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

Performance of Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies

**Report on the performance of the Convention institutions
and subsidiary bodies (2020–2021)**

Note by the secretariat*

Summary

This document presents the progress made by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) toward the objectives and outcomes of the UNCCD four-year results framework (as contained in decision 1/COP.14), assessed against the outcome indicators. This document also provides brief descriptions of the accomplishments and main activities carried out during the biennium 2020–2021 by each unit of the secretariat and the GM. In addition, a summary of the resources utilized in 2020–2021 is provided.

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



Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1–3	3
II. Overview of expenditures	4–8	3
III. Main accomplishments in 2020–2021: The United Nations Convention Combat Desertification results framework.....	9–25	6
A. Strategic objective 1: To improve the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification/land degradation, promote sustainable land management and contribute to land degradation neutrality	11–15	6
B. Strategic objective 2: To improve the living conditions of affected populations.....	16–19	8
C. Strategic objective 3: To mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems	20–22	10
D. Strategic objective 4: To generate global environmental benefits through effective implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.....	23	12
E. Strategic objective 5. To mobilize substantial and additional financial and non-financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention by building effective partnerships at global and national level ...	24–25	13
IV. Accomplishments by the unit of the secretariat.....	26–61	14
A. Executive Direction and Management.....	26–35	14
B. Communications	36–44	15
C. External Relations, Policy and Advocacy.....	45–53	16
D. Science, Technology and Innovation	54–59	17
E. Administrative Services.....	60–61	18
V. Accomplishments of the Global Mechanism	62–69	18
VI. Conclusions and recommendations	70	19

I. Introduction

1. The secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) plan, carry out and monitor progress in their work using four-year workplans and costed two-year work programmes. These workplans and work programmes follow a results-based management (RBM) approach. At the end of each biennium, the secretariat and the GM provide information on their performance in implementing the workplan and programme, following an RBM approach.

2. This performance report presents the results achieved and resources utilized by the secretariat and the GM in 2020–2021, building on the UNCCD results framework contained in decision 1/COP.14. The report provides an overview of the progress made toward the objectives and outcomes of the results framework, as measured against the outcome indicators contained in the results framework. Brief descriptions of the accomplishments and main activities carried out during the biennium 2020–2021 by each unit of the secretariat and the GM are also presented.

3. This document should be read in conjunction with information on the financial performance for the Convention Trust Funds in 2020–2021, which is contained in document ICCD/COP(15)/7.

II. Overview of expenditures

4. Table 1 presents expenditure as at 31 December 2021 by the secretariat programmes and the GM in the Trust Fund for the Core Budget of the UNCCD, amounting to EUR 1.47 million, or 89.9 per cent of the core budget, using the average exchange rate for the biennium. Additional information is provided in relation to expenditure incurred on the carry over budget for the drought initiative.

Table 1
Expenditure by programme as at 31 December 2021 (euros)

	Approved budget 2020–2021	Expenditure as at 31 December 2021	Balance of funds	Per cent of expenditure
<i>I. Secretariat programmes</i>				
A. Executive Direction and Management	2 026 838	1 873 494	153 344	92.4
B. Communications	1 122 590	1 069 928	52 662	95.3
C. External Relations, Policy and Advocacy	2 183 874	1 935 940	247 934	88.6
D. Science, Technology and Innovation	3 205 370	2 846 436	358 934	88.8
E. Administrative Services	2 307 045	2 235 105	71 940	96.9
<i>II. Global Mechanism</i>				
F. Global Mechanism	3 694 905	3 105 009	589 896	84.0
Total core budget (A–F)	14 540 622	13 065 912	1 474 711	89.9
Drought Initiative	876 117	550 434	325 683	62.8

5. As presented in the document on the interim programme and budget for 2022¹ for the second extraordinary session of the Conference of the Parties (COP ES-2), the secretariat and the GM accumulated savings in the biennium 2020–2021 mainly due to the pandemic restrictions influencing travel and meetings. The meetings of the Bureaux of the COP, the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) were mostly held online, resulting in

¹ ICCD/COP/(ES-2)/2.

savings under the Executive Direction and Management and the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) programme. Almost all meetings of the Science–Policy Interface (SPI) under STI, and meetings in the Regional Implementation Annexes, involving the Regional Liaison Offices under the External Relations, Policy and Advocacy programme, were also held as virtual. Savings were realized under personnel costs due to vacant positions throughout the biennium. Nevertheless, the overall amount of savings reported at COP ES-2 was reduced from EUR 1.51 million to EUR 1.47 million due to unplanned costs related to Umoja maintenance for 2020 and 2021.

6. Table 2 presents expenditure of the core budget by object of expenditure.

Table 2
Expenditure by object of expenditure in the core budget of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism as at 31 December 2021 (euros)

<i>Object of expenditure</i>	<i>Approved budget 2020–2021</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 December 2021</i>	<i>Balance of funds</i>	<i>Per cent of expenditure</i>
Personnel costs	10 946 166	10 412 488	533 678	95.1
Contractual services	763 660	937 468	(173 808)	122.8
Travel	670 190	165 647	504 543	24.7
Operating and other direct costs	2 067 226	1 474 303	592 923	71.3
Supplies, commodities and materials	57 855	11 742	46 113	20.3
Equipment, vehicles and furniture	35 525	64 263	(28 738)	180.9
TOTAL	14 540 622	13 065 912	1 474 711	89.9

7. Tables 3, 4 and 5 provide an overview of the distribution of posts held by staff members on fixed-term appointments. As at 31 December 2021, 56 posts were filled by secretariat staff members and 12 posts were filled by GM staff members.

Table 3
Comparison of established posts and filled posts by source of funding in the secretariat as at 31 December 2021

	<i>Core</i>		<i>Supplementary</i>		<i>Bonn Fund</i>		<i>Programme support cost</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>
USG	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
D-2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
D-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
P-5	7	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	9	5
P-4	7	7	2	2	0	0	3	3 ^a	12	12
P-3	4	6	3	3	1	1	1	1	9	11
P-2	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	3
Subtotal	21	20	5	5	1	1	8	8	35	34
GS	10	10	1	1	3	3	8	8 ^a	22	22
Total	31	30	6	6	4	4	16	16	57	56

Abbreviations: D = Director, GS = General Staff, P = Professional, USG = Under Secretary-General.

