



United Nations

ICCD/CRIC(21)/9



Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.: General
9 August 2023

Original: English

Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

Twenty-first session

Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 13–17 November 2023

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Policy frameworks and thematic topics: sand and dust storms, drought, land tenure and gender

Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: sand and dust storms, drought, land tenure and gender

Note by the secretariat

Summary

In response to the requests in decisions taken at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, this document provides a summary of the activities undertaken by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism on the implementation of the policy frameworks and thematic issues pertaining to sand and dust storms, drought, land tenure and gender for consideration by Parties at the 21st session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 21). As regards drought and under a separate agenda item, CRIC 21 will advise on the next steps for addressing drought under the Convention based on the progress report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought and the recommendations of the Science-Policy Interface.



Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Report on the follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: sand and dust storms	1–14	3
A. Introduction	1	3
B. Implementation activities.....	2–12	3
C. Conclusions and recommendations.....	13–14	4
II. Report on the follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: drought	15–64	5
A. Introduction	15–19	5
B. Drought policies.....	20–35	6
C. Awareness-raising and capacity-building	36–45	8
D. Partnerships and coordination.....	46–61	9
E. Drought finance	62	11
F. Conclusions and recommendations.....	63–64	11
III. Report on the follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: land tenure...	65–78	12
A. Introduction	65	12
B. Implementation activities.....	66–76	12
C. Conclusions and recommendations.....	77–78	14
IV. Report on the follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: gender	79–102	14
A. Introduction	79–80	14
B. Implementation activities.....	81–100	15
C. Conclusions and recommendations.....	101–102	18

I. Report on the follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: sand and dust storms

A. Introduction

1. By its decision 26/COP.15, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) to present a report on the implementation efforts relevant to this decision. This report summarizes the main activities undertaken by the secretariat, the GM and other partners since the fifteenth session of the COP (COP 15) with regard to the implementation of the policy framework and thematic issues on sand and dust storms (SDS).

B. Implementation activities

1. Advocacy, collaboration and partnership

2. The secretariat provided inputs to the report of the Secretary-General entitled ‘Combating sand and dust storms’ at the 77th and 78th sessions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) held in September 2022 and 2023.¹ The report highlights activities and initiatives undertaken by United Nations entities, including the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Coalition on SDS, Member States and a range of stakeholders which underscore the achievements to date: (i) cross-cutting developments; (ii) monitoring, prediction and early warning; (iii) impact mitigation, vulnerability and resilience; and (iv) source mitigation.

3. The UNGA resolution on SDS, RES/77/294, proclaims 12 July as International Day of Combating SDS, to be observed annually, and commends the secretariat of the UNCCD on its efforts to develop both a global base map of SDS sources and the SDS Compendium: information and guidance on assessing and addressing the risks.

4. The secretariat continues to actively participate in the United Nations Coalition on Combating SDS, initiated through UNGA resolution A/RES/72/225,² and contribute to a global response to SDS. The Coalition was formally launched at COP 14 of the UNCCD in New Delhi in 2019. The Coalition is a voluntary association with more than 15 members, consisting of United Nations entities, intergovernmental organizations and affiliated members.

5. The Coalition has created five working groups: I: Adaptation and mitigation; II: Forecasting and early warning; III: Health and safety; IV: Policy and governance; and V: Mediation and regional collaboration. The UNCCD co-leads Working Group IV on policy and governance. The Coalition holds regular meetings to operationalize the work of these groups and coordinate their activities. At the seventh and eighth meetings of the Coalition held in June 2022 and February 2023, respectively, Working Group leads shared the progress made and presented their priority activities.

2. Knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and guidance to Parties and stakeholders

Sand and Dust Storms Toolbox

6. The secretariat continues to develop the SDS Toolbox in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies and external experts. As a web-based platform built upon the contents of the SDS Compendium, the Toolbox will support policy-makers, practitioners and stakeholders

¹ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3984903?ln=en>.

² <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1467245?ln=en>.

in mitigating the adverse effects of SDS by providing easy access to relevant data, methodologies, approaches, best practices, guidelines and other resources.

7. The SDS Toolbox will present key features and elements in five modules, namely: (i) SDS source mapping and monitoring; (ii) SDS source control and management; (iii) observation, monitoring, forecasting and early warning; (iv) risk and vulnerability assessment and mapping; and (v) preparedness and impact mitigation. It aims to compile relevant knowledge, information and data as well as tools and methodologies for each module. The SDS Toolbox is expected to be launched in September 2023 and will continue to be refined to ensure synergies with other knowledge tools and to increase its efficacy and usefulness.

Voluntary policy guideline and science-policy dialogue

8. The secretariat is developing a voluntary policy guideline in collaboration with the FAO and other partners, building upon the evidence base presented in the SDS Compendium and the SDS Toolbox. The aim is to provide SDS source and affected countries with practical guidance on the integration of SDS management into key policy areas. The elements of the voluntary policy guideline were presented at COP 15 (ICCD/COP(15)/CRP.2).

9. In collaboration with Parties and relevant institutions, the secretariat will organize a science-policy dialogue to mobilize scientific knowledge, expertise and political will to address SDS. This forum will provide an opportunity to raise awareness, share knowledge and enhance capacity in terms of SDS. The outcomes of the dialogue are expected to contribute to the overall implementation of the policy framework and thematic issues on SDS, including the work of the United Nations Coalition on Combating SDS, voluntary policy guideline and SDS Toolbox, among others.

National and regional policy, strategy and implementation

10. The secretariat has been assisting in the development of national and regional plans and strategies in accordance with the SDS Policy Framework, with a particular focus on impact mitigation, including anthropogenic source management.

