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Effective implementation of the Convention at national, subregional and regional levels

Development and promotion of activities for targeted capacity-building to further the implementation of the Convention

Development and promotion of capacity-building to further the implementation of the Convention

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 2/COP.14, the Conference of the Parties (COP) restated and reaffirmed the importance of and need for capacity-building for the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in general. It also recognized the need to continue to enhance and increase efforts in this regard and, being cognizant of the importance of capacity-building in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted the above-mentioned decision on enhancing, strengthening and promoting capacity-building. The decision mandates the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) to implement concrete actions to facilitate this process.

The present document reports on activities implemented by the secretariat and the GM in compliance with these mandates. It also contains conclusions and recommendations which the COP may consider, in conjunction with the relevant draft decision contained in document ICCD/CRIC(20)/10, in its deliberations on possible future actions to enhance capacity-building within the framework of the UNCCD.



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I. Introduction

1. By its decision 2/COP.14, the Conference of the Parties (COP) recognized the need to continue to enhance and increase efforts in capacity-building to further the implementation of the Convention. The decision mandated the secretariat to, within available resources:

(a) Continue targeted capacity-building to support gender-responsive and transformative implementation of the Convention, and to further strengthen and deepen both formal and informal partnerships to better facilitate the UNCCD capacity-building process;

(b) Work with partners, including the relevant media networks, to facilitate the development of suitable training materials for journalists as well as the identification and/or provision of the trainers.

2. In paragraph 2 of the above-mentioned decision, the COP requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) to:

(a) Continue supporting capacity-building efforts, in collaboration with relevant partners, to facilitate the achievement of land degradation neutrality (LDN), with particular focus on LDN monitoring and the effective development of LDN transformative projects and programmes;

(b) Foster collaboration on drought impact mitigation capacity-building activities by building on existing partnerships with the World Meteorological Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the National Drought Mitigation Center, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and United Nations Water, and establishing new partnerships;

(c) Conduct online as well as face-to-face UNCCD Drought Toolbox training sessions.

3. In paragraph 7 of the above-mentioned decision, the COP requested the secretariat to report on the implementation of this decision at future sessions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC).

4. In keeping with the COP request in paragraph 3 above, the present report outlines the activities undertaken and being carried out by the secretariat and the GM in accordance with their respective mandates as delineated in decision 2/COP.14. It highlights achievements made, outlines challenges faced and provides details on some of the innovative measures applied/being applied to promote a more effective implementation of capacity-building activities as foreseen within the framework of the UNCCD.

II. Targeted capacity-building to support implementation

5. The COP, in reaffirming that capacity-building at all levels, in particular at the local and community level, is essential for the effective implementation of the Convention (see decision 2/COP.14), underlined the need to continue to enhance and increase efforts in this regard. This section of this report highlights actions undertaken by the secretariat to facilitate the enhancement of capacity-building to further the implementation of the Convention.

A. General support to targeted capacity-building

6. Over the past biennium and to this date, the secretariat and the GM facilitated and continues to facilitate targeted capacity-building by conducting and promoting a series of activities, which are briefly outlined in this document.

1. Global essay competition

7. Cognizant of the connection between zoonotic diseases and improper land use, the secretariat, with the aim of promoting better sustainable land management (SLM), held a global essay competition on "Health & Land". The aim of the exercise was to raise awareness

on how SLM can play a major role in preventing and/or minimizing the occurrence of zoonosis and what role the implementation of the UNCCD can play in this. The exercise was a huge success with more than 175 essays submitted from 69 countries around the world. Essays came from participants as young as 9 to as old as 65.¹

2. Women and the UNCCD Through the Years project

8. As part of its efforts to continue targeted capacity-building to support the gender-responsive and transformative implementation of the Convention, the secretariat developed and launched the Women and the UNCCD Through the Years project. This aims to put faces and voices to the actions of women around the world who are working in every aspect and area of SLM, thereby inspiring others to take action to support the implementation of the UNCCD. The project, inter alia, allows women to access capacity-building opportunities, while encouraging those who provide such opportunities to use this space to make their offers. The project is opened to receive contributions from the public at large in all formats, including audio, video, written or drawings and paintings/posters.²

