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Needs and options on how to organise international, interdisciplinary scientific advice to support the implementation of the aims of the UNCCD

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DesertNet International

Dryland Characteristics

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Hyperarid, Arid, Semi-Arid and Dry Sub-Humid Areas

More than 2 billion people live in drylands
1/3 of the human population lives in drylands

In the 1990s drylands experienced highest population growth rate

Drylands tend to have the lowest levels of human well-being
including the lowest per capita GDP and the highest infant mortality rates

Drylands are very vulnerable to changes during the next 50 years

Major portion of the drylands is already degraded, even up to the point of desertification

Africa and Asia seriously affected by desertification

Source: simplified according to Thomas 1997, MA 2005, Graph: M. Akhtar-Schuster 2004, MA 2005

UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY

UNU-INWEH

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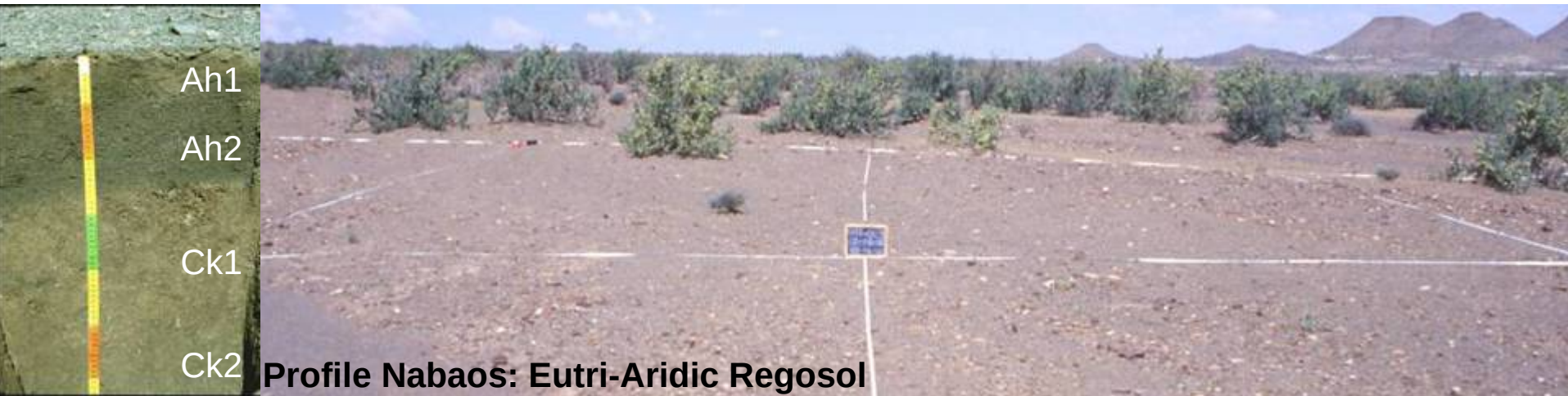
Independent Scientific e.consultation by DesertNet International & UNU-INWEH in 2010

As a follow up to the process initiated at the Conference of the Parties-9 to the UNCCD, **"on how to organize international, interdisciplinary scientific advice to support the Convention process" (ICCD/COP(10)/CST/6. 2011)**, DNI jointly with United Nations University set up an international science-based e-consultation in 2010 to assess the needs and means for the organization of independent scientific advice to the UNCCD and its Committee on Science and Technology (CST).



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UNCCD E-Survey in 2011

UNCCD-COP decision 18/COP9 requested the CST to conduct an e-survey on how to organize international, interdisciplinary scientific advice (posted on 19.07.2011 on the UNCCD website).

The UNCCD e-survey was posted on 19.07.2011 on the UNCCD website and provided the following four options:

1. Use of existing scientific networks;
2. Establishment of a new scientific network focused on specific networks;
3. Use of existing intergovernmental scientific advisory mechanisms;
4. Establishment of a new intergovernmental scientific panel on land and soil.

