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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

**Policy frameworks and thematic issues**

**Final report of the intergovernmental working group on  
effective policy implementation measures for addressing  
drought under the United Nations Convention to Combat  
Desertification**

**Report by the intergovernmental working group**

*Summary*

The Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was requested to present its findings and recommendations to Parties for their consideration at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15). The IWG discussion emphasized the under-recognized potential of land-based interventions to mitigate drought impacts, risks and cascading downward spirals due to their interactions with other economic, environmental, social and health-related issues. This necessitates a holistic approach to underwrite and enable the intended achievements of the established global agendas for adaptation and mitigation of extreme climate change events, disaster risk reduction and the green economic recovery, including for the most vulnerable communities and ecosystems.

Findings and recommendations in this report result from a stock-take of policies and review of options by the IWG 2020–21. These were based on submissions received from the Parties; responses to outreach by the secretariat to the Regional Economic Commissions and other relevant organizations; as well as a series of online discussions amongst the group members. The options considered include a proposed strengthening of the current institutional arrangements under the UNCCD to better enable action and learning to address the growing systemic risks and impacts of droughts. Under the established working modality, further elaboration of the scope and significance of the proposal for a new agreement, protocol, or another deeper, cross-cutting systemic action, could require at least another biennium to conclude. At COP 15, a set of eight immediate steps forward can be recommended by the IWG for the drafting of decisions and actions by the Parties.



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## Executive Summary

1. Effective transformation of drought risks is critical to counterbalance the increasing impacts of droughts and their interactions with other economic, environmental, and social problems, including poverty and ongoing threats to the health of populations and ecosystems. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Special Report on Drought<sup>1</sup> and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Climate Change and Land<sup>2</sup> have both clarified the opportunities for land-based interventions to mitigate drought risks and impacts on vulnerable communities, sectors, and ecosystems. This should be an essential element of a global green recovery.<sup>3</sup>
2. The Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was established by decision 23/COP.14. Its terms of reference are to take stock of and review the existing policy, implementation, and institutional coordination frameworks, including partnerships on drought preparedness and response. Its objective is to consider options for appropriate policy, advocacy, and implementation measures at all levels for addressing drought effectively under the Convention in the context of a wider holistic and integrated approach to disaster risk reduction and enhancing the resilience of communities and ecosystems. The IWG was requested to present its findings and recommendations to Parties for their consideration at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15), and the secretariat was requested to continue reporting on the implementation of the decision at future sessions of the COP.
3. This synthesis report presents the outcome of the work of the IWG, including an overview of the IWG's stocktake and review of options. It is based on submissions received from the Parties; the supporting outreach undertaken by the secretariat to the Regional Economic Commissions (RECs) and other relevant organizations; and the findings and recommendations from discussion amongst the group members. The options considered include a proposed strengthening of the current institutional arrangements under the UNCCD to support more concerted global efforts to address the growing systemic risks and impacts of droughts through a new agreement, protocol, or other deeper cross-cutting systemic action. While there is ample agreement within the IWG for the need for ambitious and fast strengthening of measures under the current institutional arrangement, there was no consensus on the latter, but a further discussion process is recommended beyond COP 15.
4. It is clear that the new arrangements to guide the work of the UNCCD on drought would take at least another biennium to prepare in a draft form, and it would very likely take significantly longer to pursue any legally binding option. In the meantime, many Parties would like to see a clearer analysis of the effectiveness of the existing framework, including articulation of any gaps, to accompany any such proposals. This continuing investigation of effectiveness requires significant conceptual and practical demonstration work to combine and enhance the available systems to monitor the effects of drought risks and impacts on people, economies and ecosystems and to evaluate the effectiveness of actions under the UNCCD.
5. The IWG's discussions have drawn attention to the under-recognized potential of land-based interventions to mitigate drought impacts, risks and cascading downward spirals due to their interactions with other economic, environmental, social and health-related issues. This necessitates a holistic approach to underwrite and enable the intended achievements of the established global agendas for adaptation and mitigation of extreme

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<sup>1</sup> <<https://www.undrr.org/publication/gar-special-report-drought-2021#:~:text=The%20GAR%20Special%20Report%20on,and%20ecosystems%20health%20and%20wellbeing>>.

<sup>2</sup> <<https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/>>.

<sup>3</sup> <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/g7-finance-ministers-meeting-june-2021-communicue/g7-finance-ministers-and-central-bank-governors-communicue>>.

climate change events, disaster risk reduction and the green economic recovery, including for the most vulnerable communities and ecosystems.

6. The IWG's main findings underline: (i) ongoing improvements under existing arrangements; (ii) a holistic approach to partnerships emerging through IWG's work due to its approach to interlinking agendas for sustainable development that gives consideration to ongoing changes affecting both land and climate conditions; (iii) continuing discussion on the need for and possible form of any potential new arrangements for the UNCCD to provide leadership of its interlinking global agenda on land and drought; (iv) increasing recognition of the need and opportunity for the UNCCD to transform drought risks through its well-grounded approach to land as the central basis underpinning progress for other global development targets and agendas as well as its own. 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.

## I. Introduction

7. Effective transformation of drought risks is critical to counterbalance the increasing impacts of droughts and their interactions with other economic, environmental, and social problems, including poverty and ongoing threats to the health of populations and ecosystems. The UNDRR Special Report on Drought<sup>4</sup> and the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land<sup>5</sup> have both clarified the opportunities for land-based interventions to mitigate drought risks and impacts on vulnerable communities, sectors, and ecosystems. This should be an essential element of a global green recovery.<sup>6</sup>

8. Drought is a global threat affecting both developed and developing regions and economies. Collective responses to drought have evolved over millennia, enabling societies and civilizations to flourish by mitigating local impacts on people and resources and transforming economies. But as systemic and often new multipliers cause avoidable effects from localized droughts and degradation to cascade within and across boundaries, everyone is hit ever harder.<sup>7</sup> Societies should not accept that people and the planet are affected to such a degree by a threat that we know at least partially how to avoid and combat. Avoidable drought impacts hitting our most vulnerable members must raise a red flag in the global governance system.

9. In many situations, the 2030 Targets for Sustainable Development cannot be reached without proactively addressing droughts as a serious threat to progress on several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG1 (poverty), SDG2 (hunger), SDG3 (health), SDG5 (gender), SDG6 (water), SDG9 (industry and infrastructure), SDG10 (inequality), SDG11 (cities), SDG12 (production and consumption), SDG13 (climate change), SDG15 (life on land), SDG16 (peace, justice and institutions) and SDG17 (partnerships).

10. A more coherent global policy-level prioritization of the proactive approach to drought can prevent the avoidable impacts, reduce the damage, and transform the recovery processes.<sup>8</sup> This involves addressing the systemic drivers of drought exposure and vulnerability, impacts and overall risks. These are not only climate-driven, but also involve human effects on one another and on the planet, as well as the collective processes needed

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<sup>4</sup> <<https://www.undrr.org/publication/gar-special-report-drought-2021#:~:text=The%20GAR%20Special%20Report%20on,and%20ecosystems%20health%20and%20wellbeing/>>.

<sup>5</sup> <<https://www.ipcc.ch/srccl/>>.

<sup>6</sup> <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/g7-finance-ministers-meeting-june-2021-communicue/g7-finance-ministers-and-central-bank-governors-communicue>>.

<sup>7</sup> <<https://www.undrr.org/publication/gar-special-report-drought-2021#:~:text=The%20GAR%20Special%20Report%20on,and%20ecosystems%20health%20and%20wellbeing/>>.

