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UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework

Review of progress in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification communication plan and the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020)

Report on progress in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification communication plan and the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020)

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 4/COP.14, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat to report on on progress made in implementing that decision.

This report presents actions taken by the secretariat for (i) the revision of the communications plan; (ii) the yearly global observance of Desertification and Drought Day; (iii) the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) activities related to the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020) and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030); and (iv) traditional and social media engagement and partnerships as well as other outreach products and programmes.

The report also outlines the communication focus for the next biennium and includes conclusions and recommendation for consideration at the fifteenth session of the COP.



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I. Background

1. By decision 4/COP.14, Parties requested the secretariat to review the communication plan and base it on the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework; build on experience in observing the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020) by identifying and developing possible activities to actively contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030); and achieve broader geographic reach and information dissemination by enhancing media engagement and developing partnerships with media organizations. Parties also requested the secretariat to raise the profile of the UNCCD outreach programmes, develop online and multimedia content and build communications capacity for relevant staff to strengthen support for the communications activities.

2. This document outlines the work done on (i) the revised communication plan and the results achieved with the yearly global observance of the Desertification and Drought Day; (ii) the UNCCD activities related to the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020) and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2010–2030); and (iii) media outreach and partnerships. The document also contains an outline of the activities developed by the secretariat related to the UNCCD outreach programmes and products, including, inter alia, the Land for Life programme, online communications and youth engagement.

II. Implementation progress

3. Over the reporting period, the secretariat has made good progress in increasing awareness about the objectives of the Convention in support of its implementation through the use of traditional and social media, flagship outreach programmes and campaigns, and knowledge-sharing platforms. The strategic process around UNCCD branding, digital strategy, the website and campaigns conducted in 2021 have laid strong foundations for the Convention's future communications activities and will be rolled out in the next biennium.

A. Revised communication plan

4. In response to Parties' requests, the secretariat has led a strategic process to align its communication plan to be consistent with the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

5. The secretariat worked with a reputable branding agency in 2021 on four key areas: (a) a review and re-alignment of the UNCCD brand to the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework; (b) development of a UNCCD digital strategy; (c) a re-design of the UNCCD website; and (d) a re-design of various communication campaigns, including on the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15), the 2022 Desertification and Drought Day and UNCCD flagship programmes, including the second edition of the Global Land Outlook (GLO), the Drought Initiative and the Great Green Wall Initiative.

6. The re-branding exercise was developed following a comprehensive review and analysis of the Convention's policy documents and decisions, a thorough audit of communications products and social media channels, over 50 in-depth stakeholder interviews and several workshops with senior management and staff.

7. Based on an independent analysis of these outcomes, the secretariat, guided by experts from the branding agency, developed a new and positive UNCCD brand platform and core narrative, identified the Convention's most strategic target audiences and developed a general messaging framework to guide communications with each of these audiences. Furthermore, the process identified a new tagline for the Convention – 'United for Land' – which unites stakeholders around a global vision.

8. Based on the analysis of the social media channels and the proposed messaging framework, the secretariat developed a digital strategy, which includes an annual editorial calendar to guide outreach through relevant channels. Each of the UNCCD's social media

channels will be aligned with the new UNCCD brand, a consistent and identifiable look and feel that reflects the needs of each channel's target audiences.

9. The re-design of the UNCCD website was informed by an extensive assessment of the status of the Convention's digital ecosystem and audience needs. The assessment was conducted through an online survey and in-person interviews with representatives of UNCCD Parties, senior management and staff, and policymakers. The new website is designed around a broader and more holistic digital approach that puts audience interaction front and centre and connects emotionally with the audience. This was achieved by, *inter alia*, providing varied, high-quality and engaging content and communicating with one voice; presenting a unified, comprehensive and coherent digital presence; improving the search experience that is built on a unified taxonomy; making the term "land" a key part of the information architecture; and using a web analytics dashboard to gauge audience engagement. The redesigned website integrates the former UNCCD Knowledge Hub and all information contained within, and will be further developed as part of the future data and knowledge portal.

