

# Evaluation of the UNCCD New York Liaison Office

June 2020



**United Nations**  
Convention to Combat  
Desertification

This evaluation considers the performance of the New York Liaison Office (NYLO) of the UNCCD in the light of the overall mandate, objectives and functions of the secretariat taking into account the aims of the secretariat's organisational update process and, as feasible, in comparison to liaison offices of other organisations. On that basis, it makes suggestions on the future role and potential of NYLO with the aim to further develop and target its contribution to the UNCCD, and to strengthen its capacity to deliver against growing expectations.

*This evaluation was commissioned by the UNCCD Evaluation Office and authored by Ms. Lilit Melikyan in December 2019 – June 2020. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the UNCCD secretariat or the Global Mechanism.*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CBD	Convention for Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN)
DLDD	Desertification, land degradation and drought
ERPA	External Relations, Policy and Advocacy Unit
ES	Executive Secretary
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
G77	Group of 77
GA	General Assembly
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
GoF	Group of Friends
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
IPBES	Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
NBS	Nature Based Solutions
NYLO	New York Liaison Office
PGA	President of the UN General Assembly
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDS	Sand and dust storms
SLM	sustainable land management
SPI	Science-Policy Interface
STI	Science, technology and Innovation
TOR	Terms of reference
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPPA	United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
USA	United States of America
WB	World Bank

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. BACKGROUND

Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. Its Strategy for 2018-2030 states as the vision "A future that avoids, minimizes, and reverses desertification/ land degradation and mitigates the effects of drought in affected areas at all levels and strive to achieve a land degradation neutral world consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, within the scope of the Convention". The Convention's 197 Parties work together to improve the living conditions for people in areas affected by land degradation, to maintain and restore land and soil productivity, and to mitigate the effects of drought. The UNCCD is particularly committed to a bottom-up approach, encouraging the participation of local people in combating desertification and land degradation.

Decision-making under the UNCCD is done at the Conference of the Parties (COP) that brings together all signatories to the Convention every two years. The COP is assisted by two subsidiary bodies: the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC). The work under the UNCCD is supported by two entities: (a) the UNCCD secretariat, that organizes the intergovernmental process and facilitates cooperation and information exchange among countries, development partners, the scientific community, the civil society and other key stakeholders; and (b) the Global Mechanism (GM) that promotes the mobilization of resources for sustainable land management. The New York Liaison Office (NYLO) is located in the UN headquarters in New York, USA. NYLO is in a way an extension of the secretariat at the heart of the UN.

The key function of the secretariat is to service the sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies. This includes a multitude of tasks, ranging from the preparation of substantive documentation to logistical arrangements for the sessions, with the overall aim of enabling country Parties to make well-founded decisions and successfully advance the implementation of the UNCCD. Particular attention is paid to:<sup>1</sup>

- a. *Increasing the political momentum:* Active promotion of the UNCCD, notably by linking scientific findings with political decision-making, supports a growing global commitment to halt land degradation and rehabilitate already degraded land;
- b. *Moving to meet global targets:* Efforts toward national/regional land degradation neutrality and recognition of the critical role of land and soil in climate change adaptation and mitigation are essential factors for meeting the global development agenda that is summarized in the Sustainable Development Goals; and
- c. *Improving conditions for national implementation:* Access to information, up-scaling of good practices, and opportunities for capacity-building are critical for progress in implementing the UNCCD at national level.

In order to efficiently carry out its tasks, the secretariat works to build and further strengthen partnerships with programmes and institutions that have proven capacities in the areas covered by the UNCCD.

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<sup>1</sup> UNCCD website: <https://www.unccd.int/about-us/secretariat>

In 2019-2020, the secretariat has been going through an organisational update process with the aim to focus its strategic approach and better use its assets in delivering on the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework. This update process seeks to strengthen the role and influence of the UNCCD as a science-policy authority on desertification, land degradation and drought, and to increase its importance as an instrument for national action on land. It also aims to elevate the organizational effectiveness of the secretariat and the GM through improved internal coherence and coordination, updated staff capacities, and empowered managers. The NYLO evaluation is one element of the organisational update process.

## 1.2. OBJECTIVES AND MAIN USES OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation is called to assess the performance of NYLO in the light of the overall mandate, aims and functions of the secretariat, taking into account the objectives of the organisational update process and, as feasible, in comparison to liaison offices of other organisations. On that basis, it was expected to make suggestions on the future role and potential of NYLO with the aim to further develop and target its contribution to the UNCCD, and to strengthen its capacity to deliver against growing expectations.

The evaluation is to serve primarily an internal learning purpose within the UNCCD secretariat. Its findings are expected to help the Executive Secretary in developing the effectiveness and efficiency of the secretariat. The findings and conclusions generated through the evaluation are expected to be of interest and use also for other stakeholders working on the UNCCD and/or specific liaison functions.

