



MONITORING OF GENDER PARITY LEVELS ACROSS THE CONVENTION



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



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Prepared by Karen Elizabeth Bernard, UNCCD Gender Policy Officer.

Valuable contributions were provided by: Baron Joseph Orr, Biljana Kraemer, Birguy Lamizana, Coleen Carranza, Gilles Amadou Ouedraogo, Louise Baker, Mehrnaz Ghamari, Olga Andreeva, Xenya Scanlon, and Zlata Prlenda-Kunstek.

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United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1
D-53113 Bonn, Germany
www.unccd.int

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Key findings

- The status of gender parity across United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is uneven, with commendable levels of parity obtained in the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) Bureau, Conference of Parties (COP) Bureau, Science and Policy Interface (SPI) and Secretariat staff, within a balanced range of 40-60% women and men in each of these.
- At the same time, gender parity is currently lacking in several of the UNCCD bodies and groups, namely: Committee on Science and Technology (CST), Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Panel, Global Mechanism (GM) and overall national delegations to CRIC and COP. Participation of women in these groups was found to range between 0 to 33%, with an average of 20%, in these cases.
- For the UNCCD bodies or groups which have not yet achieved gender parity, recommendations are made in this report encouraging consideration of corrective measures to be taken temporarily, until an acceptable level of gender parity is achieved in each case.
- There are currently no strict requirements of parity under any of the UNCCD bodies or structures. With a view to maintaining consistent levels of gender parity over time, and from one election period to the next, it may be considered to establish intentional and explicit guidelines which limit the maximum number of men or women in any UNCCD body (to 60%).
- It should be noted that it is more challenging to achieve and maintain a gender balance in bodies with a small number of members, as one or two positions can have a substantial impact on shifting the gender parity percentages of men as compared to women.

1. Background

UNCCD has an unwavering commitment to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, based on decisions taken by our Parties. This commitment is expressed in our Gender Action Plan, in implementation since 2014. At our COP15 held in Abidjan in 2022, a Gender Roadmap to accelerate implementation of our Gender Action Plan (GAP) was also approved, to ensure that we pick up the pace towards transformative change.

Gender equality is vital to deliver sustainable, progressive, and meaningful action to avoid, reduce, and reverse land degradation. UNCCD's goal is to make sure women and girls are empowered in the global efforts to achieve land degradation neutrality. One key dimension and indication of gender equality is gender parity: the equal representation of women and men in decision-making and policy-making bodies. This is stated under the Priorities for Action of the GAP: "participation in decisions taken during the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of initiatives to implement the UNCCD... Parties will seek to increase and strengthen the participation and leadership of women at all levels in decision-making and local implementation of the UNCCD... and aim to reach gender parity by 2030."

The issue of monitoring parity was specifically addressed in Decision 24/COP.15(6), "Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Gender." In this decision, the COP: "Requests the secretariat, in collaboration with constituted bodies under the Convention, to monitor the level of gender parity across the Convention and report its findings to sessions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the Conference of the Parties."

In compliance with the COP15 decision, this study establishes a baseline for monitoring gender parity across the Convention in UNCCD subsidiary bodies and institutions – CST, SPI, CRIC Bureau, COP Bureau, UNCCD Secretariat staff, and national delegations to CRIC and COP – from 2024 onwards.

In cases where gender parity is lacking and requires improvement, the application of temporary special measures (TSM) is widely accepted and considered effective. Accordingly, in this study in some cases a recommendation is made to consider implementation of a TSM until parity is achieved. Within the United Nations system, these are advocated for in particular by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and explained as follows: "State parties should analyze the context of women's situation in all spheres of life, as well as in the specific, targeted area, when applying temporary special measures to accelerate achievement of women's de facto or substantive equality. They should evaluate the potential impact of temporary special measures with regard to a particular goal within their national context and adopt those temporary special measures which they consider to be the most appropriate in order to accelerate the achievement of de facto or substantive equality for women." General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 (27), of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on temporary special measures¹

The duration of a temporary special measure should be determined by its functional result in response to a concrete problem and not by a predetermined passage of time. Temporary special measures must be discontinued when their desired results have been achieved and sustained for a period of time.

