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## Convention to Combat Desertification

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### Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

#### Twenty-second session

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Item 2 (c) of the provisional agenda

**Effective implementation of the Convention at national, subregional and regional levels**

**Performance of Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies**

### **Report on the performance of the Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies (2022–2024)**

#### **Note by the secretariat**

#### *Summary*

This document presents the progress made by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) toward the objectives and outcomes of the UNCCD four-year results framework (as contained in decision 1/COP.15), assessed against the outcome indicators contained in the results framework. This document also provides brief descriptions of the accomplishments and main activities carried out during the triennium 2022–2024 by each programme of the secretariat and the GM. In addition, this document provides a summary of the resources utilized in 2022–2024 as at 31 July 2024.



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## I. Introduction

1. The secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) plan, carry out and monitor progress in their work by using four-year workplans and costed two-year work programmes. These workplans and work programmes follow a results-based management (RBM) approach. At the end of each biennium, the secretariat and the GM provide information on their performance in implementing the workplan and programme, following the RBM approach.
2. Due to changes in the scheduling of the meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP) following the COVID-19 pandemic, the latest UNCCD programme and budget covered a triennium instead of a biennium. Accordingly, this performance report presents the results achieved and resources utilized by the secretariat and the GM in 2022–2024, building on the UNCCD results framework contained in decision 1/COP.15. The report provides an overview of expenditure and performance highlights, followed by information on the progress made toward the outcomes of the results framework. Brief descriptions of the accomplishments and main activities carried out during the 2022–2024 triennium by each programme of the secretariat and the GM are also presented.
3. This document should be read in conjunction with information on the financial performance for the Convention Trust Funds in 2022–2024, which is contained in document ICCD/COP(16)/7.

## II. Overview of expenditure

4. Table 1 presents expenditure as at 31 July 2024 by the secretariat programmes and the GM in the Trust Fund for the Core Budget of the UNCCD, amounting to EUR 18.32 million, or 84.0 per cent of the approved budget, using the average exchange rate for the triennium.

Table 1  
Expenditure by programme as at 31 July 2024 (Euros)

	<i>Approved budget 2022–2024</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 July 2024</i>	<i>Balance of funds</i>	<i>Per cent of expenditure</i>
<i>I. Secretariat programmes</i>				
A. Executive Office	2 148 072	2 055 936	92 136	95.7
B. Governing Bodies and Legal Affairs	1 280 422	832 372	448 050	65.0
C. Communications, External Relations and Partnerships	1 683 885	1 638 303	45 582	97.3
D. Global policy advocacy and regional cooperation	3 275 811	3 078 429	197 382	94.0
E. Science, Technology and Innovation	4 808 055	4 198 793	609 262	87.3
F. Administrative Services	3 072 330	2 688 496	383 834	87.5
<i>II. Global Mechanism</i>				
F. Global Mechanism	5 542 358	3 828 189	1 714 169	69.1
<b>Total core budget (A–F)</b>	<b>21 810 933</b>	<b>18 320 518</b>	<b>3 490 415</b>	<b>84.0</b>

5. Table 2 presents expenditure of the core budget by object of expenditure.

Table 2  
**Expenditure by object of expenditure in the core budget of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism as at 31 July 2024**

(Euros)

<i>Object of expenditure</i>	<i>Approved budget 2022–2024</i>	<i>Expenditure as at</i>		<i>Per cent of expenditure</i>
		<i>31 July 2024</i>	<i>Balance of funds</i>	
Personnel costs	16 419 252	15 269 269	1 149 983	93.0
Contractual services	1 175 491	796 299	379 192	67.7
Travel	1 138 424	414 026	724 398	36.4
Operating and other direct costs	2 937 696	1 680 964	1 256 732	57.2
Supplies, commodities and materials	86 782	32 008	54 774	36.9
Equipment, vehicles and furniture	53 288	127 952	(74 664)	240.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21 810 933</b>	<b>18 320 518</b>	<b>3 490 415</b>	<b>84.0</b>

6. Tables 3, 4 and 5 provide an overview of the distribution of posts held by staff members on fixed-term appointments. As at 31 July 2024, 65 posts were filled by secretariat staff members and 15 posts were filled by GM staff members.

Table 3  
**Comparison of approved/established posts and filled posts by source of funding in the secretariat as at 31 July 2024**

	<i>Core</i>		<i>Supplementary</i>		<i>Bonn Fund</i>		<i>Programme support cost</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Established</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Established</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Established</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Established</i>	<i>Filled</i>
USG	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
D-2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
D-1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	2
P-5	7	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	9	5
P-4	7	6	3	3	0	0	4	4 <sup>a</sup>	14	13
P-3	4	6	5	5	1	1	1	1	11	13
P-2	1	1	3	3	0	0	1	1	5	5
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>40</b>
GS	10	9	2	2	3	3	11	11 <sup>a</sup>	26	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>65</b>

*Abbreviations:* D = Director, GS = General Staff, P = Professional, USG = Under Secretary-General.

<sup>a</sup> The funding for one P-4 and one GS post is shared between the secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Table 4  
**Comparison of approved/established posts and filled posts by source of funding in the Global Mechanism as at 31 July 2024**

	<i>Core</i>		<i>Supplementary</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Established</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Established</i>	<i>Filled</i>
D-1	1	1	0	0	1	1
P-5	1	0	0	0	1	0
P-4	2	1	2	2	4	3
P-3	4	5	2	2	6	7
P-2	2	1	0	0	2	1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>
GS	4	3	0	0	4	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>15</b>

Abbreviations: D = Director, GS = General Staff, P = Professional.

Table 5  
**Distribution of all filled posts by grade as at 31 July 2024**

<i>Grade</i>	<i>EO</i>	<i>GBLA</i>	<i>CERP</i>	<i>GPARC</i>	<i>STI</i>	<i>AS</i>	<i>GM</i>	<i>Total</i>
USG	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
D-2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
D-1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
P-5	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	5
P-4	4	0	0	5	2	2	3	16
P-3	3	2	2	2	3	1	7	20
P-2	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	6
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>52</b>
GS	5	2	4	3	2	9	3	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>80</b>

Abbreviations: EO = Executive Office (including the New York Liaison Office, the Evaluation Office and the Group of 20 Global Land Initiative coordination office), GBLA = Governing Bodies and Legal Affairs, CERP = Communications, External Relations and Partnerships, GPARC = Global Policy Advocacy and Regional Cooperation, STI = Science, Technology and Innovation, AS = Administrative Services, GM = Global Mechanism.

