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Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies

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Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 8/COP.14, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat and appropriate Convention bodies and institutions to: (a) seek new partnerships to further enhance the implementation of the Convention and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) 2018–2030 Strategic Framework; (b) continue working with the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality Initiative to address gaps related to the land-based progress indicators and increase the policy relevance of Earth observation data, tools and interfaces; (c) build on the collaboration initiated with relevant United Nations entities, as well as development partners and relevant international organizations, to support gender mainstreaming at all levels, but especially at the national and subnational levels; and (d) continue to strengthen collaboration with the Rio conventions secretariats and relevant United Nations entities, as well as with development partners and relevant international and regional organizations, to support activities on sand and dust storms, drought monitoring, preparedness and early warning systems, drought vulnerability assessments and drought risk mitigation measures.

The COP also requested both the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue to fulfil their respective roles in the established partnerships; and seek new partnerships to further enhance the implementation of the Convention and the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. This report describes the actions taken by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism in response to decision 8/COP.14 and ends with conclusions and recommendations for consideration by Parties at the fifteenth session of the COP.



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I. Background

1. Decision 8/COP.14 calls for a review and assessment of the progress made by the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in promoting and strengthening relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies. This note provides a summary of a select number of such activities and highlights their efficacy in promoting and strengthening these relationships, as well as enhancing the implementation of the Convention.

2. Making significant progress towards the strategic objectives of the Convention and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires strong and effective relationships that can leverage the appropriate synergies with organizations that have convergent or complementary missions. This includes not only the Rio conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements, but also those organizations and institutions focused on issues directly relating to sustainable land management (SLM), including monitoring and reporting, capacity-building, land governance and tenure security, gender equality, youth engagement, drought and water scarcity, sand and dust storms (SDS), the science-policy interface, migration and urban-rural linkages, knowledge and technology transfers, media outreach and communications, and resource mobilization.

II. Established and new partnerships

A. Rio conventions and multilateral environmental agreements

3. The principals of the Rio conventions, under the auspices of the Joint Liaison Group (JLG), have increased their regular contact, holding seven meetings during the intersessional period. In November 2020, they agreed on an internal strategy which recognizes and builds upon ongoing and long-standing cooperation established by the secretariats and the JLG, including capacity-building, outreach and communications, and other allied work priorities.

4. The secretariats of the Rio conventions launched a social media campaign entitled Restoring Balance with Nature in September 2021, which is expected to continue throughout 2022. The campaign aims to raise awareness on the interconnectedness of the three challenges of desertification, climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as on the positive aspects for the solution of each crisis from climate action, biodiversity conservation and land restoration, respectively. For more detailed information, refer to document ICCD/COP(15)/3.

5. Joint statements by the Executive Secretaries were disseminated at numerous virtual conferences and events which took place during the intersessional period. The JLG also approved a plan for enhancing joint capacity-building in November 2021, which aims to develop a capacity-building programme for national focal points towards a more integrated target-setting, reporting and overall implementation of the three Conventions.

6. With the postponement of in-person meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the secretariat continued to contribute to the virtual discussion on the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) post-2020 global biodiversity framework, including all meetings and negotiations related to the participatory process for the development of the framework's goals, targets, and its implementation and monitoring frameworks. This included the Bern I and II Consultation Workshops of Biodiversity-Related Conventions on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, as well meetings of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice and Subsidiary Body on Implementation, with the aim of appropriately integrating UNCCD priorities into the framework to (a) ensure its coherence and complementarity with other existing international processes; (b) identify options for enhancing synergies on national reporting among the biodiversity-related conventions as well as the Rio conventions, including the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic

Framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 15.3 to combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.