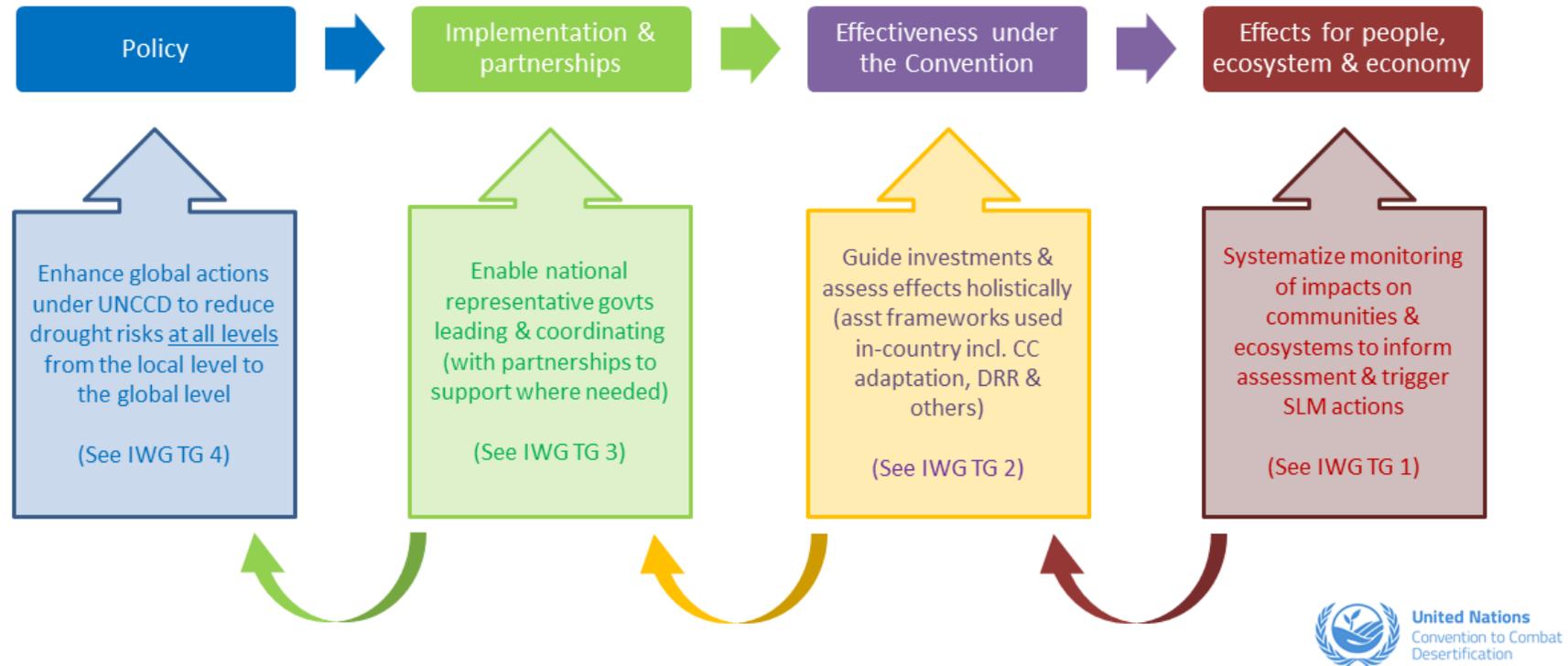
<sup>8</sup> Refer to the Integrated Drought Management Programme Pillar 3 Knowledge Product.

to enable mutual respect and stewardship of these drivers at all levels. Many of the difficulties to be faced are tractable issues created by our societies, and therefore fixable and preventable by our society. This must be done by reconnecting the disconnects that allow droughts to escalate other risks in our global system.

11. Many of our most vulnerable communities should receive more credit for the extent to which they are already succeeding in dealing with drought risks. Others that remain exposed and impacted recurrently require additional attention upstream and ahead of time. Piecemeal and partial successes could be scaled up and gaps filled faster through a more proactive global policy approach.

12. Decision 23/COP.14 established an IWG on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD. The Terms of Reference (ToRs) of the IWG are 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, in the context of a wider holistic and integrated approach to disaster risk reduction and enhancing the resilience of communities and ecosystems (figure 1).

Figure 1  
**Overview of the main elements and linkages considered in the intergovernmental working group's Terms of Reference, stock take and review**



UNCCD: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification / IWG: intergovernmental working group / TG: task group / CC: climate change / DRR: disaster and risk reduction / SLM: sustainable land management

13. The secretariat to the UNCCD provided support to the IWG, compiling submissions from the Parties, as well as information on relevant policies and initiatives implemented through international partnerships.<sup>9</sup> The Executive Secretary and staff also reached out to inform relevant regional organizations, including RECs on the establishment of the IWG and invited them to collaborate to promote regional coordination in support of the discussions of the IWG. The secretariat also reached out to other multilateral environmental agreements, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

14. The IWG stocktake and consideration of options initially focused on four broad aspects or themes of Integrated Drought Management, including: Policy and Governance; Resources and Incentives; Vulnerability and Assessment; and Drought Monitoring and Early Warning Systems (shown in figure 1). As detailed in an Interim Report presented to the nineteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 19),<sup>10</sup> these were identified to reflect the established three pillars of Integrated Drought Management<sup>11</sup>. Findings and recommendations in relation to each of these themes were discussed by the IWG during the meetings which took place on 30 June and 1 July 2021. These are reported separately.<sup>12</sup> Following the conclusion of this thematic group work, the IWG returned its attention to a review of options in the period between August to November 2021. In December 2021, the IWG discussed the possible options, findings and recommendations for COP 15 which are presented in this report.

15. This synthesis report presents the discussion of findings, and recommendations of the IWG to Parties for their consideration in preparation for COP 15. Following a summary of the stocktake (in section II), and options for consideration by the COP of the UNCCD (in section III), the emerging findings are presented (in section IV). These are followed by recommendations for the ongoing holistic approach with other Conventions and processes (in section V). For additional information on the IWG background, deeper exploration of options and other background information, please refer to the accompanying blue paper under preparation (to be published on the IWG page of the UNCCD website).

## II. The stock-take and review

16. The stocktake and review of existing policy, implementation, and institutional coordination frameworks, including partnerships, on drought preparedness and response included submissions made by Parties and stakeholders to the Convention, as well as the findings of a survey that was conducted by the secretariat at the request of the group members, and a review of policies compiled by the secretariat.<sup>13</sup> It was further informed by the parallel initiatives on drought by the IPCC, UNFCCC Warsaw International Mechanism Executive Committee workstream on Slow Onset Events, including Land Degradation and the UNDRR, as well as the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) knowledge products on drought risk mitigation, preparedness and response, and other relevant topics.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2021-11/stocktaking%20policies%20final-final.pdf>>.

<sup>10</sup> Reference to <[https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2021-01/ICCD\\_CRIC%2819%29\\_4-2015665E.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2021-01/ICCD_CRIC%2819%29_4-2015665E.pdf)>.

<sup>11</sup> Amongst the 3 pillars of Integrated Drought Management that are described in the Interim Report (see previous reference), the greatest emphasis was placed on the action-oriented pillar 3 for drought risk mitigation, preparedness and response through effective policy implementation and partnerships. Two task groups were created to address this pillar, while one each were devoted to the other pillars of IDM (Monitoring and Early Warning and Assessment of Vulnerability).

<sup>12</sup> <<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2021-07/10th%20IWG%20meeting%20report.pdf>>.

<sup>13</sup> <<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2021-11/stocktaking%20policies%20final-final.pdf>>.

<sup>14</sup> See: <<https://www.droughtmanagement.info/find/library/>>.

17. The purpose of the stock-take was to inform the consideration of options for addressing drought more effectively under the Convention. This is in line with the overarching concern of the UNCCD, which brings together the Parties in the shared realization expressed in the Preamble that despite efforts in the past, progress in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought had not met expectations and that a new and more effective approach was needed at all levels within the framework of sustainable development. This was coupled with the recognition of the importance of the provision to affected countries, especially in Africa, of effective means, inter alia, substantial financial resources, including new and additional funding, and access to technology, without which it will be difficult for them to fully implement their commitments. It was also based on the belief that strategies to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought would be most effective if they were based on sound systematic observation and rigorous scientific knowledge and if they were continuously re-evaluated to improve their effectiveness.

