

Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Central and Eastern Europe prior to the 14th sessions of Conference of the Parties of the UNCCD

31 August - 1 September, 2019, New Delhi, India

Opening and adoption of agenda

After the welcoming remarks of the Regional Chair, Mr. Andrei Kuzmich, the NFP of Belarus, and the Ms. Jamal Annagylyjova, UNCCD Secretariat the agenda was adopted with no amendments (see Annex I).

BiH representative, Ms, Svetlana Lalic, was selected as a Rapporteur of the meeting.

The group adopted the proposed agenda and deliberated on the following decisions:

Integrating the SDGs and targets into the UNCCD implementation (ICCD/COP(14)/2)

- Most of the countries expressed appreciation to the LDN TSP and the momentum it helps to create at country level. The activities should be continued including fostering country level synergies in programming among three rio-conventions.
- Few countries admitted that they lack or have weak national mechanism to ensure oversight over the main international treaties and agreements/initiatives which makes an information sharing and cohesion among the various commitments a challenging task.
- In regard to LDN Transformative Projects and Programme, some countries highlighted the important role of the Global Mechanism to help countries to access traditional and new donor funds.
- Few countries expressed the need for more transparency regarding LDN Fund activities.
- Most of the countries highlighted the need for capacity building for the NFPs in designing and resource mobilization for LDN TPP.

Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies (ICCD/COP(14)/5)

- Countries appreciated the established GEO LDN initiative and expressed the interest for more detailed information.
- Countries welcomed the further development of Drought Initiative. Some countries asked for the clarities in regard to the recruitment of national consultants to develop national drought plan.

- A particular value of peatland restoration was highlighted as an unique ecosystem with high carbon sequestration potential. Working on peatlands will be an excellent example of synergies between UNCCD, CBD and UNFCCC.
- Based on the national experience and relevance of the topic, few countries highlighted the importance of gender aspects to be mainstreamed in the implementation of the convention.

Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the UNCCD (ICCD/COP(14)/14)

- The country Parties of Annex V present at the meeting were not engaged in any activities with private sector in the framework of the convention. However, some countries expressed interest to know more and follow up on the Business Engagement Strategy of UNCCD.
- Collaboration with International Solar Alliance is based on the signed MoU between the UNCCD Secretariat and ISA to promote innovative financial mechanisms such as the LDN Fund.

Gender (ICCD/COP(14)/19)

- Most of the countries were of opinion that gender equality is well integrated in land management system. Yet, few countries shared experience of lack of application of gender strategic documents, particularly in the rural areas.

Securing of additional investments and the relations with financial mechanisms:

Report by the Global Mechanism, (ICCD/COP(14)/7-ICCD/CRIC(18)/2, ICCD/COP(14)/8)

The Managing Director of the Global Mechanism, Mr. Juan Carlos Mendosa, elaborated on 3 main areas of support to the countries (1) creating enabling environment, (2) capacity building and (3) building partnership.

- In regard to the next steps of the **Drought Initiative (DI)**, it is expected that countries which prioritized drought resilience would include the relevant activities in the design of LDN TPP. These projects could be submitted for GEF, Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund and other donors. The GM could further support countries in developing TPP in the context of drought. The recruitment of the national experts is on the way and the GM will take into consideration the fact that effective collaboration should be established between the national expert and the National Focal Point. The GM is ready to support in building partnership with new financial and technical agencies upon the request of the country.
- GM supported the reporting process through **Global Support Programme II (GSP II)**, the GSP III is under the preparation. The countries were encouraged to provide further

recommendations at CRIC session under the report of GEF, as well as during the GEF side event on Enabling Activities.

- The modality of **LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes** (LDN TPP) raised many questions. The support from the GM will be provided through the recruitment of one national and one international consultant to assist development of the project document. Despite the fact that the deadline to apply for LDN TPP support expired, the new requests could be still accommodated. The priority for LDN TPP support will be given to the countries which have established and endorsed LDN target.
- In regard to the **capacity building**, the example of two regional training for selected African and Asian countries was provided to illustrate how LDN concept and targets could be mainstreamed in the specific programming context of the regional organizations, such as African Development Bank and Asian Forest Cooperation Organization. The GM will explore the opportunity to organize similar event for countries of Annex V.
- Specific question was asked in regard to the **source of funds for GM led activities**. While the DI is funded from the core budget (special reserve fund), most of GM activities are funded through either voluntary contribution, such as Ankara Initiative, Changwon Initiative, Ireland, as well as through the GEF.
- Updated information on **LDN Fund** was provided to the participants. The Fund reached 100mln USD capital to start investments. LDN Technical Assistance Facility was established to assist countries in project design <https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/landscapes/ldn-taf/>
The GM can also facilitate the communication between the LDN Fund and the potential national partners.