7. In November 2020 and June 2021, respectively, the secretariat contributed to activities of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on (a) a panel dialogue on the relationship between land- and climate change adaptation-related matters; (b) the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture Workshop on sustainable land and water management, including integrated watershed management strategies, to ensure food security; (c) the Structured Expert Dialogue of the Second Periodic Review of the adequacy of the long-term goal of limiting global warming to below 1.5 °C compared to pre-industrial levels and the progress towards achieving it; and (d) the Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability, and adaptation to climate change.

8. The Executive Secretary and representatives of the secretariat participated in the UNFCCC COP 26 in Glasgow, advocating for land-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as for the importance of land restoration and SLM, as a cost-effective strategy towards post-pandemic recovery and sustainable development for all. During COP 26, with the support of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the three secretariats of the Rio conventions organized a streamlined version of the Rio Conventions 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.

9. The secretariat collaborated with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals focusing on the fundamental concept of ecological connectivity and its relevance to desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) and the achievement of land degradation neutrality (LDN), land restoration and biodiversity conservation. This collaboration focused on promoting ecological connectivity within ongoing processes, such as the development of relevant assessments and the definition of new topics of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services rolling work programme up to 2030 and the development of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework. It also included a scientific assessment of ecological connectivity as an essential component of ecosystem restoration as a working paper contributing to the second edition of the Global Land Outlook (GLO2).

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

10. In early 2022, the secretariat released GLO2 in close collaboration with the PBL¹ Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency, which prepared the scenarios work on land restoration as well as an analysis of global restoration commitments and their costs. Sixteen organizations were represented on the GLO2 steering committee, and eight working papers were commissioned to provide substantive inputs. Two GLO regional thematic reports, one on Southern Africa and the other on Central and Eastern Europe, were published at the same time. The secretariat is grateful for the generous support provided by China, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea and Turkey for the development of these GLO products.

11. In addition to the GLO2 products, the secretariat is a core partner in the activities to promote the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030), which is being led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme. This includes contributions to the launch of the Decade, which took place on 5 June 2021, related advocacy and communications products, and participation in various working groups and task forces, such as those on monitoring and reporting and flagship initiatives.

¹ Planbureau voor de Leefomgeving.

C. UNCCD Policy Frameworks

12. On land tenure, the secretariat has collaborated with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other relevant domain partners to produce a technical guide on how to integrate the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, as adopted by the Committee on World Food Security on May 2012, into the implementation of the Convention and accelerate the achievement of land degradation neutrality. Further, the secretariat has engaged with expert institutions on land tenure issues, including representatives of FAO, the International Land Coalition, Landesa, the Land Portal Foundation and the UNCCD Civil Society Organization Panel to present to Parties at the fifteenth session of the COP options to raise awareness on responsible land governance to combat DLDD, as mandated in decision 26/COP.14. As regards reporting, the secretariat consulted with key United Nations partners and civil society organizations to scope the availability of existing global land governance indicators, such as the relevant SDG indicators, with a view of integrating existing data sources into the future UNCCD national reporting process. For more detailed information, refer to document ICCD/COP(15)/19.

13. Partnerships are essential at all levels for gender mainstreaming. Accordingly, the secretariat has enhanced collaboration with relevant organizations, building on networks at the national and global level. The World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT)/UNCCD project on gender responsive SLM is one such example, developing tools that will be tested in pilot countries at the subnational level. The secretariat continues to work closely with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) on policy, advocacy, awareness-raising and research on gender issues and contributed to the Expert Group Meeting of the sixty sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, whose priority theme is “Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes”. The secretariat also continues to collaborate with UN Women and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) on capacity development activities and policy relevant research, including a study on the differentiated impacts of desertification, land degradation and drought, which was reviewed by experts from more than 30 institutions. For more detailed information, refer to document ICCD/COP(15)/17.

