

Information on the COP 16 President's Initiative on Drought Resilience

At the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in December 2024, Parties reaffirmed their strong commitment to advancing global drought resilience. Substantial progress was achieved, including the launch of the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership, the introduction of the World Drought Atlas, the establishment of the International Drought Resilience Observatory, and the strengthening of stakeholder participation across sectors.

While consensus was reached on most elements of the draft decision on drought, a few key paragraphs related to the structure and scope of a future global drought framework or protocol remained unresolved. As a result, Parties agreed that further discussions were necessary, and that the adoption of a comprehensive decision on drought would be deferred to COP 17 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

In this context, the COP 16 President has decided to launch the Tafa'ul Process, an informal and voluntary dialogue platform inspired by the Arabic word تَفَاؤُل (*Tafa'ul*), meaning constructive optimism and hopeful determination. As such, this initiative does not intend to engage in a parallel negotiation process; instead it seeks to foster collaboration, build trust, and bridge remaining differences among Parties ahead of COP 17, thereby creating a more conducive environment for formal negotiations to resume successfully at COP 17. Accordingly, this process aims to serve as a confidence-building and preparatory informal platform, led by Saudi Arabia as the COP 16 Presidency and with support from the UNCCD secretariat.

The Tafa'ul Process will convene three in-person meetings, ensuring balanced regional representation and the participation of leading drought experts and external facilitators. These meetings will provide a safe and inclusive space for reflection, mutual understanding, and consensus-building, helping Parties identify shared interests and potential pathways toward agreements at COP 17. The Tafa'ul Process will be complemented with other activities, including an open dialogue with all Parties at the upcoming twenty-third session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, high-level ministerial meetings held on the margins of the seventh session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and other activities that will allow all to discuss the way forward for the global drought resilience agenda.