



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

INFORMAL GUIDE

Fifteenth session of the UNCCD Conference of the Parties

Abidjan, 9-20 May 2022

This informal guide was prepared by the UNCCD secretariat with the purpose of assisting participants to the meetings in Abidjan in making the sessions a success. This guide seeks to provide an overview of the structure, programme and agenda items of COP 15, CST 15 and CRIC 20, and practical information on how the work is carried out at the formal and informal settings. This guide is not meant to offer substantive proposals

on the decisions to be made at the COP, but to support effective organization of work and focused discussions during the sessions.

The secretariat would like to emphasize that this is an informal guide and should not be referred to as an official document.

COP 15 at a glance	1
Agenda items to be considered under each body in Abidjan	3
Main agenda items: negotiation points and interlinkages	4
Procedures and organization of work	7
The high-level segment	9
Scheduling of the meetings of the COP, CRIC and CST	10
Organization of work at the plenaries	11
Contact group work	12
Role of the Bureaux of the COP, CRIC and CST	14
Role of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM)	15
Special events and side events	16
How to stay informed during the COP	18
Annex	19



COP 15 at a glance

COP 15 will have a multitude of important decisions to make on the following, among others:

- Next steps in advancing land degradation neutrality as an important solution towards sustainable development for all and within the context of the UN Decade on Ecosystems Restoration;
- The evolving UNCCD drought agenda: technical and financial support tools, policy/legal frameworks, inter-agency collaboration and science-policy guidance;
- Further linking of the UNCCD implementation with measures to address climate change, biodiversity loss, food security, urban-rural linkages, job creation and sustainable consumption and production;
- Resources for the preparation and implementation of projects;
- Roadmap for implementing the UNCCD Gender Action Plan;
- Voluntary tenure guidelines in the context of the UNCCD implementation;
- Emerging global collaboration and guidance for sand and dust storms source mitigation.



The COP will also consider several housekeeping matters and standard agenda items, such as the programme and budget for the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, the updated communication plan, strengthening of the engagement of the business sector in the achievement of the objectives of the Convention and renewed and improved ways to interact with civil society organizations.

Although the two-week meeting is generally called “COP 15”, in reality it consists of sessions of the **Conference of the Parties (COP)** and its two subsidiary bodies: the **Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)** and the **Committee on Science and Technology (CST)**. The **COP** itself takes different forms: it convenes as a high-level segment and a civil society dialogue platform in addition to the usual plenary sessions, and it also establishes a **Committee of the Whole (COW)** as a procedurally more suitable body for negotiations on its agenda items.

The above-mentioned key topics of COP 15 are negotiated under different UNCCD bodies, depending on their nature. In the next page you will find an overview of the agendas of the **COP** and the two subsidiary bodies.

Agenda items to be considered under each body in Abidjan

CST

- Adoption of the agenda

- SPI: Science-policy recommendations on land use planning for DLDD

- SPI: Science-policy recommendations on monitoring drought resilience

- SPI: Cooperation with other scientific panels and bodies (IPCC, IPBES...)

- Science-policy knowledge management: SPI, best practices and the UNCCD Knowledge Hub

- SPI work programme 2022-2023

- Indicators for the 2022 national reporting

- Agenda of the next **CST**

COP/COW

- Adoption of the agenda

- Policy frameworks and thematic issues:
 - Drought
 - Sand and dust storms
 - Gender
 - Migration
 - Land tenure

- UNCCD communication plan

- Relationships and synergies with other conventions and organizations

- Preparation of the mid-term evaluation of the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework

- 2022-2023 budget, 2020-2021 financial performance

- Report of the Evaluation Office

- Civil society participation in the UNCCD

- Private sector participation in the UNCCD

- Scheduling and agenda of the next **COP**

CRIC

- Adoption of the agenda

- 2022-2025 workplan of the secretariat and the GM

- 2020-2021 results-based performance of the secretariat and the GM

- Next steps in promoting LDN

- GM work on resource mobilization

- Collaboration with the GEF

- 2022 national reporting

- Promotion of capacity building

- Agenda of the next **CRIC**

SPI: Science-Policy Interface (a nominated group of 25 scientists supporting the UNCCD on selected science-policy matters)

DLDD: desertification/land degradation and drought

LDN: Land degradation neutrality

COP: Conference of the Parties

CRIC: Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

CST: Committee on Science and Technology

COW: Committee of the Whole

Main agenda items: negotiation points and interlinkages

As background information, COP 15 participants are provided with information for each agenda item and all draft decisions as official documentation for the session.