14. On drought, the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) continue to build on existing collaboration and establish new partnerships to support Parties in enhancing drought resilience at all levels. This includes leadership of the Drought Working Group in the Global Framework for Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG), the UN-Water interagency mechanism, as well as enhanced collaboration with the CBD, FAO, the Global Water Partnership (GWP), the International Water Management Institute, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska, UNEP-Danish Hydraulic Institute, UNFCCC, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The secretariat contributed as lead author to the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction Special Report on Drought 2021 and co-organized events at the World Water Forum held in Dakar, Senegal. With the aim of strengthening capacity and to better deliver on Parties’ requests, the secretariat took the initiative to establish a Collaborative Center on Drought. For more detailed information, refer to document ICCD/COP(15)/15.

15. On SDS, the secretariat continued its collaborations with the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms and its member organizations including FAO, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and WMO. The secretariat has been actively engaged with institutions, governments, other technical partners and regional entities on SDS issues, including pilot projects to develop national and regional SDS impact mitigation strategies. For more detailed information, refer to document ICCD/COP(15)/16.

16. On migration-related issues, the secretariat worked closely with the International Organization on Migration to produce two studies in response to requests by the Parties: (i) in Central Asia to evaluate the prospects for creating new jobs by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and improving the skills of rural youth and migrants returning to these countries; and (ii) in the Western Balkans to develop a theoretical model to leverage remittances and diaspora investments in land restoration/SLM in the region. Other partnerships include those with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on the implementation and governance oversight for the Sustainability, Stability, Security Initiative (3S Initiative); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) under the auspices of the Greening Dryland Partnership; UN-Habitat on strengthening urban–rural linkages; the International Labour Organization (ILO) and its Green Jobs Programme; as well as think tanks and institutes on issues related to land and migration. For more detailed information, refer to document ICCD/COP(15)/18.

17. On youth engagement, the secretariat responded to the request in decision 5/COP.14 and has been engaging actively and meaningfully with youth organizations. Through the Interagency Network for Youth Development, the secretariat supported the session of the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum 2021 on SDGs 12 and 13 and has been actively participating in the ILO initiative Decent Jobs for Youth. In addition, support was given to the Desertification Youth Caucus to facilitate the elections of their representatives. For more detailed information, refer to document ICCD/COP(15)/12.

D. Donor initiatives

1. Changwon Initiative

18. The secretariat continued its various collaborations in the implementation of the Changwon Initiative launched at COP 10. During 2012–2018 period, the first phase of the Changwon Initiative focused on three components: (a) enhancing the scientific process of the UNCCD; (b) mobilizing additional resources and facilitating partnership arrangements; and (c) supporting global frameworks for the promotion of best practices, including the Land for Life Award. Further information on the activities and achievements of the Changwon Initiative for the period 2012–2018 can be found in document ICCD/COP(15)/11 and the Changwon Initiative evaluation report.

19. The second phase of the Changwon Initiative (2018–2030) aims to consolidate partnerships and support the implementation and integration of LDN in broader sustainable development policies and processes at subnational, national, regional and global levels. The Changwon Initiative objectives and activities are closely linked to the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, aiming to ensure coherence with the strategic priorities expressed by Parties and promote synergies with the activities of UNCCD partners. The second phase of the Changwon Initiative is guided by a set of four strategic pillars, including (1) Scientific credibility; (2) National and international synergies; (3) Strengthened partnerships; and (4) Local impact. The Changwon Initiative continues to provide technical, financial and political support annually for the work of the secretariat in the implementation of the Convention and LDN.

20. During the 2019–2021 period, Changwon Initiative activities included LDN target-setting; LDN transformative projects and programmes, including implementation; the GLO and its regional thematic reports; science–policy interlinkages; efforts to combat SDS; the Greening Drylands Partnership; work on the UNCCD Knowledge Hub and communications; capacity-building; and a Southern African subregional drought initiative. The secretariat collaborated with the Government of the Republic of Korea in celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Changwon Initiative held virtually on 21 October 2021. At the event, a new Business for Land initiative was announced to facilitate the involvement of the business sector in the protection and restoration of land. For more detailed information, refer to document ICCD/COP(15)/13.