## 2. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

As an overall approach, the involved stakeholders were invited to participate in the development of the evaluation approach, and they were also consulted at different phases of the evaluation process. This is important for collective learning and creating conditions conducive to change and action.

The evaluation was prepared in three main phases: inception, data collection, and synthesis and dissemination of findings. It used a mixed method approach, combining of triangulation and contribution analysis and elements of an organizational assessment methodology.

- **Triangulation** was the key analysis technique used with the aim to minimize the bias in the information collected, which involves developing the reliability of the findings through multiple data sources of information, bringing as much evidence as possible into play from different perspectives in the assessment of hypotheses and assumptions. The sources of information included:
  - *Document review*; and
  - *30 Key Informant Interviews*: The key stakeholders interviewed included: UNCCD unit chiefs and key staff in UNCCD Bonn; NYLO staff; representatives of selected country Missions and UN offices and departments in New York; as well as the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), among others. A semi structured interview guide was developed and agreed with the stakeholders, along the evaluation questions;

- **Attribution and contribution analysis.** The outcomes of the observed results were attributed to the project when feasible. When it was not be feasible, contribution analysis was used; and
- **Light touch organizational assessment as an underlying methodology,** looking at (1) organisational motivation, (2) organisational capacity and (3) enabling environment<sup>2</sup> as some of the key factors that affect performance. The following aspects were considered relevant to the performance of NYLO, asked as probing questions as part of the interviews: its relationship with the secretariat (planning, coordination, sharing of resources and information); key features of location in the UN headquarters (stakeholder cooperation, information-sharing with external partners, use of facilities); NYLO visibility and public relations; its information management; aims, tasks and responsibilities and its capacities, structure and resources in relation to these.

As part of **Synthesis**, findings were mapped against the evaluation criteria and responses to the evaluation questions. Lessons were drawn from all the analytical work carried out under different tasks of this assignment and validated through the interviews with the project counterpart staff. Recommendations were drawn on the adjustments and changes that need to be made to ensure success, including on new approaches to collaboration and coordination between NYLO and the headquarters.

The evaluation considered the performance of NYLO according to the following criteria, with the aim to clarify the mandate, priorities and optimal functioning of NYLO as well as related resources, and to identify areas for further effectiveness gains:

- **Effectiveness:** The main results deriving from specific tasks and responsibilities of NYLO in liaising with the UN headquarters and related stakeholders, as well as its various inputs to the work of different units of the secretariat.
- **Efficiency:** The resource use of NYLO in comparison to other secretariat units, and various aspects relevant to the performance of NYLO, including its relationship with the secretariat (planning, coordination, sharing of resources).
- **Relevance:** assessing the responsiveness of NYLO results and activities to the overall objectives and targets the secretariat; and consideration of the relevance of UNCCD presence to the processes and collaboration of various stakeholders in New York.
- **Sustainability:** Financial viability of NYLO, and the adequacy its staffing to its main tasks.

The overall key questions that the evaluation responded to are as follows:

- What are and what should be the main objectives and goals to be achieved by NYLO?
- Who are and who should be the main key stakeholders that NYLO works with?
- What kind of strategies, factors and functions of NYLO would optimize the achievement of its objectives and goals?
- What is and what should be the role of NYLO within the secretariat? Are there changes to be made; if yes, what kind of changes?
- How could the information sharing and coordination between NYLO and the Bonn headquarters be improved? What kind of support would NYLO need most from the headquarters? What support could it best offer to the units of the secretariat, or to the GM?

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<sup>2</sup> see <https://www.universalia.com/en/services/institutional-and-organizational-performance-assessment>

The evaluation was conducted under resource constraints: ideally it should have involved interviews with a larger circle of stakeholders. In particular, interviews with the Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) could have been useful as their functions are not very different from those of NYLO with the ongoing reforms. However, at the time of the evaluation, the RCUs were being restructured, with possible staff changes, and this situation was not optimal for the interviews.

### 3. THE NEW YORK LIAISON OFFICE

In the UN system, New York has a special role. It is the seat of the UN headquarters and its General Assembly (UNGA) as well as the Security Council, and the resolutions agreed by these bodies are carefully observed all over the world. It is the venue for “high politics” in the UN system, for debates and agreements around peace, security and development. Any major changes to budgets and administrative processes within the UN system also tend to be launched in New York.

This formal importance of New York to the UN system is reflected in the numerous processes and events that take place there as part, or in the sidelines, of the official meetings and that involve a continuous flow of visits by highest-level political authorities. New York is also often considered as a duty station for particularly skilled diplomats, many of whom have an influential position in their country of origin and many others that are rapidly moving toward such positions. The combination of critically important topics, influential participants and global visibility make New York an ideal place for international liaison and advocacy. Consequently, many UN system entities along with other major organisations have at least some form of representation there.

