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Securing of additional investments and relations with financial mechanisms

Report by the Global Mechanism on progress made in the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention, matters relating to Sustainable Development Goal 15.3, and the facilitation of involvement of the private sector

Progress made in the mobilization of resources and financial flows for the implementation of the Convention, Sustainable Development Goal 15.3 matters and the facilitation of the involvement of the private sector

Report by the Global Mechanism

Summary

At its sixteenth session, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) requested the Global Mechanism (GM) to report to the twenty-fourth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 24) on the implementation of decisions 3/COP.16, 6/COP.16, 12/COP.16 and 27/COP.16. Taken together, these cover progress in mobilizing resources and financial flows for the Convention and for land degradation neutrality (LDN), measures to facilitate private-sector participation, and the response to sand and dust storms (SDS). CRIC 24 is held in conjunction with the seventeenth session of the COP (COP 17).

The report records the progress, successes and challenges of the biennium and sets out conclusions and recommendations for Parties at COP 17. The picture is one of mounting ambition set against a clear financing gap; of a GM delivering at scale through flagships, innovation and partnership, but whose capacity is materially constrained by demand outpacing resources; and of a decisive sprint to 2030 in which the shift from planning to programmatic, investment-ready action is indispensable.

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I. Introduction: decisions guiding resource mobilization and the work of the Global Mechanism

1. Decision 3/COP.16 requested the GM to advance resource mobilization and operationalize a financing toolbox; decision 6/COP.16 to strengthen work on land degradation neutrality (LDN), including second-generation target-setting and integration with broader land-use planning; decision 12/COP.16 to continue facilitating private-sector engagement; and decision 27/COP.16 to develop a global implementation initiative on sand and dust storms (SDS). Decisions 3/COP.15 and 13/COP.15 continue to frame the GM's work programme and inform the progress reported here.

2. This report first sets out the framework for GM activities: reporting against Sustainable Development Goal 15 (SDG 15) and strategic objective 5 (SO 5), the needs assessment, and the GM's operating approach. It then turns to more intelligence-driven decision-making by covering LDN Target Setting Programme 2.0 (LDN TSP 2.0), integrated land-use planning (ILUP), business cases on tenure and SDS, and progress on the Business for Land (B4L) workstream. The report then examines the impact delivered through flagships and country-level pipelines. It reviews innovations, including the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership (RGDRP), sustainable-land-management-linked insurance, resilience credits and the Drought Resilience Investment Facility (DRIF). It closes by looking forward to the roll-out of the Resource Mobilization Strategy and Toolbox, and by drawing conclusions and setting out recommendations for Parties. Information on the participation and involvement of the private sector (under decisions 6/COP.15 and 6/COP.16) is presented in detail in the Report by the Global Mechanism contained in document ICCD/COP(17)/13.

II. Framework of Global Mechanism activities

A. Sustainable Development Goal 15 and strategic objective 5 reporting

3. Entering the final years of the 2030 Agenda, global progress on SDG 15 is uneven: the rate of forest loss has slowed and protected areas now cover approximately 17.6 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas. Yet degradation, desertification and drought continue to advance. The pace of UNCCD implementation remains too slow to meet the Convention's strategic objectives by 2030.

4. In this biennium, the GM has prioritized robust target-setting for sustainable land management (SLM) and restoration, policy coherence and synergies across the Rio Conventions, and ILUP as the operational platform for balancing competing demands across landscapes. Voluntary commitments to restore more than one billion hectares, across Rio processes, signal genuine ambition, but the elongated process from target-setting to planning to resource mobilization to implementation must be shortened if delivery is to match ambition.

5. Collectively, 125 country Parties have pledged to restore more than one billion hectares of degraded land under the UNCCD LDN targets, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Bonn Challenge, and to implement thousands of complementary policy measures by 2030. Under the UNCCD alone, country Parties reported 428 implemented actions through the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS) in 2022. However, verified implementation globally (that is land under restoration, rehabilitation, or improved management) reaches little more than 10 per cent of the pledged area.

6. Regarding SO 5, public finance is ever more constrained, private-sector investment in nature-positive initiatives remains weak, and instruments used to track and target climate-, biodiversity- and desertification-related finance still require greater uptake and better alignment with country pipelines. The GM is executing a fourth Global Support Programme (GSP IV), implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which will provide a fresh snapshot of finance flows for LDN and related efforts at the level of Parties to the UNCCD. To link target-setting under

LDN and drought resilience with finance flows, a programmatic approach would strengthen both reporting and delivery. In practical terms, targeting and reporting anchored in dynamic decision-support tools, capable of guiding targeted investments and prioritizing high-impact actions, would make delivery more impactful and results-oriented. The GM, working with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), has been developing this concept for demonstration to Parties at COP 17.

B. Needs assessment and financing of the Convention

7. The UNCCD Financial Needs Assessment (FNA), launched at COP 16, estimated that achieving current global land restoration and desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) targets will require approximately USD 355 billion annually to 2030, with a cumulative need for 2025–2030 of at least USD 2.1 trillion. Projections from previous reports indicate only USD 77 billion in current annual investment, producing a persistent annual shortfall of USD 278 billion. Africa accounts for the largest share of need, reflecting pledges to restore more than 600 million hectares.

