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

Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Land tenure

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 27/COP.15, the Conference of the Parties requested the secretariat to present a report on policy issues relevant to this decision at its sixteenth session.

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 to strengthen capacity to enhance ongoing efforts to integrate tenure security into the implementation of activities to combat desertification/land degradation and drought and achieve land degradation neutrality.



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I. Background

1. Parties have acknowledged decision 26/COP.14 on land tenure as a landmark decision for the Convention and that further work needs to be carried out, whether within policy or programming efforts, to integrate land tenure into the implementation of the Convention, including land degradation neutrality (LDN) target-setting efforts and LDN transformative projects and programmes.
2. There is a growing recognition among all Parties that responsible and inclusive land governance and improved tenure security is an important enabling factor for achieving LDN, addressing biodiversity loss, adapting to climate change, creating sustainable food systems and accelerating progress towards many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Legitimate land tenure rights can provide significant incentives for rights holders to invest in LDN and other land restoration activities, thereby creating a safe space to innovate and adopt sustainable land management (SLM) practices that build on local and traditional knowledge. Land tenure security is also an important pathway to enhance gender equality and women's economic and social empowerment.
3. Decision 27/COP.15 requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM), subject to the availability of resources, to continue their efforts to integrate land tenure considerations into the implementation of the Convention and LDN initiatives, and specifically to:
 - (a) Further develop specific guidance and exchange lessons learned, through national consultations in selected countries across regions;
 - (b) Identify financing opportunities to strengthen land governance and build a business case for responsible and sustainable public and private investments in land tenure;
 - (c) Implement awareness-raising actions on responsible and inclusive land governance for combating desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD);
 - (d) Continue exploring the use of existing indicators and data sets relevant to land governance.
4. This report describes the land tenure-related activities, undertaken by the secretariat and the GM during the intersessional period, that respond to the requests contained in decision 27/COP.15.

II. Implementation progress

A. National consultations

5. In decision 27/COP.15, Parties underlined the need for more political will and capacity development to effectively integrate land tenure into the implementation of the Convention, including through national plans, legal frameworks, strategies and action programmes. The Parties requested the secretariat and partners to further develop specific guidance and exchange lessons learned, through national consultations in selected countries across regions, to assist Parties on the ways and means to integrate land tenure into efforts to achieve LDN.
6. Recognizing the importance of tenure security in combating DLDD, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) secretariat and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) established the UNCCD-FAO Joint Initiative on Land Tenure to assist Parties with the integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT) into LDN and other land restoration initiatives. With this aim, the national consultations organized and conducted by the UNCCD-FAO Joint Initiative were based on an assessment of country needs and conditions and focused on promoting the meaningful, inclusive participation of relevant stakeholders to achieve the objectives set out in decisions 26/COP.14 and 27/COP.15, including to:

(a) Convene a national dialogue and establish a multi-stakeholder platform to explore the ways and means to strengthen tenure rights and land governance;

(b) Formulate and implement a national strategy and action plan to strengthen tenure security, particularly for groups in vulnerable situations;

(c) Integrate the principles and practices in the VGGT into LDN and land restoration initiatives that aim to deliver multiple benefits to society, including accelerating progress towards multiple SDGs;

(d) Support the design and implementation of LDN and land restoration initiatives at subnational and local levels, where enhanced tenure security can be both a means to scale up SLM and an outcome of land-based projects and programmes.

7. The UNCCD-FAO Joint Initiative organized regional webinars with the Rio conventions' national focal points and FAO staff in February 2023 and a second series of webinars targeting a larger group of stakeholders in May 2023, both to raise awareness on the importance and value of tenure security and its contribution to biodiversity conservation, SLM, ecosystem restoration, and climate change mitigation and adaptation while improving food security and local livelihoods.

8. Following the regional webinars, countries were invited to submit an application package outlining their capacity needs and the support needed to integrate land tenure and related gender considerations into LDN and other land restoration initiatives. A total of 33 applications were received and evaluated against a set of evaluation criteria, including the description of challenges and opportunities, synergies with existing initiatives, technical quality of the proposal, ability to drive the national consultations, and level of multi-stakeholder engagement envisioned. A group of five countries (Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, Senegal and Sri Lanka) were selected for a first phase of national consultations on land tenure, which was communicated to all Parties in December 2023.