11. As a result, countries in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) have developed a regional strategy for SDS management, and identified three key priority areas in the region: i) strengthening SDS knowledge; ii) mitigating the impact of anthropogenic sources of SDS; and iii) ensuring regional cooperation and joint action. Likewise, countries in north-east Asia (China, Mongolia, Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation) are in the process of formulating a regional strategy for combating SDS based on source mapping and risk/vulnerability assessments. Nigeria is finalizing a national action plan on SDS in partnership with relevant institutions and stakeholders.

12. The secretariat and the GM are collaborating with the United Nations Coalition on Combating SDS to develop a programme concept note on combating SDS in order to enhance food security and achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN), led by the FAO in consultation with other Coalition members. Building on the ongoing SDS-related activities of the FAO and UNCCD, the concept note aims to strengthen the resilience of agriculture-dependent communities affected by enhanced risks and impacts of SDS while reducing and/or reversing land degradation and supporting communities and governments in the mainstreaming of SDS prevention and adaptation activities within existing frameworks for multi-hazard disaster risk reduction and management.

C. Conclusions and recommendations

13. Parties may wish to consider the recommendations contained in this document with a view to initiating early consultations on draft decisions to be forwarded to COP 16.

14. The Conference of the Parties may wish to:

(a) *Urge Parties to take full advantage of the SDS Compendium, SDS Toolbox and global SDS Source Base-map available on the UNCCD website as an entry point to obtain information, knowledge and capacity in order to understand the SDS phenomenon and develop solutions to address its sources and impacts;*

(b) *Also urge Parties to strengthen regional and cross-sectoral cooperation to address SDS by linking SDS source mitigation activities with LDN targets and other initiatives to enhance land restoration and drought resilience, recognizing that the impacts of SDS are transboundary and multi-faceted and that the unsustainable management of land and water resources can be an exacerbating factor;*

(c) *Request the secretariat and the GM, within their respective mandates and subject to the availability of resources, to meet the needs of Parties, especially in terms of knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, training, awareness-raising and technical support to develop national and regional strategies and action plans in collaboration with partners;*

(d) *Also request the secretariat, within its mandate and subject to the availability of resources, to continue developing and refining the SDS Toolbox, global SDS Source Base-map and training materials, in consultation with Parties and other stakeholders, ensuring that these tools and knowledge products are useful and effective;*

(e) *Further request the GM, within its mandate and subject to the availability of resources, to integrate anthropogenic SDS source mitigation, as appropriate, into the continued implementation of the LDN Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP) and the LDN transformative projects and programmes (TPPs);*

(f) *Invite the United Nations Coalition on Combating SDS and its members, within their respective mandates and subject to the availability of resources, to continue promoting and coordinating their collaborative response to SDS, ensuring that unified and coherent action is taken at all levels.*

II. Report on the follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: drought

A. Introduction

15. Drought is an urgent global issue. The recent droughts are unprecedented and demonstrate far-reaching impacts on all sectors of society. The drought in Europe in 2022, the worst in the last 500 years,³ and the voracious wildfires in Canada, Australia, Greece, Portugal, Spain and the United States decimated nature reserves and left cities and rural communities in ruin. The Horn of Africa is in the grip of a six-year recurrent drought.

16. Due to human activity and the links to land degradation and climate change, droughts have increased in frequency by up to 29 per cent since 2000, with 55 million people affected every year.⁴ By 2050, droughts may affect an estimated three in four of the world's population.⁵ Within the next 80 years, 129 countries will experience an increase in drought exposure primarily due to climate change, and 38 countries primarily due to the interaction between climate change and population growth.⁶

17. Strategic objective 3 on Drought (2018–2030 Strategic Framework)⁷ aims to “mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems”. The emphasis on proactive approaches to drought management focuses on ‘prevention’ and ‘preparedness’ via ‘green recovery’.

³ https://edo.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/news/GDO-EDODroughtNews202208_Europe.pdf.

⁴ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-05/Drought%20in%20Numbers.pdf>.

⁵ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-05/Drought%20in%20Numbers.pdf>.

⁶ Smirnov et al., 2016, Special Report on Drought 2021.

⁷ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-08/7COP13_0.pdf.

18. This prioritization was backed up in decisions by the COP where it guided the establishment of successive Intergovernmental Working Groups on Drought (decisions 23/COP.15 and 23/COP. 14, respectively) and the adoption of the global Drought Initiative⁸ in 2017 (decision 29/COP.13).

19. The following parts of this section provide an overview of the UNCCD drought agenda in support of Parties with a focus on the activities carried out by the secretariat and the GM. The content is presented in four parts, which represent the key dimensions of addressing drought management under the UNCCD: drought policies, awareness-raising and capacity-building, partnerships and coordination, drought finance, conclusions, and recommendations.

B. Drought policies

20. The three pillars⁹ of integrated drought management underpin the drought policy approach in the UNCCD context: (i) enhancing monitoring and early warning systems; (ii) reducing vulnerability; and (iii) mitigation, preparedness and response measures.

21. The secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with various partners, supported Parties in the process of enhancing national drought preparedness and planning – moving from reactive and crisis-based approaches towards proactive and risk-based National Drought Plans (NDPs) by raising awareness, bolstering the institutional capacities of policymakers and supporting Parties to take initial steps towards the implementation of the national drought plans.

22. More than 60 countries have finalized their NDPs within the framework of the Drought Initiative, with 34 of the completed plans currently available already on the UNCCD website.¹⁰

23. The COP adopted decision 9/COP.14 “inviting the Global Environment Facility (GEF), within its mandate, to support the implementation of relevant aspects of the NDPs and other drought-related activities within the scope of the Convention”.

