



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

AUDIT REPORT

Substantive programmes of the UNCCD Secretariat

UNCCD has adequate controls of substantive programmes, but needs to develop a resource mobilization strategy and improve reporting on its financial and staffing constraints to the Conference of Parties

14 February 2011
Assignment No. AA2010/242/01

United Nations  Nations Unies

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES · BUREAU DES SERVICES DE CONTRÔLE INTERNE
INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION · DIVISION DE L'AUDIT INTERNE

TO: Mr. Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary
A: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

DATE: 14 February 2011

REFERENCE: IAD: 11- **00166**

FROM: Fatoumata Ndiaye, Director
DE: Internal Audit Division, OIOS



SUBJECT: **Assignment No. AA2010/242/01 – Audit of substantive programmes of the UNCCD Secretariat**
OBJET:

1. I am pleased to present the report on the above-mentioned audit.
2. Based on your comments, we are pleased to inform you that we will close recommendation 4 in the OIOS recommendations database as indicated in Annex 1. In order for us to close the remaining recommendations, we request that you provide us with the additional information as discussed in the text of the report and also summarized in Annex 1.
3. Please note that OIOS will report on the progress made to implement its recommendations, particularly those designated as high risk (i.e., recommendations 1, 2 and 9) in its annual report to the General Assembly and semi-annual report to the Secretary-General.

cc: Mr. Mohamadou-Mansour N'Diaye, Chef de Cabinet, UNCCD
Mr. Lyndle Lindow, Coordinator, Administration and Finance Services, UNCCD
Mr. Swatantra Goolsarran, Executive Secretary, UN Board of Auditors
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INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

FUNCTION

“The Office shall, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations examine, review and appraise the use of financial resources of the United Nations in order to guarantee the implementation of programmes and legislative mandates, ascertain compliance of programme managers with the financial and administrative regulations and rules, as well as with the approved recommendations of external oversight bodies, undertake management audits, reviews and surveys to improve the structure of the Organization and its responsiveness to the requirements of programmes and legislative mandates, and monitor the effectiveness of the systems of internal control of the Organization” (General Assembly Resolution 48/218 B).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Audit of substantive programmes of the UNCCD Secretariat

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of substantive programmes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) secretariat. The overall objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls to ensure the effective implementation of the UNCCD secretariat's programmes and compliance with the relevant regulations and rules pertaining to planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the UNCCD activities. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

The UNCCD secretariat's activities, accountability and reporting framework have undergone significant changes following its decision to implement the 10-year strategic plan. The secretariat embarked on a process of aligning its mandate to the 10-year strategy. It has also made considerable effort to implement Results Based Management (RBM) in the UNCCD secretariat by adapting the planning, monitoring and reporting processes to the requirements of RBM, despite financial constraints.

The overall conclusion was that UNCCD has established adequate internal controls to ensure the adequate implementation of substantive programmes and compliance with regulations and rules pertaining to planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation activities, however, additional measures to strengthen internal controls are recommended in the following areas:

The Executive Secretary of the UNCCD secretariat should:

- expedite the recruitment of the Senior Advisor Resource Mobilization and Partnership, and develop and implement a resource mobilization policy and strategy;
- report to the Conference of Parties, the activities that could not be accomplished as a result of the shortfall in staffing levels and the resultant impact, in support of future resource requests; and
- develop and implement a knowledge management policy and strategy.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of substantive programmes of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) secretariat. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

2. UNCCD has three main institutions that are established in the Convention text, namely: (a) a decision-making body called the Conference of the Parties (COP); (b) a Committee on Science and Technology (CST) that is a subsidiary body to the COP; and (c) a Convention secretariat. In addition, a financial brokering mechanism/clearing house called the Global Mechanism is established in the Convention. Furthermore, to assist in the substantive considerations on the implementation of the UNCCD, the Parties have created a standing subsidiary body to the COP called the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC).