7. Table 6 shows the geographical distribution and gender of staff members at the professional level or above.

Table 6  
**Geographical distribution and gender of all filled posts at the professional category and above as at 31 July 2024**

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Africa</i>	<i>Asia</i>	<i>LAC</i>	<i>CEE</i>	<i>WEOG</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Filled</i>
USG	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
D-2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
D-1	1	1	0	0	1	2	1	3
P-5	2	1	0	0	2	3	2	5
P-4	2	5	1	0	8	9	7	16
P-3	5	2	2	3	8	7	13	20
P-2	0	2	0	0	4	1	5	6
<b>Subtotal</b>	11	11	4	3	24	23	29	52
<b>Percentage of total</b>						<b>44.2</b>	<b>55.7</b>	<b>100.0</b>

*Abbreviations:* LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean, CEE = Central and Eastern Europe, WEOG = Western European and Others Group, USG = Under Secretary-General, D = Director, P = Professional.

### III. Main accomplishments in 2022–2024

#### A. Performance highlights

8. The 2022–2024 period was exceptional for the UNCCD in many ways. It was defined by difficult geopolitical developments, global economic challenges, and the process of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic which led to major changes in working modalities. At the same time, the UNCCD and the aims that it represents made significant progress, generating a solid basis for successful action in the coming years.

9. The UNCCD national reporting concluded at the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 21) in November 2023 provided, for the first time, **an evidence-based estimate of the status and trends in land degradation**. The analysis of the reported data indicated that, between 2015 and 2019, at least 100 million hectares of healthy and productive land were degraded every year, and that reaching land degradation neutrality (LDN) by 2030 would require the restoration of an estimated 1.5 billion hectares of degraded land. While producing an exact number at this scale is challenging, the overall message was clear: land is further degrading at an alarming speed and the international community must intensify its efforts to halt this process. Governments have the main role in establishing an environment that promotes and requires such action, but effective implementation requires the engagement of the private sector and other key stakeholder groups.

10. **A global drought agenda is being developed under the UNCCD.** The second Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on Drought convened an authoritative team of national representatives, experts and practitioners to analyse and assess possible ways and means of effective action to build resilience and mitigate the effects of drought. Although many modalities and details are yet to be agreed by Parties, the overall approach for advancing proactive drought management and resilience-building is starting to form. Furthermore, the broad-based, multi-stakeholder exchanges on drought under the UNCCD have supported a fast-growing momentum on the global importance of addressing drought as a common aim for a variety of countries and stakeholders all over the world, reaching well beyond the UNCCD intergovernmental process. The urgency of addressing drought was reflected in the establishment of the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA) by the Presidents of Senegal and Spain, with support from the UNCCD secretariat. It was also

seen in many new major reports on drought, such as the Global Drought Atlas<sup>1</sup> and the Economics of Drought,<sup>2</sup> both of which were developed among several partners and will be released at the sixteenth session of the COP (COP 16).

11. **The UNCCD messages on the importance of addressing desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) have been increasingly heard.** DLDD has had a prominent role in a growing number of globally influential, high-level processes and events, including those of the Group of 20 (G20), the World Economic Forum, and the Arab Coordination Group and its members, among others. Major partnerships and initiatives, such as IDRA and the G20 Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats (G20 Global Land Initiative) have based their approaches on the UNCCD and involve numerous partners and sizeable funding to advance DLDD. They have generated political momentum and reach that have significantly raised the profile of the UNCCD. This expanding visibility is also reflected in the growing interest in the UNCCD process and actions, with 447 organizations applying for COP accreditation in 2022–2024 (versus 67 organizations in the previous biennium), and 250 private sector companies becoming involved in the Business4Land Initiative. Another example of the growing visibility is the increase in social media reach on the UNCCD signature event, the 17 June Desertification and Drought Day (DDD), which climbed from 160 million in 2022 to 390 million in 2024.

12. **The UNCCD has become an effective catalyst for implementation and resource mobilization.** So far, 131 countries have committed to setting voluntary LDN targets and 112 have successfully set and technically validated the targets, with support from the UNCCD. These LDN targets represent commitments to restore an estimated 600 million hectares, which accounts for approximately 40 per cent of the 1.5 billion hectares that the national reporting process indicates as needed by 2030 to achieve LDN. Sixty countries have also completed their national drought plans. Ninety-six countries have requested GM support to develop projects to implement their LDN targets and national drought plans and, so far, 19 projects developed with GM support have been approved for implementation by the agency they were targeted at. Ten more project concept notes have been approved for development into full project documents. If all 10 concept notes are approved for implementation, the total amount mobilized for the 29 projects would stand at USD 2.793 billion.

13. The UNCCD has also played a major role in catalysing funding beyond the LDN and drought plans and projects prepared under the Convention. To mention a few examples, the secretariat and, in particular, the GM have been actively involved in the Sahelian Great Green Wall (GGW) initiative that has so far mobilized around USD 19 billion with a similar initiative currently being developed in southern Africa, also with UNCCD backstopping. Another recent cooperation process with UNCCD involvement has been the Middle East Green Initiative, which cost around USD 2.5 billion.

14. Although the above resources represent sizeable achievements from a UNCCD perspective, much more is needed to achieve LDN and drought resilience. **The first UNCCD Financial Needs Assessment (FNA)**, to be released at COP 16, concludes that the total required investments to implement current DLDD-related plans and their associated global land restoration commitments are estimated at USD 355 billion per year, while current investment flows in land are estimated at USD 77 billion per year. Consequently, global investments in DLDD-related processes must increase by at least three and half to close the estimated financing gap. The GM has developed a Resource Mobilization Strategy based on this FNA to support Parties in closing the financing gap and achieving the objectives of the Convention. This Strategy addresses funding from a variety of sources, including innovative sources, and focuses on promoting capacity-building and the creation of an enabling environment at the country level.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.droughtmanagement.info/portal/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Lauro\\_Rossi\\_GLOBAL\\_DROUGHT\\_ATLAS\\_POSTER.pdf](https://www.droughtmanagement.info/portal/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Lauro_Rossi_GLOBAL_DROUGHT_ATLAS_POSTER.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eld-initiative.org/en/projects/eld-unccd-global-report-on-the-economics-of-drought-resilience>.

15. **The UNCCD is spearheading global policy development and advocacy for women’s land rights and economic empowerment.** The Gender Caucus meetings and the #HerLand campaign engaged female leaders and authorities at the highest level, raising awareness and gaining attention in traditional and social media on the importance of women’s land rights. Related policy-oriented and practical guidance was accessed by hundreds of participants from nearly 140 countries under the UNCCD/FAO joint initiative on integrating land tenure into LDN initiatives. In-depth national consultations have started in five countries and are set to continue.

16. With regard to internal functioning, **the secretariat and the GM implemented their work programme in full**, although the inadequacy of the core budget accompanied by high inflation has caused a temporary freezing of several positions.

**B. Progress toward the outcomes of the results framework**

17. The below table presents the expected main outcomes of the secretariat and the GM in 2022–2024, as contained in the results framework that was approved at COP 15. These outcomes reflect the positive change that is assumed to have occurred thanks to the work of the secretariat and the GM, in line with common United Nations terminology for results-based management.<sup>3</sup> Progress made toward each outcome is presented as performance data concerning the outcome indicators that were also approved at COP 15, as part of the results framework.

