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**Conference of the Parties**

**Sixteenth session**

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

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

**The positive role that measures taken under the Convention  
can play to address desertification/land degradation and  
drought as one of the drivers that causes migration**

**Note by the secretariat**

*Summary*

In its decision 22/COP.15, the Conference of the Parties requested the secretariat to present for consideration at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties a report on progress made in implementing this decision.

This report provides a summary of the activities undertaken and progress achieved by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism during the intersessional period. It presents conclusions and recommendations on ways and means of strengthening capacity to enhance ongoing efforts to address desertification/land degradation and drought as one of the drivers that causes migration.



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## I. Background

1. Since the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13), Parties have acknowledged that all forms of migration and displacement forced by desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) are challenges of a global dimension which contribute to and aggravate economic, social and environmental problems, including forced migration and displacement, and are factors to consider when strengthening urban–rural linkages (URL). Parties also welcomed the partnership between the secretariat and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) which was established to produce a technical guide on URL and land.

2. Decision 22/COP.15 requested the Global Mechanism (GM) to:

(a) Continue supporting resource mobilization for the Sustainability, Stability and Security (3S) Initiative along with developing other projects and initiatives that prioritize decent work, including green jobs and livelihoods for people in vulnerable situations, including those living in rural areas, Indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth, and people with disabilities;

(b) Assess and make recommendations about the feasibility of facilitating resource mobilization to leverage diaspora or new private sources of investments for DLDD projects and programmes;

(c) Continue supporting the development of new initiatives, subject to the availability of resources, for the sustainable management and restoration of all degraded lands, such as peatlands, grasslands and savannas, to safeguard these threatened ecosystems and to ensure food and freshwater security for people in vulnerable situations.

3. The same decision requested the secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to:

(a) Assist Parties, upon request, to strengthen URL through territorial governance systems by utilizing principles and guidance from existing frameworks;

(b) Continue to support regional and international cooperation and initiatives that aim to promote sustainable land and water management as a means of helping to mitigate the drivers that cause migration and displacement;

(c) Also continue to strengthen cooperation with other United Nations agencies and programmes, regional and international organizations, and stakeholders in order to share information to foster a better understanding of URL;

(d) Share and support the scaling up of good practices identified at the local and subnational levels, which pursue sustainable land management and land restoration in the urban-rural interface.

4. This report describes the activities undertaken by the secretariat and the GM during the intersessional period to respond to the requests contained in decision 22/COP.15. It highlights measures to enhance the implementation of land-based measures to reduce forced migration and displacement by promoting sustainable territorial development, including multi-level governance and planning mechanisms, and by enhancing the understanding of how changing rural-urban interactions affect the livelihoods of low-income and vulnerable people in both urban and rural contexts.

## II. Implementation Progress

### A. Global Mechanism

5. The 3S Initiative is an inter-governmental effort aimed at addressing the root causes of instability and proactively mitigating emerging threats associated with the mishandling and exhaustion of natural resources, which often result in chaos. Country parties that joined

the initiative include Benin, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

6. This initiative adopts a comprehensive approach to tackle interconnected issues such as land degradation, rural unemployment, insecure land tenure and competition for resources. By addressing these challenges holistically, the 3S Initiative aims to demonstrate a bold and innovative approach. In order to operationalize the Initiative, the GM has partnered with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). This partnership seeks to enable rural remittance families and their communities to build climate resilience and improve sustainable land management, thereby enhancing livelihoods, food and water security, and rural youth employment, and reducing the incentives for migration due to climate change.

7. Migrant remittances and diaspora investments represent one of the greatest opportunities for rural communities to build climate resilience and sustainable land use in Africa, thereby improving life chances and reducing migration. These resources can promote greater climate adaptation in rural communities, improving economic security, reducing the incentives to migrate, and encouraging the eventual return and reintegration of migrants. The main focus of the collaboration is to give both remittance families and diaspora investors the opportunity to use their resources in a more productive and sustainable manner. The partnership demonstrates a commitment to structured dialogues with Member States and stakeholders. Its aim is to refine and strengthen the approach of the 3S Initiative through valuable feedback, ensuring alignment with national priorities and effectively addressing localized challenges.

8. The operational proposal presented by IFAD and the GM for the 3S Initiative aims to harness the potential of remittances and diaspora investments in order to foster climate resilience and sustainable land use in rural Africa. It comprises four main components:

- Climate-focused Market Assessments of Remittances and Diaspora Investment;
- Innovations to Leverage Remittances for Climate Resilience and Sustainable Land Use;
- Innovations to Leverage Diaspora Investment for Climate Resilience and Sustainable Land Use;
- Building a Knowledge Sharing Portal.