18. According to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,<sup>15</sup> effectiveness is the extent to which an intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance. The effectiveness of the UNCCD's policy, implementation and partnerships addressing drought may therefore be determined in relation to its objectives, particularly Strategic Objective 3 (SO3), which is presented in the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework as follows:

- SO3: To mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems.
- Expected impact 3.1: Ecosystems' vulnerability to drought is reduced, including through sustainable land and water management practices.
- Expected impact 3.2: Communities' resilience to drought is increased

19. This objective is notably different from, complementary to, and significantly contributing to the achievement of the objectives for reducing risks of disasters, adapting to climate change, and achieving sustainable development more broadly that are pursued through other related global policy processes.

## 1. Gaps in effective policy

20. The IWG stock-take of policy has so far focused primarily on compiling and reviewing information on the national policy level, in line with the UNCCD Drought Initiative focus at this level. National Drought Plans published by the Parties and made available on the UNCCD website<sup>16</sup> each examine the existing systems for drought early warning, preparedness and response. In addition to these, other relevant policies, planning frameworks and response practices or systems addressing drought and available in and to all 197 Parties to the UNCCD were identified by the Parties with support from the secretariat.<sup>17</sup> They were then further analysed and discussed by the group following up on information and commentaries provided in the Parties submissions. The identified stock of relevant national policies variously includes plans addressing drought risks in relation to climate change,<sup>18</sup> disaster risk reduction planning, sustainable development planning under the 2030 agenda, etc. Some of these are sectoral, e.g. plans and policies for water, agriculture. Others concern broader topics such as economic development, migration and security. An interactive platform is planned to be provided by the Secretariat in the Drought Toolbox so that Parties can check and update the information on their relevant policies or refer to those in use in other countries.

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<sup>15</sup> <<https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/2754804.pdf>>, page 20.

<sup>16</sup> <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/drought-toolbox/page/drought-planning>>.

<sup>17</sup> <<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2021-11/stocktaking%20policies%20final-final.pdf>>.

<sup>18</sup> As in the National Adaptation Plans, Nationally Determined Contributions and other National Communications.

21. Policies addressing drought risks at the national level are complemented by global and regional frameworks and actions on disaster and risk reduction (DRR), sister conventions and other global agendas and processes. Sub-national and local policy forums should be an integral and explicit part of the national policy dialogue and budget allocation processes, especially where there are some areas with higher levels of vulnerability to drought. Some of the current national planning frameworks include and refer to local level planning, but for the most part, the local level plans are not compiled and accessible to the IWG (NB: that small countries may not need to distinguish between national and sub-national levels). These could therefore not be systematically considered in the IWG review and stock-take so far due to limitation of time and resources needed to locate and review them.<sup>19</sup>

22. While the IWG has taken stock and reviewed the UNCCDs own global policy framework and implementation, it has also identified further work still needed to fully assess their effectiveness.<sup>20</sup> In addition, significant additional efforts would be needed to review other related global policy frameworks in detail particularly concerning their implementation and effects on drought risks and impacts. Furthermore, although the IWG identified a number of significant frameworks in operation at the sub-regional level (e.g. in the Caribbean), due to capacity constraints it was unable to review these in detail. Regional meetings including dedicated agendas, time allocation and well prepared and supported facilitation arrangements would be needed to systematically compile and further analyse the policy frameworks from across all regions, and to enable Parties to take part in the review of them, possibly over a series of consecutive sessions.

## 2. Gaps in implementation and partnerships

23. The IWG briefly analysed resources and incentives for drought risk management and identified the challenges to finance drought preparedness and the critical need to engage the private sector (including smallholder farmers) along with public sources and public-private partnerships, depending on country settings. A range of innovative financing mechanisms for risk-sharing addressing drought were identified by the Global Mechanism (GM) of the UNCCD, such as, but not limited to bonds, microfinance and insurance products. All of these could be included within a menu of funding and financing options that national governments should be aware of in the formulation of their national drought policies, plans and implementation programmes.

24. Working with the private sector is critical because we need its involvement to generate income and share risks. Furthermore, they often do already have a clear incentive, i.e. business case, for investment in building resilience to drought and proactively managing its impacts and risks. This is because for many industries, drought can affect their triple bottom line. Governments and public sector agencies should make use of their leverage in this area to bring the private sector on board. Eventually, public investments required to create and maintain necessary services, institutions and monitoring systems in drought-prone areas should become self-sustaining through the generation and maintenance of an effective tax and public income base.<sup>21</sup> Access to non-financial resources such as capacity

<sup>19</sup> Some standards of practice exist for DRR planning at the local level, and some guidance is available also for local level planning for climate change adaptation planning, but not as yet for Drought Smart Land Management. It may not always be necessary to have separate local level plans for each of these in all cases, but rather could be possible to mainstream consideration of drought risk across all of them and into local level development planning. Some Small Islands Developing States may not have specific local/community level plans but rather one national plan due to working already at smaller scales.

<sup>20</sup> See following sections discussing systems under development for monitoring of effects which are needed to identify effectiveness.

<sup>21</sup> In some countries, this may already exist or could be established relatively quickly e.g. by formalizing the informal elements of existing pastoral economies as well as through innovative new green economic opportunities offered by solar-powered technologies, amongst others. In some cases, it may take time to reach the objective for establishment of functioning economies for a range of reasons. The IWG was not yet able to conduct a full review of the economics of drought risks in all contexts.

building and technology transfer, which may be needed to use financial resources effectively and sustainably should also be supported. A theory of change approach could be used to map and track steps toward this objective and could refer to any national strategies already in place.

25. The IWG did not conduct an analysis of the financial flows supporting the implementation of actions on drought under the UNCCD or through other policy frameworks.<sup>22</sup> A number of analyses are available concerning the scale of funds channelled into addressing droughts through Adaptation Funds vs Humanitarian response. For example, the 2020 World Disasters Report<sup>23</sup> compared the international flows of DRR funding to Adaptation Finance for 2018. Adaptation finance was larger than DRR, but both combined were still far smaller than the estimated requirements to address droughts and associated problems.

26. These assessments do not separate drought from other hazards. Nor do they fully account for investments in sustainable land and water management – the majority of which either come from the private sector and/or catalyse future such investments by stimulating and securing the growth of the private sector. Sometimes such investments are intended to reduce drought risks and impacts as one of several effects to be achieved by land management interventions, involving irrigation, carbon sequestration in conserved soils or tree plantation. Often there is a lack of investment in systematic monitoring to accompany these investments, and there may be risks that such investments might have an adverse effect on drought risks, e.g. by increasing irrigation water extraction, misapplication and/or ill-adapted afforestation.

27. A further exploration of **business cases** for increasing investment in proactive measures for drought preparedness at different levels, including land-based actions, was discussed by the IWG. The IWG concluded that it should not be a discussion of financing for its own sake but should directly connect back to the discussions of needs for financing to effectively prevent and overcome drought risks and impacts. This should include consideration of the funds that affected country parties, especially Least Developed Countries, need to put in place effective systems, public institutions and governance processes for assessing and managing drought risks and impacts.

### 3. Gaps in needs assessments to better inform decision-makers

28. Information on the use of vulnerability and impact assessments and the nature of priority needs and entry-points that these reveal for enhancing resilience to drought was collected by the secretariat through a survey of national focal points and analysed by the IWG. This highlighted opportunities to strengthen capacities at the regional, national and sub-national levels<sup>24</sup> in order to better use global assessments of drought risks. These capacities should enable and align local and national leadership in drought preparedness planning, investment<sup>25</sup> and actions. It also identified vulnerability and resilience assessment as part of climate change adaptation and DRR planning. The major gaps concern human and institutional capacities and processes that are needed to progressively build them in the most affected areas. It is also important to build capabilities in other regions and at the global level so that global decision-makers and institutions can respond more effectively to the needs in the most affected areas.