B. Communications campaigns

10. Building on the lessons learned from recent outreach events and the strategic review of the communication plan, the secretariat and the Global Mechanism have designed three outreach campaigns to increase stakeholder engagement to be carried out in 2022, namely:

(a) The launch of the second edition of the GLO in March/April is set up as a campaign to inform the decision-makers and the public of the importance and potential of land restoration activities globally and strengthen political commitment towards the achievement of land degradation neutrality (LDN) vision and targets;

(b) The Drought Initiative campaign will raise awareness about the progress Parties to the Convention have made to pre-empt drought disasters and scale up the visibility of this year's Desertification and Drought Day;

(c) The Great Green Wall campaign will sustain and ramp up the growing international support for the Wall and motivate the uptake of local actions by increasing the transparency and accountability of financial flows and better coordination among international actors. The launch of the refreshed campaign narrative and visual assets took place at a high-level event held during Expo 2020 in Dubai, held in February 2022.

C. Media outreach

11. The period under review marked the first time that the UNCCD secretariat received more interview requests than it solicited from the media. It could be partially explained by the increased attention to environmental issues due to COVID-19 and the pandemic coinciding with the start of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030), as well as UNCCD's work in increasing collaboration with the other Rio conventions (Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)).

12. During the period under review, activities and issues under the UNCCD mandate were featured in a wide range of mainstream media. These include The Africa Report, Al Jazeera, British Broadcasting Corporation, Canal+ Afrique, China Global Television Network, Deutsche Welle, Euronews, The Guardian, Jeune Afrique, Le Monde, New Scientist, New York Times, Project Syndicate, Reuters and Xinhua News Agency. The secretariat received interview requests from some of the world's largest global and/or regional radio and television networks that broadcast in Chinese, English, French and Spanish. Most requests came from media organizations that have experience with the Convention, but some large English and French media organizations that rarely covered the work of the Convention previously made repeated requests in 2020–2021.

13. The greatest demand for interviews and coverage occurred during key events associated with the Convention's work. UNCCD COPs are the most in-demand events,

followed by Desertification and Drought Days, the launch of substantive reports and, in the last biennium, UNFCCC COP 26. For example, COP 14 reached an estimated 4.4 billion people in over 100 countries through more than 270 articles. The secretariat tracked more than 120 media reports in 62 countries around the 2021 Desertification and Drought Day compared to 50 countries around the same event in 2020.

14. Requests focused on topics relating to land and climate change (such as food and land restoration), drylands, drought, and locations where Africa's Great Green Wall has been built and examples of similar at-scale initiatives. The media materials use facts and data from key UNCCD publications, such as the first edition of the GLO, Science-Policy Interface reports, as well as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports published in 2019 and 2021, respectively.

15. The use of better monitoring tools around COP 14 shows that UNCCD media outreach may be a lot higher than previously estimated. The tracking of media coverage currently relies on publicly available search tools and may not be comprehensive. Going forward, investing in media monitoring to ensure a data-driven approach is vital.

16. To strengthen outreach through traditional media, the secretariat conducted a two-day media training for 12 staff, including managers and experts, on COP 15 thematic issues, the 2022 Desertification and Drought Day and outreach campaigns under development.

17. To unlock media markets in Central Asia and the Russian Federation, the secretariat researched and created a database of 70 Russian-speaking journalists in 2020. One of the two media trainings in 2021 focused on the growing challenge of drought in Central Asia and resulted in the publication of four articles. Support from a Russian-speaking regional media expert/influencer with established media networks led to the release of a TV special, two radio programmes, four newspaper articles and an online lecture featuring the work of UNCCD. The second training, planned for the launch of the GLO regional reports, will benefit from the lessons learned from these experiences. It is also informing the approach to the training of journalists in the lead-up to COP 15.

18. The secretariat worked with Deutsche Welle, the world's second largest broadcast network, to mobilize youth (see details below). Deutsche Welle helped to publicize the youth webinars in multiple languages, co-host and co-moderate events, re-stream regional events and disseminate land use technologies and innovations in demand by young people.

19. Building on past collaboration, the secretariat worked with the Global Strategic Communications Council (GSCC) for the launch of the Great Green Wall Report. GSCC publicized the event, reached out to key journalists and provided advice and support in the development of required UNCCD briefing and resource materials.

D. World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

20. Declared by the United Nations General Assembly in 1995, the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought (also referred to as Desertification and Drought Day) is observed every year on 17 June to promote public awareness of international efforts to combat desertification.¹ This report covers the Day's observance activities since the last activity reported in document ICCD/COP(14)/4, namely for the years 2020 and 2021, as well as information about the upcoming 2022 Desertification and Drought Day.

