



## Convention to Combat Desertification

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

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda

**Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties**

### Conference of the Parties

#### Committee on Science and Technology

#### Seventeenth session

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 17–21 August 2026

Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda

**Interfacing science, policy, and sharing knowledge  
Improving procedures for the communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties**

## Improving procedures for the communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties

### Note by the secretariat

#### *Summary*

By its decision 4/COP.16, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, subject to available resources, to enhance the functionality of the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) for the upcoming 2026 UNCCD reporting process. Furthermore, by its decision 2/COP.16, the COP requested the secretariat, together with data providers, financial and technical partners, and the Earth Observation community to continue supporting country capacity development to monitor the implementation of the Convention.

This document presents an update on progress in the provision of technical support to countries in the preparation of their 2026 national reports, including the establishment of collaboration with relevant regional institutions and the delivery of regional capacity-building workshops under the UNCCD Global Support Programme IV. The conclusion and recommendation section of this document should be read together with the relevant draft decision contained in document ICCD/CRIC(24)/5.

Pursuant to decision 11/COP.14, which welcomed the good collaboration between the Committee on Science and Technology and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention on methodological issues relating to reporting, it is proposed that this document and ensuing draft decision be subject to joint negotiations during COP 17.

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## I. Introduction

1. The 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), which was adopted by Parties at the thirteenth session of the Conference of Parties (COP 13), requires Parties to report on five strategic objectives (SOs) and an implementation framework. Progress made in the implementation of the Strategic Framework has been regularly reviewed through the national reporting process since 2018, and every four years thereafter, in line with the reporting frequency adopted in decision 15/COP.13.
2. In decision 4/COP.16, Parties requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM), subject to available resources, to enhance the functionality of the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) for the upcoming 2026 UNCCD reporting process.
3. In the same decision, Parties also invited Conservation International (CI) to continue enhancing Trends.Earth, by addressing the critical technical issues raised during the 2022 UNCCD reporting process as a priority. Furthermore, Parties requested the secretariat, in collaboration with data providers, financial and technical partners and the Earth Observation community, including the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality (GEO-LDN) Flagship initiative, to ensure that default data is accurate, complete, consistent, scientifically reviewed, documented and, where feasible and optimal, based on continuously available high-resolution data products for the land surface, especially for small island developing States (SIDS) and developing countries without adequate data.
4. In decision 2/COP.16, Parties requested the secretariat, in collaboration with data providers, financial and technical partners, and the Earth Observation community, including the GEO-LDN Flagship initiative, to support developing countries – particularly SIDS and least developed countries – by providing capacity development for participatory land degradation mapping, target setting and drought assessments; facilitating blended learning for national reporting through e-learning and in-person training; promoting South–South, North–South and Triangular cooperation to exchange experiences; enhancing collaboration with regional bodies to offer technical and data support during the 2026 reporting process; and offering technical and financial assistance to help maximize the use of national data for reporting.
5. A progress report on the implementation of these decisions was presented at the twenty-third session of the Committee for Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 23), as contained in document ICCD/CRIC(23)/2. The final CRIC 23 report already contains several conclusions and recommendations identified by Parties to strengthen the UNCCD reporting process.
6. This document provides an update on progress in the provision of technical support to countries in the preparation of their 2026 national reports, including through the establishment of collaboration with relevant regional institutions, the delivery of regional capacity-building workshops under the UNCCD Global Support Programme IV (GSP IV) and the implementation of other medium-sized projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) which contribute to developing data and capacity for national-level planning, monitoring and reporting of land degradation neutrality (LDN) interventions.
7. In line with decision 33/COP.15, the conclusion and recommendation section of this document should be read together with the relevant section in document ICCD/CRIC(24)/5, entitled ‘Draft decisions for consideration at the twenty-fourth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention’. Pursuant to decision 11/COP.14, which welcomed the good collaboration between the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the CRIC on methodological issues relating to reporting, it is proposed that this document and ensuing draft decision become subject to joint negotiations during COP 17.