3. At its eighth session, the COP adopted a 10-year strategy to enhance the implementation of the UNCCD mandate. Through this strategy, the Parties agreed on four strategic objectives for the implementation of the Convention in 2008-2018, which address the livelihoods of people affected by desertification, the related ecosystems, the overall global added value generated by the UNCCD, and the tools, namely the resource base. They further agreed on five operational objectives for the Convention process in the following areas:

- (a) advocacy, awareness raising and education;
- (b) policy framework;
- (c) science, technology and knowledge;
- (d) capacity building; and
- (e) financing and technology transfer.

4. The strategic and operational objectives are meant to guide the actions of all UNCCD stakeholders (country parties, convention institutions, participating civil society, involved UN system organizations, donor agencies, etc.) during the period covered by the strategy. In accordance with article 23 of the UNCCD, the main functions of the secretariat are to:

- (a) make arrangements for sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies established under the Convention and to provide them with services as required;
 - (b) facilitate the reporting on and review of the implementation of the Convention, including assistance to affected countries in the provision of the required information;
 - (c) coordinate its activities with the secretariats of other relevant international bodies and conventions; and
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(d) perform such other secretariat functions as may be determined by the COP.

5. Following the approval of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the convention, the Executive Secretary of UNCCD was authorized to realign, as needed, the programmes and staffing structure in order to facilitate the implementation of the strategy. Accordingly, four substantive units were established as follows:

- (a) Knowledge management, science and technology (KMST);
- (b) Awareness raising, communication and education (ARCE);
- (c) Policy advocacy and global issues (PAGI); and
- (d) Facilitation, coordination and monitoring of implementation (FCMI).

6. These substantive units are coordinated by the executive direction management unit (EDM), and supported by conference services (COSE) and the unit for administration, finance and human resources (AFHR). In addition, a unit to support regional coordination functions was established in 2010, following the COP 9 decision on providing support to regional coordination, including a request to relocate some of the secretariat's staff to regional coordination units in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

7. The total funding for UNCCD for the biennia 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 was \$31.7 million and €37.9 million (\$54.576m) respectively. The staffing, including the approved core posts as well as other types of staff funded through extra budgetary contributions, for the biennium 2008-2009 were 52 broken down into 31 professional staff and 21 General Service staff, and those for the biennium 2010-2011 were 56, broken down into 35 professional staff and 21 General Service staff.

8. Comments made by UNCCD are shown in *italics*.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVES

9. The main objectives of the audit were to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls to ensure:

- (a) The effective implementation of the UNCCD secretariat's substantive programmes; and
- (b) Compliance with the relevant regulations and rules pertaining to planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation activities of UNCCD substantive programmes.

III. AUDIT SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

10. The audit was conducted from 16 August to 17 September 2010, and covered the period 2008 to August 2010. It focused on the review of policies and procedures for planning, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of all substantive programmes in the UNCCD secretariat, and included discussions with relevant UNCCD staff and a review of relevant documentation.

IV. AUDIT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Resource Mobilization Strategy

Lack of a resource mobilization policy and strategy

11. The UNCCD secretariat does not have a resource mobilization policy and strategy and a dedicated resource mobilization function. This contributed to lack of adequate financial resources, which has been identified as one of the challenges that could hinder the successful implementation of the substantive programmes in the UNCCD secretariat. Currently, the resource mobilization activities are being undertaken by the Chef de Cabinet, who prepares on a biennial basis a fundraising activities plan and a list of potential donors. This list is then sent to the units that are in charge of programme implementation and support, for the drafting of project proposals that would be used to seek funds from donors.

12. In a bid to address this shortcoming, the secretariat is in the process of recruiting a Senior Advisor for Resource Mobilization and Partnership Building who is expected to be on board by the last quarter of 2010. Further, UNCCD engaged a consultant to advise them on how to develop a resource mobilization policy and strategy. The consultant made some recommendations which are yet to be adopted by UNCCD.

Recommendation 1

(1) The UNCCD Executive Secretary should (a) expedite the recruitment of the Senior Advisor, Resource Mobilization and Partnership; and (b) develop and implement a resource mobilization policy and strategy.