18. The 2022–2024 results framework is the first to deploy almost exclusively quantitative indicators. Their scope is limited, providing only a “snapshot” of the progress made and, for some, there is no previous information to serve as a baseline. For financial tracking indicators concerning gender equality and secure tenure, the data collection methodology is still under development and could not be provided in this report.

19. An overview of the key achievements during the triennium is compiled in section B of the current chapter. The presentation of the accomplishments by programme in chapters IV and V of this report provides more information, and many topics are also presented in detail in specific COP, CRIC and Committee on Science and Technology (CST) documents.

<i>5 main outcomes</i>	<i>Outcome indicators</i>	<i>Progress made</i>
1. Reduced desertification /land degradation and effects of drought in affected areas (contributing to strategic objectives (SOs) 1, 4 and 5)	Number of DLDD* transformative projects developed with support from the UNCCD and which contribute to LDN*	2021: 23 national, 3 multi-country projects 2024: 31 national, 18 multi-country and 5 global projects
	Amount of funding targeted by DLDD TPPs* that have been developed with support from the UNCCD	2022: USD 500 million 2024: USD 2.793 billion In addition, the UNCCD has been an important catalyst for several multi-billion-dollar initiatives.
	Number of transformative project concepts developed with support from the UNCCD in the pipeline of the targeted donor	2021: 3 approved for implementation and 11 approved for further development 2024: 19 approved for implementation and 10 approved for further development
2. Improved preparedness for and resilience to the impacts of drought (contributing to SOs 3, 4 and 5)	Number of hectares (ha) covered by LDN targets	2021: 450 million ha 2024: estimated at 600 million ha
	Number of countries having developed and/or implemented their drought preparedness plans	2021: 60 national plans, 2 regional strategies 2024: Funding secured for 1 project covering 3 countries to develop and implement their drought preparedness plans
	Extent of partnerships supporting the UNCCD drought agenda	Two collaborative (institutional) partnerships: - University of Nebraska-Lincoln / National Drought Mitigation Center - Sahara and Sahel Observatory Establishment of IDRA*: over 40 countries, 20 major organizations and 8 banks/funds as partners

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, definitions in [the United Nations Sustainable Development Group Results-Based Management Handbook](#).



<i>5 main outcomes</i>	<i>Outcome indicators</i>	<i>Progress made</i>
3. UNCCD implementation is responsive to the needs and rights of Indigenous peoples, women, and other people in vulnerable situations (contributing to SO 2)	Number of countries involved in or applying for UNCCD support to integrate gender equality	Directly applicable data is not available. The #HerLand campaign directly engaged at least 20 countries, 2 workshops on gender involved representatives of over 40 countries, and the national reporting section on gender was responded to by 85 countries. It can be safely assumed that at least 100 countries were involved in some UNCCD actions concerning gender equality.
	Number of transformative DLDD projects, developed with support from the UNCCD, that include provisions for gender equality	Of the 19 projects approved for implementation (see outcome 1 data), 7 projects (37%) integrate gender equality
	Number of countries involved in or applying for UNCCD support to integrate secure tenure	A series of regional webinars: 885 participants from 138 countries National consultations held in 5 countries
	Number of transformative DLDD projects, developed with support from the UNCCD, that include provisions for secure tenure	A checklist for integrating tenure considerations into project design was developed to help identify key tenure issues and design appropriate interventions in project preparation supported by the GM*
	Amount of funding allocated for gender equality in DLDD TPPs that have been developed with support from the UNCCD	Data not accessible/available. Parties may consider including this data in the UNCCD reporting process.
	Amount of funding allocated for secure tenure in DLDD TPPs that have been developed with support from the UNCCD	Data not accessible/available. Parties may consider including this data in the UNCCD reporting process.
4. Advanced global collaboration for SDS source mitigation (contributing to SOs 1 and 4)	Extent of measures to address SDS source mitigation carried out by the secretariat and/or GM with partners	2022: SDS Compendium launched 2023: SDS Toolbox launched and the “Guideline on the Integration of SDS Management into Key Policy Areas” prepared jointly with the FAO* SDS project preparation ongoing
5. The UNCCD process contributes to, and benefits from, synergies with the other Rio conventions and related cooperation processes on climate change and biodiversity (contributing to SO 4)	Number of countries that leverage synergies and integrate DLDD into their national plans for addressing climate change and/or biodiversity	Exact data for the indicator not available. In their 2023 national report, 55 countries reported on 174 voluntary targets under SO 4 on global benefits. Of those, 115 targets (66%) were about nature/biodiversity and 18 (10%) about climate action.
	Number of scientific processes, reports and publications that contain inputs from the UNCCD	Inputs to the scientific review of two IPCC* and two IPBES* assessments/reports
	Extent of collaboration among the Rio convention secretariats	2023: Launch of joint capacity-building and outreach activities: joint media training sessions, workshops on gender equality, various webinars and briefings. Joint op-ed of the three Executive Secretaries before the 2024 Conferences of the Parties (COPs). Rio Conventions Pavilion organized several times.
6. UNCCD decision-making and implementation are guided by up-to-date scientific data and knowledge, and evidence-based analysis (contributing to all SOs)	Number of national reports received	2018: 72% of Parties submitted a report 2023: 65% of Parties (126) submitted a report
	Number of national reports that follow the recommended methodology	All reports used the UNCCD template/tools.
	Percentage of the Science-Policy Interface work programme implemented	100% (reports on the two objectives, coordination activities)
	Number of UNCCD guides, reports and policy briefs	2021: 12 publications and information products 2022–2024: 56 publications and information products