Differences between the two international e-consultations on how to promote international, interdisciplinary scientific advice to support the Convention process

DNI/UNU-INWEH-led e-consultation	CST-led e-survey
Led by an international, independent **scientific** group	Led by the **CST**
Focus primarily on the international **scientific community** (although ministries, NGOs, Development Agencies participated)	UNCCD also collected **official responses from Parties** through letters sent to National Focal Points on the four options (see introduction).
Questions also address the current **research impact** at country/global level.	Questions also address what regional and global **scientific networks already exist**.
Anonymous e-consultation which enables scientists to give detailed comments to each question in their **mother tongue.**	The results of the anonymous e-survey were done in three languages (English, French and Spanish) and the **official responses were fed into the assessment report**.

DesertNet International and UNU-INWEH Global e.Consultation on Land Panel

Photo: Niels Dreber, photo processing: Andrzej Suwald

Respondents classified in Annex:

I: Africa

II: Asia

III: Latin America and Caribbean

IV: North. Mediterranean

V: Central and Eastern Europe

NA: Not Affected

OA: Other Affected

Institutional classification:

EC: European Commission

DA: Development Agencies

UN: United Nations Organisations

NA: No Affiliation

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisations

NRI: National Research Institutes

IRI: International Research Institutes

Ministry

University

e.Consultation on "Land Panel"

4. In your opinion, can scientific activities in the field of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought lead to an increased awareness of these issues in environmental policy?

created by Gerhard Muche on 2009-12-18 Edit Delete R

- Negligible
- Low
- Medium
- Strong
- Very strong

Please give the reason for your decision (you can write in English, French or Spanish):

Save Please save your answer by pressing <Save>.

Contributors can select one answer or multiple answers

5. What scientific objectives do you forsee a panel on land degradation addressing?

created by Mariam Akhtar-Schuster on 2010-01-12 Edit Delete R

In this question you can set more than one tick.

- [ ] Land degradation and development issues (food security, poverty, ...)
- [ ] Ecosystem services
- [ ] Address current global environmental issues: CO2 increase and biodiversity loss (through IPCC and IPBES)
- [ ] Identifying land management options and their respective expepected benefits
- [ ] Economic assessment of land degradation
- [ ] Impact and cost efficiency of counter-measures
- [ ] Others, ...

Contributors submitted comments in their mother tongue!
This impacted the assessment phase but facilitated relevant contributions!

Please give the reason for your decision (you can write in English, French or Spanish):

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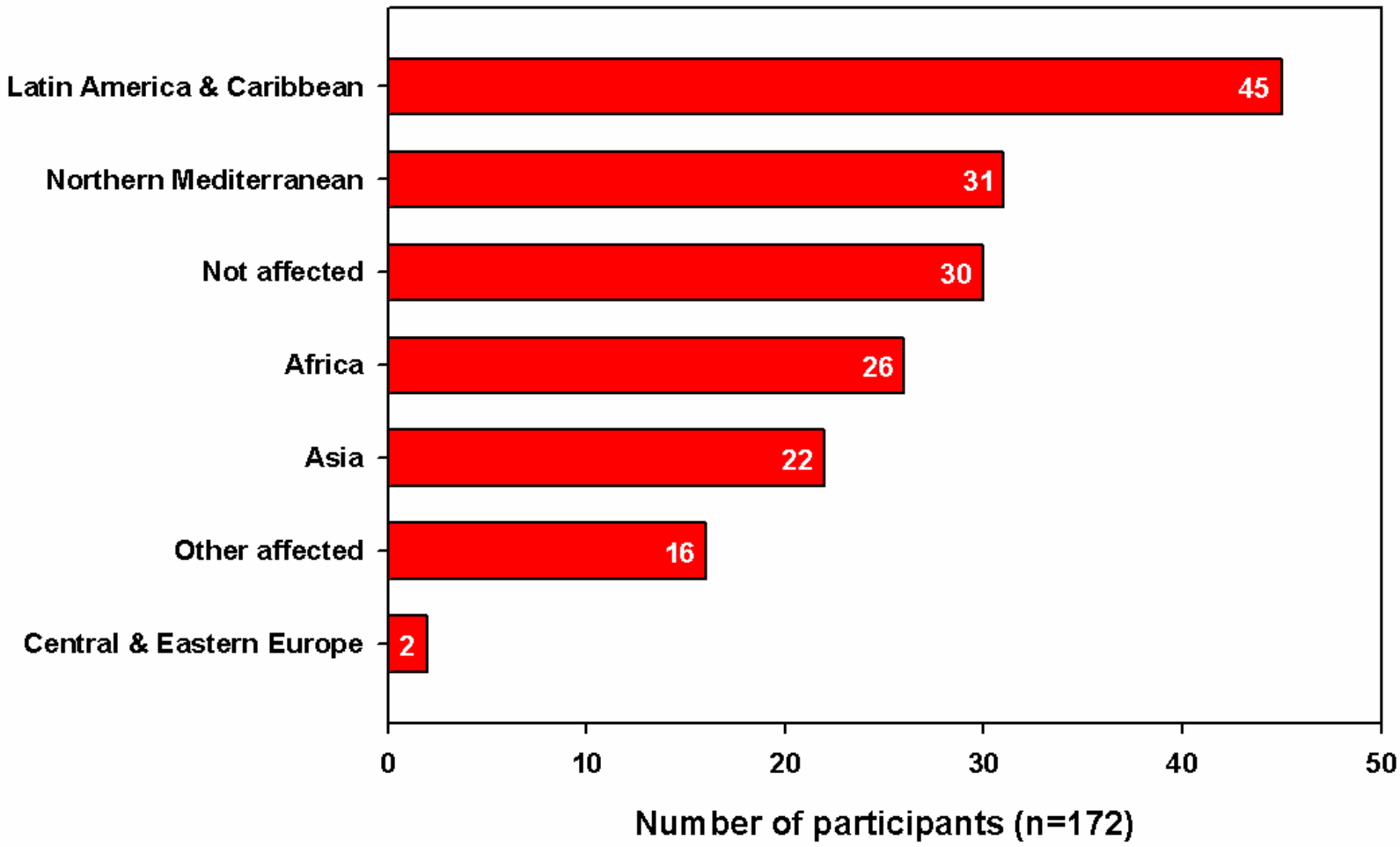
Participants classified by Annex regions