## II. Capacity building for reporting

8. In line with decision 2/COP.16, para 6(d) capacity-building for the 2026 reporting process is underway and being delivered with financial support from the GEF through a

hybrid format that combines in-person and online modalities. Since CRIC 23, progress has been made in establishing collaboration with relevant regional institutions to provide technical backstopping to countries throughout the 2026 reporting process, as well as in delivering regional capacity-building workshops under the UNCCD GSP IV. The update of the e-learning video tutorials prepared for 2022 reporting<sup>1</sup> is expected by July 2026.

## A. Technical backstopping

9. In line with decision 2/COP.16, para 6(d) which calls for enhanced collaboration with regional institutions, initiatives and organizations to provide data and technical support to country Parties for UNCCD reporting, the secretariat has established collaboration with the following institutions to provide technical backstopping and quality assurance to countries during the 2026 UNCCD reporting process:

- (a) International Research Center of Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals (CBAS);
- (b) Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC);
- (c) National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC);
- (d) Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Land Management (PISLM);
- (e) Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD);
- (f) Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS); and
- (g) The Pacific Community (SPC).

10. More specifically, memoranda of understanding (MoUs) have been established with the CBAS, OSS, PISLM, RCMRD and SPC to harness Earth observation data and related technologies in support of the implementation of the UNCCD. Under these MoUs, more specific letters of agreement (LoAs) have been concluded to facilitate the provision of targeted technical support to country Parties during the 2026 UNCCD reporting process. Alternative formal and informal partnership arrangements are being established with the JRC and the NCVC to further strengthen collaboration on data, methodologies and technical assistance for reporting.

11. Under the overall coordination of the UNCCD secretariat, these institutions will act as support hubs (hereinafter referred to as “Support Hubs”) for country Parties at the (sub) regional level during the 2026 reporting cycle, ensuring the coordinated delivery of regionally tailored support on Strategic Objectives 1 to 4 of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework and their associated indicators. Their role includes supporting capacity-building activities, not least the delivery of one regional workshop per Support Hub; providing technical assistance on data, methodologies, and reporting tools; responding to country queries through the UNCCD helpdesk; monitoring national reporting progress; and contributing to the quality assurance of national reports. Partial funding to support the activities of the Support Hubs is available through the GSP IV.

12. Following the secretariat’s consultations with these institutions and with Parties, the confirmed list of Parties to be supported by each Support Hub is contained in the annex to this document.

13. Additionally, the following institutions are involved as technical advisors, providing overarching and harmonized technical guidance to the secretariat and the Support Hubs throughout the 2026 reporting process:

- (a) Apacheta;
- (b) CI;
- (c) Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvHxVdUZA1q0CGTq-otlPTcjUX50oz9g9>.

(d) World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT).

14. Their role includes providing technical guidance on the application of methodologies aligned with existing Good Practice Guidance (GPG) documents, the selection and use of appropriate data sources, and the effective use of reporting tools. It also includes supporting the design and delivery of capacity-building activities, addressing complex technical issues escalated from regional and national levels, and systematically reviewing and aligning approaches to ensure consistency and coherence of technical advice across regions.

15. The FAO plays a dual role in this collaborative effort. As a specialized agency of the United Nations with a global mandate, it contributes as a technical advisor to the 2026 UNCCD reporting process. In addition, within the framework of the “Pilot project for GEF-8 enabling activities for national reporting under the UNCCD with support for enhanced data/reporting”,<sup>2</sup> FAO plays a complementary role of an implementing agency to that of the support hubs, providing direct technical support and access to funding to 21 country Parties<sup>3</sup> in implementing a participatory process and strengthening national institutional and technical capacities to monitor land degradation in a spatially explicit manner for the national assessment of Strategic Objective 1 (SO1) indicators and the estimation of SDG Indicator 15.3.1 (proportion of land that is degraded over total land area). The UNCCD Secretariat and FAO have been coordinating closely their respective support all through the process by having regular technical meetings. FAO co-organized the regional capacity building and peer exchange on the UNCCD 2026 national reporting for Annex III (Panama, 20 – 23 April 2026) and contributed to the design and delivery of the “Regional Capacity Building Workshops on the 2026 UNCCD National Reporting for Annex II (East, South and South East Asia) (China, 9 – 13 April 2026)”.