3. Children and the UNCCD programme

9. Determined to introduce school pupils to the subject of the importance of land to their lives, the secretariat designed and launched the Children and the UNCCD programme. This programme sees the secretariat introducing children in primary and secondary schools to the absolute need to take proper care of land. They are introduced to this issue through many creative means, including paintings, posters, drama, planting trees, presentations and discussions. The programme has proven extremely popular and successful thus far. For the period under review, schools in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean have been involved in this programme.³

4. Expansion of the UNCCD general internship programme

10. The secretariat, cognizant of the limitations that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on its in-office operations, decided to start a remote/distance internship programme. It was soon realized that in using such an approach, many more opportunities could be offered to young professionals owing to the fact that there was no constraint of finding office space. This led to an expanded internship programme, resulting in the UNCCD Capacity Development and Innovations Office (CDIO) offering dozens more training opportunities to young people from across the globe. In keeping with the goal of increasing targeted capacity-building to support the gender-responsive and transformative implementation of the Convention, special attention was/is paid to the issue of gender balance in the recruitment of interns. This internship programme continues to develop and grow, and remains a coveted internship in the United Nations system.

5. Special internship programme for least developed countries and small island developing States

11. Recognizing the need to help facilitate the development of professional and institutional capacities in least developed countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS) that are Parties to the Convention, the secretariat launched in August 2021 a special internship programme for young professionals from these countries. Through this programme, citizens from the concerned countries are educated and trained in many fields concerning UNCCD implementation. These young professionals remain in their home country during and after the training as the internship is done remotely due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic. Here again, the secretariat pays special attention to gender parity in recruiting these interns. While it is too early to do a full assessment of the effectiveness of

¹ Global essay competition: <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/cbm/voices-all-over-world-1>>.

² Women and the UNCCD Through the Years: <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/cbm/call-content-women-world-and-unccd>>.

³ Children and the UNCCD: <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/cbm/children-and-unccd-florence-italy-2021>>

this programme, the young professionals from these countries have shown great interest in doing so.

6. Mentorship programme

12. As part of efforts to facilitate targeted capacity-building to support the implementation of the Convention in the LDCs and SIDS, the secretariat developed a special mentorship programme geared at supporting the development of young professionals for these UNCCD country Parties. The intentions of this programme are to:

- (a) Train young professionals from these Parties who will then return home to work in areas relating to the implementation of the Convention;
- (b) Support the creation of a cadre of young professionals who then help educate and train others in disciplines related to the implementation of the Convention;
- (c) Strengthen institutional capacities in the LDCs and SIDS;
- (d) Offer more opportunities to young female professionals working in the area of SLM.

13. The secretariat has not been able to fully implement this programme due to the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic. However, under its umbrella, the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) of the UNCCD, with support of the secretariat, designed and piloted the Early Career Scientist Fellowship Programme. This is a pro bono secretariat-administered fellowship programme designed to provide opportunities for outstanding early career individuals to contribute to the delivery of the SPI work programme.⁴

7. Capacity-building lecture series

14. The CDIO continued its lecture series to universities and schools over the period under review. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected this programme, which was originally conceived as one where teaching and learning were done face-to-face. While the programme is presently curtailed, it has not stopped. For the period under review, 10 major lectures were delivered to various universities. Here, too, great attention was paid to the subject of gender-responsive and transformative implementation of the Convention. The operation of this lecture series is presently being reviewed with the aim of enhancing the same, bearing in mind the challenges of COVID-19.

8. Targeted capacity-building through the Capacity Building Marketplace

15. The secretariat continued the development and expansion of its Capacity Building Marketplace (CBM) during the biennium under review. This process of development and expansion included:

- (a) Increasing the total number of offers;
- (b) Making offers in the Russian language for the first time;
- (c) Increasing the focus on offers that help drive the efforts to continue targeted capacity-building to support gender-responsive and transformative implementation of the Convention;
- (d) Increasing the offers made in Spanish and French.

16. The CBM is used as one of the secretariat's main pathways of reaching the youth and providing them with opportunities for training, education and skills development. To help it achieve this objective, the secretariat has established an elaborate network of social media that helps facilitate interaction with the youth. The CBM now operates in four of the six official languages of the United Nations, with Russian being added to English, French and Spanish.

