



Conference of the Parties

Sixteenth session

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2–13 December 2024

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Policy frameworks and thematic issues, including new emerging issues: grassland and rangeland

Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Drought

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By decision 23/COP.15, the Conference of the Parties offered its guidance on the work of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) on addressing drought and requested the secretariat to report on the implementation of the decision at its sixteenth session.

This document summarizes the actions taken by the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the GM in response to the decision. These actions constitute continued support to Parties in the development and implementation of the Drought Initiative through capacity-building, the establishment of communities of learning and practice, and the creation of regional drought management strategies. In addition, it incorporates the actions taken by the secretariat of the UNCCD and the GM to facilitate the design, establishment and implementation of certain essential activities undertaken by the International Drought Resilience Alliance. This report also provides an overview of the key focus areas and findings of the final report by the Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought, as included in document ICCD/COP(16)/20.

The content of this document is presented as follows: (i) Introduction and context; (ii) National and regional drought policies; (iii) Knowledge-sharing and capacity-building; (iv) Collaboration and partnerships; (v) Drought finance; and (vi) Conclusions and recommendations.



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I. Introduction and context

1. Over the past 200 years, human-induced global warming has led to the current temperature rise of 1.4°C above pre-industrial levels and, consequently, to more frequent and hazardous extreme weather events, including drought.¹
2. Drought is arguably the most intricate and severe among weather-related disasters, owing to its long-lasting, widespread and cascading effects. It has an impact on agriculture, public water supply, energy generation, transportation, tourism, human health, biodiversity, and natural ecosystems.
3. Drought has the potential to endanger the livelihoods of millions as well as ecosystems across all continents. In extreme cases, droughts can trigger famine, displacement and conflict. Today, drought-related mortality accounts for around 60 per cent of total deaths caused by extreme weather events worldwide, while droughts account for just 15 per cent of “natural” disasters.²
4. Based on data reported by 101 country Parties during the 2022 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) reporting process,³ 1.84 billion people are drought-stricken, of which 4.7 per cent are exposed to severe or extreme drought and 85 per cent live in low or middle-income countries.
5. Human casualties and infrastructural damages are set to increase, reflecting the interplay of various factors: (i) worsening hazards (especially droughts, sand and dust storms, and floods); (ii) increased exposure (in systems such as rain-fed agriculture, power generation or shipping routes); and (iii) low resilience (revealed in weak buffer capacities, socioeconomic inequality, insufficient institutional capacities, etc.). Continuous population growth, land conversion and accelerated land degradation further increase vulnerability to droughts.
6. While drought is projected to increase in severity, frequency, duration and spatial extent, approaches to effectively deal with drought mostly continue to focus on short-term reactive measures. However increased drought risk makes long-term mitigation and proactive measures indispensable. Strategies include sustainable land and water management, recycling and reuse of water, a shift to drought-tolerant crops, and diversification of rural livelihoods. Innovative financing schemes such as insurance products, bonds and microfinance are other vital instruments for sustainable and long-term mitigation.
7. “Drought resilience” is at the core of the UNCCD’s mandate. The strategic objective on drought (2018–2030) aims to “mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance the resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems”. In this respect, priority is given to proactive prevention and preparedness approaches in support of a green recovery.
8. This prioritization was confirmed by decision 29/COP.13 at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13), offering guidance on the development of national drought plans (NDPs) and drought preparedness systems. It also promoted the development of the Drought Resilience, Adaptation and Management Policy (DRAMP) ⁴ Framework, which aims to reduce drought risk and increase resilience.
9. At COP 14, Parties emphasized the need to accelerate the implementation of the Drought Initiative by adopting the DRAMP Framework, which takes an integrated and multi-pronged approach to reducing the risks and impacts of drought. The DRAMP Framework identifies pragmatic actions for countries to better prepare for and respond to drought and guides the design and implementation of drought policies at national and sub-national levels.

¹ Climate Central. 2023: *Earth’s hottest year on record*.

<https://www.climatecentral.org/climate-matters/2023-earths-hottest-year-on-record>.

² McCann, D. G., Moore, A., & Walker, M. E. (2011). *The water/health nexus in disaster medicine: I. Drought versus flood*. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, 3(6), 480-485.

³ <https://data.unccd.int/countries-affected-by-drought>.

⁴ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/manuals-and-guides/drought-resilience-adaptation-and-management-policy-framework>.