24. This was followed by decision 23/COP.15 which requests the secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with partners and regional institutions, to continue to assist Parties in preparing and implementing gender responsive NDPs or other policy instruments related to drought and promoting regional collaboration on drought policies and strategies as a cost-effective means to support national action.

25. Subsequently, the secretariat and the GM, with the FAO as executing agency, have been working on the GEF project on an enabling activity for implementing UNCCD COP decisions on drought.

26. The project comprises four components: (i) supporting the Intergovernmental Working Group¹¹ on Drought on ‘effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under UNCCD’; (ii) enhancing the Drought Toolbox; (iii) enabling implementation of the NDPs; and (iv) a drought vulnerability assessment and preparedness for mitigation measures.

27. The project is currently operational to support Parties taking their first steps towards implementation of NDPs according to the risk reduction principles of integrated drought management. Within the framework of this project and in collaboration with the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP), WMO, FAO and the Global Water Partnership (GWP), a series of regional workshops were organized for countries selected based on a

⁸ <https://www.unccd.int/actions/drought-initiative>.

⁹ <https://www.droughtmanagement.info/pillars/>.

¹⁰ <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/drought/drought-planning>.

¹¹ IWG 2019-22. <https://www.unccd.int/convention/governance/intergovernmental-working-group-drought>.

multi-criteria assessment.¹² The aim of these workshops is to strengthen national and institutional frameworks and to build capacity for the implementation of NDPs.

28. The regional workshops covered: (i) the Asia and Europe regions, held in Istanbul, Turkey from 17–19 May 2023; (ii) the Latin America and Caribbean region, held in Bogota, Colombia from 1–3 August 2023; and (iii) the Africa region, held in Lusaka, Zambia from 5–7 September 2023.

29. The overall objective of the regional workshops was to build capacity on the effective planning of drought management and the implementation of drought plans. Furthermore, the workshops facilitate peer-to-peer learning and the development of communities of learning and practice in drought management. The workshops involved the following five sessions:

(a) A global overview of NDPs – planning towards integrated drought management: the session highlighted a global-level overview and the results of a multi-criteria assessment¹³ of the drought plans developed within the framework of the Drought Initiative, including the demonstration of comprehensive tools to support planning and implementation:

(b) Progress on the activities towards the implementation of NDPs – turning policy into actions to improve resilience: the session provided an insight into recent advances to support the implementation of NDPs, including a results framework to monitor implementation:

(c) Institutional set-up and coordination of integrated drought management – reviewing institutional responsibilities and roles to manage drought risk: the session provided best practices and methodologies for enhanced institutional functions and coordination, including a stocktaking of country experiences;

(d) Mainstreaming drought management into national frameworks: the session combined advanced approaches, evidence and best practices to align NDPs with policy frameworks, including a stocktaking of country experiences;

(e) Drought finance – financing for integrated drought management: the session introduced new pathways, approaches, instruments and tools to increase the understanding of drought finance and support the intensification of finance flows to enhance drought resilience at all levels.

30. Decision 23/COP.15 also agreed to the creation of a new Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) during the triennium 2022–2024, tasked with identifying and evaluating all policy and implementation options to effectively manage drought under the Convention, including supporting a shift from reactive to proactive drought management.

31. By the same decision, the secretariat was requested to support and facilitate the effective functioning of the IWG on Drought, subject to the availability of resources.

32. As of June 2023, the secretariat facilitated three multi-day IWG meetings that were instrumental in the creation of numerous working documents, including the IWG interim report as presented in ICCD/CRIC(21)/10.

33. A kick-off event for the IWG round took place in Bonn, Germany (November 29–30 2022) for initial consultations, leading to the group's request to the secretariat to help with the collection and preparation of a comprehensive list of options, as well as the development of a draft evaluation scheme that could be utilized to assess the various policy options/tools.

34. During the second meeting of the group held from March 14–15 in Yerevan, Armenia, all options were discussed, categories shortlisted, and the evaluation scheme further fine-tuned, leading to the third meeting held from June 21–23 in Madrid, Spain, where members of the group identified the options to be presented to the CRIC 21, those to be further developed, and worked on the methodology for its evaluation.

¹² <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-09/cc1276en.pdf>.

¹³ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-09/cc1276en.pdf>.

35. In terms of other activities, a regional project¹⁴ is being planned to support South Asian countries, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The implementing partner is the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center. The project aims to develop a region-wide strategic framework for drought management for the South Asian countries to enhance resilience to drought events, demonstrating a paradigm shift from reactive to proactive approaches. The project will also boost technical and institutional capacities to manage drought through enhanced data sharing on early warning and monitoring systems, drought risk profiling, and feasible drought risk mitigation measures. These will include training sessions to garner coordinated action and data sharing at national and regional levels, using the methodological framework and tools developed under the UNCCD. The training will target the UNCCD national focal points and other relevant stakeholders.

C. Awareness-raising and capacity-building

36. By its decision 23/COP.15 (para. 3), the COP invited the secretariat to support, upon request, the affected country Parties to enhance their capacity to assess the effectiveness of strategic actions addressing drought, subject to the availability of resources.

37. The same COP decision (para. 8) also requested the secretariat to further update and enhance the functionality of the Drought Toolbox, as well as to continue related capacity-building with the purpose of encouraging, supporting and facilitating Communities of Learning and Practice (CLP) to pursue co-learning and collaboration for drought risk reduction and resilience capacity-building issues.