Summary (Q1-Q9)

- Q1: Current impact of desertification research on country level? → **Weak (58%)**
- Q2: Current impact of desertification research on global level? → **Weak (55%)**
- Q3: Need for better information for environmental management? → **Very strong (62%)**
- Q4: Increased policy awareness through scientific activities? → **Very strong (39%) or Strong (42%)**
- Q5: Scientific objectives for a panel on Land? →
  - **Land degradation and development issues (23%)**
  - **Land management options + expected benefits (19%)**
  - **Economic assessment (17%)**

Q6: Scientific scope of a panel on Land?

- **Land degradation in drylands (37%)**
- **Broader Land issues (47%)**

Q7: Scientific activities supported by a panel on Land?

- **Regular assessments and summaries for policymakers (19%)**
- **Knowledge management (18%)**

Q8: Opinion about the establishment of a panel on Land?

Essential (66%)

Q9: In your opinion such a mechanism...

Would require a specific intergovernmental Panel (31%)

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Some Possible Options to Answer the Need for a Platform on Land

- Based on the global scientific e.consultation -

Photo courtesy: N. Dreber

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Option 1	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Platform under a new UN agency on environment (which would succeed UNEP – as proposed by France).	An advisory platform to a specialised environment agency.	• A scientific platform encompassing all global environmental problems. • Would reduce overlaps.	• May dilute needed attention to land degradation. • Extensive time required for its establishment. Would not be independent of UN organizations.
Option 2	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Linkage to any new independent strategic body on food security.	A reformed Committee on World Food Security.	• Focus on links between land and food. • Cover issues outside IPCC or IPBES.	• Only linked to FAO; broader representation needed. • Would not consider non-food related land degradation.