16. WOCAT, in its capacity as a technical advisor, provides comprehensive support to the Support Hubs and to all Parties. Building on methodologies successfully implemented during the 2022 UNCCD reporting process, WOCAT is advancing the scaling of inclusive and participatory decision-support systems that effectively integrate Earth Observation data with national and local knowledge on land degradation and sustainable land management (SLM). Its tools and approaches are now widely applied across regions, enabling enhanced country-level uptake of LDN decision-support systems. This, in turn, strengthens technical capacities, and fosters more coherent, transparent, and evidence-based reporting practices among Parties.

17. To ensure comprehensive coverage of all UNCCD country Parties, the secretariat contracted three international technical experts who have responsibilities similar to those of the Support Hubs, with specific countries directly assigned to them for technical backstopping. In relation to the 21 country Parties supported by FAO under the pilot project, these international technical experts complement FAO’s technical assistance by supporting reporting requirements beyond Strategic Objective 1, thereby ensuring balanced and coordinated support across all thematic areas of the 2026 reporting process. Support for strategic objective 5 is provided by the Global Mechanism.

18. The GEO LDN Flagship initiative will further support the reporting process by facilitating dialogue between the Earth observation community, the regional Support Hubs, international technical experts and UNCCD country Parties through online and, where possible, in-person learning and exchange workshops as well as thematic and regional dialog fora.

19. Together, these institutions and experts support the delivery of a timebound joint work programme for the 2026 UNCCD reporting process aimed at ensuring timely, consistent, and high-quality national reporting by all UNCCD country Parties during the 2026 reporting cycle through coordinated, regionally tailored, and technically robust support provided jointly by Support Hubs, under the guidance of the Secretariat and with input from technical advisors.

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/11848>.

<sup>3</sup> For a list of countries supported by FAO, see the Annex to this document.

20. To operationalize the support framework described above, the secretariat organized a Training of Trainers workshop for representatives of the Support Hubs on 27–28 November 2025 in Panama City, Panama. Convened by the UNCCD with financial support from the GEF and implementation support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) under the GSP III, the workshop was delivered with the support of technical advisors, including Apacheta, CI and WOCAT. It brought together a total of 39 participants, of whom three attended virtually; gender parity among participants was achieved. The training aimed to equip participating institutions with the technical knowledge and facilitation skills required to provide effective and streamlined support to country Parties in preparing high-quality submissions for the 2026 UNCCD reporting process.

## **B. Regional capacity-building workshops**

21. Six regional capacity-building workshops were organized with financial support from the GEF and implementation support from the UNEP under the GSP IV; at the time of writing, four workshops had been successfully conducted, with the remaining two scheduled for delivery:

(a) A regional capacity-building workshop for Parties from UNCCD Annex V (Central and Eastern Europe), Annex IV (Northern Mediterranean), Annex II (Central Asia), and non-Annex Parties was held in Antalya, Türkiye, from 30 March to 2 April 2026. The workshop was hosted by the General Directorate of Combating Desertification and Erosion Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, Government of Türkiye with expert-led training from the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (EC-JRC), in collaboration with technical partners including WOCAT, the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH), FAO, and the UNCCD Secretariat and Global Mechanism.