Presentation of Peace Forest Initiative (PFI) by the delegation of South Korea

Presentation was done by Mr. Byungki Ahn, Director /Global Forest Resources Division Korea Forest Service. He emphasized an important role of environmental diplomacy in mediating in post conflict areas, in particular at the borderlines. It is expected that PFI will contribute to achievement of SDGs on hunger, clean water, climate change. Through joint management of bilateral project the communication could start between the adjacent areas.

Example of South Caucasus was brought illustrating the opportunity to set up a common LDN target.

The UNCCD Secretariat should play a role of PFI secretariat.

- The countries welcomed the initiative and raised the question about eligibility criteria, availability of resources, and the need for an effective monitoring system of commitments.

- All types of ecosystem restoration could be targeted under PFI, also combined with social development activities such as eco-tourism, fisheries, and agro-forestry.
- Initial funds could be secured through the contribution of South Korea, whereby international organization, such as World Bank, European countries could be engaged to join PFI. Therefore, the examples of successful PFI cooperation is important to attract more partners.
- At the initial stage, consensus and welcoming of PFI by the countries is needed.
- Some countries shared the view that PFI could be effectively applied in the trans boundary landscape restoration between two countries which are at good political term but subject to severe land degradation processes.
- As Executive Secretary suggested PFI could be applied within the border of one country if it has intra-country conflicts. The initiative could be also implemented among the countries with no conflict in order to strengthen trust.
- An opinion was shared that during last decade UNCCD has been expanding its activities beyond drylands, also through LDN as a global target, peatlands rehabilitation. PFI is another global initiative which is open to all types of ecosystems. No other convention addresses forest and ecosystem restoration from social security perspectives.
- PFI implemented by UNCCD will be a contribution to the UN decade on Ecosystem Restoration. In order to track the contribution, the quantitative indicators will be developed.

Enhancing the implementation of the UNCCD agenda through the deepening, strengthening and promotion of capacity building (ICCD/CRIC(18)/8)

- Most of the countries welcomed the proposal to have training fair organized back-to-back with intersessional session of CRIC. It was emphasized that the topic for training sessions should be demand driven. It was also mentioned that one NFP can cover only one session, whereby there is strong need for the country to build its capacity in more than one topic. Therefore, the opportunity for supporting more than one participant per country should be explored.
- Countries appreciated information provided by Capacity Buildings Market Place and expressed the need for more content in Russian language.

Final report of CRIC 17 (ICCD/CRIC(17)/9)

The report of CRIC 17 was compiled during the 3 days CRIC 17 session in January 2019. The content of the report will be used for three draft decisions to be considered by the contact group:

- (i) Assessment of the implementation of the Convention against the strategic objectives of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.
- (ii) Assessment of financial flows for the implementation of the Convention.
- (iii) Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties.

The countries have agreed that most of their recommendations provided during CRIC 17 are well captured in the report. It is important to keep the most important recommendations at the final decisions. The countries have also requested the advance copies of CRIC draft decisions.

Meeting with the UNCCD Executive Secretary

The Executive Secretary addressed the group with the following statements:

- **UNCCD should contribute to the international development agenda:** stronger focus on social aspects to address root causes of land degradation. Land degradation has impact on peace and security, as the competition over resources is growing. Land degradation forces migration, people are forced to migrate from rural areas to the cities, capital, other countries.
- **UNCCD should provide opportunities:** land restoration should be an attractive business case, more investment in land restoration is needed. Latest economic study shows that 1 \$ invested in land restoration would generate 5 – 30\$. Yet, business sector is not so active in land restoration, what are obstacles, not investing in conservation, but harvesting land. Budget for Land Degradation Focal Area in GEF is limited, but so is the national budget, we have to exploit any opportunity.
- **Land degradation is a part of climate change solution:** according to the Special Report of IPCC , 30% of carbon could be sequestered through land restoration. It's a low hanging fruit, with accessible technology and it responses to multiple benefits.
- **UNCCD should not be isolated, we contribute to global agenda:** more synergetic partnerships for UNCCD.
- **UNCCD role on drought:** Country Parties would like UNCCD to strengthen its instruments on addressing drought. Legal, technical and financial options were proposed for the countries. While countries will be selecting the most optimal approach, the political aspects should be disconnected from the financial instruments.
- The Executive Secretary proposed **to make nomination of COP bureau at the ministerial level.**
- **Regional Coordination Units should be re-enforced** to produce and support regional outreach products. Global reports do not resonate with the regions, even less with the countries. Stronger regional partnership with regional organizations will be needed. UNCCD, however, does not implement projects.