8. The investment case is unambiguous. The cost of inaction, estimated at USD 878 billion per year in lost productivity, soil depletion, drought damage and carbon emissions, far exceeds the investment required. Every dollar invested in land restoration is estimated to generate up to eight dollars of social, economic and environmental benefits, or annual benefits of up to USD 1.8 trillion. Yet a 2.5-fold or greater increase in investment cannot be achieved under business-as-usual, given strained public finances, high sovereign-debt levels, political transitions, weak institutional coordination and persistent barriers to private-sector engagement.

9. Transformational change across all sources of finance, domestic public budgets, bilateral and multilateral cooperation, and private capital, is therefore needed and always guided by principles of scalability, effectiveness and appropriate incentives. For the consideration of Parties, and as an input to the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Future Strategic Framework, and as the basis of future resource mobilization, the GM has identified the following elements worthy of further exploration:

(a) Incentives-based mechanisms. Align national budgets with sustainable land management (SLM) by phasing out harmful subsidies and introducing fiscal incentives (tax credits, reductions, accelerated depreciation), while using environmental taxes, land-degradation fees and carbon pricing to discourage unsustainable use. Mix grant-based and incentive-based mechanisms rewarding measurable, reportable and verifiable outcomes, per national circumstances.

(b) Greening financial instruments for the land and drought resilience sector. Scale up performance-based tools, sustainability-linked bonds and loans, debt-for-nature swaps, tying financial terms to verifiable outcomes such as soil-health improvements, reduced deforestation and restored ecosystems.

(c) Policy coherence. Align national development strategies, fiscal frameworks and sectoral policies (agriculture, water, climate, economic planning) with DLDD objectives, replacing contradictory incentives with mutually supportive actions.

(d) Land as a strategic asset class. Development-finance institutions, including multilateral development banks (MDBs), should recognize land and drought resilience as a strategic asset class. The GM welcomes the 2025 MDB Taxonomy. Explicit investment targets for land-related projects are needed given their contributions to food security, climate action and sustainable development.

(e) Greening consumers and investors. Enhanced transparency, eco-labelling, green financial products and stronger environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards are needed to shift consumption and investment toward land-friendly outcomes.

(f) De-risking private capital through blended finance. Blended finance can unlock private investment by mitigating risks: public and concessional capital deployed via guarantees, first-loss tranches and insurance catalyses larger private flows.

(g) Strengthened international cooperation. Despite the first decline in global ODA in five years in 2024, bilateral and multilateral public finance remain critical for DLDD priorities in developing countries, generating global public goods that justify greater international resource mobilization.

(h) Valuing land's true worth. Market prices often fail to reflect land-based natural capital's full value. Fiscal and regulatory frameworks should internalize impacts on soil, biodiversity, water and ecosystem services; scalable business models integrating the total economic value of ecosystem services — including environmental credits — deserve support.

(i) Greening global value chains and enabling environments. Certification, traceability and nature-positive business models are essential to reducing land footprints and supporting restoration at scale in land-intensive sectors.

C. The Global Mechanism's approach

10. This biennium, the GM's approach has been founded on maximizing impact with available resources through agility, strategic partnerships and active engagement with country Parties. Rather than imposing one-size-fits-all solutions, the GM seeks best-fit approaches tailored to each country's context, grounded in the business case, on-the-ground evidence and strategic policy planning. In practice, this has meant refining target-setting and planning processes to support intelligent, informed decision-making and project design; mainstreaming engagement with non-traditional stakeholders, including the private sector; and leveraging innovation.

11. A growing pipeline of projects is being supported across all regions through an innovative partnership model known as the Partnership for Project Preparation. This platform-style approach allows the GM to work with partners to deliver on a scale that would not be achievable alone. In addition to country-demand-driven support, the GM focuses on flagship initiatives working with multiple Parties and stakeholders around a common agenda, while seeking to mainstream Rio synergies, gender and tenure considerations across the pipeline.

12. In this biennium, to improve project design, work on the business case on land tenure has been refined following guidance from Parties at COP 16, and guidance on the implications and integration of behavioural change communications into the work of the Convention has been developed in partnership with Rare.

13. In terms of flagship initiatives, the Great Green Wall (GGW) Initiative in Africa, the Peace Forest Initiative (PFI) and B4L private-sector engagement have all made significant progress, reported on in detail in this report. Two new thematic flagships, on rangelands, in honour of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, and on food systems and the Rio Conventions, developed in cooperation with the CBD and UNFCCC, have taken shape in this biennium. The GM has also continued to develop forward-looking tools, including the financing toolbox, and provided support to the shaping of innovative financing vehicles (the RGDRP and the DRIF).

14. Delivering on this approach, however, requires confronting pressing challenges. Demand for support continues to outpace the GM's current capacity, and a persistent shortage of human and flexible resources constrains its ability to respond at the pace and scale requested.

15. The GM mobilizes financing to fulfil its mandates. The Global Mechanism would not be able to deliver without the support of Parties and financial stakeholders who have supported its efforts in this biennium. The GM expresses its appreciation to the African Development Bank, the Austrian Development Agency, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Department of Foreign Trade and Development of Canada, the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), FAO, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, the GEF/UNEP partnership, the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security of the Italian Republic, the GEF/IUCN partnership, the Government of Luxembourg, the Korea Forest

Service, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, and the Government of Spain through its contribution to the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA).

III. Intelligent decision-making

16. The GM seeks to put country Parties in the driving seat and to enable better policy and investment decisions at local and national levels and by the private sector, driven by standards, data and planning.