(b) A workshop for Parties from North East, South and South East Asia belonging to Annex II was held in Yinchuan, China, from 9-13 April 2026 in collaboration with the Chinese National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) and the China-Central Asia Cooperation Center for Combating Desertification, and with expert-led training from CBAS, FAO and the UNCCD Secretariat and Global Mechanism;

(c) A workshop for Annex III Parties was held in Panama City, Panama, from 20-23 April 2026 in collaboration with the FAO, and with expert-led training from CI, PISLM and Apacheta. Reflecting the relatively advanced stage of many countries in the region, the workshop was designed not as a traditional, top-down training, but as a South–South peer-learning platform, fostering the exchange of country experiences, challenges, and solutions. It prioritized collaborative learning and mutual support among countries at different stages of reporting implementation, fostering practical, experience-based knowledge sharing;

(d) All fourteen Pacific SIDS were in attendance to the subregional workshop held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands from 27 to 30 April 2026. The workshop was organized in collaboration with the Government of Cook Islands, as well as technical advisors such as SPC, CI, Apacheta, WOCAT and UKCEH. Particular emphasis was placed on the presentation and discussion of available high-resolution datasets as alternative data sources to the currently provided medium-resolution default datasets, particularly for indicators under Strategic Objective 1, offering participating countries enhanced analytical options better suited to their national contexts and geographic specificities.

(e) A workshop for Francophone African country Parties is tentatively planned to be held in Dakar, Senegal, from 18–21 May 2026, in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Senegal and regional partners, including the OSS, RCMRD and the Centre de Suivi Écologique, with expert-led training and technical support provided by the UNCCD Secretariat and its partners.

(f) A workshop for Anglophone African country Parties is tentatively planned to be held in Nairobi, Kenya by mid-June 2026. It will be organized in collaboration with the Support Hubs RCMRD and OSS, with expert-led training and technical support provided by the UNCCD Secretariat and its partners.

22. The regional capacity-building workshops were designed as a foundational intervention to support Parties in preparing for the 2026 UNCCD reporting process, with the overarching aim of strengthening the technical and institutional capacities of UNCCD National Focal Points, reporting officers and national experts to deliver timely, complete and high-quality national reports through the PRAIS 4 platform. Through a practical, hands-on approach, the workshops enhanced participants' understanding of the UNCCD reporting framework, indicators and obligations—particularly SDG indicator 15.3.1—while building their capacity to access, assess and apply national and global datasets in a manner that reflects country-specific realities. They also developed practical skills in the use of key reporting tools, including PRAIS 4 and Trends.Earth, supported alignment with related global processes such as the SDGs and the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and enabled participants to address common technical and institutional challenges.

23. In addition, the workshops fostered peer learning, regional collaboration and sustained engagement with Support Hubs and technical partners, thereby establishing a strong basis for ongoing support and knowledge exchange throughout the reporting process. Notably, the workshop for Annex III Parties demonstrated the added value of a more advanced, peer-driven format, where participating countries—already at relatively mature stages of implementation—engaged in deeper exchange of practical experiences, challenges and solutions, further enriching the overall capacity-building approach.

24. Two representatives from each eligible Party were funded to participate in each workshop. In addition, for the Annex III workshop, FAO supported the participation of one additional representative from each of the 14 country Parties covered under its pilot project. Given the technical nature of the events, Parties were encouraged to nominate Geographic Information System (GIS) experts as part of their delegations. Overall, 231 participants from 92 country Parties attended the four regional capacity-building workshops conducted to date, including 71 technical experts, and comprising 126 male and 105 female (see annex II for a breakdown of participation by workshop). For all workshops, an online modality of attendance was offered, while Parties were encouraged to attend in persons to maximise opportunities for peer learning and exchange. In total, 75 participants attended the workshops online.

25. An additional regional capacity-building workshop for Arabic-speaking countries from Annex I and Annex II is tentatively planned to be held by mid-June 2026 in Saudi Arabia in collaboration with NCVC. To support preparation, a series of online technical sessions is being conducted throughout April and May 2026 to cover the substantive components of the reporting process.