The particular conditions of Annex V was highlighted by the countries including the variety of forms of land degradation in the different ecosystems. This being a reason of Annex V promoting a global approach in the implementation of the convention with a long-term vision is aligned with aglobal task prescribed by the SDGs and other global processes. It was mentioned that the definition of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD) is more appropriate for the Annex V. How the customized regional approaches will be maintained in the UNCCD?

The Executive Secretary agreed that UNCCD is a global treaty, its global task has been re-confirmed through custodianship of SDG Target 15.3. Mr. Thiaw noted that it is not a healthy

debate to address a problem in one of the parts of the world, due to telecoupled and interconnected systems. Drought is one of the examples, which affects not only African continents, but more and more Europe and recently arctic. Some non-dryland countries are more vulnerable as they don't have capacity to cope.

The question on the synergies with Rio-conventions and the relationships with the Green Climate Fund followed. The Executive Secretary expressed his appreciation to the on-going collaboration between the secretariats of rio-conventions. The Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity and Deputy Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC will attend UNCCD High Level Segment. The recent town hall meeting in Bonn with the participation of heads of agencies of UNEP, UNCCD, UNFCCC delivered a joint message on nature-based solutions. With this being said, Mr. Thiaw has encouraged the countries to promote synergies among three conventions at the national level.

In regard to the Green Climate Fund, the newly appointed Executive Director is coming to UNCCD COP14. There is an agreement that land restoration is 30 % in solution to climate change.

Decisions deriving from the Committee on Science and Technology

Guidance to support the adoption and implementation of land-based interventions for drought management and mitigation (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/3)

Monitoring framework for the strategic objective on drought (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/7 - ICCD/CRIC(18)/4) (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/5)

Work programme of the Science-Policy Interface for the biennium 2020-2021 (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/6)

UNCCD Lead Scientist, Barron Orr, presented the outcomes of the work of the Science and Policy Interface on (i) Adoption and implementation of land-based interventions for drought management and mitigation and (ii) the Monitoring framework for the strategic objective on drought:

- The choice for land management (crops, agricultural techniques, etc.) can help to build a more drought resilient society.
- Land based interventions can help to mitigate drought effects.
- Policy recommendations were reviewed by Executive Secretary, CST and COP bureau.
- New terminology Drought smart land management (D-SLM) is proposed.
- WOCAT could consider labeling documented practices as D-SLM. COP bureau agreed with term D-SLM.

- UNCCD collaborates with WMO to develop and support new approach for the monitoring framework for SO on drought. Framework includes three levels of

indicators; it is proposed that countries report on Level 1, and optionally on Level2 and 3.

- JRC produces data for Level 3 drought vulnerability index using of 16 variability. This dataset exists and it could be calculated for each country.
- Some countries expressed need for more customized guidance on application of UNCCD reporting indicators. More targeted capacity building is needed to fill in the gap of the national experts engaged in UNCCD reporting. Guidance for the SO3 monitoring framework will be produced by the Global Mechanism.
- Clarification was given on the data producers for each level (level 2 provided by WMO and 3 by JRC). UNCCD Secretariat will collaborate with WMO on default data.
- Countries mentioned necessity of international indicators being recognized by ISO and by the National Statistic system. This will facilitate the reporting process. Standartization of the methodology has been addressed through WMO GMAS which is currently working on standardization .
- Level 3 indicator should be further fine-tuned in order to move it to more nationally relevant dataset.
- Countries shared opinion that It is important to involve the STCs in regional meetings/consultations on scientific and other relevant matters. It will be good if the Secretariat and the GM could find a way of how to support / ensure that.
- While developing intra-regional scientific-technical cooperation it is necessary to take into account that regional centers should be suitable to all Parties of the region based on jointly agreed compliance criteria.

Skype discussion with Drought Management Center for South and Eastern Europe (DMC SEE)

Staff of the Drought Management Center for South and Eastern Europe in Slovenia, Ms. Andrea Susnik and Mr. Gregor Gregovic, took part in the discussion of drought -related decisions:

- The DMC SEE representatives expressed appreciation that UNCCD addressed drought issue the global level.
- DMC SEE leads one component of the DRiDanube project. Example of drought monitoring tool was presented, as well as the protocols how to proactively manage drought in the region. There is a need to integrate regional initiatives with decisions taken at the global level.
- Not all Annex V countries are covered by the activities of DMC SEE.

