



Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention**Report of the twenty-first session of the Committee for the
Review of the Implementation of the Convention, held in
Samarkand, Uzbekistan, from 13 to 17 November 2023****Contents**

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I. Opening of the session

A. Opening statements

1. On 13 November 2023, the Chair of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), Ms. Biljana Kilibarda (Montenegro), opened the twenty-first session of the Committee and made a statement.
2. The Chairperson of the Senate of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Ms. Tanzila Narbaeva, delivered a statement on behalf of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev.
3. The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, delivered a message on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres.
4. The Minister of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change of the Republic of Uzbekistan, His Excellency Mr. Aziz Abdukhakimov, made a statement on behalf of the host country of the twenty-first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 21).
5. A further statement was also made by the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD.

B. General statements

6. Statements were also made by the representatives of Morocco (on behalf of the African Group), Pakistan (on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group), Ecuador (on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries), Hungary (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for the Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV)) and Armenia (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)).
7. A statement was made by a representative of the European Union.
8. A further statement was made by the representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.
9. A statement was also made by the representative of the Dhruvotara Youth Development Foundation from Bangladesh on behalf of civil society organizations (CSOs).

C. Meetings of the Regional Implementation Annexes

10. Meetings of the Regional Implementation Annexes in preparation for CRIC 21 were held on 12 November 2023.

II. Procedural matters

A. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

11. At its first meeting, on 13 November 2023, the Committee adopted the provisional agenda as contained in document ICCD/CRIC(21)/1. The agenda reads as follows:
 1. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Adoption of the agenda and schedule of work;
 - (b) Appointment of the Rapporteur of the Committee.
 2. Assessment of implementation: strategic objectives 1 to 4.
 3. Financial flows: strategic objective 5.

4. Implementation of voluntary land degradation neutrality targets and related implementation efforts.
5. Progress report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD.
6. Improving the procedures for communication as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties.
7. Policy frameworks and thematic topics: sand and dust storms, drought, land tenure and gender.
8. Adoption of the report of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention to the Conference of the Parties.

12. Also at the first meeting, the Committee approved the schedule of work for the session, as contained in the annex to document ICCD/CRIC(21)/1.

B. Appointment of a Rapporteur of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

13. At the first meeting, on 13 November 2023, the Committee appointed Ms. Philippine Dutailly (France) as Rapporteur of its twenty-first and twenty-second sessions.

C. Informal consultations

14. Informal consultations took place regularly during the session under the guidance of the Chair and the Rapporteur of the Committee.

D. Attendance

15. The representatives of the following 110 Parties to the UNCCD attended the twenty-first session of the Committee:

Algeria	Eswatini	Kuwait
Argentina	Ethiopia	Kyrgyzstan
Armenia	European Union	Lebanon
Australia	Fiji	Lesotho
Austria	France	Liberia
Azerbaijan	Gabon	Luxembourg
Bangladesh	Gambia	Madagascar
Belgium	Georgia	Malaysia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Germany	Mauritius
Botswana	Ghana	Mexico
Brazil	Grenada	Mongolia
Burkina Faso	Guatemala	Montenegro
Cameroon	Guinea	Morocco
Chad	Guyana	Namibia
China	Haiti	Nepal
Congo	Hungary	Nicaragua
Cook Islands	India	Nigeria
Cuba	Indonesia	Oman
Czechia	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Pakistan
Côte d'Ivoire	Iraq	Panama
Democratic Republic of Congo	Italy	Papua New Guinea
Ecuador	Japan	Peru
El Salvador	Jordan	Republic of Korea
Equatorial Guinea	Kazakhstan	Republic of Moldova
	Kenya	Russian Federation

Saint Kitts and Nevis	Suriname	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Saint Lucia	Switzerland	
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Syrian Arab Republic	
Samoa	Tajikistan	United Republic of Tanzania
Sao Tome and Principe	Thailand	United States of America
Saudi Arabia	Timor-Leste	Uruguay
Slovakia	Togo	Uzbekistan
Somalia	Trinidad and Tobago	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
South Africa	Tunisia	Viet Nam
South Sudan	Turkmenistan	Zambia
Spain	Türkiye	Zimbabwe
Sri Lanka	Uganda	
Sudan	Ukraine	
	United Arab Emirates	

16. The following United Nations organizations, offices and specialized agencies were also represented:

Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals	United Nations Development Programme
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	United Nations Environment Programme
Global Environment Facility	United Nations Information Centres
Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women	United Nations Secretariat
	World Bank
	World Meteorological Organization

17. The session was also attended by 11 intergovernmental organizations and 26 CSOs, including non-governmental organizations.

E. Documentation

18. The documentation submitted for the consideration of the Committee is listed in the annex to this report.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

19. The conclusions and recommendations included in this report are a summary compilation of the ideas, suggestions and proposals offered by participants in the twenty-first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention to further the implementation of the Convention and the UNCCD 2018 – 2030 Strategic Framework. This report lists potential action that could be undertaken by Parties and other stakeholders, including the institutions and subsidiary bodies of the Convention, after consideration and appropriate decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties, in conformity with the provisions of the Convention.

A. Assessment of implementation: strategic objectives 1 to 4

1. Strategic objective 1

For continued work towards supporting efforts to achieve land degradation neutrality

20. Some Parties raised a number of issues to address, including to:

(a) Halt the conversion of natural areas and stop or at least significantly reduce land take and soil sealing to ensure the rapid expansion observed in artificial surfaces does not come at the expense of natural vegetated lands and fertile soil in future;

(b) Preserve existing tree-covered areas, upscale efforts to halt deforestation, and expand initiatives which promote (i) increased tree cover to reverse the reported declining trends; and (ii) the conservation of natural grasslands;

(c) Step up their efforts to firstly avoid, guided by analyses of return on investment, and then reduce and reverse land degradation to meet the Sustainable Development Goal target of ensuring a land degradation neutral world by 2030, within the scope of the Convention;

(d) Enhance the national relevance of the land degradation assessment by maximizing the use of national and regional data where possible and including additional indicators, such as erosion, beyond the three land-based progress indicators to better reflect national and subnational conditions.

21. Civil society organizations recommended (i) including agroecological approaches for achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets; and (ii) drawing on the principles and elements of agroecology as outlined by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to guide the transition to sustainable food and agricultural systems.

