



Regional Coordination Mechanism of the UNCCD for Asia and the Pacific

Prepared by the Task Force for the Regional
Implementation Annex for Asia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Regional Implementation Annex for Asia*¹, the Annex II of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), provides the mandate and basis for regional approaches and coordination in the implementation of the Convention in Asia and the Pacific (AP)².

This document first reviews the past activities undertaken at national, subregional and regional levels in the region since the adoption of the Convention in 1994, and then the role, functions and past activities of the Asia-RCU since it became operational in January 2001. The achievements as well as the gaps of the Asia-RCU are highlighted.

In order to more efficiently and effectively serve the affected Parties, and in accordance with Decision 3/COP.8³, this document proposes to strengthen the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Asia and the Pacific (RCM-AP) based on the results-based management (RBM) approach. At the core of this strengthened RCM-AP, a Regional Office of the Convention for Asia and the Pacific (ROC-AP) will be established to replace the existing Asia-RCU, with strengthened mandates.

The new ROC-AP will maintain and strengthen the existing activities of the Asia-RCU. A number of new activities, such as regional advisory services; preparation of RAP (2010-2014); visiting fellowship programme; promotion of science and environmentally sound technologies; development of regional roster of experts; website development, publications, newsletter and other outreach information; and resource mobilization, will be initiated within the context of the *10-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance the Implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)* as contained in Decision 3/COP.8.

An Advisory Committee will be established to provide guidance on the implementation of the RCM-AP and the operation of the ROC-AP. This Committee will have memberships from each subregion (i.e., Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia and the Pacific), the UNCCD Secretariat, Global Mechanism (GM), Committee on Science and Technology (CST), and Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC). The Chair and Vice Chair will be nominated by the representatives of the subregions, and all representatives of the subregions may serve for a maximum term of three years in rotation. The Regional Coordinator of the ROC-AP may serve as the Secretary of the Committee.

An estimated US\$ 900,000 will be required for the annual operation of the ROC-AP and its proposed activities as provided in the Work Plan (2010-2011). In view of the size and specific needs of the region with 56 country Parties, this funding requirement is very modest indeed, and it should be met by the core budget of the UNCCD Secretariat and supplementary funds as appropriate.

An integrated and coordinated strategy within the UNCCD Secretariat is required to implement the strengthened RCM-AP, as well as the efficient and effective operation of the ROC-AP.

¹ Under the UNCCD, Asia includes the Pacific member countries.

² “Asia and the Pacific” is used throughout the document in response to the comments by the country Parties in the Pacific.

³ *Decision 3/COP.8: The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)*; Report of the Conference of the Parties on its eighth session, held in Madrid from 3 to 14 September 2007; Addendum; Part two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its eighth session. ICCD/COP(8)/16/Add.1, 23 October 2007.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background

1. The importance of regional approaches and coordination in the implementation of the Convention, as reflected by the *Regional Implementation Annex* for various regions, including Asia, and the value of efforts at the regional level currently identified as the “regional coordination units” initiative has been well recognized by the Conference of the Parties (COPs).
2. Building on earlier decisions, especially Decision 6/COP.5⁴ and Decision 11/COP.6⁵, the Parties recognized in Decision 1/COP.8 the importance of strengthening the implementation of the Convention in all regions.
3. The Parties also recognized in Decision 3/COP.8 (*The 10-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance the Implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)*); hereafter referred as *The Strategy*) that “regional coordination is an important component in implementing the Convention and the Strategy, and further recognizes that coordination mechanisms must be responsive to existing and emerging needs, capacities and the specific issues of regions”.
4. Paragraph 30 of Decision 3/COP.8 also “calls upon each region to develop a proposal, in collaboration with the Executive Secretary and the GM, on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention, taking into account, inter alia, existing regional coordination activities, tools and donor and regional funding arrangements, and providing details of staffing, hosting possibilities and other financial resources required, and to define their functions and output and reporting arrangements in terms of implementing the Convention and delivering the Strategy, and to provide these prior to COP 9 for consideration in the context of the budget and the programme of work.”;
5. Paragraph 31 of the Decision “Requests the Executive Secretary to compile regional proposals and the means for putting them into operation, and to submit these to COP 9 for consideration”; while paragraph 32 “also requests the Executive Secretary, taking into account the views of the GM on its regional arrangements: (a) To review the current regional coordination arrangements within the Secretariat and within the GM with a view to improving them; (b) To develop evidence-based

⁴ Decision 6/COP.5 (Consideration of the regional coordination units initiative), which “decides to include on the agenda of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties an item on the need for, modalities for, costs involved, and feasibility and possible terms of reference of the regional coordination units”; and “decides also that until this item is considered by the Conference of the Parties, funding for this initiative shall continue to be drawn from the Supplementary Fund”; and “Invites developed countries and multilateral agencies to contribute on a voluntary basis to the Supplementary Fund for the regional coordination units initiative”.

⁵ Decision 11/COP.6 on the “Need for, modalities for, costs involved in, and feasibility and possible terms of reference of the Regional Coordination Units, “Invites the Parties, the existing regional coordination units, the Global Mechanism and any other relevant regional and subregional entities to submit their views in writing, no later than 1 January 2004, on the best arrangements for strengthening regional coordination. In particular, the submissions should include views on the rationale for, modalities for, costs involved in, feasibility of, possible terms of reference of, and institutional and collaborative arrangements for the regional coordination units”; and “Requests the secretariat to facilitate a costed feasibility study on the possible functions, institutional arrangements, modalities and collaborative arrangements of options for cost-effective and efficient regional coordination, and in particular on how to make the best use of the existing regional coordination units and other relevant regional and subregional entities. The study should take into consideration the submissions...” and “should be implemented in close consultation with other relevant regional coordination mechanisms.” The secretariat was requested to circulate the study to the Parties by 1 August 2004.

options for improving regional coordination arrangements based on the above-mentioned review and the proposals received from regions...”; (c) To submit these to COP 9 for considerations”; and paragraph 33 “Decides, while the review process in paragraphs 30, 31 and 32 is taking place and without pre-judging its outcome, to continue through the Supplementary Fund to support, and where possible strengthen, the existing Regional Coordination Units, and encourages donors and, in accordance with national capacities and where appropriate, the Parties in the regions concerned to provide funds to this end.”

6. Based on the mandate as provided by Decision 3/COP.8, an Asian Task Force was established and entrusted to prepare this proposal on behalf of the affected Parties under the *Regional Implementation Annex for Asia*. The proposal is linked to *The Strategy* as contained in the Annex to Decision 3/COP.8.

B. Mission Statement

7. The overall objective of this proposal is to strengthen the existing Regional Coordination Mechanism for Asia and the Pacific (RCM-AP), with a view to more efficiently facilitating the effective implementation of the Convention in the region, based on *The Strategy* as contained in the Annex to Decision 3/COP.8.
8. The added value of this strengthened RCM-AP and its elements will be further elaborated below.

II. METHODOLOGY

9. This proposal is prepared according to the *Guidelines to assist Parties in the development of regional proposals on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention*⁶ as provided by the UNCCD Secretariat. It began with a review of the relevant literature, including: (i) a review of all relevant background documentation, with particular reference to the relevant provisions of the Convention and *The Strategy* on regional coordination mechanisms⁷; (ii) the submissions by Parties concerning the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) and related COP decisions; (iii) past reports on Asian Regional Meetings of Focal Points and on Asian-Africa Forums; (iv) Regional Action Plans (RAPs) for the periods 1998-2002 and

⁶ *The Guidelines to assist Parties in the development of regional proposals on mechanisms to facilitate regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention* (as contained in Annex I of ICCD/CRIC(7)/INF.6), 2008.

