The meeting aimed to prioritize activities from the work plan and establish working group mechanisms to be able to better pool the coalition members’ expertise and resources to provide cross-sectoral and cross-cutting technical support at global, regional and national levels, in line with the Coalition’s action plan.

The specific objectives of the meeting were:

- Confirm commitment of the Coalition members
- Confirm membership of working groups
- Identify priority activities to move forward

1. Opening Remarks

Mr. Eduardo Mansur, Director, Office of the Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environment, Officer-in-Charge, Land and Water Division, FAO, opened the meeting, communicating the following consolidated key messages:

- The transboundary nature of sand and dust storms requires unified and coherent action. The UN Coalition to Combat SDS plays a key role in coordinating coherent action of this collaborative cross-sectoral approach to reduce the negative impacts of this unfortunately, growing issue of local, national and global scale.
- FAO has a strong technical focus on thematic areas that are related to the SDS, such as desertification, land degradation and drought. Agriculture is one of the main anthropogenic contributors to the hazards, but also one of the most heavily affected sectors.
- The facilitation of knowledge and information sharing is key. We need to better understand the sources and impact of SDS to implement innovation to reducing the impacts of SDS health, the environment on agriculture, and all other economic activities that are affected.
- The success of the coalition depends on the activities and contribution of all of us, members of the coalition bringing in what every agency has to offer.
- Only as a team, can we address this pressing of trans-boundary multi-sectoral hazard. For this, we are counting on all of you and we are looking forward to continuing this fruitful collaboration.

2. Round of Introductions

The opening remarks were followed by a short introduction of all participants. The following agencies were represented in the meeting:

UNESCAP-APDIM, UNESCWA, FAO, ICAO, ITU, UNCCD, UNDP, UNECA, UNEP, UN-Habitat, WHO, WMO
Where are we and where would we like to go?

Presentation by Coalition Chair Feras Ziadat

The UN Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms (SDS) consists of 15+ UN agencies, non-UN organizations and research institutes and aims to promote global action on SDS;

In September 2018, the 24th Meeting of the EMG Senior Officials agreed to form a coalition, upon invitation of the General Assembly, through its resolution 72/225, to consider initiating an inter-agency process to prepare a global response to SDS.

Formal launch at a side event of the UNCCD's 14th Conference of Parties in New Delhi on 6 September 2019;

Under the leadership of UNEP, a Strategy, Action Plan and Governance Guidelines were prepared through an inclusive and consultative process, giving the Coalition a strong framework for moving ahead. The documents were approved at the latest coalition meeting on July 2nd 2020 and the lead of the Coalition was officially transferred from UNEP to FAO for the coming two years.

The work of the coalition is organized along five working groups (WG). According to the governance guidelines, the following modalities of the WGs have been established:

- The five WGs of the SDS Coalition are subsidiary bodies of the Coalition.
- Main role: focus on advancing the five elements of the SDS Coalition's Strategy in a coherent, efficient and cross-cutting manner, within their respective thematic areas;
- Each WG will be led (or co-led) by one or two core member(s), typically those with the most experience and knowledge of that subject area;
- Each of the WG's (co-)leads will assure regular communication and flow of information with the SDS Coalition's chair/host agency and the other working groups;
- Membership in a WG will be open to all Coalition members. Coalition members interested in joining a WG may do so by writing to the lead/co-leads, with a copy to the current Coalition chair/host agency;
- WG's leads/co-leads will provide annual progress report to the SDS Coalition plenary meeting;
- Leads/co-leads of WGs can themselves meet at least once annually, possibly on the side of the SDS Coalition plenary meeting, to share further information about each Group's work;
- Leads/co-lead agencies will serve as WG leads/co-leads for a two-year period or until such time as they might choose to step down;
- WGs will establish their own meeting plans;
- The annual work plan of each of the five Working Groups will be derived from the overall annual work plan of the SDS Coalition.
- The costs of individual activities/events/projects in the annual work plan will be borne by those identified as the lead / co-lead agency(-ies) and the members of the working group for their implementation;
- The following working groups and leads/co-leads have been identified:
  o WG1 Adaptation and Mitigation: UNDP and FAO
  o WG2 Forecasting and Early Warning: WMO
  o WG3 Health and Safety: WHO
  o WG4 Policy and Governance: UNCCD
  o WG5 Mediation and Regional Collaboration: ESCAP and ESCWA