For continued work towards improved land-based progress indicator data and methods

22. Some Parties requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, within their respective mandates and subject to the availability of financial resources, and in collaboration with data providers, technical partners and the Earth observation community, including the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality Flagship initiative, to:

(a) Enhance the functionality in the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) and associated data analytics tools to facilitate the use of subnational land cover transition matrices to increase the accuracy of land cover degradation reporting and accompany any such developments with capacity-building;

(b) Enhance the PRAIS reporting forms with dedicated fields to collect information on the drivers of land degradation and on actions to achieve LDN for the next reporting round;

(c) Ensure default data are accurate, complete, scientifically reviewed, and documented, and, where feasible, are based on continuously available high-resolution interoperable data products for land surface, including for small island developing States;

(d) Address the data and methodological shortcomings which lead to erroneous estimates of the extent of degraded land in hyperarid areas by exploring the use of additional indicators while availing of innovation in artificial intelligence-based methods, recognizing that efforts are ongoing to find potential solutions;

(e) Review the state-of-the-art in methodologies for estimating the three land-based progress indicators with the aim of identifying and incorporating advancements while ensuring that future methodologies are feasible, simple to understand and within the capacities of Parties;

(f) Advance in the development of indicators to assess trends in the recovery of degraded land and provide guidance to Parties prior to the next reporting process on additional indicators that could be used to complement the three land-based progress indicators, taking into account default data availability and ongoing initiatives at the global, regional and national level, as well as indicators for erosion and those that are currently being developed in the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;

(g) Continue providing capacity development support to Parties, including through (i) subregional webinars; and (ii) undertaking quantitative assessments and participatory mapping of their degraded lands, including the identification of false positive and false negative processes.

For continued work towards reporting of spatial data

23. Some Parties emphasized the importance of encouraging Parties that have already set voluntary LDN targets to:

(a) Raise their level of ambition with regard to having new and more developed targets;

(b) Report their targets and associated interventions aimed at avoiding, reducing and reversing land degradation, while respecting the LDN hierarchy, in PRAIS4 to enable a periodic stocktake of progress towards achieving LDN.

24. Some Parties highlighted the need to mobilize additional technical and financial support for data collection, in particular for soil organic carbon inventories, and for the preparation of national reports.

25. Some Parties requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, within their respective mandates and subject to the availability of financial resources, and in collaboration with relevant financial and technical partners in position to do so, to:

(a) Provide capacity development support to Parties for the spatial mapping of voluntary targets and associated interventions through participatory processes involving all relevant national stakeholders;

(b) Assess the feasibility of more frequent voluntary submission (e.g. every two years) of spatial information on voluntary targets through PRAIS to ensure the reporting platform contains up-to-date information and reflects progress made by Parties in reviewing and refining their LDN voluntary targets under the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme 2.0;

(c) Ensure that key findings from the national reporting process are accurately communicated, including in press releases and media messages.

2. Strategic objective 2

For supporting efforts towards improving the living conditions of affected populations

26. Some Parties cautioned that efforts to improve the living conditions of affected populations are not yet sufficient. Overexploitation of resources and land use intensification continue to negatively impact ecosystem health and the well-being of communities.

27. Some Parties identified that the grave consequences of worsening land degradation and deteriorating living conditions of affected populations are leading to, among others, food insecurity, forced migration and conflict.

28. Some Parties expressed that responsible and gender-responsive land governance is essential for achieving social equality, reducing poverty and decreasing the exposure of their populations to land degradation. Securing the legitimate land tenure rights of all land users and for different land tenure types, particularly of vulnerable and marginalized groups, is also imperative, as well as their meaningful participation in decision-making.

For continued work towards improved reporting procedures and systems

29. Some Parties highlighted the importance of improving information flows in order to enhance consistency with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) reporting process, reduce the reporting burden and avoid duplication of data validation efforts for the 'proportion of the population below the international poverty line' and 'proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services'. Avoiding duplication of data validation efforts can be achieved by ensuring that data on these indicators already validated by national statistics offices through the SDG process are synchronized with the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) for national reporting without the need for additional verification by Parties.

30. Some Parties requested the secretariat to ensure there is sufficient flexibility in reporting forms such that due consideration is given to the availability of national data and periodicity of national censuses.

31. Some Parties requested the secretariat to provide further guidance and capacity development support for reporting on strategic objective 2 (SO 2) indicators.

For continued work towards improved understanding of socioeconomic impacts of land degradation and drought

32. Some Parties reiterated that it is critical to continue improving the SO 2 indicators to better understand land degradation impacts on the population, including by considering relevant indicators that are being used by the other Rio conventions, such as those that are currently being developed in the context of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

33. Some Parties supported the integration of relevant SDG indicators in the reporting process to assess progress made towards the implementation of responsible land tenure and gender equality.

34. As the causal relationship between poverty/income inequality and land degradation cannot be demonstrated unequivocally, some Parties suggested the use of complimentary indicators of structural poverty and/or process indicators that can show accomplishments since the adoption of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. Qualitative analysis and voluntary reports from key stakeholders could also improve the reporting methodology.

35. Some Parties were in favour of fully adopting the indicator ‘Trends in the proportion of population exposed to land degradation disaggregated by sex’ as it represents a good preliminary approach to estimate population exposed to land degradation, the tools and data are readily available and it does not place substantial additional reporting burden on affected Parties. Several Parties requested the exploration of socioeconomic factors that could be integrated in the calculation of this indicator in order to show actual differences between genders.

36. Other Parties were against the adoption of any additional indicators as mandatory for reporting unless a theory of change could demonstrate how the reporting on the indicator will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Convention. Concerns expressed in relation to these additional indicators were their complexity, the potential diversion of funds and resources away from action on the ground and the fact that these indicators may not be clearly related to the impacts of these actions.

37. Some Parties drew attention to the potential of refining the indicator ‘Trends in the proportion of the population exposed to land degradation disaggregated by sex’ by further disaggregating it by age and geographic location (urban/rural and/or by land cover type), that may consider socioeconomic factors that disproportionately expose different population groups to land degradation in the methodology. Some Parties also suggested assessing the added value and the additional resources this would require.

3. Strategic objective 3

For continued work towards mitigating, adapting to and managing the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems

38. All Parties underlined that drought is not limited to dryland areas. Drought is in fact a global challenge which requires global action, solidarity and mutual assistance.

39. Furthermore, some Parties stressed that the intensity, frequency and duration of droughts is increasing due to climate change, and their impacts are further exacerbated by regional climate phenomena such as El Niño and La Niña. Drought and land degradation are increasingly converging, leading, among others, to food insecurity, social upheaval, forced migration, and conflict.

40. Several Parties highlighted the importance of monitoring and reporting on drought as they are indispensable tools for informing and bringing forward effective planning and implementation of action to mitigate, adapt to, and better manage the effects of drought, thereby enhancing resilience of vulnerable populations as well as ecosystems and socioeconomic systems.

41. Some Parties emphasized the importance of: (i) setting genuine targets and developing proactive and integrated national drought policies and plans for integrated risk management in a participatory manner; (ii) fostering a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach; and (iii) recognizing the link with climate change, sustainable development and disaster risk reduction approaches.

42. Some Parties advocated for further study of the exacerbating effects of drought on land degradation trends and socioeconomic aspects, such as gender equality and land abandonment.

For continued work towards improved drought indicator data, methods and tools

43. Some Parties noted challenges and drawbacks in the reporting on the strategic objective 3 (SO 3) indicators, such as the use of different methodologies and sources of information resulting in limitations in data comparability; the generally low reporting rate; and/or the need to improve default data sets and national and regional data and methodologies to better understand global and regional trends.