<i>5 main outcomes</i>	<i>Outcome indicators</i>	<i>Progress made</i>
7. New stakeholders engage in the UNCCD process and implementation (contributing to all SOs)	Number of new civil society organizations applying for accreditation to the COPs	2020–2021: 67 new organizations 2022–2024: 447 new organizations
	Number of briefs, publications and events targeting different stakeholder groups	17 June Desertification and Drought Day had a specific focus group each year (2022 Drought, 2023 Women's Land Rights and 2024 Youth) Most special events targeted policymakers or the private sector
8. The communication tools of the secretariat and the GM generate increasing interest in the UNCCD (contributing to all SOs)	Extent of private sector partnerships supporting UNCCD implementation with secretariat or GM involvement	2021: No platform for business engagement 2024: Business4Land launched with 6 workshops, and 250 companies involved
	Number of website and social media visits	Since 2022, X (Twitter) followers have increased by 73%, Instagram by 145% and LinkedIn by 54%
	Number of downloads	2022–2024: Average monthly download of UNCCD publications: approximately 3,000 Yearly visits to the UNCCD online library: approximately 11,000
	Unique visitors reached through different campaigns	17 June Desertification and Drought Day online audience reach: 2021: 150 million 2022: 160 million 2023: 300 million 2024: 390 million
9. The secretariat and the GM operate effectively (contributing to all SOs)	Amount of media attention (number of articles, journalists involved, etc.)	Media reach: 2021: 7,722 mentions 2022: 15,227 mentions 2023: 19,643 mentions
	Percentage of COP decisions targeting the secretariat and/or GM implemented	Of 27 decisions taken at the fifteenth session of the COP (COP 15), a total of 206 requests were addressed to the secretariat and/or the GM. Of those, 152 (74%) were completed and 52 (25%) were ongoing (either continuous by nature or under preparation). 2 requests (1%) were not addressed.
	Number of UNCCD official meetings, including those of the Bureaux, organized in a timely and efficient manner Percentage of staff that has participated in training	COP 15, CRIC* 20 and CRIC 21, total of 25 COP, CRIC and Committee on Science and Technology Bureau meetings 100% in cybersecurity training. 80–90% in training on project cycle management (2022) and risk management (2023, 2024).
10. The administration of the secretariat and the GM functions efficiently and in accordance with United Nations rules (contributing to all SOs)	Percentage of core budget spent	2020–2021: 89.9% 2022–2024: 100% (estimate)
	Extent of improvements recommended by external auditors	Board of Auditors: the number of recommendations has remained at a similar level as before: 2020 audit: 9 recommendations 2021 audit: 11 recommendations 2022 audit: 9 recommendations 2023 audit: 11 recommendations In 2022 and 2023, only one recommendation was made each year on finance. Others were on risk management, budget processes and science and policy. Most of those were practical improvements to internal approaches, and many are already fully implemented.

*\*Acronyms: CRIC = Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, DLDD = desertification/land degradation and drought, LDN = land degradation neutrality, IDRA = International Drought Resilience Alliance, GM = Global Mechanism, FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, IPCC = Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPBES = Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, TPP = transformative projects and programmes, SDS = sand and dust storms*

## IV. Accomplishments by the programmes of the secretariat

### A. Executive Office

20. The Executive Office (EO) supported the Executive Secretary in providing strategic direction for the secretariat and the GM, representing the organization externally, coordinating cooperation with other organizations and reaching out to stakeholders worldwide to encourage their support for the objectives and implementation of the Convention.

21. In 2022–2024, the EO advocated for addressing DLDD and the UNCCD in many major events and processes. In addition to new impetus in the United Nations system context, most notably through the first-ever United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution on DLDD,<sup>4</sup> the UNCCD and its priorities were visibly present in high-level meetings and conclusions of the Group of Seven, the Indonesian, Indian and Brazilian G20 Presidencies, the BRICS group, the Arab Coordination Group and its member organizations, the Africa Climate Summit, and the World Economic Forum in Davos, among others. In most regions, ministerial level meetings were held to prepare for COP 16. In Africa, the Africa Ministerial Conference on the Environment held a Special Session on DLDD.

22. With regard to internal management during the triennium, the secretariat and the GM faced a difficult budgetary context, as explained in detail in [document ICCD/COP\(16\)/5](#). The EO ensured the overall effectiveness of the work of the secretariat through further focusing on priorities, promoting the sharing of staff and resources across functions and units, and active resource mobilization for additional human resources. The secretariat succeeded in implementing its work programme and achieving the expected results as planned, and often also exceeding the expectations.

23. At the same time, the secretariat and the GM benefited from the highest-ever level of voluntary contributions to their work, notably through the establishment of the G20 Global Land Initiative and IDRA as well as special initiatives and contributions from individual countries. These contributions also provided some additional human resources.

24. The New York Liaison Office (NYLO), which reports to the EO, ensured political visibility for UNCCD issues before the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and among key stakeholders related to the United Nations in New York. It supported and facilitated the organization of major high-level UNCCD events, such as the global observance of the 2023 DDD at the United Nations Headquarters and COP Host Country briefings, as well as bilateral meetings with regional and interest groups, and individual countries. NYLO also advanced DLDD issues in key processes, following up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the High-Level Political Forum.

25. NYLO supported the negotiations of the annual UNGA resolution on the implementation of the Convention. It carried out targeted outreach, provided information and strategic advice to constituencies at the United Nations headquarters, and served as the secretariat of the “Group of Friends on DLDD”. NYLO interfaced with and facilitated Global Environment Facility reporting to COP 15 and supported related COP negotiations.

26. The UNCCD Evaluation Office, which also reports to the EO, managed UNCCD support for the midterm evaluation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and the review of the Science–Policy Interface, the results of which are presented in detail in dedicated COP documents.<sup>5</sup> Both of these processes were based on an independent/external assessment and involved contributions from numerous Parties and other key stakeholders. The Evaluation Office also commissioned the midterm evaluation of the UNCCD Gender Action Plan (GAP), a review of the GGW Accelerator, and an evaluation of the Land for Life Programme. These evaluations and reviews were also prepared by independent external evaluators.

<sup>4</sup> <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/k24/008/37/pdf/k2400837.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> [Document ICCD/COP\(16\)/2](#), [document ICCD/COP\(16\)/CST/6](#).

27. In November 2020, the G20 leaders launched the Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats, now known as the G20 Global Land Initiative (G20 GLI). Its ambition is to prevent, halt and reverse land degradation and reduce degraded land by 50 per cent by 2040. The G20 GLI Coordination Office was established in April 2022 as part of the UNCCD secretariat structure; it is located in Bonn and functions under the supervision of the UNCCD Executive Secretary. While the G20 GLI aims and workplan are separate to those of the secretariat, its activities contribute to the objectives of the UNCCD. Its work is coordinated with, and complementary to, the activities of the secretariat and the GM.

28. During the triennium 2022–2024, the G20 GLI Coordination Office organized its work around four areas to advance land restoration: showcasing good practices, engaging the private sector, empowering civil society, and building capacity at scale. Its main achievements include establishing the Global Restoration Information Hub, leading the Land Restoration Challenge involving over 130 organizations and individuals from more than 40 different countries, implementing a small grants scheme targeting non-governmental organizations, and establishing a global programme to promote young entrepreneurs working in land restoration. Furthermore, the Coordination Office organized numerous training sessions, webinars and workshops engaging over 3,000 participants, and developed a global curriculum on innovative agriculture for land restoration in cooperation with ten universities around the world, which is currently used by 43 agricultural universities. It was also active in its communications, with regularly updated social media accounts and a global photo competition, among others.

## **B. Governing Bodies and Legal Affairs**

29. In the triennium 2022–2024, services to the UNCCD Governing Bodies and Legal Affairs (GBLA) organized the mandated UNCCD official meetings: COP 15 took place from 9 to 20 May 2022 in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire and CRIC 21 took place from 13 to 17 November 2023 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. For these two official sessions, 44 pre-session documents were processed in time for translation, with an overall documentation submission compliance rate to the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) of 100 per cent. This high compliance fully addresses repeated calls from the General Assembly regarding the importance of the timely submission of documents, as stated in its latest resolution 78/245 on the pattern of conferences. Eleven other documents, including the reports of the sessions, were also prepared.