⁷ These include: (i) *Review of reports on implementation of affected country Parties of regions other than Africa, including on the participatory process, and on experiences gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of national action programmes. Part One: Synthesis of information contained in national reports from affected Asian country Parties; (Part Two: Progress made in the formulation and implementation of the subregional and regional action programmes in Asia; ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add.1 (D); 11 October 2000;* (ii) *Review of the implementation of the convention, pursuant to article 22, paragraph 2(a) and (b), and article 26 of the convention review of reports on implementation by affected Asian country Parties, including on the participatory process, and on experience gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of action programmes; synthesis and preliminary analysis of information contained in reports submitted by affected Asian country Parties, and progress made in the formulation and implementation of subregional and regional action programmes in Asia; Note by the secretariat; ICCD/CRIC(1)/3/Add.1, 10 June 2002; (<http://www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cric1/pdf/3add1eng.pdf>); (iii) *Comprehensive review of activities of the secretariat. Note by the secretariat; ICCD/CRIC(6)/2, 18 July 2007;* (iv) *Mechanism to facilitate the regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention. Note by the Secretariat; ICCD/CRIC(7)/INF.6, 1 November 2008;* (v) *Minutes of the Meeting of the Chairs of Regional Implementation Annexes on Mechanisms to facilitate Regional Coordination of the Implementation of the Convention;* (vi) *Report of the seventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, held in Istanbul from 3 to 14 November 2008; ICCD/CRIC(7)/5; 15 January 2009. (<http://www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cric7/pdf/cric5-eng.pdf>).**

2003-2008; (v) Subregional Action Plans (SRAPs) for West Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia; and (vi) available reports of all workshops held in the Asia-Pacific region.

10. Based on the literature review and the past consultations with the affected country Parties in the Asia-Pacific region at various conferences, meetings, workshops and forums, this proposal presents the major elements for strengthening the existing RCM-AP. The first draft of the proposal was thoroughly discussed during the Asian Task Force Consultation Meeting held on 16-17 March 2009 in Bonn. Delegates from Myanmar (Chair), China, Republic of Korea, Syrian Arab Republic and Thailand, representing Regional Implementation Annex for Asia, participated in the meeting.
11. Extensive consultations with the National Focal Points (NFPs) of the affected country Parties in the Asia-Pacific region have been undertaken as this final proposal incorporates all comments and input received from the NFPs, with a view to assessing their specific needs for coordination of action at the subregional and regional levels.

III. REVIEW OF REGIONAL ACTIVITIES IN ASIA

A. Regional Implementation Annex for Asia

12. The *Regional Implementation Annex for Asia* of the UNCCD highlights the particular conditions which apply in varying degrees to the countries in the region, such as “(a) *the high proportion of areas in their territories affected by, or vulnerable to, desertification and drought and the broad diversity of these areas with regard to climate, topography, land use and socio-economic systems; (b) the heavy pressure on natural resources for livelihoods; (c) the existence of production systems, directly related to widespread poverty, leading to land degradation and to pressure on scarce water resources; (d) the significant impact of conditions in the world economy and social problems such as poverty, poor health and nutrition, lack of food security, migration, displaced persons and demographic dynamics; (e) their expanding, but still insufficient, capacity and institutional frameworks to deal with national desertification and drought problems; and (f) their need for international cooperation to pursue sustainable development objectives relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought* (Article 2). Thus, it provides the modality, guidance and basis for regional cooperation, including the development of *subregional and joint action programmes* (Article 5), *regional activities* (Article 6), *financial resources and mechanisms* (Article 7), and *cooperation and coordination mechanisms* (Article 8). These programmes and activities support the implementation of the *National Action Programmes (NAPs)*, and hence are essential elements for the effective implementation of the Convention.
13. Asia-Pacific region is very rich in biological resources and its diversity, with many biodiversity hot spots that are vulnerable to deforestation, land degradation and desertification. It is also a region that is most vulnerable to climate change, which exacerbates land degradation and desertification, and vice versa.

B. Regional Action Programme (RAP) and Thematic Programme Networks (TPNs)

14. The country Parties in Asia and the Pacific have been active in promoting regional and subregional programmes and activities. So far two Regional Conferences have been held back-to-back with the

Ministerial Conferences⁸. The first Regional Conference initiated the process for the development of the *Regional Action Programme (RAP)(1998-2002)*⁹, while the second Regional Conference had discussed the *Regional Action Programme (RAP) (2003-2008)*, which was adopted at the Second Ministerial Conference.

15. The *RAP (1998-2002)* basically comprises a number of thematic programme areas, each of which is implemented through a network that links the relevant national institutes of the participating countries, as well as subregional, regional and international organizations that are interested in participating and contributing to the thematic area.
16. The *RAP (2003-2008)* has called for accelerated implementation of the national, subregional and regional action programmes, resulting in the declaration of the *Abu Dhabi Initiative*, which has provided a number of priority projects. The First Regional Consultation Meeting on the *Abu Dhabi Initiative for the Implementation of Priority Activities for the RAP (2003-2008)* was held on 21-23 March 2005 in Abu Dhabi. This meeting reviewed 11 national, four subregional and one regional project concepts.
17. Since 1999, a total of six TPNs have been established, as follows:

TPN 1 on *Desertification Monitoring and Assessment* (hosted by China and launched on 26-27 July 1999 in Beijing)
(<http://www.unccd.int/actionprogrammes/asia/regional/tpn1/menu.php>).

TPN 2 on *Agroforestry and Soil Conservation in Arid, Semi-Arid and Dry Sub-humid Areas* (hosted by India and launched on 14-18 March 2000 in New Delhi)
(<http://www.unccd.int/actionprogrammes/asia/regional/tpn2/menu.php>);

TPN 3 on *Rangeland Management in Arid Areas including the Fixation of Sand Dunes* (hosted by Iran and launched on 7-9 May 2001 in Yazd)
(<http://www.unccd.int/actionprogrammes/asia/regional/tpn3/menu.php>);

TPN 4 on *Water Resources Management for Agriculture in Arid, Semi-Arid and Sub-Humid Lands* (hosted by Syria and launched on 4-7 July 2002 in Damascus)
(<http://www.unccd.int/actionprogrammes/asia/regional/tpn4/menu.php>);

TPN 5 on *Strengthening Capacities for Drought Impact Management and Desertification Control* (hosted by Mongolia and launched on 14 - 16 July 2003 in Ulaanbaatar)
(<http://www.unccd.int/actionprogrammes/asia/regional/tpn5/menu.php>);

⁸ The *First Ministerial Conference on Regional Cooperation to Implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Asia* was held on 13-15 May 1997 in Beijing, China; and the *Second Asian Ministerial Conference* was held on 7-11 June 2003 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

⁹ The International Expert Group Meeting on the Preparation of the Regional Action Programme (RAP) for Combating Desertification and Drought in Asia held on 10-13 November 1998 in Bangkok proposed the formation of a Regional Support Group (RSG) to strengthen and support the implementation of the RAP. Experienced persons from countries or representatives of international agencies would be invited to serve on this board. The RSG in cooperation with the Interagency Subcommittee on Environment and Sustainable Development of ESCAP and in liaison with IFAD and the Global Mechanism, would provide evaluations and advice to the RAP and assist in the mobilization of financial resources. They could serve as an independent body to evaluate progress of the RAPs and make recommendations for consideration (see *Conclusions of the International Experts Group Meeting on the Preparation of the Regional Action Program (RAP) for Combating Desertification and Drought in Asia*, Bangkok, November 1998 (<http://www.unccd.int/regional/asia/meetings/regional/RAPBangkok98/conclusions.pdf>))

TPN 6 on *Assistance for the Implementation of Integrated Local Area Development Programmes Initiatives* (hosted by Pakistan and launched on 7-9 June 2004 in Islamabad) (<http://www.unccd.int/actionprogrammes/asia/regional/tpn6/menu.php>).

18. The overall and specific objectives of the six TPNs and their activities have been provided in their respective websites (<http://www.unccd.int/actionprogrammes/asia/asia.php>). These TPNs provide both the platforms and opportunities for the affected Parties in the Asia-Pacific region to share information and lessons learned, as well as joint field studies, training programmes and the transfer of appropriate technology.
19. However, not all TPNs have been active and effective due to the lack of funding support and the need to have the broad based participation of centres of excellence from the region and elsewhere. Thus, there is a need to re-vitalize the role and functions of the TPNs under a strengthened Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) so that the TPNs will become more active and interactive in the future.

C. Subregional Action Programmes (SRAPs)

20. Based on Article 11 of the Convention¹⁰, five subregional action programmes, namely: West Asia SRAP (2000), Central Asia SRAP (2003), South Asia SRAP (2004), Southeast Asia SRAP (2005) and Northeast Asia SRAP (2008) have been initiated and developed. These SRAPs aim to provide further support for the implementation of the NAPs of the country Parties in the respective subregions. However, due to funding constraints, these SRAPs have not been as active as they would like to be.