1. 2020 Desertification and Drought Day – "Food. Feed. Fibre"

21. The 2020 Day's theme, "Food. Feed. Fibre", focused on changing public attitudes to the leading driver of desertification and land degradation. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Day drew global attention to humanity's reliance on land for well-being and health.²

¹ United Nations General Assembly resolution 49/115.

² Related links: 2020 Desertification and Drought Day: <<https://www.unccd.int/actions17-june>>

22. The global observance was hosted by the Republic of Korea and organized entirely online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A 12-hour programme included varied content: a talk show, a music concert, short videos produced for the occasion, film screenings, video messages, cooking demonstrations and panel discussions, all related to the theme. All six UNCCD Land Ambassadors have taken part in the programme with different roles. The highlight of the programme was the ministerial panel discussion “Is it time for a social contract for nature?”, which was viewed live by over 5,600 people around the world.

23. The observance programme was livestreamed via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and the UNCCD website. Over 67 million people have been reached through social media. One million people actively participated in the observance event (through the public shares, likes and comments). Video messages were received from the 74th President of the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Secretary-General, UNCCD focal point ministers, and heads of agencies from CBD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Renewable Energy Agency, International Union for Conservation of Nature, UNFCCC, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF International). The event was also reported in over 50 countries in 185 print articles as well as on radio and television, and in multiple languages. Over 110 governmental, intergovernmental and civil society organizations (CSOs) sent their observance event reports to the secretariat, presenting a diverse mix of engaging activities such as music and cultural performances, art contests, social media challenges, youth forums, virtual training and neighbourhood clean-ups.

2. 2021 Desertification and Drought Day – “Restoration. Land. Recovery.”

24. Under the slogan “Restoration. Land. Recovery.”, the 2021 Day sent a message around the world that investing in activities that protect and restore land and ecosystems will boost the recovery from COVID-19 for communities, countries and economies worldwide.³

25. The global observance was hosted by Costa Rica and organized entirely online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At a virtual High-level Forum hosted by President Mr. Carlos Alvarado Quesada of Costa Rica, ministers from Algeria, Botswana, Iceland, Peru, Republic of Korea, and Senegal reinforced the perspectives shared at the High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought convened by the President of the United Nations General Assembly three days earlier. The United Nations Secretary-General and the 75th President of the United Nations General Assembly sent messages to the Forum. Ms. Christiana Figueres, former Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC and founder of Global Optimism, moderated the session along with Minister of Environment and Energy for Costa Rica Ms. Andrea Meza Murillo.

26. Apart from the High-level Forum, there was a six-hour online programme on the Day, including a talk show produced and hosted by Costa Rica, musical concerts, short videos, films, video messages, panel discussions and a children’s programme. Twenty-three high-level government and United Nations officials, civil society leaders and UNCCD Land Ambassadors sent congratulatory messages for the Day. The secretariat and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction jointly launched the Global Assessment Report Special Report on Drought 2021. The observance programme was livestreamed via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and the UNCCD website, and partially on United Nations Web TV, with a total of 18,792 viewers.

27. A related Desertification and Drought Day campaign, which ran from February to 17 June 2021, was an opportunity to link land issues to other major international Days, Decades and events of the year such as the aforementioned High-level Dialogue, the launch of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) and the Food

[desertification-and-drought-day/2020-desertification-and-drought-day](#)>.

³ Relevant links: 2021 Desertification and Drought Day: <<https://www.unccd.int/actions/17-june-desertification-and-drought-day/2021-desertification-and-drought-day>>.

Systems Summit. The campaign included the TikTok Land Hero Dance Challenge and the United Nations digital ambassador Elyx, who invited private companies to support 1 or more of the 12 targets under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15.

28. The campaign and the 17 June event reached over 150 million people around the world through social media, with the direct engagement of 280,000 people. Numerous influencers and celebrities used the Day's hashtags to raise awareness. Media coverage reached nearly 707 million people in more than 60 countries. Over 100 governmental, intergovernmental and civil society organization sent their observance event reports to the secretariat, sharing a variety of celebration activities such as project and book launches, film screenings, exhibitions, art competitions and tree plantings.