2. Ankara Initiative

21. In the context of the SDGs and with a commitment to achieve LDN by 2030, the Ankara Initiative was launched at COP 12 to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. The Initiative supports (a) work to better understand the linkages between DLDD and social instability and migration; (b) activities that help countries address weak or insecure land tenure and resource rights, particularly for women and the most vulnerable, to stimulate the uptake of SLM activities and to make progress towards LDN; (c) a small group of countries with the integration of land tenure and resource rights issues into their plans for LDN implementation; and (d) capacity-building for local level stakeholders and organizations.

22. During the 2019–2021 period, Ankara Initiative activities included (i) developing and producing GLO2; (ii) supporting consultations with relevant stakeholders to gather inputs for the preparation of the technical guide on how to integrate the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security into the implementation of the UNCCD and the achievement of the LDN target; (iii) mainstreaming gender by commissioning a study to explore options for the integration of SDG indicators relevant to the UNCCD Gender Action Plan into the UNCCD reporting process; and (iv) launching a joint project with WOCAT on gender-responsive SLM technologies and approaches.

23. In addition, the Ankara Initiative provided support to the implementation of the 3S Initiative in Africa and commissioned expert studies on perceptions and opportunities to enhance the restoration narrative regarding the Sahel and frame a global campaign. In Central Asia, a drought working group collaborated on the development of a regional drought risk management and mitigation strategy. The Ankara Initiative also financially supported the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP) in collaboration with multiple international partners to assist interested countries with their national LDN target-setting process, including setting national baselines, targets and associated measures to achieve LDN. More detailed information can be found in document ICCD/CRIC(20)/7.

3. Peace Forest Initiative

24. The secretariat collaborated with numerous partners in rolling out the Peace Forest Initiative (PFI), which was welcomed by Parties in decision 3/COP.14. The PFI is being designed to facilitate cooperation and collaboration on LDN implementation in cross-border, fragile and post-conflict situations. In the New Delhi Declaration, Parties took note of the PFI's potential contribution to increasing cooperation on LDN, including land restoration and reforestation in transborder areas of participating countries. During 2019–2021, PFI activities have been supported with the financial support of the Government of the Republic of Korea. The terms of reference for the PFI have been developed in consultation with a number of Parties' representatives, United Nations entities and other organizations, such as the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization, the CBD secretariat, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Green Climate Fund, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO and UN Women. The secretariat consulted with governments that expressed willingness to participate in the PFI and develop a concrete platform for collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders.

E. Global Mechanism partnerships

25. FAO and the GM partnered to design and implement a GEF Enabling Activity project to implement COP decisions on drought. The secretariat and the GM also partnered with UNEP to support the 2021–2022 UNCCD reporting cycle through a new phase of the Global Support Programme (III), which aims to facilitate the development and upgrading of the reporting platform along with default data acquisition, technical assistance and capacity-building for Parties. Additionally, and in line with plans to evolve the LDN TSP, the GM has partnered with IUCN to develop a GEF Enabling Activity project on integrating LDN into land-use planning frameworks to strengthen national UNCCD

enabling environments. Upon approval by the GEF, the project is expected to start during the first half of 2022.

26. The GM has also formalized its engagement with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) during the biennium through the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The partnership will help promote a better understanding of the land, drought and disaster risk nexus, in particular with regard to climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction, nature-based solutions and food security in order to reduce the effects of climate change as well as address the displacement and migration nexus. The GM and IFRC will collaborate to implement other programmes which will support mutual interests and strategic priorities, such as the UNCCD Drought Initiative, UNCCD Land Degradation Neutrality Programme, the IFRC Global Plans for 2021–2025, and pan-African initiatives, including zero hunger, nature-based climate solutions, Red Ready disaster preparedness and national society development. The GM has also signed an MOU with the African Risk Capacity Group to support African countries in managing the impact of extreme weather events, including drought. It will also seek to leverage private sector resources through the development of new financial instruments that can provide insurance protection and other funding to mitigate these risks.

