

Decision 7/COP.15

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,

Also noting decision 34/COP.15, by which the Conference of the Parties decided to hold the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties in 2024,

Recognizing the need to reserve adequate time for the implementation of the upcoming recommendations of the midterm evaluation in order to benefit from them in the best possible manner before 2030,

Welcoming the further elements and priorities provided by the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties for the provisionally adopted 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. *Decides* to start the midterm evaluation process immediately after the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, with a view to considering the resulting findings and recommendations at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties in 2024;
2. *Adopts* the terms of reference for the midterm evaluation, as contained in annex I to this decision;
3. *Decides* to establish an intergovernmental working group to oversee the midterm evaluation process, in line with the terms of reference contained in annex II to this decision;
4. *Invites* the intergovernmental working group to consider and further detail the terms of reference for the midterm evaluation, as well as the organization and schedule of its own work, at its first meeting;
5. *Requests* the secretariat and, as feasible, the Global Mechanism to support the midterm evaluation process and the work of the intergovernmental working group by providing the needed information, managing the experts carrying out the independent assessment, facilitating communication among the members and observers of the intergovernmental working group, and organizing their meetings;
6. *Also requests* the secretariat to regularly update the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties on the progress made in the midterm evaluation process;
7. *Further requests* the intergovernmental working group to present its findings and recommendations to Parties for their consideration at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

6th plenary meeting

20 May 2022

Annex I

Modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework

I. Objectives of the midterm evaluation

1. The purpose of the midterm evaluation is to assess the progress made in implementing the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and achieving its five strategic objectives. It will determine whether the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework is working as intended, whether its implementation is meeting the stated aims, and whether/how it is contributing to broader global priorities of sustainable development. The evaluation will inform Parties and other key stakeholders about the successes and challenges in the implementation and, through a participatory process, result in recommendations to further improve performance for the remaining period of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

2. The main audience of the midterm evaluation are Parties to the Convention, both as participants in the Conference of the Parties (COP) and as countries implementing the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, as well as United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) institutions and bodies. The evaluation will also provide valuable information to the scientific community involved in the UNCCD process at different levels, implementation partners and other interested stakeholders.

II. Evaluation scope and criteria

3. The midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework will cover five interrelated components:

- (a) Continued relevance of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework;
- (b) Progress made in achieving the five strategic objectives;
- (c) Consideration of efforts to meet the aims and assignments that were set in the implementation framework of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework;
- (d) Efficiency of the reporting and review process concerning the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework; and
- (e) Sustainability of the achievements.

4. In addition, as a cross-cutting issue, the midterm evaluation will consider how gender-responsive policies and measures are taken into account in the implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and in the reporting and review process.

5. The evaluation will be built on the standard evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,¹ which comprise relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. As this is a midterm evaluation and thus focuses on further improvement to the implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework in the second half of its term, the ‘impact’ criterion will take the form of “progress to impact”. The evaluation approach is outlined below.

A. Relevance and coherence

6. The midterm evaluation will assess the extent to which the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework continues to be suited to the changing priorities and approaches in global cooperation on sustainable development, most notably those concerning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the United Nations Framework Convention on

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>.

Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. It will examine the responsiveness of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) and to the intergovernmental efforts addressing the COVID-19 pandemic recovery. It will also consider the alignment of the implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework with the policies and strategies of major multilateral partners and the donor community in general.

B. Effectiveness and progress to impact

7. The midterm evaluation will assess the progress made toward the strategic objectives, building on the indicators that are being used for each objective and taking into account the expected impact that is stated in the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. Of particular importance will be the linkage with SDG target 15.3 on land degradation neutrality (LDN).

8. With regard to the aims contained in the three fields² specified in the implementation framework of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, the midterm evaluation will seek to identify successes for potential replication and shortcomings as lessons learned, which may be used to improve the implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

9. In addition, the midterm evaluation will assess the effectiveness of action taken by Convention institutions and bodies, as well as other relevant stakeholders, as feasible, to support Parties in implementing the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, based on the tasks specified for each of them therein. This assessment will focus on the effectiveness of promoting LDN and planning for drought preparedness at country level.

C. Efficiency

10. Closely interlinked with the assessment of the effectiveness of action taken by Convention institutions and bodies, the midterm evaluation will briefly consider the efficiency of the UNCCD national reporting and review process.

