

4th Meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on Drought

MEETING SUMMARY

Dates: November 18–20, 2023

Venue: Samarkand, Uzbekistan

Working language: English

Working hours: Saturday, Nov. 18, 2023, 09:30–13:00, 14:30–19:00 (GMT+5)

Sunday, Nov. 19, 2023, 09:00–13:00, 14:30–19:00 (GMT+5)

Monday, Nov. 20, 2023, 09:00–13:00, 14:30–18:00 (GMT+5)

Item 1 Opening

1.1) Opening remarks:

- On behalf of the UNCCD Secretariat, Mr. Rajeb Boulharouf, Director of the UNCCD Liaison Office in New York, delivered opening remarks, followed by Mr. Qudratov Obidjon Nematovich, First Deputy Minister of Ecology, Environmental Protection and Climate Change of the Republic of Uzbekistan, who highlighted the country's various efforts to combat desertification and drought.
- A new IWG member, Mr. Ghulam Qadir Shah from Pakistan, was welcomed by the co-chairs of the IWG, Mr. Michael Brüntrup and Hon. Mr. Alfred Prospere.
- Mr. Corentin Genin from Belgium attended the meeting on behalf of Mr. Sébastien Willemart. Mr. Daniel Tsegai, Programme Officer at the UNCCD Secretariat presented the progress of global drought initiatives and a summary of recommendations to the IWG by Parties at the 21st Session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (**CRIC 21**).

1.2) Participants of the IWG shared **expectations from the meeting**. This included the following:

- Narrowing down the options (Counterargument: keeping a more varied set of options could be useful to provide Parties at COP 16 with a more comprehensive analysis).
- The need for benefitting from the IWG on mid-term evaluation, their report, the interactions, and findings together with CRIC members.
- Agreeing on a clear methodology to evaluate the options.
- Generating more concrete content in the time that remains until COP 16.

- Exploring complementarity of options and improving their articulation. (Counterargument: Finding complementarity might consume a lot of time and finally may not be needed, given only set of different options needs to be presented during the COP 16).
- Discussing different modes of presenting the options at the COP 16.
- Finding ways to further improve the options, making them clearer, more comprehensive, and more ambitious.
- The need for revisiting the ToR of the IWG as defined by Parties at COP 15 to evaluate what has been achieved and defining the gaps.
- Taking off pressure from the two remaining meetings by working ahead of time. Providing a clear roadmap for the remaining months.

1.3) Participants adopted a slightly altered agenda.

Item 2 Presentation and discussion of remaining options *(in order of original listing)*

1. Finance

1.1. Innovative financing mechanisms

Mr. Daniel Tsegai presented the justification, elements, processes, mechanisms, institutional arrangements, and evaluation of innovative/new financing mechanisms for drought resilience. The core elements included global taxation schemes, zero tax avoidance world, de-investment and re-direct subsidies, fee schemes, and traditional transfer schemes. Advantages and disadvantages of such a wider framing were discussed.

1.2. Strengthen Existing financial mechanisms.

Mr. Corentin Genin (Belgium) presented the justification, elements, process, mechanism, institutional arrangements, and evaluation of options under existing finance mechanisms. Global Environmental Facility (GEF) was introduced as an example of the existing financial mechanisms, which is an important contributor to drought programmes and initiatives. Participants also introduced and discussed other financial mechanisms such as Global Mechanism (GM) and GCF. Participants also asked questions what level of details would be needed for such financial mechanisms to support drought resilience; plus, how financial mechanisms can facilitate the institutional arrangements. Mr. Daniel Tsegai (UNCCD Secretariat) introduced the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA)¹ and highlighted GEF's contribution to UNCCD's activities such as Drought Toolbox and Communities of Learning and Practice.

<p>INFO BOX: Opportunities and limits of GEF Finance for Drought (according to GEF representative)</p>

¹ <https://www.unccd.int/international-drought-resilience-alliance>

An integrated programme under GEF-9 is possibly the most realistic option, with specific focus on the national drought plans, one that helps countries to develop and implement these. It will also allow to pull in funding from different focal areas and adjacent funding streams (e.g. LDC funds). A new focal area is not advisable. In the past, there were numerous protocols where no new focal area was established. However, under the current mandate, certain aspects of drought mitigation and adaptation are not (fully) covered (e.g. early warning or disaster management, among others). Yet, there is nothing that hampers countries to directly address drought with the existing GEF System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR). 80% of the current funding stream goes via such STAR schemes, where countries themselves directly decided how to utilise the resources. No further fragmentation of the GEF is advised.

2. Technical

2.1. Setting of global targets

Mr. Michael Brüntrup, IWG Co-chair, introduced the justification, elements, process, mechanism, institutional arrangement, and evaluation of establishing global targets for drought resilience. Furthermore, he presented the potential, shortfalls, and benefits of defining global targets. The need to define these (proxy) targets was raised; to not blend water scarcity with drought; to consider a traffic light system; to find overarching indicators that are easy to grasp. There was broad consensus that global targets need to be worked on much further and that they are an integral part of other options.

2.2. Develop a global work programme.

Ms. Caroline King (independent expert) presented the justification, elements, process, mechanism, institutional arrangement, and evaluation of creating a global work programme. Participants suggested to have more clarifications on the definition of global work programme, the possibilities of integration of global work programme into national drought management plans, and the spelling out of connections between a global work programme and global targets. There was consensus that a working program is/can be part of a binding- as well as non-binding instrument.