#### 3.1. SET UP OF THE UNCCD NEW YORK LIAISON OFFICE

A UNCCD senior officer was assigned for New York liaison already in 1997 and this function was formally noted by COP 4 in 2000 by a decision prompting the Executive Secretary to consult with the UN Secretariat to secure more resources from the overhead to fund the Convention’s activities, including those related to liaison arrangements in New York<sup>3</sup>. NYLO is now located in the UN headquarters. It is staffed by one director-level staff, 50 percent of a professional and 50 percent of a general staff (shared with the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity -CBD). Its expenses are covered from the resources of the UNCCD secretariat, involving a cost-sharing arrangement with the CBD secretariat for the office facilities and the shared staff. The cost-sharing arrangement between the two Conventions, which is a relatively rare approach in the UN system, has been noted also by the CBD Conference of the Parties and supported by the UN General Assembly<sup>4</sup>.

In the structure of the UNCCD secretariat, NYLO reports directly to the Executive Secretary and is part of the Executive Direction and Management (EDM) along with the Offices of the Executive Secretary and the Deputy Executive Secretary (see Figure 1). In the proposed 2020-2023 UNCCD workplan that was submitted to COP 14<sup>5</sup>, the Executive Secretary and the EDM were described to “coordinate the secretariat in its support to the Convention bodies and ensure the overall effectiveness and coherence of the work of the secretariat... provide strategic direction for the secretariat and the GM and

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<sup>3</sup> Decision 4 COP 4

<sup>4</sup>Decision VIII/16 of CBD, UNGA RES/S-19/2.

<sup>5</sup> Document ICCD/COP (14)/7: Comprehensive multi-year workplan for the Convention (2020–2023) and two-year costed work programme for the Convention (2020–2021). <https://www.unccd.int/official-documentscop-14-new-delhi-india-2019/iccdcop147> - NYLO has been described in identical terms also in earlier workplan/ work programme documents, thus the text can be considered as a standard representation of the key functions of NYLO.

represent the organization externally... and consult with Parties, coordinate cooperation with other organizations and reach out to stakeholders worldwide to encourage their commitment to the objectives and implementation of the Convention". In the same document, NYLO was described to "ensure visibility for UNCCD issues in the United Nations bodies and events of high political importance, notably the General Assembly, the Security Council and the High-level Political Forum... to undertake targeted outreach to constituencies at the United Nations Headquarters and provide information and advice on UNCCD matters to United Nations Member States and special interest groups, such as least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and Small Island Developing States... service the activities of the Group of Friends on desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD), and promote land-related partnerships and initiatives involving various stakeholders, notably youth, women, civil society and academia... advocate for further attention to be paid to UNCCD priorities in the GEF and World Bank programmes, as well as in the follow-up to key global processes and events".