The official documentation is available on the [UNCCD website](#).

In the next pages you will find an outline of those **COP**, **CRIC** and **CST** topics that are likely to be the most negotiated on, and an indication of the key points in the respective draft decisions. This outline includes, indeed, only part of the **COP**, **CRIC** and **CST** topics and negotiation points and should not be considered as a comprehensive list of agenda items.

Some topics are part of several agenda items and/or covered by more than one UNCCD body, and these interlinkages are also presented in the outline. It may be noted that in its proposals for the organization of work during the **COP**, the secretariat aims to ensure that substantive negotiations on each topic are done in only one negotiation group in a focused and transparent manner. The secretariat also ensures that the documents and draft decisions it submits to the **COP** and its subsidiary bodies are coordinated and coherent.



Topic	Body/agenda item number	Main negotiation points	Draft decision number
Addressing DLDD and promoting LDN	CRIC item 2(a): CRIC 19 report	Further commitment to developing and implementing LDN targets	CRIC decision 7
	CRIC item 2(d): SDG 15 CST item 2(a): SPI objective 1	SPI recommendations for integrating LDN into land use planning	CRIC decision 4 CST decision 1
Resources for DLDD and LDN implementation	CRIC item 4 (b): GM	GM proposal to enhance support to DLDD and LDN projects through a PPP - project preparation partnership	CRIC decision 2
	CRIC item 4(a): GEF	Innovative financing for addressing DLDD Next steps in GEF collaboration	CRIC decision 1
Drought	COP item 4: Policies/Drought	IWG recommendations on policy and implementation measures	COP decision 12
	COP item 6(a): Budget		COP decision 5
	CRIC item 2(a): CRIC 19 report	Any further arrangements/instruments on drought building upon the work of the IWG	CRIC decision 7
	CST item 2(b): SPI objective 2	Next steps in supporting national drought plans: Toolbox, knowledge sharing, partnerships, institutional networking... Proposed launching of a Drought Resilience Accelerator on monitoring/early warning pilots SPI recommendations on enhancing drought resilience/impact monitoring and assessment Further global advocacy and coordination	CST decision 2
Gender	COP item 4: Policies/Gender	Road map for the implementation of the gender Action Plan	COP decision 9
	CRIC item 2(a): CRIC 19 report	Further gender mainstreaming into DLDD activities	CRIC decision 7
Land tenure	COP item 4: Policies/Land tenure	Commitment to integrate land tenure considerations into DLDD projects and plans	COP decision 11
	CRIC item 2(a): CRIC 19 report	Awareness raising and guidance for the integration of land tenure considerations into DLDD activities	CRIC decision 7
Sand and dust storms	COP item 4: Policies/sand and dust storms	Development of tools and collaboration for addressing sand dust storms nationally and regionally	COP decision 8
Capacity building	CRIC item 2(e): capacity building	Continuous support to capacity building on UNCCD key topics and development of related partnerships	CRIC decision 3
Civil society participation	COP item 7(a): CSO participation	Further facilitation of CSO participation and the work of the CSO Panel	COP decision 6
		Development of a youth strategy for the Convention	