13. *The UNCCD Executive Secretary accepted recommendation 1 and stated that the secretariat had completed the recruitment of the Senior Advisor, and the selected officer would be on board on 15 March 2011. With regard to the policy and strategy for resource mobilization, the secretariat, in collaboration with the Global Mechanism, had begun to develop a common fundraising strategy that would address, among other activities, the mobilization of resources for the internal requirements of the institutions and the subsidiary bodies of the Convention. The draft common fundraising strategy will be submitted to COP 10 in October 2011, for the consideration of Parties. Recommendation 1 remains*

open pending the receipt of confirmation that the Senior Advisor is on board and copy of the approved resource mobilization policy and strategy.

B. Implementation of programmes

Inadequate funding resulted in human resource capacity constraints contributing to inadequate delivery of programmes

14. The UNCCD secretariat is facing a challenge with its current human resource capacity. In 2009, a consultant conducted a desk to desk workload analysis to assess the secretariat's staffing needs, and recommended a staffing structure comprised of 66 posts. However, the funding provided in the 2010/2011 budget was not sufficient to meet the required staffing level. Moreover, the function of Principal Coordinator, a key function for UNCCD secretariat, was never considered by the COP.

15. As a result of inadequate funding, 11 of those posts that the secretariat has defined essential for delivering its tasks (as contained in the secretariat's structure deriving from the workload analysis) are vacant. Further, 16 per cent of the UNCCD secretariat posts are filled either by temporary staff or staff on secondment from other UN agencies and parties' governments. As a result, there has been a high staff turnover in some of the substantive units such as Knowledge Management Science and Technology (KMST) and Facilitation, Capacity Building, Monitoring of Implementation (FCMI). This has resulted in the need for continuous training to orient staff and increased the risk of loss of institutional memory. In addition, the key position of Deputy Executive Secretary (DES) has been vacant for more than a year. The majority of the DES's responsibilities, which include fundraising and overseeing the substantive programmes, have been allocated to the Chef de Cabinet.

16. The delivery of programmes has been negatively affected as a result of inadequate funding which has culminated in the shortage of staff, as some of the deliverables such as the secretariat-wide knowledge management system and the KMST knowledge brokering system were not implemented as planned due to inadequate financial and human capacity of the ICT and KMST unit, as highlighted in the latter part of this report. The knowledge brokering system is of critical importance in the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan as it is one of the main tools required by the CST for the dissemination of scientific data, studies and research on desertification and land degradation. It is also envisaged to serve as a platform of exchange and cooperation on lessons learned, case studies and best practices to reverse the effects of desertification and land degradation.

17. As a result of the knowledge management and knowledge brokering systems not being developed, some of the secretariat's outputs for the biennium 2010/2011, although started, were significantly behind schedule. These include, updated web-based scientific information, web-based databank on information relating to reports submitted by COP and other stakeholders and web-based regional and sub regional information.

Recommendation 2

(2) The UNCCD Executive Secretary should, in support of future resource requests, report to the Conference of Parties, the activities that could not be accomplished as a result of the shortfall in staffing levels and the resultant impact.

18. *The UNCCD Executive Secretary accepted recommendation 2 and stated that information on activities that could not be accomplished as a result of the shortfall in staffing levels and the resultant impact would be submitted for consideration by Parties at COP10.* Recommendation 2 remains open pending receipt of evidence that the activities that could not be accomplished as a result of the shortfall in staffing levels and the resultant impact have been submitted to the Parties for consideration.

There is a need to develop a secretariat-wide policy and strategy on partnerships and alliances

19. Strategic objective 4 of the 10-year strategic plan and framework of UNCCD is “to mobilize resources to support implementation of the convention through building effective partnerships between national and international actors.” Currently, there is limited use of partners. In the recent past, in addition to donors and developing countries, the UNCCD secretariat has also worked with a bank and a state institution for implementing programmes. Further, the secretariat does not have a policy and strategy in place for managing partnership arrangements and neither does it use legal instruments in a systematic manner to govern the partnerships.