38. To this end, UNCCD activities, through close partnerships with the WMO, FAO, GWP, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska and other relevant partners, have focused on raising awareness, building capacity and sharing knowledge with the aim of ensuring the functionality and use of the Drought Toolbox.¹⁵

39. The capacity-building and awareness-raising activities were organized in three modules concerning: (i) drought monitoring and early warning; (ii) drought vulnerability and risk assessment; and (iii) drought risk mitigation measures, aiming to provide drought stakeholders with easy access to tools, case studies and other resources to support the development and implementation of NDPs.

40. The UNCCD secretariat is facilitating the establishment of CLP within the framework of the UNCCD Drought Toolbox to pursue co-learning and collaboration for drought risk reduction and resilience capacity-building issues (decision 23/COP.15, para. 8).

41. The technological development of the CLP is being implemented with the cooperation of the GWP which is a core partner of the UNCCD and makes a substantial contribution to the UNCCD Drought Initiative. The UNCCD signed a memorandum of understanding on the margins of the United Nations 2023 Water Conference held in New York in March 2023. A pilot version of the CLP for Latin America and the Caribbean is expected to be developed in the coming months. Leading up to COP 16, and with the support of the International Drought Resilience Alliance¹⁶ (IDRA) (see paragraphs 51–55), the CLP will be expanded to cover other regions of the world.

42. Regarding Drought Toolbox capacity-building, online training workshops were conducted together with the FAO, WMO and GWP on the 'Building Forward Better Initiative', which took place during a regional online gathering in Tunis, Tunisia from 12–16 December 2022.

¹⁴ During the past biennium 2020–22, two regional projects were implemented: (i) Southern African Development Communities and (ii) Central Asian countries. See: <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/drimms-vol-3-drought-risk-management-and-mitigation-strategy-2022-2032>.

¹⁵ <https://knowledge.unccd.int/drought-toolbox>.

¹⁶ <https://idralliance.global/>.

43. The second WASAG International Forum¹⁷ took place in Praia, Cabo Verde from 7–10 February 2023 on the theme of ‘Making Agriculture more resilient for climate change: an opportunity for action and collaboration’.

44. As a founding member of WASAG, the UNCCD secretariat leads the ‘Drought Preparedness’ Working Group of WASAG with members including the FAO, WMO, International Water Management Institute, International Union for Conservation of Nature, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, University of Nebraska, GWP and the Global Water Youth Network.

45. On the margins of the second WASAG International Forum, the UNCCD organized a round-table session on the need for coordination, cooperation and communication taking the example of the recently launched IDRA¹⁸ (see section D below). The need to shift from policy to practice was highlighted in line with the High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy (Drought Resilience +10)¹⁹ in order to catalyse political momentum to achieve a transformational change of actions and mindsets towards drought resilience.

D. Partnerships and coordination

46. As described above, UNCCD activities on drought are carried out in close collaboration with partners. The secretariat and the GM are building on existing collaborations and continue to forge new partnerships to support Parties in enhancing drought resilience at all levels.

47. In March 2013, a High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy (HMNDP)²⁰ put the need for proactive approaches to drought management on the global agenda for the first time. Subsequently, national drought policies were successfully established in many countries.

48. Ten years after this landmark event, the impacts of drought continue to increase in most world regions due to climate change and other human-induced drivers, including deforestation, bad agricultural practices such as intense farming, and growing water demand. To take stock of achievements since the HMNDP in 2013 and, even more crucially, to explore options on necessary action over the next decade, key organizations working on global drought issues are planning a ‘Drought Resilience +10’ conference in 2024.²¹

49. In view of this conference, the UNCCD secretariat was requested to foster high-level global awareness of, and commitment to, enhancing drought resilience, which could include the participation in or co-organization of the ten-year follow-up to the 2013 HMNDP (decision 23/COP.15, para. 7).

50. Hence, the UNCCD is co-leading the preparation of a HMNDP +10 – Integrating Practice and Knowledge for Drought Resilience (Drought Resilience +10) – to find answers to the challenge. Partners include the WMO, GWP, IDMP, FAO, International Union for Conservation of Nature, UNESCO, the World Bank Group, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, International Water Management Institute, the University of Nebraska, The Nature Conservancy and other relevant partners.

¹⁷ The Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture’s first International Forum, which took place in Praia, Cabo Verde, from 19–21 March 2019 on the theme of ‘Leaving no one behind’, adopted the Praia Commitments as a firm first step towards decisive action.

See: <https://www.fao.org/wasag/en/>.

¹⁸ <https://idralliance.global/>.

¹⁹ <https://www.droughtmanagement.info/hmndp10/>.

²⁰ The High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy in 2013 was a watershed moment for drought management and helped to shift the focus from crisis management to proactive drought management in many countries around the world. For more information, visit:

<https://community.wmo.int/en/meetings/high-level-meeting-national-drought-policy-hmndp>.

²¹ For more info on the High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy +10, visit:

<https://www.droughtmanagement.info/hmndp10/>.

51. Eight workstreams have been identified to provide direction for the next decade of integrated drought management. The work streams include: (i) drought resilience and global mechanisms; (ii) drought risk governance for regional, national and local challenges; (iii) drought impact monitoring, assessment, and forecasting; (iv) the need to turn drought policies into action; (v) ecosystems and drought; (vi) social inclusion, climate justice and drought; (vii) drought risk finance; and (viii) public-private-civil society partnerships for integrated drought risk management.