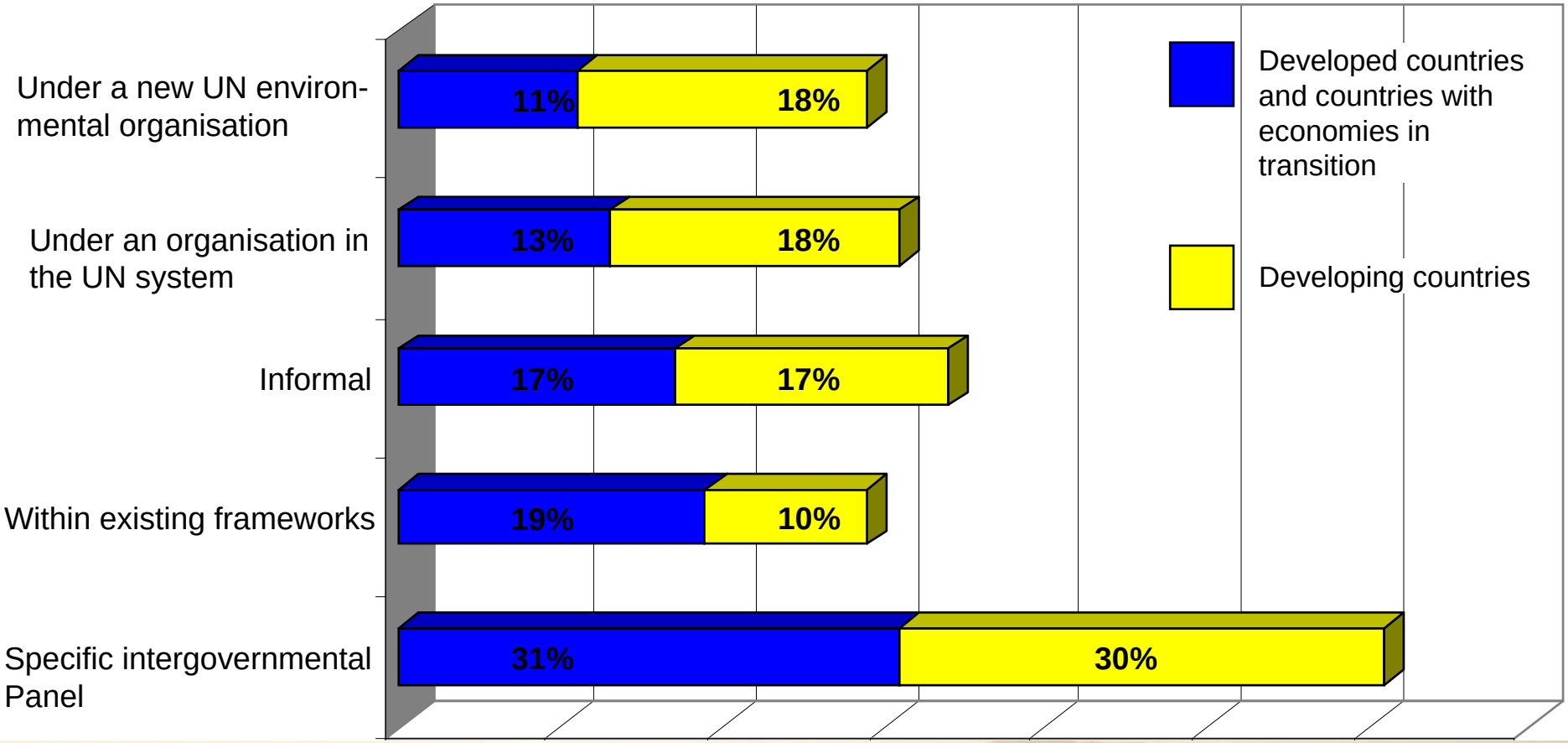
Option 3	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Linkage to the emerging IPBES.	The proposed IPBES will underpin (all) ´land issues´. Land issues could be injected into this newly emerging intergovernmental science-policy panel by creating temporary or permanent ad hoc technical working groups.	• IPBES would provide the urgency, attention and inclusion into intergovernmental discussions needed for land degradation. • Reduce fragmentation of scientific expertise on land.	• Reduced visibility of land degradation and desertification issues to policy and the general public. Awareness building and political will would be hampered, thus impairing efforts for implementing measures or attracting investments in land. • Prioritisation of biodiversity and ecosystem services may cause the institutional/political dimensions in need of consideration in broader land issues to be diluted or entirely neglected.