9. To raise awareness and gather further inputs on this consultative approach, the UNCCD-FAO Joint Initiative and multiple partners organized a plenary session at the World Bank Land Conference in May 2024 dedicated to the integration of tenure security into SLM and restoration efforts. The session entitled "Integrating Land Tenure into Sustainable Land Management: National Multistakeholder Consultations" began by framing the entry points or pathways for integrating land tenure into regenerative land management practices. The session presented reflections from country and civil society representatives on challenges and experiences in integrating legitimate land rights, specifically for women and Indigenous peoples, into SLM projects and programmes as well as the importance of participatory land governance and context-specific applications of the VGGT. It also offered the opportunity to discuss how international organizations and donors address the need for policy coherence to attract financial resources and build technical and administrative capacities for improving tenure security. In preparation for the session, a joint FAO-UNCCD synergy brief titled "Securing Tenure to Restore Land and Safeguard Livelihoods" was published and disseminated.¹

10. Between December 2023 and September 2024, the UNCCD-FAO Joint Initiative conducted the first phase of national consultations, which were funded by Canada, the European Commission, the Republic of Korea and Switzerland, with the expectation that additional resources and capacities would be made available to deliver consultations in the outstanding 28 countries that have requested support. These national consultations were based on a multi-stakeholder approach involving government, civil society, the private sector, financing institutions, and local communities. They presented an opportunity to re-energize the VGGT and integrate tenure considerations into national policy and legislation to combat DLDD as well as scale up regenerative agriculture, SLM and restoration projects and programmes. A brief summary and key outcomes of the national consultations are outlined below.

¹ <https://www.fao.org/land-water/news-archive/news-detail/en/c/1681633/>.

1. Kazakhstan

11. The National Consultation on the Integration of Tenure Security Considerations into Strategies and Action Plans to Combat Desertification/Land Degradation and Drought, requested by the Government of Kazakhstan and convened by the Committee for Land Resources Management (CLRM), took place in Astana from 6 to 8 December 2023 in order to take advantage of the country's ongoing national action programme (NAP) process as well as two FAO projects that could support the preparation and delivery of the national consultation. The main objectives of the national consultation were to:

(a) Increase understanding among participants on the direct linkages between land tenure issues and the achievement of LDN;

(b) Exchange experiences and share knowledge on the role of secure tenure in improving natural resource management practices and rural livelihoods;

(c) Discuss with national and local authorities and experts the availability and use of data related to land degradation and land tenure for restoring natural capital and providing multiple social benefits through enhanced tenure security;

(d) Bring together diverse stakeholders to raise awareness and enhance collaboration on sustainable land use and tenure security issues;

(e) Identify partners nationally and internationally, including donors and experts, that could be involved in sustaining the momentum created by the consultation.

12. Around 50 participants, representing a broad range of stakeholders, attended the national consultation, including the CRLM, the Committee for Forestry and Wildlife of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, the national company Kazakhstan Gharysh Sapary, the Livestock and Fodder Production Research Institute, the Bureau of National Statistics of the Agency for Strategic Planning and Reform, Saken Seifullin Kazakh Agrotechnical Research University, the Toraighyrov University, the Association of Farmers of Kazakhstan, the Islamic Organization for Food Security, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Asian Development Bank. Women representatives outnumbered men and several youth representatives were also present.

13. After two days of presentations and group discussions, the national consultation achieved its main objectives of bringing together diverse stakeholders, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience on the role of secure tenure in improving natural resource management practices, and increasing the understanding among participants on the direct linkages between land tenure issues and achievement of LDN and restoration goals.

14. Stakeholders agreed on the need to (i) set up a cross-sectoral collaboration mechanism to enhance synergies; (ii) improve knowledge exchange between authorities responsible for land management and land tenure governance, including local or regional authorities and scientific communities; and (iii) coordinate with stakeholders when reviewing, designing and implementing legislation on land governance to ensure that land degradation issues are adequately considered. Furthermore, they agreed on the need to (i) enhance synergies in the monitoring and evaluation of activities and data collection on land management and the governance of tenure; (ii) improve the land management of the *priauylnye pastbischa* (pastures near settlements/villages) to address overgrazing, the lack of effective pasture management, and unsustainable land use change; and (iii) undertake land use planning through the development of a self-organized system of land management by local communities for pasturelands, among other things.