- We welcome the Drought Initiative of UNCCD and the efforts to address complementary mechanism for drought. However, we should take into consideration the existing practices and approaches in drought mitigation.
- How effective are National Drought Plans (NDP)? UNCCD model for drought plan is used on the model of Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP)
- In regard to the proposed monitoring framework the concern was shared that the indicators proposed by UNCCD are suitable for the global level monitoring and will not reflect regional specific situation.
- Most of countries agreed that the elaboration of NDP is rather a desk top exercise and more time and resources are required to prepare such document with a contribution of a multi -disciplinary team and a proper consultative mechanism. The document also needs to go through governmental approval and endorsement.
- Some countries proposed to share experience how the countries from 1st call of Drought Initiative developed their plans. For the secretariat to upload the plans on the website.
- On the **complementary arrangement for drought** most of the countries expressed view that Intergovernmental Working Group should be established to propose the most optimal mixture of activities. Many activities provided under three options were beyond of the expertise and competency of the NFPs and therefore it required country level consultation. However, the group agreed that the countries should not wait for the results of IWG and further options on drought but to act now to address effects of drought. The activities under three options could be already reviewed and applied by the countries during development of national drought plans.
- In March 2019, Moldova on behalf of CEE countries sent official request to the UNCCD Secretariat to organize the workshop on drought indicators. The UNCCD Secretariat will consider organizing this workshop and will explore partnership with DMC SEE in organization of the workshop.

Land Tenure (ICCD/COP(14)/20)

The document on Land Tenure was presented which was followed by the group discussion:

- The countries of the region have shared different views on existing land tenure. For some of the countries land tenure and land rights are generally secured, whereby some countries mentioned that land tenure is not clearly defined for all types of land, i.e. private vs. state owned land.
- Gender inequality in the context of land tenure was mentioned by some countries, with men being the major land owners. More awareness raising and application of gender responsive regulation at the local level is needed.

- Some countries commented general and non-specific nature of the recommendations. More actionable recommendations should be negotiated.
- Recognition for local communities dispute resolution was noted as an important instrument of land tenure. Local level awareness raising is important.
- In regard to the recommendation to include the SDGs indicators related to land tenure and gender, some countries confirmed that they have adopted and incorporated the proposed indicators into their national monitoring systems. There was a strong opinion that UNCCD should focus on environmental -social nexus, whereby the legal and regulatory issues like land tenure should be in a forefront of the convention. UN Habitat and FAO were mentioned as specialized agencies dealing with land tenure and which provided recommendations in this regard.

Migration ICCD/COP(14)/20

Representative of the UNCCD Secretariat, Ms. Barbara Bendandi presented the document. Main elements of the INF2 document on Rural-Urban Dynamic (High Level Segment agenda) were presented by the RCU Coordinator.

- Majority of the countries recognized the relevance of migration processes for their region which is represented through abandonment of rural settlements and agricultural lands. In some countries, migration is caused by social conflicts. Rapid urbanization was mentioned as one of the growing trends which affects viability of rural areas.
- Gap in the knowledge and evidence in ecosystem degradation - social security is acknowledged. The phenomenon of “social desertification” was mentioned as a new terminology applied and the process which should be further researched.
- Interest to learn more about 3 S Initiative and possibility of replication of the model in the context of CEE.
- UNCCD Secretariat emphasized the following points relevant for the region such as (i) rural-urban migration, how cities and rural communities can develop together and (ii) remittances which could be invested to land.
- Secretariat further explained that 3S Initiative in Africa is a country led initiative. Shall Annex V countries be interested in similar type of activities, it should be initiated by the government, shall not be secretariat driven. Secretariat can assist linking Annex V countries with 3S countries to share experience on the business model used with medium and small scale enterprises to pilot some drylands products. In this context, it is important to develop private sector strategy to attract investment to rural areas.
- An economic case for rural urban migration showing the economic loss from losing agricultural lands could be developed.
- Invitation for International Organization for Migration to present report on Land Degradation – Migration Nexus.

Information about the activities of the National Center to Combat Desertification by the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation delegation presented recently established Center which is based in the Institute of Geography. The main function of the center is to provide scientific and technical advise on DLDD related matters to the government of RF. The Center has accumulated experience in application of LDN methodology for large-scale assessment, application of national indicators, as well as in mainstreaming LDN principles in climate change process under the Paris Agreement. In 2018, Institute of Geography in collaboration with the Center organized International Scientific Conference where LDN was featured. Not so many CEE countries attended the conference. Recently, the Center has published glossary on Land Degradation and Sustainable Land Management. The Center is ready and willing to share its experience and invites countries of Central and Eastern Europe for scientific collaboration.

Currently, the Center is promoting scientific collaboration with far East Asia and Central Asian countries. Center would like to expand its partnership with Annex V countries and eventually grow into the regional center which is alignment with the priority of CEE Regional Action Programme endorsed by the Annex V NFPs at COP12.

