



Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.: General
13 May 2026

Original: English

Conference of the Parties Committee on Science and Technology

Seventeenth session

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 17–21 August 2026

Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda

Interfacing science, policy, and sharing knowledge

Synthesis report on supplementary technical guidance to support aridity and drought planning and adaptation across the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

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Note by the secretariat

Summary

By decision 16/COP.16, the Conference of the Parties requested the development of a supplement to the National Adaptation Plan technical guidelines to support aridity adaptation and drought planning. The decision also called for closer collaboration with the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Convention on Biological Diversity and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction to integrate efforts to assess and address aridity and drought risks and impacts across relevant frameworks and initiatives. In response, the secretariat collaborated with the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security and the secretariats of the other Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction to prepare supplementary technical guidance titled “Planning for aridity and drought adaptation: A guide to promoting synergies across the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework”. The guide builds on existing technical guidelines and national planning processes under these conventions and frameworks.

This document synthesizes the background, rationale, structure, key conclusions and recommendations of the guide, highlighting its practical components for integrating aridity and drought planning and adaptation into national planning instruments, and summarizing related work undertaken by partners under decision 16/COP.16 on aridity and drought monitoring, impact assessment, knowledge sharing and capacity-building.

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I. Background

1. By its decision 16/COP.16, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), with the support of the secretariat, to explore the way forward to develop a supplement to the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) technical guidelines that supports aridity adaptation and drought planning, while suggesting an approach for integration into activities of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) at global and national levels, taking into account national circumstances, needs and priorities.

2. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) NAP process enables Parties to formulate and implement UNFCCC NAPs to identify medium- and long-term adaptation needs and to develop and implement strategies and programmes to address those needs. At the seventeenth session of the UNFCCC COP (COP 17), Parties adopted initial guidelines and principles for the NAP process.¹ At COP 5, serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, the Parties requested that the Least Developed Countries Expert Group update the technical guidelines for the NAP process.² The UNFCCC established the NAP process to facilitate adaptation planning in least developed countries and other developing countries.

3. Also by decision 16/COP.16, Parties requested that the secretariat work with the secretariats of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the UNFCCC and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to integrate the assessing and addressing of both aridity and drought risks and their impacts into relevant collaborative frameworks and initiatives, as appropriate, while taking into account Parties' national circumstances, needs and priorities, with the aim of:

- (a) Harnessing and maximizing the synergies among relevant multilateral agreements, goals and targets;
- (b) Encouraging comprehensive and coordinated action on land;
- (c) Quantitatively aligning assessment and monitoring, where possible; and
- (d) Reducing transaction costs.

4. In response to decision 16/COP.16, the secretariat collaborated with the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) and the secretariats of these frameworks and initiatives to produce a supplement to the NAP technical guidelines. The new supplement to the NAP technical guidelines is titled "Planning for aridity and drought adaptation: A guide to promoting synergies across the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework".³

5. The present document summarizes the main background, rationale, key messages and conclusions contained in that supplement to support Parties in considering how aridity and drought planning and adaptation can be integrated more effectively across relevant national planning instruments and processes.

II. Evidence base and rationale

6. The supplementary technical guidance for planning adaptation to aridity and drought is intended to build on existing technical guidelines for national policy instruments of the Rio conventions and Sendai Framework, including technical guidelines for national drought plans