15. The recommendations from the consultation were conveyed to the CLRM and considered during the adoption of the NAP. They included:

(a) The need to conduct an assessment of the challenges at the land tenure and LDN nexus, at different levels and for different stakeholders, to support the development of targeted solutions as part of a follow up to the national consultation;

(b) Future consultations or dialogues should be moderated by a technical expert from the country with good knowledge of the country and the facilitation skills to stimulate discussions and provide concrete and relevant examples that resonate with the participants;

(c) The pathways from the UNCCD-FAO technical guide should be complemented by specific guiding questions to participants and examples from the country to enhance understanding of the pathways and their relevance to the discussions.

2. Sri Lanka

16. The National Consultation on the Integration of Tenure Security Considerations into Strategies and Action Plans to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation, requested by the Government of Sri Lanka, took place in Colombo from 30 July to 1 August 2024. The consultation was convened by the UNCCD national focal point and the Ministry of Environment of Sri Lanka, with support from the Land Use Policy Planning Department, FAO Sri Lanka and Maldives, and the Natural Resources Management Center. The main objectives of the national consultation were to:

(a) Increase understanding and awareness among participants on the linkages between land tenure issues and efforts to combat land degradation;

(b) Exchange project experiences and share knowledge and data on land degradation (e.g. drivers and impacts) as well as land tenure and its role in improving natural resource management practices and rural livelihoods;

(c) Explore pathways and coordination mechanisms to increase tenure security, particularly for vulnerable groups, with the aim of contributing to integrated land use planning and sustainable land use;

(d) Identify existing and potential initiatives and policies that address the nexus of land tenure and SLM, including opportunities for multilateral, bilateral and national funding to advance tenure considerations that contribute to all three dimensions of sustainable development.

17. Over 20 government organizations involved in land administration, management and planning participated in the national consultation, including departments concerned with agriculture and plantations, forestry and wildlife, surveying and statistics, mining and infrastructure, and irrigation and water resources, among others. In addition to several representatives from academia, civil society was represented by the Movement for Land and Agriculture Reform, Human Development Foundation, People's Alliance for Right Land and The Public Interest Law Foundation. Women representatives outnumbered men by 2 to 1. After three days of presentations and group discussions, the national consultation achieved its main objectives of bringing together diverse stakeholders; facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experience on the role of secure tenure in improving natural resource management practices; and increasing the understanding among participants on the linkages between land tenure issues and achievement of LDN, land restoration and sustainable rural development goals.

18. Stakeholders agreed on the need for greater collaboration and coordination among government departments and commissions at the national level and the need for greater devolution of planning, implementation, and finance for land and water management initiatives at the district and village levels. This would offer more immediate and effective opportunities for addressing the main drivers of land degradation in Sri Lanka – land use change, especially deforestation and wetland conversion, illegal encroachment on state or abandoned lands, soil erosion, particularly on sloping lands, and the loss of biodiversity habitat – through cooperative land management at the local level. Data transparency, availability, and interoperability were seen as key enabling factors required to make progress in land use planning. A number of promising projects and programmes with the potential for replication and scaling up were presented, including the Good Agricultural Practices certification programme, the Healthy Landscapes project, Bim Saivya for more transparent land titling, and the Urumaya programme that offers absolute ownership on former state lands.

19. The Ministry of Environment scheduled a follow up consultation with all participants to take stock of the discussion and further explore how the proposed recommendations could be further elaborated and implemented. These included to:

(a) Create a coordination mechanism (e.g. national working group, intragovernmental platform) to facilitate exchanges among government ministries,

departments, commissions and organizations, in particular divisional secretaries, to promote greater policy coherence and identify areas for potential collaboration for implementation;

(b) Establish or empower a divisional level officer to access national data, conduct assessments, and make recommendations (e.g. LDN/SLM guidelines) for use at the provincial and district level (e.g. InforBhoomi) to inform village land use planning committees, guide regenerative soil and water management practices at the appropriate scales, and improve tenure security while balancing food security and livelihood priorities;

(c) Link tenure to a cooperative land management model with monitoring and evaluation protocols that would utilize new technologies for sustainable intensification, open access to markets, and create value chains that reward sustainable production and processing while minimizing risk (e.g. Good Agricultural Practices certification, crop insurance);

(d) Explore long-term legal and policy options (e.g. land commission) and short-term opportunities (e.g. Healthy Landscapes) for financing, replicating and scaling up existing LDN/SLM projects and programmes with the aim of addressing tenure inequality.

