



Conference of the Parties

Fifteenth session

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 9–20 May 2022

Item 7 (b) of the provisional agenda

Procedural matters

Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the business engagement strategy

Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the business engagement strategy

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 6/COP.14, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue engaging the private sector and to work with it in promoting the implementation of the Convention.

The COP also requested to explore options for promoting the increased involvement of the private sector for the development and mainstreaming of innovative and sustainable solutions to combat desertification/land degradation and drought and achieve land degradation neutrality.

The COP further requested the secretariat to report on the implementation of the decision at its fifteenth session (COP 15).

This document contains the reports of the secretariat on the measures undertaken to implement the above-mentioned decision and provides recommendations for the Parties' consideration at COP 15.



Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Background information	1–3	3
II. UNCCD business engagement strategy.....	4–16	3
A. Independent evaluation of the business engagement strategy.....	7–9	3
B. Private sector engagement strategy 2021–2030.....	10–16	4
III. Concrete involvement of business and industry entities.....	17–51	5
A. Land Degradation Neutrality Fund	19–21	5
B. Development of value chains.....	22–26	6
C. Sustainable Land Management Business Forum	27–32	6
D. Soil Leadership Academy	33–37	7
E. Promotion of youth entrepreneurship	38–40	8
F. Business for Land	41–46	8
G. Sourcing challenge.....	47–51	9
IV. Conclusions and recommendations	52–56	9

I. Background information

1. Decisions 5/COP.11, 6/COP.12, 6/COP.13 and 6/COP.14 lay the foundations for the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) to promote the involvement of business and industry entities in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).
2. The secretariat has developed a business engagement strategy (BES) outlining the objectives, modalities and conditions of UNCCD partnerships with business and private entities. The BES was presented for the consideration of the Parties at the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 12) and has since governed the relations between UNCCD bodies and institutions and the private sector.
3. At COP 14, Parties encouraged the secretariat and the GM to continue engaging with the private sector within the framework established by the BES, and to explore options for promoting the increased involvement of the private sector for the development and mainstreaming of innovative and sustainable solutions to combat desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) and achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN).

II. UNCCD business engagement strategy

4. Following the request of the COP, the secretariat and the GM have continued using the BES to engage with the private sector. This exercise has been undertaken together with a thorough review through due diligence to ensure transparency when working with specific and concrete business and industry entities.
5. The secretariat has continued its collaboration with the United Nations Global Compact and other organizations of the United Nations with the aim of sharing information and coordinating the involvement of the private sector.
6. The celebration of the 2020 Desertification and Drought Day focused on changing public attitudes around the leading driver of desertification and land degradation, including food, feed and fibre.¹ Within this framework, the secretariat and its partners engaged actively with companies involved in the production or manufacture of food and feed (agribusinesses, restaurants, large scale producers) as well as those involved in the fashion industry. This approach was extremely important to raise the importance of land in relation to providing important services such as the food we eat and the clothes we wear. Information on the event and the campaigns organized by the secretariat are available on the UNCCD website.²

A. Independent evaluation of the UNCCD business engagement strategy

7. A study of UNCCD business sector engagement was commissioned by the secretariat in 2020–2021, including an evaluation of business sector engagement and, building on the findings of the evaluation, the development of elements for a new business sector engagement strategy.
8. The evaluation recommended the following to the secretariat and the GM:
 - (a) The development of a long-term vision for business sector engagement with the UNCCD, identifying key strategic aims and priorities, expected results and associated modalities of collaboration. The strategy could also specify the main thematic areas of engagement;
 - (b) Further analysis, guidance and support targeting both country Parties and the business sector with the aim of advancing shared understanding and alignment of public and

¹ The theme for the Desertification and Drought Day was “Food-Feed-Fibre: Sustainable production and consumption”.