20. In order to alleviate some of the funding and human resource challenges, the secretariat has been collaborating with private entities for implementing some of its tasks. However, some of these arrangements were entered into without formal legal instruments, but were based on correspondences between the collaborating entities. The secretariat has also formed some inter agency alliances with United Nations agencies such as United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) that have supported the secretariat in implementing tasks assigned to the substantive units. The secretariat is in the process of finalizing a guideline for partnerships with the private sector. In addition, joint strategies are being drafted with key institutional partners, which will help manage the inter agency alliances on supporting affected countries to implement the UNCCD and working on specific issues such as the nomination of sustainable land management champions.

21. In the absence of a secretariat-wide policy and strategy on partnerships, there is a risk that the secretariat will have uncoordinated and divergent practices which may not focus on the achievement of the overall secretariat-wide objectives. In addition, the lack of legal instruments that governs the partnership arrangements may expose the secretariat to legal liabilities.

Recommendations 3 and 4

The UNCCD Executive Secretary should:

(3) develop and implement a policy and strategy on partnership arrangements, and develop legal instruments to govern both existing and future partnership arrangements; and

(4) consider increasing its use of partnership arrangements with both the public and private sectors in order to alleviate some of the funding and human resource challenges being faced by the secretariat.

22. *The UNCCD Executive Secretary accepted recommendation 3 and stated that the tasks would be contained in the work programme of the secretariat that would be submitted for consideration at COP 10. Recommendation 3 remains open pending the receipt of policy and strategy on partnership arrangements and the legal instruments that will be used to enter into partnership arrangements.*

23. *The UNCCD Executive Secretary accepted recommendation 4 and stated that recently, new partnership arrangements have been developed or initiated with several major UN system organizations, including UNDP, UNEP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Based on the action taken by UNCCD, recommendation 4 has been closed.*

The information and communication technology structure and resources are inadequate

24. In its previous budget submission to COP 9 in October 2009, the secretariat proposed to increase its staffing for the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Section, but Parties decided against the increase. The current structure of the ICT Section and staffing resources has prevented the section from adequately supporting the programmatic needs of the secretariat. The ICT Section is comprised of only one professional staff at the P-2 level and two general service staff to provide ICT assistance and support to over 50 staff at the secretariat. This has contributed to delays in implementing programmes, which could negatively affect the achievement of the secretariat's mandate.

25. In most cases, the section has had to work for extended hours in an attempt to provide ICT support to the substantive programmes of the secretariat, and has also engaged consultants to assist where possible. But even then, the demand for ICT support has not been fully met. There is an urgent need to re-assess the staffing level required for the ICT section to operate effectively, and to seek additional funding and/or appropriate alternative arrangements such as outsourcing some ICT functions to ensure that the organization's ICT needs are adequately met.

Recommendation 5

(5) The UNCCD Executive Secretary should continue seeking additional resources, and consider alternative arrangements, to ensure that the Information and Communication Technology Section adequately meet the needs of the UNCCD.

26. *The UNCCD Executive Secretary accepted recommendation 5 and stated that in its previous budget submission to COP 9 in October 2009, the secretariat proposed to increase its staffing for the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) section, but Parties decided against the increase. A proposal for increasing human resources for ICT functions will be made again in the context of preparing the programme budget submission to COP 10 and options for improved ICT services will be considered, including the recruitment of additional human resources and outsourcing some ICT functions. Recommendation 5 remains open pending receipt of evidence that additional resources have been sought from COP and alternative arrangements for improving ICT services have been considered.*

C. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Inadequate prioritization procedures in implementing Results Based Management

27. The implementation of Results Based Management (RBM) has been hampered by inadequate resources. In identifying the expected accomplishments and activities for implementing the work programme, the secretariat has taken into account the resources needed to achieve these expectations. This is in line with Results Based Budgeting, a key element of RBM, which links inputs or resources to activities to produce outputs and lead to results or expected accomplishments, and provides a framework for credible performance evaluation at the end of a budget period.

