



Midterm evaluation of the 2018-2030 UNCCD Strategic Framework

Report of the online meeting of the Intergovernmental Working Group 11 April 2024

Background

At its fifteenth session in 2022, the UNCCD Conference of the Parties (COP) launched a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework. The evaluation process is overseen by a dedicated Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG-MTE) supported by the UNCCD secretariat. It is built on three main documents: an evidence-based independent assessment on the progress made, a report to the COP, submitted by the IWG-MTE, presenting the findings and recommendations of the Group, and a COP decision on enhancing the implementation of the Strategic Framework in 2025-2030.

The IWG-MTE consists of three representatives nominated by each UN region. The group is supported by seven observers: two members of the Science-Policy Interface, one representative each from three major international organizations (FAO, GEF secretariat and IUCN) and two representatives from the civil society. The secretariat and, where feasible, the GM will support the work of IWG-MTE and service its meetings.

Unless otherwise agreed by the IWG-MTE and depending on the availability of resources, the group has three in-person meetings: the first one was held in February 2023, the second one took place immediately after the intersessional CRIC session in November 2023, and the third one is planned for 25-28 June 2024. In addition, the group meets online when needed.

Following the second in-person meeting and the comments sent by the members and observers after that meeting, the IWG-MTE met online on 11 April to consider the first full draft of its report to COP 16. This document presents the main matters discussed at that meeting.

The extent of ownership of the IWG of the report & the draft decision

The online meeting started with the consideration of a procedural matter: to what extent will the IWG members and observers be the “owners” of the report that the Group is submitting to the COP – are they assumed to have agreed with every detail of its content? It was noted that the COP 16 report will be a product of the Group; it is not a document that is to be negotiated at any stage, and while it is fully based on the exchanges among the IWG members and observers, it may not necessarily represent their individual views. In this context, the Group aims to produce an ambitious, substantive report to the COP.

A draft decision on the results of the midterm evaluation will be submitted to COP 16 as well. In line with the standard UNCCD approach, this draft will be prepared by the secretariat and made available well in advance to the COP as part of the official documentation. The draft decision will be built on the recommendations in the IWG-MTE report to the COP, and it will aim to translate the recommendations into concrete action to be taken by the Parties, the Convention bodies and institutions and other stakeholders. The secretariat will share the draft decision with the IWG and hopes that the members and observers could agree to have an exchange on its content. However, the IWG is not expected to negotiate or adopt the draft decision, as that will be done by the COP.

Consideration of the draft report

The draft report of the IWG-MTE to COP 16 contains an introductory section on the mandate and scope of the report, description of the findings and related recommendations, and conclusions that wrap-up the content. It follows the standard structure and length of the UN official documents. It builds on the findings of the independent assessment, the feedback provided by Parties and civil society organisations through the participatory consultations held in November 2023, the exchanges during the IWG-MTE meetings and the written inputs provided by the members and observers. In addition, the report uses the findings of two other evaluation processes, namely the evaluation of the UNCCD Gender Action Plan and the external review of the Science-Policy Interface.

The working group's first feedback on the draft report was largely positive, with several members commending the work done. The group identified specific areas that require further clarification or adjustment. For example, the "Global Target Recommendation " was noted to need more clarification to avoid distracting attention from existing targets like those under CBD. There were suggestions to avoid expressions that indicate preferring large-scale projects (as multiple smaller-scale initiatives that build into the larger framework may be as effective), and further attention was asked for illustrating the many achievements made in the last years.

In addition, there were calls to refine and/or add recommendations to better align with the strategic needs and contexts, such as gender considerations, CSO inclusion, and the differentiation of strategies at the national and global levels. While drought is discussed in detail by a parallel working group, it should be at least mentioned in the report of this group as well. The structure of the report was also discussed, with suggestions to have findings followed by respective recommendations to better show their rationale.

Next steps

The following actions were agreed by the IWG as the next steps to be taken:

- The IWG members will send their comments in writing by 26 April
- The secretariat will send the revised report by 6 May. At that time, the secretariat will also ask for feedback on the need to have another online meeting.
- The IWG will have its last in-person meeting on 25-28 June in Bonn.

The last IWG-MTE meeting will complete the draft report to COP 16. The provisional agenda of the meeting includes a joint session with the CST Bureau to consider updates to the UNCCD science-policy work. UNCCD staff responsible for the topics covered in the IWG-MTE report will be also invited to join different parts of the meeting.
