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**Conference of the Parties**

**Fifteenth session**

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 9–20 May 2022

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

**Report on the session**

**Draft decisions for consideration at the fifteenth session of  
the Conference of the Parties**

**Note by the secretariat\***

*Summary*

By its decision 32/COP.14, paragraph 5, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat to circulate in all official languages at least six weeks prior to the fifteenth session of the COP a single document with all draft decisions prepared for Parties for consideration at the COP and to ensure that draft decisions are clearly written and properly formatted.

Accordingly, document ICCD/COP(15)/21 includes all substantive draft decisions proposed by the secretariat that will serve as starting points for discussion and further negotiation in the Committee of the Whole contact groups.

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\* This document was scheduled for publication after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.



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## 1. Multi-year workplan for the Convention institutions (2022–2025)

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* decision 1/COP.14 and decision 10/COP.14,

*Having reviewed* documents ICCD/COP(15)/6-ICCD/CRIC(20)/2 and ICCD/CRIC(20)/3,

*Underlining* the importance of the efficient and coordinated functioning of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies in supporting Parties in their implementation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,

1. *Approves* the strategic orientation of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, as contained in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification results framework for 2022–2025 in the annex to this decision;<sup>1</sup>
2. *Requests* the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to utilize the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification results framework for 2022–2025 in the annex to this decision, organizing their work in a manner that is consistent with the provisions of the Convention and the decisions taken at the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, and in line with the guidance outlined in the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;
3. *Also requests* the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to prepare a multi-year workplan for the Convention (2024–2027), utilizing the results-based management approach, to be considered at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

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<sup>1</sup> The results framework is to be inserted in the annex at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

## 2. Modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* decision 7/COP.13 and decision 7/COP.14,

*Acknowledging* the importance of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in improving the effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention,

*Noting* that the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification will reach its midpoint in 2024 and that its midterm evaluation will be launched at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties,

*Welcoming* the further elements and priorities provided by the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties for the modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, as contained in document ICCD/COP(15)/2,

1. *Requests* the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties, building on the guidance contained in decision 7/COP.14 and in document ICCD/COP(15)/2, to:

(a) Review and update, as needed, the modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;

(b) Outline the terms of reference for an intergovernmental working group for the midterm evaluation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, including the purpose, composition and main working modalities of the intergovernmental working group;

(c) Submit this information through the secretariat for the consideration of the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth session;

2. *Also requests* the secretariat, taking into account the above-mentioned input from the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties, to include the estimated resource needs for the midterm evaluation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in its proposed 2024–2025 programme and budget that will be submitted to the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth session.

### 3. Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification communication plan

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* decision 4/COP.14,

*Noting* that the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification recognizes awareness-raising as a key element that can play a central role in addressing desertification/land degradation and drought,

*Recognizing* the importance of promoting consistent and coordinated messages about the objective of the Convention as well as on land degradation neutrality and drought issues, including as an accelerator for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,

*Recalling* United Nations General Assembly resolution 62/195, in which the Assembly declared 2010–2020 the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification,

*Further recalling* its resolution 64/201, in which the Assembly designated the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification as the focal point for the Decade, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and other relevant bodies of the United Nations, including the Department of Global Communications,

*Welcoming* the report of the United Nations Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020) and *expressing* its appreciation to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification secretariat, as the focal point for the Decade, for its successful outcomes,

*Recognizing* the additional opportunity for cooperation, coordination and synergies in the work related to ecosystem restoration among relevant United Nations entities through the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030),

*Welcoming* the development and implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification communication plan and strategic branding exercise, as reported in document ICCD/COP(14)/4,

1. *Calls for* Parties and *invites* civil society organizations, the media, the private sector and all other relevant stakeholders to leverage international awareness-raising opportunities, such as the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) and the Land for Life programme, for outreach, including to women, girls and youth, around actions to combat desertification/land degradation and drought and achieve land degradation neutrality and drought resilience;
2. *Invites* Parties to continue to raise public awareness and promote youth engagement on Convention issues by (i) linking them to other sustainable development challenges; and (ii) underlining the pivotal role of productive land in implementing the Convention and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, while addressing gender equality and women's empowerment as an integral part of these messages;
3. *Also invites* Parties to continue to actively support the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification communication plan by providing the secretariat with success stories, people-focused stories and photo/video footage from the field as a means of promoting the Convention in order to foster understanding, awareness and visibility among the public by adapting communications to local and national contexts or by hosting the global observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought;
4. *Further invites* Parties, financial and technical institutions, and other stakeholders in a position to do so to support the implementation of the communications plan;
5. *Requests* the secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to:
  - (a) Continue implementing the communication plan consistent with the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;