28. However, while the COP approved the work programme for the biennium 2010/2011, the amount committed for the core budget was only 42 per cent of the amount needed to implement the programme of work. The secretariat is responsible for raising funds to compensate the shortfall of 58 per cent which includes resources required for personnel needs outside the core budget. For the biennium 2010/2011, a number of non-core staff (two staff on secondment and two Associate Programme Officers) were in place at the beginning of the biennium in the Regional Coordination Unit and the FCMI unit, but resource mobilization activities to ensure availability of other non-core resources did not commence until April 2010. Further, the secretariat has been experiencing challenges in collecting pledged contributions for the core budget, while extra budgetary resources have been unpredictable and/or were not received on a timely basis. As at 30 September 2010, UNCCD had not received €1,926,043 (\$2,446,075) out of €22,378,600 (\$28,420,822) that was pledged by the member parties of the COP for the biennium 2008/2009 and for the year 2010. As a result of the challenges in collecting pledged contributions, some activities were either

insufficiently funded or were not funded at all, which negatively impacted the implementation of the programme of work.

29. In an attempt to overcome the mismatch between the expected accomplishment and the availability of funding, the secretariat has had to prioritize activities within the expected accomplishment such that some of the activities are not being undertaken. The prioritization at the activity level is negatively affecting the achievement of the expected accomplishment, especially in circumstances where all the activities need to be completed in order to effectively achieve the expected accomplishment. Consistent delivery is further threatened by fragmented targeting and limited availability of voluntary contributions, which lead to a situation whereby many key activities are launched or partially implemented, but cannot be completed at all, or at desired quality level, due to limited resources. This was evidently shown in the synoptic report as at 31 May 2010, where the secretariat noted that it was experiencing constraints in implementing 36 of the 64 activities due to lack of extra budgetary resources. However, because the UNCCD secretariat is prioritizing at the activity and sub-activity level rather than at the expected accomplishment level, this is resulting in the non achievement of the expected accomplishment, which may have an adverse impact on the successful achievement of the secretariat's objectives.

30. Due to inadequate resources the secretariat has also had to rely on in-kind contributions from collaborating entities to achieve some of its objectives. The funding constraints have resulted in the quantity of the outputs being adversely affected. For example the ARCE unit reduced the quantity of its printed material and also relied on in-house printing machines whose capacity is inadequate for its design and printing activities. It is worth noting that despite these challenges, management has made considerable effort to implement RBM in the UNCCD secretariat by conducting RBM training sessions for all staff members, and adapting their planning, monitoring and reporting processes to facilitate the implementation of RBM. These processes include internal monitoring of activities through synoptic reports and consolidated progress reports that are tabled every four months for senior management discussions. This monitoring mechanism involves the monitoring of the scheduling and subsequent achievement of activities.

Recommendation 6

(6) The UNCCD Executive Secretary should re-assess the prioritization procedures to ensure that high priority expected accomplishments are sufficiently funded and fully implemented.

31. *The UNCCD Executive Secretary accepted recommendation 6 and stated that for the coming biennia, the secretariat would increase its efforts to get Parties' guidance on the priorities through, among other means, starting consultations on the content of the workplan already at an early phase of its preparation. In general, the secretariat would facilitate consensus building and shared understanding among Parties on the next steps in the UNCCD process, as*

preconditions for defining clear priorities for the work of the secretariat, and also for future efforts towards mobilizing resources, building on the analysis of the outcomes of the 4th UNCCD reporting cycle. Recommendation 6 remains open pending the receipt of evidence that prioritization procedures have been re-assessed.

Programme evaluation plans and systems are lacking

32. According to ST/SGB/2000/8 – Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, Rule 107.2 (a), “All programmes shall be evaluated on a regular, periodic basis. At the programme or sub programme level, evaluation plans shall be linked to the medium term plan and they shall be integrated with the programme budget cycle”.

33. At present, the impact of the secretariat’s programme performance is assessed by COP on a regular basis using a set of indicators for implementing the tasks. One of the units, KMST, has the responsibility to support the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) in developing impact indicators for the COP to use in evaluating the effect of the results of the convention activities on desertification. So far, the CST has adopted two of the eleven impact indicators identified. KMST is currently collaborating with scientific bodies to determine the best analysis methodologies that will be applied for these indicators. For the other nine impact indicators, KMST has launched an interactive process in collaboration with key stakeholders so as to refine them. However, even though KMST is supporting CST in developing these impact indicators, it is not evaluating its own programme activities.