44. Some Parties encouraged the secretariat, with the support of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI), to improve the assessment, data gathering and reporting methodologies for the SO 3 indicators by:

(a) Considering non-meteorological drought types in the assessment of drought hazards as well as varying the precipitation accumulation period for the Standardized Precipitation Index to take into consideration regional and local climate variability as well as climate scenarios;

(b) Improving the disaggregation by sex of the indicator ‘Trends in the proportion of the population exposed to drought’, taking into account socioeconomic factors that could show differences in how women and men are affected by drought;

(c) Refining the indicator ‘Trends in the proportion of the population exposed to drought’ by further disaggregating it by age and geographic location (urban/rural and/or by land cover type), that may consider socioeconomic factors that disproportionately expose different population groups to drought in the methodology. Some Parties also suggested assessing the added value and the additional resources this would require;

(d) Including environmental and drought resilience indicators to complement the information provided by the Drought Vulnerability Index using the SPI report “Multiscale approaches for the assessment and monitoring of social and ecological resilience to drought” as a guide;

(e) Improving the methodology for reporting on drought vulnerability to overcome the challenges related to lack of comparability between default and national data and the fact that vulnerability components are diverse and difficult to measure;

(f) Exploring options to develop a tool to allow the Drought Vulnerability Index to be calculated using national data where possible or default data from best available international data sets where necessary.

45. Some Parties requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, within their respective mandates and subject to the availability of financial resources, and in collaboration with data providers and technical partners, to continue providing capacity development support to Parties for:

(a) Undertaking quantitative assessments of drought hazards, exposure and vulnerability with a view to increasing their ability to conduct a drought vulnerability assessment at the highest tier level of the drought vulnerability assessment, while assessing the implications in terms of resources of moving up the tier levels;

(b) Bolstering capacity to assess drought under various climate change modelling scenarios;

(c) Predicting the occurrence of drought using early warning systems.

46. Some Parties highlighted the need to mobilize additional technical and financial resources to improve assessment, prediction and forecasting of, as well as interventions on, drought.

47. Some Parties presented drought as having reached a pandemic status which needs urgent action and commitment at the global level. They called for genuine commitment and the adoption of aggressive approaches to drought management, including the adoption of a legally binding global instrument.

48. Civil society organizations highlighted that approaches and technologies based on agroecology have shown evidence of their worth in terms of reducing vulnerabilities.

4. Strategic objective 4

For continued work towards generating global environmental benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD

49. Some Parties acknowledged that enhancing the synergies between biodiversity conservation, mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and combating desertification, land degradation and drought requires more concerted actions and projects that aim at contributing to the objectives of the Rio conventions simultaneously, while observing the respective mandate and objectives of those instruments and taking into consideration sustainable land management approaches and technologies as referred to at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and previous COPs. Initiatives to achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN) under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) represent a promising opportunity to boost these synergies. Nature-based solutions also have potential to simultaneously address land degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change.

50. Some Parties emphasized the importance of fully integrating climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as biodiversity conservation and sustainable use into national LDN interventions with due consideration of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, especially target 1 on participatory, integrated and biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning, target 2 on restoration, target 3 on protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and target 4 on the reduction of species extinction risk.

51. Some Parties highlighted the urgent need to step up global efforts to conserve and restore biodiversity and to increase the percentage of land under protection as it will help countries reduce land degradation and achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 15.3 and the pledge to protect 30 per cent of land by 2030 under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

For continued work towards synergies in reporting

52. One Party encouraged Parties to compile the Red List Index at the national level in line with the International Union for Conservation of Nature guidelines in order to provide a foundation for understanding the relevant taxonomic groups within national borders.

53. Some Parties were in favour of fully adopting the indicator ‘Proportion of important sites for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity that are covered by protected areas, by ecosystem type’ and its metric ‘Average proportion of terrestrial key biodiversity areas covered by protected areas’ as a progress indicator/metric under strategic objective 4 (SO 4), thereby ensuring alignment with the monitoring framework of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the SDG indicators and national policies and plans.

54. Other Parties considered it necessary to further assess if the indicator should be fully adopted as there is no clear direct link between this indicator and DLDD and the benefits derived from the implementation of the UNCCD. They invited the secretariat to carry out an assessment of how this indicator would address this concern and to continue researching how best to measure the co-benefits of the implementation of the UNCCD for biodiversity conservation and restoration and the fight against climate change.

55. Some Parties highlighted the importance of improving information flows in order to enhance consistency with the SDG reporting process, reduce the reporting burden and avoid duplication of data validation efforts for the Red List Index and ‘Average proportion of terrestrial key biodiversity areas covered by protected areas’. Avoiding duplication of data validation efforts can be achieved by ensuring that data on these indicators already validated by national statistics offices through the SDG process are synchronized with the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS 4) for national reporting without the need for additional verification by Parties.

56. Some Parties requested the secretariat, in collaboration with relevant partners, to:

(a) Explore options for integrating the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and its monitoring framework into the Data Reporting Tool for Multilateral Environmental Agreements to facilitate knowledge and information management for national reporting across the Rio conventions and the SDGs;

(b) Explore the possibility of complementing the current SO 4 indicators for future reporting cycles with additional biodiversity indicators focused specifically on the links between desertification and biodiversity, starting by assessing the indicators used under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. However, indicators from other biodiversity-related Multilateral Environmental Agreements, such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, may also be relevant;

(c) Provide further guidance, capacity development support and financial resources for reporting on SO 4 indicators.

57. Some Parties raised the issue of the relevance of the default data to national circumstances but highlighted the need to maximize the use of national and regional data, where possible.

For continued work towards improved understanding of the linkages between land use change, land degradation and biodiversity

58. Civil society organizations underlined that the link between land use change, climate change and biodiversity loss is undeniable. They advocated for agroecological approaches in order to ensure that areas under agriculture are managed sustainably and that immediate action is needed to stop public support to land-degrading agriculture, infrastructure, mining, and extractive industries.

59. Some Parties concurred with the conclusion from the analysis of reported data that “land use change” is the number one driver of biodiversity loss. This finding is supported by current scientific literature and shows the importance of sustainable land use planning in helping achieve the objectives of the Convention.

60. Some Parties requested the secretariat, in collaboration with relevant partners, to explore options to import geospatial data on terrestrial key biodiversity areas and/or protected areas into PRAIS4 for improved understanding of the linkages between land use change, land degradation and biodiversity.

61. Some Parties requested the secretariat to ensure that geospatial data on terrestrial key biodiversity areas and/or protected areas have been verified by Parties before being used for reporting.

62. A partner agency advocated for the harmonization of area-based restoration commitments between the Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring, as the official monitoring platform for tracking global progress and disseminating good practices for the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and PRAIS.