(b) Engage with key audiences, such as policymakers, line ministries in charge of land-based sectors, the private sector, the farmer community and pastoralists, for the purposes of increasing awareness about the objectives of the Convention and highlighting the benefits and impacts of its implementation, taking into account particular national and regional conditions;

(c) Actively contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) by identifying and developing possible activities, as appropriate;

(d) Enhance media engagement and develop partnerships with media and other relevant organizations to expand outreach to non-English speaking audiences and achieve broader geographic reach and information dissemination;

(e) Raise the profile of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification outreach programmes and products, such as the Land for Life programme, the Land Ambassadors programme and the Rio Conventions Pavilion, in partnership with the other Rio conventions and relevant stakeholders;

(f) Maximize the traditional and social media outreach potential by developing new multimedia content based on scientific and technical data from the Global Land Outlook and other major scientific assessments, the Science-Policy Interface, the performance review and assessment of implementation reports submitted to the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, as well as success stories and those featuring the views and perspectives of beneficiaries of the Convention's work;

(g) Continue building communications capacity for appropriate staff of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism in order to strengthen support for the communication activities;

(h) Continue improving and enhancing the online communications tools, including the website and library services, with a focus on the provision of knowledge and data tools that are relevant for United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification stakeholders;

6. *Also requests* the secretariat, where appropriate, to report to the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth session on progress made in implementing this decision.

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

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* decision 8/COP.14,

*Acknowledging* that the implementation of the Convention benefits from strong and effective collaborations to leverage synergies with relevant organizations and international instruments including, inter alia, the Convention on Biological Diversity Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the Group of 20 Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement;

*Reaffirming* the usefulness of the three land-based progress indicators as set out in decision 9/COP.12 for monitoring and reporting under the Rio conventions and the Sustainable Development Goals, which are coherent with the progress indicators/metrics adopted in decision 22/COP.11;

*Welcoming* the progress to enhance existing and establish new partnerships as well as the renewed efforts to coordinate activities with the other Rio conventions through the Joint Liaison Group;

*Recalling* that the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality Initiative was established in response to decision 9/COP.13, and *acknowledging with appreciation* the important contribution of the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality Initiative to the development of data quality standards, education programmes and practical tools for the planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting of land degradation neutrality,

1. *Invites* Parties, as appropriate, to engage at the national level to explore synergies in monitoring and reporting with the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and *encourages* Parties to nominate representation to engage with the rapid implementation framework expected to be adopted;
2. *Also invites* the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality Initiative to continue facilitating the uptake and use of Earth observation data, enhancing interoperability among analytical tools and developing national and local capacity for planning, monitoring, reporting and decision-making processes to achieve land degradation neutrality, including national reporting on Sustainable Development Goal indicator 15.3.1, in full collaboration with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification secretariat;
3. *Further invites* developed country Parties, other Parties in a position to do so, international financial organizations, civil society organizations and private sector institutions to consider contributing, financially or in-kind, to global partnerships, alliances and coalitions, including the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality Initiative, as well as to regional and bilateral cooperation to address desertification/land degradation and drought,
4. *Requests* the secretariat and appropriate Convention bodies and institutions, within their respective mandates and existing resources, to:
  - (a) Continue to enhance existing and seek new partnerships that enhance the implementation of the Convention, address desertification/land degradation and drought, and help achieve voluntary national land degradation neutrality targets;
  - (b) Continue to strengthen collaboration with relevant United Nations entities and other partners to provide practical tools, technical guidance and capacity-building related to the implementation of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification policy frameworks, such as land tenure, gender, drought, and sand and dust storms, including collaborative centres on drought;

(c) Develop, in partnership with relevant organizations and networks, stakeholder engagement plans, including awareness-raising strategies, for youth, civil society organizations, the media and the private sector;

5. *Further requests* the secretariat to present a report on the implementation of this decision at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.



## 5. Programme and budget for the biennium 2022–2023

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* the financial rules for the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and its amendments,<sup>2</sup>

*Also recalling* decision 1/COP.14,

*Further recalling* decision 9/COP.9 on the programme and budget for the biennium 2010–2011, paragraphs 13 and 14,

*Recalling* decision 1/COP.E-2,

*Having considered* the information contained in the documents prepared by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism on the programme and budget,<sup>3</sup>