27. As regards project development, there is increasing demand from Parties to receive support to develop bankable gender-responsive transformative project proposals addressing desertification, land degradation, drought, land tenure, land governance and other land-based issues. In response, the GM is establishing a Partnership for Project Preparation (PPP) funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The purpose of this initiative is to connect a wide range of traditional and non-traditional partners to support the early-stage preparation and funding of projects. Examples of PPP activities underway include a tripartite MOU between the African Union Development Agency, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the UNCCD secretariat; a project preparation agreement with IFAD on a multi-country proposal; and a project preparation agreement with GWP on a national project. For more detailed information on all GM partnerships, please refer to document ICCD/CRIC(20)/5.

F. Food Systems Summit

28. In the lead up the United Nations Food Systems Summit held in September 2021, the UNCCD was the United Nations anchor agency for Action Track 3: Boost nature-positive production. The secretariat worked closely with the World Wide Fund for Nature as the Action Track chair and the core and extended leadership teams to propose transformative pathways based on the principle that systemic change requires cross-cutting levers of policy reform, coordinated investment, accessible financing and innovation, traditional knowledge, local governance, sound data, and gender action. This integrated approach is key to managing the impacts of climate change, reducing emissions, increasing carbon sequestration, regenerating ecosystems, protecting biodiversity, curbing food waste and reducing energy consumption while supporting healthy and nutritious diets.²

29. The goal of Action Track 3 is to boost nature-positive food production at the scale needed to meet the fundamental human right to healthy and nutritious food while at the same time restoring balance with nature. To raise awareness, the secretariat produced and disseminated a series of six Action Guides which introduce agroecological approaches and regenerative practices that make food production systems more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient. The strategies and actions presented in these Action Guides are evidence-based, proven to be effective, and can be adapted in a variety of diverse settings. Each Action Guide focuses on key elements that influence the social, economic and environmental dimensions of food production: regenerative agriculture, soil health, gender equity, youth engagement, drought and water scarcity, and sustainable livestock and pastoralism. Collectively, the Action Guide series offers a systems perspective to guide regenerative

² <<https://www.unccd.int/actions/food-systems-summit-2021>>.

actions for both small and large producers to promote the nature-positive transformation of our food systems.

30. In the context of food systems, the secretariat also published an analysis of national LDN reports, submitted as of the end of 2020, which identified a total of 842 response actions adopted by 86 countries. These include 25 categories of response actions aimed at transforming food systems through implementing more responsible governance, building resilient agroecosystems, and improving the management of demand-side drivers, supply chains and risk. Furthermore, these response actions would help countries to build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic and help mitigate the impacts of future crises.

31. The follow-up to the United Nations Food Systems Summit will build on existing efforts and coalitions of countries and supporting organizations. The implementation of Summit outcomes to support these efforts at country level will use existing institutions, improving their responsiveness where necessary. At the national level, governments will be supported by Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams in developing and implementing their national pathways with the engagement and contributions of all stakeholders by leveraging diverse instruments and processes. At the global level, working across the United Nations system and with partners, the Rome-based agencies – FAO, IFAD and the World Food Programme – will jointly lead a coordination hub that collaborates with and draws upon wider United Nations system capacities to support the follow-up to the United Nations Food Systems Summit.

32. The secretariat contributed to various coalitions, including the Coalition of Action 4 Soil Health, which developed as part of a multi-stakeholder approach to facilitate the adoption and scaling up of restoration practices that improve soil health in productive landscapes through investment and policy action. Specifically, the value-added proposition of this Coalition is to develop global coordinating and operating mechanisms and processes (including tools for monitoring outcomes across different scales) to guide and catalyze public and market-based private sector investments in soil health as a foundational and proactive response for addressing food and nutrition security, climate change, socioeconomic returns and growth, productivity, rural livelihoods, biodiversity, climate and nature.