29. The stocktake further underlined the scope to fully map and operationalize UNCCD's interlinkages with and complementarities to other ongoing assessments of

<sup>22</sup> A methodological note informs reporting on UNCCD strategic objective 5 which aims at mobilizing substantial and additional financial and non-financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention by building effective partnerships at global and national level. A draft version of this document was posted for peer review. The final version incorporating feedback from Parties is available from: <[https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/Methodological\\_Note\\_Strategic%20Objective%205\\_clean%20-%20Final.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/Methodological_Note_Strategic%20Objective%205_clean%20-%20Final.pdf)>.

<sup>23</sup> <<https://www.ifrc.org/media/8968>>.

<sup>24</sup> This includes the local level.

<sup>25</sup> This implies allocation of budgetary resources, amongst others.

vulnerability and emerging risks due to the complex relationships linking land and drought to multiple hazards and processes such as climate change and land degradation. This follows up, for example, on the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land which identified land management as a cost-effective solution that conserves habitats, biodiversity and carbon sinks, enables low-emission development pathways, and prevents or reduces many of the rising costs of adaptation to extreme climate events such as drought. If not proactively addressed, in affected countries in particular, the combinations of these hazards and processes are expected to have major long-term negative impacts on agricultural productivity, livelihoods and food security. When combined with a lack of livelihood options, these can lead to mass migration as an adaptation strategy. On the other hand, as indicated above, the right selection of land and water management choices and their combination is important to optimize positive and avoid negative (side-) effects.

30. Parties will start reporting on progress towards SO 3 during the 2022 UNCCD reporting process, using the indicator and monitoring framework adopted in decision 11/COP.14 and following the guidance provided in the "Good Practice Guidance for National Reporting on UNCCD Strategic Objective 3", which was released in September 2021.<sup>26</sup> This provides a basis for a global assessment of drought risk and sustainable land management (SLM) solutions by first identifying ecosystems and societies exposed to droughts. Following up on this important first step now already underway, additional support will still be needed in many countries to assess the effects of droughts on these ecosystems and societies and the ways in which these effects are either alleviated or exacerbated by policies and practices under implementation. The reporting process should clarify the theories of change and impact pathways that will enable the intended evaluation and continuous re-evaluation to improve effectiveness.

31. Following this first round of reporting on the effects of droughts, some baseline information will be put in place. A second round of data collection and reporting will then take place four years later, in 2026. At that point, and by taking the (side) effects of other, not explicitly drought-related policies and practices<sup>27</sup> into consideration, the UNCCD should be in an improved position to take stock of the effectiveness of its actions on drought using a sound systematic observation and rigorous scientific knowledge – as was foreseen when the Convention was first created. Along the way, intermediate assessments with less than perfect information can already provide much-needed insights and lessons learned to help the process move forward.

32. Complementarities to ongoing work tracking the costs of disasters under the Sendai Framework, the SDGs, and the costs of adaptation under the UNFCCC should be made use of. Land-based solutions should be anticipated to quantitatively reduce these costs. Useful methodological innovations are provided by ongoing initiatives addressing the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity, the economics of land degradation and establishing national systems accounting for natural capital and ecosystem services, including water supplies, stores and regulating services. A global system and accepted scientific approach to accounting for the needs of different economic sectors and ecosystem demands in relation to the national monitoring of annual water availability at the level of watersheds and catchments is provided for by SDG 6.4.2.

33. The specificity of the drought challenge and the full range of other drivers and processes involved (that are not all driven by climate effects) require significant additional attention and leadership from the UNCCD, building on the SDGs and other indicator frameworks and doing so in such a way that capacities are built progressively without creating additional unmanageable reporting burdens. Sub-regional and regional processes currently forecasting drought risks and impacts in regions such as Southern Africa, Central Asia and the Caribbean offer critical fora for bringing national teams together for the purposes of learning and building assessment capabilities.

<sup>26</sup> <<https://www.unccd.int/news-events/unccd-unveils-new-guidance-land-degradation-and-drought-reporting>>.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. perverse incentives, subsidies, etc.

34. Global processes currently making use of available relevant indicators and building necessary capabilities for assessment include those emerging through the Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund strategic results frameworks. These have established core indicators applicable at the global level for tracking successful investments in adaptation to climate change, including effects on the availability of water and the generation of income to sustain vulnerable livelihoods. While drawing on the work of the climate funds, it would be important for the UNCCD to review and consider any necessary adjustments in light of the clearer, more direct and immediate framing of the UNCCD's work and objectives addressing drought holistically, rather than focusing only on the aspects attributable to climate change, as the climate funds are intentionally designed to do.

#### **4. Gaps in monitoring of drought effects and effectiveness of the proactive approach**

35. The IWG identified weaknesses in the current systems for drought **Early Warning** because, in the most affected areas, they do not effectively trigger proactive actions early enough ahead of the onset of droughts to make the difference that they could make by establishing 'virtuous cycles' of preparedness and resilience-building. They neither observe the direct and indirect impacts of drought on communities, ecosystems and economies, nor identify exposure, vulnerability or the risks of these associated with different drought hazard types (figure 2 and table). Without improvement, these systems cannot effectively inform assessments of vulnerability and needs for early land and water management action to reduce drought risks. Nor can they inform the evaluation and improvement of the effectiveness of management actions taken in a progressive manner, as it should be possible for them to do.

36. It is important to acknowledge that, as presently conceived and in operation, early warning systems (EWS) alone are not sufficient to accommodate the needs and track the dynamics that require attention. These include hydrological imbalances and the demands of systems that are affected by land use and demographic changes, including growing and changing demands for water during both drought and non-drought periods. Nonetheless, there is a need to work with and progressively improve the established national drought monitoring systems using the existing and available EWS as a base and a benchmark with which to move forward.

Figure 2  
**Summary of estimated stock-take gap analysis of current drought risk and impact monitoring systems & action triggers at all levels**

<i>Drought types and impacts</i>	<i>Global</i>	<i>Regional</i>	<i>National</i>	<i>Local</i>
Meteorological				
Agricultural				
Hydrological				
Ecological				
Economic				
Socio-economic (considering inequalities)				
Institutional (plans & capacities)				

Key<sup>28</sup>

	Available observation systems relatively fit for purpose/relatively effective for informing short-term actions while still requiring continuous improvement
	Challenges remaining/partially effective for informing actions over varying time frames
	Available systems unfit for purpose/relatively ineffective in informing actions needed to proactively reduce drought risks

37. In some countries, the problem is a lack of data on the conditions of exposed populations and ecosystems. In others, considerable data and local knowledge exists but is not systematically collected. In cases where it is collected, blockages often still prevent information flow and the use of the information to trigger preventive actions, including SLM as a proactive approach to reducing drought risks. In the best-case scenarios, early actions triggered by EWS may include 6–12 month forward-looking food and water supply-focused activities. However, to inform, trigger and monitor SLM, longer time frames are also needed (1–5–10-year time horizons).

38. Several United Nations Agencies are mandated to support the development of necessary monitoring capabilities in affected countries to address these problems. The UNCCD plays an important role in convening them as observers to its processes, including some that are engaged to a greater or lesser extent within the current UNCCD scientific processes on drought. This enables continuous discussion and alignment of capacity building efforts. More of these efforts are needed to catalyse observation by agencies into capacity-building actions. Increased intersessional engagement with Parties’ experiences and challenges and better use of surveying techniques as explored by IWG could help to ensure that the UNCCD’s scientific approach to drought remains oriented to practical applications. Balancing increased learning with going from Parties’ experiences should ensure that the process remains useful to the Parties.

## 5. Enhanced use of the available resources and capacities

39. Enhanced use of the available resources and capacities to improve the observation of drought effects on populations, communities, ecosystems and economies has already been agreed by Parties in the UNCCD Strategy. There is a clear consensus across the group

<sup>28</sup> The assignment of colour coding is relative – i.e. current systems for monitoring weather effects are very far from perfect, but they are relatively more effective than the available systems for monitoring effects on water availability and others that are particularly critical for mitigating communities and ecosystems exposure, risks and impacts that are associated with droughts.

concerning the gap and the opportunity for Parties to the UNCCD to agree and achieve an improvement in both the design and uses made of EWSs to better enable the proactive approach to drought risk. A wealth of technical experience and monitoring systems concerning land, water and other natural resources are available in some countries. These could be more systematically shared and made available to others still in need of improved systems for monitoring, analysis and triggering of actions to enable more effective sustainable land and water management to buffer drought risks (sometimes with 1–5–10 year timeframes), alongside shorter-term actions with 6–12 month advance timeframes. The IWG has fed back ongoing needs for technical guidance to the Science-Policy Interface for their further consideration and possible action, subject to the availability of time and resources.