52. Facilitated by the UNCCD, advanced negotiations between the Government of Spain and the WMO are underway on the possibility of Spain hosting the conference in the first half of 2024. Spain as a possible host of 'Drought Resilience +10' will ensure maximum overlap between IDRA and 'Drought Resilience +10'.

53. In recognition of the urgent need to take more coordinated, collaborative and effective global action that builds drought resilience at the global, regional, national and local levels, the Governments of Spain and Senegal launched IDRA during a high-level event at COP 27 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt in November 2022.

54. IDRA strives to: (i) catalyse political momentum to achieve a transformational change in the way the impact of drought is managed, which is essential to reduce this existential threat to many parts of the world and ensure the transformation of actions and mindsets towards drought resilience; (ii) establish a common framework for a global platform to make drought resilience a priority in multilateral and national development and cooperation policies; (iii) promote the full engagement of stakeholders, including the private sector, to increase drought resilience; and (iv) boost finance and resource mobilization for drought resilience at different levels.

55. IDRA is already seeking to enhance collaboration with other platforms, including the initiative launched by the United Nations Secretary-General and the WMO to achieve universal coverage of early warning systems and regional initiatives to reap the maximum benefits of working together on drought resilience.

56. The UNCCD secretariat played a convening role in the setup and launch and continues to support the operationalization of IDRA.²²

57. The UNCCD also signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Drought Mitigation Center of the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, USA with the aim of (i) enhancing scientific evidence and knowledge product(s) on the multi-dimensional impacts of drought with multiple consequences for communities, including health, food, human security, peace and security ecosystems, pastoralism, forestry, wetlands etc.; (ii) developing a drought impact collection tool by tracking drought impacts to help decision-makers determine where to focus efforts in order to reduce vulnerability to the next drought.

58. This includes exploring global expansion (through an initial regional prototype) of the Drought Impact Reporter/Condition Monitoring and Observation Reports (citizen-, science- and media-based). The collaboration with the University of Nebraska will explore ideas for upgrading the Drought Toolbox, by populating the Toolbox with more/recent data and best practices and recommend methods for integrated drought risk management that can be developed in a manner that is sensitive to drought-smart land management (D-SLM)²³ in local and regional contexts. Proactive D-SLM can buffer ecosystems and communities against drought in order to mitigate temporary deficiencies in available water and prevent these from escalating into humanitarian or ecological disasters.

59. In addition, the secretariat collaborated with United Nations agencies and other organizations, institutions and country Parties in contributing to publications and co-organizing meetings and workshops including, inter alia, sessions focusing on drought resilience in August 2023 at Stockholm World Water Week and the Water for Food' Global Conference at the University of Nebraska in May 2023. The secretariat also participated in

²² More information about the International Drought Resilience Alliance and Leaders' Declaration, and the full list of supporting countries and organizations is available here: <https://idralliance.global>.

²³ <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/drought/drought-smart-land>.

open consultations on the science-based Global Water Assessment organized by UNESCO in Paris in December 2022 in order to evaluate the current water assessment mechanism and to discuss a new game-changing idea of innovative assessment mechanism (including at national and regional levels) to enable solution-oriented, sustainable and inclusive water management and governance.²⁴

60. The secretariat continues to serve in the steering committee of the WMO/GWP-led IDMP,²⁵ benefitting from partnerships within the wider network of drought players and processes, with the aim of supporting Parties in the implementation of national drought plans, enrich the functionality of the Drought Toolbox and raise awareness about addressing drought under the UNCCD.

61. The UNCCD is a permanent member of the United Nations Water interagency mechanism which maximizes system-wide coordinated action and coherence on the cross-cutting nature of water, with the aim of informing policy processes on the link between land and water, supporting the identification of emerging issues and developing effective, collaborative responses on disaster risk reduction, climate change and the overarching 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The secretariat is a member of the Expert Group on Water and Climate Change and the Expert Group on Water Scarcity led by the WMO and FAO, respectively.

E. Drought finance

62. Decision 23/COP.15 (para. 12) requests the secretariat and the GM to provide additional technical knowledge and support for the development of national capacities, and to examine and identify at global level the financing needs and opportunities for drought risk reduction and resilience-building in relation to pre-existing activities, including partnerships with the private sector.

F. Conclusions and recommendations

63. The need is growing for targeted policies, effective collaboration and increased investments on drought preparedness, response and recovery measures with a particular focus on developing countries that have been hit by drought in recent years. Thus, Parties at CRIC 21 may wish to consider the proposals contained in this document with a view to initiating early consultations on draft decisions to be forwarded to COP 16.

64. The Conference of the Parties may wish to:

(a) *Encourage* Parties to prioritize drought resilience by implementing national drought policies that enhance integrated approaches, and by recognizing its interlinkages with climate change adaptation, sustainable development, and disaster risk reduction approaches;

(b) *Urge* Parties to support the development of the communities of learning and practice within the framework of the Drought Toolbox by providing feedback on the usefulness and functionality of the CLP and by submitting to the secretariat best practices and evidence on drought management from experiences on the ground;

(c) *Request* the secretariat, the GM and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies, including the Science-Policy Interface, to support Parties in the further implementation of their NDPs by building capacities on effective planning of drought management and the implementation of drought plans, including the integration of plans with LDN and national action programmes;

²⁴ <https://udallcenter.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/2023-04/Game%20Changer%20Summary%20Paper.pdf>.

²⁵ <http://www.droughtmanagement.info/>.