10. At COP 15, Parties requested the secretariat to: (i) continue to support affected country Parties in strengthening their capacity to take strategic action to address drought and develop and implement policy instruments; (ii) promote regional cooperation on drought; (iii) strengthen existing and forge new partnerships at all levels, across sectors, and with different public, private and civil society organizations, and other relevant stakeholders; (iv) participate in or co-organize a ten-year follow-up to the 2013 High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy; and (v) support and facilitate communities of learning and practice (CLP) to pursue co-learning and collaboration for drought risk reduction and resilience.

11. COP 15 also decided to establish a new Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought (IWG on Drought) during the 2022–2024 triennium, building on the prior work of the IWG on Drought during the 2020–2022 triennium, in order to identify and evaluate all options, including global policy instruments and regional policy frameworks, and linking up, where relevant, with national plans, as appropriate, to effectively manage drought under the Convention, including supporting a shift from reactive to proactive drought management (decision 23/COP.15, para. 13).

12. COP 15 also requested the Science-Policy Interface (SPI), as objective 2 of its work programme for the triennium 2022–2024, to provide science-based evidence on historical regional and global aridity trends and future projections that may contribute to expanding drylands and affected populations, and the adaptation approaches that reduce risks to environmental, social and economic systems (decision 18/COP.15). While the findings of the IWG on Drought are presented in a separate report, as included in document ICCD/COP(16)/20), the SPI technical report on historical global and regional aridity trends and future projections that may contribute to expanding drylands and affected populations is presented in document ICCD/COP(16)/CST/3.

13. This document proposes elements for further action to support the implementation of the advocacy policy framework on drought, taking into account the growing global momentum and the wider UNCCD drought agenda with a focus on activities undertaken and proposed by the UNCCD secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM), including key points of the IWG on Drought report and the SPI recommendations. The content of the document is presented as follows: (ii) National and regional drought policies; (iii) Knowledge-sharing and capacity-building; (iv) Collaboration and partnerships; (v) Drought finance; and (vi) Conclusions and recommendations.

II. National and regional drought policies

A. Follow-up on the Drought Initiative

14. The UNCCD supports national decision-making to mitigate the impacts of drought and sustainably manage and use land and ecosystems to generate a multiplicity of benefits across countries. The understanding of the wider significance of drought resilience and sustainable land and water management decisions can be useful where they are likely to impact on water resources, food production, ecosystems and societies in individual or neighbouring countries, riparian states, entire regions or even global systems.

15. At COP 13, Parties to the UNCCD decided to establish the Drought Initiative⁵ (decision 29/COP.13) with a focus on three action areas: (i) setting up drought preparedness systems, particularly NDPs; (ii) working together at the international and regional levels to reduce drought vulnerability and risk; and (iii) providing a toolbox that stakeholders can use to boost the drought resilience of both people and ecological systems.

16. Since the establishment of the Drought Initiative in 2018, the UNCCD has supported the development of comprehensive NDPs based on the principles of risk reduction. With the participation of more than 70 countries in developing comprehensive NDPs, a strong emphasis on risk mitigation and preparedness, and the publication/official adoption of 34

⁵ <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/drought/drought-initiative>.

NDPs,⁶ the Drought Initiative has been a great success. These NDPs were prepared based on the DRAMP Framework⁷, the UNCCD Model National Drought Plan,⁸ and the “National Drought Management Policy Guidelines: A Template for Action from the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP)”⁹. The NDPs continue to be critically important for the current activities of the secretariat and the GM.

17. Within the framework of this initiative, the secretariat has also developed a Drought Toolbox – an interactive online platform or “one stop shop” offering a range of effective technical and policy options to analyse risks and various forms of vulnerability and prioritize drought mitigation interventions.

B. The High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy

18. Considered by many as a “game changer”, the 2013 High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy (HMNDP)¹⁰ on the topic of “Reducing Societal Vulnerability – Helping Society (Communities and Sectors)” was a crucial milestone in the paradigm shift from a reactive to proactive approach to drought management planning. The meeting provided practical insights into sound, science-based actions to address key drought management issues. These actions were considered by governments and the private sector with strategic guidance from the UNCCD. The HMNDP has since laid the groundwork for greater recognition of drought as a major risk factor, and for the proactive role of governance in drought. In this respect, significant progress has been made at the international, regional and national levels.

19. The recommendations of the HMNDP drew increased attention to the global drought agenda. Numerous United Nations agencies and initiatives have increased their focus on drought and started work on drought-related issues at an international level. As a result, a wide variety of guidelines, instruments and publications now support enhanced drought governance,¹¹ including the National Drought Management Policy Guidelines, which outline a ten-step process for developing and implementing national drought policies,¹² and the three-pillar approach to integrated drought management.¹³

20. Regionally, progress in strengthening drought governance and management was initiated in 2013 with the launch of the IDMP. Within this framework, regional programmes¹⁴ were established in Central Eastern Europe, West Africa and the Horn of Africa.¹⁵ Another distinct outcome of the HMNDP in 2013 was the establishment of the United Nations Water (UN-Water) collaborative initiative to support countries in developing National Drought Management Policies with a series of regional drought management capacity workshops held in Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, and Africa.