### **C. South-South and other international cooperation**

26. In decision 2/COP.16, Parties requested the secretariat, together with data providers, financial and technical partners and the Earth Observation community, including the GEOLDN Flagship initiative, to facilitate South–South, North–South and Triangular cooperation to share experiences, challenges and lessons learned related to national reporting.

27. The GEO-LDN Flagship initiative, in cooperation with the United Nations University, supported the Regional Dialogue Forum for Pacific SIDS, held in Suva, Fiji, in July 2025. The Forum focused on strengthening the use of Earth observation and spatial data to support sustainable land management, climate resilience, biodiversity conservation and disaster risk reduction, while also enhancing national capacities for monitoring and reporting under the Rio Conventions. Eight country teams participated, providing a valuable platform for regional exchange, technical learning and dialogue on context-specific challenges and opportunities.

28. The UNCCD SIDS Forum Workshop on “Strengthening Land Monitoring, Reporting and Partnerships,” held on 29 November 2025 in Panama City, was organized by the UNCCD secretariat in collaboration with the PISLM, Apacheta, and UNEP, with financial support from the GEF, under the auspices of the UNCCD SIDS Forum. Launched at COP16 in Riyadh, the Forum serves as the official platform for UNCCD National Focal Points from SIDS to exchange experiences, align negotiation positions, and advance SIDS-specific

priorities in land management and environmental governance. The workshop aimed to strengthen collaboration among SIDS in sustainable land management (SLM), land degradation monitoring (including SDG indicator 15.3.1), and UNCCD reporting by leveraging their collective voice. It provided a dedicated space to showcase innovative geospatial tools enabling countries to generate, analyze, and manage their own data, while promoting national data ownership, ethical data use, and the integration of traditional and modern knowledge systems. Discussions focused on new high-resolution datasets, peer exchange on SLM implementation and resource mobilization, and fostering long-term partnerships for capacity-building and financing. The workshop resulted in increased awareness and uptake of tailored geospatial tools, a shared understanding of SIDS' needs and challenges, and strengthened coordination among participants. A total of 46 participants attended, including 28 men and 18 women.

### **III. Enabling funding from the Global Environment Facility for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification reporting**

#### **A. Enabling activity umbrella projects**

29. The “GEF Support to the 2026 UNCCD National Reporting Process” umbrella Projects provides enabling activity funding to assist eligible countries in preparing and submitting their 2026 national reports. Four umbrella projects, implemented by the UNEP, have been approved by the GEF, supporting a total of 113 eligible countries.

30. The FAO has also taken up the role of implementing agency for the UNCCD 2026 reporting process. As mentioned above, within the framework of the “Pilot project for GEF-8 enabling activities for national reporting under the UNCCD with support for enhanced data/reporting”, FAO provides technical support to 21 countries in implementing a participatory process for the national assessment of SO1 indicators and the estimation of SDG Indicator 15.3.1. Key findings of the pilot project implemented by FAO to date include:

(a) Early engagement of technical work: Rapid progress was achieved through early access to FAO’s global technical team which enabled countries to initiate technical activities even in advance of national arrangements for fund execution. By April 2026, when the series of the regional capacity building workshops on the 2026 UNCCD National Reporting were launched, eight FAO supported countries were ready to share their advance results with other countries, enabling peer-to-peer learning and South-South exchange.

(b) Transition to full national operationalization: By April 2026, 17 of the 21 supported countries had received their national funds and were operational. Of these, six have received technical training delivered in presence by FAO experts and six have already conducted their first national participatory consultative workshop , and a further six are expected to do so before the end of the second quarter of 2026.

(c) Advanced, high-resolution analytical tools: Land Cover Transition Apps with high-resolution data (30 meters) and Land Productivity Dynamics Comparison Tools have been developed for all 21 countries and most of the countries have received training to use them. These applications support informed selection of the most representative analytical models and spatial layers by enabling direct comparison in an intuitive and user-friendly environment accessible to all users.

