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Final report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Future Strategic Framework of the Convention

Final report by the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Future Strategic Framework of the Convention

Summary

As set out in decisions 4/COP.16 and 7/COP.16, the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Future Strategic Framework of the Convention (IWG-FSF) was established by the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) at its sixteenth session to produce a report that identifies key elements, which could include goals and targets, for a post-2030 strategic framework of the UNCCD, and provides a thorough analysis of current indicators of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

This document provides an overview of the work undertaken by the IWG-FSF and presents progress made on the development of key elements identified for a post-2030 strategic framework, which are presented for consideration and further guidance by Parties at the seventeenth session on the COP in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

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I. Introduction

1. The 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework) provides the overarching policy and implementation framework guiding global actions to combat desertification and land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought. It establishes a vision aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 15, target 15.3, and defines strategic objectives related to ecosystem restoration, livelihoods, drought resilience, global environmental benefits and resource mobilization.
2. As the implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework progressed beyond its midpoint, Parties recognized the need to reflect on lessons learned and initiate preparations for the period beyond 2030. At its sixteenth session, the Conference of the Parties (COP), through its decision 4/COP.16, established the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Future Strategic Framework of the Convention (IWG-FSF) within the scope and mandate of the Convention.
3. The COP mandated the IWG-FSF to identify key elements, which could include goals and targets, for a post-2030 strategic framework and conduct a comprehensive analysis of indicators used for national reporting under the current UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, with a view of improving their relevance, feasibility and responsiveness to Parties' capacities.
4. In carrying out its work, the IWG-FSF was guided by a broad range of inputs, including the Convention text, the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, the findings of its midterm review, outcomes of related intergovernmental processes, relevant COP decisions, developments under the Rio conventions, and inputs from Parties. The IWG-FSF also considered cross-cutting issues affecting implementation, including monitoring and reporting systems, institutional arrangements, and the serious financial and capacity constraints faced by some Parties and the secretariat.
5. The terms of reference of the IWG-FSF were prepared by the secretariat under the guidance of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the Committee on Science and Technology Bureaux and were endorsed by the COP Bureau in April 2025. The IWG-FSF subsequently undertook its work through a series of meetings, supported by background documentation, including a scoping paper and an assessment of current indicators, as well as inputs from Parties through regional consultations and other relevant stakeholders.
6. In line with its mandate to ensure the continuous and inclusive engagement of Parties, the IWG-FSF conducted consultations throughout its process. Informal consultations were held with Parties during the twenty-third session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 23), providing an opportunity for initial feedback on emerging ideas and priorities. This feedback was taken into consideration during the first in-person meeting of the IWG-FSF, which occurred immediately following CRIC 23 and resulted in the development of the vision of the post-2030 strategic framework (hereinafter referred to as the Vision).
7. In addition, the IWG-FSF undertook intersessional regional consultations to solicit structured inputs from Parties. Through the regional chairs and members of the COP Bureau, Parties were invited to identify key elements and corresponding recommendations considered crucial for a post-2030 strategic framework aimed at improving the implementation of the Convention and enhancing its relevance. These consultations were guided by a common vision statement, which was developed during the group's first in-person meeting, and supported by a standardized input format, enabling regions to submit multiple key elements and associated recommendations.
8. Building on these initial submissions, a further round of regional consultations was conducted following the consolidation of inputs and deliberations of the IWG-FSF. Discussions among regional representatives during an in-person meeting held from 24 to 26 March 2026 identified a set of key elements by consensus. Parties were subsequently invited

to provide additional inputs, with a particular focus on high-priority recommendations aligned with these agreed elements. This iterative process enabled the refinement of the key elements and ensured that regional perspectives were systematically incorporated into the development of recommendations. Inputs received through both rounds of regional consultations, together with informal feedback provided during CRIC 23, formed an integral part of the IWG-FSF deliberations. The inputs informed the identification of priority issues, ensuring that the outcomes of the IWG-FSF reflect the views, priorities and experiences of Parties across all regions, and may be further considered for the formulation of the post-2030 strategic framework as and when appropriate.