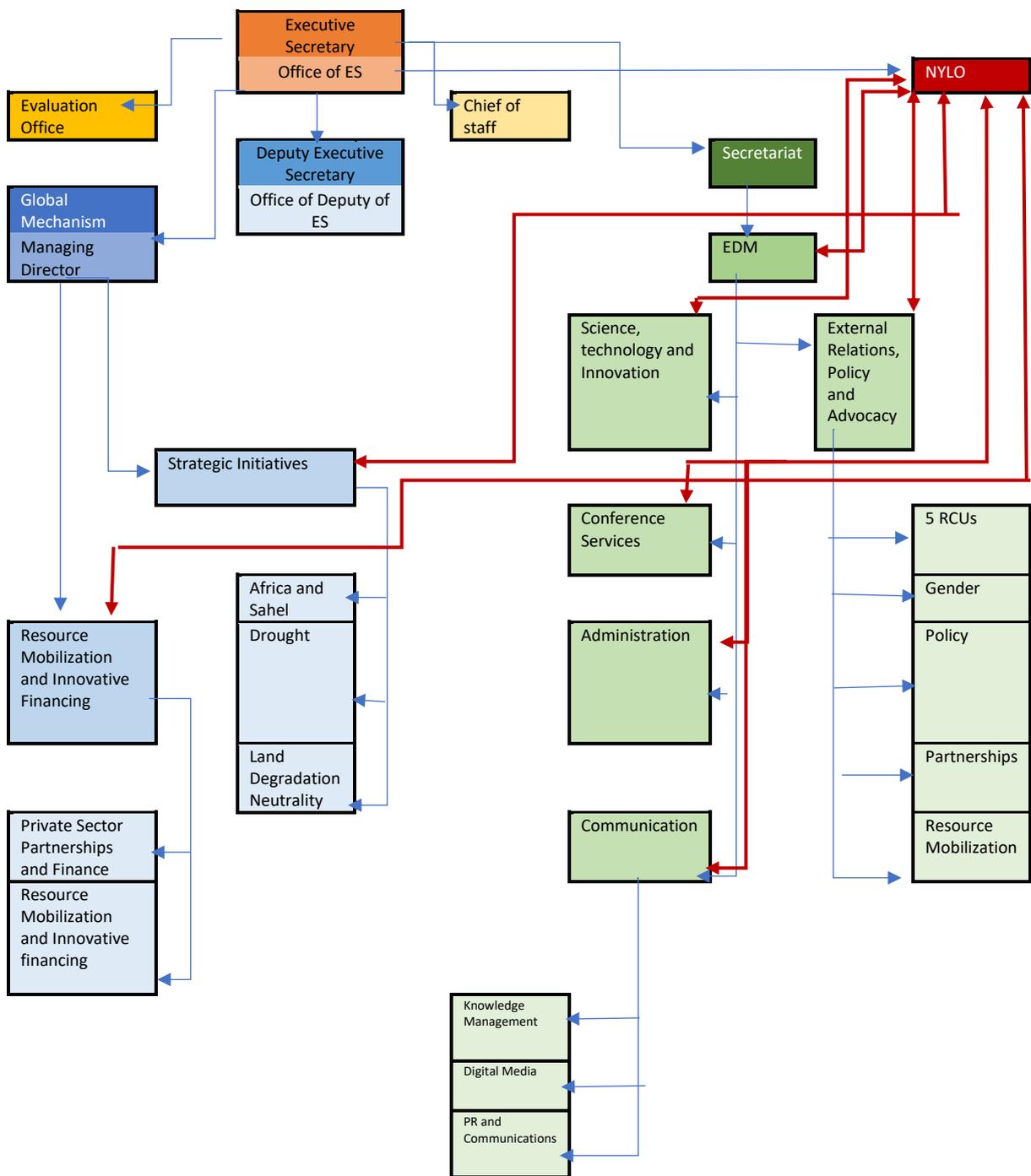
The corporate planning tool for the secretariat and the GM, the UNCCD results framework, is built around the five objectives of the Convention's 2018-2030 strategic framework and approved by the COP. It defines the priority outcomes of the secretariat and the GM for each four-year period, which are detailed in internal two-year work programmes of the secretariat and the GM by the setting of practical targets. Each target is formally assigned as the responsibility of one unit of the GM, while the outputs and activities for meeting the targets usually involve several units and are often coordinated through team work. NYLO has activities under some targets and is thus participating in related coordination, but it has not been assigned responsible for any of them. This is likely due to the focus of the targets: they reflect the substantive priorities and key topics of the secretariat and the GM, such as scientific collaboration on LDN, national drought plans or funding sources for the UNCCD, while NYLO works on the cross-cutting political advocacy that contributes to many targets but does not by itself generate the expected end result.

When asked about its main activities, the information provided by NYLO included the following:

- Preparation of the annual Secretary-General's UNGA report on the implementation of the UNCCD and substantive support to the negotiations of the related UNGA resolution;
- Inputs to the preparation of other reports and documents for New York -based meetings and policy processes relevant to the UNCCD;
- In the UN context, initiation of and support to the organisation of high-level events and campaigns on matters relevant to the UNCCD;
- Advocacy and outreach on DLDD issues toward country Missions, regional and interest groups;
- Awareness-raising and promotion of the UNCCD in the context of high-level events and exchanges;
- Serving as the secretariat for the Group of Friends of DLDD;
- Participation in relevant UN inter-agency coordination mechanisms and meetings;
- Collaboration with relevant Departments of the UN Secretariat, as well as other UN entities e.g. UN Women, UNDP etc. to advance DLDD issues;
- Representation of the UNCCD at the GEF Council and the World Bank meetings; and
- Outreach to academia, CSOs, private sector and other stakeholders based in New York

Some of these activities are specified in the current two-year work programme for the secretariat and the GM; for example, in 2020 NYLO will support the organisation of a high-level event on DLDD, hosted by the UNGA President. Most of them are, however, not included in the work programme as no exact outputs that would be explicitly (vs. generally) relevant to the targets are defined for them.

Figure 1: UNCCD secretariat and GM organigram showing functional and reporting lines (functional lines in red, reporting lines in blue arrows)



Based on the corporate version of the organigram.