17. Building on the first LDN Target Setting Programme, LDN TSP 2.0 supports countries in refining and elevating their voluntary LDN targets, making them more specific, time-bound, quantitative, spatially explicit, gender-responsive and integrated into national land-use planning. Through this country-led process, participating countries have built direct linkages between UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD work through proactive engagement of the respective national focal points in LDN working groups. With the UNFCCC and CBD secretariats, the GM has developed a supplementary guidelines document for LDN TSP 2.0, to be refined for publication at COP 17.

18. The 18 participating countries have generated valuable insights and good practices. Key lessons include the following:

(a) Comprehensive policy-coherence assessments have brought LDN work closer together with NBSAPs, NDCs, NAPs, ecosystem restoration plans and water-resources work, helping to break silos.

(b) Countries have defined and validated more specific, time-bound and quantitative targets; some have set sub-national targets through extensive stakeholder consultation.

(c) Spatially explicit targets mapping priority landscapes, watersheds and administrative units enable more targeted action and will improve monitoring, investment prioritization and reporting.

(d) Updated targets are more gender-responsive, with some Parties generating specific gender-focused LDN targets.

(e) Participating countries have advanced improved implementation plans, identified priority project ideas and developed concrete financing proposals.

[Figure 1: LDN TSP 2.0 — to be reinserted]

19. Key challenges experienced in LDN TSP 2.0 included political leadership shifts, high turnover of national UNCCD focal-point teams, limited capacities on LDN implementation and financing-gap assessment, and on access to spatially explicit data. Despite efforts, persistent silos between the Rio Conventions continue. As the 18 participating countries finalize the process, they are additionally strengthening LDN integration into their land-use planning frameworks with support from the GEF-7 Enabling Activity project on integrating LDN into land-use planning frameworks (see paragraphs 21–23 below). Following webinars in November 2024 and November 2025, the GM will present a briefing note on LDN TSP 2.0 lessons learned and good practices at COP 17.

20. At CRIC 23 in December 2025, the GM presented a dedicated report and organized a successful plenary with an interactive panel; the resulting CRIC 23 report included specific calls for continued and expanded GEF support to scale up LDN TSP 2.0 and for a more programmatic approach to UNCCD enabling activities under GEF-9, including support for target revision and updating. That plenary also led to five additional countries expressing formal interest in LDN TSP 2.0, bringing the waiting list to 21 as of 31 March 2026. A decision on scaling up LDN TSP 2.0 beyond the current 18 participating countries is now critical. Looking further ahead, Parties may wish to consider an evolution from LDN target-setting, with strong coherence across CBD, UNFCCC and the Bonn Challenge, to deeper integration of all land-based targets, including both government- and corporate-set targets.

21. A central lesson of LDN TSP 2.0 has been the need to promote ILUP and integrated landscape management as foundational tools for balancing competing land demands. By

embedding LDN principles into spatial and sectoral planning, ILUP enables countries to avoid degradation, scale SLM and prioritize restoration in high-impact landscapes, helping to turn national commitments into coordinated, on-the-ground action. As a critical component of the LDN TSP 2.0 follow-up, the GEF-7 Enabling Activity project on ILUP, implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and executed by the GM, directly addresses these needs.

[Figure 2: Flow chart of LDN TSP 2.0 and ILUP linkages — to be reinserted]

22. Despite a delayed start, a project officer was on board by August 2025 and the project workplan, log-frame and budget were aligned with the current situation and endorsed by the steering committee in December 2025. Of the 18 participating countries, 12 national focal points had confirmed partner agencies by early April 2026. A collaboration agreement with Conservation International for the LDN–ILUP planning tool, an open-source geospatial tool leveraging Trends.Earth, is under development with Jordan as an initial methodological reference.

23. The project has been presented at online events and in regional workshops. Synergies are being built with a number of existing projects and processes, including GSP, Trends.Earth, Tools4LDN, LUP4LDN, the newly approved Economics of Rio Synergies project in Mongolia with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), GIZ and FAO, and the Dryland Sustainable Landscapes Impact Programme. With the GM’s private-sector team, the project is also exploring how B4L can support ILUP processes and how earth-observation data and ILUP can serve as de-risking mechanisms in insurance systems supporting bankable drought-resilience and nature-based projects.

24. B4L is the principal vehicle for business engagement under the UNCCD: a membership network of businesses committed to responsible land stewardship, aimed at promoting better private-sector investment decisions and land-positive, drought-resilient practices. Against the estimated USD 880 billion annual cost of land degradation to the global economy and the dramatic economic impacts generated by droughts of approximate USD 300 billion in annual losses and their disruptive and cascade effects in GDPs and value chains the private sector — historically a driver of degradation — will be essential to reversing the trend, and to be a catalyzer for managing drought as a systemic risk, and in building resilience. Detailed reporting on B4L is provided in document ICCD/COP(17)/4.

25. A partnership with the Science Based Targets Network, a recognized global authority on credible corporate targets on nature, is strengthening alignment between corporate land disclosure targets and LDN targets, LDN TSP 2.0 and ILUP, with the aim of developing a monitoring methodology that recognizes corporate contributions to LDN.

26. B4L has also worked with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) to gather recommendations from leading agri-food businesses, which feed into the guidance document on sustainable management of agricultural lands. B4L is also working with the World Economic Forum and its Global Future Council on Healthy Soils and Land, in the preparation of a White Paper to make the business case for investing in health soils and land.