### Programme budget for the biennium 2022–2023

1. *Approves* the programme budget for the biennium 2022–2023 in the amount of EUR 16,874,484 for the purposes specified in table 1 below;<sup>4</sup>
2. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Government of Germany for its biennial voluntary contribution to the core budget of EUR 1,022,584 and its special contribution of EUR 1,022,584 (Bonn Fund) as host Government to the secretariat;
3. *Approves* the staffing table for the programme budget, as contained in table 2 below;
4. *Decides* to maintain the level of the working capital reserve at 12 per cent of the estimated annual expenditure in the Trust Fund for the Core Budget of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;
5. *Recalling* decision 1/COP.E-2, *confirms* the authorization to the Executive Secretary, on an exceptional basis, to draw upon the available unspent balances or contributions from prior financial periods an amount up to EUR 121,411 to offset contributions in 2022, provided that the use of the balance does not reduce the working capital reserve, and that any such utilization be distributed to programmes and the Global Mechanism proportionate to the approved budget;
6. *Adopts* the indicative scale of contributions for 2022 and 2023, contained in the annex to this decision;
7. *Invites* all Parties to the Convention to note that contributions to the core budget are expected on or before 1 January of each year, in accordance with paragraph 14 (a) of the financial rules of the Conference of the Parties;
8. *Authorizes* the Executive Secretary to make transfers between each of the main appropriation lines as set out in table 1 below, up to an aggregate limit of 20 per cent of the total estimated expenditure for those appropriation lines, provided that a further limitation of up to minus 25 per cent of each such appropriation line shall apply, and *requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Conference of the Parties on any such transfers;
9. *Also authorizes* the Executive Secretary to establish lower-level positions in addition to the approved staffing table as set out in table 2 below within a budget for staff costs not to exceed EUR 11,118,716;
10. *Invites* the United Nations General Assembly to include, in the calendar of conferences and meetings for the year 2023, the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies envisaged for the biennium;

<sup>2</sup> Decision 2/COP.1, annex; decision 10/COP.13; and decision 10/COP.14.

<sup>3</sup> Documents ICCD/COP(15)/5; ICCD/COP(15)/6-ICCD/CRIC(20)/2; ICCD/CRIC(20)/3; ICCD/COP(15)/7; ICCD/COP(15)/8; ICCD/COP(15)/9; and ICCD/COP(15)/10.

<sup>4</sup> The table is to be inserted in the annex at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

11. *Approves* a contingency budget as set out in table 3 below, amounting to EUR 2,104,660 for conference servicing, to be added to the programme budget for the biennium 2022–2023 in the event that the General Assembly decides not to provide resources for these activities in the United Nations regular budget;
12. *Decides* that, to the extent that offsetting voluntary contributions for the purpose expressed in paragraph 11 does not reach this amount, the balance will be included in the contingency budget for conference servicing;
13. *Approves* the estimated additional costs of up to EUR 1,518,560, as set out in table 4 below, to be added to the programme budget for the biennium 2022–2023 in the event that the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties is held in Bonn, Germany;
14. *Also approves* of the estimated additional costs of up to EUR 688,170, as set out in table 5 below, to be added to the programme budget for the biennium 2022–2023 in the event that the twenty-first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention is held in Bonn, Germany;
15. *Takes note* of the funding estimates for the Special Trust Fund specified by the Executive Secretary in table 6 below, and *invites* Parties to make contributions to this Fund;
16. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Conference of the Parties at its fifteenth session on the status of income and expenditure and budget performance, using a results-based approach;
17. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to prepare a results-based budget and work programme for the biennium 2024–2025 in line with decision X/COP.15<sup>5</sup> (on the multi-year workplan), presenting two budget scenarios and a work programme based on the projected needs for the biennium in (a) a zero nominal growth scenario; and (b) a scenario based on further recommended adjustments to the first scenario and the added costs or savings related to them;

### **Financial performance of the Convention trust funds**

18. *Takes note* of the audited financial statements for the secretariat and Global Mechanism for 2019 and 2020, and of the report on financial performance and the reports on the implementation of the work programme of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism for the biennium 2020–2021, and the status of contributions as at 30 April 2022;
19. *Authorizes* the Executive Secretary, on an exceptional basis, to draw upon available unspent balances or contributions from prior financial periods in the total amount of EUR 2,634,749 to (a) establish a fund for after-service health insurance in the amount of EUR 500,000; and (b) support the implementation of the Drought Resilience Accelerator, in line with decision X/COP.15<sup>6</sup> (on drought), in the amount of EUR 2,134,749;
20. *Expresses appreciation* to Parties that have paid their contributions to the core budget in a timely manner;
21. *Calls upon* Parties that have not paid their contributions to the core budget to do so without delay, bearing in mind that contributions are expected on or before 1 January of each year, and *requests* the secretariat to notify Parties of the amounts of their contributions to the core budget as early as possible in the year preceding the year in which they are due;
22. *Urges* Parties with outstanding contributions to make a renewed effort to address this issue as expeditiously as possible to enhance the financial stability of the Convention through contributions by all Parties;
23. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to continue engaging Parties with outstanding contributions from past years with a view to the Parties entering into a voluntary plan to pay

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<sup>5</sup> The final decision reference will be inserted in the report of the Conference of the Parties on its fifteenth session, Part II.