(d) *Also request* the GM to continue in its endeavour to explore potential financing instruments for addressing drought, including insurance products and bonds, and to make available related information and guidance to facilitate the access of Parties to these instruments;

(e) *Further request* the secretariat to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and promote capacity development and exchange of knowledge networks through the ongoing development of the CLP in drought management, hands-on training sessions and online webinars, evidence and best practices, including a stocktaking of country experiences;

(f) *Request* the secretariat to continue facilitating regional approaches to drought management and cooperation on data sharing, including early warning and monitoring systems, vulnerability and impact mapping and evidence on drought risk and mitigation measures in the countries, by bringing together the drought monitoring information from various sources in the countries;

(g) *Also request* the secretariat and the GM to continue to support the preparations for the HMNDP (Drought Resilience +10) conference in 2024;

(h) *Encourage* development partners and financing institutions, in particular the GEF, to support the implementation of NDPs;

(i) *Also encourage* country Parties that have developed NDPs to prioritize the implementation of the identified actions.

III. Report on the follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: land tenure

A. Introduction

65. Decision 27/COP.15 encourages Parties to continue integrating secure land tenure, in line with the principles of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) and the recommendations outlined in decision 26/COP.14, in the implementation of activities to combat desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) and achieve LDN. The same decision acknowledges that further work needs to be carried out, whether within policy or programming efforts, to integrate more secure land tenure into the implementation of the Convention, such as LDN target setting programme and LDN TPPs.

B. Implementation activities

1. Technical guide available in all United Nations languages

66. Subsequent to its launch at COP 15, the *Technical Guide on the Integration of the VGGT into the implementation of the UNCCD and LDN* is now available for download in all six United Nations languages.²⁶ Parties and other stakeholders are encouraged to refer to the technical guide and undertake appropriate measures outlined in its pathways to recognize, document and enforce legitimate land tenure rights in the context of national plans, legal frameworks, strategies and action programmes to enhance the implementation of the Convention.

2. Awareness-raising

67. Parties recognize the importance of raising awareness around responsible and inclusive land governance for combating DLDD, building on the key elements in the awareness-raising options paper, 'Land rights matter for people and the planet', launched at

²⁶ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/technical-guide-integration-voluntary-guidelines-responsible-governance>.

COP 15. The secretariat was requested to implement awareness-raising actions and engage with Parties, civil society organizations, other United Nations organizations and other key partners, where appropriate, to ensure the widest reach among all stakeholders from global to local level.

68. In February 2023, the UNCCD, FAO and other partners jointly organized an initial series of regional webinars exclusively for FAO staff and Rio convention national focal points to share their experiences and describe case examples that demonstrate specific regional challenges as well as potential synergies with other sustainable development priorities to help make secure tenure both an effective means and desirable outcome of LDN and land restoration initiatives at national and project scales.

69. In May 2023, the UNCCD, FAO and other partners jointly organized a second series of regional webinars for all stakeholders, focusing specifically on (i) why individual tenure and communal land rights should be integrated into the implementation of activities that aim to combat land degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss; and (ii) how countries can request support to tackle specific challenges linked to land and ecosystem degradation by integrating secure land tenure through an application process for national consultations. A total of 138 countries were represented during these webinars with close to 900 participants from civil society organizations/non-governmental organizations (39%), United Nations agencies (23%), national public authorities (20%), academia/research (9%) and partners and donors (8%). The video recording and presentations for these series of webinars are available for download on the UNCCD website.²⁷

3. Support for national consultations on land tenure

70. Parties are encouraged to host inclusive and participatory national-level dialogues on the implementation of decision 26/COP.14 while developed country Parties, other Parties in a position to do so, relevant United Nations entities, international financial organizations and private sector institutions are invited to consider providing financial and technical support to design and implement land administration systems to improve the responsible governance of tenure.

71. A joint UNCCD–FAO call (open from 22 May to 15 July 2023) invites requests from Parties to support national consultations to, inter alia, implement a land tenure strategy and action plan, develop specific guidance and exchange lessons learned. All submissions will be reviewed by the UNCCD, FAO and their technical partner organizations. Those countries selected to receive support are expected to be notified by September 2023, with national consultations expected to take place starting in late 2023. Subject to the availability of resources, support for national consultation on land tenure will be jointly defined with the selected country.²⁸

72. The GM recently launched the second phase of the LDN TSP (LDN TSP 2.0) which, among other elements, will assist participating countries in mainstreaming LDN into (sub)national integrated land-use planning frameworks and improve the related enabling environment. In this context, LDN TSP 2.0 participating countries may wish to build on the momentum of LDN TSP 2.0 country-level activities to explore potential synergies and complementarity with their land-tenure related work. More details are presented in document ICCD/CRIC(21)/8.

73. To integrate land tenure into projects and programmes, the GM is developing a tenure checklist to give specific guidance to donors and project developers on how to address tenure in the development of TPPs. The checklist is under development in collaboration with relevant experts and builds on the technical guide on integrating the VGGT into LDN. The checklist will be tested in the development of TPPs at country and local levels prior to its finalization and launch at COP 16.

²⁷ <https://www.unccd.int/events/webinar/unccd-fao-regional-land-tenure-webinars-all-stakeholders>.

²⁸ <https://www.unccd.int/news-stories/notifications/call-requests-support-national-multi-stakeholder-consultations-land>.

4. Financing opportunities to strengthen land governance

74. Parties requested the secretariat and the GM to identify financing opportunities to strengthen land governance and build a business case for responsible and sustainable public and private investments in land tenure within the context of activities to combat DLDD, particularly taking into consideration the perspectives of Indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth.

75. In this regard, the GM has developed a business case which provides a value proposition on why to invest in enhancing tenure security as part of the TPPs. The business case sheds light on the multiple benefits derived from more secure tenure, as well as the ways that insecure tenure can act as a bottleneck to achieving LDN targets and other land restoration commitments. The business case is tailored to target audiences from the public and private sectors, building on case studies, good practices and evidence from the ground.