^a The funding for one P-4 and one GS post is shared between the secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Table 4
Comparison of established posts and filled posts by source of funding in the Global Mechanism as at 31 December 2021

	<i>Core</i>		<i>Supplementary</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>
D-1	1	1	0	0	1	1
P-5	1	1	1	1	2	2
P-4	2	1	0	0	2	1
P-3	4	4	1	1	5	5
P-2	2	0	0	0	2	0
Subtotal	10	7	2	2	12	9
GS	4	3	0	0	4	3
Total	14	10	2	2	16	12

Abbreviations: D = Director, GS = General Staff, P = Professional.

Table 5
Distribution of all filled posts by grade as at 31 December 2021

<i>Grade</i>	<i>EDM</i>	<i>COMMS</i>	<i>ERPA</i>	<i>STI</i>	<i>AS</i>	<i>GM</i>	<i>Total</i>
USG	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
D-2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
D-1	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
P-5	1	1	1	1	1	2	7
P-4	2	0	5	4	1	1	13
P-3	3	1	5	1	1	5	16
P-2	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
Subtotal	9	3	12	7	3	9	43
GS	5	5	2	3	7	3	25
Total	14	8	14	10	10	12	68

Abbreviations: AS = Administrative Services, COMMS = Communications, EDM = Executive Direction and Management, ERPA = External Relations, Policy and Advocacy, GM = Global Mechanism, STI = Science, Technology and Implementation.

8. Table 6 shows the geographical distribution and gender of staff members at the professional level or above appointed to the secretariat and the GM.

Table 6
Geographical distribution and gender of all filled posts at the professional category and above as at 31 December 2021

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Africa</i>	<i>Asia</i>	<i>LAC</i>	<i>CEE</i>	<i>WEOG</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Filled</i>
USG	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
D-2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
D-1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	2
P-5	3	1	1	0	2	3	4	7
P-4	2	3	2	0	6	7	6	13
P-3	3	4	2	1	6	7	9	16
P-2	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	3
Subtotal	11	8	5	1	18	20	23	43
Percentage of total	25.6	18.6	11.6	2.3	41.9	46.5	53.5	100.0

Abbreviations: CEE = Central and Eastern Europe, D = Director, LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean, P = Professional, USG = Under Secretary-General, WEOG = Western European and Others Group.

III. Main accomplishments in 2020–2021: The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification results framework

9. The 2020–2023 results framework, as contained in decision 1/COP.14, is constructed around the five strategic objectives (SO) of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. It presents four-year (2020–2023) expected main outcomes and related indicators for each SO, taking into account the mandates of the secretariat and the GM as well as the priorities set by the COP.

10. In the next pages, the 2020–2021 achievements are presented as brief statements on how the work carried out by the secretariat and the GM has contributed to meeting the SOs. Following each SO statement, a more detailed description of the progress made toward the respective four-year outcomes, with a focus on the content reflected in their indicators, is also presented.

A. Strategic objective 1: To improve the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification/land degradation, promote sustainable land management and contribute to land degradation neutrality

11. During the first trimester of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, a solid foundation has been built for effective action to improve the condition of affected ecosystems. One hundred and six country Parties have translated their aims for land degradation neutrality (LDN) into concrete voluntary targets, and 23 more are in the process of doing so. A recent global assessment of land restoration commitments² indicated that the LDN targets represent voluntary commitments by country Parties to restore over 450 million hectares of degraded land. In other words, if these targets are met, the first objective of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework will be achieved. Such achievement would make a remarkable contribution to the global land restoration agenda and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030).

12. Some progress in implementing the LDN targets has already been made, notably through the GM activities and partnerships that aim to convert the targets into transformative projects and programmes. Seventy-four countries are currently working with

² <<https://www.pbl.nl/en/publications/goals-and-commitments-for-the-restoration-decade>>.

the GM in this context and, so far, 14 national and two regional projects have secured funding for implementation. The GM is further enhancing its support for the design of transformative projects through the development of a project preparation partnership.

13. Integration of LDN into the broader framework of land use planning and decision-making is a precondition for the improvement and maintenance of healthy land in the long term. The related SPI technical report and policy recommendations provide effective guidance to this end. Furthermore, an update to the Good Practice Guidance³ for the land-based progress indicators (which also serve as the sub-indicators of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15.3.1) and the renewed tools for UNCCD national reporting facilitate a continuous supply of credible data on the status of land and the progress made, thus supporting targeted policy decisions and implementation support.

14. The potential of LDN as an accelerator and integrator for the achievement of the Agenda 2030 and a post-COVID recovery has gained increased recognition. The African Great Green Wall Initiative and the Group of 20 Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats, among others, represent massive, multi-stakeholder commitments to LDN, and to achieving the UNCCD SOs.

15. The secretariat and the GM contributed to better awareness of LDN and related measures, and ensured continuous dissemination of new LDN information. Their awareness-raising and advocacy functions and the availability of scientific information for political decision-making are critical for mustering further political, technical and financial support for the countries to progress towards LDN.

2020–2023 main outcome 1.1: Reduction of the area affected by desertification/land degradation

Indicator 1.1: Affected country Parties implement activities towards achieving the targets they have set for addressing desertification/land degradation and drought.

At the end of the biennium 2020–2021, 129 countries had joined the UNCCD LDN Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP) to set voluntary LDN targets and 106 of them had already completed their targets. Comprehensive national LDN reports (as well as high-level notes for countries where the government officially adopts their LDN targets) are published on the UNCCD Knowledge Hub. Currently, 100 national reports and 64 LDN high-level notes are available online⁴.

Seventy-four countries are working with the GM and partners to develop national and/or regional concept notes for LDN transformative projects and programmes. This cooperation currently includes 59 national projects, 23 of which have developed into concept notes; and six regional/multi-country projects (involving 41 countries) three of which have been developed. In addition, one proposal with a global scope, targeting the Enabling Activity funding of the Global Environment Facility, is currently under development. Of the completed concept notes, 14 national and two regional concept notes have been approved for further development and access to development funds, involving 24 countries in total. Of these approved concept notes, seven have already been developed into fully-fledged project documents and eight more are being developed for final approval by the funding source. Three projects are being implemented. To further advance the implementation of the LDN targets, the GM is revising its support framework into a project preparation partnership to forge strategic partnerships to accelerate project preparation and the mobilization of technical and financial resources.

The secretariat and the GM have continued their cooperation with the Korean Forest Service and the United Nations Environment Programme on the Greening Drylands Partnership to look for responses to emerging desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) issues. Since 2017, pilot projects have been supported in nine countries, four of which are completed.