B. Financial flows: strategic objective 5

63. Acknowledging the information contained in document ICCD/CRIC(21)/6 and recalling the mandate given in decision 11/COP.14 and referred to in document

ICCD/CRIC(21)/6, several Parties expressed their appreciation for the improvements in the reporting template and the revision of the indicators by the Global Mechanism (GM).

64. Some Parties emphasized the importance of mobilizing substantial additional financial resources to effectively address issues related to combating land degradation, desertification and drought (DLDD), including land degradation neutrality (LDN).

65. Some Parties expressed the importance of making the best possible use of available resources and of monitoring the linkages between allocated resources and their impact in order to maximize effectiveness.

66. Several Parties affirmed the importance of involving the private sector and civil society in efforts to mobilize resources in global actions against DLDD.

67. Some Parties noted that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean countries could be considered to receive additional resources for the implementation of the Convention. One Party noted that most bilateral resources come from few countries to implement DLDD-related activities. Several Parties also acknowledged the significant funding provided by Arab States for LDN, such as Saudi Arabia's initiative and the G20 Global Land Initiative.

68. Some Parties emphasized the need to set up a strategy for resource mobilization and financing targets and develop a dedicated financing instrument for the Convention. The GM was requested to work closely with Parties to develop national financing targets and resource mobilization strategies, including solutions related to green fiscal policies and financial enabling environments. One Party also recommended the development of programmes on sand and dust storm and drought resilience.

69. Some Parties acknowledged the importance of the needs assessment that the GM is conducting, which will be critical to enhance the collective understanding of the scale of required resources for the implementation of the Convention. Some Parties expressed that the methodology for the financial needs assessment should be prepared in a collaborative manner. In this regard, they highlighted the importance of taking into account the recommendations gathered from Parties and other stakeholders at the twenty-first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention. It was further recommended that results of the assessment be shared with Parties in a timely manner so that they can be taken into account before the drafting of decisions for the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and also inform the negotiation process of the ninth replenishment of the GEF (GEF-9) from its inception.

70. Some Parties encouraged greater efforts by all Parties to continue integrating gender equality and gender perspectives in future projects and actions.

71. Some Parties expressed the need to adopt cross-cutting approaches to combat DLDD and to take greater account of them when defining core objectives of projects.

72. Many Parties requested that adequate financial resources be made available to the Convention to ensure the effective provision of scientific knowledge in its deliberations on policy matters. In this context, many Parties requested that financial resources be made available for the science and technology correspondents (STCs) to participate during the entire duration of the COP. Some Parties mentioned that participation of STCs in the full duration of the COP would imply increasing voluntary contributions.

73. Some Parties expressed the need to increase the resources made available to the secretariat and the GM in order for these institutions to cope with the growing demand for support.

74. Some Parties stated that most projects addressing DLDD are mutually beneficial for other policy objectives, which makes it crucial to boost synergies with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Therefore, they encouraged the secretariat to explore opportunities for cooperation and funding in other sectors and processes, such as the Biodiversity Finance Initiative of the United Nations Development Programme or the National Biodiversity Finance Plans, which are being updated by countries in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. They invited the secretariat to provide guidance to Parties on how to implement mutually beneficial actions with the help of these instruments.

75. One Party mentioned their exclusion from the analysis of bilateral contributions and requested that contributions from all Parties be reflected in future communications from the secretariat.
76. Many countries recommended that UNCCD national focal points be more involved in Global Environment Facility governance and also recommended stronger collaboration with the Green Climate Fund, considering that LDN has the potential to contribute to 30 per cent of the Paris Agreement targets.
77. Several Parties welcomed the Great Green Wall independent review and encouraged other initiatives to implement such operating reviews. They also requested the Great Green Wall Accelerator to prepare a management response addressing the conclusions and recommendations of the Great Green Wall independent review.
78. As regards carbon markets, some Parties proposed not referring to the issue of avoiding emissions in those markets, because it is still a matter of discussion among Parties in the Paris Agreement.
79. Some Parties requested the GM to continue developing harmonized definitions, methodologies and data collection options that provide country Parties with more information with the aim of having a more comprehensive overview of financial resources targeting DLDD. Also, some Parties highlighted the importance of stepping up efforts to increase comparability between the sets of national data provided by Parties.
80. Some Parties requested the GM to ensure that all default information in PRAIS4 can include, among others, descriptions of how that information contributes to country targets, information sources and project focal points; in this way the Parties could validate the information and complement it with national information.
81. Several Parties recommended enhanced cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and coordination between public administrations and other international partners for, inter alia, the further development of Rio markers on desertification in pursuit of a more systematic and extensive monitoring of financial flows.
82. Many Parties requested the GM to provide adequate capacity-building to improve the monitoring and reporting and country level coordination on strategic objective 5 (SO 5); one Party recommended that the GM consider deploying regional representatives to support countries more closely at the regional level in resource mobilization.
83. Several Parties requested the responsible GEF Implementing Agency to consider including a specific SO 5-related output in the project titled “Strengthening national-level institutional and professional capacities of country Parties towards enhanced UNCCD monitoring and reporting - GEF 7 EA Umbrella 1”.
84. Some Parties emphasized the role of sharing information on knowledge and technology transfer.
85. Civil society organizations (CSOs) called for a precautionary approach to financing mechanisms to combat DLDD, such as public and private partnerships, blended finance, green bonds, and debt swaps.
86. CSOs mentioned eliminating incentives and subsidies for input such as fuel and fertilizers that are harmful to land, climate and biodiversity and redirect them to practices that result in sustainable and inclusive land management.
87. CSOs highlighted the importance of supporting local LDN action to generate and disseminate knowledge through exchange with other stakeholders to achieve national LDN targets and Sustainable Development Goal target 15.3. CSO representatives further requested Parties and donors to review their funding mechanisms and improve them to accommodate the administrative and financial realities of local organizations.

C. Implementation of voluntary land degradation neutrality targets and related implementation efforts

88. Many Parties acknowledged with appreciation the information contained in document ICCD/CRIC(21)/8, recalling the mandate given by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to the Global Mechanism (GM) with regard to voluntary land degradation neutrality (LDN) target-setting and related implementation efforts referred to in this document and noting the cross-cutting approach needed for an effective implementation of LDN.

89. Many Parties noted with concern the current land degradation trends and some drew attention to the fact that not all UNCCD country Parties have committed to set voluntary LDN targets and adopt them at a high political level.

90. Many Parties welcomed with appreciation the support provided by the secretariat, the GM and relevant partners to effectively assist countries in their voluntary LDN target-setting processes and in the steps taken towards implementation efforts.

91. Several Parties also welcomed the launch of the second phase of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP 2.0) and invited countries that have yet to set their LDN targets to do so as a way that accelerates the implementation of the Convention. One Party called for the development of tools for land use planning and the need to ensure the upscaling of transformative projects and programmes and the monitoring of LDN targets. One partner agency stressed the critical importance of LDN and the definition of long-term LDN targets and related implementation efforts to the work of the UNCCD.