D. Regional Meetings of Asian Focal Points

21. Regional meetings of Asian Focal Points provide useful forums for sharing information and lessons learned on the implementation of the Convention. So far 11 such meetings have been held, as follows: (i) 26-28 May 1998, Ohtsu, Shiga, Japan; (ii) 24-25 July 1999, Beijing, China; (iii) 7-8 November 2000, Bangkok, Thailand; (iv) 26-27 June 2001, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; (v) 8-11 July 2002, Damascus, Syria; (vi) 7-9 June 2003, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE); (vii) 21-23 March, Abu Dhabi, UAE; (viii) 17-19 October 2005, Nairobi, Kenya; (ix) 7-11 August 2006, Bangkok, Thailand; (x) 31 August-1 September 2007, Madrid, Spain; (xi) 1-3 November 2008, Istanbul, Turkey. Some of these meetings were held back-to-back with the Asian Ministerial Conferences (1999, Beijing; 2003, Abu Dhabi), COP 7 (Nairobi, 2005); and CRIC 7 (Istanbul, 2008). (<http://www.unccd.int/regional/asia/meetings/meetings.php#regional>)

E. Asia-Africa Forums

22. In addition, five Asia-Africa Forums have been held: (i) 21-23 August 1996, Beijing, China; (ii) 2-5 September 1997, Niamey, Niger; (iii) 22-23 July, 1999, Beijing, China¹¹; (iv) 21-25 June 2001, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; and (v) 24-27 June 2003, Coconou, Benin. These meetings have been very

¹⁰ Article 11 of the UNCCD provides that “*Affected country Parties shall consult and cooperate to prepare, as appropriate, in accordance with relevant regional implementation annexes, subregional and/or regional action programmes to harmonize, complement and increase the efficiency of national programmes. The provisions of article 10 shall apply mutatis mutandis to subregional and regional programmes. Such cooperation may include agreed joint programmes for the sustainable management of transboundary natural resources, scientific and technical cooperation, and strengthening of relevant institutions.*”

¹¹ This was a Technical Workshop on Early Warning Systems.

useful in terms of sharing experiences and lessons learned between the Asian and African affected countries, which have different regional features but common problems related to desertification, land degradation and drought. Further collaboration may be extended to the field levels in the future.

IV. REVIEW OF THE ROLE, FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF ASIA-RCU

A. Mandate of Regional Coordination Unit for Asia (Asia-RCU)

23. Many UN agencies, such as UNDP, UNEP, UN/ISDR, and FAO have seen the great need for decentralization, and hence they have strong regional representation, including the establishment of their respective substantive offices in Bangkok, an important strategic location in Asia and the Pacific.
24. The need for the Regional Coordination Unit for Asia (Asia-RCU) has been highlighted and justified in various UNCCD meetings¹² and documents¹³. The mandates may be summarized as follows:
- (a) To represent the UNCCD Secretariat in the region, and assist in following up the COP and subsidiary bodies decisions, including reporting obligations of the country Parties in the region;
 - (b) To provide consistent and cost-effective technical, legal, and policy support and advocacy for innovative measures in the affected country Parties in the region for the effective implementation of the Convention;
 - (c) To assist in the process for the *Regional Implementation Annex for Asia* and to facilitate the development or updating and implementation of NAPS, SRAPs, RAPs and TPNs;
 - (d) To facilitate consultation, cooperation, coordination and communication at national, subregional and regional levels, including development of partnerships with various UN and relevant international, regional and national agencies, financial institutions, private sector, NGOs and civil societies;
 - (e) To facilitate, organize and participate in various relevant workshops and forums; including sharing and dissemination of information and good practices; promotion of science, appropriate technologies and traditional knowledge for combating desertification and land degradation;

¹² For example, CRIC 1 recommended several steps to further strengthen the implementation of the UNCCD, including the role of the RCUs, which include: (i) Assistance to the country Parties in updating the information provided to the CRIC through the preparation of country profiles within the national reports; (ii) Support to disseminating at the grass-roots level appropriate technologies for soil and water resource management; (iii) Support to a comprehensive work programme on best practices and to compilation of an inventory of traditional knowledge under the regional implementation annexes; and (iv) Linking of regional and subregional centres of excellence more closely with the UNCCD process (subregional action programmes (SRAPs) and RAPs) in the promotion of synergies between MEAs.

¹³ See *Mechanism to facilitate the regional coordination of the implementation of the Convention. Note by the Secretariat. Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, Seven Session, Istanbul, 3-14 November 2008. Document ICCD/CRIC(7)/INF.6, 1 November 2008.*

(f) To promote, facilitate and strengthen regional coordination and synergies between UNCCD and other relevant conventions, frameworks and international organizations, institutions and agencies in the region.

25. The above mandates are consistent with the recommendations of the first meeting of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 1) regarding the role of the RCUs¹⁴.

B. Establishment of Asia-RCU

26. The need for a Regional Backup Facility (RBF)¹⁵ in the Asian region was first recognized in the Beijing Ministerial Conference on Regional Cooperation to implement the Convention in Asia held in May 1997. The International Expert Group Meeting on the Preparation of the Regional Action Programme (RAP) for Combating Desertification and Drought in Asia held on 10-13 November 1998 in Bangkok welcomed the offer of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), based in Bangkok, to host the RBF¹⁶. However, the Regional Coordination Unit for Asia (Asia-RCU) was established instead of a RBF and became operational in January 2001 following the signing of a MOU between UNCCD Secretariat and ESCAP in September 2000. It has been hosted by ESCAP, which has been referred as UNESCAP later, since then.

27. The Asia-RCU and its operation have been supported by supplementary funds contributed by the Governments of People's Republic of China (from 2001 to 2006), Republic of Korea and Italy (from 2006). It has been headed by a Regional Coordinator (until April 2005) and an Acting Coordinator (since May 2005) and supported by a Programme Officer. Interns also visited the Asia-RCU from time to time.

28. Until the new organization structure instituted by the new Executive Secretary in 2008, the Asia-RCU was under the supervision of the Coordinator of the Asia Facilitation Unit based at the UNCCD Headquarters. All past activities of the Asia-RCU were coordinated and approved by the Coordinator of the Asia Facilitation Unit under the leadership of the Executive Secretary. The new organization structure has placed Regional Annexes under the coordination of Facilitation, Coordination, Monitoring of Implementation (FCMI)¹⁷.

29. Given its very limited human and financial resources, the achievements of the Asia-RCU in the past eight years have been most remarkable. The major activities of the Asia-RCU have been described in a report by Asia-RCU (2008)¹⁸, and they are briefly summarized below.

¹⁴ See Footnote 12.

¹⁵ A Regional Backup Facility (RBF), which could be composed of a Project Preparation Unit, Capacity Building Unit and Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, was originally proposed in the first RAP to provide the operational support for the various TPNs in enhancing the linkage mechanism and other perceived needs among the participating countries, as well as to service the regional institutional mechanism. In addition, a Steering Committee was to be established to oversee the overall implementation of the programme and to be responsible for providing general guidance on technical matters for addressing the desertification issue in the region in consonance with the provision of the Convention and the Asian Annex (see *Final Report of the Beijing Ministerial Conference on Regional Cooperation to Implement the CCD in Asia, 13-15 May 1997*). (http://www.unccd.int/regional/asia/meetings/regional/2ndregionalconf/final_report.pdf)

¹⁶ See Footnote 9.

¹⁷ See <http://www.unccd.int/secretariat/sns/docs/orgchart.pdf>

¹⁸ See *Activities of Regional Coordination Unit for Asia (Asia-RCU)* prepared by Asia-RCU, Bangkok, Thailand, 2008.

C. Past and Current Activities of Asia-RCU

C.1 National Level

30. **At the national level**, the Asia-RCU has facilitated the development of NAPs and provided support for the organization of awareness-raising workshops on the Convention and technical assistance for the development and implementation of NAPs in many countries (e.g., Bangladesh, Cambodia, DPRK, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Thailand and Vietnam). It has also facilitated (i) the preparation of National Reports for CRICs in the region (e.g., the Third National Reports for CRIC 5); and (ii) the participation of country Parties in the region in CRICs and COPs;
31. The Asia-RCU has participated in national activities, especially those in Thailand with no cost implications, such as (i) the Thai National Campaign on Rehabilitation of Land Degradation in Arid Areas held on 27-28 February, 2005 in Kanchanaburi Province; (ii) the preparation of Thai International Year of Desert and Desertification (IYDD) Campaign in Korat Province held on 15-16 May 2006; and (iii) the launching of IYDD Campaign held on 16-17 June 2006.