2. Parity analysis for key bodies and groups across UNCCD

2.1. UNCCD Secretariat staff

MANDATE

The overall aim of the Secretariat remains to service the COP and its subsidiary bodies in a manner that enables well-founded decision-making and successful action in advancing the implementation of the Convention and The Strategy. One of the key functions is to service the sessions of the Conference of Parties (COP) and its subsidiary bodies, which includes a multitude of tasks, ranging from the preparation of substantive documentation, to making logistical arrangements for the holding of the sessions of the Conference of the Party. The Secretariat also provides assistance to affected developing country Parties to help facilitate their implementation of the Convention. It also acts as custodian for the UNCCD reporting process and coordinates UNCCD activities with the secretariats of other relevant international bodies and conventions.

PARITY DATA

As of the end of December 2023, 51% of the staff members are women, out of a total of 49 staff members from the level of P1 to USG under fixed-term contracts. Representation of women among General Service staff (GS-4 to GS-7) exceeds the numbers of men, as women comprise 65% of GS staff members (men are 35%), showing a moderate imbalance at GS level. Overall the level of women's representation in UNCCD staff is 56%, from GS-4 to USG under fixed-term contracts. Parity is therefore quite on track, however, with some attention needed to take opportunities to hire more men in GS positions.

PROCEDURES FOR HIRING NEW STAFF

As per United Nations policies, UNCCD recruits and hires staff through a transparent and internationally competitive process. Final approval on hiring a selected candidate as a staffperson is given by the Executive Secretary, once he or she reviews the process that was followed. Gender parity data on composition on staff at all levels at UNCCD Secretariat is tracked, recorded and reviewed annually.

The gender parity figures on each UNCCD staff unit are found in Annex 2.

RECOMMENDATION

Continue with current good progress on gender parity among UNCCD staff, with some attention needed to take opportunities to hire more men in GS positions.

2.2. Global Mechanism (GM) staff

MANDATE

The Global Mechanism (GM) was established in 1994 under Article 21 of the Convention to facilitate the mobilization of financial resources to implement the Convention and address

desertification, land degradation and drought. As an operational arm of the Convention, the GM provides advisory services. It works together with developing countries, the private sector and donors to mobilize substantial resources within and outside a country, in order to implement the Convention at the national level.

The GM advises countries that request guidance on how to implement the Convention. This includes advice on how to: set national land degradation neutrality targets; develop and scale up large projects that transform lives and livelihoods; and develop national drought plans.

PARITY DATA

As of the end February 2024, 67% of the GM staff members are women, out of a total of 15 staff members from the GS and P levels under fixed-term contracts. Women's representation at the lowest-ranking staff levels (GS-5 and P2, in this case) is 100% women, which is cause for concern. However, women also predominate at the highest levels of GM staff (P4 to D1) with 3 times as many women as men in these higher level positions, which somewhat balances the lack of parity at the lower end of the scale. Parity therefore can be improved GM staffing, in particular with attention needed to take opportunities to hire more men in GS positions.

PROCEDURES FOR HIRING NEW STAFF

As per United Nations policies, UNCCD recruits and hires staff through a transparent and internationally competitive process. Final approval on hiring a selected candidate as a staffperson is given by the Executive Secretary, once he or she reviews the process that was followed. Gender parity data on composition on staff at all levels at UNCCD Secretariat, including GM, is tracked, recorded and reviewed annually. To date, gender parity in the GM had not been tracked separately from all UNCCD staff.

RECOMMENDATION

Continue to monitor gender parity among GM staff, with attention needed to hire more men in GS positions as opportunities arise.

2.3. Committee on Science and Technology (CST) Bureau

MANDATE

The CST is established by Article 24 of the Convention. It has been established to provide the COP with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. It is assigned various advisory functions, including providing data and other information, to perform research and review as well as for technology and evaluation.

The CST has a Bureau which is elected to oversee the implementation of the CST programme between sessions. This Bureau is headed by a Chair and is comprised of Vice Chairs representing all Annexes of the Convention.

PARITY DATA

All 5 members of the CST16 are currently men.

PROCEDURES FOR INTEGRATING NEW MEMBERS

Excerpt from the CST Terms of Reference, approved in Decision COP15 (1):

5. The Committee shall be multidisciplinary and open to the participation of all Parties. It shall be composed of government representatives competent in fields of expertise relevant to combatting desertification and mitigating the effects of drought.
6. The Committee shall elect its own Vice-Chairpersons, one of which shall act as Rapporteur. Together with the Chairperson, elected by the Conference of the Parties in accordance with rule 31 of the rules of procedure, they shall constitute the Bureau. The Chairperson and the Vice-Chairpersons shall be elected with due regard to the need to ensure equitable geographical distribution and adequate representation of affected country Parties, particularly those in Africa, and shall not serve for more than two consecutive terms.

