



United Nations

ICCD/COP(15)/15



Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.: General
24 February 2022

Original: English

Conference of the Parties

Fifteenth session

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 9–20 May 2022

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Policy frameworks and thematic issues

Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Drought

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By decision 23/COP.14, the Conference of the Parties (COP) provided its guidance to the work of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) on addressing drought and requested the secretariat to report on the implementation of that decision at its fifteenth session (COP 15). In addition to following-up on the aforementioned decision, COP 15 will consider the next steps in addressing drought under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) from different perspectives and with a broad scope of background information, including the report of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on drought and the recommendations of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI). This document seeks to provide an overview of the thereby emerging UNCCD drought agenda, including key points of the IWG report and the SPI recommendations, but with focus on the activities carried out, and proposed, by the secretariat to the UNCCD and the GM. The content is presented under five interlinked areas: (1) drought policies; (2) early warning, monitoring and assessment; (3) knowledge sharing and learning; (4) partnerships and coordination; and (5) drought finance. Particular attention is given to the specific challenges related to the impacts of drought on vulnerable communities, ecosystems and economies, including the COVID-19 pandemic and its interaction with drought.



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I. Background

1. Droughts are growing globally due to climate change and other human factors such as changes in land and water management. Exacerbated by climate change, intense and prolonged droughts are particularly reducing food production, water availability, causing economic losses, environmental degradation and, at the extreme, lead to human suffering, displacement, conflict, and loss of life.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the severity of the impacts of droughts, restricting employment opportunities and income in economies already on the brink of collapse, and hitting those whose health and well-being are already compromised the hardest. The combined, devastating impacts of drought and the pandemic are making vulnerable communities even more vulnerable, with ripple effects extending from the local to global scale. Strengthening drought resilience is one of the critical preconditions for building forward better from COVID-19 and ensuring improved preparedness for future pandemics, as well as resilience in the face of other global challenges.¹
3. Drought is at the core of the mandate of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), as presented in Article 2² of the Convention. The role of the UNCCD process in addressing drought has grown since the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) in 2017. COP 13 included drought matters as one of the five objectives of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, adopted an advocacy policy framework for drought, and approved a Drought Initiative that provided up to EUR 1.8 million for action on drought. This Initiative focussed on enhancing drought preparedness systems by supporting countries in developing a National Drought Plan (NDP), facilitating regional efforts to reduce drought risk, and building a Drought Toolbox.³
4. COP 14 in 2019 expanded the considerations of the UNCCD in addressing drought. It continued the Drought Initiative implementation with updated guidance, with emphasis on increasing collaboration and partnerships with relevant agencies, organizations, and platforms. It requested the Global Mechanism (GM) to identify potential and innovative financing instruments, based on clearly identified added value, for addressing drought, and to make available related information and guidance for facilitating the access of Parties to these instruments.⁴
5. Furthermore, COP 14 established an Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) to take stock of and review the existing policy, implementation, and institutional coordination frameworks, including partnerships, on drought preparedness and response, and to consider options for appropriate policy, advocacy and implementation measures at all levels for addressing drought effectively under the Convention. COP 14 also appointed the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) to provide science-based evidence on the approaches for the assessment and monitoring of the resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems to drought, also considering the effect of climate change on drought risk.⁵
6. In light of the above, COP 15 will consider the next steps in addressing drought under the UNCCD from different perspectives and with a broad scope of background

¹ For more information on interlinkages between COVID-19 and drought, please see <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2021-10/1767_UNCCD_FAO_Drought_COVID_cb5547en%281%29.pdf>.

² Article 2.1: “The objective of this Convention is to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, through effective action at all levels, supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements, in the framework of an integrated approach which is consistent with Agenda 21, with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in affected areas.”

³ Decision 29/COP.13.

⁴ Decision 23/COP.14.

⁵ Decisions 18/COP.14 and 23/COP.14.

information, including the IWG report and the recommendations of the SPI.⁶ This document seeks to provide an overview of the UNCCD drought agenda, including key points of the IWG report and the SPI recommendations, but with a focus on the activities carried out and proposed by the UNCCD secretariat and the GM. The content is presented under five interlinked areas, which represent the key dimensions of addressing drought under the UNCCD: (1) drought policies; (2) early warning, monitoring and assessment; (3) knowledge sharing and learning; (4) partnerships and coordination; and (5) drought finance.