34. Further, the secretariat does not have internal programme evaluation plans and systems to guide them in evaluating programmes. At present, the secretariat conducts internal monitoring of its activities through synoptic reports and consolidated progress reports that are tabled every four months for senior management discussions. This monitoring mechanism involves the monitoring of the scheduling and subsequent achievement of work packages. However, the programmes are not being evaluated for relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the activities in relation to the programme objectives. As a result, there are no mechanisms to foster organizational learning, continued programme improvement and adaptive management. This lack of evaluation is not in line with ST/SGB/2000/8 which is embedded within the United Nations Financial Regulation and Rules adopted by the COP in its “Financial rules of the COP, its subsidiary bodies and the Convention Secretariat” (UNCCD Financial Rules). The UNCCD financial rules state that “in so far as not specifically provided by the present rules, the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations shall apply”.

Recommendation 7

(7) The UNCCD Executive Secretary should comply with ST/SGB/2000/8 and develop and implement plans and

systems to evaluate the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the activities of the secretariat in relation to the programme objectives.

35. *The UNCCD Executive Secretary accepted recommendation 7 and stated that the RBM system of the secretariat has been functional and fully in use only from January 2010 onwards, and many components of the internal procedures are still under development. Among the planned next steps is the introduction of tools for qualitative evaluation as part of the internal monitoring system. Recommendation 7 remains open pending the receipt of evidence that plans and systems to evaluate the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the activities in relation to the programme objectives have been developed and implemented.*

There is a need to design specific and measurable performance indicators

36. The performance indicators used in measuring the achievement of the secretariat's expected accomplishments are not specific, measurable and time bound. The performance indicators specified in the work programmes and activity plans only indicate the description of the indicator without specifying the targeted dates of accomplishment and benchmarks against which performance could be measured. The work programmes and activity plans also have work packages (activities), which are to be performed against each expected accomplishment. The programme units are monitoring performance against these activities and not against the performance indicators. However, due to funding constraints, not all activities are performed. This has an impact on expected accomplishments, the extent of which cannot be determined as the performance indicators are inadequate. For example, the wording for some performance indicators were "extent to which schools and universities use UNCCD information on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD) for educational purposes", or "extent to which COP and CRIC reports include Civil Society Organizations inputs" or "positive feedback from external auditors".

37. In the absence of specific, measurable and time bound performance indicators, the secretariat will not be able to reliably measure or have an indication of its progress towards achieving its expected accomplishments.

Recommendation 8

(8) The UNCCD Executive Secretary should specify targeted levels and dates for achieving set performance indicators against which performance should be monitored and measured.

38. *The UNCCD Executive Secretary accepted recommendation 8 and stated that the Secretariat, in its workplan submission to COP 9 in October 2009, had presented specific targets in the context of each performance indicator, however, Parties had decided to remove these targets from the workplan. For future workplans, the secretariat will consider re-introducing the targets, and apply them internally. Recommendation 8 remains open pending receipt of evidence*

that target levels and dates against which performance is to be monitored and measured have been specified.

There is need for a secretariat-wide knowledge management policy and strategy

39. The UNCCD secretariat does not have a secretariat-wide knowledge management policy and strategy that would guide them in the development of a knowledge management system. As a result, the UNCCD secretariat has not yet developed an effective and efficient mechanism for gathering knowledge and feeding into operations. One of the units, KMST is in urgent need of a knowledge brokering system, which would enable it to gather, store, analyze, disseminate and exploit data on desertification. This system would also be able to act as a database on best practices and methodologies, and would enable the secretariat to create partnerships through networks to facilitate the sharing of scientific knowledge.