The nature- and land-based solutions, including a commitment to LDN, increased visibility on the international agenda; in 2020–2021 they were featured in numerous events and processes. The President of the United Nations General Assembly, with support from the UNCCD secretariat, organized a High-level Dialogue on DLDD in June 2021. The COP 26 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) focused on nature and the protection of terrestrial ecosystems is among the key aims in the draft post-2020 global biodiversity framework. Many major action-oriented partnerships and programmes focusing on land restoration were established or further developed, most notably the G20 Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and

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

⁴ <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/home/country-information/countries-with-voluntary-ldn-targets>>.

Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats and the Great Green Wall of the Sahara and Sahel Initiative.

The secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with partner agencies, produced a comprehensive series of knowledge-sharing products on LDN target-setting, including seven thematic studies on LDN targets and a dataset on the targets for interested partners. A dedicated LDN section was established on the Knowledge Hub⁵.

2020–2023 main outcome 1.2: Up-to-date information on the status of desertification/land degradation

Indicator 1.2: Affected Parties have access to refined default data and upgraded tools for the next national reporting period under the UNCCD.

During the biennium 2020–2021, the UNCCD performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) was significantly upgraded. As a result, the 2022 reporting process introduces several new features in the online reporting platform (PRAIS 4), such as new data mining and data visualization tools. In addition, some changes were introduced to the indicators and reporting forms and the methodological guidelines for pre-existing indicators were updated. The reporting portal is now open and Parties will be provided with technical assistance and capacity building support in the preparation of their reports. This will be mostly virtual, comprising e-tutorials and pre-recorded videos to help Parties interpret data and fill in the requisite information in the reporting forms. Some online events will allow for question and answers sessions where Parties can clarify problems encountered during the reporting period.

The user base for the data contained in the national reports has expanded beyond Parties and the secretariat to include, inter alia, media enquiries and requests from the academic community. Therefore, the design and system specifications for PRAIS 4 have sought to provide a flexible, standards-based and extensible foundation on which to subsequently deliver a UNCCD data centre to service such data requests.

2020–2023 main outcome 1.3: Affected Parties use science-based policy-relevant information derived from the UNCCD in addressing DLDD and contributing to LDN.

Indicator 1.3 Scientific cooperation involving the UNCCD delivers policy-relevant science-based information to address DLDD and contribute to LDN.

The secretariat assisted the SPI in producing a technical report synthesizing science-based evidence of how integrated land-use planning and integrated landscape management can potentially contribute to positive transformative change in the context of LDN. Key inputs for the technical report were two targeted background reports produced by subject matter experts in collaboration with SPI members and observers. The draft of the technical report was peer-reviewed by all SPI members and representatives from SPI observer organizations, and was also subject to an independent scientific review. The technical report, entitled *The Contribution of Integrated Land Use Planning and Integrated Landscape Management to Implementing Land Degradation Neutrality: Entry Points and Support Tools*, and an associated science-policy brief will be made available online in May 2022.

A second edition of the UNCCD Global Land Outlook (GLO2) and a summary for decision-makers are close to completion. GLO2 was prepared with the guidance of a steering committee and inputs from numerous experts. Two regional thematic reports on ecosystem restoration, one on Central and Eastern Europe and another on Southern Africa, have been prepared as part of the GLO2 preparatory process, and will be made available online in the coming months.

The UNCCD Knowledge Hub was further developed to offer national focal points and other interested stakeholders easy access to SPI products and other science-based policy-relevant information.

B. Strategic objective 2: To improve the living conditions of affected populations

16. Good progress was made in promoting land-based job and income generation, advancing the involvement of women, and supporting land rights in the context of UNCCD implementation.

17. The potential of land-based activities in job creation and green growth, and thereby in addressing stability and security, has been increasingly recognized. The UNCCD has become an important partner for many organizations and initiatives working on related matters.

18. The role of women is critically important for maintaining and improving the health and productivity of land. The secretariat and GM's support to Parties in the integration of gender responsiveness into plans and programmes to address DLDD was successful, with nearly all LDN target country profiles and national drought plans (NDPs) mentioning

⁵ <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/ldn/land-degradation-neutrality-homepage>>.

gender. However, the extent to which gender responsiveness is operationalized varies from country to country. Through the Gender Caucus, the gender responsiveness of COP decision-making is likely to increase in the coming years.

19. A UNCCD-specific technical guide for the incorporation of land tenure considerations into LDN projects and programmes was established and collaboration for effective awareness-raising on its use has started.

2020–2023 main outcome 2.1: Affected country Parties use land-based activities to improve stability and security

Indicator 2.1: The potential of land-based activities in improving security and stability is recognized.

The secretariat and the International Organization for Migration have continued their cooperation on understanding and analysing DLDD as driver of migration, raising awareness of the land–security/migration nexus, and developing policies and practices that link sustainable land management (SLM) with safe, regular and orderly migration. Two studies commissioned by the secretariat are under way, one for Central Asian countries and another for the Western Balkans.

The Central Asia study was launched in June 2021 to evaluate the job creation prospects of promoting sustainable agricultural practices and improving the skills of rural youth and migrants returning to the countries in the region. It will also demonstrate how land-based green growth and sustainable value chains can build a social safety net for rural populations through job creation, alternative incomes and disincentives for mass out-migration and land abandonment. The study for the Western Balkans developed a theoretical model to leverage remittances and diaspora investments in land restoration/SLM in the region. It will include a financing mechanism design in addition to a business model, customer engagement plan and projected economic/financial returns, including an analysis of the incentives and other complementary financial resources needed.

The secretariat and the GM have been supporting the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI), which aims to create 10 million green jobs in rural areas, among other goals, via a mosaic of green and productive landscapes across 11 countries. Furthermore, the secretariat and the GM have several partnerships on the land-security/migration nexus, including those with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in providing support to the Sustainability, Stability and Security Initiative (3S Initiative), and with the Korea Forest Service on the Peace Forest Initiative (PFI).

IFAD’s Rural Resilience Programme supports the 3S Initiative’s operational implementation and fiduciary arrangements. It includes a model to leverage remittances and diaspora investment for land restoration/SLM in 3S Initiative countries in West Africa. Collaboration with the Green Climate Fund for reducing the climate change drivers of rural migration and unemployment has been initiated.

The PFI is designed to facilitate cooperation on LDN in cross-border, fragile and post-conflict situations. Its terms of reference were developed in multi-stakeholder consultations involving Parties, United Nations entities and other organizations.

The secretariat has actively cooperated with several policy and research processes with the aim of raising awareness and promoting action on the land-security/migration nexus. These processes have mainly concerned urban–rural linkages and climate and security.

2020–2023 main outcome 2.2: Gender issues are increasingly taken into account in plans to address DLDD

Indicator 2.2: Affected country Parties use UNCCD guidance and technical advice on integrating gender issues into UNCCD implementation and the design of LDN transformative projects.