Nomination to the COP, CRIC and CST bureau

After internal consultation on countries nominations (both, through email and during the meeting) and taking into consideration the Rule 22 of the Rules of Procedures¹, the new officers to the bureau were selected from the countries present at COP 14 as following:

- COP - Andrei Kuzmich of Belarus , Ashot Vardevanyan of Armenia
- CRIC – Nino Chikovani of Georgia
- CST – Radko Ristic of Republic of Serbia

Andrei Kuzmich was nominated as the Regional Chair of Annex V country Parties.

¹ At the commencement of the first meeting of each ordinary session, a President, nine Vice-Presidents and the Chairperson of the Committee on Science and Technology shall be elected from among the representatives of the Parties present at the session in a manner that every geographical region shall be represented by at least two members.

TENTATIVE AGENDA

Regional Meeting preparatory to COP14 for country Parties of Annex V /Central and Eastern Europe

31 August-1 September 2019, New Delhi, India

Time	Session
	Registration
11:00 – 11:10	Opening Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming remarks by the UNCCD Secretariat • Opening statement by the Regional Chair
11:10-11:30	Organizational matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (b) Appointment of the rapporteur
11:30 – 12:30	Decisions deriving from the Committee of the Whole (COW) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Integration of the sustainable development goals and targets into the implementation of the UNCCD and the Land Degradation Neutrality (ICCD/COP(14)/2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies (ICCD/COP(14)/5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>How can we encourage better communication and knowledge sharing among the major restoration and rehabilitation initiatives?</i> (b) Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the UNCCD (ICCD/COP(14)/14)
12:30 – 13:00	(c) Gender; (ICCD/COP(14)/19)
13:00 – 15:00	Lunch
15:00 – 16:00	Decisions deriving from the Committee on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, CRIC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Securing of additional investments and the relations with financial mechanisms: Report by the Global Mechanism, (ICCD/COP(14)/7-ICCD/CRIC(18)/2, ICCD/COP(14)/8)
16:20 – 16:40	Presentation of Peace Forest Initiative by the delegation of South Korea
16:40 – 18:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (b) Enhancing the implementation of the UNCCD agenda through the deepening, strengthening and promotion of capacity building (ICCD/CRIC(18)/8) (c) Final report of CRIC 17 (ICCD/CRIC(17)/9)

Time	Session
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9:30 – 10:00	Welcoming remarks by Ibrahim Thiaw, UNCCD Executive Secretary
10:00 – 10:30	Decisions deriving from the Committee of the Whole, COW (a) Drought; (ICCD/COP(14)/17)
10:30 – 11:20	Decisions deriving from the Committee on Science and Technology, CST (a) Guidance to support the adoption and implementation of land-based interventions for drought management and mitigation (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/3) (b) Monitoring framework for the strategic objective on drought (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/7 - ICCD/CRIC(18)/4) (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/5) Work programme of the Science-Policy Interface for the biennium 2020–2021 (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/6)
11:20 – 12:15	What does it mean for Central and Eastern Europe? (Representatives of Drought Management Center by Skype) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Experience in developing national drought plans, what's next?</i>- <i>Legal arrangement for drought</i>- <i>Request for the Drought Training, role of Drought Management Center for SEE and WMO</i>- <i>Other national and regional drought related initiatives</i>
12:15 – 12:45	Decisions deriving from the Committee of the Whole (COW) (a) Migration (ICCD/COP(14)/20) Rural -Urban dynamic (COP14/INF2); <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>How relevant is this topic for CEE?</i>- <i>Is there enough evidence for negative impact of urbanization on land?</i>
12:45 – 13:00	(b) Land Tenure (ICCD/COP(14)/20) <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>How land tenure can secure more sustainable land management and achieving LDN in CEE?</i>
13:00 – 15:00	Lunch
15:00 -15:20	Multi-Year work plan for the Convention (2020-2030) (ICCD/COP(14)/6) and Programme and budget for the biennium 2020-2021 (ICCD/COP(14)/7)
15:20 – 17:00	Regional discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Relevant regional events 2020-2021 and the role UNCCD can play?</i>- <i>Working with national and regional media</i>- <i>Intra-regional collaboration</i>
17:00 -18:00	Election of officers to Bureaux COP, CRIC, CST Closure of the meeting Group Chair' Summary Closing remark from the UNCCD representative/Closure of the meeting

List of the country delegates present at the Regional Preparatory and Consultation Meeting, COP14