3. Kenya

20. The National Dialogue on the Integration of Tenure Security Considerations into Strategies and Action Plans to Combat Desertification and Land Degradation, requested by the Government of Kenya (Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry) and supported by TMG Research, was conducted in Nairobi from 20 to 22 August 2024. The main objective of the national dialogue was to sensitize relevant actors on the LDN concept and how land tenure issues can be integrated in activities aimed at avoiding, reducing and reversing land degradation as well as to co-develop proposals that can improve tenure security while contributing to land restoration efforts.

21. In total, 56 participants from 43 institutions attended the national dialogue. This included representatives from the Ministry of Lands and Physical Planning; the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development; the Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation; the Ministry of East African Community, Arid and Semi-Arid Lands, and Regional Development; the Ministry of Mining, Blue Economy and Maritime Affairs; the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife; the National Environmental Management Authority; the National Land Commission; the Kenya Forestry Research Institute; the Council of Governors; and key county governments of counties where restoration work is being undertaken. In addition, several non-state actors, civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations, grassroots women's organizations, including the National Alliance of Community Forest Associations, the Land Development and Governance Institute, the International Land Coalition, Landesa, the Conservation Alliance of Kenya, Nalala Tree Foundation, Entashata Community-Based Organization, Kijabe Environment Volunteers Organization and Shibuye Community Health Workers, participated in the dialogue. A total of 26 participants were female and 33 were male; 17 participants were under the age of 35.

22. The national dialogue succeeded in bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to discuss issues of land tenure in the context of SLM and land restoration for the first time. There was a strong presence of community representatives and grassroots voices, which contributed to a lively exchange of knowledge, experiences, concerns and potential solutions. Many of these can be integrated into the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme 2.0 (LDN TSP 2.0) process given that the relevant government representatives as well as the consultant responsible for the LDN TSP 2.0 process attended and actively participated in the dialogue.

23. Some key issues that were highlighted by participants included the slow registration of community land rights, the unequal access to land rights by women and youth, weak implementation of existing legal provisions that could enhance land tenure security and land restoration initiatives, limited enforcement of existing spatial and land use plans that could enhance land restoration initiatives, limited awareness of government institutions and non-government actors on the specific interventions planned under the national restoration initiatives, limited compliance with court rulings that resolve tenure disputes, unclear succession, and perceived tenure insecurity, even in cases of documented tenure rights due to limited trust in institutions.

24. The dialogue also highlighted that smallholders face a disproportionate burden when it comes to restoration and that large-scale landowners need to take on more responsibility for restoration. It was agreed that the existing legislative and regulatory framework provides sufficient entry points to address both land tenure and land degradation issues, but that these need to be implemented. Other issues that emerged from the dialogue were (1) the potential risks of carbon market-related restoration projects to the ability of local communities to access, use and benefit from the land (i.e. creates an avenue for land grabbing); (2) the need to consider water bodies and water management, which is often closely linked to terrestrial ecosystem degradation; (3) increasing subdivision of land is reducing the size of land parcels, which can hinder restoration at scale; and (4) the need to establish a multi-stakeholder platform to enhance coordination within and among restoration initiatives.

25. The stakeholders agreed on the following next steps:

(a) To strengthen the existing UNCCD multi-stakeholder platform to share information and data as well as synergize and coordinate on the implementation of the Convention, including land tenure issues. The Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Forestry will take responsibility for coordinating and convening the platform. The membership should be reviewed to ensure land actors and other relevant stakeholders are included and that discussions should contribute to policymaking;

(b) To use existing multi-stakeholder platforms, such as the Ardhi Caucus and the Kenya National Land Coalition, to sensitize stakeholders on the integration of land tenure considerations into LDN. As a first step, this would include presenting the results from the national dialogue and developing recommendations that can be integrated into the revision of the National Land Policy, the LDN TSP 2.0 process, and the road map for the national tree-growing initiative;

(c) To reach out to county governments, towns, municipalities, and communities working on county spatial plans, local development plans, and community land use and management plans to include tenure and LDN considerations as part of these processes;

(d) To focus on community land recognition, protection and management and integrate the work of various institutions working on community land registration issues;

(e) To involve the group of stakeholders from the national dialogue in the preparation of the position of Kenya for the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) in Riyadh.

