

Procedures for the preparation of UNCCD flagship reports and fast-track assessments, information products and advice

Approved by the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology on [05 June 2026](#)

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1. Background

In accordance with decision 20/COP.16, paragraphs 6 (a), (b) and (c), the following procedures are intended to guide the process for the preparation of thematic assessments forming the basis of Global Land Outlook (GLO) products or similar flagship reports, and for the preparation of fast-track assessments, information products and advice, in alignment with the procedures for receiving and prioritizing requests for the work programme of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI).

2. Terminology

"Flagship reports" mean comprehensive, multi-year, high-impact products, serving as "keystone publications" of the Convention, addressing environmental issues and trends relevant to the Convention's mandate, often at a global scale, and constituting a major communications tool. They draw on thematic assessments from the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), other intergovernmental processes and other scientific sources contributing to the SPI's scientific leadership of flagship reports, with the aim of providing authoritative, evidence-based analysis and key messages. Flagship reports such as the GLO and products of comparable scope encompass a series of associated products, such as summaries for policymakers (SPM) and others identified during the scoping process.

"Fast-track assessments" mean streamlined assessments conducted within a condensed timeframe in response to urgent requests, drawing on the best available science and knowledge to deliver timely, evidence-based findings on identified priority issues.

"Information products" mean rapid-response, concise, targeted outputs synthesizing available scientific and technical knowledge on specific issues, without constituting a full assessment process.

"Advice" means expert guidance and technical input provided by the SPI in response to specific requests to address well-defined questions in a concise and timely manner, drawing on existing knowledge and scientific sources, without constituting a full assessment process or an information product.

"Approval" of UNCCD flagship report SPM at a session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) signifies that the material has been subject to detailed scientific and policy review process prior to publication, with its recommendations included in a corresponding draft decision subject to a line-by-line discussion and agreement by the Parties during the respective session of the CST.

3. Identification and selection of flagship report chairs, coordinating lead authors, review editors and report steering committee

To ensure clear communications and coordination in the preparation of flagship reports, the SPI, with the support of the secretariat, will request nominations from its members for a flagship report chair, coordinating lead authors and two review editors.

The tasks and responsibilities of flagship report chair, coordinating lead authors and review editors are outlined in annex I to the present procedures.

Based on the nominations, the SPI will identify the flagship report chair, coordinating lead authors and review editors. The composition of the group of coordinating lead authors should reflect the SPI member base in terms of (i) the range of scientific, technical and socioeconomic views and expertise; (ii) geographical representation, with appropriate representation of experts from developing and developed countries, and countries with economies in transition; (iii) the diversity of existing knowledge systems; and (iv) gender balance.

The roles of review editors can be assumed by any of the SPI members, excluding the coordinating lead authors and flagship report chair.

The SPI will inform the secretariat as to the persons appointed to the positions of flagship report chair, coordinating lead authors for the various chapters, and review editors.

In consultation with the SPI co-chairs and the secretariat, the coordinating lead authors selected by the SPI may enlist other experts from the SPI as contributing authors to assist with the work.

3.1 Report steering committee

A report steering committee will be formed to oversee coordination of report scoping, writing and review of the associated SPM. It will comprise the flagship report chair and the SPI co-chairs (representing the SPI), and the chief scientist, a communications officer designated by the chief of the Communications, External Relations and Partnerships unit, and a policy officer designated by the chief of the Global Policy, Advocacy and Regional Cooperation unit (representing the UNCCD secretariat).

The steering committee will also have the option of calling upon representatives among SPI coordinating lead authors, the Executive Office of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) of the UNCCD, who can be engaged, as needed, for advice on issues extending beyond the expertise of current members.

4. General procedures for the preparation of flagship reports

In accordance with decision 20/COP.16, the SPI will scientifically lead the preparation of flagship reports, including contributing to the scoping and overseeing the scientific authorship, quality assurance and review editing to ensure the scientific integrity of the GLO, and serving on the steering committee to ensure the process is carried out effectively.

The secretariat, SPI co-chairs, flagship report chair, coordinating lead authors and review editors are required to deliver technically and scientifically balanced reports.

Authors should use language that reflects the diversity of scientific, technical and socioeconomic evidence, based on its strength and the degree of agreement as to its interpretation and implications in the literature.

Reports shall be based on publicly available and peer-reviewed literature (see annex II of this document), as well as reports and other materials, including Indigenous and traditional knowledge (see annex III of this document) not published in the peer-reviewed literature but accessible to experts and reviewers.

Reports should describe different, possibly controversial, scientific, technical and socioeconomic views on a given subject, particularly if they are relevant to the policy debate.

The working language of report meetings and draft reports will normally be English. All SPM presented to the CST will be made available in the six official languages of the United Nations and checked for accuracy prior to distribution by the experts involved in the reports.

The review process for flagship reports will generally comprise an expert/scientific review and a review by UNCCD stakeholders, which may occur concurrently or consecutively depending on the production timeline of a report.

The secretariat, SPI and Bureau of the CST will ensure that the reports are scoped, prepared and peer-reviewed in accordance with the present procedures.