3. 2022 Desertification and Drought Day

29. Preparations are underway for the 2022 Desertification and Drought Day, which will focus on the topic of drought preparedness and response and be closely aligned with the Drought Initiative campaign. The 2022 Day will focus on four key objectives, namely to:

- (a) Help provide ordinary people with the tools they need to assess their current or potential future exposure to drought risk;
- (b) Share durable solutions the international community is putting in place to ensure lives are no longer lost to drought;
- (c) Give the public an opportunity to participate in actions that increase our collective resilience because every action, even small ones, counts; and
- (d) Celebrate the progress countries are making and inspire each other to act now for the resilience of present and future generations.

E. United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020)

30. The United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020) provided a vital framework for partnerships and coordinated actions to raise awareness about the causes of and solutions to desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD). Significant progress was achieved in this regard.⁴ Among the top achievements of the decade are: increased awareness of the threats and impacts of DLDD; an expanded science and knowledge base; and the development of policies to guide action.

31. The Decade, led by a 13-member inter-agency task force brought attention to various issues, including desertification in the drylands, the impacts of drought, the importance of dry forests, and gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention. They have also showcased actions on the ground through feature stories, images and videos. The activities carried out targeted scientists, policymakers, environmental activists and CSOs.

32. The Decade was launched at the 2nd International Conference on Climate, Sustainability and Development in Semi-arid Regions convened in Fortaleza, Brazil, in 2010, with additional regional launches in Africa (Kenya), Asia (Republic of Korea), Europe (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and North America (United States of America) as well as a ministerial event in the Republic of Korea. Decade partners mobilized stakeholders to make the Convention gender-responsive through Gender Days at COP 11, COP 12 and COP 13 and by publishing the thematic and briefing papers on gender and land rights. Two volumes of cases studies titled *Living Land* (2015) and *A Better World* (2018), featuring various kinds of land management. Human interest stories and short stories from around the world were captured in a book series titled *Land for Life*.

⁴ For the full report on the Decade, see United Nations General Assembly document A/75/190: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3885161?ln=en>.

33. Of particular significance is the public's demand for the solutions the Convention offers. In 2021, "conservation of forests and land" and "climate-friendly farming techniques" were two of the top three priorities identified by 1.2 million people polled in 50 countries in The Peoples' Climate Vote conducted in 2021 by UNDP. This signals a significant change in public sentiments compared to 2010. A survey carried out in 2010 showed that only 10 per cent of the 13,000 people from 18 countries polled listed desertification, drought, the spread of disease or flooding at the top of their climate change issues of concern.

34. Better science and data may have played a critical role in these changes. The decade saw the publication of major global studies. The cost-benefit analyses from the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative provided better, more accurate data. The international scientific community also published four major reports that have strengthened the global awareness and visibility of the Convention's issues: the assessment of land degradation and restoration by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; the atlas of desertification in the world by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission; the special report on land and climate change by the IPCC; and the global goals and commitments for restoration from 2021 to 2030 compiled by the PBL⁵ Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.

35. In accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/74/220, the President of the General Assembly, with the support of the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, convened a High-level Dialogue to assess the progress made in the fight against DLDD and map the way forward in the light of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification.⁶ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Dialogue, which was originally envisioned to take place in June 2020, was postponed to June 2021, taking place at the 75th session of the General Assembly.⁷

36. The Dialogue consisted of an opening segment, two panel discussions, a high-level plenary and a Call to Action. A spillover session to accommodate plenary statements was held on 2 July 2021. The participating Heads of State/Government, ministers, intergovernmental organizations, and representatives of the United Nations system and stakeholder entities engaged in the Dialogue via in-person presentations, pre-recorded statements or livestreams. Sixty-five Member States delivered statements during the plenary.

37. The Dialogue highlighted the need for urgent action at the highest levels to halt DLDD. The interventions from the participants demonstrated strong commitment to this aim and reaffirmed that addressing DLDD and achieving LDN are pathways to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic. A detailed summary of the Dialogue was presented by the President of the General Assembly.⁸

38. The achievements and heightened attention the Decade brought to the Convention shows the added value of such Decades in focusing global attention to an issue and fostering cooperation, coordination and synergies with key stakeholders. The LDN initiatives are relevant for ecosystem restoration considering they make up close to half of the goals and commitments for restoration earmarked for achievement by 2030. As such, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) presents an opportunity for UNCCD to both mobilize global action to achieve LDN and spotlight the Convention's significant contribution to solving the global challenges of climate change and biodiversity conservation.

⁵ Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving.

