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## Convention to Combat Desertification

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda

#### Policy frameworks and thematic issues

## Rangelands and pastoralists

### Note by the secretariat

#### *Summary*

This note responds to the request made to the secretariat in decision 29/COP.16 to report on progress made in implementing this decision to the Conference of the Parties at its seventeenth session (COP 17). It highlights the activities undertaken by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism since COP 16 regarding rangelands and pastoralists.



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## I. Introduction

1. At the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Parties acknowledged the multifaceted importance of rangelands for Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth and other people in vulnerable situations, emphasizing the need for sustainable land and water management practices to support their livelihoods, cultures and resilience. Parties were invited to prioritize policies and investments for the sustainable management of rangelands, recognizing their essential role in addressing key challenges related to food insecurity, desertification, land degradation and drought, biodiversity loss and climate change. The secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) were requested to assist Parties with awareness-raising, capacity-building and resource mobilization.

## II. Awareness-raising and knowledge products

### A. Awareness-raising

2. Regional dialogues on sustainable rangelands and pastoralism were organized in collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and other partners from 4 to 12 February 2026.<sup>1</sup> Each of the three regional webinars brought together 150 to 200 participants, including UNCCD national focal points and other government representatives, pastoralists and community leaders, civil society organizations and other key stakeholders, to exchange knowledge, share experiences and identify priorities for implementing decision 29/COP.16 on rangelands.

3. During the webinars, speakers underscored that rangelands are critical and regenerative food systems, major carbon sinks and biodiversity reservoirs, as well as cultural landscapes and livelihoods for millions of pastoralists. However, rangelands remain chronically undervalued, under-assessed and under-financed, leading to degradation, loss of resilience and increased vulnerability in communities. The webinars showcased regional and national perspectives on how to advance sustainable rangeland management and restoration, including the sharing of best practices aligned with climate, biodiversity and land strategies. Speakers proposed building stronger regional knowledge communities and platforms to facilitate experience exchange (e.g., the regional knowledge platform for Latin America recently launched by WWF and IUCN), coordinating action and helping countries to design and finance rangeland solutions at scale.

4. The same partners, along with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), organized the global webinar “Integrating Rangeland and Pastoralist Solutions into Global Environmental Frameworks” on 31 March 2026 to explore how evidence-based rangeland solutions can be systematically embedded into climate, biodiversity and restoration strategies.<sup>2</sup> It brought together policymakers, technical experts and finance institutions to identify concrete policy entry points for integrating rangeland and pastoralist solutions into national and regional climate, biodiversity and land restoration frameworks (e.g., nationally determined contributions, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans, and land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets). It also highlighted shared priorities and implementation synergies that could foster greater alignment across the Rio convention agendas.

5. In collaboration with the Steering Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations–International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP), the Silk Road Journey was envisioned as a UNCCD-led communications campaign to represent a symbolic and physical 6,000 km caravan journey along the fabled Silk Road to

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unccd.int/events/other/regional-dialogues-sustainable-rangelands-and-pastoralism>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://engage.iucn.org/event/one-land-one-vision-integrating-rangeland-and-pastoralist-solutions-global-environmental>.

highlight the value of rangelands and their stewards across 10 countries.<sup>3</sup> To celebrate IYRP 2026 and build on the momentum of UNCCD COP 16, the journey aimed to inspire stakeholders through strong visual storytelling and to generate greater visibility and media opportunities to ensure country ownership and partner engagement. Ultimately, the Silk Road Journey was designed to elevate pastoralist voices (especially women, Indigenous Peoples and local leaders) in the global agenda and spotlight sustainable rangeland solutions as well as the need to secure greater investment and political support for rangeland health.

## **B. Knowledge products**

6. Three information briefs were published by the secretariat to showcase regional issues and perspectives on rangeland degradation and restoration.<sup>4</sup> For Eurasia, the brief was launched to support the Silk Road Journey with a focus on enhancing drought resilience through local partnerships and ecological restoration. For South America, the brief highlighted the urgent need to slow the conversion of rangelands to other land uses. For Southern Africa, the brief examined the potential of customary and communal rangeland management to increase productivity, ecosystem services and livelihood resilience. At the time of writing this note, additional webinars and knowledge products were in the planning stages.

7. A report titled “The Economics of Rangelands Restoration” led by the Economics of Land Degradation, ILRI, Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ), UNCCD and other partners is expected to be launched at COP 17<sup>5</sup> to highlight the global importance of rangelands, and the opportunities and mechanisms for investing in their restoration. Furthermore, it will provide a detailed analysis of the costs and benefits of rangeland restoration, as well as the key enabling conditions for scaling up finance. It will conclude with concrete recommendations for policymakers, investors and practitioners to unleash the potential for rangeland restoration.