C.2 Subregional Level

32. **At the subregional level**, the Asia-RCU has facilitated and participated in workshops in the Pacific countries¹⁹. It has also facilitated the preparation of project proposals by 15 Pacific country Parties (including Timor-Leste) on community-based UNCCD-related activities funded by the donation from the Government of Venezuela²⁰.
33. In addition, the Asia-RCU has also facilitated and supported the development of Southeast Asia SRAP (2005), and Northeast Asia SRAP (2006-2008), and it is facilitating the initiative to develop the Pacific SRAP²¹. However, due to the division of responsibility, the UNCCD Secretariat Headquarters was responsible for assisting the country Parties in West Asia and South Asia in the development of West Asia SRAP (2000)²² and South Asia SRAP (2004), respectively.

C.3 Regional Level

34. **At the regional level**, the Asia-RCU represented the UNCCD Secretariat in all UN-related meetings in the region whenever invited, such as the Heads of Agencies meetings chaired by UNESCAP, the Regional Coordination Mechanism meetings co-chaired by UNESCAP and the

¹⁹ These include: (i) South Pacific Sub-regional Workshop on *Mitigating Drought and Combating Land Degradation* (21-23 May 2001, Apia, Samoa); (ii) South Pacific Sub-regional Workshop on *Integration of Priority Activities related to Mitigating Drought and Combating Land Degradation in the context of the Implementation of the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement* (24-25 May 2001, Apia, Samoa); and (iii) *Pacific Regional Workshop on Sustainable Land Management and Preparation of Third National Report* (26-29 June 2006, Apia, Samoa); (iv) Pacific Regional Consultation Meeting on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention To Combat Desertification (UNCCD) held on 16 – 17 April 2007, SPREP Headquarters, Vailima.

²⁰ So far seven countries have signed the MOU with the UNCCD Secretariat, and funds are being transferred to these countries.

²¹ The island countries are supported by UNDP/GEF LDC/SIDS Portfolio Project, under which national reporting, the preparation of NAPs and SRAP are financed.

²² *Sub-Regional Action Programme (SRAP) to Combat Desertification and Drought in West Asia* (see <http://www.unccd.int/actionprogrammes/asia/subregional/2000/westernasia-eng.pdf>)

regional office of other UN Agencies based on the issues discussed, and the Resident Coordinator meetings chaired by UNDP-Thailand; annual UN Day Observation; relevant regional meetings, conferences and workshops²³, including UNESCAP's annual Committee on Managing Globalization and the Commission Session held in Bangkok and elsewhere²⁴; It has frequently received visiting delegations and technical teams from various countries, and international and regional agencies for consultations.

35. The Asia-RCU provided support for the Second Asian Ministerial Conference²⁵, including the preparation of the RAP (2003-2008) that was adopted by the Ministerial Conference. It has also provided support to the TPNs' activities. For example, it facilitated the contribution of mulching materials by Chinese private sector for controlling moving sands for TPN3 project in Iran in 2003.
36. The Asia-RCU has also reviewed and contributed to the activities of other UN agencies based in Bangkok on issues relating to land degradation and desertification, such as UNESCAP's North-East Asian Subregional Programme on Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC)²⁶ (<http://www.neaspec.org/index.asp>). Indeed, it has actively developed partnerships with other international and regional agencies, and collaborated with their regional activities. For example, it served as the Project Secretariat for the ADB-GEF funded project (GEF grant: US\$0.5 million; co-financing: US\$0.715 million) on the "Prevention and Control of Dust and Sandstorms in North-East Asia" (the RETA 6068 project) in 2002-2005²⁷. The project produced a *Regional Master Plan*²⁸ that maps out strategies, including an investment strategy through demonstration projects in

²³ For example, (i) the *Regional Review of Poverty Reduction Strategy* held on 14 March, 2006 at UNESCAP, Bangkok; (ii) *Regional Coordination Mechanism to meet member of UNSG's High-level panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development of Human Assessment and the Environment* held on 7 May 2006, Bangkok; (iii) *Regional Workshop on Rehabilitation of Agriculture in Tsunami Affected Areas: One and Half Year Later* held on 29-30 June 2006 at FAO ROAP; (iv) *Regional workshop on Information and Communication Technology, UNESCAP-ITU* held on 26-28 June 2006, Bangkok; (v) *Expert Group Meeting on Regional Cooperation on Follow-up to WSIS and ICT4D, and Tenth Meeting of Regional Interagency Working Group on Information and Communication Technologies* held on 30 November-1 December 2006, UNESCAP, Bangkok; (vi) *Asia Regional Workshop on Sustainable Land Management and National Capacity Self-Assessment* jointly organized by UNDP/GEF, UNEP/GEF and Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and held on 20-23 November 2006 AIT, Bangkok.

²⁴ For example, UNESCAP's 62nd Commission Session held on 6-12 April 2006 in Jakarta, Indonesia; and 63rd Commission Session held on 17-23 May 2007 in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

²⁵ Second Asian Ministerial Conference on UNCCD Implementation in Preparation for the Sixth Session of the Conference of the Parties; 7-11 June 2003; Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

²⁶ NEASPEC, participated by six North-East Asian countries, was launched in 1993 as a comprehensive intergovernmental cooperation mechanism for environmental cooperation. It serves as a forum for sharing experience on policy matters, information exchange, consultation and stocktaking on environmental activities in the subregion.

²⁷ The project had established an initial cooperation mechanism that includes a Steering Committee of four countries (China, Mongolia, Japan and Republic of Korea) and four international institutions (the ADB, UNEP, UNESCAP, and the UNCCD Secretariat) to facilitate the cooperation and coordination of the interventions by the major stakeholders in the subregion to address the environmental and socio-economic issues related to the transboundary DSS, thus complementing and maximizing the efforts undertaken by the governments of China and Mongolia under their respective national action programmes to combat desertification under the Convention. The *Regional Master Plan* has been endorsed by the Steering Committee. The "four + four" (i.e., "four countries + 4 international institutions") subregional cooperative mechanism proved to be very effective in ensuring the successful implementation of the project.

²⁸ See *Regional Master Plan for the Prevention and Control of Dust and Sandstorms in Northeast Asia; Volume 1*; Asian Development Bank, Manila, the Philippines, 2005.

various affected areas in China and Mongolia, to address the DSS issues in Northeast Asia (ADB, 2005). As part of the Project Secretariat activities, Asia-RCU has established a website and published Newsletters on issues related to *dust and sandstorms in Northeast Asia*.

C.4 International Level

37. **At the international level**, the Asia-RCU was invited to participate in international workshops or forums on issues relating to land degradation, desertification and the effects of drought, as well as synergies between UNCCD and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), such as Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These included: (i) *International Symposium on Desertification Combating and Land Degradation Rehabilitation in Northeast Asia* (13-15 June 2006, Seoul, Republic of Korea); (ii) *AIDCCD Seminar on the Role of Information Circulation Systems in the Scientific and Practical Approach to Combat Desertification* (2-7 April 2006, Namibia); (iii) *International Extension Course on Technology and Sciences in Combating Desertification and Land Degradation* (20-24 August 2006, Wuwei, China).

D. Resources Mobilization

38. The Asia-RCU was able to mobilize contributions from the private sector towards UNCCD activities. For example, it facilitated the donation of 20 computers from the Chinese private sector to the COP 6 held on 25 August-5 September 2003 in Havana, Cuba. It also mobilized the Korean private sector and NGO to finance the participation of some Asian and African countries in COP 7 held on 17-28 October 2005 in Nairobi, Kenya.

E. Publications

39. The list of publications initiated, facilitated, contributed towards or co-edited by the Asia-RCU since 2002 has been very impressive. It includes the following: (a) *Global Alarm-Dust and Sand Storms in World's Drylands* edited by Yang *et al*²⁹ published in 2002 with funding from the Netherlands; (b) *China's Initiatives for combating desertification and rehabilitating land degradation in past five decades* published in 2004; (c) *Regional Review of CCD implementation and Best Practice in Asia and the Pacific* published in October 2005 with funding from Chinese partners, and disseminated to participants at COP 7; (d) *Degradation and Recovery in China's Arid Rangelands: Lessons from History*, Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI) publisher, UK (in press); and (e) *Priority Issues and Challenges in the Implementation of UNCCD in Asia and the Pacific* (in press).