⁴ Further information on the SPI Early Career Scientist Fellowship Programme can be found in document ICCD/COP(15)/CST/5.

9. Targeted capacity-building through the Exclusive E-Learning Platform for Capacity-Building

17. In its effort to make the Exclusive E-Learning Platform for Capacity-Building more responsive, efficient and effective, the secretariat developed and launched seven new e-learning courses covering various important subjects pertaining to the implementation of the UNCCD, including the structure and functioning of key bodies. The new courses being offered cover the following topics:

- Introduction to the UNCCD
- Introduction to the United Nations
- Structure and functions/role of the CRIC
- Structure and functions/role of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST)
- Reporting
- Drought 101
- Youth, land and the sustainable development goals.

18. While some of these courses specifically target UNCCD stakeholders, they are all open to and can be taken by the public at large. In the development of these courses, great attention was paid to the issue of targeted capacity-building to support the gender-responsive and transformative implementation of the Convention when and where relevant. This can be clearly seen, for example, in the courses on drought and on youth, land and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The secretariat has now begun the process of translating its courses offered on the platform into French and Spanish. This will allow for, inter alia, greater participation of the French and Spanish-speaking world.

10. Targeted capacity-building to address sand and dust storms

19. Guided by decision 25/COP.14, the secretariat has been assisting in capacity-building for affected Parties to address sand and dust storms by (a) finalizing and publishing the Sand and Dust Storms Compendium: Information and Guidance on Assessing and Addressing the Risks; (b) refining the Global Sand and Dust Storms Source Base Map; and (c) developing a toolbox including decision-making support tools, in collaboration with relevant United Nations entities, institutions and partners. Further information on the progress made in the implementation of these measures is provided in document ICCD/COP(15)/16.

11. Outreach programme for targeted capacity-building during COVID-19

20. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic having virtually stopped all face-to-face capacity-building exercises, the secretariat organized a series of webinars aimed at providing information, training, skills and awareness-raising on the importance of capacity-building for the effective implementation of the Convention. Among these was a series of webinars on land-based jobs for youth; a global webinar on the relationship between poverty, economy and climate, and a subregional panel discussion on land, the SDGs and the future development of the Caribbean.⁵

21. In the organization and holding of these events, the secretariat paid great attention to the fulfilment of its mandate to continue targeted capacity-building to support the gender-responsive and transformative implementation of the Convention. Consequently, special efforts were made to ensure there were female panellists and broad participation of women.

22. A series of other exercises have been and continue to be held as part of the secretariat's outreach programme in response to the limitations occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. These include online discussions, different engagements through social media, engagement

⁵ COVID-19, Land and the Future of the Caribbean: <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/cbm/when-we-went-caribbean>>.

with civil society organizations (CSOs) and collaboration with universities to provide guidance to Masters and PhD students.

B. Supporting Parties to achieve land degradation neutrality

23. Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 with regard to the feasibility of convening planned face-to-face capacity-building and training workshops, and in addition to the capacity-building activities reported in document ICCD/CRIC(19)/2, the GM and the secretariat continue to support countries in achieving LDN through:

(a) The LDN Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP), which provides training and knowledge-sharing opportunities to participant countries and relevant stakeholders on the LDN TSP building blocks (i.e. leveraging LDN, assessing LDN, setting voluntary LDN targets and associated measures, and achieving LDN); and

(b) The support provided for the development of LDN transformative projects and programmes (LDN TPPs) to prepare project concept notes in line with the requirements of the targeted source of funding. This process involves capacity development for national stakeholders to ensure that they understand and meet the minimum requirements prescribed by the funding agencies. Expert national and international consultants are engaged to support the country Parties to meet the technical and quality requirements. In this context, numerous consultative workshops are also convened to ensure that the proposed projects are addressing the needs at the appropriate scale and that there is local ownership of the proposed interventions.