RECOMMENDATION

For the next election, with an awareness of the current lack of gender balance, discuss and consider voluntarily limiting the number of men elected to a maximum of 3, reserving at least 2 places for women on the Committee.

2.4. Science and Policy Interface (SPI)

MANDATE

The SPI works to translate current science into policy-relevant recommendations resulting from assessment and synthesis of current science. This includes collaboration with and leveraging the products of other scientific panels and bodies. The SPI produces peer-reviewed technical reports as well as science-policy briefs designed to support policy development. The SPI conducts peer-review of other scientific assessments and science-based communications. The SPI also communicates with the larger scientific community about the scientific knowledge requirements of the UNCCD and associated policy implications, encouraging relevant and salient research.

PARITY DATA

Of the 24 SPI members, 12 are men and 12 are women, for a perfect gender balance.

All of the 4 Early Career Scientist Fellows are currently women, which indicates a concerted effort to incorporate women into the SPI from the beginning of their careers.²

PROCEDURES FOR INTEGRATING NEW MEMBERS

The 25 SPI members and observer organization representatives are selected by the Bureau of the CST following an open application process. During the SPI renewal process in 2019, the Bureau of the CST noted that although women were encouraged to apply in the open call text for independent scientists, less than a quarter of applicants were female. As a response, the COP, in its decision 19/COP.15 para 1,10 requested the Bureau of the CST and the secretariat, after consulting with those intergovernmental scientific bodies and panels cooperating with the SPI11, to develop a gender policy and implementation plan for the SPI whereby gender is mainstreamed, and gender parity is progressively achieved.

RECOMMENDATION

Continue to monitor gender parity when the next renewal process is held, with a view to maintaining the commendable balance.

2.5. CRIC Bureau

MANDATE

Following the establishment of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention from Decision 1/COP.5, a bureau was also constituted to assist its work, and remains in function during the period in between the meetings.

PARITY DATA

Currently there are 3 women and 2 men in CRIC21/22 Bureau. This can be considered a good gender balance.

PROCEDURES FOR INTEGRATING NEW MEMBERS

The CRIC has a Bureau headed by a Chair, who is supported by Vice Chairs representing all five Annexes of the Convention. The Chair of the CRIC is automatically a member of the COP Bureau. The CRIC Bureau is elected for a period of two years.

RECOMMENDATION

Continue to monitor gender parity when new elections occur, with a view to maintaining the balance.

2.6. COP Bureau

MANDATE

During each COP, the Bureau leads the work of governments, acting as a focal point.

The COP Bureau takes the lead on issues that need follow-up post-COP and is in charge of preparing forthcoming COP meetings. The COP Bureau also often supervises specific, particularly demanding or sensitive tasks or processes that are carried out between the COP sessions.

The COP Bureau has an important role in the UNCCD process also outside of the sessions, as it directs various aspects concerning the follow-up of the decisions of the COP. The COP Bureau is also often assigned to supervise specific, particularly demanding or sensitive tasks or processes that are carried out between the COP sessions. Indeed the COP Bureau generally oversees the UNCCD process between the COPs.

PARITY DATA

Of 12 members of the COP15 Bureau, 6 are men and 6 are women. This constitutes a perfect gender balance.

PROCEDURES FOR INTEGRATING NEW MEMBERS

At the beginning of the first meeting of each ordinary session, the bureau elects a President and nine Vice-Presidents from among the representatives of the Parties, thus ensuring all geographical regions are represented by at least two members.

RECOMMENDATION

Continue to monitor gender parity when new elections occur, with a view to maintaining the balance. Consider adopting an explicit requirement that each geographical region have 1 man and 1 woman on the COP Bureau, to guarantee gender parity going forward.

3. Parity analysis on national delegations to CRIC and COP

3.1. Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)

MANDATE

According to its terms of reference the CRIC shall assist the COP in the review of the implementation of the Convention under the authority and guidance of the COP, and as an integral part of the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS).

After doing a substantive review of the implementation process, the CRIC makes recommendations for the consideration of the COP. All recommendations of the CST are first sent to the CRIC before their consideration by the COP.

PARITY DATA

At CRIC21, 112 Parties attended, with total of 219 delegates: of these 146 were men, and 72 were women. This amounts to 67% men and 33% women, which is quite unbalanced.