F. Information Outreach

40. The Asia-RCU has disseminated a large volume of UNCCD literature to various countries in the region, as well as at various meetings that the UNCCD Secretariat organised or participated in.

²⁹ See Yang Youlin, Squires, V.R. and Lu Qi (2002) (Ed.) *Global Alarm: Dust and Sandstorms from the World's Drylands*, United Nations; Printed in Beijing, February 2002.

V. STRENGTHENING THE REGIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISM FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

41. A strengthened Regional Coordination Mechanism for Asia and the Pacific (RCM-AP) is proposed within the context of *The Strategy*, so as to better respond to the needs of affected developing country Parties in the region, and to better assist these Parties in their implementation of the Convention.

42. This strengthened RCM-AP would consist of the following key elements and functions:

A. Regional Office of the Convention for Asia and the Pacific (ROC-AP)

43. At the core of this strengthened RCM-AP, the existing Asia-RCU will be expanded, strengthened and transformed into a new Regional Office of the Convention for Asia and the Pacific (ROC-AP). This name, which is consistent with the practice of other UN agencies, such as UNEP-ROAP, FAO-ROAP, and UN/ISDR-Asia & Pacific, should be conveyed to COP 9.

44. The proposed mandates, functions and the activities of the ROC-AP are further elaborated in Section VII.

B. Hosting Arrangement

45. The UNCCD Secretariat and UNESCAP based in Bangkok have signed a MOU regarding the hosting arrangement for the current Asia-RCU, and this hosting arrangement should continue. As Bangkok hosts a total of 27 UN agencies, it is the best strategic location in the region for the ROC-AP. Collaboration with other relevant partner agencies, especially UNESCAP, UNEP-ROAP, UNDP-Regional Centre Bangkok (UNDP-RCB), FAO-ROAP, can be facilitated efficiently and cost-effectively from this location. In addition to this, past relations between UNESCAP and the UNCCD Secretariat/Asia-RCU has been excellent. With the new ROC-AP, it would be possible for more interactions and collaborations with UNESCAP on issues of common interest.

C. Staffing Requirements

46. In order to more efficiently and effectively serve the country Parties in the region, the new ROC-AP will aim to have at least the following professional staff:

- (i) A Regional Coordinator (P5), who will be coordinating all the ROC-AP activities and also responsible for activities in Northeast Asia (NEA);
- (ii) A Deputy Coordinator (P4), who will be responsible for activities in Southeast Asia (SEA) and South Asia (SA);
- (iii) One Programme Officer (P3), who will be responsible for activities in Central Asia (CA) and West Asia (WA);
- (iv) One Programme Officer (P3), who will be responsible for the activities in the Pacific and also those related to the TPNs;
- (v) Two Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) (P2), one from developed country and one from developing country (both funded by donor countries), who will be providing support to the Programme Officers as appropriate;
- (vi) A Team Assistant (P1), who will be providing operational support in the office;
- (vii) Interns (as appropriate).

47. Apart from the two JPOs who will be funded by donor countries, the other **five** professional staff should be funded from core budget.
48. If it is not possible to have all five professional staff funded by the core budget at the beginning, then supplementary funds may be solicited so that all five professional positions can be filled at the same time.
49. Secondment of NFPs by country Parties to fill the professional positions on a two-year rotational basis may be an option that should be explored to meet the minimum requirement of professional staff in the ROC-AP.
50. Another possible option is for one or two professional staff from the UNCCD Secretariat Headquarters in Bonn to be transferred to the ROC-AP either on a permanent or two-year rotational basis.
51. The Regional Coordinator should be at least at P5 level, which is fully justified in view of the fact that the regional coordinators or directors of other UN agencies are at P5 or above levels. As the ROC-AP will be the regional presence of the UNCCD Secretariat, and the Regional Coordinator will represent the Executive Secretary, his/her professional level must be comparable to those of regional coordinators and directors of other UN agencies.

D. Reporting Arrangements

52. The ROC-AP may be under the coordination and the supervision of a Regional Implementation Annexes (RIAs) Coordinator based in the UNCCD Secretariat Headquarters³⁰, who may report to the Deputy Executive Secretary, who, in turn, will report to the Executive Secretary.
53. The Coordinator of the ROC-AP will report directly to the RIAs Coordinator, while the Programme Officers of the ROC-AP will directly report to the Coordinator.
54. Standard annual UN electronic Performance Assessment System (e-PAS) will be used to evaluate the performance of all staff members at the ROC-AP.

E. Advisory Committee

55. An Advisory Committee will be established to provide guidance on the implementation of the RCM-AP and the operation of the ROC-AP. This Committee will be composed of one representative from each subregion (i.e., Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia and the Pacific) to ensure equal representation in the decision-making process. The UNCCD Secretariat, GM, CST, and CRIC will also be represented. The Chair and Vice Chair will be nominated by the representatives of the subregions, and all representatives of the subregions may serve for a maximum term of three years in rotation. The Regional Coordinator of the ROC-AP may serve as the Secretary of the Committee.
56. The Advisory Committee, through its respective representative from various partner agencies, will be the conduit between the ROC-AP and the various partner agencies participating in the Committee, so as to facilitate communications and dialogues between the ROC-AP and its partner agencies. This Committee would also ensure the effective participation of GM, CST and CRIC in the activities in the region.

³⁰ In UNEP Headquarters based in Nairobi, a Division of Regional Cooperation Coordination oversees all six Regional Offices, including the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP).

57. The Advisory Committee may meet whenever opportunity arises, but at least once every six months, preferably back-to-back with COP or CRIC or the Regional Consultation Meetings of the NFPs or any other relevant meetings as appropriate, and via video, telephone or e-conference if necessary and where possible, or so as to reduce travel cost and other expenses.

F. Cooperation with the Global Mechanism (GM)

58. Paragraph 4 of Article 21 (*Financial Mechanisms*) of the Convention provides that “*In order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of existing financial mechanisms, a Global Mechanism to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources, including for the transfer of technology, on a grant basis, and/or on concessional or other terms, to affected developing country Parties, is hereby established. This Global Mechanism shall function under the authority and guidance of the Conference of the Parties and be accountable to it.*”

59. The GM is housed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which is also an Executing Agency of the GEF.

60. Although the GM does not have any regional coordination arrangements except a number of specific projects in the region, the ROC-AP will proactively liaise and coordinate with the GM in terms of resources mobilization in the region through its representative in the Advisory Committee.

G. Cooperation with the Global Environment Facility (GEF)³¹ Implementing and Executing Agencies in the Region

61. The GEF is an important financial resource for eligible country Parties as it provides funding on projects that are eligible under *Operational Programme (OP) 15: Sustainable Land Management*. While the UNCCD Secretariat Headquarters has assumed the responsibility of participating in the GEF Council meetings, the ROC-AP could liaise with the regional offices of the GEF Implementing Agencies (UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank) and the Executing Agencies (ADB, FAO) in Bangkok, with a view to facilitating the development of projects related to OP 15 and other relevant GEF focal areas (e.g., OP 12 on *Integrated Ecosystem Management*³² and other Operational Programmes relating to climate change and biodiversity) that have implications for land degradation and desertification, for eligible member countries in the region.

62. The ROC-AP will work closely with the representatives of the GEF Implementing and Executing Agencies in the region to assist eligible country Parties in accessing the GEF funds for projects relating to sustainable land management, integrated ecosystem management, afforestation and reforestation, as well as adaptation to drought induced by climate change, among others (see paragraphs 73 and 92).

H. Cooperation with the UN, International and Regional Agencies in the Region

63. The ROC-AP will liaise and interact with relevant UN, international and regional agencies in the region for possible joint activities, as appropriate. These include UNESCAP, UNEP-ROAP, UNDP-RCB, FAO-ROAP, UN/ISDR-AP, ADB and the World Bank-AP, among others.

³¹ In 2002, the GEF Assembly expanded the GEF’s mandate by adding Sustainable Land Management to the GEF portfolio. In 2003, the GEF was designated a financial mechanism of the UNCCD (<http://www.thegef.org/interior.aspx?id=240>). These new developments have increased the availability of financial resources for eligible countries to address issues relating to land degradation.

³² OP 12 encompasses cross-sectoral projects that address ecosystem management in a way that optimizes ecosystem goods and services in at least two focal areas within the context of sustainable development.