II. Drought policies

7. The basis for the drought policy approach in the UNCCD context was revamped at the High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy (HMNDP) that was held in Geneva from 11 to 15 March 2013. It was co-organized by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the UNCCD, in collaboration with a number of partners. The ‘three pillars’ approach resulting from that meeting – (i) monitoring and early warning systems; (ii) vulnerability/impact assessment; and (iii) practical risk mitigation measures – has been the guiding principle for the drought policy work under the UNCCD at national, regional and global level.

8. As a key component of the Drought Initiative, the GM, in collaboration with the secretariat, has supported Parties in preparing NDPs anchored firmly in the three-pillar approach established at the HMNDP mentioned above. This support aims to revise the national-level approach to the way drought is managed – from a reactive and crisis-based perspective towards a proactive and risk-based one. The NDPs that are prepared under the UNCCD must be aligned with and integrated into the existing relevant national frameworks. Of the 73 countries, from all regions, that expressed an interest in working with the secretariat and the GM to develop an NDP, 60 countries have finalized their plan within the framework of the Drought Initiative, while another nine countries are in the process of developing and finalizing their plans. Thirty-four completed plans are currently available on the UNCCD website.⁷

9. A preliminary analysis of the completed NDPs⁸ that the secretariat commissioned in 2021 confirmed the need for more effective coordination among relevant sectors and stakeholders in tackling the issues of drought. Many of them reported limited coordination among the institutions, sectors and stakeholders involved in drought management, and also lack of synergies at policy level. While one of the main aims of UNCCD support for NDPs is to specifically address this challenge – aligning existing national drought policies and tools into a comprehensive plan and bringing together key stakeholders from all relevant branches – it seems obvious that this is a demanding and time-consuming process that requires further effort as well as support.

10. With regard to another important aspect of the NDPs, namely effective mainstreaming of gender equality, in late 2019, the secretariat published a guiding document to support the stakeholders involved in the process of developing the drought plans to identify important measures and entries for ensuring the gender responsiveness of the plans. The GM, in collaboration with the secretariat, assisted four countries (Bolivia, Dominican Republic, India and Madagascar) in developing gender-responsive land-based transformative projects related to drought impact mitigation, within the framework of national voluntary land degradation neutrality target setting. In addition, the GM developed a value-driven partnership with counterparts such as the African Risk Capacity to further strengthen gender mainstreaming.⁹

⁶ Report of the IWG: ICCD/COP(15)/20. SPI recommendations concerning drought: ICCD/COP(15)/CST/3.

⁷ <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/drought-toolbox/page/drought-planning>>.

⁸ <<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2022-01/Analysis%20of%20National%20Drought%20Plans.pdf>>.

⁹ For further information, please see document ICCD/CRIC(20)/5.

11. The secretariat commissioned a study which found that 95 per cent of the NDPs recognize the specific vulnerability of women and children to the impacts of drought. The importance of women's role in facilitating education, awareness of and mitigation to drought disasters is also noted. The secretariat and the GM will continue their support for gender mainstreaming in the NDPs, as well as translating gender responsiveness into concrete action through their assistance in the preparation of transformative projects to implement the plans.

12. An independent evaluation of the UNCCD support for the development of NDPs¹⁰ indicated that the preparation of these plans helped countries to identify and recognize the linkages between relevant but previously disparate policies and activities. The evaluation noted that while the plans vary in quality and depth, they all provide a previously unavailable foundation and reference point upon which to build national drought preparedness. Many respondents consulted for the evaluation felt that the national drought planning process would have benefitted from a longer time frame and more resources to support broader, deeper consultation with national stakeholders. Many of them also noted a pressing need to mobilize resources and ensure that the plans are implemented. The UNCCD was expected to offer guidance and support during the next, critical phase in bringing forth the NDPs.