<sup>6</sup> Reference will be added as indicated in footnote 5.

the outstanding contribution and to continue to report on the implementation of any arrangements regarding outstanding contributions;

24. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to report on core budget contributions made by Parties for prior financial periods that have been received during the biennium 2024–2025;

25. *Expresses appreciation* for the contributions received from Parties to the Supplementary Fund, the Special Fund and the extrabudgetary funds of the Global Mechanism;

### **Evaluation reports**

26. *Welcomes* the recommendations of the independent evaluations and assessments summarized in document ICCD/COP(15)/11, and *requests* the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to use these recommendations in planning and conducting their work;

27. *Takes note* of the proposed 2022–2023 workplan of the Evaluation Office, and *requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth session on the outcomes of the evaluations that will be conducted during this biennium and on the action taken to meet the pending recommendations of earlier evaluations, as appropriate.

## **6. Participation and involvement of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* articles 3, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19, 20, 21 and 22 of the Convention,

*Also recalling* decisions 5/COP.9, 5/COP.10, 5/COP.11, 5/COP.12, 5/COP.13 and 5/COP.14,

*Welcoming* the celebration of the open dialogue sessions organized by the civil society organizations as part of the official agenda of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties,

*Also welcoming* the organization of the youth and gender caucus organized on the sidelines of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, giving an opportunity to those that are more affected by desertification/land degradation and drought to provide inputs to the decision-making process,

1. *Encourages* those countries with no or few civil society organizations accredited to the Conference of the Parties to promote the involvement of their organizations in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification process at the international level to ensure more balanced participation of civil society organizations in the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies;
2. *Requests* the secretariat to continue working with the key stakeholders, including youth, indigenous peoples, local community organizations, farmers organizations, women's organizations, peoples with disabilities, local governments and parliamentarians;
3. *Also requests* the secretariat to develop a youth engagement strategy and the modalities for its implementation to ensure a stronger, effective and meaningful participation of youth in the meetings and processes of the Convention;
4. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to facilitate the renewal of the membership of the Civil Society Organization Panel for two years starting immediately after fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, in accordance with previous decisions;
5. *Urges* developed country Parties, international and financial organizations, civil society organizations and private sector institutions to consider contributing substantially and promptly to the Supplementary Fund and Special Fund of the Convention with the aim of ensuring wider participation of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification as well as in the work undertaken by the Civil Society Organization Panel;
6. *Requests* the Civil Society Organization Panel, through the secretariat, to report to the Conference of the Parties at future sessions on its activities during the forthcoming biennium;
7. *Also requests* the secretariat to report at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties on the implementation of this decision.

## 7. Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* articles 6, 17 and 20 of the Convention,

*Also recalling* decisions 5/COP.11, 6/COP.12, 6/COP.13 and 6/COP.14

*Stressing* the importance of the involvement of the private sector in the implementation of the Convention and the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,

*Noting* the outcomes of the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum,

*Also noting also* the information provided in document ICCD/CRIC(20)/5 related to the initiatives undertaken by the Global Mechanism,

1. *Takes note* of the initiatives undertaken by the Global Mechanism and *requests* the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification business engagement strategy and the private sector engagement strategy 2021–2030 when engaging in partnerships with the private sector;
2. *Requests* the secretariat and the Global Mechanism within their mandate to:
  - (a) Engage with companies that are working in the food-feed-fibre sector, with particular emphasis on the agribusiness and fashion industry;
  - (b) Continue promoting, together with other partners, decent land-based jobs for youth and land-based youth entrepreneurship;
  - (c) Facilitate, in collaboration with the relevant partners and representatives of the private sector, the organization of the seventh Sustainable Land Management Business Forum on the sidelines of the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties;
  - (d) Continue engaging with the private sector on the introduction of sustainable land use and value chain development, including for the promotion of sustainable sourcing practices;
  - (e) Facilitate, in collaboration with partners, the development of the Business for Land initiative, bringing visibility to the commitments made by participating companies towards the objectives of the Convention and ensuring that the initiative is self-sustained in the future;
3. *Encourages* Parties, business and industry entities to support the Business for Land initiative and present specific commitments to ensure the achievement of land degradation neutrality;
4. *Requests* the secretariat to report at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties on the measures taken to facilitate and encourage the participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

## 8. Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Sand and dust storms

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* decisions 25/COP.14 and 31/COP.13,

*Recalling* the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 2/21 and 4/10 and United Nations General Assembly resolutions 70/195, 71/219, 72/225, 73/237, 74/226, 75/222 and 76/211,