The secretariat, SPI and Bureau of the CST will ensure that the SPM includes the appropriate policy-relevant and actionable guidance materials.

The secretariat, SPI and Bureau of the CST will be responsible for ensuring that proper review of the material occurs in a timely manner.

The secretariat and SPI consider draft reports, prior to their official release, to be shared confidentially with reviewers and not for public distribution, quotation or citation.

5. Flagship report scoping process

A scoping process is initiated based on the recommendations presented by the CST and the subsequent COP decision which mandates the work of the SPI and identifies the priority themes informing the GLO or other flagship reports, as set out in the procedures for receiving and prioritizing requests for the SPI work programme.

The preparation of flagship reports requires a structured scoping process to define the scope, objectives, chapter architecture, policy questions, methodological approaches, resource needs, schedule and budgets.

The scoping process unfolds in two progressive phases: (i) an initial scoping phase that lays the groundwork, and (ii) a final scoping phase that builds on the initial scoping to produce a fully developed scoping report.

5.1 Initial scoping

The initial scoping is conducted by the secretariat with input from the SPI coordinating lead authors and the Bureau of the CST with the purpose of preparing a workplan proposal covering a draft outline, timetable and indicative budget. It may include feasibility and estimated costs. The initial scoping should be completed within two (2) months of approval of the subject matter and the assignment of relevant roles within the SPI.

5.2 Final scoping

The final scoping builds on the groundwork laid by the initial scoping. In this phase, the SPI, through its flagship report chair and coordinating lead authors, together with the Bureau of the CST and with the support of the secretariat, sets up agreed collaborative modalities, such as a scoping workshop or other meetings, and produces a comprehensive scoping report. A scoping workshop may be organized in conjunction with the first in-person meeting of the SPI, with the final scoping report to be completed within two (2) months of receipt of the initial scoping.

5.3 Elements of the final scoping report

The above-mentioned final scoping report will cover substantial elements, including:

- The thematic areas and subject matters across relevant scales required to address the identified topic in a comprehensive and coherent manner, within the conceptual framework of the Convention;
- A preliminary outline of the constituent chapters and their structure;
- Potential case studies;

- Main policy questions and intended users that might be addressed through the report or other activities;
- Rationale and timeliness of the activity and how it will contribute to other processes or decisions;
- Any significant limitations in existing knowledge that might hinder the preparation of the report;
- Potential additional activities and outputs that could be derived from the report;
- Methodologies to be applied;
- The geographic scope of the report.

The final scoping report will also address procedural or administrative elements, such as:

- Overall activity schedule and milestones;
- Operational structures required, including the roles and responsibilities of all entities involved, the identification of strategic partners in delivering the activity, and the means by which the procedures for the implementation of the work programme will be carried out to ensure effective peer review, quality assurance, traceability of underpinning science and transparency;
- Estimated costs of the activity and potential sources of funding;
- Capacity-building interventions that may be required to deliver the flagship report, which might be included as activities in the general report delivery plan;
- Communications and outreach activities that might be appropriate for the specific deliverable, including for the identification of gaps in knowledge and for policy support;
- Consideration of data and information management for reports.

The overall scoping workflow set out above is illustrated in Figure 1.

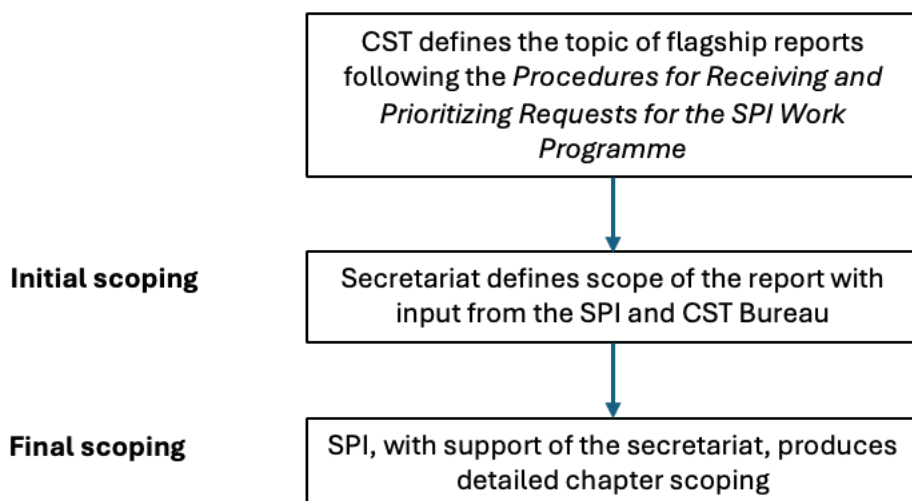


Figure 1. Workflow of the scoping process for defining the scope of Global Land Outlook products and similar flagship reports.

CST: Committee on Science and Technology; SPI: Science-Policy Interface; WP: work programme.

6. Preparation of draft flagship reports

Building on the outcomes of the final scoping, which provides the structural framework and thematic boundaries from which to develop the initial content of the report, the SPI coordinating lead authors, with the support of the contributing authors, will lead the preparation of a zero-order draft of the report.