Synergies	<p>COP item 3: Relationships with other organizations</p> <p>CST item 2(c): SPI coordination activities</p>	<p>Continuous collaboration with existing and new partners</p> <p>SPI recommendations on integrating land-based solutions with climate change adaptation/ mitigation actions, based on IPCC reports</p>	<p>COP decision 4</p> <p>CST decision 3</p>
Private sector participation	<p>COP item 7(b): Private sector participation</p> <p>CRIC item 4 (b): GM</p>	<p>Continuous implementation of the private sector strategy</p> <p>Promotion of decent land-based jobs</p> <p>Promotion of sustainable land use and value chains</p> <p>Develop models for technology transfer and innovative financing</p>	<p>COP decision 7</p> <p>CRIC decision 2</p>
National reporting	<p>CRIC item 3: Procedures for communication of information</p> <p>CST item 3(c) / CRIC item 3: Information on reporting modalities</p>	<p>Guidelines for technical review of national reports</p> <p>Guidance to Parties for the 2022 national report preparation</p> <p>Continuous development of the UNCCD reporting platform and tools, and a related data centre</p>	<p>CRIC decision 6</p>
Programme and budget	<p>COP items 2(a-c): Budget, performance and evaluations</p> <p>CRIC: items 2(b-c) workplan and performance of the secretariat and the GM</p>	<p>UNCCD budget for 2022-2023; proposed increase 2,7% mainly for drought staff and activities</p> <p>Proposal for using EUR 2,6 million from reserves mainly for Drought Resilience Accelerator</p> <p>2022-2025 results framework for the secretariat and the GM</p>	<p>COP decision 5</p> <p>COP decision 1</p>

DLDD: desertification/land degradation and drought

LDN: Land degradation neutrality

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

SPI: Science-Policy Interface (a nominated group of 25 scientists supporting the UNCCD on selected science-policy matters)

GEF: Global Environment Facility

IWG: Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought (30-member group of country representatives and experts that worked over 2020-2021 to identify further measure for addressing drought under the UNCCD)

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

CSO: Civil society organization

In addition to the above, several other agenda items will be considered by the **COP**, **CRIC** and **CST**. A full list of the draft decisions is contained in the annex to this paper.



Procedures and organization of work

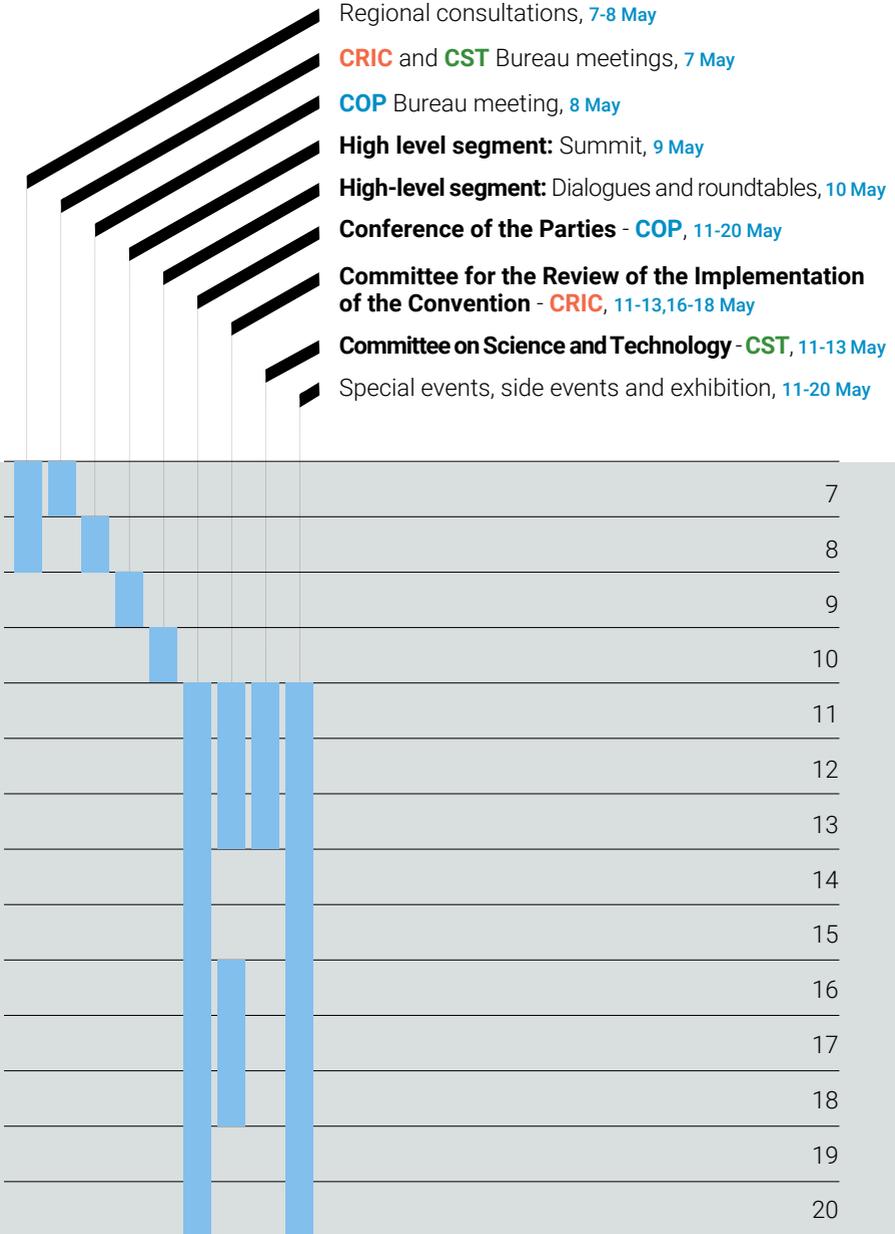
This section provides information of how the sessions are organized and what is expected from the delegates, with the main aim of supporting those that are new to the UNCCD process to successfully navigate through the COP.

