



United Nations

ICCD/COP(15)/18



Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.: General
10 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

The positive role that measures taken under the Convention can play to address desertification/land degradation and drought as one of the drivers that causes migration

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 22/COP.14, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat to (a) support Parties, upon request, in implementing the actions mentioned in paragraph 1 of said decision; (b) support regional and international cooperation and initiatives that aim to promote the positive role sustainable land management can play to address desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) as one of the drivers that causes migration; and (c) strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation with other United Nations agencies and programmes, regional and international organizations, and stakeholders to share information on the linkages between DLDD and migration.

This report describes the actions taken by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism in response to the requests contained in decision 22/COP.14 and ends with conclusions and recommendations for consideration by Parties at the fifteenth session of the COP.



Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Background	1–3	3
II. Progress made in implementing decision 22/COP.14	4–22	3
A. Support to Parties.....	4–10	3
B. Regional and international cooperation and initiatives	11–14	5
C. Cross-sectoral cooperation to share information.....	15–22	5
III. Conclusions and recommendations	23–27	7

I. Background

1. The Convention was the first multilateral environmental agreement to explicitly address migration and displacement issues in the context of sustainable development. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) preamble recognizes that “desertification and drought affect sustainable development through their interrelationships with important social problems such as poverty, poor health and nutrition, lack of food security, and those arising from migration, displacement of persons and demographic dynamics”.
2. The Convention is mentioned among the international instruments upon which the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration is founded. Adopted in December 2018 and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly the same month, the Global Compact recognizes that desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) are among the drivers/structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin. Countries that signed the Global Compact committed, at the operational level, to (a) develop adaptation and resilience strategies for sudden-onset and slow-onset natural disasters, including DLDD, taking into account the potential implications for migration, while recognizing that adaptation in the country of origin is a priority; and (b) harmonize and develop approaches and mechanisms at subregional and regional levels to address the vulnerabilities of persons affected by sudden-onset and slow-onset natural disasters by promoting sustainable outcomes that increase resilience and self-reliance.
3. Decision 22/COP.14 requests the secretariat to support Parties, upon request, in promoting the positive role that measures taken to implement the Convention can play to address DLDD as one of the drivers that cause migration and enhancing international cooperation that aims to implement several critical actions.

II. Progress made in implementing decision 22/COP.14

A. Support to Parties

4. Decision 22/COP.14 requested the secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to support Parties, upon request, in implementing actions related to:
 - (a) Promoting the restoration of degraded land as one way of changing the narrative in communities impacted by DLDD, and allowing UNCCD implementation to focus on new opportunities and solutions which offer hope to young people;
 - (b) Reviewing development policies, including land-use policies and agricultural practices, with a view to promoting large-scale ecological restoration;
 - (c) Fostering renewable energy within different national contexts, as appropriate, including through partnerships, as a means to catalyse restoration of land and the development of rural enterprise, taking into account all relevant Sustainable Development Goals;
 - (d) Promoting the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises in rural areas, inter alia, by creating sustainable value chains for local products, reducing pre- and post-harvest losses of agriculture and investing in clean rural industries;
 - (e) Encouraging responsible and sustainable investment by the private sector in land restoration, conservation and improvement, and livelihood development, as well as exploring how to develop a business case, including the consideration of public funding to facilitate increased private investment.
5. On the basis of a memorandum of understanding signed in 2014, the secretariat and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) continue to have a structured and rich collaboration with a strategy for action that has so far has focused on three areas of cooperation: (i) understanding and analysing DLDD as driver of migration; (ii) raising

awareness of the land–migration nexus and ensuring that the international policy processes duly recognize its importance; and (iii) developing policy and practices that link sustainable land management (SLM) and safe, regular and orderly migration. Forthcoming regional studies will be especially valuable in terms of turning policy into action.

6. The secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) have been supporting the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative, which aims to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land, sequester 250 million tonnes of carbon and create 10 million green jobs in rural areas via a mosaic of green and productive landscapes across 11 countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan). Under the guidance of the Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall and following the One Planet Summit held in January 2021, five action pillars are envisioned: (1) Investment in small and medium-sized farms and strengthening of value chains, local markets, and the organization of exports; (2) Land restoration and sustainable management of ecosystems; (3) Climate-resilient infrastructure and access to renewable energy; (4) Favorable economic and institutional framework for effective governance, sustainability, stability and security; and (5) Capacity-building.

7. After the One Planet Summit held on 11 January 2021 under the sponsorship of France, the GM was invited to coordinate the accelerator unit for the implementation of the Great Green Wall Initiative. The GM’s role is to monitor the financial and technical investments and the impact of projects being implemented; share expertise, knowledge, feedback and good practices; connect actors to scale up successful initiatives; and facilitate the involvement of the private sector, civil society and research/innovation. Pillar 4 (as described above) touches directly on the need to (i) create a positive enabling environment for communities to thrive in situ and provides an opportunity to address the DLDD-related drivers of migration, including incentives to attract youth to rural enterprises; and (ii) share the lessons learned with other UNCCD regions.

