



Midterm evaluation of the 2018-2030 UNCCD Strategic Framework

Report of the online meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group 17 July 2023

Background

At its 15th session the Conference of the Parties (COP) launched the midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. This midterm evaluation process is overseen by an intergovernmental working group - IWG-MTE - and involves an independent assessment, the results of which will be considered through a participatory consultation. The final product of the midterm evaluation process will be a report by the IWG-MTE, which will be submitted for the consideration of COP 16 in 2024.

IWG-MTE consists of 15 members (three representatives per UN region, nominated by each region) and seven observers representing the scientific community, major international organizations and the civil society. The UNCCD secretariat supports the work of IWG-MTE and services its meetings.

The group met for the first time in February 2023 to set the basis for the midterm evaluation process and to consider its own programme of work. After the meeting, following the guidance of the IWG, the preparation of the independent assessment started.

The second meeting, chaired by Mr. Luis Constantino, was held online on 17 July 2023. Almost all members and observers were present; this list of participants is in Annex 1 of this report. The focus of the meeting was on the progress made in preparing the independent assessment, and IWG-MTE also looked at the preparations made for the participatory consultations and its next meeting. The agenda of the online meeting is in Annex 2 of this report.

Preparation of the independent assessment

The independent assessment is to provide well-analyzed, evidence-based information on the measures taken and progress made toward the Strategic Framework, which will provide the basis for the IWG-MTE report to COP 16. It is prepared by a team of external evaluators (Mr. Ansgar Eussner as the lead evaluator, Ms. Eneidy Njoroge as the assistant evaluator, and Ms. Ines Robin, an intern working with the team until the end of August) and managed by the UNCCD secretariat.

In the IWG-MTE meeting of 17 July, the evaluation team reported of having conducted an online survey and interviews, and continued the desk review of documents. The survey had been sent to all key stakeholder groups of the UNCCD and also made available through the UNCCD website. 130 answers were received, among them 56 from national focal points. In June and July 48 stakeholders were interviewed, for additional information beyond the topics covered by the survey. By the time of the meeting, the team had summarized and analyzed most part of the survey and interview responses.

The resulting preliminary findings were presented to the group, and they are contained in Annex 3 of this report. Only a few comments were given at this stage – the direct connection between the UNCCD and the SDGs through the inclusion of land degradation neutrality in target 15.3.1 was noted as an important factor for the relevance of the Strategic Framework, and the long-term potential of the UNCCD in advancing food security and addressing water scarcity was mentioned as well.

The lead evaluator noted that rather good set of findings is already available for making conclusions on the first two evaluation criteria on relevance and coherence, but for the others - efficiency, effectiveness, progress to impact and sustainability - more data and analysis is needed. This work will continue in the coming months. It was also noted that for the first time under the UNCCD, this evaluation process has used artificial intelligence (ChatGPT) as a tool to rapidly summarize the main content of sizable



documents. So far, such summaries of information have proven to be adequately accurate and while the team is cautious in using artificial intelligence, its benefits for accessing key messages from large amount of information are recognized.

Midterm evaluation process in the context of CRIC 21

The twenty-first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 21) to the UNCCD will take place at the Silk Road Samarkand Congress Center, in Samarkand, Uzbekistan from Monday 13 to Friday 17 November 2023. On Thursday 16 November, the afternoon session will be devoted for the participatory consultation on the draft conclusions and recommendations of the independent assessment.

Before that time, the evaluation team aims to produce an advanced draft of the independent assessment report. Although this advance draft will be shared with IWG-MTE, the participatory consultations will be built on a shorter and more focused paper that presents the main findings as well as the conclusions and recommendations that the evaluation teams sees as emerging from the findings. This paper may also include questions or specific points to assist in organising the work during the participatory consultation session.

The paper will be tabled at the CRIC as a conference room paper (CRP), which is an official document but meant to be shared during the meeting (not a pre-session document). To ensure that the regional and interest groups will have ample time to consider the contents before the consultations at the CRIC, the evaluation team and the secretariat will aim to complete and share the paper latest one week in advance to the CRIC.

Next in-person meeting of IWG-MTE will be also held in Samarkand, scheduled to start in the afternoon of Saturday 18 November and finish in the evening of Monday 20 November. At this meeting, the group will start its discussion on the report to be submitted to COP 16, building on the draft independent assessment report and the feedback received through the participatory consultations. Further details on the proposed agenda of the meeting will be considered with IWG-MTE closer to the date.

All items on the agenda of CRIC 21 – the results of the national reporting and updates on key UNCCD topics – are very relevant for the work of IWG-MTE. Therefore the secretariat suggested that if possible, the group members and observers participate in the CRIC from the beginning, not only from the Thursday participatory consultations on. The participation cost support to eligible IWG members and observers will cover also the CRIC days.

Next steps

Below is an overview of the steps to be taken in the midterm evaluation process in the coming months. Some important dates are also included.