⁶ <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/drought/drought-planning>.

⁷ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/drought-resilience-adaptation-and-management-policy-dramp-framework>.

⁸ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2021-12/Model%20National%20Drought%20Plan%20Guidelines.pdf>.

⁹ WMO & GWP (2014) *National Drought Management Policy Guidelines: A Template for Action of the Integrated Drought Management Programme*, https://www.droughtmanagement.info/literature/IDMP_NDMPG_en.pdf.

¹⁰ The High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy (HMNDP), <https://community.wmo.int/en/meetings/high-level-meeting-national-drought-policy-hmndp>.

¹¹ For a non-exhaustive overview see: Harm D. et al. 2022. *HELP Guiding Principles for Drought Risk Management under a Changing Climate. Catalysing actions for enhancing climate resilience*. HELP report <https://cms.deltares.nl/assets/common/downloads/HELP-Flagship-Report-on-Drought-1.pdf>.

¹² World Meteorological Organization/Global Water Partnership Integrated Drought Management Programme. 2014. *National Drought Management Policy Guidelines – A Template for Action* https://www.droughtmanagement.info/literature/IDMP_NDMPG_en.pdf.

¹³ Integrated Drought Management Programme. N.d. *The Three Pillars of Drought Management* <https://www.droughtmanagement.info/pillars/>.

¹⁴ Integrated Drought Management Programme. N.d. <https://www.droughtmanagement.info/idmp-activities/>.

¹⁵ Integrated Drought Management Programme. N.d. <https://www.droughtmanagement.info/about/>.

21. However, the overall impact of drought on communities, livelihoods, economies and ecosystems continues to rise in most regions, particularly developing countries. Drought risk is growing rapidly in many parts of the world due to the increasing frequency and severity of droughts owing to climate change. Vulnerable populations and affected ecosystems remain underrepresented in management decisions, and political attention and finance often lag behind what is needed to increase drought resilience globally.

22. Considering the above, and to reflect on the progress made over the past 10+ years, the UNCCD, together with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Global Water Partnership (GWP) and relevant partners, is co-organizing "Drought Resilience +10: Integrating knowledge & practice for drought resilience",¹⁶ a global conference to be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 30 September to 2 October 2024. The conference will bring together countries, United Nations and non-United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and the private sector to review progress and lessons learned, accelerate drought action on the ground and explore and define a common way forward towards a more drought-resilient world.

23. The goals of the conference include: (i) reflecting on the successes and challenges of 10 years of drought risk management since 2013 in order to learn how to achieve drought resilience in the next decade; (ii) consolidating and jointly planning how drought resilience can be brought to scale in order to respond to the accelerating impacts of climate change in the next decade by applying systems thinking; and (iii) working with political leaders to strengthen awareness, mobilize resources, prioritize drought and increase commitments to building drought resilience and implementing integrated drought management. Nine workstreams have been identified to offer direction for the next decade of integrated drought management: (i) drought resilience and global mechanisms; (ii) drought risk governance for regional, national and local challenges; (iii) drought impact monitoring, assessment, and forecasting; (iv) turning drought policies into action; (v) ecosystems and drought; (vi) social inclusion, climate justice and drought; (vii) drought risk finance; (viii) public-private-civil society partnerships; and (ix) drought and health.

C. Regional and inter-regional drought management

24. Decision 23/COP.15 requested the secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with partners and regional institutions, to continue to assist Parties in preparing and implementing gender-responsive NDPs and other policy instruments related to drought, and in promoting regional collaboration on drought policies and strategies as a cost-effective means of supporting national action.

25. In response to this decision, a regional project was implemented for Member Countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).¹⁷ The Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) is the implementing partner. The project, which got underway in October 2023, boosts technical and institutional drought management capacities through enhanced data-sharing on early warning and monitoring systems, drought risk profiling and feasible drought risk mitigation measures. The Regional Drought Risk Management and Mitigation Strategy for South Asia is due to be launched at COP 16. This strategy will guide and inform the process of implementing streamlined actions on drought resilience at the local, national, and regional levels under the overall coordination and leadership of the SAARC secretariat.