24. Relevant capacity-building and training activities supported in this regard include:

(a) The organization of national and topic-specific webinars and technical meetings to build the necessary capacities of the LDN TSP country delivery teams with ongoing national processes (e.g. Barbados, Botswana, Dominica, Guatemala, Honduras, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Tunisia);

(b) The organization of training sessions and technical meetings in the form of webinars with country Parties and technical and financing partners in support of the development of LDN TPPs (e.g. Benin, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Honduras, Mali, Panama, Peru, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Caribbean SIDS' subregional proposal, Zambezi Watercourse Commission multi-country proposal, the Programme to Build Resilience in the Sahel);

(c) Maintenance of the LDN TSP website⁶ and relevant UNCCD Knowledge Hub webpages,⁷ thereby providing access to relevant technical guidance documents and final LDN TSP country reports and related country commitments to achieve LDN.

25. These targeted capacity-building activities have successfully enabled countries to continue completing their voluntary LDN target-setting processes and advancing in the development of LDN TPPs in collaboration with relevant technical and financial partners, as per the progress made as reported in more detail in document ICCD/CRIC(20)/5. Additional national/regional capacity-building and training events are being considered for 2022 (including potential options back-to-back with the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15)) and would be delivered either in a face-to-face, virtual or hybrid format depending on what is feasible as the COVID-19 situation continues evolving.

C. Continuation of targeted capacity-building to support gender-responsive and transformative implementation of the Convention

26. For the period under review, the secretariat and the GM undertook many capacity-building actions and activities to facilitate the gender-responsive and transformative implementation of the Convention. Paragraphs 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18 and 21 of the present

⁶ < <https://www.unccd.int/actions/ldn-target-setting-programme>>.

⁷ < <https://knowledge.unccd.int/home/country-information/countries-with-voluntary-ldn-targets>>.

report detail some of these actions. In addition, the secretariat has made very conscious efforts in other areas including:

- Recruiting more female staff in general, including in senior management positions as well as consultants;
- Firmly promoting the participation of women as panellists in webinars and panel discussions;
- Development of special training focusing on the issues of gender responsiveness.

27. In addition to those listed above, the secretariat and the GM undertook several other actions and activities in their efforts to fulfil their respective mandates as regards continuation of targeted capacity-building to support the gender-responsive and transformative implementation of the Convention. These additional actions are detailed in document ICCD/COP(15)/17.

D. Facilitation of the development of training materials for journalists as well as the identification/provision of trainers

28. The secretariat organized training for journalists in Central Asia aimed at the Russian-speaking media and held media briefings for international journalists. The training in Central Asia provided information on the threat of droughts in the region and international efforts to support national drought measures, and identified the issues of interest for journalists in the region. Building on this experience, additional training is planned in advance of the launch of the Regional Report on Central and Eastern Europe ahead of COP 15. As of the writing of this report, the preparations for the training of journalists for the Arab region is at an advanced stage and is expected to take place in the lead-up to COP 15. The training materials targeting journalists for both regions as well as other regions will – with the assistance of media experts from these regions – be developed ahead of COP 15.

29. A targeted approach was used to identify journalists for the trainings. About 70 journalists from the Central Asia region were identified; they write regularly on environment issues on different platforms, including through alternative media targeting non-governmental organizations. Over 50 of these journalists were invited to the training but only a few attended. The interactive session was particularly useful in identifying the issues of interest to journalists and demonstrating the need for a more differentiated training for journalists in the region that considers the needs of new writers (young journalists), other environmental journalists in the region, and international journalists who report on environmental issues from the region.

30. UNCCD media training activities are conducted in the lead-up to key activities such as the launch of a key publications, Desertification and Drought Days or official events of the Convention. This ensures that the focus of the training is aligned with and relevant to the short-term needs of journalists and other media organizations and that the UNCCD's limited media resources are effective in increasing the visibility of the Convention and its issues. Two key challenges arise from this approach. First, there is an uneven coverage of UNCCD issues, with coverage dictated by news cycles. For example, more journalists have demonstrated an interest in covering land issues that are connected to climate change and biodiversity conservation, that is, land restoration, drought and the Great Green Wall.