It should also be noted that at CRIC21, 62 of the 112 delegations (55%) had no women, while 22 (20%) had no men. This also reveals a substantial imbalance, with overall under-representation of women.

PROCEDURES FOR TRACKING DELEGATES TO CRIC

A complete list of participants is compiled and shared after the CRIC on UNCCD public website.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In reporting to the COP16, as per COP decision the Secretariat will share this information, and should strongly encourage the Parties to include more women in their delegations, and in that way seek to obtain gender balance, for more accurate representation of their respective populations.

Parties may wish to establish quotas to limit the percentage of men or women in their delegation to a maximum of 60%.

3.2. Conference of Parties (COP)

MANDATE

The COP is the highest and the main decision-making body, and is comprised of all Parties to the Convention. As the supreme body of the Convention the functions of the COP include: review of the entire UNCCD process; taking decisions on all matters; making changes to the Convention itself; establishing subsidiary bodies and other organs of the Convention.

PARITY DATA

At COP15, 134 Parties attended, with total of 789 delegates: of these 577 were men, and 213 were women. This amounts to 73% men and 27% women, which is quite unbalanced, although it is a slight improvement from COP14 (at which delegates were 79% men and 21% women).

It should also be noted that at COP15, 46 of the 134 delegations had no women, while 12 had no men. This also reveals a substantial imbalance, with under-representation of women.

PROCEDURES FOR TRACKING DELEGATES TO COP

A complete list of participants is compiled and shared after the COP on UNCCD public website.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In reporting to the COP16, as per COP decision the Secretariat will share this information, and should strongly encourage the Parties to include more women in their delegations, and in that way seek to obtain gender balance, for more accurate representation of their respective populations.

Parties may wish to establish quotas to limit the percentage of men or women in their delegation to a maximum of 60%.

3.3. CSO (Civil Society Organizations) Panel

MANDATE

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) civil society panel was established by the Conference of the Parties (COP) in 2011 to bring together the civil society community involved in the Convention.

The 5 members from each of 5 regional groupings of the nations of the world, democratically elected by the observer organizations for a two year-period, have been mandated to liaise with their constituencies and bring the voices of the civil society to the negotiations of the convention, to facilitate the coordination among the accredited CSOs and to ensure an efficient communication on issues related to desertification, land degradation and drought.

PARITY DATA

At present the CSO Panel is composed of 4 men and 1 woman. However, the previous two CSO Panels were composed of 3 women and 2 men. Clearly there is attention paid to ensuring a gender balance, although in the recent election this has gotten off track.

In terms of sponsored CSO participants at CRIC21, these were 60% female and 40% male, which is gender balanced.

PROCEDURES FOR INTEGRATING NEW MEMBERS

The Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) accredited to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) elect the members of the UNCCD CSO panel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to monitor gender parity when new elections for CSO Panel occur, and encourage the election of women, with a view to improving the current imbalance.

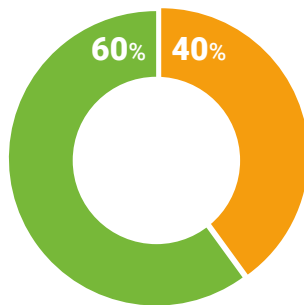
4. Conclusions

The status of gender parity across UNCCD is uneven, with admirable levels of parity obtained in the CRIC Bureau, COP Bureau, SPI and Secretariat staff, within a balanced range of 40-60% women in each of these.

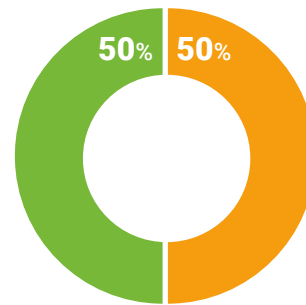
BODIES ACHIEVING GENDER PARITY IN 2023/2024

■ Women ■ Men

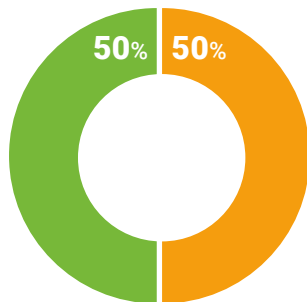
CRIC BUREAU 21/22



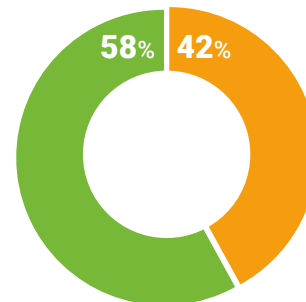
COP BUREAU (COP15)