40. The UNCCD could learn from the experience of the climate change community which first set political targets for the reduction of emissions and the increase of carbon sequestration, and then subsequently worked on associated methodological challenges. If Parties have the confidence to adopt a target for reducing the number of communities that are days away from day zero, they could be able to both measure and demonstrate progress toward this target through SLM and an increase in the availability of water, food, energy and alternative livelihoods. This would be a moving and uncertain target that would take time to establish. Initially, countries would inevitably have different standards for the minimum acceptable number of days away from day zero that their communities currently live with. There are some communities in some countries that are at or very close to day zero on a regular basis. Additional support for them could be foreseen within national strategies to overcome drought risks in such areas. Some guidelines systematizing consideration for this through the UNCCD process could be constructive.

Table

**Identification of options at all levels for improved drought management under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification based on intergovernmental working group (IWG) stock-take and review**

Based on IWG stock-take as of September 2021

<i>Theme / Level</i>	<i>G = Global</i>	<i>R = Regional</i>	<i>N = National</i>	<i>L = Local</i>
<i>T1: Monitoring &amp; Early Warning Systems</i>	Periodic global monitoring of drought risks, exposure and impacts on land, water ecosystems, communities and economies (not only observing impending hazards but providing warnings of needs for proactive measures and impact assessments).	Regional Early Warning Systems closely linked to national ones and transboundary systems considered where relevant. Regional/sub-regional programmes for cooperation, knowledge exchange and capacity strengthening to improve assessment, monitoring and more proactive earlier warnings/action triggers.	Regular monitoring of drought risks, exposure and impacts on land, water, ecosystems, communities and economies (not only meteorological effects – see <a href="#">figure 2</a> ) and improved use of them to trigger decisions by policy makers.	Systematic observations and knowledge from this level in national drought monitoring systems by engaging and institutionalizing effective observation systems and their interactions across levels.
<i>T2: Vulnerability &amp; Impact Assessment</i>	Better coordination and use of global agencies, such as the World Meteorological Organization and World Food Programme to share and harmonize data and information on drought risk towards assessing the cost of action against inaction, drought mitigation vs disaster response, and trans-regional economic forums, such as the World Economic Forum, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Group of Twenty for assessing financial risks and capabilities, including and linking trade, health mobility and other aspects of world economic risk and recovery.	Better use of sub-regional fora for building assessment capabilities and connection to regional economic cooperation for decisions and joint actions, including transboundary resource and risk management.	Translation of drought vulnerability/impacts on people and ecosystems into financial and economic terms and national economic accounting to encourage decision-makers to take drought risks into account in (sectoral) policy-making.	Strengthened national assessment processes to be more sensitive to vulnerable communities' needs and potentials (and inclusive of them) by systematically including their observations and options in assessment, planning and support.

<i>Theme / Level</i>	<i>G = Global</i>	<i>R = Regional</i>	<i>N = National</i>	<i>L = Local</i>
<i>T3: Resources and Incentives</i>	Effective use of catalytic global financing mechanisms to trigger action to redress the immediate human causes of drought exposure and vulnerability and transform them through reorientation of capabilities and reestablishment of sustainable land management.	Identification of financial and economic returns on the use of traditional financing instruments and innovative financing instruments, such as insurance products, bonds, microfinance, drought funds; sufficient availability and use of such instruments in a regional context.	Demonstration of business cases and de-risking for private actors and development banks to assure sufficient national investments in drought preparedness, e.g. through national drought funds, government-supported insurance schemes, access to regional and/or global drought emergency funds.	Sufficient incentives for communities and private sector actors to invest in drought risk mitigation and response measures.
<i>T4: Policy and Governance</i>	Increased specificity of wording, targets, time frames, processes and country responsibilities in an updated and renewed global commitment to improve proactive drought management and reduce drought impacts.	Enhanced regional level capacity building, networks, and capacity development and exchange of knowledge that exist and are connected with global level institutions.	Connections across different scales of governance and within levels to manage drought, integration of drought management into planning, budget allocation and financing systems.  Also, guidance around increasing investments in managing water, putting in place monitoring systems, and any other action that can be driven and regulated from this level.	Recognition and systematic strengthening of local capacities of stakeholders, administrations, infrastructure, etc. as key to mitigating drought risks. Incorporation of accountability of decision-making to the local level in national governance systems.

### III. Consideration of options

41. In line with its ToRs, the IWG considered options for appropriate policy, advocacy and implementation measures at all levels for addressing drought effectively under the Convention, in the context of a wider holistic and integrated approach to disaster risk reduction and enhancing the resilience of communities and ecosystems. An indicative range of required options available was presented at COP 14.<sup>29</sup> Initial reflections on some of these options were presented in the Interim Report of the IWG at CRIC 19<sup>30</sup> and in the previous section of this report on the ongoing discussion of the Stock-take and Review (table above).

42. A sketched delineation of four potential pathways associated with the broad groupings of options at different levels (as in table above: national-regional-global levels and cross-cutting combinations of these) was explored by the group (see annex). During the finalization of their recommendations, the group observed a need for further clarification and elaboration of the options for consideration, especially any proposal by some IWG members or UNCCD Parties to create new institutional arrangements for the UNCCD, such as a COP decision, political declaration, protocol or agreement to supplement the existing institutional arrangements.

43. The group members also underlined the need to revisit the stock-take of policies, implementation and institutional coordination frameworks in order to provide additional justification for the proposed institutional strengthening option. Members suggested that, in a future iteration, this justification could be presented in a gap analysis format. Some considerable additional work would be needed to fully analyse the compiled stock-take of national policies, and further pursue questions relating to implementation and institutional coordination. This analysis should then connect to and support the development of a new global policy option and/or institutional proposition. In light of this, the compilation of the stock-take of national policies represented an important first step, now in place.

44. Following this first round of stock-taking and consideration of options by the IWG, the Parties now have a much stronger basis to work from for their consideration of current arrangements and gaps than was available previously. Furthermore, the Parties will be able to update and supplement the database of relevant policies addressing drought risks and impacts through an online interface platform in the Drought Toolbox.

### IV. Main findings and consensus

45. Following the consideration of options presented in pathway format at different levels (see annex), group members found that there is scope for three types of recommendations to be made:

(a) Recommendations to review and improve the effectiveness of the existing arrangements at all levels under the UNCCD (building on the stock-take so far);

(b) Recommendations to accelerate the holistic approach in coordination with other global policy processes and in corresponding multiple partnerships to alleviate the negative effects of drought at all levels and across multiple sectors;

(c) Recommendations to enhance the UNCCD's drought agenda by supplementing the Convention text and UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework<sup>31</sup> with additional institutional arrangement(s) (decisions, amendments, protocols, agreements, etc.) more coherently articulating more specific targets and actions to be taken in line with SO3.

<sup>29</sup> See: <[https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-07/ICCD\\_COP%2814%29\\_16-1910485E.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-07/ICCD_COP%2814%29_16-1910485E.pdf)>.

<sup>30</sup> See: <[https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2021-07/ICCD\\_CRIC%2819%29\\_6-2105845E.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2021-07/ICCD_CRIC%2819%29_6-2105845E.pdf)>.

<sup>31</sup> <[https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2018-08/cop21add1\\_SF\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2018-08/cop21add1_SF_EN.pdf)>.

