conventions which tried to identify cross-cutting issues for cooperation.³⁰ The paper was presented to the Parties to the UNFCCC in December 2004, but regrettably was not endorsed.

66. The Parties to the UNCCD were asked to assess the Secretariat's coordination and cooperation activities, particularly with respect to multilateral environmental agreements, and generally the responses were favourable. Various countries referred positively to national workshops on synergies that the Secretariat had facilitated, as well as follow-up activities. UNCCD was seen as taking the lead in promoting and implementing synergies between the Conventions. One problem identified was the frequent lack of synergies within the affected countries themselves, especially in Africa. Several of the developed group noted that the Secretariat had been proactively engaged in seeking synergies, but might have overstepped the mark by being involved in the design and implementation of pilot synergy projects at the national and local levels.

67. Among the list of main institutional partners that the UNCCD Secretariat provided to the Inspectors, 21 United Nations partner organizations were identified. A short questionnaire was sent to these United Nations partner organizations seeking their views on coordination and cooperation with UNCCD. Only five agencies responded fully to the questionnaire (FAO, IFAD, UNESCO, WHO and UNDP), indicating that UNCCD has a limited number of key United Nations committed partners that it can engage with to push forward implementation processes. The main constraint identified to further cooperation was lack of funding.

³⁰ FCCC/SBSTA/2004/INF.19, 2 November 2004.

Recommendation 24:

The COP should direct the Executive Secretary to work with the Joint Liaison Group to strengthen cooperation in the implementation process of the Rio Conventions and boost synergies in order to move towards more concrete modalities of substantive cooperation, and to systematically report to it on progress made.

Recommendation 25:

The Secretariat should make strenuous efforts to play a catalytic role between the concerned Parties and the various partner organizations to enhance cooperation between them in the implementation of the Convention. In this regard, it should elaborate a concrete plan of action and systematically report to the COP on progress made.

IX. The Rio Conventions: some comparisons

68. Under the terms of reference, the Inspectors were required to make a comparison of the secretariats of the three Rio Conventions in terms of mandate, access to resources and staffing situation. Information on these variables is provided in annexes I-V and is largely self-explanatory. Under the Conventions, as can be seen from annex I, the three secretariats were mandated to perform virtually identical functions, the main difference being that assistance to the developing country Parties on request to provide information is not specified for the CBD.

69. In terms of the core budgets, UNCCD lags well behind, its approved budgets from assessed contributions for 2002-2003 and 2004-2005 being about half those of UNFCCC, and also less than those of CBD. It also receives a lower core budget contribution from the host country than UNFCCC (annex II). These differences are reflected in the staffing table (annex III). UNCCD also has less access to voluntary funding than UNFCCC (annex IV), and this can be seen especially in the funding provided for national reporting processes (annex V).

70. The Inspectors have concluded that in terms of financial and human resources, UNCCD is undernourished as compared with the other two sister Conventions. They strongly believe that the Parties to the Convention should attach more importance and provide timely policy guidance and adequate financial support to the activities of the UNCCD Secretariat in facilitating the implementation of the Convention.

Annex I

Functions of the secretariats of the Rio Conventions

UNCCD <i>(Article 23, para. 2)</i>	UNFCCC <i>(Article 8, para. 2)</i>	CBD <i>(Article 24, para. 1)</i>
(a) To make arrangements for sessions of COP and its subsidiary bodies established under the Convention and to provide them with services as required.	(a) To make arrangements for sessions of COP and its subsidiary bodies established under the Convention and to provide them with services as required.	(a) To arrange for and service meetings of COP provided for in Article 23.
(b) To compile and transmit reports submitted to it.	(b) To compile and transmit reports submitted to it.	(b) To perform the functions assigned to it by any protocol.
(c) To facilitate assistance to affected developing country parties, on request, particularly those in Africa, in the compilation and communication of information required under the Convention.	(c) To facilitate assistance to the Parties, particularly developing country parties, on request, in the compilation and communication of information required in accordance with the provisions of the Convention.	(c) To prepare reports on the execution of its functions under this Convention and present them to COP.
(d) To coordinate its activities with the secretariats of other relevant international bodies and conventions.	(d) To prepare reports on its activities and present them to COP.	(d) To coordinate with other relevant international bodies and, in particular to enter into such administrative and contractual arrangements as may be required for the effective discharge of its functions.
(e) To enter, under the guidance of COP, into such administrative and contractual arrangements as may be required for the effective discharge of its functions.	(e) To ensure the necessary coordination with the secretariats of other relevant international bodies.	(e) To perform such other functions as may be determined by COP.
(f) To prepare reports on the execution of its functions under this Convention and present them to COP.	(f) To enter, under the overall guidance of COP, into such administrative and contractual arrangements as may be required for the effective discharge of its functions.	
(g) To perform other secretariat functions as may be determined by COP.	(g) To perform the other secretariat functions specified in the Convention and in any of its protocols and such other functions as may be determined by COP.	