Timeline	Activity
Continuous	Further data collection and analysis for the independent assessment
By 31 October (latest)	- Advance draft of the independent assessment report is sent to IWG MTE members - Draft agenda and other documentation for the next IWG MTE meeting is sent to the IWG MTE members
3 November (latest)	CRP for participatory consultations is distributed online as part of CRIC documents and sent to the IWG MTE members
12 November	Regional consultations prior to CRIC in Samarkand
13-17 November	CRIC 21
16 November	Participatory consultations as part of the CRIC agenda
18-20 November	Next IWG MTE meeting

Annex 1

List of participants

Members	Name
Angola	Mr. Luis Domingos Constantino
Argentina	Mr. Pablo Viegas
Australia	Mr. Fleur Downard
China	Mr. WANG Hua
Cook Islands	Ms. Hayley Weeks
Czech Republic	Mr. Premysl Stepanek
EU	Mr. Daniel Van Assche
Mexico	Ms. Valeria Cruz
Montenegro	Ms. Biljana Kilibarda
Namibia	Ms. Kauna B Schroder
Peru	Ms. Cristina Rodriguez
Republic of Korea	Mr. Jungyo Lee
Slovakia	Ms. Beata Houskova
USA	Mr. Patrick Reilly

Observers	Name
FAO	Ms Vera Boerger
IUCN	Mr. Chris Magero
SPI	Prof. Ahmed Abd El-Ati Ahmed
CSO	Mr. Charles Oyeoussi Balogoun

Other	Name
Evaluation team	Mr. Ansgar Eussner
	Ms. Etedy Njoroge
	Ms. Ines Robin
UNCCD secretariat	Satu Ravola
	Anja Thust

Annex 2

Agenda of the online meeting

1. Welcome by the co-chairs
2. Introduction and adoption of the agenda
3. Update on the status of the independent assessment
 - Brief overview of the process
 - Presentation of the main findings so far
4. Next steps in building the independent assessment
5. Preparations for the participatory consultations, the CRIC and the next IWG meeting
6. Any other matters

Annex 3

Progress report on the independent assessment

1. Data collection process

After the preparation of the inception report which was presented and discussed at the IWG MTE meeting in February this year, the desk review of documents continued, followed by the preparation, dispatch and later analysis of a survey that was sent to all key stakeholder groups of UNCCD and also made available through the UNCCD website. 130 answers were received, among them 56 from national focal points. In June and July 48 stakeholders were interviewed, for more details see table in Annex 1.

The data collection will continue with some more interviews and a more thorough review of the various documents and studies available in the UNCCD secretariat and in the GM.

2. Preliminary findings of the independent assessment

This paper presents a brief overview of the preliminary findings of the independent evaluation team based on the information provided by survey respondents, interviewees and documents; it is not yet fully analysed or assessed, and there are also findings that point to different directions in some cases. The findings should therefore be considered as preliminary and might be modified as more information will be collected and reviewed during the coming months.

The findings are organised under the evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, progress to impact and sustainability. The findings concerning gender responsiveness will be provided later on. For each criterion, a general statement is made, followed by information of the progress made and areas for improvement/weaknesses. Where feasible, matters considering LDN and drought are specifically addressed.

RELEVANCE

Does the Strategic Framework continue to reflect the priorities of the UNCCD as an intergovernmental process?

The Strategic Objectives (SOs) and the topics they represent (improving ecosystems - SO1, improving living conditions - SO2, addressing drought and building resilience - SO3, generating synergies / global benefits - SO4, and mobilizing resources and partnerships - SO5) remain relevant to UNCCD Parties and stakeholders.

- Almost all country respondents (over 90%) and a large majority (78%) of organisation respondents to the survey consider the Strategic Framework relevant to the priorities of their country/organization. Slightly smaller number of respondents (79% and 76%) report that the Framework is guiding their country/organization's approach to addressing DLDD.
- Of the country level processes, the survey respondents consider LDN as most relevant for implementing synergies with climate change and biodiversity (70% of respondents), land/land use projects and programmes (64%) and collaboration with partners (61%), and least relevant for budgetary/financial planning and investments (24,5%). For the organizations, LDN was seen as most relevant for their land/land use projects and programmes (73%), strategic planning (69%) and policy development (64%). LDN was seen as relevant also for implementing synergies (60%).
- With regard to mitigating the effects of drought and resilience building, at country level it was considered most relevant to implementing synergies with climate change and biodiversity (68%) and projects and programmes involving water management, disaster risk management or other related areas (67%), and least relevant for budgetary/financial planning and investments (36,5%). Majority of the organization respondents assessed mitigating the effects of drought and resilience building very or extremely relevant in all of the processes listed in the survey.