Before the COP, regional meetings of the five implementation annexes are planned to be held. The Bureaux of the **COP** and its subsidiary bodies will also meet: the **CST** and the **CRIC** Bureaux are planned for Saturday 7 May, while the **COP** Bureau would meet on Sunday 8 May.



ANNEXES

1. Africa
2. Asia
3. Latin America and the Caribbean
4. Northern Mediterranean
5. Central and Eastern Europe



The high-level segment

A high-level opening ceremony, comprising a one-day Heads of State/Government Summit and another day of interactive dialogue sessions and round tables among ministers and other high-ranking officials, will be conducted on **9 and 10 May**. The high-level segment will be anchored in the COP 15 agenda, with the purpose to provide political leadership to the negotiations.

The Summit will be organized by the host country of COP 15 on **9 May**. Information of the Summit theme and programme of work will be made available soon.

On **10 May**, two interactive dialogues and three parallel ministerial roundtables will be organized, with the following themes:

- **Interactive dialogue 1 | Land reGeneration:** The role of youth in shaping sustainable land agenda
- **Interactive dialogue 2 | Future-proofing land use:** Shifting patterns in production and consumption
- **Roundtable 1 | Rights, rewards and responsibilities:** the future of land stewardship
- **Roundtable 2 | Land restoration:** A path to sustainable post-pandemic recovery
- **Roundtable 3 | The Big Dry:** From disaster to drought resilience

The interactive dialogues will take approximately 90 minutes each, while the parallel ministerial roundtable discussions will last approximately 180 minutes. Each of them will be moderated by a Chair at either ministerial level or drawn from among high-level participants. Substantive deliberations will be opened by the Chair and complemented with thought-provoking inputs from keynote speakers or panelists. In addition to the interactive dialogue sessions and ministerial roundtables, there will be the option to deliver formal statements in a separate room designated for that purpose.

More information on the high-level segment programme of work, schedule and participation/registration can be found on the UNCCD website <https://www.unccd.int/cop15/high-level-segment>

Scheduling of the meetings of the COP, CRIC and CST

After the high-level segment, the **COP** starts its agenda items in the morning of Wednesday **11 May**. The first meeting is largely procedural, but it also includes general statements of regional and interest groups. These statements present the overall approaches, aims and reservations of the groups to the main agenda items and negotiation points.

During the first meeting, the **COP** usually decides to establish a **Committee of the Whole (COW)**, which will deal with the **COP** agenda items. This **COW** starts working on Wednesday by just a few items on its agenda, with focus on the programme and budget. The budget decision tends to take plenty of time to negotiate, and therefore it is introduced among the first ones.

As soon as the **COW** has completed its programme for the day, the **CRIC** and **CST** open their first meetings. Only two official sessions can be held in parallel, thus while the **CRIC** and the **CST** work, the **COW** will not.

For Thursday and Friday (**12-13 May**), the **COW** will have only some short meetings, so that the other bodies can continue working. **CST** is expected to complete its work by Friday **13 May**, but **CRIC** will continue also from Monday to Wednesday the following week (**16-18 May**). **COW** will continue throughout the second week.