COUNTRY	NAME	DESIGNATION
Armenia	Erik Grigoryan	Minister, HoD
Armenia	Ashot Vardevanyan	NFP, Deputy Head of the Bioresources Management Agency
Azerbaijan	Sadig Salmanov	NFP, Head of Sub division of Forests Development Department
Azerbaijan	Malak Shukurova	Executive Director of REC Caucasus, HoD
Belarus	Andrei Kuzmich	Deputy Head of Biological and Landscape Diversity Department, HoD
Belarus	Dzmitry Kurlovich	STC, Dean of the Faculty of Geography and Geoinformatics
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Marijana Kapovic Solomun	Vice Dean for Scientific Research and Professor of Soil science
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Hamid Custovic	STC
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Svetlana Lazic	Senior Associate for Agriculture Land Protection, HoD
Bulgaria	Not present	
Croatia	Marija Vihovanec	
Czechia	Premysl Stepanek	Head of Multilateral Agreements Unit
Czechia	Milan Dostal	Economic and Commercial Counsellor (From the Embassy in India)
Northern Macedonia	Not present	
Georgia	Nino Chikovani	Head of Land Resources Protection Division, HoD
Georgia	Nana Bolashvili	STC, Director
Georgia	Sophiko Akhobadze	
Latvia	Not present	
Lithuania	Julius Pranevicius	Ambassador (Embassy in India)
Lithuania	Kamile Nemeiksyte	Third Secretary (Embassy in India)
Montenegro	Mirko Knezevic	STC, Senior Researcher
Montenegro	Biljana Kilibarda	National Focal Point, HoD
Moldova	Georgeta Mincu	Minister of Agriculture, regional development & environment, HoD
Moldova	Sergiu Gherciu	Chief Advisor to the Minister
Moldova	Violeta Balan	NFP, Deputy Director
Poland	Slawomir Mazurek	Undersecretary of State, HoD

Poland	Aleksander Brzozka	Spokesperson
Poland	Szymon Tumielewicz	Deputy Director
Poland	Piotr Czarnocki	Head of Unit
Russian Federation	Sergey Protsenko	Deputy Director, HoD
Russian Federation	Sergey Vasiliev	National Focal Point
Russian Federation	Olga Andreeva	Senior Researcher
Russian Federation	German Kust	STC, Principal Researcher
Russian Federation	Denis Popov	
Serbia	Jasmina Jovic	Assistant Minister, HoD
Serbia	Natasa Lalic	Acting National Focal Point
Serbia	Ratko Ristic	Dean of Faculty of Forestry University of Belgrade
Serbia	Ljiljana Belojevic	Minister Counsellor (Embassy in India)
Slovakia	Not present	
Ukraine	Yuriy Kolmaz	Head of Division of Land and Mineral Resources Protection, HoD
Ukraine	Olena Rakoid	STC, Associate Professor
Estonia	Hanna Soe	Adviser

Statements on behalf of the Annex V

Opening of the 14 Sessions of the CoP by Belarus

Mister Chair
Excellency,
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On behalf of the Annex V countries allow me to thank people and the Government of India for organizing COP 14 and the regional preparatory meetings in Incredible India! Your warm hospitality is highly appreciated!
2. We would like to express our gratitude to the Secretariat, the Global Mechanism of UNCCD and other international partners in supporting countries in the LDN Target Setting Programme and the LDN transformative projects and programmes.
3. We believe that this support should continue, and for the effective implementation of the Convention it is crucial to mobilize additional financial resources for the advancing UNCCD Framework Strategy and the national voluntary LDN targets.
4. Our region is taken pace in LDM implementation and we highly appreciate efforts of the Global Mechanism to support countries in developing LDN transformative projects. We would like to suggest that Some elements of activities should be improved: GM should focus on helping countries to establish partnership with new financial agencies, rather than with the traditional agencies like GEF .
5. We also would like to express our gratitude to the Secretariat, United Nations Environment Programme and the Republic of Korea for ensuring further continuation of the Greening Drylands Partnership which support countries in the practical implementation of LDN targets, the restoration of degraded ecosystems, such as forest and peatlands.
6. At CRIC 17 in Guyana we reviewed the results of the first reporting carried out after the adoption of the UNCCD Strategic Framework until 2030, and the recommendations were very specific, perhaps more than ever before. Now it is very important to correctly translate these results into decisions of the Conference of the Parties, and we would be grateful to the Secretariat for providing drafts of the relevant decisions as early as possible, so that we had time to discuss them at the regional consultations.