(d) Increased transparency, flexibility, and ownership: The technical approach and the tools tailored to the country’s needs were applied to promote transparent and flexible data processing and analysis, strengthen national ownership. National teams were empowered to integrate and process their own national data and use national expert knowledge according to their realities, leading to more accurate and credible results.

(e) Capacity strengthening through co-development and transfer: The co-development of tools and the transfer of Land Cover Transition and Decision Support

Apps scripts and tools to national teams have enhanced long-term national capacity, allowing countries to adapt and refine the tools independently according to evolving needs.

(f) Tailored technical backstopping and training: By April 2026, 18 countries received customized technical assistance and training (online and/ or in-person) aligned with their specific contexts and priorities, including six in-person trainings, often enabling them to go beyond minimum reporting requirements and further strengthening institutional and technical capacities. Further tailored trainings (online and in person) will be delivered to match the reporting timeline.

## **B. Global Support Programme**

31. In addition to funding directly provided to eligible countries, the GSP IV “Strengthening capacities of country Parties for the 2026 reporting process in the context of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework and SDG target 15.3”, provides methodological and technical support to UNCCD Parties in preparing and submitting their 2026 national report. Implemented by the UNEP and executed by the GM in close coordination with the Science, Technology and Innovation unit of the UNCCD secretariat, the GSP IV was approved on 24 November 2025; implementation started on 1 February 2026.

32. As detailed in section B of this document, the Global Mechanism and UNCCD Secretariat launched the regional capacity-building workshops in March 2026, with all regional workshops expected to be completed by COP17 in August 2026. Agreements with the regional Support Hubs have largely been finalized, while the international technical experts are now in place. With the convening of the workshops and technical assistance available to the countries, the GSP IV is supporting country Parties in preparing and submitting their reports complying with the deadlines of November 2026 and February 2027.

## **C. Other related projects**

33. In addition to the enabling activity umbrella projects and GSP, three GEF medium-sized projects have been planned in support of the 2026 reporting process and, more broadly, LDN implementation.

34. The GEF-8 medium-sized project ‘Enhancing data and capacity development resources to support UNCCD country Parties in national reporting and targeting of efforts to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality’, executed by the Betty and Gordon Moore Center for Science and Solutions at Conservation International in partnership with Apacheta, Auspatious, and Kartoza and implemented by the CI-GEF Project Agency, has delivered high spatial resolution datasets (30 meter) representing the land productivity dynamics (LPD) sub-indicator and is currently developing land cover datasets at 30 meter spatial resolution for all SIDS in support of the current reporting cycle. The project partners are conducting a series of in-person consultations with SIDS to verify these datasets and assure their highest quality in face of challenges encountered due to gaps in Earth observation imagery.

35. The GEF-7 Enabling Activity project ‘Integrating Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) into land use planning frameworks to strengthen national UNCCD enabling environments’,<sup>4</sup> executed by the GM and implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) provides direct country support, aligned with the second phase of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme, to integrate LDN into integrated land use plans (ILUP) policies and practices in a gender-responsive manner. As a key instrument for achieving LDN, ILUP supports the balancing of competing land-use demands through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations. The project focuses on developing geospatial dashboards, including national land resource databases, to inform planning and identify operational and financial gaps. Since its inception in May 2025, a project officer was hired in August 2025, and the project workplan was updated and endorsed by the steering committee in December 2025. Most participating countries (12 out of 18) have confirmed national partner agencies to lead implementation, while stakeholder

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/10909>.

consultations have been initiated to broaden engagement with ILUP practitioners and experts. A collaboration agreement with CI to develop an open-source LDN-ILUP planning tool to support country-level planning and decision-making, building on existing platforms such as Trends.Earth, is under development.