- Next steps:
  o Re-confirm co-lead and membership of working groups
  o Prioritize Work Plan Activities
  o Tentatively allocate institutional responsibilities
  o Which prioritized activities should be taken up by which Working Group

4. Status update of Coalition Members
Presentation by coalition members on a) on-going work on SDS and b) (envisioned) role in the working groups

UNDP:
- Work on SDS
  o Part of UNDP’s policy and programme portfolio on Sustainable Land Management and Land Degradation Neutrality
  o The UNDP-supported project portfolio on SLM/LDN covers 84 countries with a total GEF/GCF financing around $1.5 billion and $4.9 billion in co-financing
  o Based on country demand, UNDP can integrate source mitigation and adaptation measures in these projects (e.g. control of anthropogenic drivers of SDS such unsustainable agricultural practices, deforestation, overgrazing, etc.)
  o UNDP supported the inter-agency efforts to establish the SDS Coalition (TORs, launch at UNCCD/COP14, COP14 SDS Decision, co-lead of Mitigation/Adaptation Working Group)
- Role in the WGs:
  o Building on a strong partnership with the other agencies that are member of the WG and UNDP’s large project portfolio on sustainable land management and restoration, UNDP has accepted to co-lead WG 1 on Adaptation and Mitigation

WMO/SDS-WAS
- Work on SDS:
  o SDS-WAS, established in 2007, based on request of 40 member states of WMO.
    - Mission:
      • Establish a coordinated global network of SDS research & forecasting centres;
      • Enhance the ability of countries to deliver timely and quality SDS forecasts, observations, information and knowledge to users through an international partnership of research and operational communities
    - Organized around regional nodes and centres, the Regional Node for Asia, Regional Node for Northern Africa, Middle East and Europe, Pan-America Regional Node and two SDS-WAS Centres in Barcelona and Beijing

4th Meeting of the UN Coalition to Combat Sand and Dust Storms – October 21st, 2020
- Role of WMO in WGs
  o For many years, WMO (SDS-WAS) has already been leading SDS forecasting and early warning issues, WMO will lead WG 2 Forecasting & Early Warning
    ▪ Existing SDS-WAS Global Steering Committee can be a coordinating body for WG2. Representatives of UNEP, UNCCD, WHO and ESCAP are already involved into the SDS-WAS Steering Committee. All interested are welcome to join the SC.
    ▪ 1st meeting of WG2: Forecasting and Early Warning was organized in November 2019
  o WMO is ready to be involved as a member in other WGs, e.g. WG1: Adaptation & Mitigation; WG3: Health & Safety; and SDS-WAS Regional Nodes/Centers in WG5: Mediation & Regional Collaboration.

UNEP:
- UNEP will launch report on the impact of SDS on oceans on November 6th, which is a scientific assessment for policy makers, partnering with the UN Decade of Ocean Science, Joint Expert Group of Marine Expert, the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management and the Global Programme of Action on Pollution from land-based resources
  ▪ Report focusses on sources, transport pathways and deposition. It also covers the issues of global biodiversity and climate change
  ▪ It highlights that pathogens, like viruses and bacteria, can travel with aerosols along with SDS over long ranges
  ▪ If coalition members are in need of further information or briefing material, they can please reach out to Maarten Kappelle (maarten.kappelle@un.org)

UNESCAP-APDIM:
- Work on SDS:
  o Risk assessment of SDS in Asia and the Pacific region, on which to build a regional plan of action, with focus on trans-boundary initiatives; put together impact-based forecasting, average annual risks for national and regional planning and possibly define some trends for policy making; relies heavily on collaboration with various partners
  o Prepared Guidelines for countries on how to report the impacts of SDS through the Sendai Framework Monitor to enhance evidence base

FAO
- Work on SDS:
  o Agriculture is both a cause and victim of SDS. FAO is working on source and impact management.
  o Various tools/approaches are implemented at national and (inter)-regional scale, including planning tools to reduce source and impact, source mapping, observation, monitoring, forecasting and early warning, and risk mitigation measures including source management.
  o FAO strengthening capacities for monitoring and assessing SDS impacts on agriculture under the Sendai Framework Monitor, in particular under indicator C2 on reducing direct
agricultural loss attributed to disasters, incorporating SDS as hazard category into the new FAO-developed SFDRR methodology
  - Implementing an inter-regional technical cooperation programme: catalysing investments and actions to enhance resilience against Sand and Dust Storms in agriculture, 6 Recipient Countries (Algeria, China, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Mongolia), 2 Partner research organisations: ICBA, ICARDA.
  - Role of FAO in working groups:
    - As agriculture is key for SDS mitigation and adaptation, FAO happy to co-lead WG 1 Adaptation and Mitigation from a Sustainable Land Management and Disaster Risk Reduction perspective providing the following:
      - Planning, monitoring, assessment, source and impact mitigation technologies and good practices in the cropping, livestock, rangeland and forestry sectors
      - Linkages to inter-regional project leading to catalytic large-scale programme.