13. Drought policy and governance was one of the focus areas of the IWG (ICCD/COP(15)/20) and the first recommendation of its report is that all Parties should maintain their existing commitment to pursue concerted policies, partnerships and the progressively enhanced implementation of drought risk and impact management at all levels as a continuous process. Existing arrangements to mitigate the effects of drought under the UNCCD should be strengthened and additional activities should be pursued in order to begin applying systematic observation, scientific knowledge and a continuous process of re-evaluation to improve the effectiveness and coordination of international cooperation to facilitate the implementation of national plans and priorities.

14. In line with the IWG recommendation, the UNCCD secretariat and the GM will continue their support for countries in the development and implementation of NDPs. As presented in the next chapters of this document, the secretariat will focus on promoting effective early warning, monitoring and risk/impact assessment approaches, while also continuing and further developing its assistance in drought policy, knowledge sharing and capacity building. The GM will support countries in developing transformative projects to implement their NDPs, and further extend its activities concerning drought finance. Close collaboration and coordination with multiple partners will be an essential dimension of all work on drought under the UNCCD.

15. In its report, the IWG recognized the role and potential of regional level collaboration for, inter alia, monitoring and early warning, capacity building and knowledge sharing, as well as the support that may be provided by regional institutions, networks and platforms. The secretariat and the GM have already engaged in multi-country and regional drought policy planning activities as they can be very effective in addressing transboundary issues such as drought preparedness, exchange of experiences and co-learning, as well as cost-efficient to implement. They are as follows:

(a) The secretariat and the Drought Information System for Southern South America (SISSA) co-organized an online training workshop in November 2020 on the development of national plans and policies for drought in SISSA member countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay). The workshop outlined a step-by-step approach for developing national drought policies and helped to launch, design and implement national drought preparedness plans in the involved countries;

(b) Supported by the secretariat and the GM, two regional projects were implemented for Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member countries. The implementing partners are the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia

¹⁰ For further information, please see document ICCD/COP(15)/11.

(CAREC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for the Central Asia and SADC projects respectively. Both projects aimed to boost technical and institutional drought management capacities through enhanced data sharing on early warning and monitoring systems, drought risk profiling and feasible drought risk mitigation measures. They included training sessions to garner coordinated action and data sharing at national and regional levels, using the methodological framework and tools developed under the UNCCD. These training sessions targeted the UNCCD national focal points and also involved other relevant stakeholders.

16. The Central Asian project resulted in a comprehensive regional strategy for drought management and mitigation, adopted in October 2021, with an action plan for 2021–2030. It was prepared by the countries involved and further developed through two online stakeholder consultations with regional development partners, including the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture, FAO, WMO, Global Water Partnership, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), Germany's international cooperation agency, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, as well as a broad group of national stakeholders from the region.

17. The Central Asian Drought Resilience Strategy is based on the following premises: (1) building monitoring, risk assessment and drought prevention capacities; (2) drought mitigation, development of plans to address water scarcity and data dissemination; (3) capacity building and awareness raising; (4) regional cooperation.

18. The SADC project involved wide stakeholder engagements in the region, including national focal points, independent experts, water managers and policy-makers as well as key partners such as the FAO, the International Water Management Institute, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. It has produced a regional drought resilience strategy (2022–2032) that identifies nine strategic objectives for the region: (i) enhanced and reliable data collection; (ii) enhanced drought monitoring and forecasting; (iii) the dissemination of effective, credible and reliable warning messages to enable timely drought preparedness and response; (iv) stronger regional coordination; (v) enhanced drought impact assessment; (vi) enhanced drought vulnerability and risk assessment; (vii) priority measures implemented to limit the adverse impacts of drought; (viii) the implementation of priority measures to reduce drought exposure and vulnerability; and (ix) the establishment of a drought response mechanism.

19. The SADC regional drought resilience strategy aims to support countries in the region to synergize efforts in mitigating the impacts of drought while simultaneously promoting sustainable development and optimizing the productivity of the region's land resources. It will guide and inform the process of implementing streamlined action on drought resilience at the local, national, and regional levels under the overall coordination and leadership of the Secretariat to the SADC. It will also offer a platform for financing participatory action. The regional strategy will be launched during COP 15 by the Secretariat to the SADC and the partners.