I. Implementation of the RCM-AP

64. The elements of the RCM-AP and their interactions are shown in Figure 1. These include the institutional arrangement for the ROC-AP and its relation with the UNCCD Secretariat Headquarters, the subsidiary bodies of the Convention (GM, CST and CRIC), the Advisory Committee, the GEF (Secretariat, and Implementing and Executing Agencies) and other financial institutions, relevant UN, international and regional partner agencies, including civil society, NGOs and the private sector, and other stakeholders.
65. This strengthened RCM-AP will only be functioning effectively if it has the full support and cooperation of the UNCCD Secretariat Headquarters and other stakeholders, including the NFPs of the country Parties in the region.
66. An integrated and coordinated strategy within the UNCCD Secretariat is required to implement this strengthened RCM-AP, as well as the RCMs of other regions.

VI. PROPOSED MANDATES, FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE ROC-AP

67. All existing mandates and activities of the Asia-RCU at national, subregional and regional levels as highlighted in Section IV, including technical assistance and capacity-building for the implementation of NAPs, SRAPs and RAP; facilitation of TPNs activities; participation in technical and policy workshops and forums; partnerships with other UN and relevant international and regional agencies; information outreach; will be maintained and strengthened in the new ROC-AP for continuity.
68. However, under the proposed Regional Coordination Mechanism, the ROC-AP that replaces the Asia-RCU will have a much strengthened institutional and human capacity with expanded scope of activities. In particular, a total of 12 proposed activities that meet the mandates of the ROC-AP are highlighted below, and summarized in Table 1.

Proposed Activity 1: Regional Representation of the UNCCD Secretariat

69. The ROC-AP will represent UNCCD Secretariat in Asia and the Pacific and participated in all UNCCD and related activities in the region.

Proposed Activity 2: Follow Up on COP Decisions and Those of Subsidiary Bodies, and Facilitate Country Parties' Reporting Obligations

70. The ROC-AP will follow up relevant decisions adopted by the COPs and its subsidiary bodies, as well as of the outcomes of the regional meetings on the implementation of the Convention, so as to ensure that the adopted decisions are effectively implemented in the region. It will also facilitate the country Parties in the region to meet all reporting obligations as required by the COPs and subsidiary bodies.

Proposed Activity 3: Contribution to the Work Programme of the UNCCD Secretariat and the GM, including their Joint Work Programme

71. The ROC-AP will contribute to the development of the Work Programme of the UNCCD Secretariat and the GM, including their joint work programme with regional input, as well as through the preparation of national, subregional and regional project proposals, dissemination of information, provision of technical backstopping and assistance in the organization of workshops in the region.

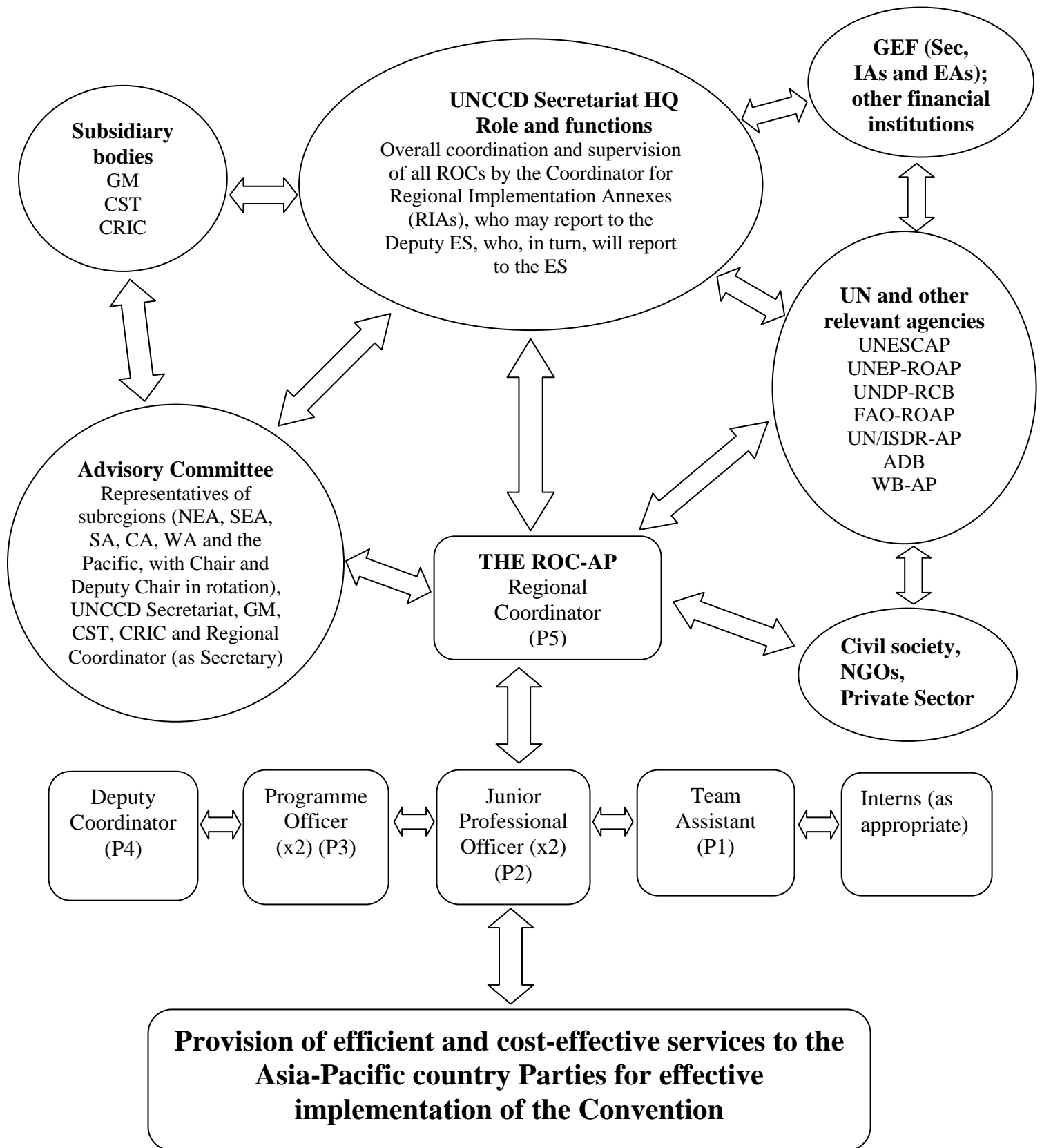


Figure 1. The elements of the RCM-AP and their interactions between each other, which have been described in Section V.

Proposed Activity 4: Technical Assistance and Regional Advisory Service (including Capacity-Building)

72. The ROC-AP will provide technical assistance, including capacity-building activities, to the developing and least-developed country Parties in the region for the further development and/or implementation of the NAPs, SRAPs and RAP. In particular, within the context of NAPs, the ROC-AP will assist country Parties in strengthening national strategies for sustainable development, including strategies for poverty eradication in relation to the implementation of the Convention. A clear and detailed mechanism will be developed to coordinate SRAPs and RAP and support their activities.
73. One of the new initiatives of the ROC-AP will be the provision of **Regional Advisory Service** based on the request of the country Parties. These may include country missions to provide hands-on technical assistance and capacity-building on issues relating to the effective implementation of the Convention, including in-country training for the development of project proposals for bilateral and multilateral funding (e.g., GEF project proposals based on *OP 15: Sustainable Land Management*, *OP 12: Integrated Ecosystem Management*, and other Operational Programmes relating to biodiversity and climate change that are linked to, or have synergies with, land degradation, desertification and mitigating the effects of drought (see also paragraphs 61 and 62).
74. The Regional Advisory Service may also include in-country training on how to access the Adaptation Fund³³ under the Kyoto Protocol, especially on adaptation to mitigate the effects of drought, which is an important element for the implementation of the UNCCD. In-country training on the development of Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects on afforestation and reforestation may also be provided for eligible country Parties upon request.
75. In the past, the Regional Adviser on Environment and Sustainable Development of UNESCAP³⁴ had been used by the Asia-RCU as a resource person for a number of public awareness and technical workshops, as part of the free advisory service provided by UNESCAP. This is an innovative way of tapping the technical resource of partner agencies for the UNCCD activities. Similar partnership activities should be explored with other relevant UN, international and regional agencies in the future.