**WHO (the points below were not presented, but received in written form by the WHO focal point)**

  - Work on SDS:
    - WHO does not work directly on Sand and Dust storms. However, as part of the work on air quality and health, WHO is involved in specific activities related to the health impacts of desert dust.
    - Synthesizing evidence on the health aspects of desert dust; Summary of good practice on desert dust and health will be featured in the update of the WHO Air Quality Guidelines
    - Supporting countries with the assessment of short term effects of desert dust
  - Role in WGs:
    - WHO can contribute on the above-mentioned topics (within the limits of the internal human resources dedicated to air quality and health).

**UNESCO Khartoum Office (the points below were not presented, but provided in written form by the UNESCO focal point)**

  - Work on SDS:
    - Working with several partners for combating desertification, establishment of green belts through capacity development and research
    - Capacity Development and research
  - Role of UNESCO in working groups:
    - Coordination and implementation of environment conservation and green belts projects

### 5. Working Group Discussions

Participants were split into breakout rooms to discuss the following points within their respective working groups:

- Priority activities that agencies are already working on and which have funding
- Priority work plan activities which we like to do, but need funding → identify those that we would like to include in a fast track programme
Please note that the current action plan is a starting point with an ambitious list of potential actions that are up for discussion. Working groups may prioritize some of those actions for implementation and add other activities, as needed.

Discussions were led by (co)-lead agencies of each working group. For a detailed list of leads and participants of each working group, including their contact details, please see the excel sheet attached.

**Working Group 1: Adaptation & Mitigation**

- Facilitated by the WG co-leads UNDP and FAO
- Participants: Anne Juepner (UNDP), Feras Ziadat (FAO), Nick Middleton (FAO), Haidar Baqir (ITU), Ameera Al-hassan (UN-HABITAT), Sandrine Jauffret (UNCCD), Sara Basart (WMO SDS-WAS), Erkan Guler (UNCCD), Elie Kodsi (UNDP), Jane Hupe (ICAO)

**Outcomes:**

1. **Current Priority Activities:**
   - UNCCD was asked by their COP to give focus to SDS source mitigation, which led to discussion of selection of best practices that can be used in target projects in the field.
   - UNCCD SDS and Drought Toolboxes have many good practices, likewise many tools at FAO exist that can be useful. UNDP keen to support launch of UNCCD SDS Toolbox and associated activities.
   - Widespread agreement that scaling up best practices and a move to implement them over large scale is important.
   - Training/capacity building workshops also important – UN Coalition members should join forces to deliver

2. **Priority activities that need funding (possible fast track programme):**
   - Vulnerability assessments (who is affected, where?) → NB link to population centres said UN Habitat; food production centres said FAO).
   - Implement best practices
   - Training/capacity building
   - Advocacy and identifying funding resources; Establish a relationship between donors and recipient countries

**Working Group 2: Forecasting & Early Warning:**

- Facilitated by the WG lead WMO
- Participants: Sanjay Srivastava (ESCAP), Wirya Khim (FAO), Alexander Baklanov (WMO), Maarten Kappelle (UNEP), Slobodan Nickovic (WMO), Xiaoye Zhang (WMO)

**Outcomes:**

- The need to encourage and establish inter-agency exchange of Particulate Matter (PM) observations has been emphasized. It will be important to define a data exchange protocol and establish an appropriate data platform. PM data is of particular importance for WMO SDS-WAS in order improve dust modeling by data assimilation and by validation models results.
- UNEP will consider to delegate a representative in the WG2
- In order to increase collaboration with UN organizations and involve corresponding experts, the WMO SDS-WAS included already as members in the Steering Committee representatives from UNEP, UNCCD, WHO and ESCAP.
- It was decided to submit as fast-track project, proposals on dust modelling re-analysis and an App for SDS
- It was decided that WMO will lead the WG2 Forecasting and Early Warning, and the SDS-WAS Global Steering Committee will be the coordinating body for the WG2.
- It would be good to include ICAO, FAO and UNDP in this working group