A zero-order draft, while likely to be more technical in nature than the first-order draft, shall be written in a clear and accessible language appropriate for policymakers, without compromising on the scientific integrity of the underlying concepts, data, and sources.

The zero-order draft shall encompass all expected outcomes of the flagship report, including the SPM to ensure that all components of the final product are subject to a complete review process.

Writing of the zero-order draft should be completed within seven (7) months of completion of the final scoping, unless unforeseen or exceptional circumstances necessitate a revision of the timeline.

6.1 Contributing materials

The preparation of the zero-order draft will require contributing materials. Coordinating lead authors and contributing authors should, in a timely manner through the secretariat, provide all relevant contributors with clear information on the content to be covered by the zero-order draft and the timeframe for the submission of contributing materials.

All contributed material should be supported where possible with references from the peer-reviewed and internationally available literature, and accompanied with copies of any cited grey literature and documented Indigenous and traditional knowledge (as set out in annex III). Contributors should include clear indications of how all materials may be accessed.

Such supporting material will need to be made available for the review process with its sources identified by the coordinating lead authors, who will work with the secretariat to ensure that appropriate knowledge and data safeguards are in place.

Arrangements for the publication and/or e-publication of supporting material should be agreed upon by the SPI and secretariat as part of the process of preparing flagship reports.

Any supporting material should contain a prominent declaration stating that it is supporting material for the SPI and, as such, has not been subject to the formal SPI review processes.

For material available in electronic format only, the URL (web address) where such material is available and a soft copy of such material should be sent to the secretariat for archiving purposes.

Coordinating lead authors will integrate contributions, together with peer-reviewed and internationally available literature, into the zero-order draft.

6.2 Internal review by the Science-Policy Interface

Following completion of the zero-order draft, the draft flagship report will be subject to an initial internal review by the SPI to ensure alignment with the scope of the flagship report and scientific accuracy and integrity. All SPI members are expected to engage fully in this process by providing comments and feedback and to contribute to ensuring the quality and scientific rigor of the draft report, within a period of one (1) month.

The internal review by the SPI will verify, inter alia, that key concepts and frameworks are clearly defined and illustrated, definitions and terminology are used consistently throughout the draft report, and science underpinning the report is traceable with accurate citations and evidence.

Review comments will be addressed by the coordinating lead authors to produce a complete revised zero-order draft within two (2) months of receipt of the SPI's internal review comments.

6.3 First-order draft

Upon completion of the revised zero-order draft, the document will be submitted to the secretariat, which will be responsible for developing a first-order draft of the flagship report.

The preparation of the first-order draft of flagship reports will be undertaken by a dedicated communications team established by the steering committee, ideally comprised of the members of the steering committee and any additional scientific communications writing support, subject to funding availability, with a view to ensuring that the flagship report constitutes an effective science communication product accessible to a broad audience, leading to impact well-beyond UNCCD stakeholders. Depending on the topic of the report, the steering committee may wish to engage specific SPI authors and/or officers from the secretariat and the GM for specific parts of the report related to their expertise.

The first-order draft should be completed within ten (10) months of receipt of the revised zero-order draft, unless unforeseen or exceptional circumstances necessitate a revision of the timeline.

In preparing the first-order draft and subsequent revision stages, the SPI coordinating lead authors and contributing authors will support the secretariat in ensuring the scientific integrity and traceability of the report, including underpinning concepts, framing and data, as well as the accuracy and appropriate citing of sources.

In preparing the first-order draft, the Bureau of the CST will support the secretariat in ensuring that the process is conducted in accordance with the present procedures and that the report remains relevant to the mandate and needs of the Parties.

The flagship report chair will liaise with the steering committee, coordinating lead authors and contributing authors to ensure that the secretariat, coordinating lead authors and contributing authors have access to the latest chapter drafts and share an understanding of the workplan, including timelines for SPI input, review and steps toward production (editing, copyediting, graphic design, proofreading, etc.), and that virtual meetings are scheduled as needed to ensure enactment of the workplan and delivery of draft products in time for their review and production.

The overall drafting workflow for the preparation of zero and first draft reports is illustrated in **Figure 2**.