This section presents the activities carried out and results achieved in follow-up to the decisions made on gender and land tenure at the fourteenth session of the COP (COP 14).

Gender: In the framework of the UNCCD Gender Action Plan, the secretariat has provided capacity building, conducted research for advocacy and policy guidance, promoted the development of UNCCD-specific tools and guidelines, and supported the integration of gender responsiveness into different aspects of UNCCD implementation.

Capacity building targeted the national focal points. It presented the key concepts and tools for gender mainstreaming in policy and projects, as well as examples and exercises to facilitate the practical application of these concepts.

The secretariat commissioned a study on the differentiated impacts of DLDD on women and men in order to contribute to the development of a baseline on gender-related issues in DLDD. The study includes 55 country profiles which highlight significant convergence of gender issues and the incidence of DLDD. Its results will be presented at COP 15.

Collaboration continued with the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies on the design of a gender-responsive SLM tool to allow data collection and analysis of SLM practices from a gender perspective. The joint project seeks to fill the gap in the availability of sex-disaggregated data, to deepen the analysis of SLM practice adoption patterns, and to boost the uptake of gender-responsive SLM practices around the world.

For gender mainstreaming, the secretariat continued to develop guidance and provide technical assistance to ensure the gender responsiveness of plans, projects and programmes concerning LDN and drought. Nearly all LDN target country profiles and NDPs mention gender, although the extent to which gender mainstreaming is operationalized varies from country to country. Gender

aspects were also integrated to the activities of the SPI and the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on Drought. For national reporting, the secretariat has included new sex-disaggregated indicators and a new set of questions relating to gender and women's empowerment in the report template.

The above-mentioned study on the differentiated impacts of DLDD on women and men found that only one fifth of the COP delegates are female. To support women's inputs into the COP decision-making processes, a Gender Caucus was established as an informal group at COP 14 by likeminded negotiators, representatives of delegations, civil society organizations (CSOs) and scientists interested in gender issues related to the UNCCD. The secretariat will once again facilitate the Gender Caucus meeting during COP 15.

The secretariat and the GM have participated in the United Nations System Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, managed by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women since 2018, and thereby submitted an annual report on their performance against the UN-SWAP indicators. In 2020, they met or exceeded requirements for 82 per cent of the UN-SWAP indicators, a 35 per cent increase when compared with the 2019 performance. The secretariat and the GM have also established an internal process to enhance their own capacities, policies and practices to support the inclusion of gender equality. A staff survey on gender mainstreaming capacity and a gender audit were carried out in 2020. Their findings indicate that the secretariat and the GM have most of the key requirements for gender responsiveness in place or under development. Building on the findings of the capacity assessment and the gender audit, gender policy is under preparation.

Land tenure: The secretariat collaborated with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other partners to produce a technical guide on how to integrate the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) into the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of LDN. The technical guide was prepared through multi-stakeholder e-consultations and feedback from Parties at the nineteenth session of the CRIC (CRIC 19). It highlights three key aspects to be considered by policy- and decision-makers and land administrators in the design and implementation of LDN commitments and initiatives: legitimate tenure rights; consultation and participation; and gender-responsive approaches. The guide presents nine action-oriented pathways on potential solutions to commonly encountered land tenure challenges in the context of national plans, legal frameworks, strategies and action programmes with regards to LDN.

The secretariat established a multi-partner working group to enhance advocacy and awareness-raising on land tenure issues. This group works toward (i) raising awareness on responsible land governance to combat DLDD among all stakeholders, particularly vulnerable populations; (ii) engaging with country level institutions and CSOs for joint actions; and (iii) guiding the future efforts of the secretariat to promote awareness-raising on the issue of land tenure. It is currently preparing "action tracks" as a concrete work plan to advance the objectives.

To monitor land tenure in the UNCCD context, the secretariat commissioned a study to assess the availability of data on SDG indicators relevant to land governance, which could potentially be integrated into the UNCCD reporting process. The study found that the current data availability for such indicators is still very limited and not feasible for integration into the UNCCD reporting process.

C. Strategic objective 3: To mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems

20. Significant progress was made in 2020–2021 in the development of the UNCCD drought agenda and the building of a solid basis for related action. The IWG on Drought provided fresh, in-depth information and recommendations, which will guide further action to address drought under the UNCCD. Around 70 countries worked on the development of an NDP, linking together different national policies and activities on drought to establish a foundation for well-coordinated and effective national drought preparedness. Collaboration between the secretariat/GM and major multilateral entities working on drought issues intensified and expanded; the Drought Toolbox is a prime example of such a joint product, bringing together the knowledge and practices of numerous expert organizations.

21. The assessment of drought hazard, exposure and vulnerability is a precondition for mitigating, adapting to, and managing the effects of drought and building the resilience of communities and ecosystems in the long term. The related SPI technical report and policy recommendations provide effective guidance on drought resilience assessment at the

national and subnational levels. Furthermore, the development of Good Practice Guidance⁶ on the drought progress indicators and renewed tools for UNCCD national reporting facilitate the continuous supply of credible data on the progress made at the national to global levels, thus supporting targeted policy decisions and implementation support.

22. Good progress was also made in terms of support to Parties for sand and dust storm source mitigation and impact/risk reduction, with the active work of the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms launched at COP 14, and the development and completion of the Sand and Dust Storms Compendium, Source Base-map and Toolbox.

2020–2023 main outcome 3.1: The effects of drought are better mitigated and managed, building on the support and information derived from the UNCCD

Indicator 3.1: Affected Parties use the information derived from the UNCCD to complete and implement NDPs.

In the biennium 2020–2021, drought was approached from a variety of perspectives. The work of the SPI and the IWG on Drought was facilitated, and both expert bodies will submit their reports to COP 15. The secretariat and GM continued to implement the Drought Initiative, with focus on supporting countries in the development of their NDPs, and in knowledge sharing and learning.

Seventy-three countries expressed an interest in working with the secretariat and the GM to develop an NDP. Sixty of them have already finalized their plan and another nine countries are in the process of developing theirs. The NDPs aim to revise the national-level approach to drought management – from a reactive and crisis-based perspective towards a proactive and risk-based one. They must be aligned with and integrated into the existing relevant national frameworks.

Some multi-country and regional drought policy planning activities were carried out. A training and planning workshop for southern Latin American countries was organized to support the development of national drought policies and drought preparedness plans. Two regional projects were implemented, one for Central Asia and another one for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member countries. Both projects aimed to boost technical and institutional drought management capacities through enhanced data sharing on early warning and monitoring systems, drought risk profiling and feasible drought risk mitigation measures. The Central Asian project resulted in a comprehensive regional strategy for drought management and mitigation, adopted in October 2021, with an action plan for 2021–2030. The SADC project produced a regional drought resilience strategy (2022–2032) that identifies nine strategic objectives to support countries in the region.