9. The stakeholder consultation in January 2024 consisted of a series of technical panels and presentations of relevant studies and surveys, followed by the presentation of the 3S Initiative approach and an open consultation with Member States and relevant stakeholders. Speakers included global experts and practitioners from both the public and private sectors who shared their insights, experiences and lessons learned. The second day of the event was entirely dedicated to consultation with Member States. The main conclusion from the consultation was that the leveraging of remittances and diaspora investments for climate-resilient development and sustainable land use in Africa will continue to gain importance as the continent navigates complex challenges posed by climate change, rural poverty, and migration.

10. As climate-related risks intensify and rural communities grapple with dwindling resources and livelihood opportunities, there will be a growing need for innovative interventions that empower communities to adapt and thrive in a changing environment. The commitment of IFAD and the GM within the 3S Initiative underscores a shift towards collaborative and holistic approaches that recognize the interconnectedness of climate resilience, rural development and migration, and the role of economic contributions by migrants in resilient climate adaptation for millions of households and communities in vulnerable contexts. By harnessing the financial resources, expertise and networks of remittance senders and diaspora investors, Africa is poised to unlock new pathways for sustainable rural development, improve livelihoods and mitigate the drivers of migration, ultimately fostering a more resilient and prosperous future for its people.

11. The main recommendations that emerged from discussions held during the consultation are the following:

(a) Dedicate time and resources to the collection and provision of clear, fact-based information from/to migrants and their families in their countries of origin to enhance their awareness of climate change adaptation needs and investment opportunities;

(b) Collect data and perform detailed evaluations of past efforts to promote green and climate-resilient investments by the diaspora, facilitating the scale-up of successful approaches;

(c) Encourage investment funds and remittance service providers to develop green financial products and foster partnerships promoting climate-smart solutions.

12. IFAD and the GM will continue to engage the 3S countries to identify opportunities to implement the approach.

## B. Secretariat

13. URL refers to the flow of people, goods, information, capital and services that bring communities and cultures together. These flows are supported by land-based infrastructure and networks that cross socioeconomic, biophysical and jurisdictional boundaries, yet are often not fully recognized or accounted for in the typical political and administrative spheres of governance and management. Rural communities benefit from employment opportunities, financial and technology flows, transport links, power lines and digital connectivity. Local and regional food systems are a prime example of how these linkages work, connecting rural producers to markets and supply chains that feed our growing cities.

14. Strong, sustainable and resilient URL are central to the effectiveness of integrated urban-rural or territorial approaches to sustainable development. URL are the lifelines that connect urban and rural communities with significant potential to improve their lives and livelihoods. However, climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss are exacerbated by inefficient and high-impact URL that adversely affect livelihoods and contribute to growing inequality and instability in rural areas. Land degradation impacts on the ability of communities to build resilience, stem rural out-migration and ensure the health of land-based assets.

15. Parties have welcomed the partnership established between the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and UN-Habitat to produce a technical guide on URL and land. As a first step, UNCCD and UN-Habitat have developed a **Primer on URL and Land** which offers a comprehensive overview of the topic and its relevance to the Convention as part of the global effort to assist countries in achieving their land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets. It identifies the key functional characteristics of URL that pose unique challenges to the health and productivity of the land: (1) fragmented governance; (2) urban consumer demand; (3) infrastructure development; (4) urban and peri-urban expansion; (5) rural-to-urban migration; (6) feedback loops; and (7) telecoupling.

16. The Primer describes the relevant actors, frameworks and tools that can be used to support LDN initiatives by strengthening URL and making them more resilient. Key actors include national and state governments, sub-national and local authorities, the private sector and civil society which help shape the structure and operation of URL. Multi-level governance frameworks, integrated territorial and flow-centred approaches, and human rights-based and gender-responsive strategies are recognized as effective in engaging diverse URL actors and enhancing LDN efforts in a variety of contexts.

17. The Primer also highlights that a number of land administration and management tools are available for designing, planning, implementing and financing more sustainable and resilient URL that also address land degradation drivers and impacts: from integrated land use planning (ILUP) and integrated landscape management (ILM) to demand-led policies and land administration in the public sector domain, green and blue infrastructure, land restoration, nature-based solutions, and social and solidarity economies that require coordination and partnerships with the private sector.

18. The frameworks and tools presented in the Primer are intended to encourage the development of three main elements to strengthen URL and accelerate progress towards

achieving LDN targets: (1) integrated territorial approaches involving multi-actor participatory processes; (2) coordination mechanisms and partnerships to design and manage flow-based URL; and (3) the transition to social and solidarity economies. The key findings that emerged when developing the Primer are presented here for ease of reference.

