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United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



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Opening Speech

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**18th Session of the Committee for the Review of the
Implementation of the Convention**

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**New Delhi, Tuesday, 3 September 2019, 15H00
Plenary**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Friends and Colleagues,

This morning I welcomed participants to the fourteenth session of the CST. Now it is my pleasure to welcome you as participants to the 18th session of the CRIC.

The Mahatma Gandhi once said: *“The future depends on what you do today”*.

I hope all of you have settled in and you are ready to engage intensely.

And actively share your experiences.

You have a lot to do today. And what you do will make - not only the CRIC but - the entire COP a success. From you, I anticipate some clear, targeted decisions that will guide us in the next biennium.

In taking up the role of Executive Secretary, I am ambitious for the UNCCD. And for those stakeholders that rely on the health and productivity of their land. I hope you can help us in moving away from a focus on process – planning etc. - to one that supports you in delivery. With impact on the ground – where there are real world benefits for those who live on and work the land.

To be clear, there is no mission creep here. The secretariat is not moving towards implementing projects or programmes. But I hope that you will continue to see us change and evolve. All we do should be useful to you, dear Parties, in terms of delivering on your ambitions.

As former US President Barak Obama once said: *“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we have been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”* In the guidance you give us. In the decisions you take. Be the change you seek for this Convention.

CRIC 18 could be a real milestone. We will finalize the first UNCCD reporting process - using progress indicators and setting baselines. We will be able to measure progress in implementing the Convention against these well into the future.

With the important task of setting baselines finalized. And the job of setting nationally relevant targets also well underway, we now need to ensure that projects are prepared, funded and implemented on the ground.

In the future, the CRIC can become your platform to share both success and experience in implementation. Parties can start by connecting the dots.

Having identified targets, hotspots and monitoring frameworks, the business of getting the funding needed to implement and transfer their plans into “action on the ground” is stepping up a gear.

The Global Mechanism is here to help. So CRIC 18 will also focus its attention on the issue of resource mobilization.

And because we need to cover all of the elements of the Strategic Framework on options to monitor the strategic objective on drought. In this, I am very encouraged to witness the good collaboration between CRIC and CST in all matters relating to reporting and monitoring. The document prepared on drought presents a good example of how scientific knowledge can be harnessed to identify the best ways to measure progress on drought in the context of our strategy.

I would also want to draw your attention to other topics that will need the attention of CRIC.

For example, topics and policy that are discussed at the high-level segment or elsewhere in COP will need to be consistently followed up.

To my mind, decisions taken at the level of the COP can - and should - be integrated into national planning. Then, in time, they can be reported on through the UNCCD reporting process.

Gender is a clear example. Parties at CRIC 17 already concluded that gender related issues would need to be reflected in future reports. How will we do this in a way that is effective and useful? I look forward to the collective wisdom of Parties.

With that in mind, Excellencies, distinguished delegates and friends, one final issue I wanted to bring to your attention. The modalities for the midterm review of the 2018-2030 UNCCD strategic framework. The review will not be undertaken until 2024. However, it is data obtained from your reports that will be one of the main sources of information that will allow the COP to assess whether we, collectively, are moving in the right direction.

We will only have one more reporting round before the mid-term review. Let us collect and report as much useful data as we can in a credible and standardized way – building on the good work done in the last reporting.

I would like to assure you that the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, together with UN Environment, stand ready to extend capacity building support using the latest reporting tools. So, there is a lot to be done. A lot to be considered.

I am looking forward to seeing the fruits of your deliberations. And to working hard to deliver on your decisions in the coming biennium.

Thank you.

Good luck.