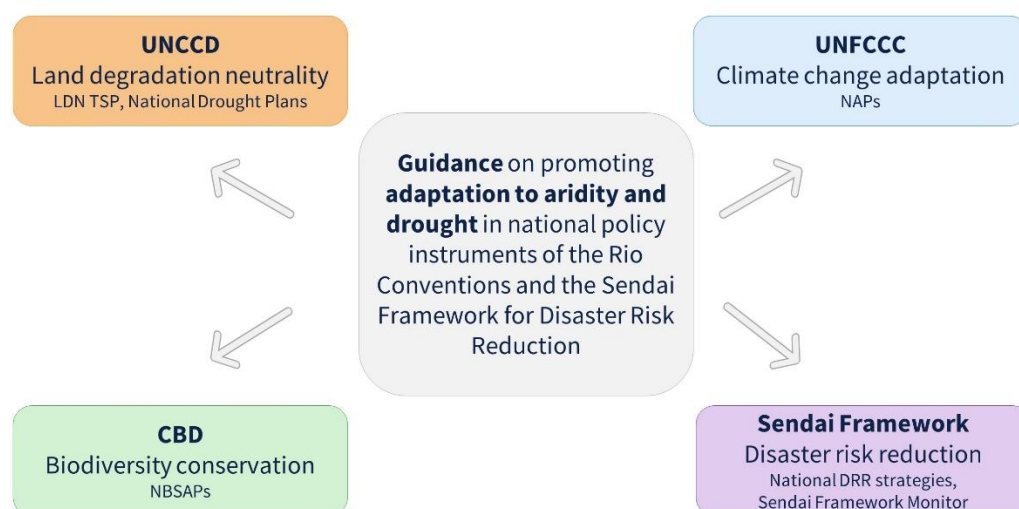
¹ See decision 5/CP.17 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, https://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/cancun_adaptation_framework/national_adaptation_plans/application/pdf/decision_5_cp_17.pdf.

² See decision 2/CMA.5, "Global goal on adaptation", of the Conference of the Parties, serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023_16a01E.pdf#page=22.

³ See <https://www.unccd.int/resources/manuals-and-guides/planning-aridity-and-drought-adaptation-guide-promoting-synergies>.

and the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme of the UNCCD, the updated NAP technical guidelines under the UNFCCC, the technical guidelines for National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans under the CBD, as well as national disaster risk reduction and management strategies and the Sendai Framework Monitor. The guidance is intended to assist policymakers and technical and financial partners who support implementation, as well as project developers seeking to realize synergies in the development of land-based interventions (see Figure 1).

Figure
The supplementary technical guidance draws upon the existing technical guidelines for national policy instruments of the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.



Key: UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification), LDN TSP (Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme), UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), NAP (National Adaptation Plan), DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction), CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity), NBSAP (National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan).

A. Aridity and drought as interrelated but distinct challenges

7. Aridity and drought are distinct but interrelated phenomena with significant implications for ecosystems, economies and societies. Aridity is an enduring feature of a location characterized by a permanent deficiency of moisture, whereas drought is a temporary period of abnormally low precipitation. Yet, their impacts frequently overlap and may reinforce one another across sectors and spatial and temporal scales.

8. Observations of past and current impacts, together with future projections, show that aridity and drought affect land systems far beyond land degradation and desertification alone. Diminishing water availability and the drying of soils also drive ecosystem deterioration, biodiversity loss and compounding hazards, such as wildfires and sand and dust storms, while the resulting land degradation can reinforce adverse climate feedback loops.

9. Aridity and drought also exacerbate water and food insecurity for millions of people worldwide and affect multiple sectors, including water systems, agriculture, energy and ecosystems. The systemic and interconnected nature of aridity and drought underscores the need for adaptation approaches that address interactions among land, climate, biodiversity and disaster risk.

B. Rationale for a synergistic approach across the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

10. Addressing the interconnected challenges of aridity and drought risks and impacts requires collaboration and coordinated action at multiple levels. This can be achieved by building on the synergies among the goals and targets of relevant multilateral agreements and international frameworks, in particular the UNCCD, UNFCCC, CBD and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (the Sendai Framework).

11. Tackling aridity and drought in a more systematically integrated way through these frameworks can help address their multifaceted nature while contributing to sustainable land management (SLM), biodiversity conservation, climate mitigation and adaptation and disaster risk reduction. In this way, adaptation to aridity and drought can become more effective and support progress towards the multiple goals of the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework.