31. Second, while it is essential to seize these opportunities to share and for outreach, this is not sufficient to build the support and capacity Parties need to implement the Convention. In the long-term, this would have unintended consequences, including leaving behind issues such as land tenure, gender equality and popularizing key UNCCD concepts such as LDN. It is necessary that there be an approach that builds the capacity of journalists active in both traditional and social media during this United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030). This more structured training could focus initially on UNCCD's key programmes, moving on into plans for more capacity-building-related activities.

E. Conduct of trainings on the UNCCD Drought Toolbox

32. The secretariat, in collaboration with FAO and UNEP-DHI (Danish Hydraulic Institute) Centre on Water and Environment, organized a series of webinars to familiarize stakeholders on the interactive Drought Toolbox to help countries develop and implement national drought plans and take proactive approaches to drought management.

33. In the context of the Building Forward Better initiative of FAO,⁸ the secretariat contributed to the training in the extended administered e-courses (October 2020–July 2021) with a focus on the Drought Toolbox and its functionality.

34. In the context of the UNCCD efforts in Central Asia mentioned in paragraph 28 above, the secretariat, together with the Regional Environmental Central for Central Asia and partners, organized training sessions with the aim of developing and implementing drought risk reduction strategies in the Central Asian region.

35. As part of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) project,⁹ the secretariat, together with FAO and UNEP-DHI, organized an online training on the Drought Toolbox with insight into innovative tools and measures for robust drought risk management, including monitoring and early warning systems, vulnerability assessments and risk mitigation measures with a focus on the SADC region.

36. The UNCCD secretariat co-organized an online training workshop on the development of national plans and policies for drought in southern South America organized by the Drought Information System for southern South America. The virtual workshop was held on 23–24 November 2020.

III. Partnerships to facilitate capacity development

A. Promotion of partnerships to enhance targeted capacity-building

37. By its decision 2/COP.14, paragraph 1(a), Parties stipulated that the secretariat should, within available resources, further strengthen and deepen both formal and informal partnerships to better facilitate the UNCCD capacity-building process. In seeking to carry out this mandate, the secretariat is continuing its efforts to build these partnerships. These efforts were wide-ranging in that they sought partnerships that could support all aspects of the capacity-development process.

1. Formal partnerships

38. During the preparation of the present report, the secretariat maintained and, in some cases, expanded existing formal partnerships that facilitate capacity-building in one form or another. These partnerships include those with the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of Turkey through the Changwon Initiative and the Ankara Initiative, respectively; the Global Environmental Facility; the Caribbean Community; the Centre International de Formation Européenne; and the Japan International Cooperation Agency. The secretariat also works with the Joint Liaison Group of the three Rio conventions, where it plays a major role in the development of a joint capacity-building programme.

39. With the intention of building more partnerships at the subregional level, the secretariat has made and is making concerted efforts to sign formal agreements with relevant subregional intergovernmental organizations. In this regard, initial work has been done and is continuing with several bodies including SADC and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel. These efforts are ongoing and will greatly increase with time. However, the secretariat has found that building these partnerships and ensuring that

⁸ <<https://www.fao.org/land-water/overview/bfb/en/>>.

⁹ <<https://www.unccd.int/news-events/regional-project-drought-risk-management-southern-africa-launched>>.

they do produce results takes much time and effort, as well as some resources and commitment from the intended partners, if concrete outcomes are to be achieved.

40. The secretariat is at present in pursuit of a formal agreement with the City of Bonn to jointly host the Bonn/UNCCD international conference of universities. It is planned that this series of conferences will discuss, inter alia, the issue of placing the discipline of SLM on the curricula of universities around the world. The City of Bonn has shown great interest in this idea, but both parties agreed that, due to the prevailing pandemic, the first of these conferences will have to be considered for a later date.

2. Informal partnerships

41. The secretariat has been far more successful in maintaining and/or building new informal partnerships to support the capacity-building process. For the period under review, all long-standing informal partnerships, including those with DesertNet International, the Caribbean Youth Environment Network, and several universities including Wageningen University & Research and the University of Cologne, continue to bear fruit. These informal partnerships are less of a challenge to maintain and sustain, and allow for greater flexibility.