Proposed Activity 5: Coordination of TPNs

76. Due to lack of resources, the activities of TPNs have been limited in the past few years. The ROC-AP will coordinate the activities of TPNs and their contribution to interregional cooperation in order to enhance the coherence of the policy framework relating to the sustainable management of natural resources.
77. It is proposed that under TPN3, the ROC-AP will take immediate action in 2010 to facilitate and assist West Asia in developing a subregional action programme on the prevention and control of dust storms that are affecting Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq.

³³ The Adaptation Fund, established by the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol of the UNFCCC to finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes in developing country Parties, is financed with 2% of the Certified Emission Reduction (CERs) issued for CDM projects and with funds from other sources. Decision 1/CMP.3 has established the Adaptation Fund Board as the operating entity of the Adaptation Fund and invited the GEF to provide secretariat services and the World Bank to serve as the trustee of the Adaptation Fund on an interim basis. These interim institutional arrangements will be reviewed after 3 years. The Adaptation Fund Board is composed of 16 members and 16 alternates and its meeting will take place at least twice a year in Bonn, Germany, which hosts the UNFCCC secretariat.

³⁴ Unfortunately, this Regional Adviser post has been abolished by UNESCAP after December 2007.

Proposed Activity 6: Preparation of RAP (2010-2014)

78. The RAP (2003-2008) has already expired, and there is a need to prepare the next RAP (2010-2014) to be adopted by the Third Asian Ministerial Conference that may be organized in 2010. The new ROC-AP will facilitate the preparation of the RAP (2010-2014) within the context of *The Strategy* as contained in Decision 3/COP.8.
79. It may be noted that the implementation of the past two RAPs have not been most satisfactory due to the lack of financial resources, which affects effective coordination. Thus, the new RAP (2010-2014) needs to be better coordinated with the support of adequate financial resources.

Proposed Activity 7: Visiting Fellowship Programme

80. A Visiting Fellowship Programme (VFP) will be established to facilitate the short-term visit of the National Focal Points (NFPs) of the UNCCD and the visiting scientists and experts to the ROC-AP. The VFP could be of one to three months duration depending on the needs and circumstances. This programme could enhance the mutual understanding of the operation of the UNCCD Secretariat, in particular, the ROC-AP and the visiting fellows.
81. The above VFP is complementary to the UNCCD fellowship programme as proposed by the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology³⁵ and established by Decision 16/COP.8.³⁶

Proposed Activity 8: Partnerships Strengthening and Development

82. The ROC-AP will maintain and strengthen its existing partnerships with relevant UN, international and regional agencies based in Bangkok, while developing new partnerships, including those with civil society, NGOs and the private sector in the region, as appropriate. The scientific and technical expertise of relevant research institutes and Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centres³⁷ will be solicited to support the ROC-AP's technical assistance activities.
83. The aim is to forge a regional partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in the region in order to support poverty reduction and social, economic and environmental sustainability. This is consistent with the "Mission" of *The Strategy* as contained in Decision 3/COP.8.

Proposed Activity 9: Synergies with CBD, UNFCCC and other Relevant MEAs and Frameworks

³⁵ See *Report of the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology; Committee on Science and Technology Eighth session, Madrid, 4-6 September 2007*. Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda; Report of the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology, UNCCD fellowship programme; Report on a UNCCD fellowship programme; Note by the secretariat; ICCD/COP(8)/CST/5, 12 July 2007.

³⁶ See Decision 16/COP.8: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification fellowship programme; Report of the Conference of the Parties on its eighth session, held in Madrid from 3 to 14 September 2007; Addendum; Part two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its eighth session. ICCD/COP(8)/16/Add.1, 23 October 2007.

³⁷ The CGIAR Centres in the region include Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in Bogor, Indonesia; International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) in Aleppo, Syria; International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in Patancheru, India; and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Baños, the Philippines.

84. The new ROC-AP will seek synergies between the activities in the implementation of the UNCCD, CBD, UNFCCC, as well as other relevant multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and frameworks (e.g., *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters*) at the national and regional levels. These may include the establishment of joint national and regional forums under the common objective of sustainable development, including implementation of *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development* and *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)*; the establishment of national and regional communication and networking strategies to share information between relevant Conventions and Frameworks, so as to make their joint activities more cost-effective.
85. A few country Parties, including Saudi Arabia, have shared their ideas in their submissions to COP 8 on the “*Options for enhanced cooperation among the Rio Conventions, and the success stories of field activities on synergies*”³⁸.

Proposed Activity 10: Promotion of Science and Environmentally Sound Technologies, and Development of Regional Roster of Experts

86. With the support of the CST, the ROC-AP will actively and proactively promote cost-effective science and environmentally sound technologies that are affordable to the member countries for the implementation of the Convention in the region, including good practices from traditional and endogenous knowledge.
87. A roster of independent experts with relevant expertise and experience in the region will be established, maintained and regularly updated, taking into account the need for a multidisciplinary approach and broad geographical representation. This regional roster will be complementary to that established by the CST, which will be fully consulted on the selection of each expert for the roster. The roster will be posted at the home page of the ROC-AP (see paragraph 88) after it is approved by the Advisory Committee.

Proposed Activity 11: Publications, Information Outreach and Networking

88. A home page specifically for the RCM-AP will be developed to report on all UNCCD and related activities in the region, including those related to NAPs, SRAPs, RAP and TPNs, as well as joint activities with partners. Specific published or unpublished research articles that have been undertaken within the framework of the Convention may be posted on the website, which will be linked to the UNCCD Secretariat home page.
89. A quarterly electronic newsletter will be published to share the most up-to-date information and experiences, as well as good practices on the implementation of the Convention in the region.
90. Thematic research work such as those resulted from the Visiting Fellowship Programme will also be published as appropriate.

Proposed Activity 12: Resources Mobilization

91. The ROC-AP should be empowered and assisted by the UNCCD Headquarters to mobilize resources to support, develop and sustain its activities through its extensive network, as well as to support the activities of the country Parties in the region as appropriate.
92. For example, the ROC-AP may assist eligible country Parties in accessing the GEF trust fund (see paragraphs 61, 62 and 73), as well as the Special Climate Change Fund, LDC Fund, and

³⁸ See ICCD/COP(8)/Misc.1, 11 July 2007 (<http://www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cop8/pdf/misc1eng.pdf>)

Adaptation Fund under the UNFCCC for projects on coping with drought, conservancy adaptation and mainstreaming adaptation into integrated water resource management, as well as afforestation and reforestation, which are also eligible under the CDM of the Kyoto Protocol. All these project activities would have significant implications for the implementation of the Convention.

93. A resource mobilization strategy will be developed by the new ROC-AP. Potential new and innovative sources of funding from donors, international foundations, private sector, civil society and NGOs will be identified. Innovative financing, such as land degradation and desertification funds, public-private partnerships, micro-financing³⁹, and others⁴⁰ will be explored. All resource mobilization activities will be liaised and coordinated with the Global Mechanism through the Advisory Committee in full consultation with the UNCCD Secretariat Headquarters.

VII. TWO-YEAR (2010-2011) RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT (RBM) WORK PLAN

94. A two-year Work Plan (2010-2011) that is based on results-based management (RBM) approach, with proposed activities, indicative costs, expected outcomes and success indicators, linkages to the strategic and operational objectives of *The Strategy*, and possible funding sources, is developed after extensive consultations among the Asian Task Force members and presented in Table 1.
95. This Work Plan will be complementary to the Work Programme of the UNCCD Secretariat and the GM, including their Joint Work Programme.

VIII. Financial Resources Required

96. Decision 3/COP.8 recognizes the need for the Convention and its institutions to have adequate resources to allocate, according to their new results-based management (RBM) approach work programme based on *The Strategy* in order to respond to the new challenges and needs at all levels.
97. As indicated in Table 1, an estimated US\$ 900,000 per year will be required for the operation and the additional activities of the new RCU-AP. This amount includes (i) the salaries for professional staff (excluding the JPOs who will be funded by donors) and the operational cost (i.e., office space; stationery and communication; missions and DSA); and (ii) the cost for additional activities, including preparation of RAP (2010-2014); technical assistance activities for NAPs, SRAPs and RAP; regional advisory services; coordination of TPNs; visiting fellowship programme; partnership strengthening and development; website development, publications, information outreach and networking; resources mobilization; among others, as provided in Section VI. In view of the large size and the specific needs of the region with 56 country Parties, this estimated US\$900,000 funding requirement is very modest indeed (i.e., less than US\$20,000 per country).
98. Supplementary funding from donors should be solicited to complement the funding from the core budget for the professional positions (i) to (iii) and (v) as mentioned in paragraph 49.