The secretariat and the GM are collaborating with several United Nations entities skilled in supporting the development of country-level drought monitoring capabilities, which is a key objective of many NDPs. The main UNCCD tool for the global monitoring and assessment of the impact of drought is the set of indicators for strategic objective 3, which were adopted at COP 14. These indicators are being used for national reports for the first time in 2022, and the related Good Practice Guidance for National Reporting on UNCCD Strategic Objective 3 was published in 2021. In addition to the preparations for national reporting, the secretariat and the GM have worked on drought vulnerability assessment and preparedness for mitigation measures with FAO through a Global Environmental Facility enabling activity project.

During the biennium 2020–2021, the UNCCD knowledge-sharing actions on drought focused on the upgrade and expansion of the Drought Toolbox. This Toolbox collates numerous tools from a variety of partners, organized in three modules concerning: (1) drought monitoring and early warning; (2) drought vulnerability and risk assessment; and (3) drought risk mitigation measures. A series of online training sessions and webinars were also organized to familiarize stakeholders with the functionality of the interactive Drought Toolbox.

On drought finance, the GM developed a technical report identifying potential public and private financing instruments and mechanisms for drought. This report defines key barriers to financing drought and provides recommendations on the building blocks of drought finance. It also proposes key steps in preparing national drought finance strategies and how to incorporate these into countries' NDPs. The GM carried out also two other assessments on (1) the feasibility and options for establishing a global drought resilience fund, including options for scoping out a potential fund structure and an operating and financing model; and (2) the potential for issuing Sustainable Land Bonds in alignment with land degradation, which could also include financing for drought.

2020–2023 main outcome 3.2: Early warning concerning drought and/or sand and dust storms (SDS) is increasingly applied, building on the support and information derived from the UNCCD

Indicator 3.2: Affected Parties use the information derived from the UNCCD to mitigate the impact of SDS

⁶ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/UNCCD_SO3_GPG_DraftForExternalReview_8Feb2021_0.pdf>.

The secretariat continued to actively participate in the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms. Drawing from the Coalition strategy, a 2020–2022 action plan was developed, including working groups on (1) Adaptation and mitigation; (2) Forecasting and early warning; (3) Health and safety; (4) Policy and governance; and (5) Mediation and regional collaboration. Within the Coalition, FAO has led the development of a global programme that links SDS with LDN. The objective of the global programme is to strengthen the resilience of agriculture-dependent communities affected by increasing exposure to climate change and the increased risks and impacts of SDS, while reducing and/or reversing land degradation; and to create an enabling environment for scaling up SDS source and impact/risk reduction in the agricultural sectors.

In collaboration with several partners and the SPI, the secretariat has prepared and made available information and tools for addressing SDS, as follows:

- A Sand and Dust Storms Compendium (SDS Compendium) that provides guidance on how to assess and address the risks posed by SDS. The Compendium includes approaches and methodology frameworks on data collection, assessment, monitoring and early warning, impact mitigation and preparedness, source mapping and anthropogenic source mitigation;
- A Global Sand and Dust Storms Source Base-map that provides information for planning source mitigation actions, source monitoring, early warning, and risk, impact and vulnerability assessments;
- A Sand and Dust Storms Toolbox (SDS Toolbox) that provides easy access to tools, methodologies, approaches, case studies and other resources to support the development and implementation of SDS policies and plans at various levels.

The secretariat has started the preparation of capacity-building training materials, including e-learning courses, to complement the SDS Compendium and the SDS Toolbox. The training courses will focus on SDS risk assessment, monitoring and early warning, and SDS source and impact mitigation.

D. Strategic objective 4: To generate global environmental benefits through effective implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

23. During the biennium 2020–2021, the re-activation of the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) of the Executive Secretaries of the Rio Conventions resulted in an ambitious joint work programme and advocacy. Progress was made also in linking the scientific work under the three Rio conventions, notably through SPI participation in the scientific review of the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The inputs resulting from the SPI participation will assist in the inclusion of UNCCD priorities in the climate change agenda and vice versa, which may in turn provide for further synergies and increased effectiveness of national implementation of the two Conventions.

2020–2023 main outcome 4.1: The UNCCD process contributes to, and benefits from, synergies with the other Rio conventions and related cooperation processes on climate change and biodiversity

Indicator 4.1: The IPCC and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) take into account the inputs from the UNCCD.

Indicator 4.2: Development of joint indicators with the other Rio conventions advances.

The SPI, with backstopping from the secretariat, continued to contribute to and cooperate with other international scientific panels and bodies dealing with DLDD issues. In 2020–2021, the SPI contributed to the reports, working groups and processes of IPBES, IPCC, the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils, the International Resource Panel, the Global Land Indicators Initiative and the Integrated Drought Management Programme. These coordination activities have provided SPI members with a broader perspective of the work of other scientific mechanisms, contributing additional context and scientific grounding to the work completed on the two scientific assessments by the SPI during the biennium.

The Executive Secretaries of the Rio conventions, under the auspices of the JLG, held seven meetings during the biennium and agreed on an internal strategy, which includes cooperation on capacity-building, outreach and communications, among other things. Joint statements by the Executive Secretaries were disseminated at numerous virtual conferences and events, advocating for a more synergistic implementation of the three conventions at the country level.

The three secretariats launched a social media campaign entitled Restoring Balance with Nature in September 2021, which is to continue throughout 2022. The campaign raises awareness on the interconnectedness of desertification, climate change and biodiversity loss, and the shared solutions.

The secretariat continued to contribute to the virtual discussions on the Convention on Biological Diversity post-2020 global biodiversity framework. UNCCD was also actively represented at the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 26) in Glasgow, advocating land-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and for the importance of land restoration and SLM, as cost-effective strategies towards post-pandemic recovery and sustainable development

for all. During COP 26, the secretariats of the Rio conventions organized a hybrid version of the Rio Conventions Pavilion, with seven sessions to highlight the complementarity of the three processes, and the UNCCD also hosted a side event titled “Down to Earth: Making ecosystems and communities more resilient to extreme drought and floods”. Furthermore, the secretariat contributed to activities of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice of the UNFCCC.