42. These short-term informal partnerships, that is to say those established to facilitate an individual activity, programme or project, have been very useful in facilitating the capacity-building process. For the period under review the secretariat has made full use of these types of partnerships, undertaking webinars, panel discussions, lectures and trainings. These partnerships were developed with schools, universities, CSOs, radio stations, internet-based information pathways, newspapers and community-based organizations. Some of the activities realized include:

- (a) Four webinars for youths on land-based jobs: three subregional and one global;
- (b) A panel discussion on land and the sustainable development of the Caribbean, which led to other capacity-building activities being undertaken, including internships for young professionals from the Caribbean SIDS;
- (c) A global webinar on the relation between poverty, the economy and climate;
- (d) Several capacity-building sessions with different CSOs such as Migrafrica;
- (e) Children and the UNCCD project;
- (f) Women and the UNCCD Through the Years project.

B. Partnerships with media networks and other entities to facilitate the development of training materials for journalists and identification and/or provision of trainers

43. UNCCD worked in partnership with Global Strategic Communications Council (GSCC) based in Washington to develop the training materials for the global coverage of the Great Green Wall. The materials provided an overview of the project, its progress, gaps and multiple benefits. This partnership has enabled UNCCD to develop a more sophisticated approach to identify and facilitate quick access to interviewees. It also provided access to work with a global network of more than 1,000 freelance journalists covering climate change, who could report on related land issues.

44. UNCCD also worked in partnership with Deutsche Welle Africa in a mutually beneficial manner. Deutsche Welle gained access to UNCCD Land Ambassadors and senior management for interviews and events attractive to its youth audiences. For instance, the webinar on Africa was streamed live on Deutsche Welle's Facebook page and had over 1,000 followers, and within days was watched by over 3,000 people. In return, Deutsche Welle publicized the webinars on their social media platforms, facilitated some of the events and, subsequently, published articles about the same.

45. UNCCD also worked in partnership with the organization Blossom to develop the training and media materials for the Arabic-language media and UNCCD's global media events. This activity is in progress, providing insights to new and higher-level entry-points

for media engagement that UNCCD needs to address to increase coverage for its global outreach.

46. These partnerships are different but represent the main partnership models for UNCCD: (i) through partnerships with not-for-profit media organization such as GSCC; (ii) partnerships with media organizations such as Deutsche Welle; and (iii) partnerships with a private contractor. Each has strengths and weaknesses as well as costs and benefits that must be considered in selecting future partners.

C. Partnerships and collaborations in capacity-building to facilitate the achievement of land degradation neutrality, focusing on monitoring and development of transformative projects and programmes

47. The Science-Policy Interface, with support from the secretariat, collaborated with the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils of the FAO Global Soil Partnership on two important capacity-development activities: (1) the co-organization of global symposia on soil biodiversity and salt-affected soils; and (2) the scientific review of reports addressing critical barriers faced by Parties in their efforts to achieve LDN, including (a) technical approaches to recarbonizing soils; (b) the development of a protocol for measurement, monitoring, reporting and verification of soil organic carbon in agricultural landscapes; and (c) the technical specifications for the development of national soil organic carbon sequestration potential maps.¹⁰

48. The secretariat collaborated with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on three capacity development outreach initiatives: (1) the 52nd session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice dialogue on the relationship between land- and climate change adaptation-related matters; (2) the structured expert dialogue on the second periodic review of the adequacy of the long-term global goal and the progress towards achieving it, which emphasized the interaction of climate change and desertification/land degradation, including their combined impact on natural ecosystems and food security; and (3) the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture workshop on sustainable land and water management, including integrated watershed management strategies, to ensure food security, which focused on SLM for food security and sustainable agriculture through LDN response actions.

49. The secretariat collaborated with the United Nations System Staff College on two capacity-development initiatives: (1) the development and delivery of an online course module on the pivotal role of land within a holistic and integrated approach to addressing climate change and sustainable development; and (2) a course for a Master in International Development through the IE¹¹ School of Global and Public Affairs, which focused on how the competition for limited land resources can make or break the achievement of the SDGs.

50. The secretariat strengthened its collaboration with the Group on Earth Observations, a partnership of over 100 national governments and over 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. Through the GEO Land Degradation Neutrality Initiative (GEO LDN), progress in the development of minimum data quality standards, interoperability among analytical tools and the modular development of curricula have contributed to global efforts to develop and promote capacity in the measurement and mapping of degraded lands and support the achievement of LDN.