Evaluating the effectiveness of NYLO requires at least some definition of the result expectations (beyond activities and outputs) against which the assessment can be made. For this purpose, building on the NYLO description in the workplan document and its activities as presented above, the current objectives of NYLO were broadly defined as follows:

1. UNCCD issues are reflected in relevant New York based intergovernmental policy making processes;
2. The Permanent Missions, the United Nations General Assembly and its organs, relevant UN system organisations and major interest/regional groups represented in New York are aware of and supportive to the implementation of the Convention;
3. The GEF secretariat is aware of the UNCCD priorities and reflects them in its activities;
4. Relevant organizations headquartered in North America such as the World Bank, the secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity and major civil society organizations are aware of the UNCCD priorities, and information of their developments is delivered to the secretariat and the GM; and
5. New land-related partnerships and initiatives involving various stakeholders, notably youth, women, civil society and academia, are launched.

These generic objectives serve also the purpose of evaluating the relevance of NYLO.

## 3.2. FINDINGS

### 3.2.1. Effectiveness

In a brief analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) that was carried out at the beginning of the evaluation process, NYLO defined among its strengths its direct reporting line to the Executive Secretary and its nature as a diplomatic liaison, indicating that these characteristics allow it to have the political leverage that it needs, in order to influence the intergovernmental process and to approach high-level authorities such as visiting dignitaries and Permanent Representatives. This perception is confirmed by the findings of this evaluation: NYLO has a solid track record in promoting the UNCCD priorities in the context of major policy processes and events in New York, and it has also worked well with various New York based representatives and constituencies as well as the GEF in Washington. There is also some, but less, evidence of achievements for the last two generic objectives defined above, concerning liaison with other relevant organizations headquartered in North America and promotion of land-related partnerships and initiatives.

*NYLO has succeeded in ensuring that UNCCD issues are reflected in selected New York based intergovernmental policy making processes, most notably in the context of UNGA and its organs (objective 1).*

Perhaps the most important recent development in the UNCCD process in general has been the inclusion of land degradation neutrality (LDN) in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – under SDG 15 on life on land, target 15.3 is about LDN. The 2018-2030 UNCCD Strategic Framework includes LDN as an important operational concept, which guides national programming and related monitoring. More than 120 UNCCD country Parties have either set or are in the process of setting national LDN targets, which links their national action directly with SDG 15. This connection is further strengthened

by the UNCCD reporting system, as major part of the data collected is about LDN progress, and same indicators (same reports) are used for global monitoring of progress toward SDG target 15.3.

While the substantive development of LDN was prepared through the relevant units in the Bonn headquarters, NYLO had an important role in promoting the political buy-in. NYLO was instrumental in supporting the preparation of a UNGA high-level meeting on DLDD in September 2011, where over one hundred heads of state and government participated, and which resulted in the first high-level commitment to LDN. Similarly, NYLO was actively advising UN member states on LDN in the preparations for the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (“Rio + 20”) that concluded with commitment to LDN, among other results. This Summit fed directly to the preparation of the SDGs, which includes, as noted above, LDN as target 15.3. Since the adoption of the SDGs, NYLO has ensured that LDN information is included in the annual report of the UN Secretary General on DLDD, and related UNGA resolutions have repeatedly emphasized the importance of LDN not only for SDG 15 but also as an accelerator and integrator of other SDGs.

Another important milestone for the UNCCD process was the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020). This Decade was launched and followed-up through UNGA resolutions, and NYLO played an important role in informing the member states on the plans and progress in his context. The Decade supported awareness of DLDD and triggered related action and collaboration among numerous countries, UN system organisations and other stakeholders. In addition to promoting the implementation of the Convention, the Decade as a process also raised the profile of the UNCCD: although being much smaller than most collaborating organisations, the UNCCD secretariat was assigned to serve as the lead agency for the Decade. A High-Level Dialogue chaired by the President of the General Assembly is planned to take place in June 2020, with the aim to consider the outcomes of the Decade and the future actions on addressing DLDD. NYLO is actively participating in the preparations for that event.

*NYLO has contributed to the recognition of the nexus between DLDD and peace, security and migration, and gender issues, notably through supporting the inclusion of related provisions in UNGA resolutions.* These political resolutions have paved the way for increasing support to concrete actions of using land restoration as a tool for improving stability, particularly for increasing local income generation in migration-prone areas. NYLO had also an important role in the organisation of a UN Security Council session on the nexus between DLDD and conflicts, especially in Africa, in 2018, with the Executive Secretary invited to address the Council. Furthermore, NYLO assisted in the planning and preparation for a Ministerial Meeting on the Sustainability, Stability and Security (3S) Initiative in Africa, held in July 2018, and in integrating land issues into the Global Compact on Migration that was endorsed by UNGA in December 2018. For the latter, NYLO served as the liaison between the UNCCD secretariat and the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for International Migration.