19. **Fragmented land governance is perhaps the most significant challenge. The national policy and governance frameworks chosen often determine the effectiveness of strategies and approaches in achieving sustainable, equitable and integrated urban-rural development.** In some countries, integrated territorial governance (i.e. functional territories) combined with flow-centred governance frameworks offer the greatest potential for strengthening URL and achieving LDN. This requires financial and technical assistance to establish the administrative procedures and capacities for vertical and horizontal integration as well as for land use planning and implementation within a specific functional territory.

20. **ILUP and territorial planning offer a suite of tools to help coordinate intermunicipal and interregional strategies and action plans.** The objective is to balance competing land use demands and allocate resources across multiple users, sectors and jurisdictions along an urban-rural continuum. These tools can address the shortcomings of other planning systems which fail to consider the wider landscape of URL-related land uses and impacts.

21. **ILM is particularly adept at addressing URL challenges arising from urban and peri-urban expansion, infrastructure development and agriculture extensification.** All contribute to rural-to-urban migration, deforestation and biodiversity loss, climate change and water scarcity, food insecurity, poverty and inequality. Landscape partnerships can be strategically positioned to support the implementation of commitments under the Rio conventions, including those contained in target 15.3 (LDN) of the Sustainable Development Goals, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, Nationally Determined Contributions, and National Adaptation Plans.

22. **Responsible and inclusive land governance is required to enhance land tenure security for urban, rural and peri-urban communities.** It is a critical enabling factor to prevent and reduce the negative impacts of URL on land and natural resources. Tenure security for all not only promotes long-term investments in land stewardship but can play a significant role in preventing and managing conflicts that arise from URL processes and infrastructure.

23. **Green and blue infrastructure can provide cost-effective, nature-positive complements to food, water, transport and energy flows that are typically supported by grey infrastructure.** Nature-based solutions can enhance drought and flood mitigation, the provision of renewable energies, biodiversity conservation, and water and waste recycling. To address URL impacts on land, these solutions can include conservation hubs, forested and riparian buffer zones, ecological connectivity features and multifunctional zones.

24. **Public procurement and demand-led policies can help shift growing urban demand towards more sustainably produced land-based commodities and greener supply chains.** Managing demand-driven URL can encourage regenerative land management practices in rural areas through new markets and supply chains that increase producer incomes and stem rural out-migration. Social solidarity and circular economies connecting urban consumers and rural producers can help raise awareness on the need to sustainably manage the entire life cycle of goods and services and mitigate URL impacts on land.

25. The challenges posed by telecoupled or long-distance URL can be significant in some countries and only addressed in the domain of international trade and foreign investment. Urban consumer demand in high- and middle-income countries can lead to distant but large environmental footprints in developing countries. This is an important consideration for countries where land degradation and land use change are closely linked to international trade and investment in the production, processing and distribution of land-based commodities.

26. The hope is that this **Primer on URL and Land** will serve not only as a foundation but also as a motivation to: (1) consider and address URL impacts on land health and

productivity; and (2) mainstream appropriate response measures into land use planning, governance and management decisions. By providing an easily accessible overview of URL challenges and solutions, the Primer highlights many relevant governance frameworks and spatial tools that can help strengthen the bonds between rural producers and urban consumers. The ultimate objective is to make URL sustainable, less environmentally destructive and more resilient so that rural communities can better access opportunities and more equitably share in the benefits of an interconnected world.

### **III. Conclusion**

**27. Since COP 13, Parties have recognized the important role that the conservation, sustainable use and restoration of land resources, i.e. the LDN response hierarchy, can play in preventing and reducing forced migration and displacement. Stronger and more resilient URL in the land-based commodity and trade sectors offer multiple entry points for governments, businesses, and communities, allowing all stakeholders to participate and prosper.**

**28. Fragmented land governance is perhaps the most significant challenge in addressing urban-rural inequalities. The national policy and governance frameworks chosen often determine the effectiveness of strategies and approaches in achieving sustainable, equitable and integrated urban-rural development. In some countries, integrated territorial governance (i.e. functional territories) combined with flow-centred governance frameworks offer the greatest potential for strengthening URL and achieving LDN.**

**29. Strengthening URL to reduce forced migration requires financial and technical assistance to establish the administrative procedures and capacities for vertical and horizontal integration as well as for land use planning and implementation within a specific functional territory. Leveraging migrant remittances and diaspora investments is a unique opportunity for rural communities to build climate resilience and sustainable land use, thereby reducing out-migration. These resources can contribute to achieving economic security, reducing the incentives to migrate, and encouraging the eventual return and reintegration of migrants.**