4. Mexico

26. The national consultation in Mexico is expected to take place from 11 to 12 September 2024. The primary objectives of the national consultations in Mexico are to increase awareness and support to vulnerable groups on integrating tenure governance into land restoration initiatives; analyse national information on land tenure, with an emphasis on vulnerable groups such as women, youth and Indigenous peoples; and encourage the development of effective tenure governance strategies and action plans in the context of LDN and land restoration initiatives. In addition, the national consultations will build capacity to formulate projects and programmes that attract sustained funding and additional resources, engage CSOs and other institutions to strengthen informed community work regarding tenure-related decision-making, and promote an inclusive governance structure, mechanisms, processes, and monitoring and evaluation.

5. Senegal

27. The national consultation in Senegal is expected to take place at the end of September or the beginning of October 2024. The country is planning to hold local consultations and a national forum. The main objectives of the national consultation process is to increase awareness of key stakeholders on the need to adapt to, mitigate and reverse land degradation; ensure they have the capacity to lobby decision-makers for fair, responsible and gender-sensitive land reform; identify and scale-up good practices, tools and frameworks; and develop a note on the outcomes that can influence strategic and political considerations in the implementation of the country's LDN targets.

B. Financing opportunities for land tenure

28. Decision 27/COP.15 requested the GM to identify financing opportunities to strengthen land governance and build a business case for responsible and sustainable public and private investments in land tenure within the context of activities to combat DLDD, in collaboration with relevant partners and financing institutions, in line with the VGGT and social and environmental safeguards, and particularly taking into consideration the perspectives of Indigenous peoples and local communities, women and youth, and communicate these financing opportunities to Parties.

29. The GM has launched LDN TSP 2.0, which, among other elements, will assist the 18 selected countries in mainstreaming LDN into (sub)national integrated land-use planning frameworks and improve the related enabling environment. In this context, countries participating in LDN TSP 2.0 may wish to build on the momentum of LDN TSP 2.0 country-level activities to explore potential synergies and complementarity with their land tenure-related work. Moreover, in the implementation of the refined targets and the development of land-based transformative projects and programmes, countries may wish to refer to the recently developed checklist to guide project developers in integrating tenure considerations.

30. The GM has developed a business case which provides a value proposition on why to invest in enhancing tenure security as part of land-based transformative projects and programmes and has mapped out financing institutions and mechanisms with specific gender mainstreaming requirements and tenure-related priorities and/or safeguards to be considered in the project development phase. Further financing opportunities will be explored through public and private sources, utilizing key messages from the business case for responsible and sustainable public and private investments and advocating for more investments in this regard. More details are presented in document ICCD/CRIC(22)/5.

C. Awareness-raising on responsible and inclusive land governance

31. Decision 27/COP.15 requested the secretariat to implement awareness-raising actions on responsible land governance for combating DLDD and engage with Parties, CSOs, other United Nations organizations and other key partners to have the widest reach among all stakeholders from global to local level, in particular Indigenous peoples and local communities, those living in rural areas, women, youth, and persons with disabilities. The key awareness raising actions on land tenure are outlined below.

1. The UNCCD-FAO Joint Initiative

32. In February 2023, the UNCCD, FAO and other partners jointly organized an initial series of regional webinars exclusively for FAO staff and Rio convention national focal points to share their experiences and describe case examples that demonstrate specific regional challenges as well as potential synergies with other sustainable development priorities to help make secure tenure both an effective means and desirable outcome of LDN and land restoration initiatives at national and project scales.

33. In May 2023, the UNCCD, FAO and other partners jointly organized a second series of regional webinars for all stakeholders, focusing specifically on (i) why individual tenure and communal land rights should be integrated into the implementation of activities that aim to combat land degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss; and (ii) how countries can request support to tackle specific challenges linked to land and ecosystem degradation by integrating secure land tenure through an application process for national consultations. A total of 138 countries were represented during these webinars with close to 900 participants from CSOs /non-governmental organizations (39 per cent), United Nations agencies (23 per cent), national public authorities (20 per cent), academia/research (9 per cent) and partners and donors (8 per cent).

2. Strategy Workshops on Women's Land Rights and the Rio Conventions

34. The secretariat co-organized two strategy workshops on women's land rights and the Rio conventions in July 2023 and June 2024, both held in Berlin, Germany.² The first workshop, held from the 3 to 5 July 2023, was organized in collaboration with the Robert Bosch Stiftung and TMG Research. It brought together around 60 stakeholders from more than 30 countries, including national focal points, convention secretariats and other United Nations bodies, and CSOs. It focused on leveraging synergies to advance women's land rights across the Rio conventions and identifying pathways to empower women and ensure equal land rights. Jointly developing a theory of change on women's land rights and facilitating cross-collaboration among the caucuses and other rights holder constituencies within the conventions were considered essential next steps to enhance synergies. Participants emphasized the necessity of strengthening the engagement of grassroots women.