12. The legal and policy foundations are in place for synergies with respect to adapting to aridity and drought, documented in the new supplement to the NAP technical guidelines. Chief among these are:

(a) Articles 2 and 4 of the UNCCD, which define how mitigating the effects of drought is part of the objective of the Convention, reflecting the relationship of the UNCCD with other conventions;

(b) Article 4, paragraph 1 (e), of the UNFCCC, which mandates country Parties to cooperate on adapting to climate change, specifically highlighting the rehabilitation and protection of areas affected by drought and desertification;

(c) Article 7, paragraph 1, of the Paris Agreement, which establishes the global goal on adaptation, aiming to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change, and paragraph 2, which recognizes how adaptation makes a contribution to the long-term global response to climate change to protect people, livelihoods and ecosystems;

(d) The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which focuses on the restoration of degraded ecosystems through Target 2, and building resilience and minimizing the impacts of climate change on biodiversity through Target 8; and

(e) Paragraph 30 (g) of the Sendai Framework, which focuses on promoting the mainstreaming of disaster risk assessment, mapping and management in all areas prone to droughts.

13. The new supplement to the NAP technical guidelines builds on the established practice of developing supplementary materials to the NAP technical guidelines to provide in-depth support on selected issues. As reflected in decision 16/COP.16 and document [ICCD/COP\(16\)/CST/3](#) (which resulted in a NAP supplement on promoting synergies between LDN and climate change adaptation⁴), collaboratively developed supplemental technical guidance focused on realizing synergies can help to bridge gaps between convention/framework-specific objectives and adaptation planning processes. This, in turn, can support more coherent and effective implementation at the national level, allowing land interventions to contribute to the achievement of multiple benefits.

C. Scope and structure of the supplementary technical guidance

14. The new supplement to the NAP technical guidelines has been designed as a practical document for integrating planning for aridity and drought adaptation across national planning instruments and processes under the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework. The main target audience comprises policymakers and technical experts from entities mandated with planning for land, climate, biodiversity and disaster risk management, including national

⁴ See <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/promoting-synergies-between-land-degradation-neutrality-and-climate-change>.

focal points to the UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD, national Sendai Framework focal points and other stakeholders involved in developing or updating relevant national planning instruments.

15. The guidance includes sections on the background and mandate, output and target audience, the nexus linking aridity and drought with land degradation and desertification, climate change, biodiversity loss and disaster risks, a comparison of goals and technical guidelines of the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework, and step-by-step instructions.

16. The guidance is organized into seven components (see Table 1 below) following the logical sequence of a planning cycle, from setting the scene and establishing enabling conditions through risk assessment, identification and financing of measures to implementation and iterative monitoring and reporting. This structure is intended to provide Parties with a practical, stepwise framework adaptable to national contexts, while remaining coherent with the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework. Each of the components is further elaborated through specific action points presented in annex 1 to this decision. These components emerged from an alignment exercise across the policy instruments and implementation guidance for the Rio conventions and the Sendai framework.

Table 1

Components of the technical guidance on aridity and drought adaptation

Component A – Setting the scene

Component B – Identifying enabling conditions for adaptation to aridity and drought

Component C – Assessing aridity and drought risk

Component D – Developing measures for adaptation to aridity and drought

Component E – Financing adaptation to aridity and drought

Component F – Implementing adaptation actions

Component G – Monitoring and reporting of adaptation progress

D. Methods used to develop the guidance

17. The new supplement to the NAP technical guidelines builds on the technical guidelines for national planning instruments under the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework, including the UNCCD LDN target-setting technical guide,⁵ the UNFCCC NAP technical guidelines,⁶ the CBD guidance for developing and updating national biodiversity strategies and action plans^{7,8} and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)⁹ guidance for national disaster risk reduction strategies.¹⁰ Other relevant technical guidance includes the UNCCD drought resilience, adaptation and management policy

⁵ See “Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting – A Technical Guide” at <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/ldn-target-setting-technical-guide>.

⁶ See the “NAP Technical Guidelines: Updated technical guidelines for the process to formulate and implement national adaptation plans” at <https://napcentral.org/nap-guidelines>.

⁷ See the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan Capacity Building Modules at <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/training>.

⁸ See “Guidance for Revising or Updating National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans to Align with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework” (Convention on Biological Diversity decision 15/6, annex 1) at [https://www.cbd.int/doc/nbsap/Annex%201%20\(NBSAP%20guidance\).pdf](https://www.cbd.int/doc/nbsap/Annex%201%20(NBSAP%20guidance).pdf).