27. With rangelands central to COP 17 and the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, the GM has partnered with private-sector partners on the development of Global Rangeland Standards (GRS) as a pilot to explore certification and monitoring systems that foster voluntary commitments, traceability and accountability by the private sector. In addition, the GM is acting as an advisor to a private-sector-led pilot project, “Resilient Threads”, in Mongolia, to demonstrate a One Health approach linked to the GRS that will serve as a solid case study for future decision-making.

28. The GM was requested to strengthen the business case on land tenure. Approximately 608 million family farms globally lack secure land rights, with women and Indigenous Peoples disproportionately affected. Without legal security, neither the private sector nor communities have a long-term incentive to invest in sustainable management. In the best-case scenario, they are unable to use land as collateral and, in the worst case, are exposed to displacement or asset seizure. Where communities have documented, enforceable rights, investment in sustainable practices increases two- to threefold, agricultural productivity rises

by 30 to 40 per cent, and poverty and conflict decline. The GM has therefore produced a Business Case and a Tenure Checklist offering project developers a practical tool to integrate Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure principles into project design from the outset, so that interventions are tenure-sensitive, gender-responsive and do no harm.

29. On sand and dust storms, decision 27/COP.16 requested the secretariat and the GM to develop a global implementation initiative. A proposal for an initiative has been developed. It targets anthropogenic SDS sources and data gaps and engages in advocacy for the United Nations Decade on Combating Sand and Dust Storms (2025–2034). It refocuses global action on issues within the UNCCD’s mandate, land and source management, through four elements: (a) land-focused monitoring via standardized wind-erosion networks that integrate land-health data with remote sensing and dust-emission models; (b) source stabilization through evidence-based SLM targeting soil health, vegetation structure and surface roughness in priority hotspots; (c) science-policy integration that refocuses dust models on source areas and aligns SDS with LDN frameworks; and (d) coordination and capacity, including transboundary cooperation and technical capacity-building. A draft is available for the guidance of Parties.

IV. Impact: flagships, pipeline and private-sector engagement

30. The GM has intensified efforts to deliver impact by developing a robust pipeline of investable projects capable of attracting scaled-up finance for land restoration and drought resilience. By focusing on high-impact, bankable initiatives, in particular flagship programmes in priority regions and on priority themes, the GM works to bridge the gap between national commitments and actionable investment.

A. Flagship initiatives

31. The GGW remains the cornerstone flagship in Africa. In the Sahel, the GM supports multi-country efforts to restore degraded landscapes, build resilience and create green jobs, building on USD 14 to 19 billion mobilized and programmed across projects in countries including Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Senegal. Through the GGW Observatory, which the GM has helped the Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall develop, the GGW Accelerator reports that, as of 31 December 2025, 389 projects had been registered — though fewer than 90 contained data compatible with the harmonized reporting structure, a significant reporting gap that GGW Member States must address, including through validation by national coalitions.

32. From those reporting projects, the Initiative is currently measuring 1.66 million hectares under restoration (of a 100 million-hectare target), 24 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂-eq) sequestered or mitigated (of a 250 million-tonne target), 2,315 MWh of power produced, 4.6 million jobs created (of a 10 million target) and more than 46 million persons benefiting. Partner contributions include: Green Climate Fund projects collectively mitigating 15 million tonnes CO₂-eq across solar electrification, sustainable crop production, carbon-sink restoration and resilient agroforestry; the African Development Bank (AfDB) committing USD 3.32 billion through 83 national and 29 multinational projects since 2021, nearly 51 per cent of the Bank’s GGW commitment; Agence Française de Développement (AFD)-funded projects in 2024 supporting 3.3 million people in vulnerable situations, enabling 104,183 family farms to improve their economic conditions, bringing 1.5 million hectares under sustainable resource management and supporting 192,165 family farms to transition to agroecological systems; International Fund for Agricultural Development initiatives generating 28,197 new jobs and approximately 5 million tonnes CO₂-eq sequestered over 840,820 hectares; World Bank-supported projects sequestering around 4 million tonnes CO₂-eq across 224,754 hectares, creating 392,568 jobs and supporting 1,130 rural production units; and World Food Programme activities restoring 325,350 hectares, producing 1.08 MWh of clean energy through solar-powered irrigation, creating 69,000 green jobs and enabling 21,500 households to move off traditional fuels. The

GGW Accelerator continues to support national coalitions — central to resource mobilization and effective monitoring — in GGW Member States.

33. In Southern Africa, the GM works with the 16 Southern African Development Community Member States and partners on the GGW to develop regional investment plans, project pipelines and resource-mobilization roadmaps, with a focus on integrated approaches across drylands, including the Zambezi basin. In response to decision 9/COP.15, paragraph 7, the GM has successfully mobilized the inaugural Southern Africa Great Green Wall Accelerator, implemented by AfDB and funded by the GEF, to consolidate and deliver the political and resource-mobilization ambitions, with a strong emphasis on engaging the private sector through B4L. Significant political mileage was achieved in 2025 during South Africa’s G20 Presidency, where the Initiative’s ambitions were profiled, and a GEF-8 International Waters project was approved in January 2026, highlighting the leverage potential and strong partnership in the Zambezi basin, which is at the core of the Southern Africa Great Green Wall Initiative (SA GGWI).