In addition to collaboration with the Rio convention secretariats and bodies, the secretariat worked with numerous other entities for the identification and effective promotion of matters and actions of mutual interest. For example, with the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the collaboration focused on promoting ecological connectivity as an essential component of ecosystem restoration; and with the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security, the secretariat participated in an independent assessment and research report on the coherence and alignment among SLM, ecosystem-based adaptation, ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction and nature-based solutions. Currently, the secretariat is exploring the interlinkages between land, water, renewable energy, climate change and livelihoods through partnerships with the International Renewable Energy Agency and research institutes, such as Tsinghua University, and also with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

E. Strategic objective 5. To mobilize substantial and additional financial and non-financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention by building effective partnerships at global and national level

24. The GM approached resource mobilization from various mutually supportive perspectives. Countries were provided hands-on support to develop “bankable” projects based on their LDN targets and NDPs, with a focus on avoiding the usual bottlenecks at an early phase of the project preparation. Large-scale, multi-country flagship initiatives and projects, most notably GGWSSI, brought together numerous partners and gave Parties the chance to access larger amounts of funding, increase (sub)regional cooperation, and generate the large-scale impact of UNCCD implementation efforts.

25. The UNCCD approach to engaging the private sector was revised to increase focus on encouraging changes to business operations in order to catalyse a transition to sustainable land use and advance sustainable value chains. Innovative financing instruments and approaches to technology transfer were explored as potential means for availing new resources for UNCCD implementation.

2020–2023 main outcome 5.1: Improved access to implementation resources

5.1 Scope of funding sources to address DLDD.

5.2 Improved capacity of affected country Parties to translate their project ideas for UNCCD implementation into high-quality projects.

The GM support to LDN transformative projects and programmes is presented under main outcome 1.1. In addition to that, the GM sought to improve the access of Parties to implementation resources through launching and promoting large-scale flagship initiatives, facilitating the engagement of the private sector, developing approaches for technology transfer and exploring innovative financing.

On the flagship initiatives, the GGWSSI featured prominently in the One Planet Summit of January 2021, resulting in pledges amounting to USD 19 billion. The UNCCD was asked to host the coordinating unit of the Great Green Wall Accelerator for the coordination and monitoring of and reporting on the achievements of all GGWSSI partners, structures and institutions to support the Pan-African Agency for the Great Green Wall. Other large-scale regional or multi-country flagship initiatives involving the GM include the Programme for Integrated Development and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Zambezi Watercourse and a transformative programme for Caribbean small island developing States.

To promote the greater participation of the private sector, the GM has developed, in collaboration with the secretariat, a Private Sector Strategy 2021–2025. This Strategy focuses on two main objectives: (i) facilitate investments and technology for sustainable production as a catalyst for a transition to sustainable land use; and (ii) promote the expansion of value chains for sustainable consumption for healthy lands and people. In order to support the implementation of the Private Sector Strategy, the GM has collaborated with UNIDO on SLM innovation, the World Economic Forum in its Trillion Trees challenge, and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development in the development of a business investment approach to soil health. In collaboration with partners, various events and promotional activities were organized on mobilizing private sector investments.

In line with its mandate to mobilize resources for the transfer of technology, the GM is developing a model framework for technology transfer. The framework explores options for the horizontal distribution of more mature technologies between countries

to ensure availability and affordability where these technologies are most needed, while aiming to help new and innovative technologies move up the innovation chain. The GM has also undertaken a preliminary assessment of technology transfer financing models to explore their relative efficiency and effectiveness, including in (i) the use of blended public and private funding; (ii) the provision of seed funding for promising new and innovative technologies; (iii) finance innovation centres for knowledge transfer and capacity-building and to facilitate networking to identify market opportunities.

With regard to innovative finance, the GM was requested to identify potential and innovative financing instruments for addressing drought, based on clearly identified added value. Findings from a GM commissioned report were provided to the Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought for its consideration. The GM carried out also two other assessments on (1) the feasibility and options for establishing a Global Drought Resilience Fund, including options for scoping out a potential fund structure, and an operating and financing model; and (2) the potential for issuing Sustainable Land Bonds in alignment with land degradation, which could also include financing for drought.

Furthermore, the GM has commissioned a report that explores instruments for greening debt relief by investing in land, such as debt-for-land-restoration swaps, sustainability-linked bonds and other tools that could link debt relief to land restoration, and a scoping study on financial instruments to leverage remittances for land restoration in the Western Balkans.

The collaboration between the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund (LDN Fund), the Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) and the GM was strengthened, particularly at the project level, with the GM supporting the responsiveness of LDN project preparation to the requirements and conditions of the TAF/LDN Fund pipeline.

IV. Accomplishments by the unit of the secretariat

A. Executive Direction and Management

26. The Executive Direction and Management (EDM) programme supported the Executive Secretary in providing strategic direction for the secretariat and the GM, representing the organization externally, coordinating cooperation with other organizations and reaching out to stakeholders worldwide.

27. In 2020–2021, in the challenging COVID-19 pandemic context, EDM ensured the overall effectiveness of the work of the secretariat through further focusing on priorities and introducing new online working modalities. Particular attention was paid to supporting the well-being of staff through flexible working arrangements and offering access to various support services. These measures worked very well, and although some planned activities had to be postponed or revised because of the pandemic, most notably the fifteenth session of the COP, the secretariat succeeded in implementing its work programme and achieving the expected results as planned.

28. The New York Liaison Office (NYLO), as part of EDM, ensured the political visibility for UNCCD issues before the United Nations General Assembly. It supported the office of the President of the United Nations General Assembly in the organization of the High Level Dialogue and other key processes that follow up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. NYLO carried out targeted outreach to constituencies at the United Nations headquarters and provided information and strategic advice on UNCCD matters to the United Nations Member States and special interest and regional groups. It also served as the secretariat for the Group of Friends on DLDD.

29. The UNCCD Evaluation Office, which functions as part of EDM, commissioned five evaluations and conducted a participatory gender audit during the biennium. The Evaluation Office also followed up on earlier UNCCD evaluations.

30. In the 2020–2021 biennium, services for the UNCCD governing bodies and legal affairs were also part of EDM. In due consideration of the circumstances whereby the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions did not allow for meetings to be organized in a face-to-face format, the UNCCD secretariat, in accordance with the Presiding Officers of the UNCCD governing bodies, temporarily used/adopted the so-called ‘virtual meeting’ format since mid-March 2020 for six small intergovernmental meetings which could not be postponed to a later date due to their established mandate by our Parties.