⁹ The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction acts as the custodian, coordinator, and monitoring body for the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

¹⁰ See “Words Into Action. Developing national disaster risk reduction strategies” at <https://www.undrr.org/developing-national-disaster-risk-reduction-strategies>.

framework¹¹ and the UNCCD national drought planning guidance,¹² which specifically informs national drought planning, as well as the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface report on aridity trends, impact projections and adaptation.¹³ The newly developed supplementary guidance integrates all of the above, facilitating the identification of synergies and harnessing them to achieve the goals of all three Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework.

18. To support integration across these processes, the steps proposed in all of the technical guidelines were systematically compared to identify their principal similarities and differences. Similar steps were clustered into seven components forming the backbone of the guidance, with each of these components translated into more detailed action points for countries.

19. The comparison of the technical guidelines for the national planning instruments of the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework was followed by a literature review of all components of the guidance. This review covered a combination of peer-reviewed and grey literature, using dedicated search terms and additional cross-referencing and snowballing. In total, more than 100 publications, including peer-reviewed papers, research and policy reports, technical guidance, official documents and decisions, best practices and toolkits were evaluated for the development of this guide.

20. The guide also drew on semi-structured key respondent interviews with representatives of the secretariats of the UNCCD, UNFCCC, CBD and UNDRR, together with representatives of research organizations, development agencies and non-governmental organizations. These interviews contributed to the formative process to strengthen alignment with existing national planning processes and the practical relevance of the guidance.

21. The development of the guide also included the identification and preparation of case studies, selected to provide lessons learned, success stories or best-practice examples that cross diverse geographic contexts and harness synergies through multi-goal-oriented planning and implementation of aridity and drought adaptation.

22. The results of the literature review, consultations and case studies were analysed using a combination of qualitative content analysis and triangulation to ensure that the information most relevant to users of the guidance would be organized and communicated to facilitate national-level integration of aridity and drought planning and adaptation across all of the national planning instruments relevant to the implementation of all three Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework.

E. Ongoing work on drought and aridity monitoring under decision 16/COP.16

23. In response to decision 16/COP.16, paragraph 1, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Global Water Partnership (GWP) have advanced work to integrate aridity information into drought monitoring and early warning activities at national, regional and global levels through the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP). This work is intended to strengthen forecasting, monitoring and evaluation, support more robust aridity assessments, including consideration of long-term aridity trends and structural changes in water availability, foster data-sharing and collaboration and improve timely responses to water stress and drought conditions.

24. Reported activities include a growing project pipeline, mainly supported through the Adaptation Fund, with an overall funding request of more than USD 200 million covering more than 30 countries, several of which are being provided with preparatory support from

¹¹ See “Drought resilience, adaptation and management policy framework (DRAMP): Supporting technical guidelines” at <https://www.unccd.int/resources/manuals-and-guides/drought-resilience-adaptation-and-management-policy-framework>.

¹² See the Model National Drought Plan guidance at <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/model-national-drought-plan>.

¹³ See “The global threat of drying lands: Regional and global aridity trends and future projections” at <https://www.unccd.int/resources/reports/global-threat-drying-lands-regional-and-global-aridity-trends-and-future>.

the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD. These activities include enhancing drought forecasting and monitoring, strengthening national and regional drought monitors, supporting risk assessments that consider long-term trends towards greater aridity, and improving dissemination of early warning information, including at the community level. The IDMP has also developed, with the WMO Expert Team on Drought, a prototype Global Drought Mosaic which integrates regional drought monitors into a harmonized global product, and which is intended to subsequently incorporate national drought monitors

F. Science-based standards, guidelines, knowledge sharing and capacity-building under decision 16/COP.16

25. In response to decision 16/COP.16, paragraph 2, the IDMP and its cooperating partners have advanced the development of science-based standards and guidance for assessing the socio-economic and environmental impacts of drought and increasing aridity. Reported outputs include a Baseline Assessment of Drought Impact Monitoring, guidelines on drought impact monitoring, guidance on institutional coordination for drought management, and additional tools on gender mainstreaming and legal and regulatory frameworks for drought management. These materials are intended to support more consistent assessment and analysis of impacts and to strengthen the basis for adaptation planning and implementation. In addition, a series of online courses were developed by IDMP with the UNCCD secretariat on drought monitoring and early warning, risk and impact analysis and risk mitigation, preparedness and response.