The planned schedules of each body are presented in the last pages of their agenda documents.

Organization of work at the plenaries

The plenary debates of each body – **COW**, **CRIC** and **CST** – advance in a similar manner:

The chair states the agenda item that is about to be considered and asks the secretariat (or sometimes someone else, for example a working group chair) to present the item

The secretariat makes an introduction, which usually is a short summary of the document that has been prepared for the agenda item

The chair opens the floor for discussion.

For most items, each regional/interest group makes a statement presenting its views concerning the agenda item. The groups are usually relatively well organized and assign specific delegates to speak on behalf of the group on different items.

After the regional/interest groups, individual countries and finally observers may also take the floor.

For many items, the plenary debate is short, consisting only of regional statements. However, there are always also items on which many individual countries also want to state their views at the plenary level.

When there are no more comments from the floor, or when the time allocated for an item runs out, the Chair closes the item. After that, it will be subject to negotiations in a contact group unless something is agreed immediately at the plenary.

The bodies meet in the plenary form for (1) the introduction/first debate of each item and (2) after the negotiations on an item are completed, to agree on a finalized decision text. Negotiations are done in contact groups, and before an item can be taken to a contact group, it has to be presented at the plenary. Often the plenary advances fast, as countries want to start the negotiations on each decision text. It is also common to start at the plenary with those items that are the most difficult to agree on – for example, as mentioned earlier, budget tends to be the first item to be introduced at the COW so that the budget contact group can start immediately.

Contact group work

Usually four contact groups are established: one for the budget, one for other **COW** matters, one for the **CST** and one for the **CRIC** matters. At COP 15 there will also be a joint **CRIC/CST** contact group dealing with issues relating to indicators and strategic objectives. To enable also small delegations to fully participate in the negotiations, the general approach is to allow only two contact groups to meet in parallel, although sometimes there are exceptions to this approach.

Each contact group is open to any Party that wants to join the negotiations, but in practice regional/interest groups nominate their representatives to speak on behalf of the group. The size of the groups varies: the budget group tends to be an “expert-only” small group, with approx. 10-12 negotiators, while other negotiations attract bigger crowds. Contact groups may decide to establish smaller sub-groups for specific items. As the UNCCD is a party-driven process, the size and composition of the contact groups is a prerogative of the Parties. A facilitator or two co-facilitators are selected to each contact group, and they are always national delegates.

The draft decisions prepared by the secretariat are the starting point for contact group negotiations. The usual order of negotiations for one decision in the contact group is as follows:

1. The facilitator calls for general comments to the draft decision
2. The draft is amended to include the comments, and as different groups may present differing comments, some parts of the draft decision may end up with several alternative approaches.
3. The facilitator opens the first reading. The draft decision text is read through paragraph by paragraph, and the negotiators either agree with the content or give their proposed modifications to it. After the first reading, some paragraphs have been agreed by everyone, some have a few small details to be further considered, and some others contain two or more alternative texts. Everything that has been agreed may not be re-opened for negotiation again. The text sections that have not been agreed are placed in square brackets.
4. The facilitator opens the second, third, fourth... reading and the text is cleaned up and modified until all of it is agreed.

Between the different readings, there is usually a break so that each regional/ interest group may consult internally on its views. When a draft decision is fully agreed in a contact group, it goes back to the plenary of the body that has started it (**COW**, **CRIC** or **CST**) for formal adoption. It is assumed that a text that is agreed at the level of the contact group is acceptable to all Parties and thus ready for adoption.