31. Furthermore, extensive consultations took place with (i) UNCCD conference service providers on the arrangements to be provided or foreseen for sessions of the UNCCD governing bodies mandated to take place during the biennium with respect to their

organization in a virtual format as well as (ii) the secretariats of the Rio conventions to draw from their experience. It was concluded that a coherent approach aimed at efficiently addressing the matter of organizing UNCCD governing bodies in a ‘virtual format’ should match and respond to the specificities of the UNCCD mandate, legal framework and process. In line with this, the secretariat organized CRIC 19 from 15 to 19 March 2021 as an online meeting and the second extraordinary session of the COP from 6 to 9 December 2021 through a silence/written procedure preceded by an online informal contact group.

32. To facilitate active participation in the online official sessions, the secretariat provided Parties with detailed guidance on how the sessions are organized through the official notifications sent, the organization of regional consultations and the posting of relevant information on the UNCCD website.

33. For the two official sessions, a total of seven pre-session documents for translation were processed in time with an overall documentation submission compliance rate to the United Nations Office at Geneva of 100 per cent. Five other documents, including the reports of the sessions, were also prepared.

34. Thirteen meetings of the Bureaux of the COP, CRIC and CST were organized, all of them online.

35. EDM also provided advice on legal, institutional and procedural questions and carried out related tasks.

B. Communications

36. Over the biennium 2020–2021, the secretariat made good progress in increasing awareness about the objectives of the Convention in support of its implementation through the use of traditional and social media, flagship outreach programmes and campaigns, and knowledge-sharing platforms. The campaigns for the Desertification and Drought Day, 17 June, was a success in 2020 and 2021. Both global observance events were organized entirely online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with varied content ranging from a high-level panel discussion to a music concert and cooking demonstrations. The observance programmes were livestreamed via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and the UNCCD website.

37. In 2020, over 67 million people were reached through social media. One million people actively participated in the observance event through public shares, likes and comments. The event was reported in over 50 countries in 185 print articles as well as on radio and television, and in multiple languages. Over 110 governmental, intergovernmental and civil society organizations sent their observance event reports to the secretariat.

38. In 2021, over 150 million people were reached through social media, with the direct engagement of 280,000 people. Media coverage reached more than 700 million people over 60 countries. Over 100 governmental, intergovernmental and civil society organizations sent their observance event reports.

39. In general, the UNCCD social media audience grew massively between April 2019 and January 2022, partially due to the June 17 campaigns. The growth rate was steepest for LinkedIn, with an almost 600 per cent increase in the followers. Twitter followers increased by 132 per cent.

40. To mark the conclusion of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification 2010–2020, the President of the General Assembly, with the support of the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, convened a High-level Dialogue in June 2021 during the 75th session of the General Assembly. The Dialogue reaffirmed that addressing DLDD and achieving LDN are pathways to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.

41. During the biennium, the activities and issues under the UNCCD mandate were featured in a wide range of mainstream media. These include The Africa Report, Al Jazeera, British Broadcasting Corporation, Canal+ Afrique, China Global Television Network, Deutsche Welle, Euronews, The Guardian, Jeune Afrique, Le Monde, New Scientist, New York Times, Project Syndicate, Reuters and Xinhua News Agency. The secretariat received

interview requests from some of the world's largest global and/or regional radio and television networks. The UNCCD Land for Life and Land Ambassadors programmes continued, bringing new perspectives and stories to enrich the outreach. The UNCCD Land Heroes campaign and the youth webinars, organized jointly with Deutsche Welle, targeted young people, each reaching a significant audience (1.5–5 million people). The Rio Conventions Pavilion, a collaborative platform that promotes synergies among the Rio conventions, was organized at UNFCCC COP 26, providing seven hybrid sessions.

42. With regard to publications and information dissemination, twelve products were developed during the biennium, including a series of knowledge products on LDN, policy recommendations on drought, briefs on the UNCCD response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the status report on the implementation of the GGWSSI. The UNCCD News Alert has close to 33,000 subscribers.

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

44. In 2021, the secretariat launched an update to the UNCCD branding, digital strategy, the website and campaigns. The results of this process will be available in the course of 2022, starting with the launch of the new website in March.

C. External Relations, Policy and Advocacy

45. The External Relations, Policy and Advocacy (ERPA) programme works to position land and drought issues on key agendas (globally and regionally) and develop policy frameworks for the implementation of the Convention. The programme also seeks to expand the engagement of critical stakeholders and partners. As part of ERPA, the functions of the regional liaison offices (RLOs) have been revamped to strengthen UNCCD cooperation and outreach within and among the regions, facilitating partnerships, advocacy and coordination under each Regional Implementation Annex.

46. During the biennium 2020–2021, ERPA aimed to ensure that LDN remains high on the political agenda at the global level. It supported policy development and the engagement of stakeholders to facilitate the restoration of degraded land at scale, with linkages to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030). Land restoration was also set as a core theme for GLO2, which that will be launched on the margins of COP 15.

47. ERPA coordinated the actions of the secretariat around the emerging UNCCD drought agenda. It serviced the IWG on Drought, continued and further developed partnerships around the Drought Toolbox, and supported the GM to assist countries in the development of the NDPs.

48. Furthermore, ERPA brought forward the implementation of the Gender Action Plan to assist Parties in their efforts to better involve women both as agents and beneficiaries in the implementation of the UNCCD and document the achievements and lessons learned from using a gender-sensitive approach. It organized the internal process of the secretariat and the GM to enhance their capacity in gender mainstreaming.

49. In collaboration with FAO, ERPA led the preparation of the technical guide on land tenure (applying the VGGT to the UNCCD context) and participated in a working group to develop effective awareness-raising on tenure and land rights. ERPA participated actively in the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms and, together with partners, completed a global source map and technical guidance for mitigating the impact of SDS.

50. ERPA coordinated the activities of the secretariat for the Food Systems Summit held in September 2021, specifically around the issues of nature-positive food production. These activities resulted in new partnerships related to soil health and agrobiodiversity.

51. To ensure that partnerships and synergies for UNCCD implementation deliver value, ERPA collaborated actively with stakeholder groups that are critical for the effective implementation of the Convention, most notably CSOs and youth. During the biennium, 67 new organizations submitted their documents for accreditation to the COP. ERPA also worked with the GM on encouraging the involvement of private sector in UNCCD implementation at all levels, and in the preparation of the new UNCCD Private Sector Strategy.

52. ERPA facilitated the collaboration in the context of the JLG and provided UNCCD policy inputs to various processes and events concerning biodiversity and climate change.

53. The RLOs represented and advocated for the Convention, its objectives and its benefits for Parties in the respective regions and assisted the countries under each Regional Implementation Annexes to exchange views, identify topics and measures of shared interest, and carry out joint action to implement the Convention. The RLOs were also instrumental in partnership-building and resource mobilization for the specific requirements and needs of the different Regional Implementation Annexes and in supporting information exchange and communication within the regions. Parties not belonging to a Regional Implementation Annex were also supported through specific arrangements organized by ERPA.