92. Several Parties requested the secretariat and the GM to provide further insight on the outcomes related to target-setting, transformative projects and programmes, and pipeline development, including on assessing the impacts generated by the established partnerships for UNCCD implementation.

93. Several Parties expressed concerns over the fact that fewer resources are allocated to the UNCCD from the Global Environment Facility and other funding sources compared to other Multilateral Environmental Agreements, while highlighting the importance of synergies among Rio conventions, and called on the GM to provide more support to country Parties for assisting in the design of projects to be submitted for funding. In this regard, several Parties called for more simplified and streamlined processes to access funding.

94. With regard to innovative financing and the engagement of the private sector, several Parties encouraged the GM to continue sharing lessons learned. One Party also encouraged the GM to pay special attention to the role of green bonds and debt swaps as useful mechanisms contributing to reducing sovereign debt, while taking into account that matters relating to carbon credits are the subject of discussions among Parties under the Paris Agreement. One Party highlighted the importance of private sector funding not replacing the allocation of funds from international multilateral financing institutions.

95. Some Parties called for strengthening policy advocacy efforts for LDN and related restoration work and encouraged country Parties to continue working closely with the UNCCD to develop further actions and cooperation, including among countries at regional level, in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal target 15.3 and LDN by 2030. Several Parties also encouraged the GM and country Parties to foster synergies with other ongoing global initiatives, such as the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative on the economic impacts of land use decisions, and with related conventions to develop national and regional projects, so no countries are left behind.

96. Several Parties called on country Parties to strengthen internal coordination with the national focal points of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and those vested with responsibilities in other crucial areas, such as finance and planning officials, and strongly encouraged the UNCCD to strengthen its engagement with relevant partners, such as Multilateral Development Banks, bilateral and multilateral funding agencies, philanthropic donors and the private sector.

97. Several Parties recalled the recommendations made in the second edition of the Global Land Outlook and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Climate Change and Land. They highlighted that these recommendations illustrate a holistic approach on how to best achieve land degradation neutrality, including, among other things, by redirecting public spending towards regenerative agriculture and sustainable land management solutions. They underscored the importance of integrating these actions in the LDN TSP and the implementation of national LDN targets.

98. One partner agency highlighted that rangelands constitute a vital ecosystem in drylands and invited country Parties and partners to continue working on rangelands preservation and restoration activities aligned with LDN targets.

99. The civil society organization representative (i) urged all Parties to set, revise and adopt LDN targets and establish solid LDN baselines using the best available data and local and traditional knowledge through participatory processes; and (ii) called for increased technical support and funding, including via small grants, to foster the LDN action of local communities and related knowledge exchange activities.

D. Progress report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD

100. All Parties reiterated that droughts are closely linked to other environmental challenges with far-reaching impacts on people and ecosystems and stressed the importance of effective drought mitigation.

101. The Parties expressed their sincere appreciation to members of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on Drought and to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) secretariat for the work accomplished so far.

102. Some Parties suggested the need to narrow down the policy options presented by the IWG in their progress report submitted to the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention.

103. Some Parties expressed that the focus should be on policy options within the mandate of the Convention and where the Convention can make the strongest contribution to proactive drought management.

104. Some Parties highlighted the importance of these policy options being fleshed out and developed in a way that would contribute to the effective implementation of an integrated and proactive approach.

105. Some Parties proposed that the IWG could focus on two options, one being legally binding and other non-legally binding.

106. Regarding the draft evaluation methodology proposed in the report, some Parties considered it appropriate because, taking into account the level of detail available for the options and the level of uncertainty in their impact, a qualitative evaluation scheme would ensure more objectivity than a quantitative one. Furthermore, they indicated that a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis seemed to be an adequate way of presenting the results of the evaluation, making it easy to understand and interpret for all UNCCD Parties.

107. Some Parties recommended that the policy options should be considered as complementary and not mutually exclusive. In particular, the policy option on financing should not be considered as an independent option but as an integral part of all the other options.

108. Some Parties stressed the need to focus on financing, capacity-building, technology, and knowledge transfer, especially for developing countries.

109. Some Parties advised the IWG to further evaluate the options based on the likelihood of success, political will available globally, timeliness, and the ability of each option to enhance drought resilience.

110. A few Parties suggested that the IWG include a specific target on drought and a dedicated financial instrument and/or financial support for the implementation of the target.

111. Some Parties suggested focusing on existing mechanisms instead of developing a new one, as using existing mechanisms is more cost-effective and efficient, while others stressed that a dedicated funding mechanism would contribute to the successful implementation of the Convention's drought-related work.

112. Some Parties also highlighted the need to align the work of the IWG with the ongoing activities under existing targets, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as to consider other initiatives such as the G20 Global Land Initiative and the International Drought Resilience Alliance.

113. Some Parties underscored the need for integrated and proactive drought management and governance, paying particular attention to sustainable land management, and some Parties further underscored sustainable water management, land restoration and nature-based solutions.

114. Parties also stressed that close coordination and cooperation with other processes and institutions and building partnerships at all levels will be essential for the effective implementation of any of the options.

115. Many Parties highlighted the importance of cross-sectoral, multisectoral, multilevel and whole-of-government approaches as very effective mechanisms to address drought mitigation, preparedness and response.

116. Some Parties expressed the need to establish a drought framework or programme in view of drawing attention to drought-related issues in an integrated manner while also addressing issues of synergies among the three Rio conventions.

117. Some Parties stressed that only a clearly articulated legally binding global policy instrument on drought would provide guidance to Parties in their implementation of drought initiatives at all levels.

118. Many Parties recommended building on existing initiatives, programmes and agreements, given the need for rapid and immediate action to achieve drought resilience.

119. A few Parties mentioned that the option to develop a new instrument outside the Convention has the potential to create regime conflict and incoherence with the mandate of the Convention.

120. Some Parties acknowledged that negotiating a legally binding instrument might take time, depending on the willingness of Parties, however it is better to invest in more efforts to seek a long-lasting solution than take shortcuts that will not yield required results in addressing drought at a global level.

121. Some Parties stated that the IWG on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the Convention is the appropriate forum for substantial discussions on policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD. They indicated that they would not express an opinion about any of the options at this point, as the IWG was established precisely to compile and assess them, and they would like to refrain from making comments in this regard until the group has finished its work and presented its findings and recommendations.

122. Some Parties expressed that the options, especially about drought, are very complex issues that need more time and more discussions to be considered.

123. Further, some Parties stressed the need to establish synergies with other Multilateral Environmental Agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity, where protocols have been established under an agreed treaty.

124. Some Parties stressed that a step-by-step approach might be more promising. The first step should be drought-related agreements at regional level, which can be expanded to a global agreement.

125. Many Parties also stressed the importance of designing approaches and solutions that promote gender equality, as well as the appropriate involvement of civil society organizations and the private sector.