20. The secretariat and the GM will continue promoting and supporting regional collaboration to create and strengthen regional platforms for the coordination and exchange of data, knowledge and experiences on drought indicators.

21. In its report, the IWG notes that drought deserves renewed political attention at the global level and that enhanced action should be taken at all levels. The IWG members discussed the potential of strengthened global support for national action, which could include, inter alia, a more concerted formulation of policy, target-setting, tracking, learning and funding at the global level. COP 15 will further consider the matter.

III. Early warning, monitoring and assessment

22. The SPI report on its work programme objective 2¹¹ notes that monitoring and assessment of resilience of ecosystems and vulnerable populations to drought is critical to understanding the extent to which ecosystems and societies are able to cope with, adapt to and recover from drought. The monitoring and assessment of resilience contributes to moving from “reactive” to “proactive” drought response regimes. The SPI recommends, inter alia, that countries conduct regular assessments and monitoring of drought resilience, and that the secretariat, with partners, supports respective capacities.

23. In its report, the IWG also recognizes the importance of accessible, inclusive and effective monitoring, early warning and action systems that support drought-resilient ecosystems, societies and economies. Its stocktaking revealed weaknesses in the current drought early warning systems, especially in the global systems for monitoring systemic effects of drought on land and ecosystem management. The IWG found that, particularly in the most affected areas, these systems cannot effectively inform assessments of vulnerability and needs for early land and water management action to reduce drought risks, nor support the improvement of drought management actions. Nonetheless, the IWG suggests using the existing early warning systems as a base and benchmark to progressively improve the national drought monitoring systems.

24. The secretariat and the GM are collaborating with several United Nations entities skilled in supporting the development of country-level drought monitoring capabilities. The main UNCCD tool for global monitoring and assessment of the impact of drought is the set of indicators for objective 3 in the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, which is used for national reporting every four years. The methods and datasets recommended for the objective 3 indicators¹² are aligned with WMO guidelines and based on existing, well-recognized index systems, where feasible.

25. The secretariat and the GM have also worked with the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) on an enabling activity project for implementing UNCCD COP decisions on drought, with the FAO as the implementing agency. This project includes a component on drought vulnerability assessment and preparedness for mitigation measures. The project was launched in April 2021 and the expected completion date is December 2023. The project comprises four components:

- (a) Supporting the IWG on Drought on ‘Effective Policy and Implementation Measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD’;
- (b) Enhancing the Drought Toolbox;
- (c) Enabling implementation of the NDPs;
- (d) A drought vulnerability assessment and preparedness for mitigation measures.

26. In the coming years, the secretariat and the GM will continue working with partners to support countries in improving their drought early warning, monitoring and assessment systems. Building on the evolving coordination and collaboration arrangements in the context of the NDPs, the secretariat and the GM propose to launch the special, time-bound Drought Resilience Accelerator initiative to develop national drought monitoring, with particular attention on improving drought early warning systems.

¹¹ Policy-oriented recommendations resulting from evidence on the approaches for the assessment and monitoring of the resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems to drought, under objective 2 of the Science-Policy Interface work programme for the biennium 2020–2021. ICCD /COP(15)/CST/3.

¹² Good practice guidance for national reporting on UNCCD Strategic Objective 3, issued in 2021. <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2021-09/UNCCD_GPG_Strategic-Objective-3_2021.pdf>.

27. Through this initiative, the secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with partners, will conduct, with a small number of countries, pilot activities that would, taking into account the specific conditions of each participating country,

(a) Establish a baseline for a state-of-the-art system to assess drought vulnerability, monitor and predict drought and project water scarcity;

(b) Set up a single drought information point by compiling data and analysis provided by multiple sources and making the country-specific information available to all stakeholders;

(c) Empower decision-makers to plan and manage the impacts of droughts through enhanced access to the drought early warning information; and

(d) Develop drought early warning communication to improve cross-sector and local-national information sharing.