Gender issues are gaining growing importance in the UNCCD process, following the adoption of the UNCCD Gender Action Plan by COP 13 in 2017 and its implementation from thereon. NYLO has contributed to the visibility of the UNCCD approach to gender issues by co-hosting a ministerial event entitled “Adapting to climate change, empowering women through the sustainable management of natural resources” in September 2018 and providing UNCCD inputs to various meetings and processes, including the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). NYLO activities on gender issues have served to create awareness of the critical role of women as land-users and the importance of their empowerment in this context; and promoted the UNCCD Gender Action Plan.

*In addition to the above topics, NYLO has organised and participated in meetings and events on many matters relevant to the UNCCD. For example, in July 2018 NYLO supported to organization of a ministerial event on drought preparedness as a building block for achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda; and NYLO has also followed-up the proceedings at the UN Forum on Forests.*

Most of the New York based interviewees confirmed that NYLO was effective in ensuring the visibility of the UNCCD in relevant New York based intergovernmental policy making processes. Particularly LDN and the Decade were mentioned in this context. Nevertheless, several interviewees mentioned that the visibility of this Convention is still not as high as it could be, mentioning in particular the need for more active attendance to UN meetings and events that can be used as a platform to promote UNCCD mandate and seek synergies. Many interviewees thought that more could be done for mainstreaming DLDD in the strategies of UN system organisations with NYLO taking an active advocacy role. In the SWOT analysis, also NYLO mentions “Governing Bodies of UN entities to profile DLDD issues” as an opportunity for further development. There is room to pursue this further.

Further on the visibility aspect, NYLO reported on cooperation with the UN Communications Department, which included, for example, the following:

- the involvement of UN Radio during COP sessions in Argentina, Changwon and Namibia;
- securing the acceptance of the 2011 Miss Universe Leila Lopes to become a UNCCD Drylands Ambassador;<sup>6</sup>
- ensuring the presence of high-level commentators in media events concerning the UNCCD<sup>7</sup>; and
- Provision of interviews on UNCCD matters with media based in New York, for example, recently with Al Arabiya and UN Radio.

All major global media houses have offices at the UN Headquarters. Through NYLO, the UNCCD could better benefit from this co-location by developing stronger relations with the UN-based journalists and by further collaboration with the UN communications network.

*NYLO has raised awareness of and generated support to the implementation of the Convention from Permanent Missions, the United Nations General Assembly and its organs, UN system organisations and selected interest/regional groups represented in New York. More could be done to enhance that impact, ensuring in particular that NYLO is perceived as an impartial broker (objective 2)*

In its own words (from the SWOT analysis) “*what NYLO does well is direct access to the Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives, to the UN, and direct access to all UN Programmes and Funds. Access to Ambassadors have allowed for the creation of the Group of Friends on DLDD*”. Most of the interviewees concurred that through its inputs to the annual UNGA report and support to the negotiations on the related resolution, NYLO has been effective in securing political support and buy-in from the member state representations in New York. Further, according to the interviewees, this political support has also been reflected in the general positions of the countries to the UNCCD negotiations, although detailed approaches have been formulated by the UNCCD focal points from line ministries.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unccd.int/news-events/miss-universe-2011-leila-lobes-appointed-drylands-ambassador>

<sup>7</sup> See for example a blog post of the Prime Minister of Iceland: <https://knowledge.unccd.int/knowledge-products-and-pillars/unccd-science-policy-weblog/iceland-counting-land-reach-carbon>

Like other UNGA Second Committee resolutions, those on the UNCCD have been tabled by the Group of 77<sup>8</sup> (G77), which has requested the expertise of NYLO for the drafting process. NYLO has been also called by the negotiators to serve as a substantive secretary of the negotiations of the UNCCD resolution. Those interviewees that represented former G77 Presidencies considered that while occasionally, the initial draft UNCCD resolutions have required considerable redrafting to be adopted, generally NYLO support has been effective and its advice has been useful and important. Many interviewees also believe that NYLO has been effective in supporting the management of political divergences among member states on specific, divisive, controversial and sensitive issues. This is not an opinion shared by all the member states however: there was some perception that NYLO could be politically aligned with some of the members of the G77.

In 2013, the Permanent Representatives to the UN of Iceland and Namibia, with support from NYLO, established a Group of Friends on DLDD, seeking to maintain the momentum generated by the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development on issues related to DLDD, particularly LDN, in the context of the preparations for the post-2015 development agenda. The Group was very active in the lead to the adoption of the SDGs and the successful inclusion of LDN in target 15.3, after which its activities seem to have slowed down somehow, according to some interviewees - some of the countries are still active but others less so. Several interviewees commented on that, adding that NYLO could have been more active in engaging interested countries to the Group as well as in broadening the membership. This issue-based Group could be a good tool for working more actively with countries from all regional groups, outside the usual political divisions.