² <<https://www.unccd.int/actions17-june-desertification-and-drought-day/2020-desertification-and-drought-day>>.

private sector interests, collaboration modalities and expectations for effective country-level action addressing land;

(c) Further development of the UNCCD tools, facilities and capacity for effective business sector engagement, which may include:

- (i) a platform for the business sector to collaborate, access and share information, and exchange views on matters relevant to UNCCD priorities;
- (ii) revamping communications targeting the business sector, for improved transparency and alignment;
- (iii) reviewing the processes (e.g. around due diligence) to ensure they cover the various types of business sector actors and engagement;
- (iv) more collaboration and complementarity across the secretariat and the GM, e.g. through the creation of a business sector task team;
- (v) improving knowledge management on business sector engagement through a systematic tracking of related resources and results, and periodic reporting on related matters for external purposes; and
- (vi) internal learning and staff training on matters relevant to business sector engagement.

(d) Improving business sector engagement efficiency by focusing on strategic, high-yield partnerships, drawing on existing efforts and materials from other United Nations institutions on the matter, and engaging in collaborations with said institutions.

9. In addition to guidance-building on the evaluation recommendations, the study outlined further strategic outputs and related main deliverables as potential elements for a new UNCCD business sector engagement strategy. These outputs were defined around the broad focus areas of “Norms, Policies and Practices”, “Brokering and Convening”, and “Implementation Support”.

B. Private sector engagement strategy 2021– 2030

10. Building on the existing UNCCD BES considered by the Parties at COP 12 and the recommendations of the 2021 independent evaluation of the BES, the UNCCD prepared a working Private Sector Strategy with the aim of partnering with the private sector in a transition towards greater sustainability for healthy lands and people.

11. The strategy focuses on both private sector engagement and private sector development. As such, it is an extension of the BES’s current substantive focus to also include productive pathways that support land and ecosystem rehabilitation.

12. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030 will require an acceleration of transformative change and innovation in the production and consumption systems within the food, fibre and feed sectors. The SDGs cannot be achieved solely through public investment and official development assistance. Achieving SDG 15 (Life on Land) requires private sector investment and a transition to sustainable productive practices at scale. The strategy aims to support the work of UNCCD country Parties and UNCCD institutions (the secretariat and the GM) to tap into these opportunities.

13. The conversion of land for agriculture is the leading driver of land-use change, primarily to meet the demand for food, feed, fibre and bioenergy production. Changing the way we produce and consume will play a major role in reversing land degradation and biodiversity loss and mitigating climate change. The involvement of the private sector in the restoration and protection of ecosystems is key to ensure sustainable supply chains that do not threaten future generations. To contribute to this, the UNCCD plans to increase its efforts to engage the private sector to support a fundamental re-think around productive capacities in favour of nature-positive outcomes that also deliver socioeconomic benefits.

14. The overall vision of the UNCCD Private Sector Strategy 2021–2030 is that achieving the SDGs by 2030 will require accelerated transformative change and innovation in the

production and consumption systems, particularly within the food, fibre, and feed sectors. The strategy also promotes value chains with a net positive impact on lands and people.

15. The main goal of the UNCCD Private Sector Strategy is to crowd-in private sector expertise, innovation, solutions and funding to achieve the relevant SDGs, in particular SDG 15 and Target 15.3 concerning land degradation and drought, as well as any relevant COP decisions.

16. The strategy focuses on two main objectives: (i) facilitating investments and technology for sustainable production as a catalyser for a transition to sustainable land use, and (ii) promoting the expansion of value chains for sustainable consumption for healthy lands and people. To achieve these, six key action areas are proposed:

- (a) Engage strategically with multi-stakeholder investment platforms;
- (b) Facilitate impact investments in favour of healthy lands;
- (c) Support governments in identifying blended finance solutions;
- (d) Foster the scaling up of new technologies and facilitate technology transfer in sectors with a heavy land footprint (food, feed, fibre and extractive industries);
- (e) Accelerate a shift towards sustainable value chains to provide better options for consumers;
- (f) Promote the consumption of land-positive products and brands.