26. In response to decision 16/COP.16, paragraph 5, the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) has been identifying which sustainable land and water management best practices consider aridity trends, projections and impacts to support knowledge sharing and the adoption of successful integrative approaches. WOCAT has also encouraged new submissions of practices to include information about their relevance to building resilience to aridity and drought. The UNCCD Community of Learning and Practice (CLP) on Drought Management has been encouraged to consider these developments, bringing aridity and drought into existing sustainable land and water management solutions.

27. Subject to the availability of resources, WOCAT plans to build on this work through the systematic review and tagging of existing practices in the Global SLM Database, integration of aridity-responsiveness into the review process for newly submitted practices, and compilation of the resulting collection for broader knowledge sharing and integration into a planned UNCCD aridity platform, in collaboration with the WMO.

28. Together, these activities contribute to knowledge sharing and capacity-building, support more inclusive and participatory approaches to assessing drought and aridity impacts and provide practical inputs relevant to the supplementary technical guidance summarized in the present document, particularly its components on risk assessment and monitoring and reporting of adaptation progress. More information on these developments is available in documents [ICCD/COP\(17\)/CST/3](#) (knowledge sharing via WOCAT), [ICCD/CRIC\(24\)/3](#) (capacity-building), and [ICCD/COP\(17\)/11](#) (CLPs).

III. Conclusions and recommendations

29. **The guidance on aridity and drought adaptation confirms that aridity and drought drive systemic, interlinked risks across land, climate, biodiversity and disaster domains, exacerbating water and food insecurity and affecting multiple sectors at local, national, regional and global scales. Their impacts arise from diminishing water availability and drying soils, which intensify land degradation and desertification, deteriorate ecosystems and biodiversity and increase the frequency and severity of compounding hazards, such as wildfires and sand and dust storms.**

30. **Having considered the synthesis report on supplementary technical guidance to support planning for aridity and drought adaptation across the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework, the CST may wish to consider the following conclusions, with the aim of making recommendations to the COP.**

A. Conclusion 1 on systemic aridity and drought risks

31. Aridity and drought reduce water availability, degrade land and ecosystems, increase the frequency and severity of hazards, such as wildfires and sand and dust storms, and reinforce adverse climate feedback, thereby intensifying risks to people, ecosystems and economies. These risks cut across sectors, including water, agriculture, energy and health, and interact with social vulnerability and exposure, resulting in cascading and compounding impacts that undermine resilience and sustainable development, particularly in already affected and resource-constrained regions.

B. Conclusion 2 on planning instruments as levers for synergy

32. National planning instruments under the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework, including LDN target setting, NAPs, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and disaster risk reduction strategies, provide key entry points to integrate aridity and drought adaptation and to harness synergies among the frameworks' goals and targets.

33. These instruments typically follow similar steps, such as establishing enabling conditions, assessing risks, setting targets aligned with global objectives, identifying and financing measures, and monitoring and reporting. Systematically integrating aridity and drought into these shared steps can make adaptation more effective and usefully leverage existing planning cycles and coordination mechanisms.

C. Conclusion 3 on core components of synergistic adaptation

34. Effective and synergistic adaptation to aridity and drought depends on a set of core components common to these national planning instruments, namely, strengthened enabling conditions, inclusive and comprehensive risk assessments, formulation of national targets aligned with global goals, selection and prioritization of robust adaptation options and coherent monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting, supported by adequate and accessible finance.