- Many Parties have used the UNCCD as a relevant framework for building national strategies, policies and frameworks to address DLDD, in particular for the LDN target-setting and national drought plans. Some have used it also for developing DLDD projects and programmes. For example, the Cook Islands look to UNCCD for guidance in GEF projects. UNCCD has guided national policy on sustainable land management (SLM) in Mexico, although challenges were faced during a change of government. Namibia has enshrined environment protection in the constitution, focusing on land tenure and gender issues considered as important to reach land restoration targets. Peru has integrated UNCCD recommendations into national reporting and policies, including LDN measures alongside nationally determined contributions (NDCs) on climate change.
- UNCCD is seen as a platform and forum for sharing and receiving information and experiences relevant to DLDD among countries and other stakeholders. Its role in promoting and supporting partnerships and initiatives around its key topics is recognized (the African Great Green Wall, the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA), the G20 Initiative and cooperation with the World Economic Forum (WEF) were specifically mentioned).
- The effects of droughts and soil degradation are becoming severe in areas that were not affected earlier, notably in the global North and consequently, the attention to these issues and with it the relevance of the UNCCD framework for addressing them is increasing. The leading role of Spain in IDRA and the membership of several other industrial countries like Germany, Italy, the USA and others show the increasing urgency felt for addressing drought problems; also the debates in the EU about becoming an affected party and the approval by the European Parliament of a comprehensive legislation on nature protection, including soil and land degradation and ecosystems restoration are prominent examples.

Relevance: Areas of improvement/weaknesses

- While the UNCCD and the Strategic Framework are perceived as being highly relevant for addressing climate change and biodiversity loss, their status and recognition are much lower than those of the other two Conventions. The UNCCD has less resources, less political and media attention and weaker science-policy influence.
- The UNCCD and its Strategic Framework do not influence much national budgetary processes. Also the UNCCD secretariat is small and while its hard work is recognized by interview partners, its limited resources are also acknowledged.
- In contrast to many other MEAs, the UNCCD and its Strategic Framework have no quantitative targets or explicit obligations to its Parties (such as obligations to provide national data or meeting national targets), only voluntary targets and processes.
- The role of women and gender equality in the UNCCD implementation could be enhanced. This will be substantiated in a parallel evaluation.
- Even if the UNCCD and its Strategic Framework are generally seen as relevant, the actions taken by countries are predominantly guided by other frameworks that are either more specific/suitable to their situation or considered politically more important.
- It was repeatedly stated that there is a need to communicate the UNCCD mandate more effectively outside the concerned stakeholders, including also to the media and general public, and to increase awareness about what the UNCCD plans, does and achieves.

COHERENCE

Is the Strategic Framework coherent with – and responsive to – related processes and institutions?

The UNCCD and its Strategic Framework are coherent with other key processes and frameworks.

- The survey results indicate that the UNCCD and its Strategic Framework are coherent with the SDGs, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (UNDEC), the other two Rio Conventions and their implementation processes, with at least two-thirds of the respondents agreeing to each of these statements.
- The role of the UNCCD as the custodian of SDG 15.3.1 on LDN and related reporting was specifically emphasized in the interviews, along with the key role of LDN in 50 projects funded by the GEF under its Land Degradation Focal Area, and that of ecosystem restoration in UNDEC.
- Other mentioned examples of coherence with other processes are the UNCCD inputs to the African Great Green Wall through its Accelerator Unit, support to the 3S Initiative launched by Morocco and Senegal, as well as cooperation activities with specialized organizations and entities like FAO, IFAD, UNEP, WMO, WFP and WOCAT.

Coherence: Areas of improvement/weaknesses

- Several interviewees stated that the three Rio conventions still operate largely independently from each other, in spite of increasing high-level coordination via the Joint Liaison Group of their Executive Secretaries.
- The respective national focal points tend to be in different ministries and/or departments. Some countries reported that the UNCCD focal points are mostly in the environment ministries compared to those of the UNFCCC and CBD focal points being more often part of the more powerful ministries of foreign affairs or agriculture.
- Collaboration between the UNCCD and regional organizations is not sufficiently developed. This was particularly mentioned for African regional organisations, like EAC, ECOWAS, SADC and others, and was pointed out also by national focal points of Latin American countries.

EFFICIENCY

To what extent does the Strategic Framework support resource mobilisation efforts?

Is the Strategic Framework being monitored efficiently?

Countries know what resources are needed and where to look for them, but often lack the capacity to access them.

The national reporting looks at relevant matters, but the reporting tool could be simplified and made easier to use.

On resources:

- According to the survey results, a large majority (72%) of countries knows what the resources needed for their country are to implement the Strategic Framework and its Objectives. However, only a small number of respondents reports of having secured the resources. Almost half of the respondents (40%) states that they know where to look for funding for to implement the Strategic Framework and its Objectives, but almost the same number (37%) claims not to have the technical capacity to access the resources.
- While in the survey nearly 40% of respondents stated that aside from insufficient financial resources, they have sufficient technical and institutional capacity in place to support their country's implementation of the Strategic Framework and its Objectives, in the interviews most national focal points and their representatives emphasized the limitations to their operational capacities.
- GM support for resource mobilization, notably the assistance in and tools for developing project concepts, were seen as helpful, and its timely responses to questions and requests were appreciated.