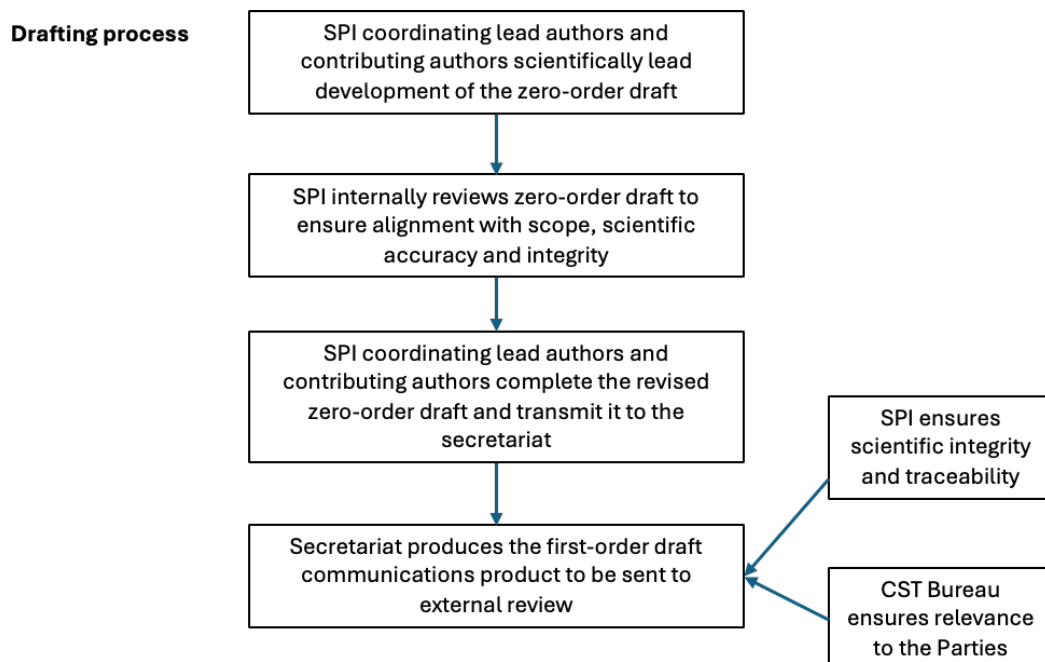


Figure 2. Workflow for the preparation of thematic assessments forming the basis of Global Land Outlook products and similar flagship reports, including responsibilities of the Science-Policy Interface, Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology and the secretariat.

SPI: Science-Policy Interface; WP: work programme; CST: Committee on Science and Technology.

7. Review process for flagship reports

The first-order draft of flagship reports, as produced by the secretariat with the support of the SPI and Bureau of the CST, will be subject to an external review process comprising two phases:

- Independent scientific review;
- UNCCD stakeholder review.

The two review phases may be conducted consecutively or concurrently, depending on the nature of the topic addressed in the report and operational needs.

The review process shall be guided by the following three principles:

- GLO products and similar flagship reports shall represent the best possible scientific, technical and socioeconomic knowledge, conveying policy messages grounded in the best available science, and be as balanced and comprehensive as possible;
- The review process shall involve the broadest possible participation of external experts (experts not involved in the preparation of the flagship report drafts) and UNCCD stakeholders, ensuring geographical representation from all regions and countries;
- The review process should be open and transparent, with all review comments duly addressed and recorded.

For the review process, two review editors will be appointed from SPI members not serving as report chair or coordinating lead authors, with the aim of supporting and overseeing the review process and ensuring its integrity.

7.1 Independent scientific review of flagship reports

The secretariat, with input from the SPI, will identify a pool of potential expert reviewers external to the SPI, encompassing diverse scientific, technical and socioeconomic expertise. From this pool of candidates, the secretariat, with the support of the SPI, will identify and invite those selected on the basis of the relevant expertise required, ensuring gender balance and geographical representation, to serve as expert and scientific reviewers for the independent scientific review of the first-order draft.

With a view to ensuring a robust review process, up to fifty (50) expert reviews are expected to be received.

The selection, invitation and confirmation of expert reviewers should be completed prior to the finalization of the first-order draft, ideally one (1) month in advance, so that the review process can begin immediately thereafter.

The review process, timeline and list of selected expert reviewers will be posted on the UNCCD website to ensure transparency. Parties will be notified directly that this process has been initiated.

Where scheduling challenges necessitate that the independent scientific review and the UNCCD stakeholder review are conducted concurrently, the notification to Parties may include the first-order draft for comments.

Where the two review phases are conducted consecutively, the first-order draft will be sent to Parties at a later stage, in conjunction with the commencement of the UNCCD stakeholder review.

The first-order draft, encompassing all expected outcomes of the flagship report, including the SPM, will be shared with the pool of independent scientific reviewers. The secretariat will also provide reviewers with any specific material referenced in the document that is not available in the internationally published literature, made available by the secretariat upon request.

Expert and scientific reviewers shall submit their comments in writing, in accordance with the modalities and deadline specified by the secretariat, which shall be no later than two (2) months from the date of transmission of the first-order draft to the secretariat.

Comments and inputs received from expert and scientific reviewers will be compiled by the review editors with the support of the secretariat.

For consecutive reviews, the first-order draft is revised based on input from the independent scientific review to become the second-order draft, which will be revised again after the UNCCD stakeholder review to become the advance final draft.

The second-order draft should be made available for the UNCCD stakeholder review phase within three (3) months of receipt of independent reviewer comments.

The review editors, in full cooperation with the steering committee, SPI and secretariat, will ensure that, in the production of the second-order draft, all reviewer comments are appropriately addressed, scientific integrity and traceability are maintained, and the report is written in a clear and accessible language suitable for a broad audience.

For concurrent reviews, the first-order draft is revised based on inputs from the independent scientific review and stakeholder review, received simultaneously over a period of two (2) months from the date of transmission of the first-order draft, to become the advance final draft.

In this case, the advance final draft, encompassing all expected products associated with the flagship report, including the SPM, should be made available within nine (9) months of receipt of all comments.