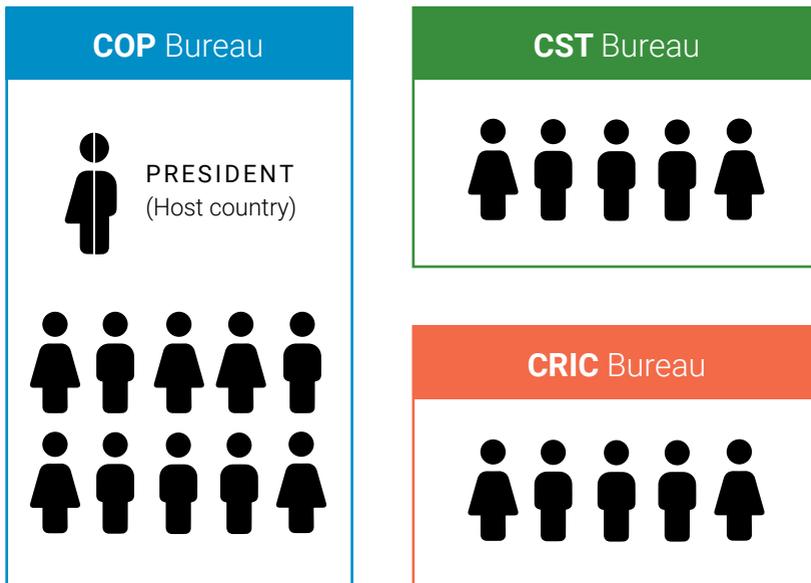


While **COW**, **CRIC** and **CST** plenary may agree on a draft decision completed at a contact group, they do not have the powers to make decisions. Only the **COP** plenary can do that.

Formally speaking, **CRIC** and **CST** make only “recommendations” to the **COP**. Thus draft decisions that are agreed at the level of **CRIC** or **CST** plenary are not yet complete, but they must be sent also to the **COP** plenary for adoption. For most decisions, this is a quick proceeding. If, however, a decision that is agreed at a contact group level is opened at the plenary, there are two possibilities: if the change that is requested to the agreed form is small but important, for example correcting a typo, it can be immediately agreed upon during the plenary. If it is such that many groups and countries would further discuss about it, the draft decision is usually sent back to the contact group, as the plenary is not meant for detailed negotiations.

Role of the Bureaux of the COP, CRIC and CST

The three Bureaux are formally in charge of overseeing the organization of sessions and of any procedural issues. The **COP** Bureau has ten members and a president (two per UN region¹ plus the president). The host country is always selected as the president, thus for COP 15 the president will be a delegate of Côte d'Ivoire. **CRIC** and **CST** Bureaux have five members each including the chair (one per region). The **COP** and **CST** Bureaux and the Chair of the **CRIC** Bureau are selected at the beginning of the COP, and the **CRIC** Bureau members are selected at the end of the session. During their sessions, the respective Bureaux meet daily.



¹ Africa, Asia and Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean ("GRULAC"), Eastern Europe, and Western Europe and others ("WEOG"). WEOG covers the interest groups of the EU and the JUSSCANNZ, of which usually only the EU represents as a group. US, Japan, Norway, Switzerland... speak on their own.

Role of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM)

The secretariat is the ‘machinery’ supporting the **COP** and its subsidiary bodies. It advises the Bureaux in their work, and is in charge of the documentation (both content and delivery), agenda, organization of work, planning of facilities with the host country, arranging sponsored participants’ travel etc. During the sessions and the contact groups, the secretariat supports the chairs and facilitators on both substantive and procedural matters.

The secretariat relies on UN secretariat expertise to support specific aspects of the conference. Document experts run the document reproduction and dissemination and the arrangement of in-session edits/translations, while UN security leads the security measures. Some of these services are provided remotely – for example, the completed draft decisions are often sent to UN Geneva for editing, and due to time difference in some **COP** venues, this may occasionally complicate the schedules.

The GM is not involved in the **COP** arrangements, but it submits its report to the **COP** and is involved in many other agenda items too. For these agenda items, the GM is present in the negotiations and provides information as needed, but it is not expected to support the chair procedurally, only advice on content issues.



Special events and side events

Numerous events and forums organized by various countries, organizations and partners will take place in the sidelines of the COP. They are not directly linked with the COP agenda (although the COP may note their outcomes in the session report) but usually focus on some of the key topics of each session.

In Abidjan, the following major events will be organized (timing to be announced):

The UNCCD Women's Caucus is an informal group by negotiators, representatives of delegations, civil society organizations (CSOs) and scientists interested in promoting gender equality in the context of the UNCCD. It will meet several times during the COP.

Business Forum brings together representatives of the private sector to consider selected DLDD matters from the business perspective.

The Youth Forum is a platform for youth to voice their commitments toward achieving land degradation neutrality, build their capacities and opportunities to work toward combating desertification, land degradation and drought, and share their experiences in combating desertification.