126. Some Parties stated that an objective and unbiased assessment of the options based on the best scientific and technical information available would be paramount for the credibility of the work of this group.

127. Civil society organizations suggested that governments should regulate land use, support sustainable land management, and avoid rewarding excessive stocking or destructive tillage with drought relief funds.

128. The co-chair of the IWG, in response to the interventions by Parties, stated that the IWG will take into consideration the comments and suggestions to the next IWG meeting due to be held from 18 to 20 November 2023 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

E. Improving the procedures for communication as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties

For improved coordination among country stakeholders in the national reporting process

129. Some Parties cited the challenge of achieving close cooperation among key stakeholders in the national reporting process, acknowledging that a multidisciplinary and multiagency response is required for a comprehensive national report.

For reporting under strategic objectives 1–4

130. Some Parties acknowledged that the full set of data in the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS4) is extremely valuable for underpinning decision-making processes and devising land degradation policies. They also recognized the limitations of default data for reporting in the absence of national or regional alternatives.

131. Some Parties requested further technical and financial assistance to maximize the use of national and regional data.

132. Some Parties reiterated the need for high-resolution interoperable data products for land surface and soil organic carbon data as well as capacity-building, including for small island developing States.

133. Some Parties requested the secretariat, in collaboration with data providers, technical partners and the Earth observation community, including the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality Flagship, to:

(a) Make available guidelines at the national, regional and global level to standardize mapping approaches, such as the appropriate map scale and minimum mapping unit, for the relevant geospatial indicators;

(b) Support efforts to create a community of practice and a platform for ongoing engagement of technical experts to enable South-South cooperation to share experiences, challenges and lessons learned related to national reporting.

For the analyses contained in official documents presented to the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

134. Some Parties acknowledged that the information gaps due to non-submission of national reports hampered the ability to conduct a sound global assessment. However, they advised against using default data to fill information gaps in the official syntheses and analyses submitted to the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) without explicit validation of this data by Parties.

135. Some Parties stated that efforts should be made to ensure that Parties are sufficiently incentivized to engage in reporting, including through making adequate financial resources available to institutionalize reporting at national level.

For improving access to enabling funding provided by the Global Environment Facility

136. Several Parties expressed their appreciation to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Environment Programme, stressing their important role in facilitating access to enabling funding for reporting.

137. Many Parties expressed their disappointment with the delivery of the UNEP umbrella programme and emphasized the urgent need to improve the mechanism by which funds from the GEF for enabling activities are being disbursed and for greater communications between UNEP and Parties. Additionally, in this regard, some Parties requested for GEF to provide more options to Parties to access enabling activities, including direct access, and to also include UNCCD national focal points (NFPs) in communications for this funding. Several Parties also encouraged that coordination at national level be improved to ensure that administrative processes related to the disbursement of funds are streamlined and effective. Improved collaboration between the NFPs for UNCCD and the GEF operational focal points was mentioned as one way to achieve this.

138. Some Parties proposed to consider the amelioration of the quality, quantity and methods of and opportunities for capacity-building given to the countries because in this case, it has not been possible to be used meaningfully in some Parties.

139. Many Parties also suggested collaborating with a subregional or regional institution that could assist Parties in obtaining the enabling funds since the disbursement could be channeled through one group application, reducing drastically the administrative burden on Parties and UNEP, as was the case with the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) and some of the Caribbean Parties.

140. Several Parties suggested that the process of the umbrella projects be initiated early enough and up to two years before launching the reporting process to ensure that funds are readily available and national-level activities in preparation for national reporting can be launched well before the deadline of reporting. Some Parties requested that the national reporting deadline be conditional on the progress of disbursement to ensure higher quality reports.

141. Some Parties proposed including other relevant implementing agencies in the process of administering umbrella projects to facilitate access to enabling funds. In the same way, and for the sake of the efficiency of the process, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies have been mentioned, among other agencies.

142. Some Parties stated that the allocations to the Land Degradation Focal Area of the GEF should be commensurate with the financial needs for an effective implementation of the Convention and highlighted that an increase in the allocation is needed.

For the PRAIS 4 reporting platform and data analytics tools

143. Some Parties requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM), within their respective mandates and subject to the availability of financial resources, and in collaboration with relevant technical partners, including the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality Flagship, to:

- (a) Conduct a formal requirements analysis for improvements and enhancements to PRAIS, its reporting guidance and analytics tools, in preparation for the 2026 reporting process;
- (b) Clearly delimit the PRAIS forms for affected developed, affected developing and non-affected Parties;
- (c) Ensure that PRAIS allows Parties to submit supporting documents containing qualitative and quantitative information regarding additional indicators in multiple formats;
- (d) Enhance the format of the PDF report to transform the reports into effective communication and awareness-raising tools in order to assist Parties in desertification, land degradation and drought-related data sharing;

(e) Enable relevant and interested Parties and institutions to provide feedback to innovations, where feasible.

144. Some Parties invited Conservation International to continue enhancing Trends.Earth by:

- (a) Addressing the critical technical issues raised during the 2022 reporting process as a priority, such as limited processing capacity;
- (b) Conducting a formal requirements analysis for improvements and enhancements to make the software sustainable for future reporting;
- (c) Upgrading the functionality for the upload of national data;
- (d) Providing for further flexibility so that sovereignty in national data is respected.

For capacity development and quality assurance

145. Several Parties presented the challenges to meet the requirements associated with the new modality of reporting, including but not limited to the complexity of data-driven and web-based reporting through PRAIS and Trends.Earth, the methodological basis for the indicators and associated data requirements, the asynchronous nature of funding disbursement, and reporting deadlines. Furthermore, at national level, Parties are challenged by the lack of internal coordination among key stakeholders.

146. Some Parties requested the secretariat and the GM, within their respective mandates and subject to the availability of financial resources, and in collaboration with relevant financial and technical partners in position to do so, to:

- (a) Provide online webinars and e-learning courses as the default mode for future capacity-building on national reporting as it is cost-effective and convenient;
- (b) Organize in-person capacity-building activities at the regional or subregional level;
- (c) Enhance the capacity development support provided to Parties by organizing regional workshops to launch the reporting process, forming scientific technical committees composed of secretariat staff and international experts, followed by a further round of regional technical workshops for the finalization of the national report;
- (d) Ensure that all guidance documents for reporting on strategic objective 1 be developed by the same institution that provides the tool or tools for generating the indicators, and that technical support is provided by that same institution or by any institution that has a high level of technical expertise, rather than by independent consultants;
- (e) Emulate the model used by PISLM for extending technical capacity and support to other small island developing States.

147. Some Parties also invited Conservation International to provide further Trends.Earth training.

148. Some Parties requested that:

- (a) The four-year reporting cycle is phased in such a way that sufficient time is allocated for the creation of enabling conditions at the national level, conducting the technical work required as well as reviewing and validating the national report prior to submission;
- (b) A dedicated period of time is allocated to the technical review and quality assurance process and that time is not shortened at the expense of extended submission deadlines.