26. The project involved wide stakeholder engagements in the region, including national focal points, independent experts, civil society representatives, international and regional organizations, policymakers and key partners such as the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the GWP, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and the ADPC. The Regional Drought Risk Management and Mitigation Strategy for South Asia identified strategic

¹⁶ <https://www.droughtmanagement.info/hmndp10/about/conference/>.

¹⁷ The South Asian Association for Regional Member Countries (SAARC) comprises eight member states: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

objectives for the region, highlighting the following crucial dimensions: (i) reliable data collection; (ii) enhanced drought monitoring and forecasting; (iii) the dissemination of effective, credible and reliable warning messages to enable timely drought preparedness and response; (iv) enhanced drought impact, vulnerability and risk assessment; (v) priority measures implemented to limit the adverse impacts of drought; (vi) identification of regional collaboration opportunities on drought management; and (vii) implementation of priority measures to reduce drought exposure and vulnerability.

27. With the strong support of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) regional annex, in April 2024 the Republic of Moldova hosted an interregional meeting on drought and land degradation neutrality (LDN), including the CEE, Central Asia and Northern Mediterranean regions. The conference consisted of a scientific practical conference on drought and LDN and a workshop on drought. Extensive sharing of knowledge and best practices led to the adoption of the Chisinau Declaration¹⁸ on the outcomes of the meeting, stating the need for stronger cooperation among the regions and UNCCD annexes on drought-related issues.

D. The Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought

28. At its fifteenth session in 2022, the COP decided to establish an Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought (IWG on Drought) for the triennium 2022–2024, tasked with identifying and evaluating all options to proactively manage drought under the Convention, including global policy instruments and regional policy frameworks, and linking up, where relevant, with national plans, as appropriate (decision 23/COP.15).

29. In accordance with this COP decision (23/COP.15, para. 15), the IWG on Drought was composed of the following 27 members: three representatives nominated by each of the regional groups (the five regional implementation annexes, the European Union and its Member States, and the JUSCANZ group of countries); two representatives from civil society organizations, as observers; two independent experts; and two representatives from international organizations. The UNCCD secretariat supported the work of the IWG on Drought and serviced a total of six in-person and multiple hybrid and virtual meetings between November 2022 and June 2024. Over the course of almost two years, the group explored a broad range of options and evaluated them according to different schemes.

30. The final outcomes of the IWG on Drought, as included in document ICCD/COP(16)/20, contain seven options derived from 48 original options. The presentation of each option includes a definition, possible elements, processes, institutional arrangements and mechanisms for implementation, as well as an evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). The group produced a final report with a focus on the following policy options, presented here in alphabetical order:

(a) **Amendment to the Convention:** This option refers to the formal alteration of the provisions contained in the UNCCD, which is a legally binding agreement under international law. The amendment is therefore also legally binding;

(b) **COP decision on the collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF):** This option implies adopting a COP decision on the collaboration with the GEF, and aiming to strengthen the programmatic relevance of and funding for drought resilience building;

(c) **COP guidance to the GM:** This option implies adopting a COP decision providing guidance to the GM, aiming to strengthen the capacity of affected Parties to access finance and implement their NDPS, contributing to more proactive drought management;

(d) **Global Framework on Drought Resilience:** This option is an overarching strategic policy instrument which would involve setting a global goal, time-bound targets and indicators; proposed actions to achieve these targets; and monitoring and learning systems;

¹⁸ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-07/%D0%A1hisinau_Declaration_Moldova_April2024.pdf.

(e) **Political Declaration:** This option is a formal statement, proclamation, or announcement of intent, generally signed by high-level representatives. In this case, the political declaration could be the outcome of a high-level segment of the UNCCD COP;

(f) **Protocol:** This option is a legally binding instrument adopted under the Convention to provide a broad and comprehensive legal approach for addressing drought at all levels. It outlines specific commitments for the Parties that ratify the protocol, and includes provisions for principles, goal and targets, and institutional arrangements;

(g) **Special and ambitious COP decision on drought:** COP decisions are resolutions made by the COP of the UNCCD which offer a quick and continuous process for the implementation of the Convention. This option refers to a COP decision focused on drought, including special and ambitious clauses.

31. These options are not mutually exclusive, and combinations of options may be envisaged at COP 16 and beyond in various ways, depending on the focus, ambition, time horizon, and other factors, guided by the overall aim to manage drought more effectively under the Convention. In the IWG on Drought there was a consensus amongst all experts on the need for strengthened action at all levels and increased political momentum to enhance drought management and governance under the UNCCD.

32. The secretariat will need to secure additional human and financial resources due to its very limited human resources capacity as well as the work required to respond to the IWG on Drought's proposal and any attempt to kickstart the process of implementing any of the options described above.