*Reiterating* that the global frequency and intensity of sand and dust storms have increased in the last decade and that sand and dust storms have natural and human causes that can be exacerbated by desertification/land degradation and drought, biodiversity loss and climate change,

*Urging* a proactive approach to enhance cooperation and coordination at global, regional and subregional levels to address the causes and impacts of sand and dust storms while promoting and supporting initiatives to streamline comprehensive sand and dust storms preparedness that reduces the risks and boosts the resilience of affected and vulnerable communities and ecosystems,

*Acknowledging* with appreciation the progress made so far under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to address sand and dust storms in terms of resilience, preparedness and capacity-building,

1. *Welcomes* the Sand and Dust Storms Compendium: Information and Guidance on Assessing and Addressing the Risks and the Sand and Dust Storms Toolbox, and *invites* Parties to make use of the Compendium and the Toolbox to strengthen their preparedness for sand and dust storms;

2. *Requests* Parties affected by sand and dust storms to enhance the integration and coherence of sand and dust storms impact mitigation measures, including those addressing anthropogenic sources, in related policy areas at national and subnational levels with a view to advancing integrated land-use planning and landscape management;

3. *Also requests* Parties to strengthen multistakeholder platforms and regional initiatives that contribute to addressing sand and dust storms, taking note of the regional and subregional nature of the impacts, while paying particular attention to involving women, youth and other vulnerable groups;

4. *Further requests* the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, within the scope and the mandate of the Convention and in collaboration with partners, to:

(a) Develop a voluntary policy guideline, in consultation with countries affected by sand and dust storms, to assist in the integration of sand and dust storms into key policy areas;

(b) Continue developing the Sand and Dust Storms Toolbox, including the global Sand and Dust Storms Source Base-map and other geographic information system platforms, data and tools, as feasible, and supporting the capacity of country Parties to use these;

(c) Compile an inventory of existing sand and dust storms-related tools and technologies beyond the Sand and Dust Storms Toolbox and make this information available to Parties;

(d) Facilitate the organization of a science–policy dialogue on sand and dust storms as a contribution to developing further guidance and policies to address sand and dust storms;

(e) Participate actively in the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms and enhance cooperation and collaboration with United Nations agencies, organizations and treaties to address sand and dust storms source mitigation, including in the work of the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms on developing a global implementation initiative on sand and dust storms to address anthropogenic sand and dust storms sources and data/information gaps;

5. *Requests* the Global Mechanism, within its scope and mandate, to support the development of transformative desertification/land degradation and drought projects, programmes and financing options related to anthropogenic sand and dust storms source mitigation;
6. *Invites* the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms and other relevant United Nations entities as well as member agencies of the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms to continue their collaboration to assist affected country Parties, within their mandate and resources, in developing and implementing national and regional policies on sand and dust storms including early warning, risk assessment and anthropogenic source mitigation, in particular through the development of a global sand and dust storms implementation initiative;
7. *Also invites* technical and financial institutions and other stakeholders in a position to do so to provide technical and financial support for countries to achieve their voluntary land degradation neutrality targets related to combating sand and dust storms in the context of land degradation neutrality transformative projects and programmes;
8. *Requests* the secretariat to:
  - (a) Present a report on the implementation efforts relevant to this decision at twenty first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention;
  - (b) Present a report on policy issues relevant to this decision to the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth session.

## 9. Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Gender

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* decisions 7/COP.12, 9/COP.10, 9/COP.11, 30/COP.13 and 24/COP.14,

*Reaffirming* that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, will make an important contribution to the effective implementation of the Convention, including the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and to the achievement of the goals and targets contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable Development Goal target 15.3 on land degradation neutrality,

*Also reaffirming* that securing women's tenure rights and women's access to and rights to land and other natural resources will be critical for the achievement of key Sustainable Development Goals (in particular on poverty, women's empowerment, and food security) and for the effective implementation of the Convention,

*Reiterating* our strong commitment to the effective implementation of the Gender Action Plan,

*Welcoming with appreciation* the work done by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism,

*Having considered* document ICCD/COP(15)17 and the conclusions contained therein,

1. *Approves* the proposed road map to accelerate the implementation of the Gender Action Plan;
2. *Encourages* Parties to submit, on a voluntary basis, reports on the implementation of key national level activities contained in the road map and *requests* the secretariat to compile such information on a regular basis;
3. *Also encourages* Parties to increase the representation of women in their delegations attending the Conference of Parties;
4. *Requests* the secretariat to consult with organizations that provide funding for women's participation in global treaty processes with a view to extending these funds to also cover official United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification meetings;
5. *Also requests* the secretariat to facilitate, on an annual basis, the convening of the Gender Caucus in conjunction with sessions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and/or the Conference of the Parties, with a view to guide and support Parties to enhance the implementation of the Gender Action Plan;
6. *Further requests* the secretariat to strengthen collaboration and coordination with relevant organizations to support the implementation of the Gender Action Plan and its roadmap, especially in the areas of policy, advocacy and research;
7. *Requests* the secretariat to synthesize and analyse information on gender matters included in national reports submitted in 2022 for consideration at the twenty-first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention;
8. *Also requests* the secretariat to report on the progress made in implementing this decision to the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth session.