30. At the end of COP 15, the secretariat conducted a participant satisfaction survey,<sup>6</sup> which received responses from almost 300 participants. The survey questions were almost identical to the survey conducted at the end of COP 14, which enabled an easy comparison of the results from one COP to another. The findings were generally positive, with more than 70 per cent of respondents expressing satisfaction in 15 of the 19 scale response questions concerning COP 15 preparations, arrangements and services. Compared to the results of the survey carried out at COP 14, a higher rating was given to 12 of the 19 same scale response questions at COP 15. Key survey questions addressed the relevance and usefulness of the COP agenda items and decisions, both of which received an approval rate of over 90 per cent. Similarly, high ratings for the quality of the official documents (84 per cent), organization of the plenary sessions (74 per cent), services to the contact groups (84 per cent) and support to regional consultations (85 per cent) offered major indications that the work of the secretariat and the GM was appreciated. A satisfaction rate of around 80 per cent was also indicated by participants for the pre-COP provision of practical information and registration. While the overall level of participant satisfaction was higher than for COP 14, there was nevertheless room for improvement in many areas of work. Most concerned the logistical and security arrangements at the COP venue. The secretariat has carefully analysed the survey results with the aim of further developing services at forthcoming COPs.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-07/COP%2015%20participant%20survey%20report%20.pdf>.

31. At the time of preparing this report, preparations for COP 16 are underway in Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Host Country Agreement was signed with the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on 31 January 2024. By 31 July 2024, four integrated planning missions had been organized by the secretariat to address the organizational and logistical processes of the COP. By the same date, five pre-session documents of a total of 32 documents for translation had already been submitted to UNOG.

32. A total of 25 meetings of the Bureaux of the COP, CRIC and CST were organized during the triennium. Of those, ten were organized in Bonn, ten were online and five were held outside of the UNCCD duty station. The unit facilitated the organization of 17 other UNCCD meetings, as well as three Adaptation Board Fund meetings in Bonn.

33. GBLA provided continuous advice to the secretariat and the GM on legal, institutional and procedural questions, and carried out related tasks.

### **C. Communications, External Relations and Partnerships**

34. The Communications, External Relations and Partnerships Unit (CERP) was created on 1 January 2023, following a slight refocusing of the secretariat structure. CERP comprises the following areas of work: strategic communications, including outreach and media relations, digital communications, the knowledge management/library and audiovisual functions, and external relations and partnerships, including partnership development, engagement with non-Party stakeholders, such as CSOs, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations, academia, the private sector, youth, Indigenous peoples and local communities, women and local governments, as well as donor relations and corporate resource mobilization.

35. During the reporting period (2022–2024), significant progress was made in increasing the Convention’s visibility through strategic communications, impactful partnerships and increased engagement with non-Party stakeholders.

36. The annual observance of DDD on 17 June is the high point in the Convention’s global outreach and advocacy efforts. In 2022, the global observance event was hosted by Spain and focused on drought resilience. In 2023, the global observance event took place at the United Nations General Assembly in New York and was dedicated to advancing women’s land rights. In 2024, DDD marked the 30th anniversary of the Convention, with global celebrations hosted by Germany focusing on intergenerational land stewardship. The global online reach of DDD increased from 160 million in 2022 to 390 million in 2024.

37. The reporting period saw a significant increase in top-tier media coverage of the Convention’s activities and consistent growth of UNCCD’s digital presence and engagement on its social media channels. Strategic launches of key reports drove coverage in mainstream global and regional media, reinforcing the Convention’s role as an authoritative source of science-based information on land and drought issues. Targeted thought leadership pieces, such as op-eds authored by high-profile personalities, elevated the Convention’s issues on the global stage. Media partnerships further contributed to the increased visibility of UNCCD. The UNCCD social media audience continued to grow between 2022–2024, particularly on Instagram, LinkedIn, and X (formerly Twitter). Furthermore, the Convention has increased its multilingual communications capacity and the availability of public information materials in the six United Nations languages.

38. To ensure that partnerships and synergies for UNCCD implementation deliver value, CERP has actively collaborated with stakeholder groups critical for the effective implementation of the Convention, most notably CSOs, women and youth. The first-ever UNCCD Youth Engagement Strategy was launched and a cohort of 10 new Land Heroes was announced on 17 June 2024. The secretariat also strengthened engagement with UNCCD Goodwill and Land Ambassadors who use their voice and influence to support the implementation of the Convention.

39. During the triennium 2022–2024, 447 new organizations submitted their documents for accreditation to the COP. CERP also engaged with other secretariat units and the GM in

the preparation of the new UNCCD Resource Mobilization Strategy. A comprehensive UNCCD Partnership Strategy was initiated.

40. CERP facilitated collaboration in the context of the Joint Liaison Group of the Executive Secretaries of the three Rio conventions, as well as the organization of the Rio Conventions Pavilion/Journey at COPs and other key events in 2022–2024. Successful capacity-building initiatives for negotiators, media and youth were organized focusing on UNCCD issues and synergies among the Rio conventions. The secretariat also engaged with the United Nations system through the Environment Management Group and the COP 16 Action Agenda, with thematic days co-led by partners.

#### **D. Global Policy Advocacy and Regional Cooperation**

41. The Global Policy Advocacy and Regional Cooperation (GPARC) programme of the UNCCD is dedicated to establishing the UNCCD as a respected and credible partner in addressing DLDD. The unit develops and tests policy frameworks for effective decision-making and the accelerated implementation of the Convention. The mission of GPARC is to prepare and deliver persuasive policy messages that elevate DLDD as a political priority and support national efforts in implementing the Convention's objectives. As part of GPARC, the Regional Liaison Offices (RLOs) facilitate cooperation, partnerships and outreach within and among regions, and support coordination under each Regional Implementation Annex.

42. Drought: In 2022–2024, GPARC coordinated the secretariat's activities related to the emerging UNCCD drought agenda. A key task during the triennium was facilitating the work of the IWG on Drought on identifying and evaluating global policy instruments and frameworks to support a shift towards proactive drought management, and the resulting IWG on Drought report and the related COP 16 decision will represent important milestones for the UNCCD. This IWG on Drought generated an intensive substantive exchange among national representatives, drought experts and practitioners on how best to address drought under the UNCCD, which has high potential to amplify commitment and cooperation on addressing drought worldwide.