- The important role of the GEF as well as the special initiatives launched by some countries and partners (the Changwon Initiative, and the G20 Initiative) in advancing the UNCCD implementation was recognized.

On monitoring progress:

- In the survey, a large majority of the respondents (83%) assessed the national reporting indicators as relevant to their country's approach to DLDD. Almost the same number considered that the national reports provide an accurate reflection of their country's progress towards addressing DLDD (79% of the respondents).
- 83% of respondents stated that the process of preparing a national report supports national coordination and cooperation on DLDD matters, and 78% noted that they continue to use the national reports and the associated data for their own purposes after the report submission to the UNCCD.

Efficiency: Areas of improvement/weaknesses

- Accessing funding from many major donors and implementing partners is complex, and many UNCCD focal points and other stakeholders said to lack the required capacity. The need for improved awareness of funding sources and their working modalities as well as project preparation requirements and methods were recognized. Involving other capable actors, such as regional organisations, in resource mobilization efforts was considered necessary. Some respondents noted that the GM staff is very helpful and reactive, but that staff resources are very stretched.
- The engagement of the private sector was considered to be still very limited, and the need for the development of business cases to demonstrate the concrete economic and social benefits of land restoration and SLM was noted.
- The national focal points change often in many countries, which was seen as problematic for LDN related matters and tasks, as these tend to be technical and demanding. Limited knowledge of English was considered sometimes also as hampering effective communication with peers in other countries and funding agencies.
- Some respondents thought that the secretariat is not always clear about the need for and benefit of additional budgetary resources when requesting them.
- Only half (52%) of the survey respondents considered that the UNCCD objectives and expectations are sufficiently flexible and responsive to unforeseen events (e.g. COVID).
- The PRAIS4 reporting is relying mostly on satellite default data, supplemented/corrected in the minority of cases by national data. A dashboard displaying PRAIS results would be valuable for identifying trends. Challenges for national focal points include understanding the reporting system, complexity of indicators, technical issues, data sourcing from other national institutions, and complex administrative procedures by countries and UNEP with resulting funding delays for getting timely support via specialised consultants.
- The UNCCD framework includes Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), but some suggested to enhance CSOs' involvement with a view to further increase their participation and provide support for their activities.

EFFECTIVENESS

What measures have been developed through the UNCCD process to support delivery of the Strategic Objectives? How effective are these measures?

To be noted: these findings are very preliminary and will be significantly enhanced later on.

Results achieved at country level and/or globally

- In general, respondents noted that land matters are more visible in the international agenda than earlier and their inter-connectedness is better understood. Land is also increasingly featuring in the nationally determined contributions under the UNFCCC and the CBD national biodiversity action plans, as well as in the new Global Biodiversity Framework.
- **LDN:** By now, 129 countries have joined the UNCCD LDN target-setting programme and 106 of them have already set their targets. Majority of the countries (close to 80) that have worked on the LDN targets have also started the development of corresponding LDN transformative projects and programmes in collaboration with partners. In the survey, 90% of the respondents that have been involved in the UNCCD's LDN-focused activities stated that it has improved their understanding of the status of land degradation. Most of them considered that it has also improved planning and tools for fighting land degradation and increased capacity to measure and monitor land degradation (73% for both points), improved national/local coordination on land matters (66%) and assisted in the implementation of the conventions on biodiversity and climate change (60%). However, less than half of the respondents thought that it had increased political commitment to land matters (45%) and secured more funding (whether internal or external) for land related projects (39%).
- **Drought:** Since 2017, the role of addressing drought has grown in the UNCCD process, starting with the establishment of the four-year Drought Initiative. This Initiative supported Parties in developing national drought plans, which were finalized in 60 countries. It also facilitated regional efforts to reduce drought risk and enabled the building of a Drought Toolbox. In terms of policy developments, two IWGs were established to consider effective policy instruments and frameworks as well as implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD, with the first of them providing its findings to COP 15 and the second one due to report to COP 16 in 2024.
- In the survey, 81% of the respondents that have been involved in the UNCCD drought activities stated that it has improved their understanding of the drought risk. Many considered that it had also improved planning for drought and mitigating the effects of drought (77%), increased political commitment to drought preparedness (67%), assisted in the implementation of the conventions on biodiversity and climate change (64%) and increased capacity for drought monitoring and early warning (59%). Somewhat lower ratings were given to the UNCCD drought activities having improved national/local coordination on drought (52%) and secured more funding (internal or external) for drought preparedness (50%).

Effectiveness of the Convention institutions and bodies

- In the survey, respondents were asked for their opinion on same five statements on effectiveness for the secretariat, the GM, the CRIC and the CST. Below is a table showing the statements, the UNCCD entities and the percentage of respondents that gave a positive rating (agree or strongly agree with the statement) for each entity.