⁶ <<https://www.un.org/pga/74/event/high-level-dialogue-on-desertification-land-degradation-and-drought/>>.

⁷ <<https://www.un.org/pga/75/event/high-level-dialogue-on-desertification-land-degradation-and-drought/>>.

⁸ <<https://www.un.org/pga/75/2021/07/08/high-level-dialogue-on-desertification-land-degradation-and-drought-10/>>.

F. United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030)

39. In March 2019, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2021–2030 as the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, stressing “the need to step up efforts to tackle desertification, land degradation, erosion and drought” and “the need for cooperation, coordination and synergies in the work related to ecosystem restoration among relevant United Nations entities, according to their mandate”. General Assembly resolution A/RES/73/284 invites the FAO and UNEP to lead the implementation of the Decade through a collaborative approach that includes, inter alia, the Rio convention secretariats.

40. At the launch of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030), the UNCCD worked together with the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) to launch a publication titled “Restoring Life to the Land – The Role of Sustainable Land Management in Ecosystem Restoration”. The publication, which was prepared jointly by the UNCCD secretariat and WOCAT, illustrates how the sustainable land management (SLM) experience feeds directly into ecosystem restoration efforts as well as ecosystem maintenance. SLM has a central role in all eight ecosystems identified for the Decade through combating land degradation while generating multiple co-benefits including climate change mitigation, resilience, improved biodiversity and enhanced production. The publication contains examples of SLM practices, as well as the stories of the people who implemented them, for all eight ecosystems.

41. The three Rio conventions (CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC) joined forces for the “Restoring balance with nature campaign” to ensure that protecting and restoring nature can help drive a green recovery and prevent future pandemics. The campaign was launched at the closing of the Nature for Life Hub event organized by UNDP on 6 October 2021. The campaign shared ideas with the public about how the actions of the three conventions impact not only the ecosystems, but also their everyday lives by creating a positive butterfly effect. Additional information on the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, including cooperation with the Rio conventions, is contained in document ICCD/COP(15)/4 on partnerships.

G. Other outreach programmes and products

1. Website and online communications

42. UNCCD increased its outreach through online communications during the biennium as a key channel for raising awareness about the Convention’s issues and impact, not least due to the impact of COVID-19. In-person meetings, such as press conferences, official meetings and global observances of Desertification and Drought Day, were converted into online or hybrid meetings held on different online platforms.

43. UNCCD’s combined social media following currently stands at 200,000. The table below shows the increase in social media audiences as at 31 January 2022. The turn to online communications as well as the application of new outreach strategies during the Desertification and Drought Day played an important role, as has the engagement with youth.

Table

UNCCD social media audience change from April 2019 to January 2022

<i>Platform</i>	<i>April 2019</i>	<i>January 2022</i>	<i>% increase</i>
Twitter followers	18,300	42,500	132%
Facebook likes	23,000	33,145	44%
LinkedIn followers	3,157 (est.)	21,686	587%

44. The Secretariat strengthened its capacity to produce podcasts and short videos to meet the global shift towards short, on-demand audiovisual materials. Over 100 video messages were produced with the UNCCD Executive Secretary, Deputy Executive

Secretary, and relevant staff members of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism in response to partners' requests, ranging from international and regional forums and conferences to United Nations observance days. One of the most popular videos was a conversation between the UNCCD Executive Secretary and Land Ambassador and Senegalese musician Baaba Maal (over 12,000 views). A series of podcasts titled Good Land Stewardship for Present and Future Generations was produced between October 2020 and December 2021. The podcasts were published on all major podcast platforms and reached about 1,000 listeners each.

2. Land for Life programme

45. The Land for Life programme, supported by the Elion Foundation based in China, engages in various awareness-raising and knowledge support activities to educate the public and policymakers on the importance of achieving LDN and the benefits of implementing SLM practices.

46. The Land for Life Award was launched at COP 10 in 2011 in the Republic of Korea as part of the Changwon Initiative. The Award recognizes individuals and organizations advocating and promoting land-use practices, known as SLM techniques, with significant and positive impacts on people, communities and society. The Land for Life Award and its Kubuqi Special Award have had 18 winners to date. However, there has been a reduction of entries and interest since the award stopped including a monetary prize for the winners.