36. The forthcoming GEF-8 project entitled ‘Scaling the capacity of UNCCD Parties for inclusive decision support in Land Degradation Neutrality’,<sup>5</sup> implemented by the United Nations Development Programme and executed by the Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Bern, Switzerland builds on approaches successfully applied by WOCAT during the 2022 UNCCD reporting process. Under this initiative, WOCAT is providing in-depth support on participatory land degradation monitoring and LDN reporting to ten countries selected through an open call: Belize, Cambodia, Chad, Egypt, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Palau, Sri Lanka and Turkmenistan. In addition to targeted country support, the project will develop multilingual global training materials and other resources to facilitate the replication and scaling of these approaches by other Parties and stakeholders, while also promoting South–South exchange through the sharing of lessons learned and practical insights. The project is aligned with GSP IV and the broader UNDP portfolio on land degradation and sustainable land management. Overall, WOCAT’s work contributes to scaling harmonized methodologies across a growing number of countries, while fostering alignment and synergies with related processes under the Rio Conventions, particularly by strengthening linkages between LDN and biodiversity objectives. It also supports the establishment of a solid operational and institutional foundation, providing a basis for future programmatic expansion under subsequent funding cycles and through diverse funding streams and modalities.

37. To enhance coherence and maximize the impact of technical and financial support for reporting, the UNCCD secretariat is actively coordinating implementation arrangements across the GEF medium-sized projects, the enabling activity umbrella projects and the Global Support Programme IV. This coordination aims to ensure that capacity-building, data development and technical assistance activities are complementary, streamlined and aligned with Parties’ reporting needs, while minimizing duplication of effort and maximizing the efficient use of available resources. For this purpose, the secretariat convenes periodic coordination meetings with the respective leads of the supported projects and programmes, facilitating information exchange, alignment of workplans and identification of synergies in support of the 2026 reporting process. Notable examples of such collaboration include the joint organization of regional capacity-building activities, such as: i) the regional workshop for Annex III, delivered in partnership with FAO within the framework of the “Pilot project for GEF-8 enabling activities for national reporting under the UNCCD with support for enhanced data/reporting”, and ii) the organization, back-to-back with the regional workshop for Francophone African country Parties, of an additional one-day workshop for African SIDS by CI under its GEF medium-sized project, focusing on enhancing data availability and capacity development in SIDS for UNCCD national reporting through the use of high-resolution (30 m) land productivity dynamics datasets.

#### IV. Reporting timeline

38. The timeline for the 2026 reporting process was endorsed by Parties in decision 4/COP.16, with the understanding that the Bureau of the CRIC will monitor progress made throughout the 2026 Convention reporting process to decide on adjustments, if needed.

39. As indicated in document ICCD/CRIC(23)/2, the deadline for the submission of national reports is 30 November 2026 for the section addressing Strategic Objective 1. A second deadline, on 26 February 2027, is envisaged for the remaining sections of the report. The initial deadline was established to enable the secretariat, in its capacity as custodian of SDG indicator 15.3.1, to submit the corresponding estimates to the United Nations Statistics Division by the end of February 2027.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/11935>.

## V. Conclusions and recommendations

40. The progress made since CRIC 23 demonstrates that substantial efforts have been undertaken by the secretariat, the Global Mechanism, and partners to operationalize the mandates contained in decisions 2/COP.16 and 4/COP.16 in preparation for the 2026 reporting process. The establishment of regional Support Hubs, strengthened collaboration with technical partners and data providers, and the delivery of targeted capacity-building activities together provide a solid foundation for the timely submission of high-quality national reports.

41. The enhanced support architecture—comprising regional Support Hubs, international technical experts and technical advisory institutions, under the overall coordination of the secretariat—represents a significant step forward in delivering coordinated, regionally tailored and technically robust assistance to country Parties. Experience to date highlights the added value of this collaborative approach, particularly in addressing complex methodological and data-related aspects of national reporting, and points to opportunities for sustaining and further strengthening such arrangements beyond the current reporting cycle.