Statement in the survey	SEC	GM	CRIC	CST
The role of this UNCCD entity is clear	83%	76%	72%	64%
The entity's way of working is effective	71%	63%	62%	55%
Considering the Strategic Framework and its Objectives, the entity focuses its work on the most appropriate topics	69%	65%	74%	67%
The entity's work is valuable for my country / region / organization's work on DLDD	72%	65%	60%	55%
We use the entity's work in my country / region / organization	59%	54%	60%	60%

- Both CRIC and CST were assigned specific tasks in the Strategic Framework and related work was also assessed by survey respondents. The three tasks for CRIC were about assessing reports submitted by Parties and other reporting entities; producing targeted recommendations and draft decisions for consideration by the COP; and facilitating the exchange of information on measures adopted by Parties through formal and informal interactive sessions and online platforms on topical issues, including capacity-building, best practices and lessons learned relating to on-the-ground implementation. Two-thirds of the respondents considered CRIC work on all three tasks (69% on average) either good or very good.
- CST was tasked in the Strategic Framework to contribute to improving the scientific understanding of and knowledge on the processes leading to and solutions to address DLDD; to addressing specific needs of local populations and helping to identify solutions that improve the standards of living of people in affected areas; to facilitating networking among scientific institutions related to DLDD and ongoing activities through the Science–Policy Interface (SPI) to provide recommendations for implementation; and to assisting the CRIC through the timely provision of scientific advice on methodological matters related to reporting. Of these, the CST work (taking into account SPI inputs) on facilitating scientific networking was rated most highly, with 68% of respondents considering it as good or very good. Almost two-thirds of the respondents considered CST work on all four tasks (64% on average) either good or very good. In the interviews, some interviewees further noted that SPI's work has led to increased consideration of science at COP and CRIC meetings, and that science-policy oriented publications such as the Global Land Outlook, the SPI reports and policy briefs, and articles, have increased knowledge and awareness within and beyond the UNCCD community.
- Many respondents noted that the UNCCD has successfully put land on the international agenda, with focus on land tenure, gender issues, and LDN targets. Land issues are now also addressed by the IPCC and the IPBES. Improved communication efforts were said to have increased the political importance of UNCCD, with the message highlighting the link between land, climate change, and biodiversity starting to resonate.

Effectiveness: Areas of improvement/weaknesses

- Many respondents consider lack of financial resources as the main hindrance for achieving the UNCCD objectives.
- While UNCCD is viewed as an actor on drought, the translation into action is not sufficiently happening. Technical knowledge doesn't translate enough into concrete actions and projects on the ground, for example in the Sahel. Some respondents said that a drought protocol could underscore the seriousness of the issue for Parties; however, ratification and implementation would pose challenges from a policy perspective and require considerable time.
- Good land governance, including land tenure decisions and active gender actions, are recognised by the COP as necessary for achieving the LDN targets; however, their implementation progress is uneven among countries.
- For strengthening the UNCCD role as a science-policy authority for land and drought matters, several developments of the SPI were suggested, such as making the SPI a continuous [permanent] body, further SPI coordination and collaboration with other advisory bodies, in particular IPCC and IPBES, inclusion of more scientific disciplines, notably social scientists and economists, as SPI members, and lifting the budgetary limitations for science-technology correspondents' attending the full COP. It was also noted that the language used by the UNCCD, in particular in SPI publications, is sometimes too complicated and abstract for politicians, the media and the general public.

PROGRESS TO IMPACT

What progress is being made towards the Strategic Objectives? To what extent can any progress be attributed to the UNCCD?

Achieving the expect impacts of the Strategic Framework by 2030 seems to be difficult. However, several UNCCD results so far have potential for generating long-term benefits.

- When asked about progress to impact, many respondents brought up UNCCD related achievements, activities and processes that have potential for generating long-term benefits. These included, among others, the work towards reaching LDN targets and the attention to drought, including the IWGs to enhance drought action and the development and implementation of the drought plans. Specific cooperation initiatives such as the Great Green Wall were also mentioned.
- Large majority of survey respondents representing countries and organisations (78% and 80% respectively) considered that the visibility and awareness of the importance of addressing DLDD is growing. The political/strategic commitment towards implementing the UNCCD was also seen as increasing (countries 60% and organisations 74% of respondents). Many mentioned the growth of understanding of how land is interconnected with other topics, from infrastructure development to gender equality, and the influence of that understanding to national planning and policies.
- Many considered the launch of systematic country level monitoring of land matters through the UNCCD national reporting as an important step ahead. Furthermore, sharing of best practices and lessons learned among different stakeholders, including communities, businesses, and researchers, as well as efforts to engage specific stakeholder groups such as parliamentarians, were seen as good achievements.
- In the survey, some diversity of responses and lower rates of progress were assessed for country level volume of DLDD projects and programmes (increase in 58% of countries), multi-sectoral, cross-ministry coordination (increase in 55% of countries), technical and institutional capacity (improved in 49% of countries) and financial support and investments (increase in 34% of countries), Roughly half of the respondents (52%) considered that the implementation of the Rio Conventions is becoming more integrated.
- The Strategic Framework includes a small number of expected impacts for each Strategic Objective. These expected impacts specify in more concrete terms what the Framework is aimed to achieve by 2030 under the broadly defined SOs. The respondents were asked to assess, based on their own professional knowledge and experience, to what extent they personally think progress will have been made against each of the impacts by 2030, when compared to the current situation in 2023. Below is a table of the expected impacts and a percentage of respondents that considered that either good or very good progress will be made.