¹⁰ Further information on the partnership can be found in document ICCD/COP(15)/CST/4.

¹¹ Instituto de Empresa.

D. Fostering collaboration on drought impact mitigation capacity-building activities by building on existing partnerships and establishing new ones

51. In the context of the FAO-led Global Framework for Water Scarcity in Agriculture¹² partnership, the secretariat published a paper on “Thinking ahead: Drought resilience and COVID-19”¹³ and organized an event at the World Water Week 2021 on “Integrated drought resilience in a changing climate”.¹⁴

52. The secretariat collaborated with the World Bank by contributing to a report on “EPIC Response: Innovative Governance for Flood and Drought Risk Management”¹⁵ and co-organized a session at World Water Week in Stockholm entitled “Integrating Against Drought – the Southern Africa Drought Resilience Initiative”. It was held on 26 August 2021.¹⁶

53. The secretariat co-authored the Global Assessment Report 2021 of the UNDRR’s special report on drought.

IV. Innovations for furthering cost-effective capacity-building

A. Development and promotion of innovative pathways to facilitate capacity-building

54. As the global pandemic continues, the secretariat is forced to find new and innovative ways of realizing its mandate of facilitating the implementation of the Convention across the board, including capacity development. For the period under review the secretariat developed several innovative activities and programmes such as the Children and the UNCCD project (see para. 9) and the Women and the UNCCD Through the Years project (see para. 8), as well as the special internship for the LDCs and SIDS (see para. 11 above).

55. The secretariat is currently initiating the development of the UNCCD Innovation Hub. This hub will serve, inter alia, as a platform where all new innovations in the area of SLM may be introduced to Parties, other UNCCD stakeholders and the public at large. In this initial stage, the hub will focus on:

- (a) Bringing information on all new innovations in the area of SLM, including in technology, financing, policy and agricultural and forestry practices, to one place, thereby allowing quick and easy access to the same by UNCCD stakeholders and the public at large;
- (b) Providing a platform that hosts a community of practice, where Parties and other stakeholders can share information on best practices as these pertain to innovation in SLM;
- (c) Serving as a place where innovators can showcase their SLM innovations and where those seeking innovations can find them.

56. Apart from the innovation, the secretariat is developing other innovative strategies to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the realization of its mandate. Attention is being paid to all areas of secretariat work where innovations can have a positive impact. As pertains to capacity-building, some of the innovative approaches used during the period under review include:

¹² <<https://www.fao.org/land-water/overview/wasag/es/>>.

¹³ <<https://www.unccd.int/publications/thinking-ahead-drought-resilience-and-covid-19-wasag-working-group-drought>>.

¹⁴ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJH7gacsZyk>>.

¹⁵ <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water/publication/an-epic-response-innovative-governance-for-flood-and-drought-risk-management>>.

¹⁶ <<https://www.worldwaterweek.org/event/9618-integrating-against-drought---the-southern-africa-drought-resilience-initiative>>.

- Establishing the special internship programme for young professionals from LDCs and SIDS;
- Initiation of the development of a UNCCD virtual museum;
- The Children and the UNCCD project;
- The Women and the UNCCD Through the Years project;
- Design of a special mentorship programme for young professionals from LDCs and SIDS. This programme has only been partially implemented (see para. 13 above);
- Design of the Bonn/UNCCD International University Conference series;
- Development of a global remote/distance internship programme to train and equip young professionals from around the world;
- Use of different approaches in the development of webinars, including employing methods such as round-table sessions and panel discussions;
- Use of new approaches in the design and development of e-learning courses.

B. Further development of the Capacity Building Marketplace and the Exclusive E-Learning Platform

57. The CBM continues to be a major tool used by the secretariat to provide access to capacity-building opportunities offered around the world in all areas of SLM. The CBM now operates in four of the United Nations languages with the addition of Russian. This addition means that the CBM now, inter alia:

- (a) Offers opportunities daily in Russian;
- (b) Provides, on an ongoing basis, internship placements for Russian-speaking young professionals;
- (c) Creates the basis for widening its clientele and offers greater services to Russian-speaking UNCCD stakeholders.