76. Strengthening land governance at national and local levels cannot be achieved without the relevant technical and financial support, as well as the inclusive consultation of all actors affected. The GM has mapped out financing institutions and mechanisms with specific gender mainstreaming requirements and tenure-related priorities and/or safeguards to be considered in the project development phase. Further financing opportunities will be explored through public and private sources, utilizing key messages from the business case for responsible and sustainable public and private investments and advocating for more investments in this regard.

C. Conclusions and recommendations

77. **Parties at CRIC 21 may wish to consider the proposals contained in this document with a view to initiating early consultations on draft decisions to be forwarded to COP 16.**

78. **The Conference of the Parties may wish to:**

(a) Urge Parties to invest in activities and initiatives that strengthen land governance in the context of addressing DLDD;

(b) Also urge Parties to follow the VGGT principles, taking into account the principles of implementation, in the implementation of activities to combat DLDD and achieve LDN;

(c) Further urge Parties to review and, where appropriate, adopt national land governance legislation and procedures, including effective, timely and affordable access to justice, and transparent dispute and conflict resolution mechanisms, which recognize legitimate tenure rights, including customary rights, in order to support sustainable land management (SLM) and restoration;

(d) Urge Parties to promote responsible and sustainable private and public investments in combating DLDD, including restoration programmes that adhere to environmental and social safeguards in line with the VGGT;

(e) Request the GM to provide the technical and financial support needed to integrate more secure land tenure into LDN projects and programmes;

(f) Also request the GM to explore innovative solutions to finance the strengthening of land governance, including through public and private sectors.

IV. Report on the follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: gender

A. Introduction

79. In decision 24/COP.15, Parties reaffirmed that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, particularly persons with disabilities and people that are poor or live in

vulnerable situations, will make an important contribution to the effective implementation of the Convention, including the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the UNCCD, 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 LDN.

80. Parties also recognize that women play an essential role in collectively managing land more sustainably, reducing biodiversity loss, and mitigating and adapting to the effects of drought, and 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. Parties' strong commitment to the effective implementation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) reinforces the importance of creating an enabling environment, especially at the national level, to make the implementation of the Convention gender-responsive and transformative.

B. Implementation activities

1. National reporting

81. The UNCCD GAP recommends using national reports to document the efforts made to address gender equality and women's empowerment in the implementation of the UNCCD. Decision 24/COP.15 requests the secretariat to synthesize and analyse information on gender matters included in national reports submitted by Parties as part of the reporting process for consideration at CRIC 21. This decision also encourages Parties to submit, on a voluntary basis, reports on the implementation of key national-level activities contained in the GAP roadmap and requests the secretariat to compile such information on a regular basis, including monitoring the level of gender parity across the Convention, and report its findings.

82. The national reporting process monitors the progress made as regards the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework for implementing the Convention, adopted at COP 13 (decision 7/COP.13). As regards gender-related issues, national reporting templates now include a gender-specific indicator for Strategic objective 2, measuring trends in population exposure to land degradation, disaggregated by sex. Another set of gender-related questions are incorporated into the implementation framework, providing Parties with the space to report on matters relevant to the gender-responsive implementation of the Convention and the GAP, in terms of i) financial and non-financial resources; ii) policy and planning; and iii) actions on the ground.

83. Of the 117 national reports received, 107 countries submitted information on the implementation framework, with 85 countries reporting on their approaches and/or experiences related to gender issues.

84. Among the topics related to *financial and non-financial resources*, countries underlined the importance for women to gain access to and benefit from financial and non-financial resources.

85. Countries with successful strategies and approaches emphasized the need for specific funding streams for women accompanying programmes and projects related to land management, restoration, climate change, natural resource management and/or rural development.

86. Providing women with training and education to facilitate their access to financial resources, establishing women-friendly quotas, and incentivizing their participation in decision-making processes were also mentioned as promising strategies. It has been observed, for example, that having a quota of 40 per cent women and taking a gender-responsive approach throughout the project leads to an increase in female participation and more equitable distribution of benefits.

87. A commitment to gender mainstreaming in national policies and legislation was also mentioned, as well as the development of technologies and systems that promote equality and equity for marginalized groups such as women and youth to facilitate access to financial means, as well as reducing discrimination and gender gaps.

88. In relation to *policy and planning*, many Parties reaffirmed that (i) protecting and promoting women's land rights; (ii) enhancing women's access to productive resources such as land and natural and financial resources; (iii) engaging women in decision-making; and (iv) capacity-building are indispensable cornerstones for the effective implementation of the UNCCD.

89. In total, 15 countries reported that women's land rights are protected in national legislation. It was also found that policies that promote equal access to land and natural resources and equal land rights for women resulted in an increase in productivity and income for women farmers, improving their economic standing and reducing poverty. Land management has also become more sustainable because of the increased involvement of women.

90. One of the most significant challenges to mainstreaming gender was a lack of gender experts and the significant amount of time it takes to achieve social transformation. Institutional and technical capacities are considered essential to ensure that gender concerns are integrated into DLDD policies and programmes.

91. It is especially important to ensure that gender mainstreaming goes beyond a simple head-count approach. In this respect, many countries have indicated that systematic gender-responsive programming is more promising and has shown positive results in terms of increasing and improving the income, leadership, self-esteem and livelihoods of women.