III. Concrete involvement of business and industry entities

17. In the last biennium, the secretariat and the GM have been working on and developing partnerships with business and industry entities with the aim of strengthening the involvement of the private sector in the implementation of the Convention and in the achievement of LDN.

18. The following concrete partnerships and programmes have been undertaken with the private sector following the guidelines set out in the BES and the private sector strategy.

A. Land Degradation Neutrality Fund

19. The secretariat and the GM have continued collaborating with the management of the LDN Fund in facilitating knowledge and information sharing on the operations and achievements of the Fund.

20. The secretariat also facilitated two meetings between civil society organizations (CSOs) and the LDN Fund Manager to provide information on the Fund and the potential role that CSOs could play. Two members of the current UNCCD civil society panel have been considered as members of the LDN Fund Strategic Board. The purpose of the board is to make recommendations on the Fund's strategic direction and ensure its alignment with policies to fight land degradation and climate change.

21. Additional information on the Fund was made available to the Parties at the nineteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 19³) and will be presented by the GM to CRIC 20 through the report by the GM on progress made on the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention.⁴

³ Document ICCD/CRIC(19)/3 on the Operationalization of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund.

⁴ Document ICCD/CRIC(20)/5.

B. Development of value chains

22. On the basis of experiences undertaken in the Sahel region, the GM is piloting the integration of additional economic parameters to ensure increased returns on investment for local communities. This work includes:

(a) Jointly with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the GM is exploring the development of an automated satellite-based identification system for key tree crops in the region which will allow for the stocktaking of economic potential. This work will also include the deployment of drones to support the development of the automated system;

(b) The GM has also successfully mobilized resources for the introduction of effective and sustainable land management (SLM) practices with women farmers in rural communities in Mali.

23. From a global perspective, the GM is spearheading new research on climate change and land degradation risks faced by value chains globally. This will allow farmers and producers to prepare and adapt to climate change, while at the same time profiting from emerging opportunities.

24. The GM also continues to support the identification of innovations and new approaches in value chains. Together with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the GM launched a global challenge to identify key innovations in clean tech and sustainable land management. The GM also supported the World Economic Forum (WEF) in the organization of their first trillion trees challenge for the Great Green Wall (GGW).

25. The GM is supporting the government of Côte d'Ivoire in the development of the Abidjan Legacy Programme. The proposed programme will focus on the sustainable transition of key Côte d'Ivoire commodities to ensure more sustainable and regenerative land use, especially for land used for cocoa bean production. The programme will focus on both mitigation and adaptation measures and will also call for a more rapid implementation of full traceability in the cocoa bean value chain.

26. Additional information on work related to productive capacities can also be found in document ICCD/CRIC(20)/5.

C. Sustainable Land Management Business Forum

27. The secretariat, together with the government of India, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, organized the fifth SLM Business Forum on the sidelines of COP 14.

28. More than 100 business representatives, government officials and civil society representatives adopted a declaration⁵ that was integrated into the final report of the COP 14. In the declaration, the participants recognized that the world must build a future that prevents, minimizes and reverses desertification and land degradation while mitigating the effects of drought.

29. They also called on all companies to join them in their collaborative effort to implement SLM practices and land restoration as part of the transition to a sustainable global economy to help halt and reverse land degradation and restore degraded ecosystems, while managing land resources sustainably to help communities prosper.

30. Businesses also emphasized their critical role in creating sustainable food and land use systems and committed to action towards a land-degradation neutral world, prioritizing solutions for SLM and soil health, value chain and landscape-based approaches, climate and

⁵ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-12/ICCD_COP%2814%29_23-1918294E.pdf>, page 18.

water-smart solutions to help strengthen the resilience of communities and improve livelihoods through robust business decision-making.