28. In essence, the Drought Resilience Accelerator will aim to kick-start the development of an effective, coordinated drought early warning system in the involved pilot countries, while providing practical knowledge and lessons that the UNCCD intergovernmental process and individual Parties may use for further action on drought early warning, monitoring and assessment. The information provided through the initiative will help plan the next steps in those countries that have completed, or are in the process of completing, their NDP.

29. Strengthening drought resilience offers a prime tool for building forward better from COVID-19 and ensuring improved preparedness for future pandemics, natural disasters and the climate emergency. The Drought Resilience Accelerator will serve as a specific UNCCD contribution to the efforts of the global community and, particularly, its most vulnerable members, to cope with the impact of the pandemic and transit to stronger, more resilient economies, anchored firmly in sustainable development. In this context, the secretariat proposes to finance this initiative from the savings of the UNCCD core budget, most of which derive from the meetings and travel cancelled because of the pandemic during the last biennium. More information of the proposed financing of the Drought Resilience Accelerator is contained in the document on the programme and budget¹³.

30. The initiative is planned to be implemented in collaboration with the FAO, WMO, and other relevant partners. Similar to the two earlier initiatives launched by the secretariat, i.e. the land degradation neutrality pilot projects and the Drought Initiative, it is expected that the Drought Resilience Accelerator activities will succeed in attracting further partners and funding, and thereby expand well beyond the original number of countries in the coming years.

IV. Knowledge sharing and learning

31. During the biennium 2020–2021, the UNCCD knowledge sharing actions on drought focused on the upgrade and expansion of the Drought Toolbox.¹⁴ This Toolbox was developed through a close partnership between the UNCCD, WMO, FAO, the Global Water Partnership (GWP), the European Union Joint Research Center (EU-JRC), the United Nations Environment Programme Centre on Water and Environment (UNEP-DHI) and the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) at the University of Nebraska. It collates a large number of tools organized in three modules concerning: (1) drought monitoring and early warning; (2) drought vulnerability and risk assessment; and (3) drought risk mitigation measures, aiming to provide drought stakeholders with easy access to tools, case studies and other resources to support the development and implementation of national drought plans.

¹³ Document ICCD/COP(15)/5.

¹⁴ <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/drought-toolbox>>.

32. The content of the Drought Toolbox database was further developed based on suggestions received from Parties, regional and sub-regional stakeholders, and partners. It was enhanced with datasets for monitoring and early warning and improved risk assessment, and with gender-responsive tools for risk mitigation. A user survey was carried out and responded to by more than 70 Parties and regional organizations. The results were incorporated into the Toolbox platform.¹⁵

33. In collaboration with the FAO and UNEP-DHI, the secretariat organized a series of online training sessions and webinars to familiarize stakeholders with the functionality of the interactive Drought Toolbox. These webinars aimed to promote a coherent approach to the three pillars of pro-active drought management (i.e. the three modules of the Toolbox) by guiding the participants through the various tools available under each module. Usage of the Drought Toolbox was also promoted in various workshops and capacity building activities on drought. Supported by the GEF Enabling Activity project mentioned above, among the next steps in developing the Drought Toolbox content, the secretariat has initiated a partnership with UNEP-DHI and the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT). The aim is to improve the accessibility of case studies and best practices on sustainable land management, specifically aimed at drought risk mitigation.

34. In addition to the Drought Toolbox, the secretariat prepared and contributed to various studies, publications and policy briefs on drought, including the paper, *Thinking ahead: Drought resilience and COVID-19*,¹⁶ which was produced by a working group on drought preparedness led by the secretariat, as part of the FAO-led Global Framework for Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG).

35. The IWG underlines the importance of knowledge and learning – its report states that overcoming negative drought effects due to both climate and land-use changes must entail a continuous and adaptive learning process at all levels, including leadership at the global level and good practices for enabling ground-truthing from the ground. The IWG suggests that the secretariat encourages and supports Communities of Learning and Practice (CLPs) to pursue co-learning and collaboration for the drought risk and impact management issue, benefiting from the tools and activities in the Drought Toolbox and with particular emphasis on engaging local communities. The secretariat would support the dissemination of lessons learned in the CLPs to the appropriate national, regional, and global review and policy processes.