G. Monitoring and reporting

33. The secretariat, as the custodian agency for SDG indicator 15.3.1 (“Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area”), continues to play an active role in the ongoing Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) that oversees the SDG indicator framework adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission and coordinates the annual SDG progress reports to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development each year. In October 2019, the IAEG-SDGs elevated SDG indicator 15.3.1 to Tier I status, recognizing that the indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology, and standards are available, with data regularly produced by countries. In collaboration with the Australian Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Organisation, the secretariat produced the second edition of the Good Practice Guidance for SDG indicator 15.3.1.³

34. The secretariat has strengthened its collaboration with the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and its LDN Initiative (GEO-LDN Initiative), a partnership with over 100 national governments and 100 participating organizations that envisions a future where decisions and actions for the benefit of humankind are informed by coordinated, comprehensive and sustained Earth observations. Established in 2018 in response to the invitation to GEO to support Parties’ efforts in implementing the Convention contained in decision 9/COP.13, the GEO-LDN Initiative has so far contributed to: (i) the development of minimum data quality standards for estimating SDG indicator 15.3.1; (ii) the

³ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2021-09/UNCCD_GPG_SDG-Indicator-15.3.1_version2_2021.pdf>.

development of practical land-use planning tools for LDN by means of an international technology innovation competition organized in collaboration with the Science-Policy Interface (SPI); (iii) the further development of Trends.Earth tool by Conservation International; and (iv) the development of a university-level curriculum of study to educate a new generation of planning and environmental professionals in the principles and practices of LDN. For more detailed information, refer to document ICCD/CRIC(20)/7.

H. Other scientific cooperation

35. In response to decision 20/COP.14, the SPI continues to contribute to and cooperate with other international scientific panels and bodies dealing with DLDD issues. During the implementation of the SPI work programme for 2020–2021 (see decision 18/COP.14), six coordination activities relating to other intergovernmental scientific panels and bodies were undertaken. Further information can be found in document ICCD/COP(15)/CST/4.

36. In response to decision 19/COP.14, the secretariat collaborated with the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security, which coordinated with the Rio convention secretariats and other relevant partners to produce an independent assessment and research report on the coherence and alignment among SLM, ecosystem-based adaptation, ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction and nature-based solutions. Further information can be found in document ICCD/COP(15)/CST/5.

37. In response to decision 17/COP.14, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, FAO and its Agricultural Stress Index System and other related agencies have shared information on plant varieties and animal breeds that are tolerant to drought. In addition, with the aim of disseminating this information to UNCCD stakeholders, a review of the scientific and technical literature on drought-tolerant plant species and animal breeding techniques for improving the drought resilience of food production systems under climate change was conducted.

38. In response to decision 6/COP.14, the secretariat is exploring the interlinkages between land, water, renewable energy, climate change and livelihoods through partnerships with the International Renewable Energy Agency and research institutes, such as Tsinghua University. The secretariat also collaborated with the scientific committee of the 2021 World AgriVoltaics Conference and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization's 2021 Global Call for Innovative Solutions in Cleantech and Sustainable Land Management. These collaborations were aimed at assembling scientific evidence and innovative practical cases on these interlinkages for the development and mainstreaming of innovative and sustainable solutions for combating DLDD and achieving LDN, including in agriculture, agricultural technology, food systems, water, rangelands, mining, forestry and renewable energy.

I. Media-oriented partnerships

39. UNCCD has more than 10 years of experience with media partnerships and has learned from them both in terms of benefits and challenges. The most active engagement since COP 14 was with Deutsche Welle and partners in the United Nations communications groups and networks. UNCCD also engaged with other influential media platforms such as the Global Strategic Communication Council. While formal partnerships may be costly and challenging, our ongoing engagement with media trained on UNCCD issues is bearing fruit.