D. Science, Technology and Innovation

54. The Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) programme facilitates scientific assessments and supports scientific cooperation, facilitates national reporting and review processes, and manages the secretariat's functions on capacity-building and innovation.

55. STI supported the SPI in meeting its two objectives for science-policy guidance and in its coordination activities with seven other scientific mechanisms. In addition to substantive support, STI facilitated virtual collaboration among the SPI members and organized the four meetings of the SPI, the first of which was a physical meeting followed by two virtual meetings and a hybrid meeting.

56. In addition to supporting the SPI work programme implementation, STI made the substantive preparations for the meetings of the Bureau of the CST as well as CST 15. It represented the secretariat in scientific meetings and processes of other intergovernmental bodies as well as in bilateral engagements with various Parties and organizations. STI also provided scientific input in response to requests from practitioners, civil society, researchers and journalists, and contributed directly or through scientific review to a wide range of relevant publications.

57. STI completed the necessary preparations for the 2022 national reporting process by establishing minimum data quality standards, updating methodological guidance, improving reporting forms, and developing new features in the online reporting platform. The reporting portal is now open and the STI coordinates the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building support to Parties in the preparation of their national reports. STI also coordinated the substantive preparations and organization of work of the intersessional CRIC meeting in March 2021 and prepared for the meetings of the Bureau of the CRIC.

58. To meet the growing need for continuous UNCCD-specific data supply, STI coordinated an internal data task force that conducted an inventory of existing data and sources and prepared a road map for the upgrade of the current approach to a proper UNCCD data centre. This centre will be based on the current online reporting portal and repository.

59. The UNCCD online Capacity Building Marketplace continued to attract visitors. Its offerings were continuously updated, with particular attention paid to increasing the availability of material in languages other than English. The Capacity Building Marketplace served as the channel for various online training and e-learning courses on key UNCCD topics, including LDN, the development of transformative projects, national reporting and gender mainstreaming. It hosted campaigns, competitions and exhibitions that reached new audiences and thereby raised awareness on the UNCCD among the general public.

E. Administrative Services

60. The Administrative Services programme is tasked with ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of services to the secretariat and the GM regarding financial management, human resources, travel, procurement, and information technology, in accordance with the regulations and rules of the United Nations and the UNCCD.

61. Administrative Services continued assisting units with delivering on their important tasks and, despite the challenges faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, processed 32 recruitment processes for staff and over 100 for consultants, and actioned 60 procurement requests for goods and services. While travel and in-person meetings were prevented for much of the time, several virtual events, including CRIC 19, the second extraordinary session of the COP and its informal group, the Desertification and Drought Day (June 17) events for 2020 and 2021, and a GGWSSI ministerial meeting were organized. Administrative Services and notably its information technology staff had a key role in the organization of these meetings.

V. Accomplishments of the Global Mechanism

62. During the biennium 2020–2021, the GM focused on supporting the development of national drought plans and advancing the setting and implementation of the LDN targets. A total of 69 of the 73 countries which expressed an interest have advanced on their national process of developing NDPs. In the context of LDN target-setting, the voluntary LDN TSP has supported 129 participating countries, of which 106 have successfully completed this voluntary process and 100 have published their national reports in the UNCCD Knowledge Hub.

63. The GM has then been responding to requests from Parties to support the development of land-based project proposals that meet the quality requirements of public and private funders. The portfolio currently consists of 59 national projects involving 55 countries (23 national project concept notes have been developed, 10 are under development and 26 are still to be developed), and 6 regional or multi-country projects involving 41 countries (3 regional concept notes have been developed, 2 are under development and 1 is still to be developed). Particular attention was provided to mainstreaming gender into the project concept notes and proposals. Twelve transformative projects and programmes (2 regional projects and 10 national projects) have benefited from additional support to prepare gender-specific studies such as gender gap analyses and gender action plans.

64. In addition, seven projects were supported under the Greening Drylands Partnership of the Changwon Initiative. The collaboration between the LDN Fund, the TAF and the GM was strengthened, particularly at the project level, with the GM supporting improvements to LDN project preparation that responds to the requirements and conditions of the TAF/LDN Fund pipeline.

65. While national projects and programmes form the backbone of interventions by Parties and receive support from the GM, there is increasingly important work being done via larger projects that deliver at landscape scale.

66. The GGWSSI is one such flagship initiative, aiming to restore, by 2030, 100 million hectares of degraded land, sequester 250 megatons of carbon and create 10 million green jobs. In January 2021, following the release of the GGWSSI implementation status report (published in September 2020), USD 19 billion was pledged at the One Planet Summit for further projects on the GGWSSI. Also in that Summit, the Great Green Wall Accelerator was created to facilitate coordination and collaboration among the GGWSSI partners. The UNCCD was asked to host the coordinating unit of the Accelerator and support the coordination and monitoring of and reporting on the achievements of all GGWSSI partners, structures and institutions in collaboration with the Pan-African Agency for the Great Green Wall. An initial results monitoring framework has been developed with and validated by the GGWSSI national agencies. The GGWSSI is aligned with the goals and ambitions of Parties to the UNCCD.

67. Other large-scale regional or multi-country flagship initiatives are taking shape, including the Programme for Integrated Development and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Zambezi Watercourse.

68. To promote the greater participation of the private sector, the GM has developed, in collaboration with the secretariat, a Private Sector Strategy 2021–2025. This Strategy focuses on two main objectives: (i) facilitate investments and technology for sustainable production as a catalyst for a transition to sustainable land use; and (ii) promote the expansion of value chains for sustainable consumption for healthy lands and people. In line with this strategy and its mandate to mobilize resources for the transfer of technology, the GM is developing a model framework for technology transfer.

69. With regard to innovative finance, the GM was requested to identify potential and innovative financing instruments for addressing drought, based on clearly identified added value. Findings from a GM commissioned report were provided to the IWG on Drought for its consideration. The GM carried out two additional assessments on the feasibility and options for establishing a Global Drought Resilience Fund and the potential for issuing drought-linked Sustainable Land Bonds. Furthermore, the GM has commissioned a report that explores instruments for greening debt relief and a scoping study on financial instruments to leverage remittances from migrants for land restoration in the Western Balkans.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

70. The COP may wish to consider the performance of the secretariat and the GM in the biennium 2020–2021 and use this information to support its consideration of the workplan, programme and budget for the coming years.