35. The second workshop was co-hosted by TMG Research, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the UNCCD, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and held from 20 to 21 June 2024. Around 50 participants, including civil society and grass roots women's organizations, mainly from East Africa and Asia, attended the workshop to discuss the role of women's land rights within the Rio conventions. The objectives were to jointly identify first entry points to leverage synergies for women's land rights and strengthen the agency of grassroots organizations, including:

- (a) Windows of opportunity for mobilizing financing for grassroots organizations within the conventions' existing funding mechanisms;
- (b) Strategies to strengthen the vertical and horizontal coordination of national focal points;
- (c) How to better integrate the perspectives of grassroots organizations into national policy dialogues to influence international negotiations;
- (d) How to align targets for women's land rights in national plans to harmonize implementation strategies and enhance monitoring and reporting;
- (e) Concrete ideas for coordination between women's caucuses to put women's land rights issues at the centre of their agendas, amplify grassroots voices, and enhance advocacy, learning and social inclusion.

36. Participants emphasized the need for long-term action, the establishment of a space for continuous engagement as well as communication channels to ensure accountability and a follow-up on commitments, such as developing a road map of short-term and long-term opportunities and coordinating activities before and during the three Rio convention COPs in 2024 and beyond.

3. Her Land, Her Rights.

37. Together with partners, activists and influencers, the secretariat spearheaded the #HerLand campaign³ to promote inspiring examples of women and girls' leadership in SLM and mobilize support to secure land rights for women and girls across the world. The main objectives of the campaign were to:

- (a) Raise awareness of the disproportionate impact of DLDD on women and girls and the barriers they face in decision-making on land issues;
- (b) Illustrate, through the lens of women and girls, the impacts of DLDD;
- (c) Highlight successful examples of women and girls' contributions to SLM and the broader SDGs;

² <https://www.tmg-thinktank.com/blog/harnessing-synergies-and-mobilizing-joint-action-a-historic-first-workshop>.

³ <https://herland.global/>.

(d) Hold a call to action for stronger female leadership and decision-making power on issues that affect them in the context of DLDD.

38. The campaign engaged UNCCD Goodwill and Land Ambassadors and leaders from governments, international organizations and civil society, and reached an estimated 300 million people, as measured by UNCCD's social media and online engagement monitoring tools. Over 30 women leaders, including present and former Heads of State and government, heads of international organizations, as well as prominent gender advocates and influencers, joined the call to action to date.⁴

39. The campaign was launched on International Women's Day on 8 March 2023. The global observance of the Desertification and Drought Day on 17 June 2023 was organized under the theme of "Her Land. Her Rights." and brought together women leaders from around the world at the General Assembly of the United Nations to promote gender equality in land restoration. High-level policymakers, scientists, and youth representatives discussed policies for women's land rights and leadership in land management. The event was jointly organized by the UNCCD, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, FAO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the United Nations Development Programme.

40. Former President of Finland Tarja Halonen spearheaded the political outreach and high-level advocacy in support of the "Her Land. Her Rights." call to action and actively engaged with world leaders, inviting them to join the call to action for advancing women's land rights and SLM. Inna Modja, a UNCCD Goodwill Ambassador, played a pivotal role in showcasing and presenting the #HerLand virtual exhibition at various global events, including the Global Environment Facility Assembly and UNFCCC COP 28, amplifying the campaign's message. Collaborating with UNCCD Goodwill and Land Ambassadors, musician Ricky Kej composed and produced a song in partnership with Inna Modja focusing on the themes of women's land rights and environmental sustainability, which was performed at the Resonance Climate Concert at Dubai Opera on the sidelines of UNFCCC COP 28.