Annex II

Access to core budget resources under the Rio Conventions

	UNCCD	UNFCCC	CBD ¹
Budget	<i>Thousands of US dollars</i>		
<i>Budget approved by COP for 2000-2001</i>	13,995.7	25,286.0	18,643.9 (2001-2002)
<i>Budget approved by COP for 2002-2003²</i>	16,234.2	32,837.1	21,956.8 (2003-2004)
<i>Budget approved by COP for 2004-2005²</i>	17,049.0	34,807.3	21,416.3 (2005-2006)
<i>(Budget proposed by Executive Secretary)</i>	<i>(26,060.5)</i>	<i>(42,311.2)</i>	<i>(28,233.4)</i> (2005-2006)
Income from assessed contributions³	<i>Thousands of US dollars</i>		
	Trust Fund for the Core Budget (UXA)	Trust Fund for the Core Budget (FCA)	Trust Fund for the Core Budget (BY)⁴
<i>Income in 2000-2001</i>	13,104.6	23,524.4	15,361.4
<i>Income in 2002-2003</i>	15,660.9	27,331.9	17,334.0
Income from voluntary contributions	<i>Thousands of US dollars</i>		
	Voluntary contribution of Germany to the trust fund for the core budget (UXA)	Voluntary contribution of Germany to the trust fund for the core budget (FCA)	
<i>Income in 2000-2001</i>	976.5	1,389.3	
<i>Income in 2002-2003</i>	988.0	1,483.8	
<i>Pledged in 2004-2005</i>	1,110.0	1,651.1	

Source:

UNCCD: Decision 3/COP.3; Decision 4/COP.4; Decision 4/COP.5; Decision 23/COP.6; ICCD/COP(6)/2/Add.1 and 5; Audited Financial Statements, 2002-2003.

UNFCCC: Decision 20/CP.5; Decision 38/CP.7; Decision 16/CP.9; FCCC/SBI/2002/10/Add.1; FCCC/SBI/2003/5; FCCC/SBI/2004/12/Add.2.

CBD: Decision V/22, UNEP/CBD/COP/5/23; Decision VI/29, UNEP/CBD/COP/6/20; Decision VII/34, UNEP/CBD/COP/7/21; UNEP/CBD/COP/7/2; CBD Financial Statements.

Notes:

1. CBD biennial budget cycle not aligned with UNCCD and UNFCCC.
2. Total resource requirements, i.e., before supplementary contribution from host country government.
3. Includes interest income and miscellaneous income.
4. Voluntary contributions.

Annex III

Staffing of the secretariats of the Rio Conventions

	UNCCD	UNFCCC	CBD
	2004-2005	2004-2005	2005-2006
<i>(i) Core budget approved</i>			
ASG	1	1	1
D-2	0	4	0
D-1	2	6	3
P-5	10	8	4
P-4	8	18	16
P-3	5	25	9
P-2	4	9	0
Total Professional and above	30	71	33
Total General Service	13	39.5	26
TOTAL	43¹	110.5	59
<i>(ii) Funded from programme support costs</i>			
D-1	0	1	
P-5	2	1	
P-4 – P-2	1	8	
Total Professional and above	3	10	3
Total General Service	10	20	5
TOTAL	13	30	8²

Source:

UNCCD: ICCD/COP(6)11/Add.1 and 3.

UNFCCC: FCCC/CP/2003/6/Add.1; FCCC/SBI/2003/5.

CBD: UNEP/CBD/COP/7/10; UNEP/CBD/COP/7/21

Notes:

- Five of the 43 posts are financed through programme support funds (1 P-5, 1 P-4 and 3 GS).
- 2003-2004.