³⁹ Microfinance has been promoted as an innovative option to help address climate change mitigation and adaptation, such as encouraging reforestation and afforestation. The Executive Board to the CDM has also launched the idea to explore the possibilities for combining CDM development with microfinance mechanisms in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

⁴⁰ For example, JAL Mileage Bank members worldwide was able to participate in "JAL Miles for Eco" from 5 to 30 June 2006 by making donations of 10,000 miles or in units of 10,000 miles. Counting one mile as one yen, the JAL Group donated the equivalent amount in cash to the project entitled '*Inner Mongolia Greening Project Against Desertification*' managed by Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement (OISCA), a Tokyo-based non-profit-organization founded in 1961 which focuses on environmentally sustainable development in countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

99. One option to reduce the cost would be the secondment of NFPs by country Parties to fill one or two professional positions on a two-year rotational basis.
100. It is feasible that the ROC-AP may tap into the technical expertise of other UN, international and regional agencies for free regional advisory services that are also within their mandates, as in the case with UNESCAP during 2001-2007 when its Regional Advisory Service on Environment and Sustainable Development was available.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

101. The cost-effectiveness and the added value of the Asia-RCU have been well demonstrated through its past activities, and its significant contributions and achievements towards promoting the implementation of the Convention in the Asian region. The willingness of UNESCAP to host the Asia-RCU, the full support of the affected country Parties in the region, as well as the contribution by affected country Parties to its operational costs, have fully justified its existence.
102. In order to more efficiently and effectively serve the affected country Parties in the region, it is proposed that the existing RCM-AP be strengthened. At the core of this strengthened RCM-AP, a Regional Office of the Convention for Asia and the Pacific (ROC-AP) will be established to replace the existing Asia-RCU, with strengthened mandates and at least five professional staff funded by the core budget. This new ROC-AP will maintain and strengthen the existing activities of the Asia-RCU. A number of new activities, such as regional advisory services; preparation of RAP (2010-2014); visiting fellowship programme; promotion of science and environmentally sound technologies; development of regional roster of experts; website development, publications, newsletter and other outreach information; and resource mobilization, will also be initiated within the context of *The Strategy* as contained in Decision 3/COP.8. An Advisory Committee will be established to provide guidance on the implementation of the RCM-AP and the operation of the ROC-AP.
103. An integrated and coordinated strategy within the UNCCD Secretariat is required to implement this strengthened RCM-AP, as well as the efficient and effective operation of the ROC-AP.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

104. Based on this proposal, the Parties at COP 9 may wish to deliberate and decide on the following items:
- (a) To endorse the strengthened RCM-AP and the establishment of the new ROC-AP that will replace the existing Asia-RCU in 2010;
 - (b) To approve the two-year ROC-AP Results-Based Management (RBM) Work Plan (2010-2011) and the proposed activities as provided in the Work Plan;
 - (c) To approve the provision of financial resources under the core budget for the next biennium in order to cover the operational and activity costs of the ROC-AP;
 - (d) To convene the Third Asian Ministerial Conference in 2010;
 - (e) To convene a UN Summit to review the progress on the implementation of the Convention in 2014 in commemoration of the 20-year anniversary of the Convention.

Table 1. The ROC-AP Results-Based Management (RBM) Work Plan (2010-2011).

Proposed activities	2010	2011	TOTAL	Expected outputs, outcomes and indicators	Linkage to the Strategic and Operational objectives of the 10-year (2008-2018) Strategy	Possible sources of funding
	US\$	US\$	US\$			
Objective of the RCM-AP: To more efficiently and effectively serve the Asia-Pacific member countries and assist them in the effective implementation of the Convention d policy services				Areas of land degradation and desertification reduced over longer term	Strategic objectives 1 to 5 and Operational objectives 1 to 5	Core budget/supplementary funds
<i>Activity 1: Regional Representation of the UNCCD Secretariat</i>	Regular activities	Regular activities	Regular activities	Relevant activities participated on behalf of the UNCCD Secretariat	Strategic objectives 1 to 5 and Operational objectives 1 to 5	Core budget
<i>Activity 2: Follow Up of COP and Subsidiary Bodies Decisions and Facilitate Member Countries' Reporting Obligations</i>	Regular activities	Regular activities	Regular activities	COP and subsidiary bodies decisions followed and member countries' reporting obligations fulfilled	Strategic objectives 1 to 5 and Operational objectives 1 to 5	Core budget
<i>Activity 3: Contribution to UNCCD HQ Work Programme and Joint Work Programme with the Global Mechanism</i>	Regular activities	Regular activities	Regular activities	UNCCD HQ Work Programme and Joint Work Programme with the Global Mechanism successfully developed with regional input	Strategic objectives 1 to 5 and Operational objectives 1 to 5	Core budget
<i>Activity 4: Technical Assistance and Advisory Service (including capacity-building)</i>	90,000	90,000	180,000	No. of missions undertaken with tangible results and outcomes	Operational objectives 2 and 4	Core budget &/or supplementary funds
Activity 4.1: Provide support to the implementation of NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs, including advisory services, training and awareness-raising workshops				NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs successfully implemented		
<i>Activity 5: Coordination of Thematic Programme Networks (TPNs)</i>	60,000	60,000	120,000	TPNs successfully coordinated	Operational objective 4	Core budget &/or supplementary funds
Activity 5.1: Coordination and provision of support for TPNs				Increase in TPNs activities with tangible results and outcomes		
<i>Activity 6: Preparation of RAP (2010-2014)</i>	30,000	30,000	60,000	RAP (2010-2014) prepared	Strategic objectives 1 to 5 and Operational objectives 1 to 5	Core budget
<i>Activity 7: Visiting Fellowship Programme</i>	85,000	85,000	170,000	No. of visiting fellows supported	Operational objective 4	Supplementary funds
Activity 7.1: Visiting scientists, NFPs of one to 3 months duration, as appropriate						

Activity 8: Partnerships Strengthening and Development	10,000	10,000	20,000	Existing partnerships strengthened & new partnerships developed	Strategic objective 4	Core budget &/or supplementary funds
Activity 8.1: Participation in relevant UN and other meetings as representative of the UNCCD Secretariat				No. of relevant meetings participated		
Activity 9: Synergies with CBD, UNFCCC and other Relevant MEAs and Frameworks				Increase in joint activities with partners	Strategic objective 4	Core budget &/or supplementary funds
Activity 9.1: Participation of workshops organized by CBD, UNFCCC and other relevant frameworks (e.g., Hyogo Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction)	10,000	10,000	20,000			
Activity 10: Promotion of Science and Environmentally Sound Technologies, and Development of Regional Roster of Experts (Coordination with CST)	20,000	20,000	40,000	Good practices disseminated; Regional roster of experts established, maintained and updated	Operational objective 5	Core budget &/or supplementary funds
Activity 11: Publication, information outreach and networking					Operational objectives 1 and 3	Core budget &/or supplementary funds
Activity 11.1: Development and maintenance of website, including database	25,000	25,000	50,000	Website developed & maintained		
Activity 11.2: Publication of e-newsletter	10,000	10,000	20,000	E-Newsletter published		
Activity 11.3: Other thematic publications	25,000	25,000	50,000	Thematic books published		
Activity 12: Resources Mobilization				Increase in financial resources	Strategic objective 4 and Operational objective 5	Core budget &/or supplementary funds
Activity 12.1: Development of GEF projects for eligible countries	30,000	30,000	60,000	Increase in GEF-funded projects		
PROJECT MANAGEMENT						
RCU-AP Coordinator (P5)	120,000	120,000	240,000			Core budget
Deputy Coordinator (P4)	100,000	100,000	200,000			Core budget
Programme Officer (x2) (P3)	150,000	150,000	300,000			Core budget
Junior Professional Officer (2) (P2) (funded by donors)						Donors
Administrator/Secretary (P1)	50,000	50,000	100,000			Core budget
Interns (as appropriate)						
Staff Travel	50,000	50,000	100,000			Core budget
Equipment (PCs)	5,000	5,000	10,000			Core budget
Operational expenses (e.g., office space, transportation, communication, etc)	30,000	30,000	60,000			Core budget
Total	900,000	900,000	1,800,000			