4. Policy brief on advancing gender equality to restore land and build resilience

41. In June 2023, a policy brief titled "Her Land: Her Rights: Advancing Gender Equality to Restore Land and Build Resilience" was published to highlight the critical role of gender-responsive approaches to land tenure that empower women and accelerate the implementation of land restoration commitments that build community resilience. The brief examined how greater tenure security for women and girls can lead to more equitable and sustainable land management.⁵

42. The policy brief outlined the importance of tenure security for women's empowerment, as well as their households and communities, by increasing their contribution and access to the social, economic and environmental benefits that result from sustainable land management and restoration. It highlighted that supporting countries and communities to strengthen women's land rights and access to natural resources is a concrete step towards linking human rights to LDN targets and other land restoration projects and programmes. Some of the key recommendations to strengthen women's land rights in the policy brief include:

- (a) Reducing or eliminating discrimination that inhibits women's meaningful participation in decision-making processes concerning land governance;
- (b) Supporting gender-responsive reforms of legal, justice, and administrative systems;
- (c) Engaging men and women through awareness-raising campaigns to shift gender norms and strengthen women's land rights;

⁴ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/DDD_Her%20Land%20Call%20to%20Action.pdf.

⁵ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/brief/her-land-her-rights-advancing-gender-equality-restore-land-and-build-resilience>.

- (d) Conducting gender assessments and closing the gender data gap;
- (e) Ensuring sustained financial and technical support for gender-responsive projects and programmes.

5. Stand for her Land Campaign

43. The UNCCD supported the Stand for Her Land Campaign, driven by a global steering committee of international non-governmental organizations and led by Landesa, which aims to close the gap between global commitments and local practice. Through their coalition model involving local grassroots organizations, national CSOs, and other non-state actors, the campaign connects global and local actors and empowers grassroots women leaders and men who are champions in advocating for gender justice and stronger women's land rights.⁶

D. Indicators and data on land governance

44. Decision 27/COP.15 requested the secretariat to continue exploring existing global indicators and data sets relevant to land governance and, when appropriate, engage with relevant partners and institutions to pilot options to integrate potential indicators in future UNCCD reporting processes. The UNCCD reporting manual for the 2022–2023 reporting period urged Parties to report on experiences in setting up policy measures to mainstream gender in the implementation of the UNCCD, which may involve enhancing women's participation in land-based decision making and improving women's land rights and access to related resources, etc.

45. There are three land tenure-related SDG indicators: 1.4.2. Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognized documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure; 5.a.1. (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) Share of women among owners or rights bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure; and 5.a.2. Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control.

46. In 2024, for SDG indicator 1.4.2, 33 countries reported on legally documented tenure rights and provided sex-disaggregated data regarding land tenure rights, and 22 countries reported the share of people who perceive their rights to be secure on an aggregate basis. However, for all countries reporting but one, there is only one data point between 2011 and 2018, which limits the analysis of progress over time and its usefulness for decision-making. For SDG indicator 5.a.1, 46 countries submitted data between 2009 and 2020. In one-third of the countries, less than 50 per cent of women and men have ownership or secure rights over agricultural land. In 40 of the 46 countries, fewer women own agricultural land with the share of men with ownership at least twice that of women. For SDG indicator 5.a.2, 71 countries reported; of these, only 30 per cent of countries have legal frameworks that effectively protect women's land rights (rated high or very high), while 51 per cent were considered to poorly protect women's land rights (rated low). For all three SDG indicators, global status or progress assessments are currently not possible due to insufficient data. The data for indicators 5.a.1 and 5.a.2 provide a good starting point but require more complementary data and the engagement of key stakeholders to effectively inform decision-making.

III. Conclusion

47. **Since the landmark COP decision on land tenure in 2019, the importance of land tenure to address DLDD and achieve LDN has been increasingly acknowledged by all sectors of society. Over 30 countries have requested support for integrating land tenure considerations into LDN initiatives and national policies and plans, building on the**

⁶ <https://stand4herland.org/>.

Technical Guide on the Integration of the VGGTs into the implementation of the UNCCD and LDN.

48. In the first phase, national consultations were conducted in five countries (Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, Senegal and Sri Lanka). The lessons learned are being used to refine the methodology to support more countries in their efforts to integrate land tenure into LDN through national consultations or dialogues. With the support of the GM, some countries have begun to consider integrating land tenure into the activities of the LDN TSP 2.0.

49. The GM has developed a business case for responsible and sustainable public and private investments in land tenure, identified potential financing sources and mechanisms, and produced a checklist to enhance resource mobilization and ensure land tenure is integrated into projects and programmes. The business case and the implementation of the tenure checklist provide new opportunities to enhance financing opportunities for land tenure in LDN and DLDD projects and programmes. Through awareness-raising events and campaigns, considerable public interest on women's land rights and the importance of tenure security for women's economic empowerment has been generated at global, regional and national/local levels.