43. GPARC has actively supported IDRA which was established in November 2022 by Senegal and Spain. By now, over 40 countries, 20 major organizations and 8 banks/funds have joined IDRA as partners. They work together to mobilize political, technical and financial capital to enhance drought resilience in countries, cities, and communities globally. IDRA's activities and initiatives revolve around four pillars: (i) creating political momentum to encourage leaders to prioritize drought resilience in national development and cooperation policies; (ii) setting a common framework of action and guiding action on the ground, acknowledging the need to adapt solutions to different contexts and scales; (iii) promoting the exchange of knowledge, practical solutions and technologies at all levels to build drought resilience at the required pace and scale; and (iv) exploring innovative finance mechanisms to mobilize resources for drought resilience, while leveraging public and private investments to maximum effect. The work of IDRA is aligned with and supportive of the mandate of the UNCCD and IDRA also worked closely with the IWG on Drought.

44. Since its establishment, IDRA has sought to raise the political profile of drought resilience through ambitious agenda-setting and the convening of numerous decision-makers and major organizations and institutions within a global network. Its next major delivery will be the launch of the International Drought Resilience Observatory, a global, AI-powered data platform where managers can easily analyse and visualize key social and environmental drought resilience indicators and use them to make practical decisions.

45. In collaboration with the Joint Research Centre of the European Union, the UNCCD produced a Global Drought Atlas for policymakers in the run-up to COP 16. The Atlas shows the extent to which drought risks are globally networked through issues such as trade and forced migration, highlights the impacts of drought on crucial economic sectors, and explains known methods of building resilience to future droughts.

46. With the support of the Global Water Partnership (GWP), GPARC developed several Communities of Learning and Practice (CLPs) on drought to strengthen interactions among

drought stakeholders, particularly national focal points. To support the operation of the CLPs, GWP assisted the UNCCD in developing a global online platform and five regional online platforms based on the UNCCD Regional Implementation Annexes.

47. In collaboration with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the South Asia Regional Drought Plan was developed to provide a solid foundation for further strengthening national and regional drought management efforts in SAARC countries.

48. To scale up and accelerate the drought response on the ground, the Drought Resilience +10 Conference was co-organized by the UNCCD in Geneva. This conference brought together countries, experts and practitioners to review progress and lessons learned in drought management, and explore and define a collective way forward towards a more drought-resilient world.

49. Gender: GPARC advanced the implementation of the GAP to support Parties in their efforts to better involve women, both as actors and beneficiaries, in the implementation of the UNCCD. The main actions included an analysis to establish a baseline for monitoring gender parity throughout the Convention, the organization of the UNCCD Gender Caucus at COP 15 and CRIC 21, and a study on women-led solutions for drought resilience. GPARC also supported the second phase of work of the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) on gender-responsive technologies for sustainable land management (SLM).

50. The UNCCD gender activities were assessed in an independent evaluation of the GAP in 2024. A large majority of the respondents to the evaluation considered that the UNCCD gender activities had improved their understanding and awareness (85 per cent of the respondents); developed their capacity to integrate gender equality into projects and programmes (92 per cent of respondents) and national/local policies and strategies (78 per cent of respondents); improved responsiveness of the project proposals to donors' requirements (61 per cent of the respondents); and increased national commitment to gender equality (90 per cent of the respondents). These findings correspond with indications of an increasing interest in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of the UNCCD. The Gender Caucus is benefiting from continuous growth in high-level participation, with a core group currently comprised of 40 members, including 3 Parties, 8 United Nations agencies and 11 CSOs. A total of 123 persons attended the Gender Caucus sessions held at CRIC 21 in 2023. In addition, UNCCD workshops and webinars are gaining record audiences, with 172 participants at the most recent webinar held on International Day of Rural Women 2024. The #HerLand campaign has a massive reach, with more than 300 million views on various social media platforms including X, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram.

51. As requested by Parties at COP 15, the first-ever report on gender parity across the Convention was compiled and discussed with interested Parties and funding agencies, with a view to considering measures to increase the number of women delegates at official UNCCD meetings. In keeping with the GAP Roadmap, a research study was conducted on women-led solutions for drought resilience, with 87 submissions received from around the world, showing inspiring examples from community-based women leaders.

52. Sand and dust storms (SDS): GPARC intensified its work on SDS by coordinating and supporting the development of three key knowledge products: the Guideline on the Integration of SDS Management into Key Policy Areas, produced jointly with the FAO; a Technical Brief on the Global SDS Source Base Map; and the SDS Toolbox. GPARC also represented the secretariat in the United Nations Coalition on Combating SDS and supported a high-level event on SDS hosted by Uzbekistan as part of CRIC 21.

53. Land Tenure: GPARC has been the focal point for the UNCCD-FAO joint initiative on integrating land tenure into LDN initiatives. In this context, a series of regional webinars were organized to raise awareness of 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. Following the regional webinars, countries were invited to submit an application package outlining their

capacity needs and the support required to integrate land tenure and related gender considerations into LDN and other land restoration initiatives. In this regard, the Joint Initiative worked with an initial group of five countries (Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, Senegal and Sri Lanka) to organize and conduct national consultations.

54. Migration and security: To support the Convention's efforts to address DLDD as one of the drivers of migration, the GPARC Unit has developed a Primer on URL and Land together with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The Primer 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 LDN targets.

55. The Regional Liaison Offices/Officers (RLOs) are an integral part of the GPARC unit responsible for regional cooperation. They serve as the first point of contact within the secretariat for dialogue with the Parties, and as an important source of information on relevant regional issues for the secretariat as a whole. The day-to-day responsibilities of the RLO include providing ongoing support to the national focal points, Science Technology Correspondents and other country representatives in the respective regions. Their efforts to strengthen UNCCD policy, advocacy and outreach in the regions include: (i) raising awareness of the work of the Convention and raising its profile through existing regional efforts; (ii) creating an enabling environment for the discussion of UNCCD priority issues for the region; and (iii) promoting and supporting the exchange of information and the implementation of initiatives or projects at the regional, sub-regional and national levels. During the current biennium, 2023–2024, the RLO for the Northern Mediterranean was closed and discussions are ongoing with Parties to identify a host country for this office. Arrangements to host the RLO for Latin America and the Caribbean in Panama have been finalized, and the Host Country Agreement for the RLO for Asia in Beijing, China, has been signed, with the office expected to open during the next biennium.

## **E. Science, Technology and Innovation**

56. The Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) programme facilitates national reporting and review processes, supports scientific assessments and scientific cooperation, and manages the secretariat's functions on capacity-building and innovation.