Expected impacts	Good or very good progress
Land productivity and related ecosystems services are maintained or enhanced	50%
The vulnerability of affected ecosystems is reduced and the resilience of ecosystems is increased	43%
National voluntary LDN targets are set and adopted by countries wishing to do so, related measures are identified and implemented, and necessary monitoring systems are established	54%
Measures for sustainable land management and the combating of desertification/land degradation are shared, promoted and implemented	55%
Food security and adequate access to water for people in affected areas is improved	53%

The livelihoods of people in affected areas are improved and diversified	46%
Local people, especially women and youth, are empowered and participate in decision-making processes in combating DLDD	52%
Migration forced by desertification and land degradation is substantially reduced	26%
Ecosystems' vulnerability to drought is reduced, including through sustainable land and water management practices	41%
Communities' resilience to drought is increased	45%
Sustainable land management and the combating of desertification/land degradation contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and addressing climate change	60%
Synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and processes are enhanced	64%
Adequate and timely public and private financial resources are further mobilized and made available to affected country Parties, including through domestic resource mobilization	39%
International support is provided for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building and "on-the-ground interventions" in affected country Parties to support the implementation of the Convention, including through North–South, South–South and triangular cooperation	45%
Extensive efforts implemented to promote technology transfer, especially on favorable terms and including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed, and to mobilize other non-financial resources	45%

Progress to impact: Areas of improvement/weaknesses

- Transforming the LDN aims into reality: The target-setting process is challenging and time-consuming for countries, many LDN targets are qualitative (instead of exact plans), and committing to LDN remains voluntary.
- Credible monitoring of progress: In many countries, the monitoring systems are weak and the baseline for land degradation is not clearly established and/or there are varied estimates for the total size of degraded lands. The extent to which progress can be attributed to the UNCCD requires further assessment and analysis.

SUSTAINABILITY

To what extent are sufficient commitments, capacities and resources in place to deliver the Strategic Objectives, and to maintain any associated impacts beyond 2030?

The following conditions and necessary steps were suggested by respondents for assuring the sustainability of the results achieved in the context of the implementation of the UNCCD and its strategic framework:

- Increase of awareness and political will to address land degradation is needed in many countries.
- Sustainability of UNCCD objectives depends on their integration into legal systems and ongoing efforts such as including land restoration/SLM/agro-ecology in environment bills.
- Raising awareness, capacity building, and utilizing traditional knowledge contribute to long-term impacts.

- A whole of government approach with support from the highest level of government authorities is needed to improve coordination and overcome silos.
- Active participation of media, academia and CSO is required.
- Increased attention to drought resilience and prevention, including early warning systems and disaster reduction plans is needed. Anticipatory and proactive approaches are necessary for addressing drought, rather than reactive measures.
- Continued focus on capacity building, mobilization of funding support, and integration among the Rio conventions is crucial.
- Enabling tools like land tenure and gender action plans, as well as effective guidance for focal points, are essential for achieving sustaining impacts.
- Several interviewees highlighted the need to diversify rural incomes, to raise awareness among farmers, and to provide them with knowledge about co-benefits of SLM and guidance on how to achieve them. Regional catalogues of best practices in this respect are considered as useful.