E. Gender considerations

33. The importance of gender mainstreaming in all environmental and poverty eradication policies has been recognized in a wide range of global agreements and fora also applicable to the UNCCD, including chapter 24 of Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (2015), and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 18 of 2022 (E/RES/2022/18).

34. For the activities of the secretariat and the GM on gender-responsive drought management and adaptation, Parties may wish to refer to documents ICCD/COP(16)/17 and ICCD/CRIC(22)/5.

III. Knowledge-sharing and capacity-building

A. Community of learning and practice

35. A central tenet of the Drought Initiative is the Drought Toolbox which countries can utilize to develop and strengthen their NDPs. The Toolbox is designed to provide governance to stakeholders with an easy-to-use tool to support the development of national drought policy plans (based on tailor-made solutions, case studies and other resources) with the aim of boosting the resilience of people and ecosystems to drought.

36. Item 8 of decision 23/COP.15 "requests the secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to encourage, support and facilitate communities of learning and practice to pursue co-learning and collaboration for drought risk reduction and resilience capacity-building issues".

37. In response to this decision, the UNCCD, in collaboration with the GWP, developed the Communities of Learning and Practice (CLP) on Drought Management.¹⁹ The objectives of the CLP include: (i) enhancing the knowledge and technical capacities of national actors

¹⁹ <https://droughtclp.unccd.int/clp/home>.

and key stakeholders working on drought and desertification management, including through the use of the UNCCD Drought Toolbox; (ii) promoting the adoption, replication and upscaling of integrated and inclusive drought management practices; (iii) supporting the design and development of integrated drought management policies and governance frameworks; and (iv) building trust, cooperation and a shared sense of identification among national actors and other key stakeholders working on drought.

38. The CLP is expected to engage the national focal points as well as drought experts across countries and regions and to leverage bottom-up approaches to drought risk management. While contributing to the UNCCD's global mandate on drought, the CLP will enhance actions by utilizing integrated components and functions of the Drought Toolbox. In addition, the UNCCD secretariat will support the dissemination of lessons learned in the CLP to the appropriate national, regional and global review and policy processes and other United Nations conventions and processes addressing drought.

39. A "Needs Assessment Survey" was conducted with countries to gather opinions and feedback for the creation and development of CLP on drought management. More than one hundred countries responded to the survey. The feedback showed that countries believe that the most valuable contribution of the CLP on Drought Management would be to support the development of technical knowledge on drought. Therefore, the CLP online platform has created a "Materials" feature for members to share technical information and knowledge on drought. The vast majority of responses also showed that countries expect the online platform to provide more information on calls for proposals and funding opportunities. In response to this request, the online platform included an "Opportunities" section where users can share information on (but not limited to) funding opportunities, grants, project proposals, competitions and training courses on drought.

40. Three regional CLP and one global CLP have been created for (i) Asia, (ii) Latin America and the Caribbean as well as (iii) Central and Eastern Europe, and Northern Mediterranean. The CLP for Africa is set to be showcased in September 2024 on the sidelines of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN).

41. More than 200 users from governments, international organizations, civil society organizations, academia, and other sectors have registered as online members of CLP (as of August 2024).

42. Each CLP has organized at least one interactive webinar. The CLP will be officially launched at COP 16.

43. Given the workload generated by a successful and active CLP as well as the need for more effective implementation, further dissemination and outreach by CLP, the secretariat will need to ensure future human resources capacity by securing additional human and financial resources in order to host the CLP in a sustainable manner.

B. Global Environment Facility project

44. Decision 23/COP.15, para. 6 requests the secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with partners and regional institutions, to continue to assist Parties in preparing and implementing gender-responsive NDPs or other policy instruments related to drought, and to promote regional collaboration on drought policies and strategies as a cost-effective means of supporting national action. In response, the secretariat and the GM, with the FAO as executing agency, have been collaborating on the implementation of the GEF project, with a focus on enabling activities for implementing COP drought decisions.

45. Within the framework of this project and in collaboration with partners including the IDMP, WMO, FAO and GWP, three regional workshops were organized with a focus on alignment of NDPs with NAPs. The countries were selected based on "multi-criteria assessment of NDPs".²⁰ The Asia and Europe workshop held in Istanbul, Türkiye, from 17–19 May 2023 included five countries (Moldova, Montenegro, the Philippines, Serbia and Sri Lanka) with 15 participants. The Latin America and the Caribbean workshop held in Bogota,

²⁰ <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-09/cc1276en.pdf>.