36. In the context of the aforementioned GEF enabling activity project on drought preparedness, the secretariat is working with the FAO on the establishment of a community of practice on drought risk management to contribute to knowledge sharing between countries and individual users. This collaboration will directly respond to the IWG's proposal, and will also serve to clarify how such CLPs can be best used in the UNCCD context and what the related resource needs are. Keeping in mind both the secretariat's very limited human resources capacity, and the workload that a successful, active CLP entails, the secretariat will need to secure additional human and financial resources to be able to host the CLP in a sustainable manner.

37. To complement its own capacity to respond to the needs arising within the Convention process and the expectations from the Parties, the secretariat has recently outlined an approach for capacity development and the exchange of knowledge networks. These networks build on similar arrangements within other United Nations system organizations, most notably those of UNEP, with the aim of drawing on up-to-date expert advice, scientific support and technical cooperation from specialized institutions for the UNCCD process. Such networks would be built to mutually benefit the secretariat and the partnering institution, with limited or no financial interactions.

¹⁵ <<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2020-10/Assessment%20on%20the%20Submissions%20of%20Drought-%20Policy%2C%20Implementation%20Frameworks%20and%20Tools.pdf>>.

¹⁶ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2021-10/1767_UNCCD_FAO_Drought_COVID_cb5547en%281%29.pdf>.

38. As the first priority, the secretariat is considering building a network for knowledge exchange and capacity development for drought preparedness. This would involve a diverse range of activities, such as the provision or facilitation of access to reliable data on drought monitoring and early warning systems, drought risk profiling, and guidance on drought risk mitigation strategies and implementation measures. Such a network could also provide expertise on specific drought topics and participate in/conduct advocacy and awareness-raising activities of mutual interest.

V. Partnerships and coordination

39. All UNCCD activities on drought were carried out in close collaboration with partners. The secretariat and the GM have built on existing collaboration and forged new partnerships to help Parties enhance drought resilience at all levels. More information on this section can be found in ICCD/COP(15)/4.

40. In the context of the Drought Initiative, support for the NDPs and to the development of the Drought Toolbox was provided by the WMO, FAO, GWP, EU-JRC, UNEP-DHI, NDMC, UNDP, the World Bank, the International Water Management Institute (IMWI) and the Union for Mediterranean. The IUCN served as implementing partner in the project for Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) countries while the Central Asia Region for Economic Cooperation (CAREC) was the implementing partner for the Central Asia Project. The GEF enabling activity project is funding many UNCCD activities on drought. The IWG members include representatives of the FAO and WMO, as well as those of several research institutions.

41. The secretariat collaborated with United Nations agencies and other organizations, institutions and country Parties in contributing to publications and co-organizing meetings and workshops including, inter alia, sessions focusing on drought resilience at the 2021 World Water Week, the Global Assessment Report (2021) of the UNDRR's Special Report on Drought¹⁷, the World Bank's recent flood and drought report, the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response conference on Space-based Solutions for Disaster Management in Africa, as well as various tasks of the United Nations Senior Leadership Group on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience, the UNDRR platform, and the European Drought Observatory/Global Drought Observatory. Preparations for the 2022 World Water Forum are underway: the secretariat is co-organizing action groups (sessions) on the topic of 'Protect and restore ecosystems and forests, including coastal and marine impacts, and combat desertification' and contributing to a session on 'improving resilience and adaptation to climate change, crises and extreme water disasters through strategies, planning and social capacity building'.

42. The secretariat collaborated with United Nations agencies and other organizations based in Bonn and co-founded the Bonn Water Network (BWN)¹⁸ which aims to strengthen the expertise needed in research, training, and practice to implement water-related Sustainable Development Goals around the world. The BWN brings together the expertise of the Bonn-based institutions renowned for working on water and related issues in international research, development policy and training by holding workshops, webinars and organizing high-level joint events.

43. The secretariat continues to serve on the steering committee of the WMO/GWP-led Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP),¹⁹ boasting partnerships in the wider network of players and processes on drought, with the aim of enriching the functionality of the Drought Toolbox and raising awareness about addressing drought under the UNCCD. The UNCCD is a permanent member of the United Nations Water (UN-Water) interagency mechanism which maximizes system-wide coordinated action and coherence on the cross-cutting nature of water, and part of the Joint Steering Group of UN-Water since

¹⁷ <<https://www.undrr.org/publication/gar-special-report-drought-2021>>.