3. Legally binding options

3.1. Adopt a legally binding Amendment to the Convention under the auspices of the Convention.

3.2. Adopt a Protocol or Agreement under the auspices of the Convention.

Mr. Bongani Simon Masuku (Eswatini), on behalf of the African Group, presented the overall definition, justification, elements, process, mechanism, advantages, and disadvantages of both legally binding instruments (3.1 and 3.2). Questions and comments were raised about the specific objectives of these options, the difficulty of reaching a consensus, as well as the lengthy procedures of making such legally binding options. The legally binding options were believed to support the implementation of the

Convention, which has a wide range of coverage in addition to drought. These discussions function as the foundation for future development and report of the options.

4. Non-legally binding options

- 4.1. Adopt non-legally binding decisions, political declaration or other kind of non-legally binding instruments under the Convention.
- 4.2. Adopt non-legally binding decisions, political declaration or other kind of non-legally binding instruments outside the Convention.

Mr. Daniel Roures Rego (Spain) presented the definition, scope, objectives, common and main characteristics, institutional arrangements, and mechanisms of non-legally binding options. These non-legally binding options include options ‘outside’ and those ‘under’ the Convention. A basic ‘Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats’ (SWOT) analytical framework was also introduced. Questions about the process of adoption of non-legally binding options were raised, including whether and how non-legally binding options can potentially turn into legally binding options. It was confirmed that although these options are not legally binding, governments/signatories are expected to strongly advocate and support the implementation of these options. In addition, it was stated that non-legally binding does not mean that no commitment is required. The connections between (future) COP decisions and non-legally binding options should be further explored.

Item 3 Discussion of potential ways forward

Mr. Michael Brüntrup opened the floor to re-shuffle the options and provided an initial roadmap. With the support of an independent consultant, a further clarification of the options will be drafted before the 5th IWG meeting in Chile. A further refinement and combination of other options such as finance and outreach and dissemination were suggested to be completed before the 6th IWG meeting. Mr. Imad Antoine Ibrahim (independent legal expert) stressed the need of specific taskforces and committees to facilitate the combination of the options. Furthermore, it was emphasized that any legally binding agreement requires a draft which starts as a non-legally binding document that is amended, passed, and ratified to (potentially) become legally binding instrument.

It was clarified that it is beyond the mandate of the IWG to draft text documents (including legal documents and amendments) for COP 16 to adopt. A consolidated paper is expected to be completed before the 5th IWG meeting for the discussion in the 5th IWG meeting due to be held Chile (18-21 March 2024). The need and urgency of a clear roadmap for the remaining months before COP 16 was mutually emphasized. An agreement was achieved to continue proceeding on the protocol, work programmes, policy declarations inside and outside UNCCD, finance plus, COP decisions, amendments, and global targets.

The four major categories are: (i) Finance (ii) Global Target/Global Work Programme (iii) Protocol and amendment and (iv) Political Declaration/ UNGA/UNEA Resolution /COP Decision.

A couple of final reflections included the following:

- Any instrument is as strong as the number of the Parties that adopt it. The more consensual it is the stronger it will be. State acceptance is crucial.
- A clearer distinction between content and process needs to be (re)-introduced. It is not up to the IWG to decide what will be adopted. The group's mandate only entails the presentation of different options.
- We should not allow current constraints determine what is the right thing to do - there is the need to propose the right things. The size of the proposed solution needs to match the size of the problem. We need to clearly define for each of the categories we move forward with, what is the difference we are seeking for each category between now and successful adoption of the option that is eventually chosen? Irrespective of how it is delivered what is that we want delivered?
- The three pillars² of drought risk reduction are designed to guide practical actions for nations to implement their drought policy and management plans” (Drought Resilience, adaptation and management policy framework). **National drought plans**³ are key component of the response to drought under the convention, though they don't appear as a “Category/key word”.
- Desired future state: All parties to the convention that want to develop a national drought plan are supported to develop one, to a level that contains bankable actions that will be financed by 2030.

Item 4 Joint Meeting of the IWG Drought and IWG Mid Term Evaluation

- IWG on Drought and IWG on Midterm Evaluation had a joint meeting. Participants discussed and exchanged ideas on political commitment, resource mobilisation, action at scale, and regional cooperation to support the ongoing processes of the UNCCD.

Item 5 Closing

- The co-chairs thanked the host country, the government of Uzbekistan, and the UNCCD Secretariat, for facilitating the meeting. Mr. Abduvokhid Zakhadullaev (Uzbekistan) thanked all participants and closed the fourth IWG meeting.

Item 6 Wrap Up/Future considerations

- Participants expressed their willingness to join specific working groups.
- The need for external expertise was agreed upon.
- Host countries and dates of the next IWG meetings are decided (see table below)

² (i) Enhancing monitoring and early warning systems (ii) reducing vulnerability and (iii) Mitigation, preparedness and response measures.

³ [Current status: 70 national plans are being worked on, 60 are delivered. A review of 31 plans by the FAO found 6 were highly satisfactory, 14 moderate and 11 need of improvement].

Table: Next Steps (updated)

2023	
14. December	<i>Submission of additional categories</i>
19 December	<i>Meeting summary disseminated (draft)</i>
2024	
15 January	<i>Recruitment of consultant(s)</i>
15 February	<i>Four groups submitting draft texts</i>
29 th February	<i>Working documents and agenda ready- in preparation for Chile meeting</i>
18 th -21 st March	<i>Chile - 5th IWG meeting takes place</i>
3 rd -6 th June	<i>Kingdom of Saudi Arabia - 6th and final IWG meeting takes place</i>
End June	<i>IWG report among COP documents</i>
December	<i>Final report presented at COP 16 (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)</i>