31. The UNCCD Delhi Declaration from Business also called on the governments to engage in a range of policy shifts, including:

- (a) Harmonizing decisions coherently within the United Nations framework;
- (b) Regulating in support of innovation for the purpose of SLM;
- (c) Supporting incentive mechanisms that reward the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of nature;
- (d) Enabling public and private sector dialogue, collaboration and knowledge exchange;
- (e) Developing clear policies and targets and ensuring synergies across wider environmental partners and society at large;
- (f) Harnessing the role of market-based mechanisms, including carbon markets;
- (g) Increasing the emphasis on public-private financing mechanisms;
- (h) Supporting resilient rural livelihoods through entrepreneurship and climate adaptation measures;
- (i) Strengthening local land tenure and rights with the recognition of women and youth.

32. The sixth session of the SLM Business Forum is expected to take part back-to-back with COP 15 with the support of the government of Côte d'Ivoire.

D. Soil Leadership Academy

33. The secretariat and the GM have continued supporting the implementation of the Soil Leadership Academy during the past biennium.

34. The resources provided by the initiative were fundamental to support the work of the secretariat as lead United Nations agency for Action Track 3 (Boost Nature-Positive Production) for the United Nations Food Systems Summit held in September 2021. Specific information on the work undertaken by the secretariat is available in document ICCD/COP(15)/4 on the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies

35. As reported in document ICCD/CRIC(20)/5 of the GM, additional support was provided to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development to prepare a Soil Investment Hub to provide, together with Just Rural Transition and the Croatan Institute, guidance and decision-making tools to enable companies to plan for effective soil investments.

36. Together, they prepared the "Soil Investment Guidance Report" to help food and agriculture companies invest in impactful, high-value, and long-term solutions for healthy soils along their supply chains and beyond. The intention of this work was to standardize the classifications of soil as a value-chain asset, qualify, quantify and demonstrate the private and public benefits of investing in soil health practices and provide a portfolio of soil investment mechanisms that can be prioritized to scale up healthy soil solutions.

37. In the coming months, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development will launch a toolkit to help companies monitor and report on the impact of their soil investments for the company and stakeholders. The toolkit would also be able to share knowledge on best practice for each specific soil investment type based on a company's place in the value chain, and to collaborate for collective action.

E. Promotion of youth entrepreneurship

38. In the framework of the “Land-based jobs for youth” webinars organized by the secretariat and Deutsche Welle, the secretariat collaborated with youth-led companies and initiatives working with the land using sustainable value chains.

39. The webinar series gave the opportunity to portray the work undertaken by several youth-led companies (all the participants were under 35 years old), including:

(a) Complete farmer⁶: a digital platform for young people to access available land for establishing a farm in Ghana;

(b) eGro⁷: a Danish company working to promote agroforestry and permaculture to protect land and reverse climate change;

(c) Tsoo13⁸: an initiative launched by an agripreneur in Botswana;

(d) BeeHub⁹: a social enterprise aimed at promoting education and the conservation of bees in Guatemala;

(e) Farmizen¹⁰: an Indian company that connects consumers with organic local farmers through an app;

(f) TreePlanet¹¹: a smartphone-based tree planting game that plants actual trees and promotes reforestation;

(g) The Cacao Project¹²: an initiative promoted by a chef and farmer which provides cacao seeds to farmers in the Philippines;

(h) Food Santé¹³: a production and processing company for agri-food products in Mali.

40. Additional information on the organization of the webinars is contained in document ICCD/COP(15)/12 on the participation and involvement of CSOs in meetings and processes of the UNCCD.

F. Business for Land

41. Business activities can have a significant impact on land at every point along the value chain, from the sourcing of materials to the cultivation, transportation, production, operations, etc. Forming strategic partnerships with the business sector and engaging it, beyond financial support, in UNCCD implementation is therefore essential for the world to deliver on its commitment to protect land, restore degraded land and scale up actions for combating DLDD and achieving LDN.

42. The growing awareness of consumers and businesses of the importance of topics such as corporate social responsibility has led to an increasing trend in the active participation of the business sector in addressing global environmental issues, and investors increasingly taking environmental, social and governance standards into consideration with investment decisions. In this context, it is important to boost the momentum and attract business sector support and collaboration for LDN.