57. National reporting: The 2022 national reporting process was launched in November 2021 and concluded in March 2023. This process generated 126 national reports submitted by Parties, and the first update against the baseline of land degradation as reported in 2018. For the first time, the UNCCD can track the status and trends in land degradation and make an evidence-based estimate of actions to be taken if LDN is to be achieved by 2030. Furthermore, a suite of indicators on drought hazard, exposure and vulnerability were included in the reporting framework for the first time. One hundred and eleven Parties submitted reports on this pressing issue. The STI, supported by its partners, has been pioneering the approach of making tools and technology available for Party reporting, with maps to support the indicators. For the first time, spatial and temporal patterns in land degradation, drought and population exposure were mapped by country Parties. In addition, added value has been brought to national reports by country mapping of land degradation 'hot spots' and land improvement 'bright spots', in addition to national voluntary targets and implemented actions to meet those targets. This provides the UNCCD with greater transparency about national commitments towards LDN reported by countries. This progress was made possible by the upgrade of the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS) to a data-driven reporting system.

58. In terms of capacity-building for the 2022 reporting process, the STI developed and launched a series of e-learning tutorials on indicator-level reporting, released in five United Nations languages. However, effective monitoring of implementation requires continuous capacity-building and further resources. In 2024, the STI, in collaboration with the FAO, the Group on Earth Observations LDN (GEO-LDN) Flagship, and the German Development Agency (GIZ), launched "Using land-cover information to monitor progress on Sustainable Development Goal 15", a new certified e-learning course which is now available free of charge on the FAO eLearning Academy.



59. Digital transformation: The STI has led an internal task force to investigate possible developments for data management and use in the UNCCD to move towards an effective digital transformation. The task force created an inventory of the UNCCD's data assets and shaped a three-year roadmap towards a fully data-driven UNCCD. One of the roadmap's objectives was achieved when the STI launched the first-ever online UNCCD Data Dashboard, providing access to key numbers on the status and trends of land degradation and drought, as reported by country Parties in the 2022 reporting process. The STI is also exploring how to secure specialist services required to maintain and operate its existing digital platforms and expand and grow its digital assets over the coming years. This digital transformation initiative will align the UNCCD with the United Nations Secretary General's vision for a "UN 2.0" and provide enhanced data, digital, behavioural science, strategic foresight and innovation services to the Parties. This initiative will be enabled by partnerships. An agreement has been concluded with Conservation International to continue to upgrade the Trends.Earth software and analyse the requirements for a new knowledge management tool to help Parties set and track LDN targets.

60. Science and policy: The STI has supported the work of the CST and the SPI. During the triennium, the SPI developed a gender policy and implementation plan which was endorsed by the CST Bureau. The SPI also completed scientific assessments on sustainable land use systems (SPI Objective 1) and aridity trends, projections and impacts (SPI Objective 2). This work led to the completion of two technical reports which are summarized in official documents ICCD/COP(16)/CST/2 and ICCD/COP(16)/CST/3, respectively. The SPI engaged in the scientific review of the Global Land Outlook (GLO) thematic reports and cooperated with six other intergovernmental scientific bodies. Most noteworthy was the SPI's completion of an analysis of the IPCC Sixth Assessment reports on climate change adaptation and mitigation, which is reported in official document ICCD/COP(16)/4.

61. The SPI is due for a review at COP 16, and participated actively in the preparation of an external assessment that was commissioned as background, as well as in the related exchanges of the CST Bureau and the midterm evaluation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. The resulting proposal by the CST Bureau suggests that future work programmes of the SPI be set to last two intersessional periods (usually four years) to focus on the delivery of GLO products or similar high profile, science-based flagship reports. In addition, the SPI would continue its coordination activities and provide rapid-response information, as requested by the COP, CST or CRIC Bureaux through the secretariat. The STI collaborated with several partners in the provision of scientific guidance for improving SLM and restoration practices. With the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security, three parallel scientific assessments, leading to three reports, were conducted on the following topics:

(a) The contribution of land and water management approaches to SLM and achieving LDN;

(b) Promoting synergies between LDN and climate change adaptation: A supplement to the National Adaptation Plan technical guidelines; and

(c) Harmony in action for land restoration: Linking social protection, financial inclusion and disaster risk finance.

62. The STI also collaborated with WOCAT in promoting the analysis, dissemination and accessibility of SLM best practices and developing tools relevant to UNCCD stakeholders.

## **F. Administrative Services**

63. The Administrative Services (AS) programme is tasked with ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of services to the secretariat and the GM regarding financial management, human resources, travel, procurement and information technology, in accordance with the regulations and rules of the United Nations and the UNCCD.

64. During the triennium 2022–2024, high inflation combined with the decade-long zero nominal growth presented serious challenges for the UNCCD core budget. A Finance and Budget Committee chaired by the Executive Secretary was established for a regular

consideration of the status of UNCCD resources and, with the guidance of that Committee, AS identified and executed several cost-saving measures that kept the expenditures within the limits of the approved core budget. The voluntary contributions to the secretariat and the GM continued to increase compared to earlier years, notably through the establishment of the G20 GLI Coordination Office as part of the secretariat. These contributions were effectively and efficiently administered and, when feasible, used to compensate for the limitations of the core budget in covering the core tasks of the secretariat.

65. AS is the focal point for internal and external audits and, during the triennium 2022–2024, 18 outstanding audit recommendations were closed. In follow-up to new audit reports, a comprehensive UNCCD enterprise risk management system and several internal standard operating procedures were established, with training and participatory workshops involving nearly all UNCCD staff. The UNCCD approach to the delegation of authority was updated. AS took the lead on maintaining and improving internal capacity concerning the use of the UMOJA system through training and expansion of access rights, as well as monitoring and implementation of best practices.

66. AS processed 35 recruitments for staff and over 300 for consultants, actioned 270 procurement requests, and processed around 3500 payment documents to external business partners. In coordination with GBLA, AS handled the administrative tasks (travel, facility planning and management, contracting partners, etc.) for the organization of numerous in-person meetings, including COP 15 and CRIC 21, global events for DDD, as well as regional meetings in preparation for COP 16.

## V. Accomplishments of the Global Mechanism

67. During the triennium 2022–2024, the GM focused on accelerating the development of a geographically balanced project preparation pipeline through a partnership model to facilitate gender-responsive, large-scale, integrated landscape investment programmes and flagship initiatives for advancing LDN and drought resilience. The GM has actively promoted the greater participation and involvement of the private sector and took charge of the preparations and analysis concerning national reporting on Strategic Objective 5.

68. To date, the LDN Target Setting Programme<sup>7</sup> (LDN-TSP) managed by the GM has supported 131 participating countries in setting voluntary LDN targets. In total, 112 countries have successfully set and technically validated their voluntary LDN targets and associated measures, and 106 final national LDN reports are publicly available on the UNCCD website.<sup>8</sup> In total, 76 countries have officially adopted their LDN targets and delivered a high-level LDN note signed at the highest possible level by a minister, inter-ministerial body, cabinet council, or the Head of State. Sixty-five of these are publicly available on the UNCCD website. A recent internal assessment undertaken by the GM indicates that the LDN targets express voluntary commitments by country Parties to restore close to 600 million hectares of degraded land. The second phase of the LDN TSP (LDN TSP 2.0) was launched in May 2023.