9. In accordance with its mandate, the present report constitutes the final outcome of the work of the IWG-FSF and is submitted to the seventeenth session of the COP for consideration and action, with a view to informing the further development of a post-2030 strategic framework of the Convention.

II. Findings

A. Preamble

10. The post-2030 strategic framework is intended to serve as a comprehensive and coherent foundation to implement the Convention at all levels, enabling Parties to take action according to national circumstances. The implementation of the framework will benefit from an integrated approach, whereby its objectives are mutually reinforcing and collectively guide Parties towards a holistic, whole-of-government and whole-of-society response to combat desertification and land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought. Additionally, a clear national approach for sustainable development that treats the framework's objectives as an integrated and indivisible whole will strengthen policy coherence and on-the-ground impact. In this context, land degradation neutrality may continue to serve as an operational concept.

B. Vision for the post-2030 strategic framework

11. The post-2030 strategic framework will be guided by the following Vision:

"A world where healthy and sustainably managed land enhances resilient and inclusive human well-being and food security, supports ecosystem services, and enables societies to cope with drought and other growing pressures on land."

C. Key elements necessary to address the Vision: Guiding the future implementation of the Convention in line with the Convention text

12. The key elements presented below should be considered in the light of the following cross-cutting statements, as relevant and appropriate:

- (a) For the implementation of the next strategic framework, full use will be made of new technology, including artificial intelligence, in order to achieve the Vision;
- (b) Sufficient political will is essential to supporting all of the key elements;
- (c) A comprehensive theory of change can be used to support many of the key elements. A theory of change is a powerful communication tool that can be used to illustrate the logical link between action and impact. It clarifies objectives and connects multi-year activities into a comprehensive narrative;
- (d) The importance of working at all levels is recognized, particularly at the local level;
- (e) A sufficiently resourced and sustainably staffed UNCCD secretariat is essential to addressing all of the key elements;

(f) In line with articles 6, 12, 13, 20 and 21 of the Convention and related COP decisions, including 3/COP.16, it is essential for the implementation of the post-2030 strategic framework to increase the mobilization of adequate, timely and predictable financial resources, including mobilizing additional funding from all sources, as well as more diversified resources and the use of innovative financing mechanisms;

(g) All actions, measures and activities undertaken under the post-2030 strategic framework should be implemented in accordance with relevant national legislation and regulations.

13. Following the above cross-cutting considerations, the key elements for the post-2030 strategic framework are presented below in no particular order:

(a) **Advocacy, communication and public awareness-raising:** Increase awareness and understanding of the importance of combating desertification and land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought;

(b) **Capacity-building:** Strengthen and institutionalize capacities, especially of affected developing country Parties at all levels, for informed decision-making and action;

(c) **Resource mobilization:** Increase financial resources and other forms of support for the implementation of the Convention;

(d) **Cooperation:** Improve the effectiveness and coordination of cooperation at all levels to facilitate the implementation of national priorities;

(e) **Knowledge-sharing:** Strengthen the voluntary exchange of technologies, information, knowledge and experiences;

(f) **Monitoring and evaluation:** Ensure a responsive, transparent, relevant and inclusive monitoring and evaluation system that is within the capacities of Parties in order to track implementation and progress, evaluate impacts and support action;

(g) **Proactive drought management, resilience and preparedness:** Increase the focus on drought, as well as on holistic and integrated drought management, taking into account biodiversity and climate;

(h) **Food security:** Strengthen human well-being, food security and livelihoods by improving the health and productivity of agricultural land and rangelands as well as non-timber forest products while reducing pressure on natural ecosystems;

(i) **Sustainable land and water management:** Avoid, reduce and reverse degradation of all lands, including, but not limited to, agricultural and rangelands to enhance the integrity, connectivity and resilience of ecosystems, in particular through sustainable soil, water and biodiversity management;