34. Geographic expansion has continued to Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Asia and Eastern Europe, with the GM nurturing multi-country programmes that integrate LDN targets, drought planning and landscape restoration to attract GEF, Green Climate Fund and regional-bank financing. In LAC, for example, the partnership with the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF) has gained traction: a regional technical cooperation programme of approximately USD 300,000 was approved at the end of 2025 for joint implementation over 24 months. Guidance on how country Parties can access available resources will be shared with national focal points. In this biennium, thematic flagships have emerged as a complementary vehicle, cutting across regional groupings to emphasize critical ecosystems and co-benefits. The rangelands flagship advances sustainable-management standards and restoration models that support pastoral livelihoods, biodiversity and climate resilience — often in combination with nature-positive food systems. The Nature for Food/food systems flagship focus highlights regenerative practices that enhance soil health, boost productivity and secure food systems in drylands, positioning these as high-return investment themes.

B. Country-level pipeline and critical partnerships

35. At country level, the GM builds pipelines of investment-ready projects through targeted capacity-building, project preparation and partnerships aligned with national LDN targets, drought plans and development strategies. Critical partnerships — with regional bodies (the African Union, SADC, regional economic communities), multilateral funds (GEF, GCF, the Adaptation Fund, the World Bank, AfDB, CAF), bilateral donors and the private sector — enable resource mobilization, de-risking and accelerated implementation, delivering geographically balanced, gender-responsive portfolios.

36. Overall, 108 countries have requested support to develop national and/or multicountry projects through the transformative projects and programmes workstream, which is delivered through the Partnership for Project Preparation. Since 2018 and as of May 2026, this portfolio includes: (a) 51 active national projects (39 project concept notes have been supported, and 21 project documents and prefeasibility studies have been completed or are receiving support); (b) 32 active regional or multicountry projects (20 concept notes have been supported, and 22 project proposals, prefeasibility and feasibility studies are receiving support); and (c) 3 global projects supported (3 concept notes have been developed and 1 project document approved).

37. Excluding work carried out under the GGW Accelerator, from November 2024 to May 2026, the GM has supported the development of project-related documents (i.e. pre-concept notes, concept notes, project proposals, prefeasibility studies, investment plans, project appraisal reports) through partnerships, including: (a) 22 projects approved for implementation (16 national, 5 regional and 1 global); and (b) 23 project concept notes or project documents currently under development which have not yet been approved (11 national and 12 regional).

38. The total budget for the 22 projects approved for implementation between November 2024 and May 2026 is approximately USD 1.48 billion, comprising USD 226 million from the targeted source of funding and USD 1.25 billion from co-financing. In addition, the total expected budget for the 23 project concept notes and/or project documents is USD 677 million, comprising USD 517 million from the targeted source of financing and USD 160 million from co-financing. Therefore, the total amount mobilized if all of the 23 project documents are approved — i.e. 45 projects in total — would be USD 2.16 billion, comprising USD 743 million from targeted sources of funding and USD 1.412 billion from co-financing.

39. However, the transformative projects and programmes portfolio also includes more than 10 project ideas developed at an earlier date which are not active, owing to various issues including the lack of a concrete or confirmed targeted source of funding and the limited engagement of countries and/or partners. These project ideas are considered dormant, and continuous efforts are being made to incorporate them into new projects with an identified targeted source of funding.

40. Critical partnerships that have been established include the signing of a Fiduciary Principles Agreement with AfDB, the approval of a regional technical cooperation with CAF and a potential Technical Assistance facility with the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Feasibility studies supported have facilitated access to grant and loan finance to implement the PIDACC Zambezi Zone I project, while a project in Uzbekistan to support restoration of the lower Aral Sea basin is under review by partners for potential loan financing from the European Investment Bank and the French Development Agency. In addition, strategic project-preparation partnerships continue to be strengthened with UNDP, UNIDO, WMO, the Global Water Partnership, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), WWF, regional economic communities and transboundary river-basin organizations, among others, while new partnerships continue to be pursued, particularly with partners to support the design of blended projects and project-preparation partnerships with the private sector that are likely to be a key area of focus for the next biennium.

41. An AfDB-supported “Gender-Transformative Resilience to Drought in Transition States in Southern Africa” project was launched in 2025, leveraged with the Canada Grant and the Greening Drylands Partnership, illustrating the results and impact of the Partnership for Project Preparation in Southern Africa. The project aims to improve drought resilience among women and girls in Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, three of the Southern African countries hit by devastating droughts. The project is collaborating with the International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA) to deliver Drought Investment Plans in at least six countries and a project pipeline targeted at accessing the DRIF, the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership and other potential financing sources, with potential alignment with UNFCCC national action plans.

42. The design of new flagships has progressed in the current biennium through a collaboration with IUCN and the Government of Mongolia on a GEF-8 medium-sized proposal contributing to the Rangelands Flagship Initiative, as well as a proposed technical assistance facility with the Asian Development Bank. The collaboration with the UNDP-led GEF-8 Blue and Green Island Integrated Impact Programme continues to be strengthened by supporting alignment with LDN implementation and gender-responsive approaches, with an ambition to share experiences and influence GEF-9 projects.