¹⁸ <<http://www.bonnwaternetzwerk.de/>>.

¹⁹ <<http://www.droughtmanagement.info/>>.

February 2020. Through its membership in the UN-Water, the secretariat informs policy processes on the link between land and water, and supports the identification of emerging issues and the development of effective, collaborative responses on disaster risk reduction, climate change and the overarching 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The secretariat also contributes to the annual World Water Development report of UN-Water and participates in the biannual meetings. Furthermore, the secretariat is a member of the Water and Climate Expert Group led by the WMO and the Water Scarcity group led by the FAO.

44. The GM formalized its collaboration with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) through a Memorandum of Understanding. The partnership will promote a better understanding of the land, drought and disaster risk nexus, particularly with regards to climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction, nature-based solutions and food security, in order to reduce the effects of climate change and address the displacement and migration nexus. The GM and IFRC will collaborate to implement programmes of mutual interest and strategic priorities, such as the UNCCD activities addressing drought, the UNCCD Land Degradation Neutrality Programme, the IFRC Global Plans 2021–2025, and the Pan African Initiatives (Zero Hunger, Nature-based Climate Solutions, Red Ready Disaster Preparedness and National Society Development).

45. The IWG recognizes and supports the value of the holistic approach, led, and convened by the UNCCD, of working in concert with other relevant processes and partners. It recommends the UNCCD to continue to strengthen and enhance as well as forge new strategic partnerships at all levels, across sectors and with different public, private and civil society organizations.

46. Furthermore, the IWG considers that the UNCCD, with other partners including the UNDRR, should provide a global coordination mechanism on drought, based on existing platforms, such as IDMP, WASAG and UN-Water, to promote multilevel and multisectoral collaboration with international, regional, and national organizations and initiatives. This mechanism would include relevant United Nations organizations, development agencies, the private sector, knowledge centres, local and regional learning and practice networks, centres of excellence, and civil society organizations. It should do so by delivering strategic information and showcasing results achieved on the ground by mitigating and transforming drought risks.

47. In line with the IWG report, the secretariat and the GM will continue to further develop partnerships with a variety of organizations and stakeholders, with the aim of generating coordinated, effective and cost-efficient action on drought at all levels. Regarding the global coordination mechanism, the secretariat will continue consulting with its partners in the United Nations system on the potential aims, specific areas and added value of enhancing current coordination and collaboration platforms. One key area of such enhanced coordination and collaboration would be about drought monitoring and assessment, possibly leading to improved global and/or regional-level science and evidence-based policy guidance to support drought preparedness and resilience building. Similarly, following the SPI recommendations on its objective 2, support for national capacity building on drought early warning, monitoring and assessment could greatly benefit from coordinated action among United Nations system organizations, as well as other relevant partners.

48. It may be noted that, currently, there is only one core budget UNCCD staff member working on drought on a full-time basis. Although temporary assistance is provided through consultancies and voluntary contributions, there is an evident human resource gap that would require a longer-term solution. The secretariat is addressing this matter in the proposed programme and budget.²⁰

²⁰ Document ICCD/COP(15)/5.

VI. Drought finance

49. One of the four focus areas of the IWG stocktaking and consideration of options relates to resources and incentives for integrated drought management. As background information for the IWG work, the GM developed a technical report identifying potential public and private financing instruments and mechanisms for drought in order to make related information and guidance available to facilitate Parties' access to these instruments. The report explores how countries can fund a proactive approach to drought management and reorient existing funding sources management while tapping into new resources. It defines key barriers to financing drought and provides recommendations on the building blocks of drought finance (infrastructure, disaster risk, climate, environmental and agricultural finance) while outlining key instruments (credit, loans, bonds, microcredit, funds and blended finance). Furthermore, it proposes key steps in preparing National Drought Finance Strategies and how to incorporate these into countries' NDPs.