8. The secretariat contributed to the WWF publication “From Roots to Riches: Priority policy and investment decisions for grasslands and savannahs,” launched at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in October 2025.<sup>6</sup> The report reflects a growing commitment to grassland and savannah conservation within WWF and its partners due to its critical role in food security, biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, ecosystem services and human cultures. The report was also envisioned as a contribution to the IYRP and UNCCD COP 17, adding to the evidence base contained in successive Global Land Outlook (GLO) reports,<sup>7</sup> in particular the GLO “Thematic Report on Rangelands and Pastoralists” which underpinned the first decision on rangelands and pastoralists in 2024.<sup>8</sup>

## **III. Rangelands Flagship Initiative<sup>9</sup>**

9. The Rangelands Flagship Initiative (RFI) is a multi-partner, global initiative led by Mongolia and the UNCCD to significantly increase investments to achieve LDN by conserving, sustainably managing and restoring rangelands. RFI will contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in rangelands, which include most of the world’s drylands. In addition, through its three components of knowledge, investment and institutions, it will advocate for increased public and private investment and develop supporting knowledge products. RFI will also support measures to increase the percentage of rangelands included in protected areas in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as advance sustainable land management to improve resilience to climate

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.silkroadcaravan.org>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unccd.int/land-and-life/rangelands-and-pastoralists/overview>.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.eld-initiative.org/en/projects/economics-of-rangelands>.

<sup>6</sup> [https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our\\_focus/food\\_practice/grasslands\\_and\\_savannahs/roots\\_to\\_riches\\_priority\\_decisions\\_for\\_grasslands/](https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our_focus/food_practice/grasslands_and_savannahs/roots_to_riches_priority_decisions_for_grasslands/).

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/overview>.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo-thematic-report-rangelands-and-pastoralists>.

<sup>9</sup> See ICCD/CRIC(24)/2.

change impacts and integrate rangelands and sustainable grazing into nationally determined contributions in line with recommendations from COP 27 of the UNFCCC.

10. The GM is working with the Rangeland Stewardship Council (RSC) to (i) promote healthy, sustainable rangeland ecosystems and (ii) accelerate the restoration and improvement of rangelands to properly functioning conditions and promote the sustainability of the livestock industry and communities dependent upon productive, healthy rangelands. A unified global standard is under development to (i) avoid and reduce rangeland degradation; (ii) improve livelihoods and economic development opportunities through value chain innovations; and (iii) increase awareness of the potential for sustainability in the production and value chains of rangeland commodities. The standard will provide an overarching set of global rangeland stewardship indicators to ensure the consistent implementation of the RSC rangeland stewardship principles and support the contribution of public and private multi-sector stakeholders to LDN. Ongoing consultations are key components of this effort, connecting policymakers, scientists, landowners, Indigenous communities and other stakeholders to address the context-specific challenges of rangeland users, ensuring the standard is not only scientifically robust but also socially and economically practical.

#### **IV. Conclusion and recommendations**

11. **The UNCCD secretariat, GM, donors and partners have made significant efforts to raise awareness of the value of healthy rangelands and the critical stewardship role of pastoralist and rangeland communities for local livelihoods, biodiversity and ecosystem services, and national economies, as well as the achievement of regional and global sustainability goals.**

12. **The COP may wish to invite all UNCCD stakeholders to sustain and increase the momentum created by decision 29/COP.16 and make concerted efforts to implement the key priorities identified and agreed to by Member States in the preambular paragraphs of the United Nations General Assembly resolution 76/253 declaring 2026 the IYRP.<sup>10</sup>**

13. **The COP may wish to encourage Parties, donors and partners to make political and financial commitments to implementing sustainable rangeland management and restoration practices, as well as to fostering public-private-community partnerships that empower pastoralist and rangeland communities to continue their stewardship of these vast landscapes.**

14. **The COP may wish to request the secretariat and GM, subject to the availability of resources, to continue (i) raising awareness of the value of healthy and productive rangelands for people, nature, climate and economies; (ii) building the evidence base to design, finance and implement projects and programmes that conserve, sustainably manage and restore rangeland health, including guidance or tools to address knowledge gaps; and (iii) supporting resource mobilization efforts for initiatives that strive to improve local livelihoods and the stewardship of rangeland resources, including through sustainable supply chains and community-based projects and programmes.**

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<sup>10</sup> <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/76/253>.