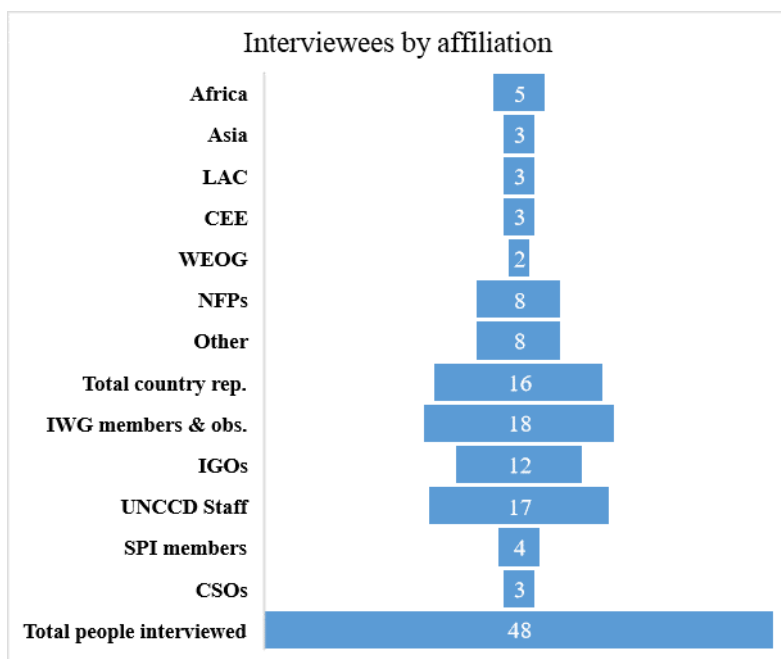
Annex 1 : Data collection

Survey response statistics

Survey respondents by affiliation	Percent	Count
National Focal Point	42.4%	56
Science and Technology Correspondent (STC)	15.9%	21
Other national representative to UNCCD	8.3%	11
Regional / sub-regional implementation	3.0%	4
Current or former member of the Science-Policy Interface	9.1%	12
Representative of a scientific institution	7.6%	10
Representative of a UN system organization or a multilateral donor entity	3.0%	4
Representative of a Civil Society Organization / Network	16.7%	22
Representative of a Private Sector Company / Network	1.5%	2
Other	12.9%	17
Total	100%	130

Survey respondents by Annex	Percent	Count
African	33.8%	44
Asia-Pacific	16.9%	22
Eastern European	12.3%	16
Latin America and the Caribbean	20.8%	27
Western European and other States	16.2%	21
Total	100%	130

Interviews statistics



To be noted:

Some interviewees are marked under more than one affiliation; the total number consists of 16 country representatives, 12 IGOs, 17 secretariat staff and 3 CSOs

Region	Country
Africa	Algeria
	Angola
	Egypt
	Namibia
	Uganda
Total	5
Asia	China
	Cook Islands
	Republic of Korea
Total	3
Central and Eastern Europe	Czech Republic
	Montenegro
	Slovakia
Total	3
Latin America and the Caribbean	Mexico
	Argentina
	Peru
Total	3
WEOG	Germany
	USA
Total	2