46. The first two of these are relatively uncontroversial and broadly accepted amongst the members of the IWG. However, a range of different views are held concerning the third point. Some would consider a protocol or agreement on drought as likely to help by raising the profile of the UNCCD across the United Nations system and creating greater recognition of its work among the wider community of policy-makers, practitioners and other stakeholders concerned with drought challenges. According to this view, decisions or declarations are generally not sufficiently forceful to mobilize the level of support that the UNCCD needs, and which is generated for the other Rio conventions through the introduction of these additional institutional arrangements supplementing the basic Convention text.

47. On the other hand, there are also concerns amongst the group about, *inter alia*, the real added value of any Protocol or Agreement as compared to the already detailed provisions of the UNCCD, extensive resources and time required for the negotiation of such an instrument, etc. Although the UNCCD scientific process is changing, considerable work still remains to be done to implement the practical learning process that it is intended to provide for the evaluation of effective actions to reduce drought risks and impacts. There are questions as to whether the UNCCD must prove effective first before receiving the level of consideration accorded to its sister conventions. And if so, how, without that support, it would put in place the sound systematic observation and rigorous scientific knowledge that it needs to continuously re-evaluate and improve the effectiveness of actions.<sup>32</sup>

48. During the coming year, with or without any additional arrangements, the UNCCD could provide guidance enabling Parties to make use of the emerging global opportunities to retrofit approximated systems to monitor and assess drought effects on communities and ecosystems. These could begin to assess what has happened over the past decade of accelerating drought risks and impacts. It may also then be possible to project anticipated changes forward into the future, and to generate estimates of the effectiveness of different policies, implementation arrangements and partnerships. Nonetheless, the speed of the expected learning curves must remain moderated to balance with the objective to leave no one behind. In any event, an exciting phase of confidence-building and discovery could accompany 2022 baseline reporting by Parties to the UNCCD on drought effects and implementation impacts.

49. Consensus recommendations are presented in the following section. A lack of clarity in the mandate of the IWG for recommending the consideration of any particular option for agreement, and diverging views of Parties – as expressed at the most recent COPs – have hampered discussions about options for a possible further articulation of a more coherent and forceful global policy on drought under the UNCCD. In spite of this difficulty, a number of elements that could contribute to such coherence and forcefulness have featured recurrently in the IWG’s discussions.

50. The following seem to be emerging as generally agreed:

(a) Firstly, drought deserves renewed political attention at the global level and enhanced action should be taken at all levels. Some IWG members also support the development of a new global policy framework for addressing drought that could supplement the existing framework under the UNCCD by taking a potentially more inclusive approach that need not separate developed from affected countries, nor limit its focus to countries with the driest climates – since all countries can and do experience droughts. Other IWG members emphasize the importance of better implementing the existing framework;

(b) Secondly, the proactive approach to managing drought effects by investing in resilience through pro-active measures such as sustainable land and water management

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<sup>32</sup> With regard to these questions, there are some game changers emerging through the data and indicators that are becoming available thanks to the SDG process, and more generally to emerging remote sensing, geographic information systems technologies, mobile technologies, and continuously emerging innovative uses of these to enhance governance and transparency that bring the UNCCD objectives into reach. Use of these is already beginning to some extent in some areas.

practices sets the UNCCD apart as an enlightened leader with the capability to make a practical difference to the achievement of the objectives of the other Rio conventions and SDGs;

(c) Thirdly, the holistic approach, led and convened by UNCCD, by working in concert with other relevant processes and partners, has already emerged as the preferred approach for all Parties which tasked the IWG to pursue it. The validity of this has been reaffirmed throughout all of the work and findings of the group;

(d) Fourthly, a global target – such as the 1.5 degree target employed by the Paris Agreement – could be set in the future for the UNCCD’s work on drought at the global level and translated into political commitments at the national level by national policy-makers in the same way that many countries have set targets for land degradation neutrality. This should follow through to target-setting at the catchment level within and between countries, as well as to the local level and the level of water service providers, and requires private sector engagement;

(e) Fifthly, 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.

51. It is clear that the preparation of new arrangements to guide the work of the UNCCD on drought would take at least another biennium to prepare in a draft form before it could be ready for negotiation and agreement by the Parties and it would very likely take significantly longer to pursue any legally binding option. In the meantime, many Parties would like to see a clearer analysis of the effectiveness of the existing, relatively new policy framework, including articulation of any gaps, to accompany any proposals for a new global policy instrument. This continuing investigation of effectiveness also will require significant work (which is underway) to establish and apply indicators for monitoring progress toward SO3. It is therefore desirable and feasible that all three of these complementary types of recommendations (improving existing arrangements, establishing new partnerships and continuing discussions on new arrangements) should continue in parallel over the coming biennium. Combatting negative drought effects under climate and land-use changes must entail a continuous and adaptive learning process at all levels.

## V. Recommendations to the Parties for decision at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties

52. Recommendations of the IWG are the following:

(a) **All Parties shall maintain their existing commitment to pursue concerted policies, partnerships and 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 started in line with the notable level of global commitment and ambition established in the Convention text<sup>33</sup> to apply systematic observation, scientific knowledge, and a continuous process of re-evaluation to improve the effectiveness and coordination of international cooperation and to facilitate the implementation of national plans and priorities. Key action areas are spelled out in recommendations b to g. Parties should establish a mechanism to discuss if and which new institutional arrangements<sup>34</sup> may be needed to further enhance the effectiveness of the UNCCD in decelerating and transforming drought risk under the Convention and beyond (see recommendation (h)). Parties to the UNCCD should, wherever possible, seek to simultaneously address other risks and risk management systems and create co-benefits beyond drought resilience, and avoid negative impacts. Overall,**

<sup>33</sup> See overarching preamble on page 4 of the Convention Text.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. mandated drafting committees, Task Forces, Steering Groups, validating and/or vetting committees, dedicated auditors committees or evaluation boards, etc.

Parties should support the growing role and increased confidence in the UNCCD's proactive approach, convening power and leadership on land-based solutions to drought risks and impacts;

(b) Parties should request the secretariat to encourage and support Communities of Learning and Practice (CLP) to pursue co-learning and collaboration for drought risk and impact management issues. These CLPs should engage existing local communities in particular and assist where bottom-up demand exists. While contributing to the UNCCD's global mandate on drought, they should encourage the inclusion of stakeholders across all levels (particularly sub-national), and across public, private, and civil domains (particularly representatives of vulnerable groups and women). The CLPs are encouraged to make use of and integrate tools and activities into the UNCCD Drought Toolbox. The secretariat to the UNCCD shall support the dissemination of lessons learned in the CLPs to the appropriate national, regional, and global review and policy processes within the UNCCD bodies and processes and its holistic approach to addressing drought with other Conventions and other United Nations processes and conventions that address drought;

(c) Parties, with the assistance of regional institutions, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, should establish accessible, inclusive and effective monitoring, early warning and action systems that support drought-resilient ecosystems, societies and economies. Regional approaches should be considered, particularly for issues such as EWS, cross-border trade, cross-boundary water management, migration and security/stability. Regional centres or networks of excellence and CLPs can be very valuable, regrouping comparable situations and solutions. The secretariat to the UNCCD should provide support for collecting regional experience, as well as analysing and integrating it into global review and policy processes;

(d) Parties should support the secretariat and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies, including the Science-Policy Interface to enhance their capacity to assess the effectiveness of the UNCCD's strategic actions addressing drought. Assessments should include qualitative and quantitative measurement of the effects of droughts on ecosystems, societies and economies, of the difference made by human decisions taken or remaining to be taken, and of the costs and benefits of action versus inaction. Regional centres or networks of excellence and CLPs can provide valuable information. The assessments should be fed into other complementary ongoing UNCCD processes and other United Nations processes addressing drought risks;

(e) Parties should call upon the secretariat, the GM and other appropriate UNCCD bodies to provide 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 place. An inclusive process should explore integrated financing mechanisms that could engage national treasuries and the national and international financing community, both private and public, to recognize the returns on investments, while also identifying and reducing perverse incentives that exacerbate land degradation and drought risks. Existing financial collaboration forums at regional and sub-regional levels should also be addressed for further collaboration. Particular attention should be given to financial mechanisms that enable local drought-affected stakeholders to invest profitably in their own resilience since they know best what is feasible, useful and which generates co-benefits and avoids harm;<sup>35</sup>