Annex IV

Access to non-core budget voluntary funding under the Rio Conventions¹

	UNCCD	UNFCCC	CBD
	<i>Thousands of US dollars</i>		
(a) Fund for participation	Trust Fund for participation of representatives of state parties in the session of the UNCCD Conference (UVA)	Trust Fund for participation in the UNFCCC process (FER)	Special Voluntary Trust Fund for facilitating the participation of parties in the Convention process (BZ)
<i>Income 2000-2001</i>	1,429.3	2,995.8	2,199.0
<i>Income 2002-2003</i>	1,642.5	2,034.6	1,555.9
(b) Fund for supplementary activities	Trust Fund for voluntary financing of activities under the UNCCD (UWA)	Trust Fund for supplementary activities (FRA)	Special Voluntary Trust Fund for additional voluntary contributions in support of approved activities (BE)
<i>Income 2000-2001</i>	7,092.3	5,873.3	3,703.6
<i>Income 2002-2003</i>	7,116.8	7,371.5	3,445.8
(c) Host country funds	Trust Fund for Convention events organized by the UNCCD secretariat (BMA) (Bonn Fund)	Trust Fund for Special Annual Contribution of the Government of Germany (FQA)	
<i>Income 2000-2001</i>	923.6	3,286.7	
<i>Income 2002-2003</i>	1,034.3	3,661.4	

Source:

UNCCD: ICCD/COP(6)/2/Add.3 and 5; Audited Financial Statements, 2002-2003.

UNFCCC: FCCC/SBI/2002/10/Add.1; FCCC/SBI/2004/12/Add.2.

CBD: CBD Financial Statements.

Notes:

1. Some funds are not included in the table, e.g., UNFCCC Trust Fund for Technical Cooperation (FUA) (a contribution of US\$ 1.5 million was made in 2000-2001 by UNFIP for implementation of the clean development mechanism project under the Kyoto Protocol); UNFCCC interim allocation to the Kyoto protocol (US\$ 5.5 million); and CBD General Trust Fund to support Developing Country Parties on Biosafety Issues (US\$ 226,000 in 2005-2006).

Annex V

Access to funding for national reporting under the Rio Conventions

	<i>Year/Period</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>No. of reports</i>	<i>Average per report US dollars</i>
UNCCD				
<i>First reporting</i>	1999	Africa	42	11 325
	2000	Asia/CEE	37	4 173
	2000	LAC	30	8 984
	1999-2000	All regions	109	8 253
<i>Second reporting</i>	2002	Africa	48	6 098
	2002	Asia	44	4 738
	2002	LAC	33	5 485
	2002	NM, CEE	17	3 548
	2002	All regions	142	5 229
UNFCCC				
<i>First reporting¹</i>	<i>As at 24 September 2004</i>	n.a.	101	310 198
CBD				
<i>Third reporting²</i>	n.a.	All regions	n.a.	20,000

Acronyms:

CEE: Central and Eastern Europe; LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean; NM: Northern Mediterranean; WEOG: Western Europe and other group.

Source:

UNCCD: ICCD/COP(3)/5/Add.2 and 4; ICCD/COP(5)/2/Add.4; ICCD/COP(6)/2/Add.4.

UNFCCC: FCCC/SBI/2004/INF.11, annexes I and II.

CBD: UNEP/CBD/COP/7/17 and Add.3; CBD Secretariat data.

Notes:

- Each NAI Party is required to submit its initial communication within three years of the entry into force of the Convention for that Party, or the availability of financial resources (except for the least developed countries, who may do so at their own discretion). As at 19 May 2005, 124 initial national communications had been received. Submission of second national communication (SNC) is at an early stage: as of October 2004, 52 countries had been allocated US\$ 15,000 each for a self-assessment exercise and three countries had submitted their SNCs.
- Parties were invited to submit their first national reports by 1 January 1998 (133 submitted as at 30 September 2003), and their second national reports by 15 May 2001 (104 submitted as at 31 October 2003). The CBD has informed JIU that, based on experience from the first and second national reports, the GEF Secretariat and the implementing agencies advised that the budget for the third national report would be at the level of US\$ 20,000, which is an average indicative figure.