40. UNCCD worked in an informal partnership with Deutsche Welle (primarily the Africa office), which is headquartered in Bonn, to increase UNCCD outreach to young people (details of the events organized are reported in document ICCD/COP(15)/3). The partnerships enabled young people to engage with high-level government officials, such as the Prime Minister of Togo, the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Information Technology of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the UNCCD Executive Secretary, UNCCD celebrities and Land Heroes. In return, Deutsche Welle received numerous interview opportunities with UNCCD's senior staff and celebrities and inspiring youth (aged between 24 and 35 years) with groundbreaking and thriving agripreneurial and

ecopreneurial initiatives drawn from all regions of the world. This partnership has increased the visibility of the Convention to a new youthful audience. Formal partnerships with media organizations are costly, but their impact is evident and necessary in sustaining public trust and the delivery of credible, science-based facts.

41. UNCCD also informally partnered with the Global Strategic Communications Council (GSCC) to support coverage of its key events. GSCC is a global network of non-governmental journalist associations that are primarily dedicated to reporting on climate change stories, particularly on critically underreported issues such as the link between land and climate change (see document ICCD/COP(15)/3). This collaboration not only introduced new journalists to cover the issues, but also strengthened UNCCD's preparations for event launches through co-curating the media briefings and expanding the products provided to journalists in advance of an event.

42. UNCCD also proactively joined and collaborated with a number of United Nations system-wide communications initiatives, more specifically the United Nations Communications Group in Bonn; Flotilla led by CBD; Pipers by UN-Water; the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) led by FAO and UNEP; and the United Nations Communications Task Force on Climate Change and the United Nations Communications Group, which are both led by the United Nations Department of Global Communications. These partnerships expanded UNCCD's capacity not only to distribute its media and other communications products globally but also created opportunities for reaching new audiences. For instance, our active involvement in Flotilla led to collaboration with the CBD's Global Biodiversity Youth Network in publicizing the youth webinars. Collaboration in the Department of Global Communications led to the proactive solicitation of communication materials from various United Nations media services and social media support by the United Nations Secretary-General's social media team.

43. Lastly, UNCCD continued partnering directly with journalists that have been trained over the last 10 years under the Convention and/or participated in the work of the Convention. Some of the best and most sustained coverage of UNCCD issues and events has come from journalists who received training from UNCCD in the past. This signals that partnerships built around the training of journalists on the issues of the Convention is a cost-effective approach that supports coverage beyond news cycles and UNCCD programmes and events and may have huge returns in promoting and spotlighting the progress countries are making to achieve LDN during the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

44. When considering the next steps for promoting and strengthening relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies, priority should be given to those partnerships, alliances and coalitions that assist Parties in the implementation of the Convention, recognizing that strong and effective relationships can leverage the appropriate synergies with organizations that have overlapping or convergent mandates.

45. It is important to (i) reaffirm the usefulness of the three land-based progress indicators/metrics for all Parties, as set out in decision 9/COP.12, for reporting under the UNCCD and the SDGs; these progress indicators are consistent with the progress indicators/metrics adopted in decision 22/COP.11; and (ii) recognize there are significant benefits that can be derived from collaboration with external bodies and experts, such as the GEO-LDN Initiative and the Monitoring Task Force of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030), to assist countries in monitoring and reporting on the three progress indicators/metrics.

46. Newly formed partnerships to (i) promote tenure security, gender responsiveness, drought preparedness, SDS source mitigation, youth engagement, resource mobilization, food systems transformation; (ii) raise awareness and provide timely access to information, solutions and knowledge; and (iii) support other Convention priorities will be critical to the secretariat's efforts to support Parties in

creating the enabling environment for avoiding, reducing and reversing desertification and land degradation, and mitigating and adapting to the impacts of drought, floods and wildfires.

47. In order to strengthen partnerships and promote new ones that are conducive to a more efficient and effective implementation of the objectives of the Convention, Parties may wish to consider the elements for a draft decision contained in document ICCD/COP(15)/21.