Many interviewees considered that NYLO has been overall effective in serving the needs of the Parties, responding to their requests (in technical part this involves soliciting the answers from the secretariat in Bonn), which has contributed to countries taking more effective stance and actions on DLDD. NYLO was also commended for organizing periodic briefings of regional or interest groups and sharing information about certain key events, such as the 17 June Desertification and Drought Day and the 5 December World Soil Day. The feedback received from the interviewees indicated that for many missions in New York, NYLO is a one-stop point for information or assistance on DLDD and UNCCD issues. However, some countries prefer to approach the UNCCD secretariat in Bonn directly. The missions contact NYLO mostly about matters related to negotiations, draft resolutions and alike concerning UNCCD and DLDD. On many substantive developments, technical matters or UNCCD routine assignments the secretariat in Bonn is directly in contact with the relevant ministries in the capitals. When the missions approach NYLO on these matters, the requests are forwarded to the Bonn office.

Several interviewees mentioned that NYLO could further improve the visibility of this Convention through more events or other similar activities targeting specific constituents, not only the member states but inviting also private businesses (with substantial interest in UNCCD mandate areas), funds and foundations, and civil society organizations (CSOs). NYLO was also called to become more engaged in promoting south-south and triangular partnerships, including collaboration with related UN entities such as the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), in order to help countries to learn from each other and engage in joint initiatives

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<sup>8</sup> Group of 77 is a coalition of 135 developing countries, designed to promote its members' collective economic interests and create an enhanced joint negotiating capacity in the UN

*NYLO has contributed to cooperation with the GEF and the World Bank, the secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity and selected civil society organizations but the results of these liaison functions are, with some exceptions, relatively modest. NYLO support to launching new land-related partnerships and initiatives involving various stakeholders, notably youth, women, civil society and academia has been limited, however. In these functions, there is plenty of room for further development. (objectives 3, 4 and 5)*

The UNCCD was the only so-called “Rio Convention”, others being the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), that was not set to benefit from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funding at the time of its adoption. This meant that the UNCCD priorities were not highlighted in the considerations on GEF programming, but also that many enabling activities under the UNCCD, such as building a national reporting process or updating country level capacities on the new Convention, had to be covered through fundraising for voluntary contributions, with varying success. For the other two Rio Conventions, these activities were funded through the GEF.

NYLO played an important role in the GEF becoming a financial mechanism of the Convention. It informed countries of related benefits and suggested action in the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, “Rio+10”) in 2002, which was critical for the political backing needed for the GEF Assembly decision. The WSSD made a high-level call for the GEF to become a financial mechanism of the UNCCD, and the Second GEF Assembly that was held shortly after the WSSD in 2002 agreed to include land degradation, primarily desertification and deforestation, as a new focal area of the GEF. The Assembly also confirmed the availability of the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD. Following the GEF Assembly decision, NYLO has been an active contributor in the preparation and periodic updates of the related Memorandum of Understanding between the GEF Council and the UNCCD COP.

With regard to another Washington-based major organisation, the World Bank, NYLO supported the inception of the World Bank Programme on sustainable land management in sub-Saharan Africa. It has liaised with different World Bank departments on various UNCCD events and processes, including the organisation of the 2014 high-level global observance event of the World Day to Combat Desertification at the Bank’s headquarters; and participated in meetings and panel discussions relevant to the UNCCD. Nevertheless, NYLO liaison with the World Bank has tended to focus on UNCCD representation for general visibility, while all substantive and technical collaboration has been dealt with by the Bonn UNCCD staff. In recent years, the World Bank has indicated increasing interest in becoming involved in some new priority areas of the UNCCD, notably the Great Green Wall initiative and the land-security nexus, and tapping this interest holds great potential for the UNCCD Parties to expand the implementation of the Convention. With active, targeted advocacy and coherent messaging, NYLO could effectively support the emerging partnership and cooperation with the World Bank.

In general, NYLO could do more in establishing and nurturing ties with selected international financial institutions, funds and foundations, and private sector entities located in Washington and New York, with the aim to backstop the resource mobilization functions carried out by the Bonn-based UNCCD staff. When asked, NYLO did not consider contribution to UNCCD’s improved access to implementation resources among its main tasks, and also of the Bonn-based staff, only some believed that this should be something that NYLO is assigned for. Nevertheless, because of its regular contacts with the GEF and the World Bank, NYLO is already participating in secretariat’s team work on resource mobilisation, and further coordination in that context on related NYLO liaison and advocacy toward financial institutions could be an important step forward.