Working Group 3: Health & Safety:
- Facilitated by the WG lead WHO
- Participants: Pierpaolo Mudu (WHO), Mazen Malkawi (WHO), Robert Stefanski (WMO), Vera Boerger (FAO) Joy Shumake-Guillemot (WMO)

Outcome:
- Priority areas identified that we need to find funding for are: (a) Policies and interventions: more and more requests are coming in from countries asking for support to share policy advice and good practices, incl. practices on the ground, e.g. planting trees, increase green spaces etc. and (b) Source apportionment
- WHO will publish Air Quality Guidelines next year with a chapter on desert dust. Some of those points outlined in the report can serve as starting points for this WG’s priority activities.
- Need to enlarge this WG with other members and agencies

Working Group 4: Policy & Governance:
- Facilitated by the WG-lead UNCCD
- Participants: Utchang Kang (UNCCD), Daniel Dale (FAO), Stephan Baas (FAO)

Outcomes:
- WG4 should work on the following two aspects: a) issues related to the Coalition’s operation/function and b) issues relevant to global SDS policy
- A question was raised on how the Coalition can contribute to global policy-making, noting the Coalition (only a network of organizations) has no substantial connections with any global processes. Related to this, the Coalition can support ground level activities providing a bridge between actors;
- Work of WG4 needs to be linked to and coordinated with the work of other WGs for synergy and efficiency, as WG4 would benefit from and input as well to other groups’ work and outcomes;
- Ideas on priority activity include:
  - Mapping frameworks and regional cooperation platforms related/relevant to SDS for joint advocacy
  - policy advisory package (ref. Voluntary guidelines on land tenure) to help countries implementing their strategies and plans
  - Communication strategy
- Once the working groups have established their work plans and shared them, we need to discuss modalities across working groups and how those can be complementary.
Working Group 5: Mediation and Regional Collaboration

- Facilitated by the WG-co-leads UNESCWA and UNESCAP
- Participants: Letizia Rossano (UNESCAP), Tarek Sadek (UNESCWA), Jamal Annagylyjova (UNCCD), Norah Ng’eny (UNCCD), Ernest Werner (WMO SDS-WAS), Andrea Sealy (WMO SDS-WAS), Erdogan Ozevren (UNCCD), Amin Shamseddini UNESCAP), Tamara van ‘t Wout (FAO)

Outcomes:

1. **On-going work**
   - ESCAP – Asia Pacific Regional assessment of SDS impact evidence-based towards the development of cross-boundary actions especially in West Asia region
   - ESCWA Mashriq area – regional climate change modelling including new parameters on SDS analysis, wind speed, extreme to be completed next year
   - UNCCD: regional pilot project in Central Asia and Nigeria to design national and regional policy to mitigate SDS sources, encouraging countries to include SDS sources in LDN planning and implementation
   - FAO: welcome exchange of data, risk assessment, focus on North Africa, Middle East, Asia

2. **Opportunities**
   - Hold an online inter-regional event for the sub/regions(s) to share information with affected countries
   - By presenting the services and information that are already available or could be available, develop protocols and guidelines for sharing data that is available and that countries are comfortable sharing
   - Need to share data and information between working groups
   - Capacity building
   - Regional plans of action

6. **Plenary discussion and wrap-up**

After all working groups presented the highlights of their respective breakout room discussions, a plenary discussion lead to the following outcomes:

Common **priority themes** identified for moving forward:
- SDS sources – identifying them and apportioning them
- Identifying and implementing good practices for source and impact mitigation
- Identifying vulnerable places and vulnerable populations
- Policy advisory – helping countries develop plans, as part of existing frameworks e.g. SFDRR
- Transboundary mechanisms are critical as SDS is a transboundary issue
- Enhance cooperation and coordination and data and information sharing
- Strengthen countries’ capacities

**Modalities** confirmed for moving forward:
- Need to keep our work informal and as action-focused as possible
- Working group leads will receive a list of contact details all breakout room participants. Working group leads will be responsible for following up with participants in the coming months and present progress at the next coalition meeting
- Affiliated/additional members should be added on an ad-hoc basis through the working groups
- The next coalition meeting will take place in early 2021