69. Overall, 96 countries have requested GM support to develop national and/or multi-country projects (approximately 103 concept notes in total) through the transformative projects and programmes workstream which is delivered through the Partnership for Project Preparation. As of July 2024, this portfolio includes: (a) 72 national projects; (b) 25 regional or multi-country projects; and (c) 6 global projects. So far, 19 projects developed with GM support have been approved for implementation (12 national and 7 regional), and 10 project concept notes (2 national, 4 regional and 4 global) have been approved for development into full project documents. A further 18 project concept notes or project documents (10 national, 6 regional and 2 global) are currently under development. Seven of the approved projects, covering at least 12 countries, integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into the project aims, structure and activities.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unccd.int/actions/ldn-target-setting-programme>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unccd.int/our-work/country-profiles/voluntary-ldn-targets>.

70. The total budget for 19 projects approved for implementation is approximately USD 946 million, comprised of USD 553 million from the targeted source of funding and USD 392 million from co-financing. The total expected budget for the 10 project concept notes approved for development into full project documents is USD 1.85 billion, comprised of USD 300 million from the targeted source of financing and USD 1.555 billion from co-financing. If all 10 concept notes are approved for implementation, the total amount mobilized for 29 projects would be USD 2,793 billion, comprised of USD 854 million from targeted sources of funding and USD 1,939 billion from co-financing.

71. In Africa, the GGW Accelerator, hosted by the GM, has supported GGW partners in overcoming practical challenges and strengthening the monitoring of the USD 19 billion pledged at the One Planet Summit. In June 2024, the launch of the GGW Observatory by the UNCCD, as part of the Accelerator, provided a platform for collating impact data and sharing best practices across 11 GGW countries. This platform features tools for analysis and evidence for resource mobilization, and tracks additional commitments.

72. The GM has also collaborated with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to support countries in the Horn of Africa and develop regional transboundary cooperation in the context of the Peace Forest Initiative (PFI). It has also collaborated with the Southern African Development Community on its regional GGW. The Southern African GGW Initiative aims to create productive landscapes in the Southern Africa region that contribute to regional, socially inclusive economic prosperity and environmental sustainability. It is supported by several donors, and linked to other major projects that contribute to similar aims in the region.

73. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the GM is collaborating with the CCAD and other institutional, technical and financing partner agencies in the region to develop an initiative to help prevent migration in the Dry Corridor by boosting the resilience and livelihoods of local communities. Under the leadership of eight participating countries and the CCAD, the scope of activities proposed under this initiative will include the Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Uses 2040 Strategy, the Green Climate Fund Dry Corridor Project, the Dry Corridor Flagship Project under the United Nations Decade for Ecosystems Restoration, the upcoming Critical Forest Biome Integrated Program for Mesoamerica under the eighth replenishment of the GEF, and relevant national projects funded by bilateral and multilateral donors. The GM is also collaborating with the Partnership Initiative for SLM (PISLM) and other partner agencies in the Caribbean region to develop the regional Caribbean Small Island Developing States (CSIDs) programme.

74. In Asia, with the Pacific Island countries and regional organizations, the GM has worked on identifying priority areas for a regional programme, and critical investment pillars and cross-cutting themes. This cooperation is linked to the Pacific countries' regional programmatic approach to climate action with the aim of building synergies. The GM is also working with the Pacific Community to implement a pilot project under the Greening Drylands Partnership, entitled "Developing and Testing a Forest Management Model to Guide Research and Policy Direction for Effective Forestry Decision Making".

75. In Central Asia, transboundary cooperation on sustainable land, forest and water management is promoted via the PFI. Three priority thematic areas of cooperation are: (i) SDS source mitigation; (ii) the Fergana Valley and high mountains; and (iii) the development of a regional environmental data platform building on existing databases and platforms to maximize their complementarity. The GM is also collaborating on the development of a regional transboundary collaboration programme that will provide technical support to the Land Restoration Programme in the lower Aral Sea basin.

76. Also through the PFI, the GM has been collaborating with three countries in the South Caucasus to promote regional restoration cooperation. Exchanges have been held on environmental cooperation and an action plan, including a regional environment dashboard with a digital soil map, a regional vision paper on restoration promoting SLM and Nature-Based Solutions, and transboundary cooperation on the monitoring of migratory species.

77. Financial needs assessment: COP 15 requested the GM to conduct an initial Financial Needs Assessment (FNA) to determine the resources required for full implementation of the Convention based on existing DLDD-related plans and commitments, and the full report will

be released at COP 16. The report estimates that the total required investments to implement current DLDD-related plans and their associated global land restoration commitments are estimated at USD 355 billion per year, while current investment flows in land are estimated at USD 77 billion per year. This results in an estimated financial gap of USD 278 billion per year to achieve current DLDD plans. Notwithstanding any increase in ambition related to the revision of targets and plans, current investments in DLDD-related processes at the global level must increase by at least three and half to close the estimated financing gap.

78. The GM has developed a Resource Mobilization Strategy based on this FNA to support Parties in closing the financing gap and achieving the objectives of the Convention. Rather than prepare a purely strategic document, the GM has chosen to offer practical tools for country Parties to address their financial needs with step-by-step guidance for national resource mobilization, approaching a wide range of financing sources and instruments.

79. At the same time, the GM seeks to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of resource mobilization by facilitating the engagement of the private sector and promoting the use of innovative financial instruments to complement traditional sources of financing.

80. For private sector engagement, the Business4Land initiative was designed to catalyse private sector action around four key objectives: (i) improving soil health; (ii) preserving land quality by implementing sustainable management practices; (iii) restoring or rehabilitating degraded land; and (iv) strengthening the resilience of drought-risk ecosystems and communities through mitigation, adaptation and the management of the effects of drought. The private sector is encouraged to either seize opportunities or manage material risks associated with DLDD. This may mean environmental, social and governance arrangements where land is mainstreamed into corporate decision-making along the value chain; financing LDN through sustainable financing solutions and philanthropic contributions; or advocacy to create a positive enabling environment to leverage the private sector's expertise, skills, and resources in order to further encourage commitments and efforts to combat DLDD.

81. For innovative financing instruments, the GM has encouraged the development of impact investment funds similar to the LDN Fund, embracing restoration practices or target-specific geographies, biomes and value chains. As other potential tools, the GM has also explored the potential of carbon and resilience credits to better address land degradation and build drought resilience, debt-for-nature swaps, and a drought insurance model linked to SLM practices, with a strong resilience component. The UNCCD Technology Transfer Framework was further developed through a pilot project, which brought together entrepreneurs and innovators from 11 African countries for capacity-building on evaluating innovations and technologies in line with expressed needs.

## VI. Conclusions and recommendations

82. **The COP may wish to consider the performance of the secretariat and the GM in the biennium 2022–2024 and use this information to support its consideration of the workplan, programme and budget for the coming years.**

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