43. The UNCCD, together with the government of the Republic of Korea, presented the Business for Land initiative on the sidelines of the 10th anniversary celebrations of the Changwon Initiative. Several companies and foundations, including Mirova, Elyx Foundation, GS Retail Co. Ltd., Hyundai Livart and the World Business Forum on

⁶ <<https://www.completefarmer.com/>>.

⁷ <<http://www.egro.dk/>>.

⁸ <<https://www.facebook.com/Tsoo13-248266458878172/>>.

⁹ <<https://www.beehubguate.com/>>.

¹⁰ <<https://www.farmizen.com/>>.

¹¹ <<https://treepla.net/>>.

¹² <<https://louisemabulo.com/the-cacao-project>>.

¹³ <<https://anzishaprize.org/fellows/adama-kante/>>.

Sustainable Development, participated virtually in the presentation, providing the first business for land commitments. The official launch of the initiative will take place at COP 15.

44. The programme aims to facilitate business sector engagement in the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of LDN through strategic partnerships and networking among interested stakeholders, including local communities working on the ground. It will provide opportunities for peer learning and information exchange on innovative and sustainable solutions for combating DLDD, as well as sustainable business models for enterprises contributing to achieving LDN.

45. The programme was conceived and designed to focus on two main components:

- (a) Gathering companies' pledges and commitments to achieve LDN;
- (b) Identifying concrete business lead projects and partnerships to implement the UNCCD and achieve LDN.

46. The Business for Land initiative will act as a platform to bring together business sector partners from all around the world in supporting and implementing LDN measures.

G. Sourcing challenge

47. The GGW Sourcing Challenge is a campaign led by the GM, in collaboration with the WEF and other partners, which seeks to enrol major corporate partners in a mission of transforming the Sahel via market-driven, sustainable and ethical supply chains. The objective is to gain commitments to working with ingredients sourced from small scale producers in the Sahel. This challenge will focus on a range of ingredients with a combination of market and impact potential, including fonio, moringa, gum Arabic and many more. In its second stage, the sourcing challenge will focus on dryland products globally.

48. The integration of nature-positive agricultural production into global supply chains with clear and positive economic, social and environmental impacts is a way to not only ensure sustainable impact along the GGW but also as an example of how food and agroforestry systems can transition towards nature-positive actions. The main aim of the sourcing challenge is to increase sustainable economic linkages towards the GGW.

49. As part of the challenge, global supply chain managers will be invited to integrate dryland products into their supply chain. This could be in the form of adopting a new product line (e.g. moringa oil), highlighting an existing product line (e.g. shea) or using dryland products as a composite input (fonio). Supply managers will have to adhere to specific geographical standards, as well as environmental standards and basic standards, such as being part of the Global Compact.

50. Companies that commit to being involved will become official sponsors of the GGW, entitling them to communicate their participation to their staff, shareholders and consumers. Case studies and data on social impact will also be provided.

51. The sourcing challenge will include a sector-wide consultation, including a larger public stakeholder consultation (online) and a virtual workshop, inviting producers, retailers and other stakeholders to provide input on the different steps proposed.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

52. The secretariat and the GM have continued engaging actively with the business and industry entities in the implementation of the UNCCD and the achievement of LDN.

53. In doing so, they have strengthened their tools through the evaluation of the BES and the preparation of the private sector engagement strategy 2021–2030 which are currently guiding the transparent and diligent method of working with companies. The application of due diligence has been proven to be an extremely useful means of engaging with reliable companies.

54. New, recently developed initiatives set to be implemented in the coming months, including “Business for Land” and the “Sourcing Challenge”, have a great potential to encourage companies to commit and invest in the protection and rehabilitation of the land.

55. Looking ahead, the secretariat and the GM could continue working with business and industry entities, exploring those that are working in the food – feed – fibre sectors, particularly in agribusiness and the fashion industry.

56. Based on the above, elements for a draft decision have been integrated into document ICCD/COP(15)/21 for the consideration of the Parties.