47. The 2021 Land for Life Award themed "Healthy Land, Healthy Lives" was presented to two changemakers starting up, nurturing and running innovative land restoration and conservation projects: Familial Forestry by Professor Shyam Sunder Jyani of Rajasthan, India; and Saihanba Forest Farm in Hebei province in China for the Land for Life Kubuqi Special Award. In addition, the Global Landscapes Forum received a special mention from the UNCCD Executive Secretary. The award ceremony was held from 28 to 29 September 2021 during the eighth Kubuqi International Desert Forum in Inner Mongolia, China.

48. In 2022, its 10th anniversary year, the Award is being reviewed and evaluated with the aim of making it a more prestigious environmental/land restoration award and increasing the number of entries.

3. UNCCD Land Ambassadors

49. The UNCCD Land Ambassadors have continued to support the work of the secretariat, and their engagement has been formally renewed to 2023. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, engagement has mainly been online, with participation at various high-level events. A process is in place to ensure regional balance, which will also allow for the Land Ambassadors to focus on reaching new audiences.

50. The current UNCCD Land Ambassadors are: former President of Finland Tarja Halonen; Senegalese musician Baaba Maal and Indian music composer Ricky Kej, who composed and performed the UNCCD Land Anthem; Malian singer and actress Inna Modja, who was the protagonist of the Great Green Wall documentary and launched the first-ever charitable non-fungible token (NFT) auction in support of women-led land restoration projects, prominent China Central Television anchor and presenter Liu Fangfei, and the distinguished Korean diplomat, lawyer and academic Byong Hyon Kwon.

4. Land Heroes

51. The UNCCD Land Heroes campaign was developed and launched to demonstrate the strong link between land, biodiversity and climate. It focuses on youth empowerment and the role of young people in conveying this message through concrete actions. Between March and May 2020, participants between the ages of 15 and 30 were asked to submit a short text with a photo or video with a specific solution to limit the footprint that the production and consumption of food, feed and fibre leave on the land.

52. The #UNCCDLandHeroes social media campaign reached more than 2 million people, attracted 262 entries via Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and established new

relationships with influencers and young activists to further support the UNCCD youth engagement efforts. Nine finalists were shortlisted with the winner, Ciencia Mágica, founded by Alondra Jazmín Fraustro Cardiel and Silvia Alejandra Lara Valdez in Mexico, being awarded a USD 500 cash prize for an outstanding project with significant outreach capacity, to invest in implementing the impactful and scalable action by the end of 2021. The next cohort of Land Heroes will be selected and announced at COP 15.

5. Youth Webinars

53. The partnership with Deutsche Welle identified young people as a key audience with interest in sustainable land use technologies that could transform agriculture. From November 2020 to December 2021, the Secretariat organized and facilitated four global webinars on the topic of land-based jobs for youth. This activity has marked an important step in strengthening youth engagement in the Convention, with each webinar reaching between 1.5 to 5 million people.

54. The purpose of the webinar series was to inspire young people to create sustainable jobs and entrepreneurship in the land sector and find creative solutions for a strong post-COVID-19 recovery. The interactive webinars also aimed to gather the key priorities and messages from young people on land, climate, and biodiversity for delivery at the forthcoming policy forums, including at COPs of the Rio conventions.

55. The webinars addressed issues of concern to youth in all regions, while three focused on specific regions: Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The last webinar featured a global panel and was conducted in all United Nations languages. Speakers came from both the policy and implementation communities, with a majority of the latter being young people. Podcasts with some of the speakers are being produced on an ongoing basis to increase reach through social media.

6. Publications and information dissemination

56. Twelve public information products were developed during the reporting period. This included a series of knowledge products on LDN, jointly produced with the Global Mechanism and FAO, to support countries towards setting and achieving their voluntary LDN targets. In collaboration with FAO, the Global Water Partnership and the World Meteorological Organization publications with policy recommendations were developed on the topic of drought. A policy document in support of the global response to COVID-19 was developed in 2020. “The Great Green Wall: Implementation Status and Way Ahead to 2030” was the most downloaded of the information products, with over 5,000 downloads.

57. The UNCCD News Alert – an update of the materials published on the UNCCD website – is sent out biweekly to approximately 33,000 subscribers. This constitutes a 10 per cent increase coming from scientists and youth compared to the previous number of 30,000 subscribers.

58. The library focused on the distribution of online reference content and thematic library pages as the COVID-19 pandemic limited distribution of hard copies. The Knowledge Hub, the e-library catalogue and the thematic pages are among the most visited resources on the UNCCD website, indicating the high interest of the visitors in knowledge resources related to DLDD.