D. Sustainability

11. The midterm evaluation will include a brief examination of the financial, social, environmental and institutional capacities of the systems that are needed to sustain, over time, the results achieved so far.

E. Cross-cutting issue: Gender

12. In addition to the above criteria, the midterm evaluation will consider how gender-responsive policies and measures are taken into account in the implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and in the reporting and review process.

13. Building on the evaluation criteria outlined above, the evaluation will be based on a number of evaluation questions that will be defined at the beginning of the evaluation.

III. Modalities and organization of work

14. The evaluation will be supervised by an intergovernmental working group, consisting of members that will be proposed by each regional group and nominated by the COP, as well as observers that include representatives of the Science-Policy Interface, selected partner organizations and civil society organizations. The secretariat will support the work of the intergovernmental working group.

² The three fields are financial and non-financial resources, policy and planning, and actions on the ground.

15. The evaluation will be based on factual findings considered through a participatory process and eventually submitted to the COP for a decision on the way forward. The corresponding elements of the evaluation process will be as follows:

(a) An independent assessment, to be supervised by the intergovernmental working group and carried out by external evaluation experts using the evaluation criteria. The external expertise to be used should observe geographical and gender balance. The assessment will present findings on the evaluation components (continued relevance of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework; progress toward the strategic objectives; the implementation framework; the reporting and review process; sustainability of the results; and gender aspects) based on sound, verified evidence and objective analysis, and be clearly documented in the assessment report. The assessment will also present conclusions and provisional recommendations for possible future action to further enhance the implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

(b) A participatory consultation on the conclusions and recommendations of the independent assessment, to be conducted during an intersessional meeting of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention; and

(c) A COP decision, which will present Parties' agreement on the action to be taken to further enhance the implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

16. With regard to the background material to be used for the midterm evaluation, the national reports submitted by Parties in 2018 and 2022–2023 will provide the key data for assessing the progress made toward achieving the strategic objectives and for considering the aims of the implementation framework.

Annex II

Terms of reference of the intergovernmental working group to oversee the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework midterm evaluation process

1. At its fourteenth session, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to include in the preparations of the midterm evaluation the establishment of an intergovernmental working group to oversee the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework midterm evaluation process (IWG-MTE). The terms of reference, including the purpose, composition and main working modalities of the IWG-MTE, are presented below.

I. Purpose of the intergovernmental working group

2. The IWG-MTE is established to oversee the evaluation process. Building on the midterm evaluation terms of reference, as agreed by the COP at its fifteenth session, the IWG-MTE will:

(a) Agree on a detailed plan and schedule for the midterm evaluation process, including the preparation of the independent assessment, a consultative process and the preparation of a report for the COP, as well as its own organization of work and schedule;

(b) Ensure that the first main component of the evaluation, the independent assessment, is responsive to the objectives and criteria of the evaluation and conducted according to high evaluation standards, and that the external evaluation experts preparing that assessment observe geographical and gender balance;

(c) Prepare, with the support of the secretariat, a draft report including the findings of the independent assessment, conclusions and recommendations, as well as preliminary observations of the group;

(d) Advise the secretariat on the organization of the participatory consultation on the conclusions and recommendations of the independent assessment, to be conducted during an intersessional meeting of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC);

(e) Prepare a report on the findings and recommendations of the midterm evaluation and submit it for the consideration of the COP at its sixteenth session.

II. Composition of the intergovernmental working group

3. The IWG-MTE will consist of three representatives per region,³ to be nominated by each region. The group will be supported by seven observers: two members of the Science-Policy Interface, one representative each from three major international organizations and two representatives from civil society. The COP Bureau, at the proposal of the secretariat, will nominate the observers.

4. The secretariat and, where feasible, the Global Mechanism will support the work of IWG-MTE and service its meetings.

III. Main working modalities of the intergovernmental working group

5. Unless otherwise agreed by the IWG-MTE, and depending on the availability of resources, the group will have three in-person meetings: one at the beginning of its work, another one immediately after the intersessional CRIC session, and one at the end of its work to finalize its report.

³ Africa; Asia and the Pacific; Latin America and the Caribbean; Central and Eastern Europe; and Western European and Other Countries.

In addition, the group will meet online, either in full or in smaller subgroups, and it will also actively communicate through email exchanges. The secretariat will facilitate the meetings of and communication among the group members and observers.