Annex 2 : Strategic Framework theory of change

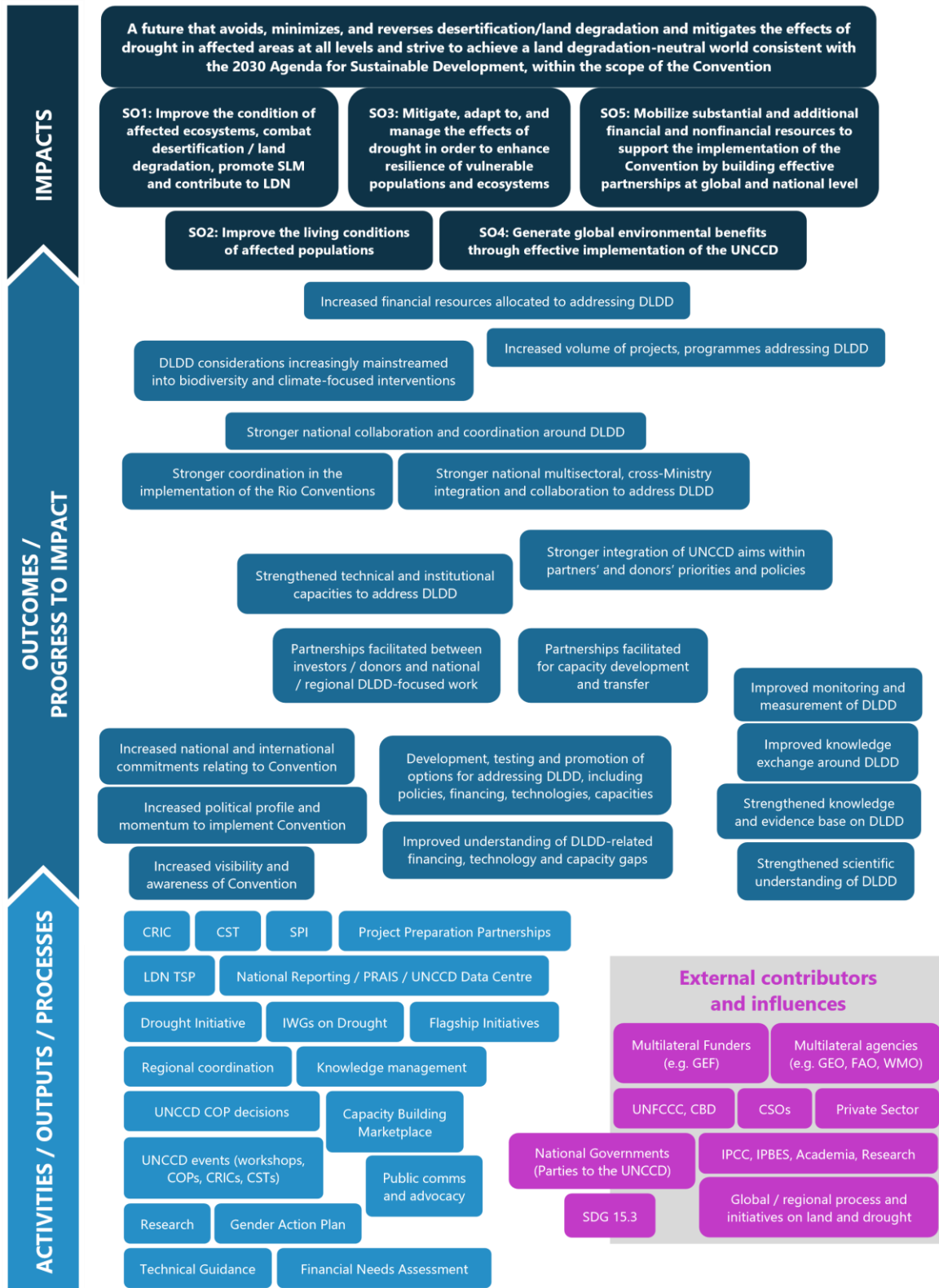


Figure 1: Strategic Framework theory of change

Annex 3 : Key assessment questions and subquestions

RELEVANCE	
1. Does the Strategic Framework continue to reflect the priorities of the UNCCD as an intergovernmental process?	1.1 To what extent does the Framework remain relevant to the priorities of Parties to the Convention?
	1.2 To what extent does the Framework remain relevant to the priorities of UNCCD's partners, including multilateral donors, multilateral agencies, and civil society?
COHERENCE	
2. Is the Strategic Framework coherent with – and responsive to – related processes and institutions?	2.1 To what extent is the Framework and its implementation coherent with Parties' national approaches, and with regional approaches?
	2.2 To what extent is the Framework and its implementation coherent with the approaches of UNCCD's partners?
	2.3 To what extent is the Framework and its implementation coherent with the SDGs, particularly delivery of SDG 15.3?
	2.4 To what extent is the Framework and its implementation coherent with the work of the other Rio Conventions?
	2.5 Is the Framework sufficiently flexible and responsive to emergent developments and unforeseen events, whether positive (e.g. UN Restoration Decade, Global Biodiversity Framework, G20 Initiative) or negative (COVID-19 and other global crises)?
EFFICIENCY	
3. To what extent does the Strategic Framework support resource mobilisation efforts?	3.1 Have the Framework and Strategic Objectives been a useful tool for resource mobilisation by Parties, regions and UNCCD institutions?
	3.2 What resource mobilisation strategies have been most successful, and why?
4. Is the Strategic Framework being monitored efficiently?	4.1 Have the Strategic Objectives proven to be clear, appropriate and realistic?
	4.2 How efficient and effective are the Framework's monitoring processes? Does PRAIS monitor actions and results towards meeting the Strategic Objectives in a timely and economic manner?
	4.3 How useful are the national reports and the underlying data to Parties themselves?
EFFECTIVENESS	
5. What measures have been developed through the UNCCD process to support delivery of the Strategic Objectives? How effective are these measures?	5.1 To what extent are Parties and regions using UNCCD-developed measures?
	5.2 What have been the main strengths and weaknesses of UNCCD-developed measures?
	5.3 Beyond UNCCD-developed measures, what other measures are Parties and regions using to support delivery of the Strategic Objectives?
	5.4 How effective has support to Parties and regions been from the UNCCD's institutions (including subsidiary bodies)?
	5.5 How effectively are Parties and regions being supported by UNCCD's partners, including multilateral donors, multilateral agencies and civil society organisations?
PROGRESS TO IMPACT	
6. What progress is being made towards the Strategic Objectives? To what extent can any progress be attributed to the UNCCD?	6.1 What impacts and trends (whether positive or negative) are apparent from national reporting and PRAIS data?
	6.2 Beyond PRAIS, what impacts and trends do other data sources suggest?
	6.3 To what extent has the UNCCD contributed to impacts and trends? What is the nature of those contributions?
	6.4 To what extent is progress being made against the Strategic Objective theories of change?
SUSTAINABILITY	

7. To what extent are sufficient commitments, capacities and resources in place to deliver the Strategic Objectives, and to maintain any associated impacts beyond 2030?	7.1 Since the start of the Strategic Framework, has there been a notable change in the extent of national, regional and international political commitment and momentum behind the Convention?
	7.2 What resources and capacities (technical, institutional) are Parties and regions allocating to support delivery of the Strategic Objectives? What are the main resourcing and capacity gaps?
	7.3 How are Parties and regions working with other UNCCD partners (multilateral funders and agencies, CSOs, private sector, other Rio Conventions) to support delivery of the Strategic Objectives?