SCIENCE-POLICY INTERFACE



SECRETARIAT STAFF

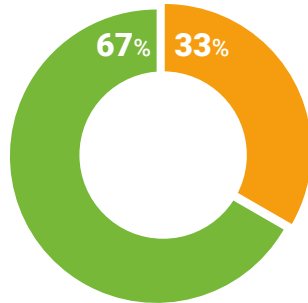


At the same time, gender parity is lacking in several of the UNCCD bodies and groups, namely: CST, CSO Panel, GM staff and overall national delegations to CRIC and COP. Participation of women was found to range between 0 to 33%, with an average of 20%, in these cases. For these groups, recommendations are made in this report encouraging corrective measures to be taken temporarily, until an acceptable level of gender parity is achieved.

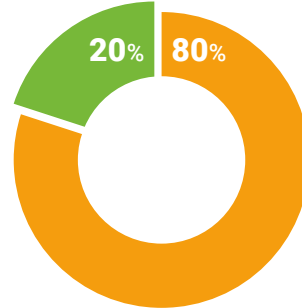
BODIES LACKING GENDER PARITY IN 2023/2024

Women Men

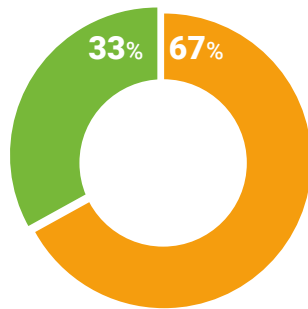
GLOBAL MECHANISM (GM) STAFF



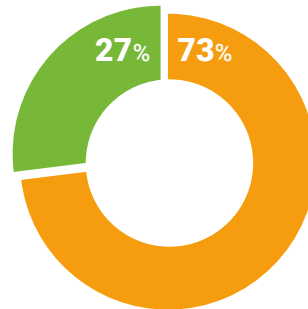
CSO PANEL



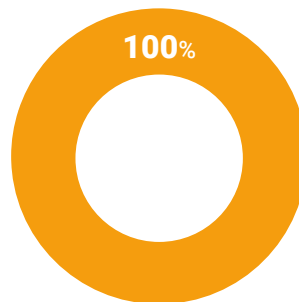
PARTIES' DELEGATES TO CRIC21



PARTIES' DELEGATES TO COP15



COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (CST) BUREAU



There are currently no strict requirements of gender parity under any of the UNCCD bodies or structures. With a view to maintaining consistent levels of gender parity over time, and from one election period to the next, it may be considered to establish intentional and explicit guidelines which limit the maximum number of men or women in any UNCCD body (to 60%).

It should be noted that it is more challenging to achieve and maintain a gender balance in bodies with a small number of members, as one or two positions can have a substantial impact on shifting the gender parity percentages of men as compared to women.

Annex 1

Parity levels in UNCCD Secretariat and GM staff - 2023

As of the end of December 2023, 51% of the staff members are women out of a total of 49 staff members from the Professional level (P1 to USG) under fixed-term contracts. Women representation for General Service staff (GS-4 to GS-7) exceeds the men staff, as women comprise 65% of GS staff members (men are 35%), showing a moderate imbalance at GS level. Overall the level of women's representation in UNCCD staff is 56%, from GS-4 to USG under fixed-term contracts. Parity is therefore quite on track, however, with some attention needed to take opportunities to hire more men in GS positions.

In the last 4 years, UNCCD has made great strides towards achieving gender parity within the secretariat and the GM, following the recommendations from the UN-SWAP reporting cycle in 2019.

The UNCCD human resources management and related policies are gender-responsive and its workforce, in fact, (the secretariat and the Global Mechanism) has achieved gender parity which is reported in its COP documents.

UNCCD has been implementing strategies and commitments to ensure gender parity in its Secretariat and the Global Mechanism. UNCCD has a gender-parity strategy which is part of the advocacy policy framework on gender (Target 8). In parallel, it follows UN Staff rules and regulations on recruitment and appointments in which considerations are given to both geographic and gender representation.