58. The secretariat has taken advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to design many more online activities to expand the use and clientele base of the CBM. In this regard a series of events have been conducted using and increasing the reach of the CBM. These activities included:

- A global essay competition;
- A children's poster competition;
- A global schools visit exercise to introduce young people around the world to the UNCCD and the issues of SLM;
- A series of webinars, online panel discussions and round-table events;
- A very effective global social media exchange;
- A global remote/distance internship programme.

59. A major development that took place as regards the exclusive E-learning Platform was an increase in the number of e-learning courses prepared and offered by the secretariat. These courses are detailed in paragraph 17 above.¹⁷ These courses are now being translated into French and Spanish. This process is not happening as quickly as was hoped by the secretariat, and measures are now in place to facilitate more rapid progress. There are plans to have these courses translated into Russian, but this is still in the very initial stages.

60. The exclusive E-Learning Platform is open to offer courses prepared by others relating to SLM and/or other UNCCD implementation issues. For the period under review, several

¹⁷ UNCCD E-Learning Platform: <<https://unccd-capacitybuildingmarketplace.moodle.school/>>.

organizations including FAO and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services have made use of this opportunity. However, CSOs and other non-governmental entities have made little use of the opportunity to make their course offerings.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

61. The secretariat and the GM have done extensive work as regards increasing their efforts to facilitate capacity-building and have made several key conclusions regarding the same. These conclusions are focused on aspects of this report that highlight the successes achieved, challenges that must be faced and opportunities to further the capacity-development process within the framework of the vision of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and its contribution to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Accordingly, the COP may wish to consider the following conclusions:

(a) The expansion of the CBM is commendable and should continue, particularly with regard to its development relating to the use of other United Nations languages. However, more efforts must still be made to widen its clientele. Parties, CSOs and other stakeholders should make use of CBM opportunities, including to post their course offerings;

(b) The offering of new e-learning courses and their translation into French and Spanish are welcome steps in the development of the exclusive E-Learning Platform and must be continued. Parties, CSOs, universities and other stakeholders must make greater use of this tool through, *inter alia*, making their own course offerings;

(c) Significant results have been achieved in capacity-building to support the gender-responsive and transformative implementation of the Convention. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the trainings took place virtually. Furthermore, not all UNCCD stakeholders have been reached by these activities. Therefore, more strategies need to be developed and implemented to enhance this process;

(d) The on-demand media training activities are efficient and effective and should be continued. In addition, a more structured approach to media training is needed to popularize key UNCCD concepts and priorities not only in the biennium's programmatic work, but also during the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030);

(e) Parties and other stakeholders working on the ground are important partners in providing access to the in-kind resources needed for the training, such as case studies, visual materials (photos, film footage, human interest stories, etc.) or the co-hosting of training workshops with field trips built in to generate the substance for coverage;

(f) Partnerships are essential to the capacity-building and development process. Consequently, the secretariat and the GM should redouble their efforts to encourage Parties to be much more involved in this process. Parties, CSOs and other stakeholders should make greater efforts to answer the calls from the secretariat and the GM for partnership building in support of the efforts being made;

(g) The work accomplished on sand and dust storms is a most welcome development. Concerned Parties and other stakeholders should be encouraged to make full use of these tools. The secretariat should continue its cooperation with concerned Parties, organizations and other relevant stakeholders in the interest of developing additional tools and in furthering capacity-building in this regard;

(h) The innovative approaches taken by the secretariat and the GM to facilitate capacity-building and development in response to the challenges presented by COVID-19 should be further pursued. Indeed, innovation must be central to the work

of both the secretariat and the GM to help ensure a more efficacious realization of their mandates.

B. Recommendations

62. Taking into consideration the content of this report and the conclusions drawn, Parties may wish to consider the latter with a view to preparing a draft decision for further consideration by the COP based on the draft text for negotiations contained in document ICCD/CRIC(20)/10, which, in accordance with paragraph 5 of decision 32/COP.14, contains all draft decisions prepared for consideration at CRIC 20.