7.2 Review of flagship reports by stakeholders to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

The UNCCD stakeholder review aims to receive comments from a broad range of UNCCD stakeholders, including national focal points, science and technology correspondents, accredited civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations, and representatives of UNCCD caucuses and fora, including the Gender Caucus, Indigenous Peoples Caucus, Local Communities Caucus, and the Youth Forum.

Upon notification, either the first-order draft (in case of concurrent reviews) or second-order draft (in case of consecutive reviews) will be distributed to the intended UNCCD stakeholders for review.

Stakeholders shall submit their comments in writing, in accordance with the modalities and deadline specified by the secretariat, within two (2) months of receipt of the draft.

Comments and inputs received from expert and scientific reviewers will be compiled and addressed by the secretariat with the support of the review editors and coordinating lead authors.

The review editors, in full cooperation with the steering committee, the SPI and the secretariat, will ensure that, in the production of the advance final draft, all reviewer comments are appropriately addressed, scientific integrity and traceability are maintained, and the report is written in a clear and accessible language suitable for a broad audience.

The advance final draft, encompassing all expected products associated with the flagship report, including the SPM, should be made available within four (4) months of receipt of all comments.

The workflow for the review process is illustrated in:

Figure 3 a.: where expert/scientific and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification stakeholder reviews occur concurrently;

Figure 3 b.: where expert/scientific and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification stakeholder reviews occur consecutively.

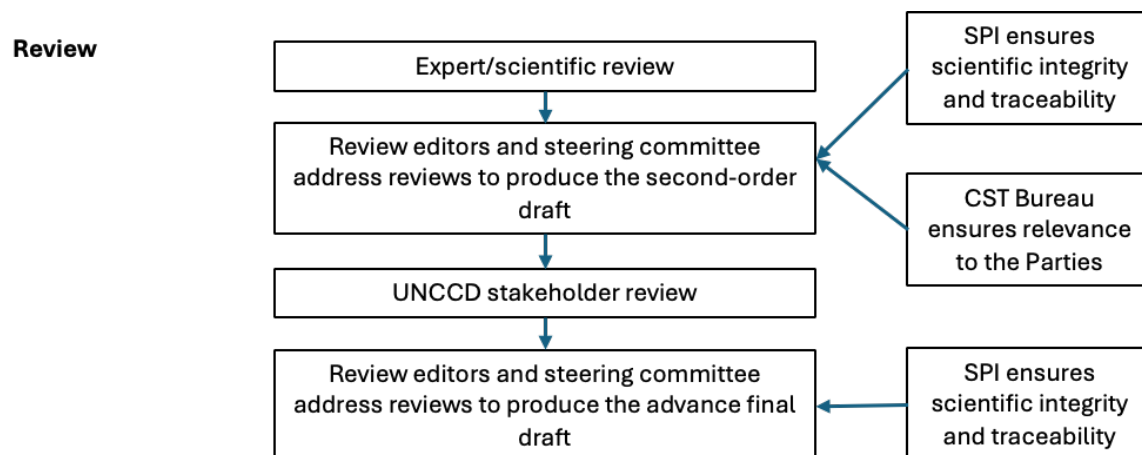


Figure 3 a. Workflow for the review process for flagship reports when expert/scientific and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification stakeholder reviews occur concurrently.

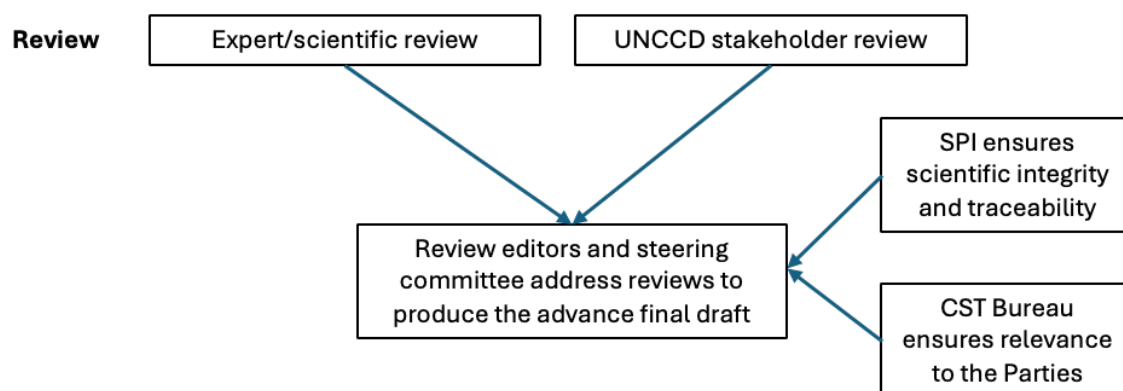


Figure 3 b. Workflow for the review process for flagship reports when expert/scientific and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification stakeholder reviews occur consecutively.

UNCCD: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; SPI: Science-Policy Interface; CST: Committee on Science and Technology.

8. Preparation and publication of flagship reports

Upon completion of the advance final draft, the secretariat, with the support of the flagship report chair and the coordinating lead authors, will coordinate all steps related to copyediting, possible translation, layout, design, proofreading and printing for the production and official publication of the flagship report.

