Regional Inception workshop
NATIONAL TARGET SETTING TO ACHIEVE
LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY
Central and Eastern Europe, Southern Caucasus and Central Asia

Batum, Georgia, 6-7 June 2016

Workshop report
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1. Introduction

The Inception workshop for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Southern Caucasus marked the regional launch of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN-TSP) of the UNCCD Secretariat and Global Mechanism. The LDN-TSP aims at helping countries in establishing national voluntary targets for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and identifying transformative projects to achieve these targets. The workshop was hosted by the Government of Georgia and held on June 6-7, 2016 in Batumi.

The workshop was attended by nine countries with at least two senior representatives per country, including all country consultants recruited by the LDN TSP in support of the programme. During the two day workshop, UNCCD national focal points (NFPs), LDN TSP country consultants as well as representatives of IUCN, UNEP, UNDP, REC (Caucasus) and the LDN-TSP project team (see the list of participated countries and organizations, Annex 1) discussed the roadmap to implement the Programme.

The workshop was organized back to back with the Eighth Ministerial Conference Environment for Europe held on June 8-10, 2016 in Batumi which provided opportunity for dissemination of LDN activities in the region.

This report summarizes the key issues discussed during the workshop as well as the main results and conclusions of the workshop.

2. Workshop objectives

The main objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Familiarise workshop participants with the approach to LDN target setting;
2. Identify opportunities for leverage through the LDN target setting process; and
3. Create a mutual understanding about the LDN target setting roadmap and mutual accountabilities.

Over the two day workshop, country representatives had the opportunity to familiarize with the methodological and operational approaches related to the target setting process and exchange their views and propositions for the implementation of the LND target setting process in their countries. Furthermore, this workshop provided an initial platform for regional exchange and collaboration along this process among African countries. The content of the workshop was mainly focused on the presentation of the LDN target setting process along with the step by step approach (see below) and how to use this initiative as a vehicle to achieve SDG target 15.3.

1. Government leadership and stakeholder engagement
2. Setting LDN baseline
3. Identifying LDN trends
4. Identifying drivers of LDN
5. Defining national voluntary LDN targets
6. Mainstreaming LDN in land use planning
7. Identifying measures to achieve LDN targets
8. Facilitating actions towards LDN
9. Monitoring progress towards LDN
10. Reporting on LDN

3. Summary of main workshop results

- **Technical Guide and LDN methodology:** The proposed methodology to carry out the LDN target setting process and its importance to achieve LDN by 2030 is understood and accepted by all participants. The Technical Guide was evaluated as clear, all questions were answered, the national focal points and consultants were comfortable with technical tasks, considering the job doable in the planned timeframe. Sustainability of default data in mid- and long-term reporting was discussed. In this regard, building or increasing capacity of national experts becomes an important element to be addressed in the TSP.

- **Opportunities for leverage:** The opportunities and challenges that represent mobilizing the highest level of governmental leadership and stakeholders’ engagement, especially from private sector and international organizations were understood and accepted with enthusiasm. It was commonly agreed that a direct contribution to the SDGs will be used as a strong leverage. The role of UN Country Team which facilitates the process of SDGs nationalizations in many countries of the region was highly emphasized. The responsible national agencies will be identified and engaged to the process. Challenge of crossing out the borders of “home” ministries was understood and different pathways varying from country to country were identified. It was agreed to reflect the leverage options, risks and assumptions in the Leverage Plan. Economic valuation of land based capital and cost-benefit analysis of SLM options were recurrently mentioned by the participants as an excellent support tool for LDN leverage. The active participation and engagement of IUCN, UNDP, UNEP and GIZ in support to TSP and beyond was encouraging for the countries.

- **Roadmap:** The LDN TSP participating countries were informed about expected outputs, outcomes, milestones and timelines of the LDN TSP. There is certain risk of non-compliance with the proposed schedule, especially on the establishment of the national working groups and approval of the work plans at the country level by September. As far as the technical part is concerned, the timely delivery would depend on external factors, like provision of data sets for the three indicators. The final delivery of the programme,
the LDN-TSP country report was briefly discussed. It was understood that it should be a political document that reflects the country's commitments and the LDN target(s) set by the country.

- **LDN awareness raising**: The importance of using all communication means (lobbying, social networks and mass media) to attract attention and obtain leverage on LDN as a priority development opportunity, was clearly understood. It should be a mutual commitment of the countries and involved partners to promote and explain LDN to different target groups at the country level as well as at the international fora.

- **Interaction between NFP and consultant, roles and tasks**: The working relations between the NFP and the consultants, their roles and tasks were intensively discussed by the participants. It was emphasised that the national consultant works in tandem with the NFP. The NFP represents the government in the project whereas the national consultant is a resource person that has been assigned by the UNCCD and the GM to assist the NFP and the government with the implementation of the LDN-TSP. The LDN-TSP Regional and national consultants are reporting to the regional team leader. The LDN-TSP Regional consultant and the Chief technical advisor will provide necessary technical support to the national consultant in the LDN-TSP implementation.

- **Regular and clear communication**: A need for a regular communication between the countries and LDN-TSP team was highly emphasised. A strong team spirit was built among countries, creating a clear momentum for action, that need to be capitalized through very close support and periodic (informal) meetings, especially at CRIC13.

### 4. Follow up actions

- Clear information from the LDN-TSP management to the countries on the management of budget allocated to cover TSP activities.
- Ways to provide countries with some flexibility for planning and adjusting budgets as well as to avoid possible delays in payments needs to be identified.
- Countries feel the need of being ensure UNCCD/GM engagement beyond completion of TSP, in particular through supporting access to LDN indicators data flows and investment funding for LDN activities on the ground.
- Visits from UNCCD ES and GM MD might be needed to support engagement of top decisions makers and key economic stakeholders.
Annex 1. List of participated countries and organizations

LIST OF PARTICIPATED COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

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NATIONAL TARGET SETTING TO ACHIEVE LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY
Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia
June 6-7, 2016, Batumi, Georgia

Countries:

1. Azerbaijan
2. Bosnia and Herzegovina
3. Georgia
4. Republic of Moldova
5. Kyrgyzstan
6. Russian Federation
7. Serbia
8. Ukraine
9. Uzbekistan

Organizations:

1. UNCCD \ GM
2. IUCN
3. UNEP
4. UNDP
5. REC (Caucasus)
6. GIZ