Colombia from 1–3 August 2023 brought together 6 countries (Colombia, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Honduras and Panama) with 21 participants. The Africa workshop was held in Lusaka, Zambia, from 5–7 September 2023 with 14 countries (Algeria, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Eswatini, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe) and 42 participants. In total, 25 countries and 78 participants were involved. In addition, the secretariat and the FAO organized a regional workshop on planning for integrated drought management with a specific focus on Central Asian countries, held in Istanbul, Türkiye, from 16–18 October 2023.

46. Overall, the workshops supported Parties in strengthening national and institutional frameworks and built capacity for the effective planning of drought management and the implementation of drought plans. Furthermore, the workshops facilitated peer-to-peer learning and the development of CLP in drought management. Participants were introduced to: (i) the global Drought Initiative and various NDPs from across the world with a demonstration of comprehensive tools to support planning and implementation; (ii) insight into recent advances to support the implementation of NDPs, including a results framework to monitor implementation; (iii) institutional set-up and coordination of integrated drought management – reviewing the respective responsibilities of various institutions and their roles in managing drought risk, including best practices and methodologies for enhanced institutional functioning and coordination, plus a stocktaking of country experiences; (iv) advances in approaches and best practices to align NDPs with policy frameworks, including a stocktaking of country experiences; and (v) the issue of financing for integrated drought management, including new approaches, instruments and pathways to increase the impact of such finance and support the intensification of finance flows to enhance drought resilience.

C. Global Drought Atlas

47. The UNCCD, in collaboration with the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (EC-JRC), has initiated a project to create a Global Drought Atlas for policymakers in the run-up to COP 16. This effort is spearheaded by the International Centre for Environmental Monitoring Research Foundation, EC-JRC, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and United Nations University - Institute for Environment and Human Security.

48. The Global Drought Atlas explores and presents a wide range of drought impacts and risk drivers for five sectors of global relevance: agriculture and livestock, water supply, hydropower, inland waterways and ecosystems. It then synthesizes common drivers of risk and cascading impacts, including their linkages and contributions to other negative impacts such as land degradation. The Atlas also presents regional and local case studies to highlight lessons learned from past droughts, illustrating how impacts have affected people and sectors across a range of events and themes around the world. Finally, the Atlas covers approaches and solutions for comprehensive drought risk management and adaptation, including best practice success stories and measures and pathways to address systemic drought risks.

D. Economics of Drought

49. To better understand the benefits of action versus the costs of inaction in drought risk management and transformation pathways, enabling societies to better cope with drought events, the UNCCD is working on a flagship publication on the “Economics of Drought Resilience” with partners including the German Society for International Cooperation and United Nations University – Institute for Water, Environment and Health.

50. The report provides evidence and future scenarios demonstrating the economic case for nature-based and sustainable land use practices to enhance the resilience of the land, different agricultural value chains and communities to increasing drought events. It also discusses policy and societal frameworks for transformational pathways towards these drought-smart futures.

51. The main output of this study will be a global report for publication at COP 16 with integrated country-based case studies aiming to inform target-setting processes for Parties to the UNCCD. The report will highlight: (i) real drought-related costs for societies and

economies in the event of inaction; (ii) costs and benefits of effective policy and management measures for land-based proactive drought risk management; (iii) business cases for proactive drought risk management; and (iv) pathways and best practice to enhance the drought resilience of soils and land in heavily affected regions through changes in land-use practices.

IV. Collaboration and partnerships

52. Decision 8/COP.14 requested both the secretariat and the GM to continue to: (i) fulfil their respective roles in established partnerships; (ii) seek new partnerships according to their respective mandates in order to further enhance the implementation of the Convention and the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the UNCCD; and, (iii) if appropriate, bring them to the attention of the COP for any necessary action.

53. Decision 23/COP.14 particularly welcomed enhanced collaboration on drought among the FAO, GWP, WMO, UNCCD secretariat and other partners within the framework of the Drought Initiative.²¹ It further emphasized the importance of coordinating the efforts of multiple actors in this area, avoiding duplication and enhancing synergies, including among global networks such as the WMO/GWP-led IDMP, the UNCCD-led IWG on Drought, the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG), and the Global Network Against Food Crises, as well as regional initiatives.

54. The COP also adopted decision 23/COP.15, para. 9, requesting the secretariat and the GM, subject to the availability of resources, to continue to connect, strengthen and enhance as well as forge new strategic partnerships at all levels, across sectors and with different public, private and civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

A. International Drought Resilience Alliance

55. Recognizing the need for positive action, a coalition of like-minded countries, led by the governments of Senegal and Spain, established the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA), which was launched at COP 27 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in November 2022. The Alliance aims to create political momentum and mobilize vital resources to build drought resilience in an equitable, inclusive manner, shifting away from reliance on disaster response. The UNCCD hosts the Alliance secretariat, ensuring its work aligns with and supports the mandate of the Convention and its Parties.