43. The GM has been supporting the implementation of pilot projects funded by the Greening Drylands Partnership and the Partnership for Project Preparation. These pilot projects have been contributing to transforming LDN theory and concepts into practice and delivering good examples to inform policy, decision-making and implementation at the national level. The pilot projects have evolved as a strategic platform that mobilizes partnerships, scales up successful approaches, replicates proven models and leverages and scales up financial resources. Since 2012, 18 pilots have been completed across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America, in addition to the Ethiopia pilot completed in 2024. From 2024, the Greening Drylands Partnership has focused on specific geographic regions, namely the Pacific Islands and East and Southern Africa, while the Partnership for Project Preparation continues to operate globally. In the Pacific small island developing States (SIDS), pilot projects are contributing to the implementation of the Pacific Agriculture and Forestry Strategy for 2024–2050, which was adopted in May 2024 by the Pacific Community.

The partnership with the Pacific Community is supporting the development and testing of a forest-management model to guide research and policy direction for effective forestry decision-making in Fiji and Tonga. The pilot aims to generate a localized plant-invasive-species management model to inform forest restoration research, policy and decision-making in the Pacific Island countries. In Africa, pilot projects are contributing to the implementation of the Southern African Great Green Wall Initiative, which involves 16 Southern African countries and 8 East African countries that are members of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), respectively. A SA GGWI South Africa G20 Legacy pilot project entitled “Sustainable Land Management through Climate-Smart Agriculture, Agroforestry and Woody Indigenous Species Cover to Address the Land Degradation and Poverty Nexus in Limpopo” was launched in 2026; the pilot project is executed by the Government of South Africa and a regional non-governmental organization, Universal Greening Organization. To demonstrate scale-up and leverage potential of pilot projects, the Greening Drylands Partnership is co-financing a GEF medium-sized project proposal entitled the Southern Africa Great Green Wall Accelerator, which will also support pilot projects in six countries, namely Comoros, Malawi, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The Accelerator project will deliver a SA GGWI institutional mechanism and multi-sectoral coordination platform, as well as a costed Investment Plan and project pipeline, building on the pilot project outcomes. The project was launched with a SA GGWI Capacity Building Workshop on Nature-Based Solutions in partnership with AfDB, the Zambezi Watercourse Commission (ZAMCOM), the SADC Secretariat, the African Union Commission and the International Finance Corporation. Building on the lessons learned, the pilot projects operating model has transitioned toward a Call for Proposals in collaboration with partners such as UNDP, to enhance the participation of technically specialized institutions, improve the quality and bankability of pilot project concepts, and shorten project preparation timelines. The first Call for Proposals will be launched in partnership with UNDP in 2026, building on the GEF Small Grants Programme.

44. A strategic collaboration in Latin America with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and DeserTech delivered a technology transfer and open-innovation programme focused on mitigating desertification and drought in the Atacama Desert region. This Partnership for Project Preparation pilot project brought together a cohort of 15–20 local leaders for online needs-assessment sessions, technology scouting and an in-person seminar. The aim was to co-develop up to 20 project proposals tackling urgent water and resilience challenges. With a shared operational budget, the IDB has committed to finance at least one scalable pilot project and is mobilizing additional resources across its network to support further implementation. As of November 2025, the IDB and the Global Mechanism have assessed 18 proposals and selected one pilot for financing that is delivering a decentralized wastewater-treatment solution for small-scale agriculture in Jujuy, Argentina, for USD 123,500.

C. The Peace Forest Initiative

45. Launched at COP 14 in 2019 with support from numerous Parties, notably the Government of the Republic of Korea, the PFI was established as a UNCCD thematic flagship demonstrating the links between land restoration, peace and security in fragile and conflict-affected areas.

46. PFI provides an inclusive platform for stakeholders to co-design, mobilize resources and implement joint activities on land restoration, fostering synergy between land, security and resilience. The PFI has been working globally across Central Asia, the South Caucasus, the Horn of Africa and East Africa, South-East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Western Balkans.

47. In this biennium, pilots have been launched in Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indonesia and Timor-Leste, and Central Asia, in collaboration with UNDP, FAO, the World Bank and others. The UNDP-supported Central Asia pilot is being extended to Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The focus is on restoring degraded land and managing soil, water and forests while fostering transboundary cooperation, building trust, reducing resource-based tensions and generating replicable models for post-conflict and drought-vulnerable contexts.

48. A PFI flagship report, “Ground for Peace: Land Restoration for International Peace and Security”, and PFI Operational Guidelines have been produced; with partners including Adelphi, the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, the GM has organized advocacy events at the Munich Security Conference 2025, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and Geneva Peace Week 2025, emphasizing the urgency of resource allocation for environmental peacebuilding. In 2026, the G7 Environment track adopted an outcome text on Desertification and Security.

49. Building on these outcomes, the need for a fragility financing mechanism for environmental restoration in fragile contexts has been identified. The concept is likely to take the form of a consortium of actors, funders and delivery partners functioning as a platform for blended financing with embedded de-risking, delivering multisectoral, context-tailored packages of projects under a harmonized medium- to long-term results framework. Subject to the availability of resources, the second phase of the PFI (2026–2030) will focus on developing this mechanism and on additional pilot projects, expanding geographic scope and showcasing the link between SDGs 15.3 and 16 with concrete evidence.