The final publication shall acknowledge the flagship report chair, coordinating lead authors, contributing authors, steering committee, SPI, reviewers and review editors, and other

contributors, including designers and copyeditors, as appropriate, by name and affiliation, at the end of the report (as set out in annex IV).

The format of publication of the flagship report, whether in print or in a paperless digital format, will be determined by the secretariat on a case-by-case basis, with a view to presenting the findings of the report through the most appropriate and accessible means.

The final publication shall occur at least two (2) months before the COP. This requires an indicative publication date to be set at the beginning of the quadrennial cycle to ensure the process is completed on time, while remaining subject to adjustment once the date of the COP is confirmed.

9. Preparation and publication of summaries for policymakers

The SPM shall include the following components:

- Background to the flagship report;
- No fewer than three (3) major headline key messages;
- No fewer than three (3) policy recommendations.

An initial version of the SPM is presented as a component of the zero-order draft, prepared and reviewed by the SPI in accordance with the procedure set out in section 6.2. At this stage, the SPM seeks to identify science-based key messages and recommendations emerging from the scientific findings of the report that address each of the key messages, to be sent to the secretariat as the basis for subsequent drafting.

As a component of the first-order draft, the SPM is prepared by the secretariat with the support of the steering committee, the flagship report chair and the coordinating lead authors, and will be subject to the expert and scientific review and UNCCD stakeholder review processes.

The final draft of the SPM, resulting from the expert and scientific review and UNCCD stakeholder review processes, will be produced by the secretariat in cooperation with the review editor and steering committee, with a view to ensuring that the key messages and recommendations are grounded in scientific integrity and appropriately translated into language suitable for policy measures.

The preparation of the SPM shall follow the timeline and deadlines established for the production of the successive order drafts of the flagship report, as set out in these procedures.

10. Approval of summaries for policymakers by the Committee on Science and Technology

In accordance with decision 20/COP.16, paragraph 6 (b), recommendations in the SPM will be converted into an official document for approval by the CST.

Official document drafting will be led by the secretariat, with the text reviewed by the flagship report steering committee, allowing for the SPI representatives on the steering committee to consult with SPI coordinating lead authors and contributing authors to ensure the scientific integrity of the recommendations. Final language will be confirmed by the secretariat.

The number of recommendations included in the draft decision corresponding to the respective SPM would be at least equal to the number of recommendations in the SPM but may be greater if, for example, the steering committee identifies that a recommendation for Parties could not be implemented without the development of guidance, which would require another paragraph inviting the secretariat, the GM and partner organizations, individually or in combination, to develop the guidance.

Through this process, the SPM recommendations are translated into formal policy recommendations contained in a draft decision negotiated by the CST and submitted for COP consideration.

11. Error correction procedure

The review processes set out above are designed to ensure that errors are eliminated prior to the publication of flagship reports and SPM. However, should a reader identify a possible error in a finalized flagship report or SPM (e.g., a miscalculation or a factual inaccuracy), the issue should be brought to the attention of the secretariat, which will implement the following correction procedure.

The secretariat will request the current serving SPI co-chairs to investigate the matter, with the option of requesting clarifications from the original authors, as needed, and report back to the secretariat on the conclusion.

Should the flagship report chair confirm that an error has occurred, the current serving SPI co-chairs will be asked to consult with the secretariat and the original authors of the section requiring attention to ensure that appropriate remedial action is taken.

Following an assessment of the implications and impact of the error and the corrective measure, including its significance and relevance, the current serving SPI co-chairs shall review and approve or reject the recommended remedial action within the shortest possible timeframe.

Should the proposed remedial action be rejected, the current serving SPI co-chairs shall provide a written justification and, where needed and possible, indicate an alternative corrective measure.

Any required correction to the report or SPM must be made without undue delay. The approved correction shall be reflected in all publicly available versions of the report or product.

12. Preparation of fast-track assessments and information products

Following the acceptance of a request for a fast-track assessment and/or information product based on the feasibility assessment as set out in the procedures for receiving and prioritizing requests for the SPI work programme, the development process for the deliverable shall commence.

Where the request concerns the development of a fast-track assessment or information product, the SPI co-chairs, in cooperation with the secretariat, will initiate a consultation with the requesting entity to produce a scoping document as soon as possible, within a mutually agreed timeframe.

The scoping document will outline the assessment modalities, relevant background, scope and tentative outline, methodology, roles and responsibilities of the SPI, supporting researchers and/or research organizations, and set a mutually agreed timeline for the delivery of the deliverable.

Based on the above scoping document, a first draft of the fast-track assessment or information product will be completed and submitted to the requesting entity for review, enabling feedback to be provided, and the SPI and requesting entity to jointly refine the scope and delivery timeline of the final report or information product.

Fast-track assessments and information products will be reviewed internally by the SPI to ensure scientific quality. If the entity requesting the product feels that further review is needed, an additional independent scientific review can also be conducted to further ensure the accuracy and integrity of the final report or information product.

The SPI will address the comments received and finalize the fast-track assessment or information product in its final version within the agreed timeline.