## 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

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* that the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification recognizes that desertification/land degradation and drought are challenges of a global dimension and contribute to and aggravate economic, social and environmental problems and forced migration, among other things,

*Acknowledging* that the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration recognizes that desertification/land degradation and drought is one of the drivers/structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin and that the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was mentioned among the international instruments upon which the Compact rests,

*Recalling* decision 19/COP.13 and decision 22/COP.14, which requests the secretariat to support Parties, upon request, in promoting the positive role that measures taken to implement the Convention can play to address desertification/land degradation and drought as one of the drivers that cause migration, and the New Delhi Declaration, which encourages local governments to adopt integrated land use management and enhanced land governance to rehabilitate the natural resource base that makes cities sustainable, taking into consideration the New Urban Agenda, including by reducing rates of land consumption and soil sealing along with biodiversity and ecosystem loss,

*Acknowledging* that migration is one of the key factors to be considered when strengthening urban–rural linkages to address growing socio-economic inequalities and create more sustainable infrastructure and supply chains,

*Welcoming* the Trust Fund for the International Fund for Agricultural Development Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme to implement the Sustainability, Stability and Security Initiative established within the Rural Resilience Programme at the International Fund for Agricultural Development,

*Further welcoming* the studies on the Central and Western Balkans prepared by the secretariat upon the request of the concerned Parties and the partnership between the secretariat and UN-Habitat established to produce a technical guide on urban–rural linkages and land,

1. *Invites* Parties, to:

(a) Promote sustainable territorial development, including governance and planning mechanisms, to strengthen urban–rural linkages, address desertification/land degradation and drought, and create economic opportunities that reduce forced migration and increase rural stability;

(b) Review development policies, including on integrated land-use planning, agricultural subsidies and practices, water, waste, transport infrastructure, and renewable energy, both on-grid and off-grid, with a view to promoting large-scale land restoration, appropriate green and blue infrastructure, and the development of rural enterprises;

(c) Implement land and ecosystem restoration as an essential part of land-use planning at national and subnational level by enhancing understanding of how changing rural–urban interactions affect the livelihoods of low-income and vulnerable groups in both urban and rural contexts;

(d) Support the implementation and scaling up of the Sustainability, Stability and Security Initiative in Africa and other regions in order to contribute to employment creation for vulnerable groups in rural areas by restoring degraded land and empowering indigenous and local communities, women and youth by facilitating access to secure land tenure;

2. *Requests* the Global Mechanism to:

(a) Continue supporting resource mobilization for the Sustainability, Stability and Security Initiative and its replication along with developing other bankable projects and initiatives that prioritize green jobs and livelihoods for youth, and adopt and integrate human mobility measures to accelerate the implementation of the Convention;

(b) Assess and make recommendations about the feasibility of operationalizing a financing mechanism to leverage diaspora investments;

3. *Requests* the secretariat to:

(a) Assist Parties, upon request, to strengthen urban–rural linkages through territorial governance systems by utilizing principles and guidance from existing frameworks, including the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security and urban–rural linkages guiding principles, as a way to scale up land restoration activities to achieve voluntary land degradation neutrality targets and enhance the implementation of the Convention;

(b) Continue to support regional and international cooperation and initiatives that aim to promote sustainable land and water management as a solution to mitigate the drivers that cause migration;

(c) Continue to strengthen cooperation with other United Nations agencies and programmes, regional and international organizations, and stakeholders to share information to foster a better understanding of urban-rural linkages, with a special focus on achieving land degradation neutrality and addressing the drivers of forced migration;

(d) Support local and subnational actors pursuing land restoration in the urban–rural interface with a view to showcasing and replicating good practices;

(e) Present for consideration at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties a report on progress made in implementing this decision.