7. We welcome the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies. We believe the GEO LDN initiative is important to enhance national capacities to access and utilize global, regional and national data.
8. We also welcome the further development of drought initiative, this initiative should attract more countries and should not be limited to supporting countries in preparing drought action plans only but also building national capacity in setting up the proactive drought mitigation mechanisms and facilitating exchange of experience among the countries participating in the drought initiative.
9. We would like to note the important role of SPI in work undertaken during last two years related to drought indicators and land-based interventions to mitigate drought. The result of the implementation of the SPI work programme for 2020-2021 in collaboration with WMO and other partners should be the proposal of specific practical measures for monitoring and adaptation to drought, the development of innovative approaches, including using GIS application.
10. The proposed indicators on drought are global, but we would also like to emphasize the importance of regional and subregional cooperation on drought, and in this regard we would like to acknowledge the work of the Drought Management Center, Slovenia.
11. On the complementary arrangement for drought we believe that Inter – governmental Working Group should be established to propose the most optimal mixture of activities on the complementary arrangements on drought. But we should not wait for the results of IWG and further options on drought, we have to address drought now. The activities under 3 areas (financial, technological and legal) could be already reviewed and guide the countries during development of national drought plans.
12. During COP 14 we must pay particular attention to gender issues, which are important for our region. Gender equality issues are becoming an integral part of projects and programs to combat land degradation. We must begin to address these issues in practice, and in order to obtain relevant data, it will be important to include these issues in the reporting.
13. We would like to note the importance of further studies on the relationship between

land degradation and migration, issues of peace and security in order to understand the ways to effectively influence these processes and take adequate measures. And in this we would also like to emphasize the importance of issues of various types of migration, including rural-urban, which is more typical for the countries of our region.

14. Annex V countries welcome the Peace Forest Initiative and we believe that this initiative should cover all countries that wish to join it, and all type ecosystems.
15. Land tenure issues are relevant for the countries of our region, in which the share of the private land sector is high, but we have to focus on UNCCD mandate. The relationship of this issue with land degradation should be better studied. We would like to emphasize the importance of recognition for local communities dispute resolution and local level awareness raising in this issue.
16. It is important to continue building capacity, we highly appreciate the training fairs held during CRIC 17, and we consider it necessary to continue the practice of conducting such trainings in the future. The topics of trainings should be determined on the basis of the most demanded needs of countries. And we would like to encourage more regular and more targeted capacity building events.

Distinguished delegates,

17. In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the Annex V countries are ready for an open and constructive dialogue to develop COP 14 decisions that will make the implementation process of the Convention more effective in actual global context.

We wish all participants of COP 14 successful and fruitful work.
Thank you for attention!

Statement at the High Level Segment by Armenia

Mr. President,

I would like to thank the Government of India for hosting COP14 in New Delhi!

I would like to congratulate the Government with important leadership role, as the President of the 14 session of the COP, and also congratulate new members of the Bureau, and express full confidence in our group experience and efficiency.

The region of Central and Eastern Europe is making steady progress in elimination of extreme poverty and fostering stronger economic growth. We are at the critical moment and we have to move towards an energy and resource efficient economy when economic growth will not compromise environmental and social security.

Countries of Central and Eastern Europe welcome the spirit of COP 14 which is “Investing in land, unlocking opportunities”. We believe that resources we spend on land rehabilitation should be considered as a long-term investment which would help ensure that growth is planet-friendly and create new industries and jobs.

The countries of Annex V are not isolated from global environmental challenges, such as climate change, land degradation and drought. We welcome COP 14 agenda, in particular on drought, land tenure and further integration of SDG Target 15 in the implementation of the convention and building synergetic partnerships.

We strongly believe that SDG Goal 15 can help to accelerate the implementation of all other Sustainable Development Goals.

As we are embarking at the last decade to achieve SDG 2030 goals, we call upon the rio-conventions, UN agencies and international organizations to make efforts in joint programming. The countries of the region will seek a synergetic approach to address climate change , land degradation and biodiversity loss.

That vision will only be realized if strong partnerships are built and sustained.

Last, but not least, Mr. President, I would like to talk about young people.

For our region with the growing young generation, it is absolutely important to incorporated the youths perspectives and actions in addressing desertification, poverty and climate change. Therefore, we welcome the organization of UNCCD Desertification Youth Forum and hope that this platform will be held on regular basis.

Mr. President,

We hope to have a productive and result-oriented Cop 14.

With these words, I once again, I thank you Mr. President

Closing of the 14th session of the CoP by Azerbaijan

Dear Mr. President!
Excellences,
Distinguished delegates.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Annex V country Parties, I would like to, express our sincere appreciation to the People and Government of India for hosting COP-14 in a beautiful city of Delhi, for great organization of this event and your hospitality. We also would like to congratulate the Indian Government with important leadership role and congratulate new members of the Bureaus, and express full confidence in our group experience and efficiency.

COP 14 was a first global land summit organized under the leadership of Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD. Our Annex would like to congratulate you, Mr. Thiaw, personally and your team for an outstanding work done to provide high-level, inclusive and visible global stage for the all stakeholders to come and to have effective negotiations.