149. Some Parties underscored the utility of the in-built revision and review system of PRAIS for the expert review of national reports and to enable confidential and secure communication with the secretariat in the review process.

150. Several Parties and civil society organizations (CSOs) called for the participation of CSOs, Indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth, and relevant

stakeholders in the development of national reports and that they should be considered as beneficiaries of related training initiatives.

151. CSOs highlighted the need to increase the efficiency of the reporting through enhanced planning which must consider the launch of the process, technical review, and political adoption in a timely manner in order to ensure ownership, engagement, coordination, and inclusion of all key stakeholders while ensuring the integration of information from other national processes and synergies between reporting on Rio conventions and Sustainable Development Goals.

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

1. Sand and dust storms

152. During the plenary, some Parties raised the following issues:

(a) To continue the active engagement of the secretariat in the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms and its role in leading the working group on policy and governance;

(b) To continue the development of the guideline on the integration of sand and dust storms (SDS) management into key policy areas, with the expectation that this be done in consultation with Parties and other stakeholders;

(c) To continue the support provided by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to Parties in the development of regional and national strategies and action plans, and taking efforts to mobilize financial support and provide technical support to developing country Parties for the preparation of regional and national projects and programmes to support the implementation of these plans;

(d) To continue building upon existing knowledge and expertise, promoting synergies between relevant instruments and processes, including the integration of efforts to combat SDS into disaster risk reduction strategies such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, and making use of existing platforms to better communicate the importance of combating SDS;

(e) To continue promoting the use of the Sand and Dust Storms Toolbox, exploring the inclusion of a compilation of an inventory of existing SDS-related tools and technologies, ensuring its wide dissemination among relevant stakeholders, and providing capacity-building to interested Parties to ensure that they learn about all the possibilities it offers;

(f) The UNCCD should promote a proactive and preferably through land-based management and nature based approaches to combating SDS, focusing mainly on adaptation and source mitigation, such as promoting sustainable land management (SLM), addressing desertification, land degradation and drought, and strengthening the resilience of affected and vulnerable populations and ecosystems. The involvement of women and other vulnerable groups should always be promoted in these actions;

(g) To continue encouraging the Convention to promote the implementation of SLM approaches and technologies as it was referred to at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and other COPs because of the relationship between drought and land degradation and SDS;

(h) To continue stressing the importance of country-to-country learning opportunities, the sharing of good practices, and technology transfers that facilitate peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges;

(i) To continue giving increased attention to the control of SDS so that the United Nations and regional partners and alliances can play a supportive role in (i) strengthening awareness-raising education, outreach and mobilization activities, including through the International Day of Combating Sand and Dust Storms; (ii) strengthening cross-border and cross-regional joint prevention and treatment of SDS; (iii) increasing the focus on the

management of SDS sources; and (iv) coordinating the environmental protection and restoration of source areas and pathway areas to enhance the stability and sustainability of source ecosystems;

(j) To continue strengthening scientific and technological support, conducting in-depth research on the impact of climate change and human activities on the occurrence and development of SDS, accurately identifying source and pathway areas, and studying the establishment of a scientific and efficient comprehensive monitoring system to continuously improve the levels of forecasting and early warning.

2. Drought

153. Acknowledging the information contained in document ICCD/CRIC(21)/9, many Parties welcomed the work by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism within the thematic area of drought.

154. Many Parties recognized that 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.

155. Some Parties encouraged the prioritization of drought resilience by implementing national drought policies that enhance integrated approaches and by recognizing its interlinkages with climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation and restoration, agroforestry and agroecological practices, sustainable land management, sustainable development, and disaster risk reduction approaches. Some Parties also underlined the synergies between drought-smart land management practices, ecosystem restoration actions, and nature-based solutions.

156. Some Parties emphasized the focus on good land governance and the mainstreaming of gender issues into land governance to support and enhance drought resilience.

157. Some Parties drew attention to the importance of developing and implementing gender-responsive national drought plans.

158. Some Parties attributed success in preventing land degradation to “good land use decisions and sustainable land management.” This also provides an opening for the secretariat to continue its great work in helping countries produce whole-of-government sustainable land management plans to help build resilience to drought.

159. Some Parties expressed their strong support for the holistic approach, led and convened by the UNCCD, of working in close collaboration with other relevant processes and partners. They also emphasized the need for a continued integrated collaboration between the three Rio conventions and the need to strengthen the involvement of civil society.

160. Parties encouraged the development of the communities of learning and practice within the framework of the Drought Toolbox to pursue co-learning and collaboration on drought risk reduction and resilience. Parties also emphasized that reliable data is imperative to ensure effective decision-making and action, and that capacity-building and knowledge exchange play a vital role in achieving this goal.

161. Some Parties suggested that the secretariat, the Global Mechanism and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies, including the Science-Policy Interface, support Parties in the further implementation of their national drought plans by building capacities on effective planning for drought management and the implementation of drought plans, including the integration of plans into land degradation neutrality and national action programmes, taking into consideration Indigenous peoples.

162. Some Parties highlighted that to date the Drought Initiative has only been undertaken in 1 of the 15 Pacific Island countries, despite their increased vulnerability. Some Parties urged targeted support be channelled to small island developing States, including dedicated programmes like the Drought Initiative

163. Some Parties suggested that the Global Mechanism 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, taking into account the serious debt situation of developing countries and their consideration in this context.

164. Some Parties suggested to explore potential financing instruments for addressing drought with a cross-cutting approach, including funding opportunities within the frameworks of the other Rio conventions, and also to provide Parties with information and guidance to facilitate access to these instruments.

165. Many Parties encouraged development partners and financing institutions, in particular the Global Environment Facility, to support the implementation of national drought plans and policies.

166. Some Parties invited the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to reach out to the Green Climate Fund and other financial institutions to explore the possibility of financing projects and programmes which could lead to co-benefits in terms of improved drought resilience, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and halting biodiversity loss. They invited the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to report on these possible partnerships and opportunities.

167. Many Parties expressed their support for the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue participating in the preparations for the High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy +10 that will take place in 2024 as a follow-up to the 2013 High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy.

168. Civil society organization representatives recommended strengthening links between drought, adaptation to climate change, sustainable development, and reduction of risks and disasters.

3. Land tenure

169. All Parties reaffirmed the central role of land tenure security and the principles and practices of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) in combating desertification, land degradation and drought and achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN) as well as in the realization of the spatially explicit, land-based targets of the Rio conventions.

170. All Parties welcomed the Technical Guide on Integrating the VGGT into LDN and land restoration initiatives and encouraged enhanced partnerships to foster: (1) awareness-raising and related capacity-building; (2) strengthening of multi-stakeholder platforms; (3) gender mainstreaming; (4) supporting women's financial empowerment; (5) financing investments in integration efforts; and (6) social and environmental safeguards and grievance redress mechanisms.