The Rio Conventions Pavilion 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, sustainable land management and efforts to combat desertification, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. During COP 15, the ten-day programme of the Rio Conventions Pavilion will include the following, among others:

11 May	Drought Day	16 May	Sand and Dust Storms Day
12 May	Food Day	17 May	Land Restoration Day
13 May	Land for Life Day	18 May	Great Green Wall Day
14 May	Science Day		

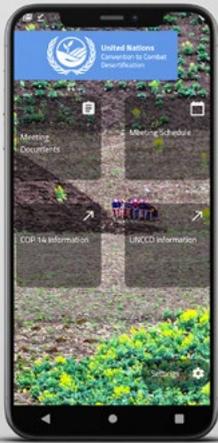
Side events organized in the sidelines of the official meetings provide an informal opportunity for Parties and other participants to exchange information and experiences on diverse issues related to the objectives of the Convention. At COP 15, side events will particularly contribute to the COP 15 theme Land. Life. Legacy: from Scarcity to Prosperity and considerations around the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration. A scheduled list of side events will be published close to the COP.



More information on the special events and side events will be made available on the UNCCD website: https://www.unccd.int/cop15/special_and_side_events



Land. Life. Legacy.
FROM SCARCITY TO PROSPERITY



How to stay informed during the COP

During the COP, the scheduling of meetings and negotiations evolves all the time, and it is important to find the latest and correct information fast. Since COP 14, the UNCCD has had **a conference App** that provides access to all official documents and other relevant information, and also aims to provide constantly updated schedules and room allocations. This App is **available for free** for different phone operating systems.



At the beginning of each COP day, the Daily Journal is the key source of information. It is produced by the UNCCD conference services and present the planned schedule and programme for the day, including the timing and venue of plenary meetings, contact groups, special events and side events, as well as regional and interest group meetings. The Journal also presents the programme that was concluded in the previous day. The Journal will be published on the App and the UNCCD website for each day of the COP. The schedule of meetings will also be available on screens in the different hallways of the conference center, guiding participants where to go.

For substantive progress, the Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB) online daily reports provide a detailed description of what was negotiated, who proposed what and what's next. It can be accessed on:

<https://enb.iisd.org/negotiations/un-convention-combat-desertification-unccd>

Annex

List of all draft decisions for the COP, CRIC and CST²

Draft decisions of the COP

Number	Topic
1	Multi-year workplan for the Convention institutions (2022–2025)
2	Modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the UNCCD
3	Implementation of the UNCCD communication plan
4	Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies
5	Programme and budget for the biennium 2022–2023
6	Participation and involvement of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the UNCCD
7	Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the UNCCD
8	Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Sand and dust storms
9	Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Gender
10	The positive role that measures taken under the Convention can play to address desertification/land degradation and drought as one of the drivers that causes migration
11	Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Land tenure
12	Policy advocacy on drought
13	Programme of work for the sixteenth session of the COP

² Full texts of the draft decisions can be found in documents ICCD/COP(15)/21, ICCD/CRIC(20)/10 and ICCD/COP(15)/CST/8, all of which are available on <https://www.unccd.int/convention/official-documents>

Draft decisions of the CRIC

Number	Topic
1	Collaboration with the Global Environment Facility
2	Report by the GM on progress made on mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention
3	Promotion of capacity-building to further the implementation of the Convention
4	Integration of Sustainable Development Goal 15 and related target 15.3 into the implementation of the UNCCD and land degradation neutrality
5	Programme of work for the twenty-first session of the CRIC
6	Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the COP
7	Report of the CRIC at its nineteenth session

Draft decisions of the CST

Number	Topic
1	Policy recommendations resulting from the SPI work programme for 2020–2021: Objective 1
2	Policy recommendations resulting from the SPI work programme for 2020–2021: Objective 2
3	Policy-oriented recommendations resulting from the cooperation with other intergovernmental scientific panels and bodies
4	Interfacing science and policy: The SPI, the dissemination and accessibility of best practices, and the UNCCD Knowledge Hub
5	Work programme of the SPI for the biennium 2022–2023
6	Programme of work for the sixteenth session of the CST



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

United for land

unccd.int