D. Business for Land Impact

50. Since COP 16, B4L has broadened its membership in agri-food, textiles and infrastructure, has supported businesses in testing land-positive approaches, defining land- and drought-related targets and aligning corporate reporting with national frameworks, and has produced sector-specific recommendations for agriculture. The next B4L Forum, where progress will be discussed, will take place in August 2026 in Ulaanbaatar, in conjunction with COP 17. In this biennium, B4L has focused on three pillars: on operations and value chains, supporting businesses in aligning business models with LDN and sustainable land, soil and water management, and integrating these into corporate and national reporting frameworks; on finance, exploring innovative financial products, most notably the DRIF, and developing an investor scoring system to mainstream land across portfolios; and on advocacy, launching the B4L Champions’ Council and national B4L hubs with business associations to generate national action and policy recommendations. The B4L Champions’ Council, launched at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos in 2026, is a high-level platform engaging senior leaders. Bringing together an initial group of champion companies and inspirational business leaders, the Council promotes the translation of corporate sustainability commitments into concrete land-positive action across supply chains and supports innovative finance solutions under B4L, as well as advocacy from the private sector to its peers for land. Detailed reporting is provided in document ICCD/COP(17)/4.

51. Moving forward, B4L will increasingly drive private-sector engagement as a core pillar of the GM’s pipeline strategy. As the network grows, an increasing number of businesses are anticipated to participate in UNCCD projects and programmes, with the aim to strengthen private-sector engagement aligned with national LDN targets and to help develop associated blended restoration and drought-resilience projects from land-intensive value chains. This leverages the LDN-aligned corporate-disclosure mechanisms for stronger business action and is building alignment between corporate land targets and LDN targets to mobilize the private sector as a key finance and implementation partner. Through the Private Sector Engagement Strategy 2021–2030 and B4L platforms, the GM is seeking to unlock private capital, philanthropy and blended finance to co-finance flagship and Parties’ pipeline projects. The GM looks to Parties for strong support in establishing the enabling environments needed to realize its potential.

V. Innovation

52. The GM is placing innovation at the heart of its strategy to combat drought, land degradation and desertification by pioneering approaches that operationalize commitments, unlock creative financing and accelerate technology transfer.

A. Drought resilience and the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership (RGDRP)

53. The RGDRP, launched at COP 16 in Riyadh and advanced through its inaugural conference in June 2025, represents a shift from reactive crisis response to proactive, long-term drought resilience. Connecting 74 vulnerable countries with technical, financial and institutional support, the RGDRP will operate through three pillars: a Readiness Facility for strategy and pipeline development; an Investment Facility for project financing; and a Knowledge Platform for sharing innovation. Building on pledges from the OPEC Fund, the Islamic Development Bank and Saudi Arabia, this biennium has been devoted to establishing the institutional and operational foundations to move the Partnership toward implementation.

54. The Governance Framework was developed and refined through consultations with the COP 16 Presidency, UNCCD leadership and partners, and strengthened after the first Steering Committee meeting in December 2025. The GM advanced the establishment of the RGDRP secretariat, including its Terms of Reference and institutional arrangements, and confirmed Steering Committee membership through an inclusive process that finalized civil-society and private-sector representation. Foundations were laid for the RGDRP Fund as a Multi-Partner Trust Fund, with Terms of Reference developed in coordination with the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, positioning the Fund for formal establishment following the signature of memoranda of understanding with participating United Nations agencies. A comprehensive Operational Manual will consolidate governance, operational and fund-related provisions into a single framework. The RGDRP has now transitioned from design to establishment, with preparatory work under way on the first call for proposals under the Readiness Facility in early 2027.

B. Innovative finance

55. A key focus this biennium has been blended finance, insurance and credits. The Drought Resilience Investment Facility (DRIF) is being established, with support from Luxembourg, to be hosted at Luxembourg's Earth Impact Fund with a target size of USD 300 to 400 million. Under the B4L umbrella, commissioned by IDRA under its innovative-finance pillar, DRIF will be the first global fund of its kind dedicated to drought resilience, using concessional capital to de-risk projects and attract commercial finance for equity investments in transferable and scalable drought-resilience technologies and businesses. In 2025, the GM secured funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg to support DRIF's establishment.

56. Insurance is a crucial and under-utilized vehicle. Parametric and index-based products can protect vulnerable farmers and communities from drought shocks, enabling rapid recovery and the adoption of sustainable practices; integrated with social protection and microfinance, such tools reduce risk exposure and build long-term financial resilience. Initial feasibility studies are under way, including in Namibia and Pacific small island developing States. With private-sector partners, including EY, the GM is also exploring a Land Resilience Insurance Framework that integrates risk reduction, transfer and financing within broader investment programmes, embedding insurance within blended-finance structures and value chains. Next steps include resource mobilization for the large-scale pilots in Namibia and the Pacific in collaboration with the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the African Risk Capacity. Delivery will require partnerships with a large range of technical agencies and the insurance sector.

57. Resilience credits are emerging as a promising frontier, drawing lessons from carbon markets, as they reward adaptation, ecosystem restoration and drought-proofing. Building on the GM's earlier analytical work on "UNCCD-friendly" carbon credits, which examined how carbon-market approaches could better reflect land restoration, tenure security and local-community benefits, the GM is now exploring resilience credits in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme. The exploration will assess whether such approaches can generate additional revenue streams for land stewards and support more resilient land-use systems in vulnerable dryland contexts. Next steps will focus on co-

developing the resilience-credit concept, associated monitoring and verification systems and potential piloting in selected contexts to demonstrate feasibility and applicability for scaling.