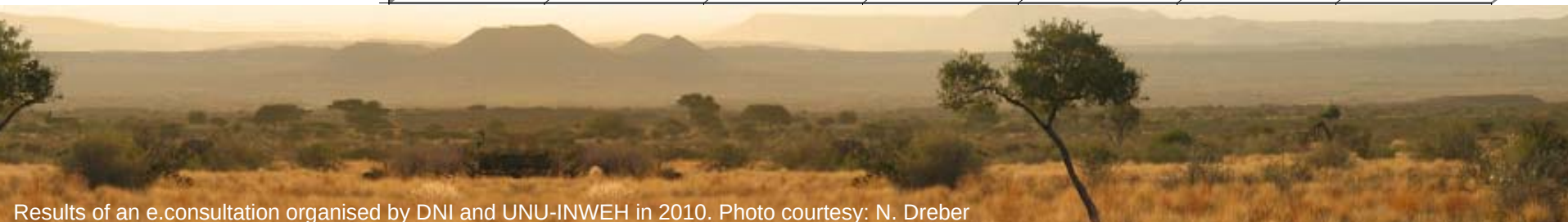
Option 4	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Network of Networks of international scientific bodies.	Creation of a polycentric, horizontal structure to facilitate networking of existing institutions at the local, national, regional and international levels which would allow a multi-stakeholder community to access programmes and policies at the science-policy interface.	• All relevant stakeholders would be integrated with solid foundations at the national and international levels, building upon existing structures at the local and regional levels. • Acceptance among a wide range of stakeholders. • Reduce the risk of duplication in structures and actions. • Foster independence of the scientific community. • Creation of easy open access for networks and advocacy groups, addressing concerns over national sovereignty.	• Decentralised institutions may have a lower visibility and less influence at the policy level, thus reducing the power to influence intergovernmental decisions.

Option 5	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
International platform on land degradation.	Would receive inputs from various sources (e.g. networks of scientists, IPCC, IPBES, UN agencies, national and regional scientific bodies, civil society organizations).	• Broad participation of interested parties with a focus solely on land issues as a cross-cutting concern.	• No 'champion' agency and no widespread donor support. • Would take considerable time and resources to establish. • System might become cumbersome by including all stakeholders.

Order of Preference to Overcome Structural Deficiency at the Science-Policy Interface on (Dry)Land Issues

(Results of a global scientific e.consultation organised by DesertNet International & UNU-INWEH)





Results of an e.consultation organised by DNI and UNU-INWEH in 2010. Photo courtesy: N. Dreber

Outcomes of the Plenary Discussions at UNCCD COP10 in 2011 on CST-coordinated e-survey

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(1) Reservations on the Establishment of a new intergovernmental scientific panel on land and soil:

- Rejection of creating a new panel or request for more information on existing mechanisms.
- Establishment of a new intergovernmental scientific panel on land and soil would separate different elements of ecosystems and prevent required holistic approach on DLDD.
- Integrate DLDD into the portfolio of the newly emerging Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

(2) Build on existing initiatives and not re-invent the wheel:

- Use existing resources to scientifically cover DLDD issues.
- Better coordination of sub-regional and regional activities and networks.
- Make existing regional and sub-regional networks more competitive and enhance cooperation between them.

(3) Establishment of a new intergovernmental scientific panel on land and soil:

- Thorough gap analysis of existing networks through the UNCCD.
- Results of e.survey underscores that a structural/institutional problem exists.
- UNCCD should become a global authority on scientific matters of land degradation.
- Create synergies between local scientific institutes / sub-regional, regional needs.
- Clear cost implications / Short-term strategy: build on existing networks.

Next Steps:

DesertNet International: Focus first on developing a network of networks by the scientific community, using an existing science-policy mechanisms to inject science on „land issues“ into decision-making processes.

In parallel, the policy arena should begin to develop the basis for a structure for land issues the can achieve the required legitimacy to inform policy-making.

COP10 request to the CST Secretariat:
Establishment of an *ad hoc working group* to on how to “organize international, interdisciplinary scientific advice to support the Convention process”.

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Establishing a new platform - Some principles requested by scientists:

- Who should be included in such a platform?
- What is a workable and cost efficient size?
- To whom should such a platform report?
- How can the platform ensure reliable information is produced from multiple knowledge sources, including from the local level?
- How will the scope of such a platform be defined?
- What new structural options are there beyond the current IPCC and IPBES models?
- How can existing expert structures be built upon to create a flexible and manageable platform that can adequately respond to real-time needs?
- What roles would scientific and policy actors play in constituting and commissioning a platform to promote land issues?