12.1 Nature of fast-track outputs

Fast-track assessments will present the results in the form of a concise report comprising:

- The main findings and conclusions of the analysis; and
- A concise summary and clear recommendations or options for decision-makers.

Information products will present their results in a variety of formats, based on what has been mutually agreed.

The secretariat, with the support of the SPI, will facilitate the publication and dissemination of the product, as appropriate to the product type.

Fast-track assessments and information products will be posted on the SPI publications website and retained by the secretariat.

13. Provision of advice

Following the acceptance of a request for advice, in accordance with the procedures for receiving and prioritizing requests for the SPI work programme, the SPI shall initiate the formulation and provision of advice.

The SPI, with the support of the secretariat, will address the request for advice, sending a formal response to the requesting entity within two (2) weeks.

Should the requesting entity require further clarification on the advice received, consider the response incomplete or unsatisfactory, or need additional support in relation to the submitted request, it may seek clarification and raise questions to the SPI within two (2) weeks of receipt of the advice.

The SPI will commit to providing further advice and addressing the points raised in a timely manner.

14. Updating the procedures for the preparation of UNCCD flagship reports and fast-track assessments, information products and advice

The Bureau of the CST, in consultation with the SPI co-chairs and with the support of the secretariat, will periodically review and update these procedures to reflect implementation experience and emerging needs.

Annex I – Tasks and responsibilities

Tasks and responsibilities of report chairs, coordinating lead authors, contributing authors, review editors, expert reviewers and national focal points.

Report steering committee

Function: Oversees coordination of report scoping, writing and review. Ensures frequent communications between the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) and secretariat throughout the production of Global Land Outlook products and similar flagship reports.

Comment: The steering committee will comprise the report chair, SPI co-chairs, chief scientist, secretariat communications representative and policy and advocacy representative.

Flagship report chair

Function: To assume responsibility for overseeing SPI contributions to scientifically lead the preparation of flagship reports.

Comment: Flagship report chairs are responsible for ensuring that a report is completed to the highest scientific standard, ensuring timely completion and liaising with the secretariat and SPI on organization of the workflow and the timeline for producing flagship reports. The names of all report co-chairs will be acknowledged prominently in the reports they help to prepare.

Flagship report co-chairs are nominated and selected, as set out in section 3 of the procedures.

Coordinating lead authors

Function: To assume overall responsibility for coordinating major sections and/or chapters of a flagship report.

Comment: Coordinating lead authors have the responsibility of ensuring that major sections and/or chapters of a report are completed to a high standard, delivered to the report chair and secretariat in a timely manner, and conform to overall standards of style set for the document.

Coordinating lead authors play a central role in ensuring that any cross-cutting scientific, technical or socioeconomic issues of significance to more than one section of a report are addressed in a complete and coherent manner, reflecting the latest information available. The skills and resources required of coordinating lead authors are similar to those required of contributing authors, together with the additional organizational skills needed to coordinate a section, or sections, of a report. All coordinating lead authors will be acknowledged in the reports.

Contributing authors

Function: To prepare technical information in the form of text, graphs or data for inclusion by coordinating lead authors in the relevant section or part of a chapter.

Comment: Input from a wide range of contributors from the SPI is key to the success of flagship reports. The names of all contributors will therefore be acknowledged in flagship reports.

Contributions are sometimes solicited by coordinating lead authors but unsolicited contributions are also encouraged. Contributions should be supported, as far as possible, with references from the peer-reviewed and internationally available literature and with copies of any unpublished material, cited along with clear indications of how to access the latter. For material available in electronic format only, the location where such material may be accessed should be cited.

Contributed material may be edited, merged and, if necessary, amended in the course of developing the overall draft text.

Review Editors

Function: To assist the SPI and secretariat in identifying reviewers for the expert review process, ensure that all substantive expert and government review comments are afforded appropriate consideration, advise coordinating lead authors on how to handle contentious or controversial issues and ensure that genuine controversies are adequately reflected in the text of the relevant report.

Annex II – Procedures on the use of literature in flagship reports

This annex is provided to ensure that the Science-Policy Interface process for the use of literature is open and transparent.

In preparing thematic assessments forming the basis of the Global Land Outlook and similar flagship reports, emphasis is to be placed on the quality assurance of all cited literature. Priority should be given to peer-reviewed scientific, technical and socioeconomic literature, where available.

It is recognized that other sources provide crucial information for flagship reports. These sources may include reports from governments, industry, research institutions, international and other organizations, or conference proceedings. Use of this literature entails extra responsibility for the author teams to ensure the quality and validity of cited sources and information.

The following additional procedures are specified:

Use of newspapers, magazines, blogs, websites and broadcast media

Information derived from newspapers and magazines, blogs, websites and broadcast media should not be considered valid sources of scientific information. However, information from these sources may be used as evidence that something is considered important to the public and should be appropriately verified and referenced before use. Personal communications of scientific results are not acceptable sources.

Responsibilities of coordinating lead and contributing authors

The coordinating lead authors will ensure that all sources are selected and used in accordance with the procedures in this annex.