56. IDRA's activities and initiatives revolve around four pillars:

(a) Creating political momentum, so that leaders prioritize drought resilience in national development and cooperation policies;

(b) Setting a common framework of action: IDRA highlights priority investments to build drought resilience, and identifies the stakeholders best placed to implement them. The objective is to guide action on the ground, acknowledging the need to adapt solutions to different contexts and scales;

(c) Exchanging knowledge, practical solutions and technologies at all levels in order to build drought resilience at the required pace and scale, including through the CLP;

(d) Harnessing innovative finance mechanisms to mobilize resources for drought resilience, leveraging public and private investments to maximize impact.

57. The total membership of IDRA has grown to 38 countries and over 30 international organizations. IDRA is important as it envisions a world in which droughts are proactively addressed, shifting from reactive and crisis-based approaches to proactive and risk-based drought preparedness.

²¹ <https://www.unccd.int/actions/drought-initiative>.

58. IDRA launched a call to action to support nature-based solutions for drought resilience. A heads of state meeting was organized on the sidelines of UNFCCC COP 28. The meeting highlighted the need to draw on the collective strengths of IDRA's expanding membership to advance concrete policies, actions, and capacity-building initiatives for drought preparedness, acknowledging that we are only as resilient to drought and climate change as our land is. IDRA continues to advocate for action on drought and mobilize political commitment at the highest level. Three major publications were also launched at UNFCCC COP 28: (i) the Global Drought Snapshot report;²² (ii) The cascading and compounding impacts of drought policy brief;²³ and (iii) the Nature-based solutions for drought resilience brief.²⁴

59. Within the framework of the IDRA, the UNCCD, in collaboration with the Yale Center for Ecosystems in Architecture and other like-minded institutions, has initiated the development of the Integrated Drought Resilience Observatory (IDRO) prototype, to be presented at COP 16.

60. IDRO's mission will be to connect data with science in order to promote action by leveraging innovative technologies, fostering collaboration and providing actionable insights and frameworks for informed decision-making. The Observatory will assess how well-equipped countries cope with imminent drought events using the concept of drought resilience and provide critical insights for decision-making. This proactive approach will enhance the capacity of communities and ecosystems to effectively respond to droughts, aligning with the objectives of the UNCCD, promote sustainable land management, and ultimately contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Collaboration with the University of Nebraska

61. Furthermore, the secretariat is collaborating with the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) of the University of Nebraska, based in Lincoln, USA. Together with the UNCCD, the NDMC produced a policy brief at UNFCCC COP 28 on the multi-dimensional impacts of drought with multiple consequences for communities, affecting health, food, human security, peace and security ecosystems, pastoralism, forestry, wetlands, etc.

62. To make data collection as effective as possible, the NDMC and UNCCD are co-developing a drought impact collection tool by tracking drought impacts to help decision-makers determine where to focus efforts to reduce vulnerability to the next drought event.

C. Collaboration with other United Nations agencies

63. Additionally, the secretariat continues to collaborate with United Nations agencies and other organizations, institutions and country Parties by contributing to publications and co-organizing meetings and workshops, including Stockholm World Water Week in August 2023 and August 2024 as well as the Water for Food Global Conference at the University of Nebraska in May 2023. In addition, it participates in open consultations on the science-based World Water Assessment Programme organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris in December 2022 to evaluate the current water assessment mechanism and discuss a new game-changing idea involving an innovative assessment mechanism (including at the national and regional levels) to enable solution-oriented, sustainable and inclusive water management and governance.

64. The secretariat continues to serve on the steering committee of the WMO/GWP-led IDMP which will host the HMNDP +10 conference in September 2024 with the latest meeting held on 25–26 June 2024 in Geneva on the premises of WMO. The UNCCD is also a permanent member of the UN-Water Inter-Agency Mechanism, which maximizes system-

²² <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2023-12/Global%20drought%20snapshot%202023.pdf>.

²³ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2023-12/20231207_The%20cascading%20and%20compounding%20impacts%20of%20drought_DRAFT_V4.pdf.

²⁴ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/brief/nature-based-solutions-drought-resilience>.

wide coordinated action and coherence on the cross-cutting nature of water. The aim is to inform policy processes on the land-water nexus, support the identification of emerging issues and develop effective, collaborative responses to disaster risk reduction, climate change and the overarching 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The secretariat is also a member of the Expert Group on Water and Climate Change, and the Expert Group on Water Scarcity, led by the WMO and FAO respectively.