The Networking of Existing Science-Based & Dryland-Related Networks has Started!

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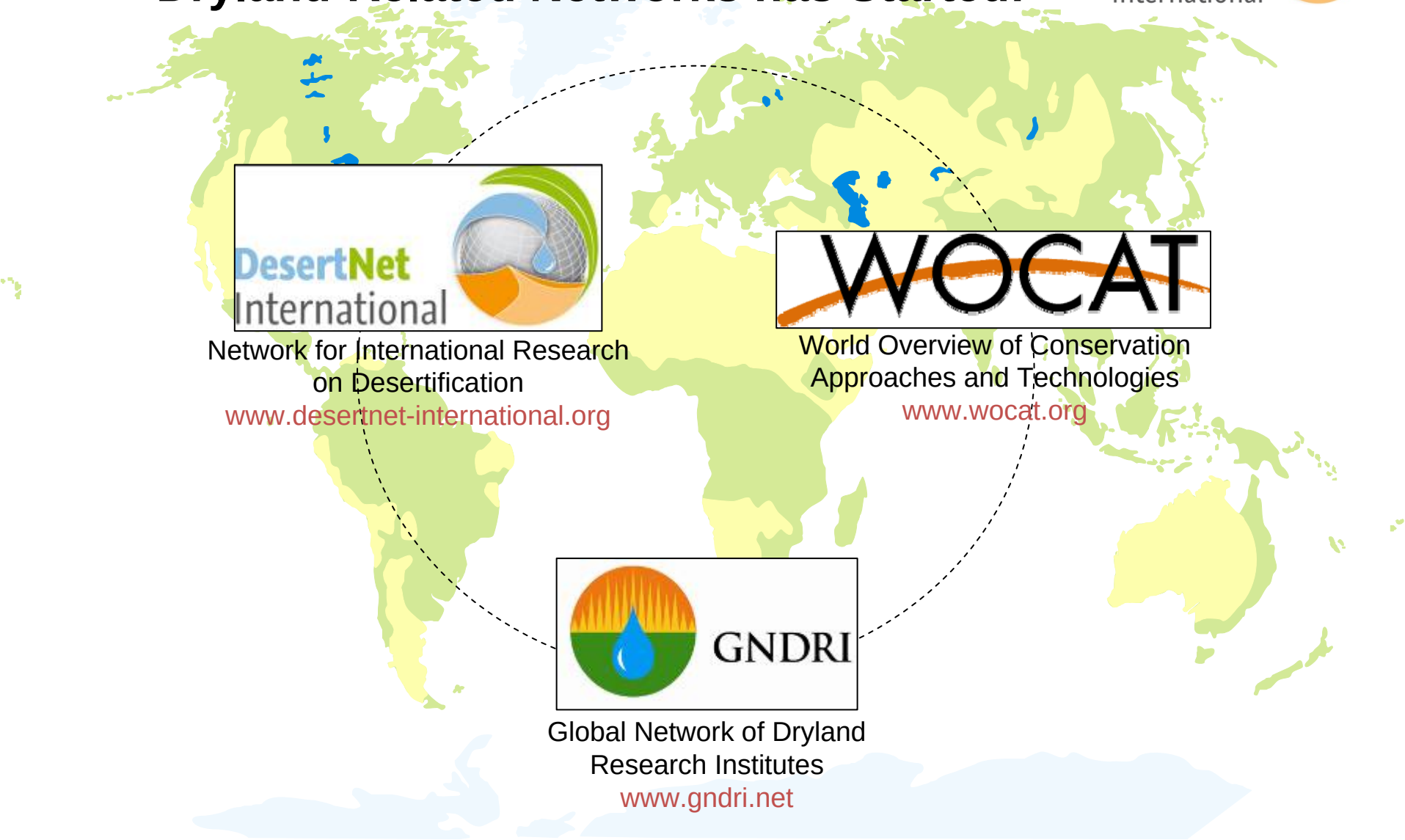

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Network for International Research on Desertification

www.desertnet-international.org

WOCAT

World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies

www.wocat.org

GNDRI

Global Network of Dryland Research Institutes

www.gndri.net

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