40. Until recently, the KMST unit was delegated with the responsibility to draft and implement a secretariat-wide knowledge management policy and strategy. However, the KMST unit has neither the capacity nor capability of handling such a large project. This has resulted in a decision to shift the responsibility for the development of the secretariat-wide knowledge management policy and strategy to the Executive Direction and Management (EDM). But the responsibility for the development of a knowledge brokering system still rests with the KMST unit, with support from the ICT unit. As a result of inadequate capacity and capability, KMST has indicated that they would be engaging a consultant to assist them in the development of a strategy and framework for the knowledge brokering system.

41. Without sufficient capacity and capability to develop the secretariat-wide knowledge management system, there is a risk that the programmes may not be implemented effectively and efficiently.

Recommendation 9

(9) The UNCCD Executive Secretary should develop and implement a knowledge management policy and strategy.

42. *The UNCCD Executive Secretary accepted recommendation 9 and stated that the Secretariat engaged a knowledge management expert with extensive experience on UN systems in January 2011. The secretariat aims to produce, for submission to COP 10, a design for a comprehensive UNCCD knowledge management system including a roadmap for its establishment. The process of developing the concept would also include the identification of internal policies and procedures as well as capacity building needs for maintenance and operation of the knowledge management system. Recommendation 9 remains open pending the receipt of the approved and implemented knowledge management policy and strategy.*

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

43. We wish to express our appreciation to the management and staff of UNCCD for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O ¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ²
1	The UNCCD Executive Secretary should expedite the recruitment of the Senior Advisor, Resource Mobilization and Partnership and develop and implement a resource mobilization policy and strategy.	Strategy	High	O	Receipt of confirmation that the Senior Advisor is on board and the approved resource mobilization policy and strategy.	October 2011
2	The UNCCD Executive Secretary should, in support of future resource requests, report to the Conference of Parties the activities that could not be accomplished as a result of the shortfall in staffing levels and the resultant impact.	Human Resources	High	O	Receipt of documentation that the activities that could not be accomplished as a result of the shortfall in staffing levels and the resultant impact have been submitted to the consideration of Parties for consideration	October 2011
3	The UNCCD Executive Secretary should (a) develop and implement a policy and strategy on partnership arrangements and (b) develop legal instruments to govern both existing and future partnership arrangements.	Governance	Medium	O	Receipt of the policy and strategy on partnership arrangements and the legal instruments that will be used to enter into partnership arrangements.	October 2011
4	The UNCCD Executive Secretary should consider increasing its use of partnership arrangements with both the public and private sectors in order to alleviate some of the funding and human resource challenges being faced by the secretariat	Operational	Medium	C		Implemented
5	The UNCCD Executive Secretary should continue seeking additional resources, and consider also alternative arrangements, to ensure that the Information Communication and Technology Section adequately meet the needs of the UNCCD.	Human Resources / Information Resources	Medium	O	Receipt of documentation that additional resources have been sought from COP and alternative arrangements for improving ICT services have been considered.	Continuous

Recom. no.	Recommendation	Risk category	Risk rating	C/O ¹	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ²
6	The UNCCD Executive Secretary should re-assess the prioritization procedures to ensure that high priority expected accomplishments are sufficiently funded and fully implemented.	Operational	Medium	O	Receipt of documentation that prioritization procedures have been reassessed.	Not provided
7	The UNCCD Executive Secretary should comply with ST/SGB/2000/8 and develop and implement plans and systems to evaluate the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the activities of the secretariat in relation to the programme objectives.	Compliance	Medium	O	Receipt of documentation that plans and systems to evaluate the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the activities in relation to the programme objectives have been developed and implemented.	March – April 2011
8	The UNCCD Executive Secretary should specify targeted levels and dates for achieving set performance indicators against which performance should be monitored and measured.	Operational	Medium	O	Receipt of documentation that target levels and dates against which performance is to be monitored and measured have been specified.	January 2012
9	The UNCCD Executive Secretary should develop and implement a knowledge management policy and strategy.	Information resources	High	O	Receipt of the approved and implemented knowledge management policy and strategy.	Ongoing

1. C = closed, O = open

2. Date provided by UNCCD in response to recommendations. [Insert “Not provided” where date is not provided; “Implemented” where recommendation is closed; (date) given by the client.]