## 11. Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Land tenure

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* decision 16/COP.14 and decision 26/COP.14,

*Acknowledging* that decision 26/COP.14 on land tenure is a landmark decision for the Convention,

*Recognizing* the United Nations General Assembly resolution 76/206 titled “Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa”, which recalls the invitation to Parties to the Convention to legally recognize rights to equal use and ownership of land for women and the enhancement of women’s equal access to land and land tenure security, and encourages Parties to follow the principles of implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security in the implementation of activities to combat desertification, land degradation and drought,

*Commemorating* the tenth anniversary of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, which is endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security,

*Welcoming* the technical guide on the integration of 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 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and land degradation neutrality, produced by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in collaboration with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and other partners, and the nine pathways therein towards more responsible land governance to enhance the implementation of the Convention,

*Acknowledging* that further work needs to be carried out to integrate land tenure into the implementation of the Convention and into specific activities to combat desertification/land degradation and drought and achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030, such as the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme and land degradation neutrality transformative projects and programmes,

*Anticipating* the options to promote awareness-raising on responsible land governance requested by Parties in decision 26/COP.14 to (i) encourage innovative approaches to overcome potential risks and challenges; and (ii) identify opportunities to raise awareness for secure land tenure among all stakeholders, particularly among vulnerable populations, including those living in rural areas, women, youth, indigenous peoples and local communities, and persons with disabilities,

*Recognizing* the Gender Action Plan roadmap and its contribution to strengthening women’s land rights and access to resources,

*Noting* the work of the Science-Policy Interface on the interlinkages between land tenure, land degradation neutrality and integrated land-use planning, particularly its report titled “The Contribution of Integrated Land Use Planning and Integrated Landscape Management to Implementing Land Degradation Neutrality: Entry Points and Support Tools”,

*Having considered* document ICCD/COP(15)19 and the conclusions contained therein,

1. *Encourages* Parties to continue integrating land tenure, in line with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security principles and the recommendations outlined in decision 26/COP.14, in the implementation of activities to combat desertification/land degradation and drought and achieve land degradation neutrality;
2. *Further encourages* Parties to refer to the technical guide on the integration of 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 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and land degradation neutrality and undertake appropriate measures outlined in the pathways therein to address land tenure in the context of national plans, legal frameworks, strategies and action programmes to enhance the implementation of the Convention;

3. *Invites* Parties, civil society organizations and other United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification stakeholders, where appropriate, to engage in actions to raise awareness on the importance of responsible land governance for combating desertification/land degradation and mitigating the impacts of drought, particularly among vulnerable populations, including those living in rural areas, women, indigenous peoples and local communities, youth, and persons with disabilities;

4. *Invites* developed country Parties, other Parties in a position to do so, relevant United Nations entities, international financial organizations, and private sector institutions to consider providing financial and technical support to design and implement land administration infrastructure to improve the responsible governance of tenure in accordance with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security principles;

5. *Requests* the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue their efforts to integrate land tenure into the implementation of the Convention and land degradation neutrality initiatives, and specifically to:

(a) Further develop specific guidance and exchange lessons learned, through national consultations in selected countries across regions, to assist Parties on the ways and means to integrate land tenure into land degradation neutrality, such as targets, plans, projects and programmes on desertification/land degradation and drought;

(b) Identify financing opportunities to strengthen land governance and build a business case for responsible and sustainable public and private investments in land tenure, in collaboration with relevant partners and financing institutions, in line with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security and social and environmental safeguards, and particularly taking into consideration the perspectives of women, youth, indigenous peoples and local communities;

(c) Implement awareness-raising actions on responsible land governance for combating desertification/land degradation and drought, and engage with Parties, civil society organizations and other key partners, where appropriate, to have the widest reach among all stakeholders from global to local level, and particularly among vulnerable populations, including those living in rural areas, women, indigenous peoples and local communities, youth, and persons with disabilities;

(d) Continue exploring existing global indicators and data sets relevant to land governance and, when appropriate, engage with relevant partners and institutions to pilot options to integrate potential indicators in future United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification reporting processes, with a view to avoiding duplication of reporting efforts and ensuring the widest reach among different national contexts;

6. *Also requests* the secretariat to:

(a) Present a report on the implementation efforts relevant to this decision at the 21st session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention;

(b) Present a report on policy issues relevant to this decision to the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth session.

## 12. Policy advocacy on drought

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recognizing* that droughts are becoming more common, intense, severe and extended in space and time, and are being further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, with dire impacts on livelihoods, ecosystems and the economies,

*Deeply concerned* about the combined, devastating impacts of drought and the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the most vulnerable communities,

*Noting with appreciation* the active involvement of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the World Meteorological Organization and numerous other partners in the measures to address drought under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,

*Commending* the secretariat, the Global Mechanism and their partners on the results achieved in implementing the Drought Initiative,

*Welcoming with appreciation* the report by the Intergovernmental Working Group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification as contained in document ICCD/COP/15/20,