VI. Looking forward - Inspiration

58. The GM aims to help Parties close the persistent financing gap for restoration and drought resilience. Anchored in the FNA, the GM aims to support a framework that enables Parties to mobilize adequate, predictable and sustainable finance. Rather than being GM-led, it emphasizes country-driven approaches, policy coherence and multi-stakeholder alignment to transform land and drought resilience into a high-return investment priority. The approach is accompanied by a step-wise Resource Mobilization Toolbox (RMT). This could eventually become an interactive platform that supports countries in identifying, formulating and implementing financial solutions. The RMT offers guidance for designing national resource-mobilization strategies reflecting country-specific costs and solutions for SLM and drought resilience; step-by-step support for cross-ministry coordination and alignment with development plans and partners; analytical platforms to track commitments and monitor progress; and evidence-based cases that justify scaling budgets.

59. This approach requires a paradigm shift beyond business as usual and brings together a great deal of the Global Mechanism portfolio. The Global Mechanism has been able to demonstrate a number of interesting models and approaches. The challenge now is meeting demand from Parties while going to scale in terms of: scaling domestic public finance through greening fiscal policy, repurposing harmful subsidies and integrating LDN and drought objectives into national budgets; enhancing international public finance via stronger bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including synergies with the GEF, GCF, multilateral development banks and flagships such as the RGDPR; unlocking private and blended finance through B4L, sustainability-linked instruments, de-risking tools, resilience credits, parametric insurance and vehicles such as the DRIF; applying catalytic approaches such as performance-based mechanisms and nature-positive value chains; and building the capacity and partnerships needed to prepare investable pipelines, with emphasis on flagships including the GGW, thematic priorities on rangelands or food security, and cross-cutting innovations in technology transfer and behavioural change.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

60. The financing gap for land restoration and drought resilience is structural and the investment case is unambiguous however a 2.5-fold or greater increase in investment cannot be achieved under a business-as-usual approach.

61. A paradigm shift in financing is necessary, possible and already taking shape, but it demands political commitment.

62. Smarter and more intelligence-driven decision-making at country level is delivering results but remains resource-constrained. LDN TSP 2.0 has generated demonstrable progress in the 18 participating countries, more specific, time-bound, spatially explicit and gender-responsive targets, closer integration with NBSAPs, NDCs and NAPs, and concrete financing proposals, yet 21 at least Parties remain on the waiting list pending extrabudgetary resources. With ILUP emerging as the operating system that connects targets to investable action.

63. Flagship initiatives and work on pipeline development deliver impact at scale and can increasingly support synergy-type projects among the Rio Conventions and in the context of other thematic issues such as food and water security. Emerging thematic flagships on rangelands and food security are gaining traction and show promise

- 64. The Peace Forest Initiative has moved from concept to pilots across multiple regions and is shaping a fragility financing mechanism that may add value in addressing the land–security nexus.
- 65. Coordination gaps at the national level, including in interministerial coordination and in the context of multicountry projects, will need to be addressed if results are to attract further finance.
- 66. Private-sector engagement is growing but remains structurally insufficient without enabling conditions.
- 67. Financial innovation can expand the pool of available finance but it needs nurturing.
- 68. A global implementation initiative on sand and dust storms could offer Parties’ clear strategic direction.
- 69. The operational capacity of the GM is insufficient to meet Party demand.

B. Recommendations

- 70. The following recommendations are submitted for the consideration of Parties at COP 17.
- 71. Endorse and pursue a comprehensive and transformational approach to Convention financing (including the consideration of subsidies; the integration of LDN and drought-resilience objectives into national and sub-national fiscal frameworks and development plans; the scaling of performance-based instruments such as sustainability-linked bonds and loans; the expansion of blended finance to de-risk private investment; and the recognition of land and drought resilience as a strategic asset class by development–finance institutions, building on the 2025 MDB Taxonomy).
- 72. Scale up LDN TSP 2.0 and integrated land-use planning by providing support to Parties currently on the waiting list and moving decisively from fragmented target-setting to programmatic support, from targeting through to reporting, using vehicles such as ILUP.
- 73. Continue to develop the pipeline of multisector projects and consolidate the delivery of flagship initiatives, including new thematic flagship initiatives on rangelands and food security; work diligently to support capacity-building for resource mobilization and project design and to address coordination and scaling challenges; progress the implementation of the Partnership for Project Preparation, focusing on promoting Rio synergies, multisector projects, access to innovative financing and blended financial structuring of projects, including engagement with the private sector; and continue to support the implementation of pilot projects to demonstrate proof of concept and catalyse innovation to attract and leverage increased financing and scale up of best practices.
- 74. Advance the second phase of the Peace Forest Initiative and its fragility financing mechanism;
- 75. Continue scaling up the mobilization of financial resources to support countries in transforming their National Drought Plans into Investment Plans, and to mobilize technical and financial resources to enhance the national drought resilience ecosystems for proactive drought management. Support the establishment of the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership, supporting countries in developing investable projects.
- 76. Accelerate private-sector engagement, supporting the operationalization of Business for Land and the Drought Resilience Investment Facility, encouraging standard-setting, nature-positive value chains and tenure frameworks that unlock investment, and promoting strengthened ESG standards. The detailed conclusions and recommendations on private-sector engagement are presented in document ICCD/COP(17)/4.

- 77. Support continued innovation and its transition to scale, including resilience credits, parametric and index-based insurance, and performance-based financing, together with the development of dynamic decision-support tools that link target-setting with investment decision-making.**
- 78. Adopt the global implementation initiative on sand and dust storms and support its operationalization.**
- 79. Reflect on how to strengthen the core capacity of the GM.**
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