Gender parity data for staff at UNCCD Secretariat

As of Dec 2023

GENDER PARITY DATA BY LEVEL P STAFF			GENDER PARITY DATA BY LEVEL GS STAFF		
	Female	Male		Female	Male
P1	0	0	G3	0	0
P2	5	1	G4	0	1
P3	9	7	G5	12	6
P4	7	9	G6	3	1
P5	2	3	G7	4	1
D1	1	2			
D2	1	0			
ASG	0	0			
USG	0	1			

Gender parity data for staff at Global Mechanism (GM)

As of February 2024

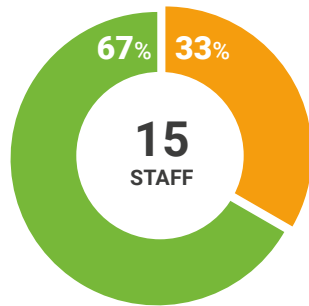
GENDER PARITY DATA FOR GLOBAL MECHANISM STAFF		
	Female	Male
G5	3	0
P2	1	0
P3	3	4
P4	2	1
P5	0	0
D1	1	0
D2	0	0

Annex 2

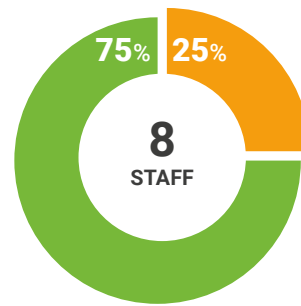
Parity by level in each UNCCD staffing unit - 2023

Women Men | as of December 2023

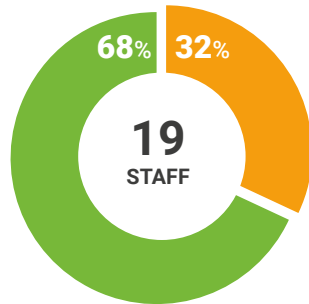
GLOBAL MECHANISM (GM) STAFF



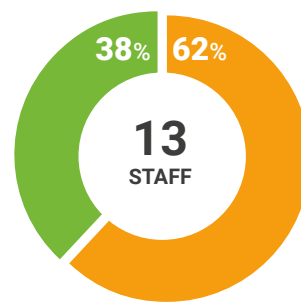
G20 INITIATIVE STAFF



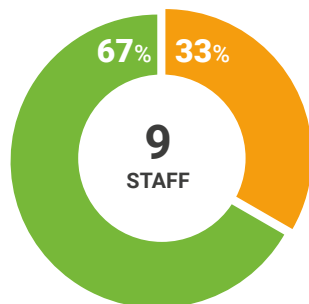
EXECUTIVE DIRECTION MANAGEMENT (EDM) STAFF



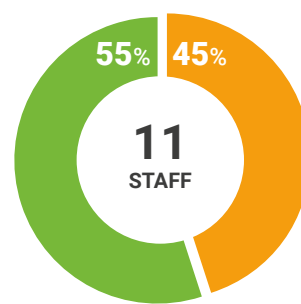
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES (AS) STAFF



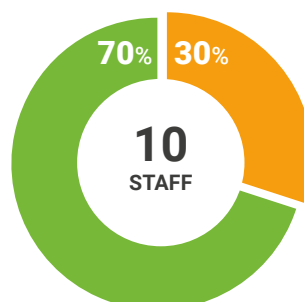
COMMUNICATIONS, EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS (CERP) STAFF



GLOBAL POLICY ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH (GPARC) STAFF



SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (STI) STAFF



Annex 3

Overview of parity levels in UNCCD bodies - 2023

UNCCD body or group	Total persons	# of men	Percentage men	Percentage women	# of women
Committee on Science and Technology (CST)	5	5	100%	0%	0
CSO panel	5 (one from each Annex)	4	80%	20%	1
CRIC Bureau 21/22	5	2	40%	60%	3
COP Bureau (COP15)	12	6	50%	50%	6
Delegates to COP14 (all Parties with delegations to COP14) ³			79%	21%	
Delegates to COP15 (all Parties with delegations to COP15)	789	577	73%	27%	213
Delegates to CRIC21	219	146	67%	33%	72
Science-Policy Interface (SPI)	24	12	50%	50%	12
Secretariat staff	76	32	42%	58%	44
Global Mechanism (GM) staff	15	5	33%	67%	10

Notes:

Entities highlighted in **green** are considered to have achieved gender parity. Entities in white background are considered to fall short of gender parity.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cedaw/general-recommendations>
- 2 [Members | UNCCD](#)
- 3 UNCCD. 2022. Study on the Differentiated Impacts of Land Degradation, Desertification and Drought on Women and Men, pp 97-98. UNCCD: Bonn.



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Desertification