35. In practice, this implies improving institutional and governance arrangements to overcome siloed decision-making, investing in science and data to underpin multilevel risk assessment frameworks that capture hazard, exposure, vulnerability and response, prioritizing SLM, nature-based solutions and integrated land use planning that deliver multiple benefits, and mobilizing and streamlining finance, including innovative mechanisms, to sustain proactive risk reduction and long-term adaptation efforts.

D. Conclusion 4 on coordinated action for synergies

36. Realizing the potential synergies identified in the guide requires coordinated action at national and global levels, including enhanced collaboration, data sharing and financing mechanisms across ministries, sectors and stakeholders at the country level and more closely aligned technical guidance, capacity-building, financial support and monitoring across the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework at the international level.

37. Within countries, bridging national planning instruments and processes under these frameworks depends on deliberate coordination to avoid fragmented or conflicting interventions and to reduce transaction costs. At the global level, the secretariats and partner institutions can add value by aligning guidance, support and monitoring systems around shared objectives on aridity and drought and other cross-cutting challenges.

38. Parties may wish to consider these conclusions when engaging in consultations on a draft decision to be considered by the COP based on the draft text for negotiations that can be found in document [ICCD/COP\(17\)/CST/8](#), which, following decisions

22/COP.16 and 36/COP.16, contains all draft decisions prepared for Parties for consideration at the seventeenth session of the CST.

Annex I

Structure of the step-by-step guidance





1. **Component A – Setting the scene**
 - Introducing the rationale for adaptation to aridity and drought and its relevance to national planning, the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
2. **Component B – Identifying enabling conditions for adaptation to aridity and drought**
 - Action point 1: Understanding the institutional framing and regulatory frameworks
 - Action point 2: Establishing a plan development mechanism
 - Action point 3: Ensuring government and stakeholder engagement
3. **Component C – Assessing aridity and drought risk**
 - Action point 1: Identifying drivers and impacts of aridity and drought
 - Action point 2: Assessing aridity and drought risk, including vulnerabilities and potential (future) impacts
4. **Component D – Developing measures for adaptation to aridity and drought**
 - Action point 1: Defining targets in line with global goals and frameworks
 - Action point 2: Defining, evaluating and prioritizing suitable adaptation actions
5. **Component E – Financing adaptation to aridity and drought**
 - Action point 1: Estimating the cost of aridity and drought adaptation
 - Action point 2: Identifying and accessing funding sources, including innovative financing instruments
6. **Component F – Implementing adaptation actions**
 - Action point 1: Mainstreaming aridity and drought in policies, programmes and activities
 - Action point 2: Implementing adaptation actions
 - Action point 3: Communicating the plan and its defined goals
7. **Component G – Monitoring and reporting of adaptation progress**
 - Action point 1: Collecting data to evaluate implemented actions
 - Action point 2: Reporting under national and international processes
 - Action point 3: Evaluating the plan to inform future updates

Annex II

Aligning the main policy instruments of the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

[English Only]

Figure
The components that emerge when the main policy instruments and implementation guidelines of the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction are aligned

Conventions & framework	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	Convention on Biological Diversity	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
				
Main policy instrument	Land Degradation neutrality Target Setting Programme / National Drought Plans	National Adaptation Plans	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan	National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies or Plans
Guidance document	LDN TSP Guidelines NDMP Guidelines	NAP Technical Guidelines	NBSAPs Capacity building module	Words into action
Including drought and aridity into the existing technical guidelines: emerging components				
Component A - Setting the scene			Element 1	
Component B - Mapping enabling factors for adaptation to aridity and drought	Step 1	Module E		Step 1 Step 3 Step 4
Component C - Assessing aridity and drought risks	Step 2 Step 3 Step 4	Module A		Step 1
Component D - Developing measures for adaptation to aridity and drought	Step 5 Step 6 Step 7	Module B		Element 2 Element 3 Step 2 Step 6 Step 7
Component E - Financing adaptation to aridity and drought	Step 8	Module C		Element 4 Step 7 Step 8
Component F - Implementing adaptation		Module E		Element 5 Step 5 Step 9
Component G - Monitoring, evaluating and reporting of adaptation progress	Step 9 Step 10	Module D		Step 10