(f) Parties should call upon the secretariat to the UNCCD as well as the GM to take stock, together with relevant multilateral and bilateral partners, of the current processes and funding levels for drought management, with a view to

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<sup>35</sup> A number of the existing global climate funds have lately begun to engage with this observation.

improving and enhancing them. Parties should also call on their other relevant global processes, such as DRR, Climate Change Adaptation, Financing for Development and Green Recovery to recognize and support the UNCCD process. This should consider factors that enable or prevent the implementation of policies and actions to support activities at the (sub)regional and national levels. The UNCCD should convene a global forum for all relevant agencies and actors to take stock, assess and review effective financing to mitigate the effects of drought. It should provide the countries with a clear orientation as to the different funding streams accessible to them. It should also provide the global development community with a clear direction in terms of monitoring, evaluation, emerging lessons and any remaining issues to be addressed. This would be informed by ongoing coordination efforts with other relevant financing mechanisms and processes for disaster risk reduction, climate finance (including the Adaptation Fund), food and water security, ecosystem-based approaches and the broader financing agendas for 2030 and beyond. The UNCCD should do this by presenting its global evaluation of the results obtained from investments (as described in recommendations (d) and (e)) to the wider international community and shedding light on the returns on the investments. This would provide a clearer basis for discussion of further such investments in light of evolving needs due to climate change and other accelerating factors;<sup>36</sup>

(g) The UNCCD should 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. Based on existing platforms, such as the IDMP, Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture and United Nations Water, the UNCCD, with other partners, including the UNDRR, should provide a global coordination mechanism on drought to promote multilevel and multisectoral collaboration with international, regional and national organizations and initiatives. This mechanism would include relevant United Nations organizations, development agencies, 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 in mitigating and transforming drought risks. This would be enabled by the global assessment (in recommendations (d), (e) and (f)), regional institution-building (as described in (c)) and CLPs (as described in (b));

(h) Parties may wish to consider a further process to continue to discuss if and which further initiatives or new institutional arrangements (e.g. drought protocol or political declaration or other) could be established. These could focus on promoting a more coherent and proactive global approach to mitigating and transforming drought risks and impacts at all levels by the UNCCD, the United Nations systems as a whole and the Parties to both.

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<sup>36</sup> Such assessments may be needed and anticipated to support the Global Stocktake for the Paris Agreement and other global discussions of the Global Green Recovery and the UN Decade on Restoration, but due to the necessary focus on investments in land management to mitigate drought risks, it should most ideally be led by UNCCD if it could be feasible for UNCCD to do so.

## Annex

### Consideration of Pathways

[English only]

1. In line with its Terms of Reference (ToRs), the intergovernmental working group (IWG) considered options for appropriate policy, advocacy and implementation measures at all levels to address drought effectively under the Convention, in the context of a wider holistic and integrated approach to disaster risk reduction and enhancing the resilience of communities and ecosystems. An indicative range of required options available was presented at the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 14).<sup>37</sup> Initial reflections on some of these options were presented in the Interim Report of the IWG at the nineteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 19)<sup>38</sup> and in the ongoing discussion of the stock-take and review (table).

2. A brief overview of each of the identified pathways is presented in the following paragraphs, in line with the findings from the Stock-take (highlighted in the table). Some members of the IWG have expressed the wish to further define and refine the presentation of these through additional work to be carried out before the COP. Any additional contributions may be presented to the COP as an additional IWG publication alongside an intended blue paper to document the background and process of the IWG, and/or a new working group could be convened to take up this task following the COP.

**“Business as Usual”:** A continuation of present efforts at national, regional and global level in the presence of climate change and increasing pressure on natural resources from various sides (land and water use for agriculture, industry, humans, settlements, etc.) with multiple mutual interferences will increase the systemic and cascading risks from drought, and lead to ever increasing negative impacts, particularly in territories of those Parties with already strong desertification trends, high dependencies on land and water for livelihoods and the economy, strong negative impacts of climate change and low capacities to design and implement drought and related policies.

**“Improved national action”:** Continued global focus on improving national level policy actions reaffirming the subsidiarity principle approach to reach the affected areas and populations in each country (no change of approach – a COP decision would call on Parties to improve national policies and implementation) and request support, if needed, from other levels to strengthen national drought resilience capacities and implement strong measures through the synergies of cooperation at higher levels.

Continue strengthening policy coordination and implementation through national commitments to existing global policy standards and reporting processes to track implementation. Existing, but mostly weak regional and global partnerships would continue to support these. To some extent, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) reporting process already offers countries a systematic global protocol for the four-yearly monitoring of national inventory of land areas, resident population numbers, and genders exposed to drought.<sup>39</sup> This is complemented by an annual CRIC and a bi-annual decision-making process in the form of the COP.

This can be progressively further enhanced, standardized and methodologically supported to more directly, coherently and uniformly take stock of the status and effects caused by drought and/or management of drought on: reserves of water, pasture, staple foods,

<sup>37</sup> See: <[https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-07/ICCD\\_COP%2814%29\\_16-1910485E.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-07/ICCD_COP%2814%29_16-1910485E.pdf)>.

<sup>38</sup> See: <[https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2021-07/ICCD\\_CRIC%2819%29\\_6-2105845E.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2021-07/ICCD_CRIC%2819%29_6-2105845E.pdf)>.

<sup>39</sup> See: <<https://www.unccd.int/news-events/unccd-unveils-new-guidance-land-degradation-and-drought-reporting>>.

contingency finance and institutional capability within these areas and groups. This should include updated plans in place in each community, watershed, country and region to withstand drought risks, thereby better informing national policy and budgeting and contributing to reducing vulnerability. The available communication channels and rationale for all groups to engage in the four-yearly inventory process could be progressively clarified by practical examples of success.

3. Through the existing Drought Toolbox and Drought Initiative, the UNCCD could continue accelerating support and guidance to Parties to fill gaps identified at the national level and enable (compare table):

- Regular monitoring of drought risks, exposure and impacts on land, water ecosystems, communities and economies (not only meteorological effects – see figure 2) and improved use of monitoring to trigger decisions by policy makers.
- Translation of drought vulnerability/impacts into financial and economic terms and national economic accounting to sensitize decision-makers to take drought risks into account in (sectoral) policy-making.
- Formation of business cases for private actors and development banks to assure sufficient national investments in drought preparedness, alongside continued public support, where needed.
- Governance systems connecting across scales to manage drought, including the integration of drought management into planning budget allocation and financing systems.

**“Strengthened global support and improved national action”**: A more concerted articulation of policy, target-setting, tracking, learning and funding at the global level enables countries to inspire and support increased national level actions (a COP decision would propose to establish a global target and measurement system for Strategic Objective 3 (SO3), a process for a review of impacts under the Convention and an interface for the holistic global approach to drought together with other conventions and processes to be hosted by the UNCCD) and improved and accelerated funding arrangements at global level.<sup>40</sup>

4. UNCCD could continue accelerating support and guidance to Parties to fill gaps identified at the global level (see table):

- Periodic global monitoring of drought risks, exposure and impacts on land, water ecosystems, communities and economies (both observing impending climate hazards and engaging with the significance of anthropogenic drivers and management decisions) and warnings of needs for proactive early actions through improved sustainable land management.
- Better use of trans-regional economic forums for assessing financial risks and capabilities, including & linking trade, health mobility and other aspects of world economic risk and recovery (e.g. the World Economic Forum, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Group of Twenty).
- Availability of catalytic global financing mechanisms to trigger the redress of the immediate human causes<sup>41</sup> of drought exposure and vulnerability.

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<sup>40</sup> As of COP 13 already positive steps have been taken toward this, which include the significant work of the UNCCD with the Drought Initiative, the IDMP.

<sup>41</sup> All aspects determined by human decisions and/or lack of decisions about issues that are within humans power to determine and regulate e.g. concerning the use of land, water, institutions, laws, economic development strategies, trade, cooperation, conflicts, or others).