(j) **Rights and tenure:** Promote human well-being through integrating rights and safeguarding land and water tenure for all, with particular attention to people in vulnerable situations;

(k) **Inclusion:** For all aspects of implementation, ensure inclusion for all, in particular of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth and other people in vulnerable situations;

(l) **Gender equality:** Ensure gender equality and a gender-responsive approach for the implementation of the Convention;

(m) **Sand and dust storms:** Strengthen work on addressing sand and dust storms;

(n) **Science and policy:** Strengthen the overall and synergistic interface of science, research, education and policy to support evidence-based decision-making and implementation, including by reinforcing and supporting the role of the Science-Policy Interface, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of responses on the ground;

(o) **Effective implementation – from commitments to transformative actions:** Guided by the principles of the Convention, strengthen and mainstream policies, strategies, programmes and the enabling environment for the effective implementation of national priorities with the engagement of all relevant stakeholders;

(p) **Synergies and policy coherence:** Strengthen cooperation and collaboration with the Rio conventions at all appropriate levels in order to leverage synergies, relevant organizations and international instruments in the implementation of the Convention and enhance policy coherence.

D. Assessment of current indicators - analysis report of current indicators for national reporting on the strategic objectives of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework (indicator framework)

14. The IWG-FSF relied on an external consultant to develop a report,¹ which was provided as an information document for CRIC 23. The report provided an assessment of (i) the current indicators for national reporting under the strategic objectives of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework; and (ii) the findings from the midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework to inform its discussions. The findings of the consultant report should not be interpreted as outputs, conclusions or the agreed position of the IWG-FSF. This report focused on evaluating the suitability of the current indicators relative to the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

15. The IWG-FSF concluded that future work on indicators should build on the new key elements proposed above and any strategic objectives, goals or targets that may be considered by Parties, taking into account the ongoing work on monitoring and lessons learned from the 2026 reporting processes. The IWG-FSF also recognized the value of considering potential synergies for relevant multilateral monitoring frameworks, particularly considering that the United Nations will revisit the post-2030 agenda by 2027. Consistent with the recommendations of the midterm evaluation, the future indicator framework should support investment prioritization and decisions by Parties and should allow Parties to evaluate the impact of their investments in combating desertification, land degradation and drought within their capacities. For example, the next indicator framework should more effectively reflect the gains as well as losses of natural capital and reflect changes in the health of rangelands and agricultural lands and soils. It should also allow for Parties to flexibly apply the framework to accommodate national contexts, priorities and Indigenous and traditional knowledge, while respecting national data sovereignty.

16. The IWG-FSF considered that a co-production approach to the development of the indicators may be helpful, engaging, for example, institutions with relevant expertise and practitioners. This would ensure that the future indicator system is relevant and workable. This could be achieved, in part, through well-designed surveys and virtual consultations.

E. Future financing of the Convention

17. The IWG-FSF takes note of the finance report prepared by the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD.²

III. Conclusions and recommendations

18. **Parties may wish to consider:**

(a) **Welcoming with appreciation the report by the IWG-FSF, including the Vision and identification of 16 key elements for the post-2030 strategic framework.**

(b) **Building upon the work carried out by the IWG-FSF during the 2025–2026 biennium, deciding to extend and expand the mandate of the IWG-FSF for the 2026–2028 biennium, subject to the availability of resources, with the task of completing the development of a proposal for a post-2030 strategic framework, and subsequently**

¹ See <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2025-11/2519461E.pdf>.

² This document may be accessed at <https://www.unccd.int/resources/other/background-document-future-unccd-financing>.

continuing the work on indicators to support the post-2030 strategic framework for the UNCCD while considering effective ways to communicate the impact of the Convention.

(c) Requesting the secretariat to support and facilitate the effective functioning of the IWG-FSF, subject to the availability of resources, including by delivering on its terms of reference, providing consulting resources, and facilitating access to other relevant experts and institutions that the IWG-FSF may draw upon as needed and appropriate.