This session was held at a time when countries and international community are gearing up for Climate Action Summit later this month. We are confident that UNCCD COP 14 under the leadership of India sent a strong and clear message to the global community that protecting and improving the health of land is the most natural, affordable and long-lasting solution for climate change, biodiversity protection and human well-being. The impressive list of participants of the High Level Segment, Governmental leaders, Ministers, Head of UN agencies, civil society and private sector shows that UNCCD is a global forum for high-level stakeholders to contribute.

In regard to the outcomes of the COP 14 our group welcome the deliberations and decisions of the conference.

Each of three committees have achieved their goals of providing a comprehensive platform for policy deliberations and recommendations.

We believe, that COP 14 was a turning point for the convention when Parties called for strong and bold actions to support and participate in a global ecosystem restoration. Cop provided clear overview of most important global and regional restoration initiatives. When we go back home we will bring a clear message to seek linkages and cohesion between various national commitments to maximize our efforts.

Mr. President,

Distinguished delegates,

The constructive decisions have been taken to continue supporting countries in programming existing resources to combat Desertification Land Degradation and Drought and to achieve voluntary land degradation neutrality targets. Our region expresses its further commitment to work on integration LDN target in the national strategic documents, and we already have good practices and approaches in integrating LDN in regulatory framework and land use planning.

We believe the decision of involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the target-setting exercise, including all ministries concerned, local communities, indigenous peoples, civil society organizations and the private sector is a key to better achievements of LDN targets. We welcome the support provided by the Global Mechanism through LDN Transformative Projects and Programme and through other existing financial mechanisms including private and public funds. Meantime, Annex 5 countries emphasize the need to mobilize additional and diverse sources of financing for implementation of the Convention at national level.

Droughts become increasingly intensive and turning into natural disasters, and our region faces negative impacts of droughts on social and economic life of the population.

In the regard to drought, we would like to see a stronger policy role of the convention. We appreciate the efforts of the Secretariat in provision of a comprehensive document on potential options for the complimentary arrangements on droughts. Nevertheless, an inclusive and in-depth discussion between all stakeholders is needed to come up with the most optimal solutions. Therefore, our group welcomes the establishment of the Intergovernmental Working Group to facilitate discussion on effective measures and arrangements addressing droughts under the UNCCD.

We welcome the decision of COP-14 to further support development and implementation of the national drought plans and other drought-related activities and as well as mobilization of additional voluntary financial and non-financial resources.

We also welcome the SPI recommendations on the monitoring strategic objective on droughts and science based evidence on the approaches for the assessment and monitoring of the resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems to droughts. This will be a timely and needed contribution to the work of Intergovernmental Working Group on droughts.

In regard to the reporting process, we look forward to the implementation of CRIC decisions on further improvement of the reporting procedures. We believe the decision capture well the lessons learnt and recommendations provided in Guyana.

We further welcome the adoption at COP-14 decision on the establishment of indicator and monitoring framework for UNCCD strategic objective 3 on Drought. We look forward to a strong collaboration with and support of specialized institutions on capacity building and technical assistance to report on the compilation and use of the default data based on prepared methodological good practice guidance. We, however, concerned that the expanded requirements for the reporting with inclusion of new indicators will represent additional workload for the countries and therefore look forward to the adequate and timely resource allocation for the next reporting cycle with the aim to establish national land and drought monitoring system.

We expect that the Secretariat, Global Mechanism in collaboration with the Group on Earth Observations and its special LDN initiative will further build national capacity in land monitoring with a long-term views of establishing land monitoring platforms.

Our region re-affirms its readiness to integrate four priority areas of the Gender Action Plan in implementation of the Convention and the achievement of LDN targets.

In this regard we look forward to a continued targeted capacity building to support gender responsive and transformative projects and programmes and we see the strong necessity to focus on further implementation of the decisions adopted by the parties in this regard.

We recognize the key role of young generation in addressing land degradation, droughts, migration and climate change and the need for their further empowering. Therefore, we welcome the organization of UNCCD Desertification Youth Forum and hope that this platform will be held on regular basis.

We also acknowledge land tenure is critical in achieving land degradation neutrality and addressing land degradation and droughts and welcome the decision of COP-14 made in this regard.

We appreciate the initiative of India on adoption of the Delhi Declaration under COP-14, which confirms the commitment of the countries to solve issues on land degradation, desertification and drought at a highest possible political level.

Our region highly appreciate the contribution of science in the Convention implementation, the work of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) and particularly would like to welcome the prepared reports, including the tools for soil organic carbon, enabling environment for LDN and land-

drought nexus. We welcome decisions for further development and application of these tools at national levels. We recommend the SPI in its next work programme to adapt existing scientific language to the policy makers at the country level. We do assure that Central and Eastern European region will continue to make every effort on national and regional levels towards implementation of objectives set at COP-14.

We wish to thank all of you for a successful session of the COP.

Have a safe flight home!

Thank you, Mr. President!