7. Rio Conventions Pavilion and exhibition

59. Inaugurated in Nagoya, Japan at the CBD COP 10 in 2010, the Rio Conventions Pavilion (RCP) is a collaborative platform that promotes synergies among the Rio conventions at the implementation level and showcases activities that link biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, SLM and efforts to combat desertification, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Detailed information on the RCP is available to the public on the website <www.riopavilion.org>.

60. The fourteenth edition of the RCP was held during COP 14 in New Delhi, India, in 2019. The RCP programme covered a range of cross-cutting issues under the overarching theme of “Share. Learn. Inspire.” It provided a platform to inspire and facilitate information

exchange among various stakeholders, including policymakers, scientific experts, field practitioners and local communities. Deliberations on several issues related to combating desertification were intended to demonstrate the importance of a management approach that prioritizes prevention over recovery, complete the shift to a new paradigm – from reaction to resilience – and forge understanding and cohesion between local and global organizations, including the private sector. The Government of India contributed a significant amount of in-kind support for hosting the RCP: construction, equipment, transportation for delegates and provision of additional office space. Aside from contributions from core partners, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) contributed cash funds as the core partner of the RCP.

61. At the UNFCCC COP 26, the RCP was hosted by the GEF. With GEF support, the three secretariats organized a streamlined version of the Pavilion, with a total of seven hybrid sessions, including a High-Level Session, to highlight the complementarity of the three processes in issues related to human health, ecosystems restoration, food systems and the need for a synergistic outlook on finance for national implementation.

III. Focus of the next biennium (2022–2023)

62. All activities under the communication plan are designed to assist UNCCD Parties and stakeholders in implementing the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework in its entirety and achieving their ambitions for the achievement of LDN and drought resilience. This will remain the primary goal in the implementation of the plan during the next biennium.

63. The United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 presents a unique opportunity to clearly position SLM at the heart of the interconnected challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss and further strengthen the linkages among Rio conventions and build new partnerships with key stakeholders within and outside of the United Nations system.

64. The communication activities for the next biennium aim to strengthen the UNCCD brand through an integrated approach involving all UNCCD stakeholders across various communication platforms, complemented by cohesive and convincing messages backed by sound scientific evidence that highlights the benefits of productive land for achieving the SDGs. For this, the secretariat will work closely with Parties and other stakeholders to develop a range of materials that can be adapted to the regional and national context.

65. Consistent with the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and building on communications work to date, including the outcomes of the UNCCD branding process, its new website and digital strategy, as well as ongoing and planned outreach programmes and campaigns, the focus in the next biennium will be on:

(a) Aligning UNCCD Parties and stakeholders around a consistent and inspiring narrative on the importance of SLM, its contribution to addressing the interconnected challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, and its central and catalytic role for the achievement of the SDGs;

(b) Developing and implementing impactful campaigns that highlight successes by UNCCD Parties and stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention, including at-scale restoration initiatives such as the Great Green Wall; underscore the urgency of addressing DLDD as well as the environmental, human and economic costs of inaction; and position LDN as a critical yet achievable objective in the context of the SDGs;

(c) Leveraging key opportunities to place land issues high on the global agenda and reach new audiences, with particular focus on leading the annual observance of the Desertification and Drought Day; further increasing the impact of outreach programmes such as the Rio Conventions Pavilion and Land for Life; as well as actively contributing to the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030);

(d) Strengthening partnerships and capacity for raising visibility of land issues and positioning UNCCD as a go-to authoritative source of information on these issues with

media and other key stakeholders, with special attention paid to providing high-quality, science-based information in relevant formats, channels and languages. For this, scientific and technical data, information and policy recommendations from the Science-Policy Interface, the GLO and other major scientific assessments will be fully employed;

(e) Mobilizing new and influential voices in support of the Convention's objectives and related advocacy and communications activities, for example the UNCCD Land Ambassadors and leaders from government, business and civil society, with particular emphasis on engaging youth, women and girls from communities affected by DLDD.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

66. Parties may wish to consider the document and especially the focus on the next biennium with a view to preparing a draft decision for the COP based on the draft text for negotiations that can be found in ICCD/COP(15)/21, which, in accordance with decision 32/COP.14, contains all draft decisions prepared for Parties for consideration at COP 15.
