



CHAMPION COUNTRIES TRANSFORMING LAND-BASED AGENDAS

Call for Requests for Support to Assist Countries in Strengthening Land Degradation Neutrality Targets and Integrated Land Use Planning Frameworks

In October 2015, the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) endorsed SDG target 15.3, which includes the concept of land degradation neutrality (LDN), as a strong vehicle for driving the implementation of the Convention. Shortly after and following the COP mandate, the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface published the Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality¹ to provide a scientific foundation for understanding, implementing and monitoring LDN, and the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD launched the LDN Target Setting Programme² to support country Parties in using best available data for assessing land degradation baselines and setting voluntary LDN targets and measures.

As of February 2023, the LDN Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP) has supported a total of 130 participating countries, with 107 countries having successfully completed this voluntary process and 101 countries having already published its outcomes in the UNCCD website³. According to a recent global assessment⁴, through voluntary LDN targets alone, UNCCD country Parties have committed to restoring an estimated total of over 450 million hectares of degraded lands. However, despite the very substantial progress achieved to date, the findings of the Second Edition of the Global Land Outlook⁵ presented in 2022 clearly tell us that we need to do more, faster and better in order to address the global crisis of land degradation.

In this context and taking into account the mandate that COP15 provided in this regard, country Parties can improve their LDN targets to ensure that these are more quantitative, specific, time-bound, policy-coherent, spatially explicit, linked to integrated land use planning, and gender responsive. There is also a need to develop tools to support scenario planning and trade-off analysis to inform and improve decision making in land use planning, and provide adequate capacity building and decision support.

Strengthening LDN targets and integrated land use planning frameworks will be key to support the enabling environment that countries need to close LDN implementation gaps and deliver a pipeline of programmes and projects that meet land-based targets and achieve a status of healthy and

¹ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/scientific-conceptual-framework-land-degradation-neutrality-report-science>

² <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/land-degradation-neutrality/projects-programmes/ldn-target-setting>

³ <https://www.unccd.int/our-work/country-profiles>

⁴ <https://www.pbl.nl/en/publications/goals-and-commitments-for-the-restoration-decade>

⁵ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo2>

productive land in balance by 2030. This approach will improve joint implementation efforts among the Rio Conventions and make key contributions to multiple SDGs and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

For this purpose and following relevant COP mandate to further develop the LDN target setting process and improve integrated land use planning frameworks, the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD and its partners have developed the second phase of the LDN TSP (2.0), which includes a GEF-funded Enabling Activity project developed in collaboration with IUCN to facilitate “Integrating Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) into land use planning frameworks to strengthen national UNCCD enabling environments”.

The purpose of this call for requests for support is to select 15 champion countries that are committed to transforming their land-based agendas and demonstrating how to bring UNCCD policy and implementation efforts to the next level. Through the LDN TSP 2.0, the UNCCD will provide dedicated technical and financial support services to these countries and will also establish a waiting list of additional interested countries. Based on the demand received from countries and subject to available resources, the UNCCD may scale up the support to additional countries that meet the selection criteria through partner agencies that may wish to support this work.

The following criteria will be applied for the selection of countries:

1. The country has completed its LDN target setting process and LDN targets are publicly available (i.e., on the UNCCD website);
2. The country has defined specific LDN targets and/or measures related to integrated land use planning;
3. The country provides information on ongoing efforts to strengthen its LDN targets and measures, and related implementation activities;
4. The country provides information on ongoing efforts to strengthen integrated land use planning frameworks, including relevant projects;
5. The country demonstrates high level political commitment to lead a national process to strengthen its LDN targets and integrated land use planning framework;
6. The country belongs to one of the Regional Annexes of the UNCCD and is eligible for GEF funding (note: as part of the selection process, the UNCCD will ensure adequate regional balance among the countries selected).

The Global Mechanism is very pleased to invite country Parties to submit their requests for support in the form of an official letter that should: (i) be signed by the Minister of the UNCCD National Focal Point institution; (ii) be submitted by any of the officially designated UNCCD National Focal Points; and (iii) describe how the country meets the selection criteria. Request for support must be submitted before 2nd of June 2023 to the following email address: LDNtargetsetting@unccd.int.