171. Some Parties suggested that land tenure should be addressed in the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme 2.0 process, taking into account the Technical Guide on Integrating the VGGT into LDN and making LDN targets more tenure-sensitive.

172. Several Parties recommended adopting do-no-harm and gender-responsive approaches, which safeguard legitimate tenure rights (whether individual, collective, formally documented or not), taking into account the needs and aspirations of Indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth.

173. A number of Parties recommended that the issue of land tenure be addressed in an inclusive and inter-generational manner, taking into account the diversity of ecosystems, and that all knowledge, information, and awareness-raising products should be widely disseminated and made publicly available. Some Parties suggested that the secretariat should consider gathering the most relevant documents in a Land Tenure Toolbox.

174. Some Parties highlighted the useful activities of civil society organizations and proposed to continue to make use of their input and expertise to enhance the implementation of the Convention. Some Parties encouraged other Parties and the secretariat to continue to make use of the contributions and expertise of civil society organizations in their decision-making and guidance.

4. Gender

175. Parties commended the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) secretariat and the Global Mechanism for their efforts to promote gender equality in the implementation of the Convention.

176. Many Parties highlighted the positive role of women and girls in sustainable land management and land restoration, thereby contributing to the fight against desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD).

177. Many Parties reaffirmed that women and girls are key environmental stewards but face significant barriers, including lack of equal land tenure, unequal access to resources, information, technologies and financial services, and unequal participation in decision-making.

178. Many Parties called for the promotion of gender-responsive and gender-transformative measures to combat DLDD and achieve land degradation neutrality, taking into account the national contexts.

179. Some Parties emphasized that intersectionality should be considered in the planning, design and implementation of policies and programmes to address all forms of discrimination, including, but not limited to, age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and nationality.

180. Many Parties called for the further promotion of the use and ownership of land by women, especially rural and Indigenous women, and for the improvement of equal access to land and land tenure security.

181. Many Parties emphasized the need to improve the situation of rural and Indigenous women, particularly in terms of economic empowerment, recalling the second priority area of the UNCCD Gender Action Plan.

182. A number of Parties recommended that the rights of all stakeholders, including women, youth and Indigenous peoples, must be respected throughout the development and implementation of land use policies, programmes and plans and recommended the promotion of a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, and to this end to strengthen the collaboration with the private sector and civil society.

183. One Party recommended a more holistic approach to implementing the UNCCD Gender Action Plan Roadmap, using a cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach.

184. Several Parties reiterated the importance of promoting activities that boost synergies towards gender mainstreaming between the Rio conventions and other relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

185. Several Parties welcomed the first reporting on sex-disaggregated exposure to land degradation and drought, but found that the current indicators do not yet fully reflect the actual differences in how men and women are affected by these phenomena.

186. Several Parties mentioned the urgent need to tackle the gender data gap and called for the improvement of the reporting process through additional data collection and the assessment of new indicators.

187. A number of Parties suggested compiling such information on a regular basis and making it publicly available to Parties and suggested that the secretariat provide more information on how regular progress reports are evaluated and inform further actions to promote gender equality across the Convention.

188. Several Parties recommended the continuation of the Gender Caucus, ensuring its greater visibility on the agendas of forthcoming sessions of the Conference of the Parties and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), and that it should remain open and inclusive and ensure meaningful civil society engagement.

189. Several Parties stated that all the agenda items on thematic topics should be presented separately on the agendas of future sessions of the CRIC, for the sake of clarity.

190. A few Parties recommended that the secretariat share information with Parties on the UNCCD's collaboration with relevant international organizations and the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies on gender-disaggregated data.

191. Several Parties recommended that financial institutions and mechanisms assess and, where necessary, adjust the accessibility of their funding programmes vis-à-vis women's organizations that support gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

192. Some Parties noted that outreach and awareness-raising activities should include men and boys as equal agents and beneficiaries of change.

193. Civil society organizations and some Parties highlighted the need for a more gender-responsive Science-Policy Interface.

IV. Conclusion of the session

A. Adoption of the comprehensive report of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention to the Conference of the Parties, including conclusions and recommendations

194. At its eighth meeting on 17 November 2023, the Committee considered the draft report on its twenty-first session.

195. The Committee approved the draft report as a whole, as orally revised, and entrusted the Rapporteur to finalize it in consultation with the CRIC Bureau and the UNCCD secretariat.

B. Closure of the session

196. At the eighth meeting of the Committee, statements were made by the representatives of Morocco (on behalf of the African Group), Pakistan (on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group), Ecuador (on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean countries), Hungary (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV)) and Georgia (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)).

197. A statement was made by a representative of the European Union.

198. A statement was also made by the representative of the Republic of Moldova.

199. Further closing statements were made by the representatives of Fundación Ambiente Y Recursos Naturales (on behalf of civil society organizations) and of the Land Youth Negotiators Programme (on behalf of the youth).

200. His Excellency, Mr. Obidjon Kudratov, First Deputy Minister of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change of Uzbekistan, made a closing statement.

201. The Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, also made a closing statement.

202. The CRIC Chair, Ms. Biljana Kilibarda (Montenegro), made concluding remarks and declared closed the twenty-first session of the CRIC.

Annex

Documents before the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention at its twenty-first session

<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>
ICCD/CRIC(21)/1	Provisional agenda and annotations. Note by the secretariat
ICCD/CRIC(21)/2	Preliminary analysis – strategic objective 1: To improve the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification/land degradation, promote sustainable land management and contribute to land degradation neutrality. Note by the secretariat
ICCD/CRIC(21)/2/Corr.1	Preliminary analysis – strategic objective 1: To improve the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification/land degradation, promote sustainable land management and contribute to land degradation neutrality. Note by the secretariat. Corrigendum
ICCD/CRIC(21)/3	Preliminary analysis – strategic objective 2: To improve the living conditions of affected populations. Note by the secretariat
ICCD/CRIC(21)/4	Preliminary analysis – strategic objective 3: To mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems. Note by the secretariat
ICCD/CRIC(21)/5	Preliminary analysis – strategic objective 4: To generate global environmental benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD. Note by the secretariat
ICCD/CRIC(21)/6	Preliminary analysis – 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. Report by the Global Mechanism
ICCD/CRIC(21)/7	Improving the procedures for communication as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties. Note by the secretariat
ICCD/CRIC(21)/8	Implementation of voluntary land degradation neutrality targets and related implementation efforts. Report by the Global Mechanism
ICCD/CRIC(21)/9	Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: sand and dust storms, drought, land tenure and gender. Note by the secretariat
ICCD/CRIC(21)/10	Progress report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD. Report by the Intergovernmental Working Group
ICCD/CRIC(21)/INF.1	Information for participants. Note by the secretariat
ICCD/CRIC(21)/INF.2	Status report on the 2022 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification reporting process. Note by the secretariat