8. Upon the request of Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), the secretariat commissioned a study to provide evidence on the role of DLDD in driving out-migration in the region with the financial support of the Russian Federation, specifically to assess the impact of land-use practices on migration at the national and regional level, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The scope of the study was discussed and endorsed by participating countries, in collaboration with the IOM office in Vienna and the National Institute of Geography of Russian Academy of Sciences. In July 2021, a kick-off meeting took place to initiate national consultation processes and identify partnerships for data and information collection and analysis as well as for the dissemination of the outcomes of the study.

9. The Central Asia study specifically aims to evaluate the prospects for creating new jobs by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and improving the skills of rural youth and migrants returning to these countries. It will also demonstrate how land-based green growth and sustainable value chains can build a social safety net for rural populations through job creation, alternative incomes and disincentives for mass out-migration and land abandonment. The outcomes of the study will also be considered to (i) design gender-responsive transformative projects and programmes to achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN); (ii) inform governments, including at subnational level, on potential opportunities to create green rural jobs in migration-prone areas; and (iii) promote technology transfer and joint capacity-building. The preliminary results of the study are expected to be presented at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15).

10. Upon request, another study for the Western Balkans developed a theoretical model to leverage remittances and diaspora investments in land restoration/SLM in the region. In partnership with the IOM Regional Office in Vienna, Austria which provides support to IOM offices in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the secretariat is supporting the investigation of the DLDD–migration nexus and the potential role of the diaspora in financing land restoration activities. It will also design a financing mechanism with a business model, customer engagement plan and projected economic/financial returns, including an analysis of the incentives – monetary and non-monetary – and other complementary financial resources needed.

B. Regional and international cooperation and initiatives

11. Decision 22/COP.14 also requested the secretariat to support regional and international cooperation and initiatives, within the scope of the Convention, that aim to promote the positive role SLM can play to address DLDD as one of the drivers that causes migration. The secretariat and the GM have developed several partnerships in this regard, most notably with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in providing support to the Sustainability, Stability and Security Initiative (3S Initiative).

3S Initiative and the International Fund for Agricultural Development

12. Implementation responsibility and governance oversight for the 3S Initiative has been incorporated into IFAD's multilateral structures under the new Rural Resilience Programme. These structures provide the 3S Initiative with a sound institutional footing with respect to its operational implementation and fiduciary arrangements, including through the Trust Fund for the IFAD Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme. Potential financial contributors to the 3S Initiative will find these implementation and oversight arrangements to be credible and reassuring. The essential task at this juncture is to initiate fundraising based on an agreed strategy.

13. As part of the efforts to mobilize new resources for the 3S Initiative, the secretariat and the IFAD Financing Facility for Remittances are exploring the possibility of developing a model to leverage remittances and diaspora investment for land restoration/SLM in 3S Initiative countries in West Africa. A concept note was developed to address innovative financing models for land restoration/SLM; an analysis of incentives and other enabling factors that would facilitate this type of investment; an assessment of geographical scope with a focus on 3S Initiative countries, including the Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Somalia; and operational modalities for testing the model either within existing projects or by establishing pilot projects.

14. After initial discussions with the Green Climate Fund, the secretariat and IFAD agreed to jointly develop a concept note and funding proposal within the framework of IFAD's Enhanced Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP+) to support three countries in the 3S Initiative as part of a more expansive global coverage. The proposal will seek to channel climate finance to meet the overlapping objectives of ASAP+ and the 3S Initiative, specifically to reduce the climate change drivers of rural migration and unemployment. The secretariat is contributing to proposal preparation costs that will cover the following elements: institutional arrangements, implementation structure, investment criteria, best practice, private sector leveraging, climate rationale, financial and economic analysis, gender action plan, youth employment, stakeholder consultations, editing and formatting, climate impacts analysis and modelling, and environment and social safeguards.

C. Cross-sectoral cooperation to share information

15. Decision 22/COP.14 requested the secretariat to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation with other United Nations agencies and programmes, regional and international organizations, and stakeholders to share information on the linkages between DLDD and migration.

16. The secretariat has participated in conferences on DLDD and migration to move from policies to action within the scope of the Convention. In the past biennium, the relationship between urban and rural communities and the factors driving urban-rural migration; climate and security; and green jobs and livelihoods has gained special resonance.

1. Urban-rural linkages

17. Urban-rural linkages have been addressed at previous COPs. At COP 13, the Interactive Dialogue with Mayors concluded with the key takeaway message: "The ways in which cities are planned, financed, developed, built, governed and managed has a direct

impact on sustainability and resilience that goes well beyond urban boundaries.” At COP 14, the Local and Regional Governments Day organized by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability contributed to the High-Level Segment Ministerial Round Table titled “Rural and urban communities – failing or flourishing together”. The key messages from this round table included: (i) rural and urban communities need to act as partners and not competitors; (ii) land-use planning should be considered together with ecosystem conservation and restoration; and (iii) there is a need to strengthen linkages and promote collaboration between the public and private sectors to bring together sustainable supply and value chains. The COP 14 New Delhi Declaration encouraged local governments to adopt integrated land use management and enhanced land governance to rehabilitate the natural resource base that makes cities sustainable, taking into consideration the New Urban Agenda, including by reducing rates of land consumption and soil sealing along with biodiversity and ecosystem loss.