42. Experience from pilot support initiatives and regional capacity-building workshops underscores the value of early technical engagement and more advanced, peer-driven learning formats. Early access to technical support enables countries to initiate analytical work ahead of full project operationalization, accelerating reporting readiness and allowing for the sharing of more advanced results during regional exchanges. This was notably demonstrated in the workshop for Annex III Parties held in Panama City, where countries at relatively mature stages of implementation engaged in deeper exchanges of practical experiences, challenges and solutions, illustrating how peer-based approaches can effectively complement traditional training modalities and enrich overall capacity-building efforts.

43. Notwithstanding this progress, challenges remain, particularly with regard to disparities in national capacities, long processing times for large datasets and access to high-quality and high spatial-resolution data, due to gaps in Earth observation imagery. Further efforts are needed to enhance the harmonization of data sources and methodologies across countries to improve the consistency and comparability of reported results. Ensuring sustained technical support throughout the reporting cycle will be essential for the success of the 2026 reporting process.

44. Furthermore, experience from the current reporting process highlights the importance of timely operationalization of approved GEF resources, as administrative and procedural requirements associated with funding disbursement affect the sequencing and early implementation of support activities.

45. Effective coordination among Support Hubs and technical advisors remains essential to ensuring coherent guidance and minimizing duplication of effort. Continued engagement by Parties with available support mechanisms, including through early designation of reporting teams and active participation in capacity-building activities, can further improve reporting readiness and help alleviate time pressures as reporting deadlines approach. Clear and timely communication by the secretariat on reporting timelines, tools and support modalities will remain important to facilitate national-level planning.

46. The provision of enabling funding through the GEF, including umbrella projects and the GSP, is critical to supporting eligible countries, particularly developing countries, in meeting reporting obligations. Complementary initiatives and projects further contribute to strengthening national capacities, improving data availability and promoting the integration of land degradation neutrality into planning and decision-making processes. Aligning capacity-building investments with longer-term national planning, monitoring and decision-making processes — including the integration of land degradation neutrality into national and subnational frameworks — can help Parties maximize the benefits of these investments. Leveraging the data, tools and institutional capacities developed through the 2026 reporting process may also contribute to greater national data ownership, improved sustainability of reporting expertise and reduced reporting burdens in future cycles.

47. Building on ongoing improvements to reporting, further efforts should be made to advance a data-driven transformation of the Convention. Strengthening the use of reporting data for decision-making, policy development and communication can enhance the overall impact. Enhancing the usability and accessibility of reporting data can support more informed, evidence-based policy development at national and subnational levels, including in land-use planning, target setting and implementation of land degradation neutrality commitments.

## Annex I

### **List of Parties receiving support by each regional institution during the UNCCD 2026 reporting process**

1. International Research Center of Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals (CBAS): Bangladesh, Cambodia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam.
2. Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC): Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Republic of North Macedonia, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
3. National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC): Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.
4. Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Land Management (PISLM): Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname.
5. Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD): Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Eswatini, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Sudan.
6. Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS): Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Togo, Tunisia.
7. The Pacific Community (SPC): Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

### **List of Parties receiving support on Strategic Objective 1 from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through the GEF-funded Enabling Activity Pilot Project for Enhanced Data and Reporting:**

1. Argentina, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Mongolia, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Serbia, Uruguay.

## Annex II

### Participation in the regional capacity-building workshops organized to date

Table 1  
Number of country participants in the regional capacity-building workshops organized to date

<i>Location</i>	<i>Total participants</i>	<i>In-person participants</i>	<i>Online participants</i>	<i>Female participants</i>	<i>Male participants</i>	<i>Technical Experts (estimated, in-person only)</i>	<i>Countries represented</i>
Antalya, Türkiye	97	31	66	46	51	22	35
Yinchuan, China	32	29	3	9	23	16	17
Panama City, Panama	57	55	2	20	37	21	26
Rarotonga, Cook Islands	45	41	4	30	15	12	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>92</b>