65. In addition, the secretariat co-organized the 10th World Water Forum held in Bali, Indonesia, from 18–25 May 2024. It coordinated the “Disaster Risk Reduction and Management” thematic area with a focus on the “Best practices and drought management planning including drought impact mitigation” sub-theme. Other coordinators included the FAO and the governments of Spain and Indonesia.

66. Drought management is a complex issue that requires an integrated approach. Sustainable drought management is also about managing water demand, reducing water consumption, avoiding overexploitation of groundwater and surface water resources, and sustainably meeting the needs of different uses and ecosystems, including maintaining minimum environmental flows. In this regard, the UNCCD has established a fruitful and mutually beneficial partnership with the Water Convention, hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Together with the UNECE and various partners, the UNCCD co-organized a global workshop on “Droughts in Transboundary Basins”, held on 26–27 February 2024 in Geneva. The result of the workshop was presented during the UNCCD interregional meeting on drought and LDN, held in April 2024 in Chisinau, Moldova. Further cooperation may be especially helpful in terms of sharing best practices and building capacity, also within the framework of the CLP.

V. Drought finance

67. The GM is working to establish a blended public-private Drought Resilience Fund. This would be a funding tool to support the strategic objectives on integrated drought risk reduction, help leverage financial resources and mobilize investments for effective and sustainable drought resilience measures. The aim is to create a return-generating fund that invests in a range of drought resilience-related projects and/or companies capable of significant positive contributions to drought resilience. The fund will utilize both concessional and commercial capital within a blended structure. The goal is to demonstrate the feasibility of a two-pronged approach to investment, capable of generating impacts and financial returns simultaneously.

68. Furthermore, the GM also supports the establishment of a new drought insurance model to reduce the insurance premium by incorporating sustainable land management techniques as incentivized behavioural change, thereby serving the most vulnerable populations and making them more resilient. The proposed drought insurance model aligns seamlessly with IDRA's Pillar 4 of Innovative Financing by introducing a parametric insurance mechanism that swiftly responds to climate events, providing financial stability and reducing economic losses for affected communities.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

69. Drought is a global concern that is worsening over time, impacting on regions and nations worldwide. Vulnerable populations, especially those reliant on agriculture, face heightened risks, including food insecurity and health issues, with projections pointing towards an increasingly dire future. In the short term, many countries are hampered in preventing the worst impacts of drought, however they are capable of actively and progressively increasing drought resilience.

70. Parties to the UNCCD have recognized the growing need for targeted policies, effective collaboration and increased investments in drought preparedness, response and recovery measures for decisive action on drought resilience.

71. In collaboration with the WMO, GWP and more than a dozen international organization committee members of the “Drought Resilience +10 Conference”,²⁵ the secretariat elevates drought policy advocacy to the highest level by co-organizing a ten-year follow-up to the HMNDP in 2013, which will take place at the WMO Headquarters in Geneva, from 30 September to 2 October 2024. The conference is expected to be a watershed moment for drought management, helping to shift the focus from crisis management to proactive and prospective drought management in many countries around the world.

72. Transboundary partnership and collaboration are more urgent than ever in order to address the multifaceted challenges posed by drought. Collaborative efforts involving governments, communities and international partners are crucial to enhance drought resilience.

73. The establishment of the global and regional CLP will lay the foundations for capacity-building and knowledge exchange by pursuing co-learning, interaction and collaboration for drought risk reduction and resilience. The CLP are expected to engage national focal points as well as drought experts across countries and regions, and to leverage bottom-up approaches to drought risk management.

74. The UNCCD has fostered collaborations with numerous key partners. The consolidation of partnerships includes the facilitation of the IDRA, and participation in various fora and high-level conferences, including the 10th World Water Forum, annual World Water Week and biannual UN-Water Meeting in order to effectively support the global agenda on drought and help reinforce the momentum of country cooperation at regional and global levels.

75. The GM, in collaboration with the secretariat and partners, continues to strengthen the capacity of affected Parties to access finance and implement their NDPs, contributing to more proactive drought management. Options for many new prospects and drought finance are available or under development.

76. Parties may wish to consider these conclusions as well as the final remarks of the IWG on Drought, as included in document ICCD/COP(16)/20, with a view to preparing a draft decision for the COP based on the draft text for negotiations found in ICCD/COP(16)/22, which contains all draft decisions prepared for Parties for consideration at COP 16.

²⁵ <https://www.droughtmanagement.info/hmndp10/>.