The author team is required to critically assess the information they would like to include from any source. Each chapter team should review the quality and validity of each source before incorporating information into a flagship report. Authors who wish to include information that is not publicly or commercially available are required to send the full reference and a copy, preferably electronically, to the secretariat. For any source written in a language other than English, an executive summary or abstract in English is required.

These procedures also apply to papers undergoing the publication process in peer-reviewed journals at the time of the government or expert review.

All sources will be integrated into the reference section of flagship reports.

Responsibilities of the review editors

The review editors will support and provide guidance to the author team in ensuring the consistent application of the procedures in this annex.

Responsibilities of the report chair

For sources that are not publicly or commercially available, the report chair will make these sources available to reviewers who request them during the review process.

Responsibilities of the secretariat

For sources that are not publicly or commercially available, the secretariat will store these sources after publication of a flagship report in order to support section 11 on “Error correction procedure”.

Annex III – Bringing Indigenous and traditional knowledge into flagship reports

The procedures outlined below originate from decision 20/COP.16 to include provisions for considering Indigenous and local knowledge in the preparation of flagship reports. Accordingly, the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) should encourage governments and stakeholders, including accredited Indigenous peoples organizations (IPOs) and the Indigenous Peoples Caucus, to nominate an appropriate number of Indigenous and traditional knowledge holders and Indigenous and traditional knowledge experts to contribute to SPI deliverables. Furthermore, the SPI is encouraged to include Indigenous and traditional knowledge, and an appropriate number of Indigenous and traditional knowledge holders and Indigenous and traditional knowledge experts, in all stages of the SPI's products. In accordance with applicable international obligations and national legislation, nothing in these procedures should be construed as diminishing or extinguishing any existing rights of Indigenous peoples as well as local communities.

Nomination & selection

The SPI requests nominations that explicitly include Indigenous and traditional knowledge holders and Indigenous and traditional knowledge experts; selection should strive to reflect the diversity of knowledge systems.

Co-design in scoping

Consider Indigenous and traditional knowledge experience and expertise during scoping to co-design assessments grounded in diverse knowledge systems; also consider Indigenous and traditional knowledge in defining policy questions, boundaries, and methods.

Preparation & review

Options for including Indigenous and traditional knowledge include:

- Identify Indigenous and traditional knowledge sources using dedicated journals, databases and networks outside mainstream scientific repositories; use annotated resource lists where available; invite reviewers for flagship reports from accredited IPOs and the Indigenous Peoples Caucus;
- Allow Indigenous and traditional knowledge holders contributing in situ knowledge to use community-based validation/documentation; also allow flexible formats for submission of review comments; include review editors with Indigenous and traditional knowledge expertise; ensure Indigenous and traditional knowledge expertise is represented in author teams for summaries for policymakers and synthesis writing teams.

Rights Consideration

Nothing in these procedures diminishes existing rights of Indigenous peoples or local communities; implementation must respect international obligations and national legislation.

Annex IV – Criteria for defining the role of authors and contributors

The Science-Policy Interface (SPI) will apply the authorship and contributorship criteria of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) for all SPI reports and related publications. In line with the ICMJE “Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals”, individuals will be named as authors only if they meet all ICMJE authorship criteria (substantial contributions to the work; drafting or critical revision; final approval; accountability for all aspects of the work), while those who contribute in other ways (such as funding acquisition; general supervision; administrative support; or editorial assistance) will be recognized appropriately as contributors in the acknowledgments section rather than listed as authors. See:

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. (2024). *Defining the role of authors and contributors*. In *Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals*. Retrieved May 20, 2026, from:
<https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>

The SPI will periodically review these procedures to remain aligned with any updates to the ICMJE recommendations.

Annex V – Code of practice on the use of artificial intelligence

In carrying out all stages of Science-Policy Interface (SPI) report preparation and related assessment activities, the SPI shall follow the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Code of Practice on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (version 1.0), as set out in appendix II to the annex of IPBES information document IPBES/12/INF/12, and welcomed by the IPBES Plenary in its decision at its twelfth session (held in Manchester, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from 3 to 8 February 2026). See:

IPBES (2026). *The IPBES Code of Practice on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (version 1.0): Tailored to the needs of assessments* [Technical note]. IPBES Secretariat. Retrieved May 20, 2026, from <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17628864>

Until such time that the SPI identifies the need to develop its own procedures on the use of artificial intelligence, the SPI will follow any subsequent versions of the IPBES Code of Practice on the Use of Artificial Intelligence as they are adopted or welcomed by the IPBES Plenary, with such later versions automatically superseding version 1.0 for all SPI report production and related processes.

Annex VI – Manuscripts for publication derived from the work of the Science-Policy Interface

The production of manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed literature, based on work performed in support of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) objectives by members and observers of the SPI, is strongly encouraged. Institutional attribution in such publications should be associated with the home organization(s) of each author, and not the SPI itself, unless approved by the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Acknowledgement

The role of the UNCCD as a whole, and the SPI in particular, should be communicated in the acknowledgements section of any such spinoff publication, following confirmation of that role by the UNCCD secretariat.

United Nations disclaimer

Such spinoff manuscripts must also contain the following disclaimer:

“The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.”