18. Subsequently, a strong working relationship has been established with the Policy, Legislation and Governance Section at UN-Habitat. This Section is responsible for the publication “Urban-Rural Linkages: Guiding Principles and Framework for Action to Advance Integrated Territorial Development” that will support Parties in revising national and subnational rural, urban and territorial policy frameworks. Future work being considered may focus on producing a policy brief and a technical guide to strengthen synergies between implementation and monitoring approaches on urban-rural linkages and LDN.

19. Along this line, a pilot project has been initiated in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to demonstrate the urban–rural linkages concept in connection with LDN and SLM within the framework of the Changwon Initiative’s Greening Drylands Partnership. The pilot project addresses an integrated urban–rural approach to be implemented in dryland urban and peri-urban areas of Ethiopia (four locations), with a focus on agroforestry interventions incorporating integrated land use planning and sustainable value chains (e.g. coffee). It aims to contribute to addressing multiple development challenges, including rural livelihoods, rural out-migration, food security, access to energy, and ecosystem protection, among other things. The outcome and lessons learned from the pilot project will provide input for refining the urban–rural linkage concept and the development of policy options promoting sustainable agricultural and rural development as well as sustainable resource management while contributing to achieving LDN through integrated land-use planning approaches. An overall approach to the Greening Drylands Partnership is provided in document ICCD/CRIC(20)/5.

2. Climate and security

20. Climate risk, migration and increased insecurity continue to be high on the political agenda, with land restoration and efforts to restore terrestrial ecosystems seen as a key measure for stabilizing climate-vulnerable communities. The secretariat was invited to contribute to the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM), a coordination mechanism for climate and security housed within the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, with input from the United Nations Development Programme and UNEP. This interagency body has the task of providing climate risk assessments to the United Nations Security Council and other United Nations bodies which synthesize inputs from different United Nations agencies and external experts. The CSM team has created an online Community of Practice to exchange ideas and contacts for project development and the organization of events. The secretariat has contributed to this work by describing the effects of DLDD on migration and instability in fragile areas and providing lessons learned from the 3S Initiative. The Drought Toolbox, performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) and LDN target-setting reports were also presented as potential sources of data for the climate-security risk assessment framework of CSM.

21. German think-tank adelphi partnered with the secretariat to hold a regional dialogue on climate change and security risks in North Africa and the Sahel in November 2019. The event was convened within the framework of the Climate Diplomacy Initiative, supported by the German Federal Foreign Office, with the Government of Morocco and the 3S Initiative also contributing to its organization. A Climate-Fragility Risk Brief on North

Africa and the Sahel was prepared as a background note for the event and widely disseminated across the climate diplomacy network. Since then, adelphi has continuously supported UNCCD advocacy by inviting the secretariat to present the 3S Initiative and other activities in numerous events on land, climate and security.

22. The Clingendael Institute, based in the Netherlands, focuses on climate security and advocates for topics presented at the annual Planetary Security Conference. The secretariat has been working closely with the Institute, especially on security-related events and publications, including an online round table organized during the Berlin Climate Security Conference 2021.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

23. Since COP 14, the menu and scope of measures that play a positive role in addressing DLDD as one of the drivers that cause migration have increased and widened. Countries increasingly recognize the links between climate and environmental change and population movements, which points to the potential of adopting human mobility measures to enhance the implementation of the Convention. For example, a bold new approach to the land restoration agenda, which includes the promotion of sustainable agriculture and its associated value chains combined with access to renewable energy, offer promising avenues for action to stabilize rural communities, strengthen urban–rural linkages and address migration pressures.

24. Given that most people who migrate do so in search of better employment opportunities, designing labor-intensive programmes for SLM and ecosystem restoration in the rural areas has significant potential. To address out-migration from rural areas affected by DLDD in the long term, priority should be given to actions that create meaningful livelihood opportunities through a continuum of land restoration activities which also strengthen land tenure, integrated land-use planning and territorial governance, and enhance green and blue infrastructure for sustainable development.

25. Policy interventions that favour a stronger symbiotic urban-rural linkage would be most impactful if they target vulnerable groups, including women, rural youth, refugees, and internally displaced persons in rural and fragile areas, and provide them with viable on-farm and off-farm employment opportunities. Access to renewable energy, water, and transport infrastructure as well as more sustainable regional food supply chains are some of the entry points to offer meaningful employment and unlock the development potential of remote rural communities.

26. It is worth stressing that policy interventions can and must favour youth. Youth are most likely to face migration pressure but will be vital to restoration efforts and, in a just transition to more resilient and sustainable food systems. Food systems are the world's largest employer of young people, particularly in the Global South. Two thirds of these youth live in some of the most agroecologically productive areas of the world. Investing in young human capital by providing incentives, training and capacity-building for engagement and employment in land restoration activities is key to addressing DLDD and transforming food systems for all. Initiatives to support young farmers to access and control land resources with equitable rights of inheritance and long-term security of tenure would be an important step.

27. These conclusions and recommendations have been incorporated into elements for a draft decision for consideration by Parties, as contained in document ICCD/COP(15)/21.