- Increased specificity of wording, targets, time frames, processes and country responsibilities in an updated and renewed global commitment to improve drought management and reduce drought impacts (whether in form of COP decisions, political declarations, agreements, protocols, etc. – to be decided following the articulation of targets and reconfirmation of maximum consensus).

5. To provide leadership for multi-scale and inter-sectoral disaster risk management, an interagency convening process is already provided for under the Convention. Furthermore, the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) continuously enhances collaborations in support of the UNCCD, among the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Water Partnership (GWP), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and other partners working within the framework of the Drought Initiative. Furthermore, within the framework of the Global Framework for Water Scarcity Agriculture, the secretariat to the UNCCD regularly coordinates many agencies, including the United States Drought Management Center at the University of Nebraska, the FAO, WMO, GWP, International Water Management Institute and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, with the wider United Nations Water group, which includes these and other agencies. The Environment Management Group of the United Nations Environment Programme offers an additional coordination forum which could also report any relevant actions on drought to the UNCCD.

6. Possible additional global policy declarations, decisions, agreements, annexes or protocols<sup>42</sup> to mitigate drought risks and impacts have been under discussion since COP 13 and formally documented at COP 14. However, there is no consensus yet on this and a significant number of Parties have expressed concerns about proposals to establish new legal or funding frameworks. They would prefer to first assess and strengthen the effectiveness of the existing arrangements. To enable consideration and negotiation by the Parties,<sup>43</sup> these should be set out in such a way as to sufficiently identify their intended implications for the effective implementation of the Convention at all levels. Any legal or financial implications (should there be any) likely to concern any Parties should also be laid out and clarified before they are agreed and accepted.

7. A decision by the COP could set in motion the preparations needed for this pathway at different levels of ambition and degrees of binding. At a low level, the existing tools could be further strengthened. At a higher level, it would likely require at least one drafting committee process with clear ToRs to prepare such an instrument over a time period of at least one biennium before any draft policy instrument could be ready for review and negotiation amongst the Parties.

8. **“Improved national action and strengthened regional support”**: Countries improve national drought systems and also convene at the regional level to further boost national level and transboundary actions and accelerate learning, building more practical exchanges, processes and institutional capacities with regional partners with whom they already share borders, sometimes rivers systems and sometimes policies, which have similar ecosystems and capacities and more private sector actors able to act across borders (a COP decision would call on Parties, Regional Economic Communities (REC) and partnerships to improve regional-level actions for learning and exchange, including the scheduling of annual intersessional meetings to review progress toward SO3 and report on this to the COP with support from the secretariat).

<sup>42</sup> <<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2021-07/UNEP%20report.pdf>>.

<sup>43</sup> In the event that not all Parties would have the desire to commit to a more clearly defined common global protocol for tracking and raising resilience to drought than is already in place in the form of the UNCCD and the existing Sustainable Development Goals, targets and indicators, a voluntary guideline could offer an optional supplement. In the case that all Parties in some regions would desire to adopt and adhere to a more articulated global protocol, but that those in other regions would not, then an amendment to the relevant regional annexes of the Convention could be an option – see the study by UNEP mentioned in previous note.

9. **“Improved national action and strengthened regional support” pathway:** Although it is often assumed that global initiatives (see previous option) include activity at the regional level, in practice this does not always happen. To enable more regional-level actions, the COP could call on regional-level bodies and groups; or, regional-level bodies, countries and groups could voluntarily decide to take action.<sup>44</sup> Specific regional guidelines/recommendations can be tailored to the climate, environment and social characteristics of the regions, whereas global guidance often remains too general. In some cases, regional guidance is for the purpose of information sharing/guidance to then promote action at national level. In others, there are regional level processes, economies and decision-making that require specific attention. These could be significantly accelerated by a specific call from the COP on relevant financing mechanisms or partnerships, including the Global Environment Facility, RECs, transnational river bodies and the countries themselves, to provide support for the acceleration of proactive regional policy, implementation and partnerships through (see table):

- Regional/and sub-regional programmes for knowledge exchange and capacity strengthening to improve assessment, monitoring and more proactive earlier warnings/action triggers. Regional Early Warning Systems to be closely linked to national ones<sup>45</sup>
- Better use of sub-regional forums to build assessment capabilities and connections to regional economic cooperation, including transboundary resource management.
- Identification of financial and economic returns on the use of traditional financing instruments and of innovative financing instruments, such as insurance products, bonds, microfinance, drought funds; sufficient availability and use of such instruments.
- Regional-level capacity building and networks for capacity development and exchange of knowledge are in place and connected with global-level institutions.

10. A decision by the COP could establish a process for regional-level SO3 learning to be convened in each region during intersessional years, and for a report on these sessions to be provided to the COP in future years with support from all regional partners and other partners concerned, and additional facilitation from the regional facilitation staff of the secretariat to the UNCCD, if needed.

11. **“Systematic intensification of coherence and cooperation across all levels”:** A comprehensive strategic approach articulating policy and target-setting at the global level *while also* engaging more regional-level actions integrating all of the above

12. **“Systematic intensification of coherence and cooperation across all levels” pathway:** A simultaneous enhancement of efforts against drought at all levels, from global to national (including strong sub-national), is the best way to account for the strengths and weaknesses of each of these levels, leaving responsibility to the lowest level possible to support local solutions but provide support where the lowest level is overburdened or not suitable (subsidiarity principle). Given the increasing risks and impacts of drought in the most vulnerable areas and the extent to which these are avoidable through a proactive approach, it is desirable to accelerate progress to the greatest extent possible. In the event that all options could be activated simultaneously, this would require and represent the highest level of strategic policy coherence and coordination effort. If agreed and enacted by all Parties and observer institutions, this should then obtain the fastest, deepest and most sustainable results. However, concerted advocacy to mobilize necessary resources,

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<sup>44</sup> The stocktake identified the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM), a sub-regional CBO that promotes SLM projects in the wider Caribbean as an example of a promising sub-regional level initiative.

<sup>45</sup> Some examples of this are already happening, but more is still needed.

processes and monitoring of implementation for periodic reality checking and course correction will remain essential for all Parties and observers to remain informed and convinced of effects and effectiveness at the ground level.

13. Continuous dialogues at all levels would be needed to strengthen the linkages both horizontally and vertically. Continuous gap analyses and network analyses should be activated from the global level to identify and strengthen the weakest links at each level, unlocking, relinking and lubricating the learning curves, and leaving no one behind. The establishment, periodic use and refreshment of a global assessment, including upward and downward linkages, could provide a focus and collective learning process for this purpose. This should be an explicit and integral part of any point of reference for every national policy framework addressing drought risks.

14. IWG members would like to articulate further cross-cutting options that could lead to more vertical and horizontal coordination: ownership-responsibility-accountability, communication, access to information and the meaningful participation of indigenous people and local communities. This should detail how and by whom the options should be implemented (e.g. specific policies, institutions or initiatives for improved drought management). More details could be provided concerning the roles of various United Nations agencies and processes, as well as various types of capacities, coordination and knowledge exchange needs at different levels and across levels.

15. The anticipated effects on drought risks affecting populations and ecosystems could be expected to vary (as in figure 3), depending on the approach and anticipated pathway to be taken.

16. The options were considered and discussed as a series of pathways, including a pathway for strengthened global support. Sketching out these pathways (as in figure 3) raised many questions due to the continuing absence of systems for monitoring and tracking progress towards the SO3. The pathways can only be sketched hypothetically and are not based on any monitoring systems or databases. Tracking these pathways in a more scientific way would require the identification of methods that could be used to define and measure progress so that the effectiveness of the options could be fully evaluated and compared. This lack of data was troubling for some group members, raising concerns that would require time and attention to develop and resolve. Some group members find this figure unhelpful and potentially misleading.

Figure 3  
**Conceptual sketch illustrating potential pathways, combining options at different levels and their assumed effects which could be systematically monitored and verified subject to the proactive choices to be made by Parties**