50. In addition to the above-mentioned report, the GM carried out two additional informal assessments on (1) the feasibility and options for establishing a Global Drought Resilience Fund, including options for scoping out a potential fund structure, and an operating and financing model; and (2) the potential for issuing Sustainable Land Bonds in alignment with land degradation, which could also include financing for drought. The results of these assessments will be available by COP 15.

51. In its recommendations related to drought finance, the IWG calls for additional technical knowledge and support for the development of national capacities and a global assessment process to examine and identify the financing needs and opportunities for drought management activities in relation to those already in existence. It also considers that the secretariat and the GM should take stock, together with relevant multilateral and bilateral partners, of the current processes and funding levels for drought management, with a view to improving and enhancing them. Other relevant global processes such as those on disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, financing for development and green recovery should recognize and support this UNCCD process. This could involve the UNCCD convening a global forum to take stock, assess and review effective financing to mitigate the effects of drought.

52. The secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with partners, will continue assessing the financing needs for drought management, and exploring measures to meet those needs.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

53. While the ongoing pandemic has exacerbated the impacts of drought on vulnerable communities, economies and ecosystems, climate change and various human decisions and activities and the changes in land and water management have altered the drought conditions. Policies to promote economic and urban development in water-scarce areas may exacerbate the drought situation. In extreme cases, droughts can also contribute to displacement, conflict and ecosystem decline, especially in areas where increasing temperatures are extending drought conditions.

54. The need is growing for targeted policies, effective collaboration and increased investments on drought preparedness, response, and recovery measures with a particular focus on developing countries that have been hit by drought in the last few years. Governments and international agencies are prepared to respond to the post-COVID-19 period in a manner that leaves no one behind while building forward better for a more drought-resilient society and ecosystems. These will require, inter alia, rigorous actionable and concrete measures that enhance drought monitoring and early warning systems, and reduce the impacts and vulnerabilities of economies, communities and ecosystems.

55. The positive experience and enhanced collaboration of the UNCCD, United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders within the framework of the Drought Initiative is an encouraging development. At the national level, it has

effectively transformed the approach to drought management from 'reactive' to 'proactive'.

56. The development and implementation of the NDPs has also boosted integrated and inclusive action to address drought, while coordination and interlinkages among policies and programmes in different sectors remain a challenge.

57. Drought forecasting, monitoring, early warning, and preparedness systems, as necessary measures for proactive drought management, are in need of further development in many countries. This is a critically important area for further support, collaboration and capacity building.

58. National action can greatly benefit from regional collaboration and exchange of experience. The regional strategies developed in Central Asia and SADC provide elements for similar efforts in other regions.

59. The interactive Drought Toolbox provides stakeholders working on drought with easy access to multiple tools, case studies and other resources. Its further upgrading and expansion, as well as related capacity building, in partnership with expert organizations, ensures that this tool remains useful and interesting in the future.

60. In line with the IWG recommendations on effective knowledge sharing and learning, new approaches are needed for the UNCCD. The co-organization of communities of learning and practice offer one potential solution while networks of experts and institutions for drought capacity building and knowledge exchange could provide further expertise and backstopping to the UNCCD work on drought.

61. The UNCCD has succeeded in fostering coordination and collaboration on drought with numerous key partners. Further strengthening of partnership building, coordination and information exchange can effectively advance global action on drought and assist in reinforcing the momentum of countries' cooperation at regional and global levels.

62. Many new prospects and options for drought finance are available or under development. The GM, in collaboration with the secretariat and partners, will aim to ensure that the financing opportunities target identified needs, and that the countries have the necessary capacity to access the available financial tools.

63. In the coming years, the secretariat will continue awareness-raising and policy advocacy on the importance of addressing drought under the UNCCD. In collaboration with partners, the secretariat will identify opportunities for such advocacy at the highest level, possibly by co-organizing a ten-year follow-up to the High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy in 2023.

64. Parties may wish to consider these conclusions with a view to preparing a draft decision for the COP based on the draft text for negotiations that can be found in ICCD/COP(15)/21, which, following decision 32/COP.14 (Para 5), contains all draft decisions prepared for Parties for consideration at COP 15.
