

**Madame Chair,
Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. On behalf of the Parties of the Annex V region, I am pleased to deliver this statement at the opening of the twenty-third session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC23).
2. We would like to express our appreciation to the Government of Panama for hosting us and for its warm hospitality.
3. As we gather in Panama, we reaffirm our shared commitment to advancing the objectives of the UNCCD and accelerating global action to combat desertification, land degradation, and drought. With land degradation intensifying worldwide and drought growing in severity and frequency, this session represents a crucial opportunity to review progress, identify gaps, and strengthen collective action.
4. The Annex V region attaches particular importance to the effective implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. We acknowledge the significant work accomplished under the Convention and emphasize the need for enhanced coordination, stronger science–policy integration, and adequate means of implementation to deliver transformative progress during the remaining years of the Framework.
5. In this context, Annex V Parties takes note of the ongoing work of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Future Strategic Framework (IWG-FSF). We expect that the deliberations of the IWG-FSF will provide a unique opportunity to modernize the Convention,

strengthen its global relevance, and ensure that the post-2030 framework is ambitious, action-oriented, and reflective of evolving environmental, social, and economic realities. Annex V Parties stand ready to engage constructively in this process and highlight the need for an inclusive, transparent, and Party-driven negotiation leading up to COP17.

6. Annex V Parties underscore the importance of reinforcing science–policy guidance under the Convention. As land degradation, drought, biodiversity loss, and climate change impacts become increasingly interlinked, decisions must rely on credible science and the best available knowledge. We encourage stronger cooperation among scientific bodies, including the SPI, national institutions, academia, and regional experts.

6 bis. Annex V countries acknowledge the need for an established and inclusive process on capacity-building under the UNCCD.

7. Drought remains one of the most serious and rapidly expanding risks for our region, impacting ecosystems, food security, water resources, and rural livelihoods. We therefore attach great importance to all UNCCD processes and initiatives aimed at strengthening drought preparedness, early warning, and long-term resilience.

8. In this regard, Annex V Parties highlight the Community of Learning and Practice on Drought Management as an essential platform for regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and capacity-building. By connecting policymakers, experts, and practitioners, it supports peer learning, promotes innovative drought-resilience approaches, and strengthens institutional and technical capacities. Annex V Parties expect that this platform will continue its work and receive the support needed for its sustained and enhanced operation.

9. The Annex V region also reiterates the importance of integrating gender perspectives across all actions under the Convention. Ensuring women's full and meaningful participation and strengthening their capacities is essential for achieving sustainable land management and land degradation neutrality. We are grateful and supporting the newly established UNCCD Women Delegates Fund and the Land Youth Negotiator Academy.

10. We further highlight that secure land tenure is fundamental to combating land degradation and achieving long-term drought resilience. Strengthening governance frameworks, empowering local communities, and ensuring equitable access to land resources remain essential priorities for our region.

11. Our region expresses its gratitude for the ongoing LDN TSP 2.0 programme and the valuable support it has provided in strengthening national capacities and advancing Land Degradation Neutrality processes. We strongly encourage the continuation and expansion of this programme to include additional countries that are still in need of technical and institutional support leaving no one behind. We also call for the exchange of knowledge and good practices among countries. Furthermore, we highlight the importance of sustained assistance for the effective implementation, monitoring, and achievement of the established LDN targets.

12. Finally, we call upon the Global Mechanism, Parties, partners, and donors to enhance financial support and mobilize innovative financing mechanisms including public-private partnerships and climate-related funding to scale up land restoration efforts. We highlight that support is needed to find sufficient resources to update National Action Programmes and align them with other environmental policies. Sustainable land management must be recognized as a long-term investment requiring predictable, adequate, and accessible resources.

Madame Chair,

The Annex V region stands ready to work constructively with all Parties to advance the Convention and to ensure that our collective efforts contribute to a more resilient, sustainable, and land-secure future for all.

I thank you for your attention!