92. Many countries have shared their experiences on how to accomplish this. Some key approaches in this regard are:

(a) Integrating women's interests and needs into the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects from the very beginning, including equal resource allocation and benefit sharing;

(b) Working at the intersections of climate change, DLDD and gender to address gender equality in a more holistic manner;

(c) Establishing gender-responsive land governance systems to address gender-based inequalities in land access and resource control;

(d) Developing gender statistics and sex-disaggregated databases to aid planning, programming and policy formulation in a gender-responsive fashion;

(e) Establishing women's user groups or committees, community mobilization programmes and public consultations, combined with capacity-building, training and inclusive governance structures, proved to be an effective way to increase women's participation in land and natural resource management.

93. With regard to the *actions on the ground* and effective strategies for engaging women and youth in SLM and land restoration activities, many countries highlighted the following key approaches which have enabled them to engage women and youth on the ground:

(a) Providing access to resources: many countries have implemented policies and initiatives to provide women and youth with access to resources, such as land, credit, and training to enable them to participate fully in SLM activities. The establishment of specific quotas was once again mentioned as a valuable tool to engage women and youth in SLM activities;

(b) Leading capacity-building programmes aimed at women and youth is another strategy to engage the latter in SLM and land restoration. Training programmes, for example, covered agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and livestock management, as well as leadership and entrepreneurship skills;

(c) Encouraging participation in decision-making processes at the community and national levels was found to lead to greater involvement by women and youth. Approaches used in this respect included community mobilization programmes, community-based SLM groups, public consultation and inclusive governance structures;

(d) Providing financial incentives, such as payment for ecosystem services, subsidies, community-based revolving funds and market linkages, was found to encourage women and youth to participate in SLM activities and help to sustain their engagement.

94. A number of countries were also able to provide examples of special measures to engage women and youth. Examples included, inter alia, promoting wage parity with men, providing crèches and work-side sheds for children, and providing daycare services and special income-generating programmes aimed at women and youth, such as soap making, vegetable farming, palm oil extraction, shea butter production, kofi oil extraction, palm wine production, and raffia palm product manufacturing. The creation of village savings schemes and credit groups to provide alternative livelihoods to village residents was also reported.

2. Gender Caucus

95. In response to the request contained in decision 24/COP.15, the secretariat is facilitating the convening of the Gender Caucus at CRIC 21 and COP 16 with a view to guiding and supporting Parties to enhance the implementation of the GAP and its roadmap.

3. Strategy Workshop on Women's Land Rights and the Rio Conventions

96. The United Nations General Assembly resolution 76/206 invites 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. Furthermore, decision 24/COP.15 requests the secretariat to continue collaborating and coordinating with relevant international organizations, including the other Rio conventions, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and other United Nations entities to support the implementation of the GAP and its roadmap, especially in the areas of policy, advocacy and research.

97. In response to this request, the secretariat, along with TMG Research and Robert Bosch Stiftung, organized a *Strategy Workshop on Women's Land Rights and the Rio Conventions* which was held in Berlin, Germany from 3–5 July 2023. The objectives of the workshop were to (i) bring together key actors and institutions working to promote and strengthen women's land rights and access to natural resources; (ii) develop a better understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and capacity needs in developing countries; (iii) identify potential synergies in work programmes to foster new partnerships and greater cooperation for enhanced impact on the ground; and (iv) discuss approaches to improve (sub-)national harmonization, alignment and coordination on gender and land commitments made under the Rio conventions and other processes.

4. Desertification and Drought Day 2023

98. Declared by the General Assembly in 1995, the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed every year on 17 June to promote public awareness of international efforts to combat DLDD. The theme of this year's Desertification and Drought Day was 'Her Land, Her Rights' as a call to all stakeholders to advance women's land rights. The global observance event was held at the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 16 June 2023, and jointly organized by the UNCCD with UN Women, the FAO, United Nations Human Rights Office and United Nations Development Programme.

99. Among the notable speakers were the United Nations Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General, the President of the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Prime Ministers of Iceland and Namibia, the Vice-President of the Government of Spain, senior officials from Brazil and the United States, the President of COP 15 of the UNCCD, and the Executive Secretary of the Convention. They were joined by Finland's first female President and UNCCD Land Ambassador Tarja Halonen, UNCCD Goodwill Ambassadors, the musicians Baaba Maal, Inna Modja and Ricky Kej, as well as Indigenous and youth activists from Canada, Chad and Lesotho.

100. Other commemorative events took place across the world, with events in 40 countries. Global media outreach around Desertification and Drought Day 2023 resulted in over 1,000 print and online articles, while over 300 million people were reached through social media. The Day was a culmination of the UNCCD's year-long #HerLand campaign to promote

successful examples of women and girls' contributions to SLM, and mobilize support to advance land rights for women and girls around the world.

C. Conclusions and recommendations

101. Parties at CRIC 21 may wish to consider the proposals contained in this document with a view to initiating early consultations on draft decisions to be forwarded to COP 16.

102. The Conference of the Parties may wish to:

(a) *Urge* Parties to work towards the recognition of equal use and ownership rights of land for women and the enhancement of women's equal access to land and land tenure security, as well as the promotion of gender-sensitive measures to combat DLDD and achieve LDN, taking into account the national context;

(b) *Also urge* Parties to submit, on a voluntary basis, reports on the implementation of key national-level activities contained in the GAP roadmap;

(c) *Request* the secretariat to compile such information on a regular basis, including monitoring the level of gender parity across the Convention, and produce a report on its findings;

(d) *Encourage* the secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to continue organizing the Gender Caucus and other awareness-raising activities for the promotion of gender-responsive land restoration policies and programmes worldwide.