1. *Requests* Parties to maintain their existing commitment to pursue concerted policies, partnerships and progressively enhanced implementation of drought risk and impact management at all levels as a continuous process;
2. *Also requests* Parties, with the assistance of regional institutions, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, to establish accessible, inclusive and effective monitoring, early warning and action systems that support drought-resilient ecosystems, societies and economies;
3. *Further requests* Parties to support the secretariat and appropriate United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification institutions and bodies, including the Science-Policy Interface, to enhance their capacity to assess the effectiveness of strategic United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification actions addressing drought;
4. *Encourages* Parties, regional organizations and other stakeholders working on drought to share their knowledge of and experiences with relevant, innovative and transformative tools for inclusion in the Drought Toolbox, and *requests* the secretariat to further update and enhance the functionality of the Drought Toolbox, as well as continue related capacity-building;
5. *Invites* all Parties, multilateral and bilateral partners, and international financing mechanisms to scale up and facilitate effective financing for the implementation of drought mitigation measures at all levels;
6. *Requests* the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, in collaboration with partners, to continue to assist Parties in preparing and implementing gender-responsive national drought plans and promoting regional collaboration on drought policies and strategies as a cost-effective means to support national action;
7. *Also requests* the secretariat, in consultation with relevant partners and processes, to identify opportunities to foster high-level global awareness of and commitment to enhancing drought resilience, which will include the co-organization of a ten-year follow-up to the 2013 High Level Meeting on National Drought Policy;
8. *Further requests* the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, in close collaboration with partners, to implement the Drought Resilience Accelerator, as outlined in document ICCD/COP(15)/15, to serve as targeted support for (i) the improvement of national early warning systems, monitoring and assessment in the context of the national drought plans; and (ii) the development of further guidance and approaches to replicate such improvements in other countries;

9. *Requests* the secretariat to encourage and support communities of learning and practice to pursue co-learning and collaboration for drought risk and impact management issues;
10. *Also requests* the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue to strengthen and enhance as well as forge new strategic partnerships at all levels, across sectors and with different public, private and civil society organizations;
11. *Invites* the secretariat to continue consulting with its partners on the potential aims, specific areas and added value of enhancing current coordination and collaboration platforms, with a focus on coordination and collaboration for improved global-level drought monitoring and assessment, and for increased reach and effectiveness in building capacities for drought early warning, monitoring and assessment;
12. *Also invites* the secretariat to continue exploring the requirements and potential modalities for the creation of networks of experts and institutions for capacity-building and knowledge exchange on drought;
13. *Requests* the secretariat, the Global Mechanism and other appropriate United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification bodies to provide additional technical knowledge and support for the development of national capacities and a global assessment process to examine and identify the financing needs and opportunities for drought management activities in relation to those already existing;
14. *Further requests* the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to take stock, together with relevant multilateral and bilateral partners, of the current processes and funding levels for drought management, with a view to improving and enhancing them;
15. *Decides* to continue to discuss if and which further initiatives or new institutional arrangements could be established to effectively address drought under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;
16. *Requests* the secretariat to report at the twenty-first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties on progress made in implementing this decision.

### 13. Programme of work for the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* article 22 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,

*Also recalling* decisions 9/COP.1, 2/COP.2, 4/COP.3, 5/COP.4, 5/COP.5, 29/COP.6, 30/COP.7, 27/COP.8, 35/COP.9, 38/COP.10, 39/COP.11, 34/COP.12, 35/COP.13 and 32/COP.14 on its programme of work,

*Taking into consideration* the relevant decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties at its fifteenth session,

1. *Decides* to include the following items on the agenda of its sixteenth session and, if necessary, its seventeenth session:

(a) 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification:

(i) Report of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and its recommendations to the Conference of the Parties;

(ii) Review of progress in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification communication plan;

(iii) Follow-up on the midterm evaluation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;

(iv) Review of the report of the Committee on Science and Technology and its recommendations to the Conference of the Parties;

(b) Promoting and strengthening relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies;

(c) Policy frameworks and thematic issues;

(d) Programme and budget for the biennium 2024–2025;

(e) Procedural matters:

(i) Participation and involvement of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;

(ii) Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and business engagement strategy;

2. *Also decides* to include interactive dialogue sessions with relevant stakeholders, including ministers, civil society organizations, the business community, the scientific community and members of parliament, on agenda items of relevance to them;

3. *Requests* the secretariat to prepare an annotated provisional agenda, in agreement with the President of the Conference of the Parties at its fifteenth session, taking into consideration provisions contained in the relevant decisions taken during that conference;

4. *Also requests* the secretariat to circulate in all official languages at least six weeks prior to the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties appropriate documentation for that session, reflecting the decisions contained in operative paragraphs 1 and 2 above;

5. *Further requests* the secretariat to circulate in all official languages at least six weeks prior to the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties one document for each governing body (Conference of the Parties, Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, Committee on Science and Technology) with all respective draft decisions prepared for Parties' consideration and further adoption and to ensure that the draft decisions are clearly written and properly formatted.