*NYLO has contributed to synergies with the other Rio Conventions and related cooperation processes on climate change and biodiversity.* It has advocated for the potential of land-based activities in mitigating and adapting for climate change, recently through promoting Nature Based Solutions (NBS) on suitable occasions, mostly for supporting the general visibility of the UNCCD in the context of events and meetings on climate change. However, several interviewees for this evaluation highlighted the need for closer engagement and more synergies. Considering that the Climate Action Team of the UN Secretary-General is located at the UN headquarters and that the offices of numerous influential climate change lobbying organisations, from the Climate Group network to Al Gore’s Climate Reality Project, are located in New York or Washington, there is indeed room – and opportunities - for achieving more in this field. NYLO could also engage with the private sector to promote thematic engagement, e.g. in relation to NBS, as part of the advocacy and partnership building activities - some Bonn-based UNCCD staff thought that NYLO could become an important UNCCD advocate for establishing closer relations with selected key private sector players based in the USA.

With regard to biodiversity, the current set up with the one of the NYLO staff members being shared with the CBD secretariat contributes to some extent to related synergies. However, practically all cooperation between the UNCCD and CBD secretariats is done between the headquarters in Bonn and Montreal, and the geographical location of NYLO in the same continent as the CBD secretariat has no real significance in this case.

*NYLO’s contribution to further developing the UNCCD relations with the scientific community has been limited to presentations at universities.* NYLO has held presentations on several occasions at prestigious universities (Columbia University, Yale University, Stanford University, Lincoln University in Nebraska) to increase awareness of UNCCD. It does not consider as its role to further develop the UNCCD relations with the scientific community, such as by facilitating the establishment of partnerships with renowned think-tanks and research institutions, while some in Bonn office saw a potential role for NYLO involvement in such collaboration as part of its advocacy aims.

### **3.2.2. Efficiency**

*As demonstrated in the previous sections, NYLO works mostly in the fields of political advocacy and awareness raising. It uses its resources efficiently, although available opportunities could be utilized better for enhancing its effectiveness and reach. NYLO office facilities should be upgraded.*

In section 3.1, the current objectives of NYLO were defined to be about gaining attention to UNCCD issues in relevant New York based intergovernmental policy making processes and ensuring the awareness and support of key New York (and to some extent Washington) based stakeholders to the implementation of the Convention. In addition, NYLO was noted to have a role in launching new land-related partnerships and initiatives.

In line with these objectives, the concrete activities that NYLO carries out are largely about political advocacy and awareness raising.

Compared to units that focus on operational or technical tasks, NYLO functions require different, often non-financial resources that, for the purpose of assessing NYLO efficiency in this evaluation, may be defined as

- skilled staff,
- well-founded substantive messages,
- supporting partners or champions, and
- an ability to seize opportunities and plan appropriate timing.

Of course, NYLO also needs adequate office facilities and occasional funding for its travel.

About NYLO staffing: NYLO employs 1.5 professional staff, consisting of one full-time director-level staff and 50% of a P4 Programme Officer (shared with the CBD secretariat), as well as 50% of a Programme Assistant (also shared with the CBD secretariat). For perspective, it may be noted that the rest of the secretariat consists of approximately 35 professional level staff (not including NYLO). Both NYLO professionals are profiled as career diplomats, with extensive experience in New York-based UN diplomacy and related processes and thus expertise in advancing matters in that context. There are no specified results expectations against which the capability of NYLO staff could be precisely measured, but the extent and scope of results that it has delivered, as described in the section on effectiveness, and the overall positive notion of the feedback received from the interviewees indicate that the NYLO staff have had the skills needed for the job so far, and that those skills have been used efficiently. On the other hand, several interviewees commented that the UNCCD liaison office could be better equipped to serve on more technical questions, given the growing need for such assistance by some constituencies.

The point that the P4 position is paid in half by CBD was frequently commented upon in the interviews. While the potential benefits and synergies were recognized, some interviewees noted that there are at times overlapping demands on the time of the shared staff members, and as there is another person to work for the UNCCD, the shared staff ends up representing CBD whenever such overlapping happens. In fact, several interviewees from other New York based UN agencies commented that they associate that particular staff member with CBD only (while they associate only the Head of the Office with UNCCD). Similar concerns about overlapping demands were noted also in the case of the NYLO Programme Assistant. Another challenge on the shared staff that was brought up by the interviewees was that there may be sensitive issues/issues still in the making at one of the Conventions, not ready to be shared, which occasionally leads into difficult situations and potential conflicts of interest for the shared staff.

Most of the interviewees commented that the visibility needs of both conventions (UNCCD and CBD) warrant having separate designated staff while the office facilities and related costs could still be shared. A few interviewees claimed that NYLO has the necessary staff resources comparing with the UNFCCC, which has tended to have only one person, and not as a liaison office but as a seconded to the UN headquarters. However, this was not an opinion shared by the vast majority of the interviewees, who argued that the UNFCCC has already attracted a great deal of attention and does not need the same level of advocacy as UNCCD and CBD need for making their priorities visible in the New York policy debates.

NYLO is using interns/consultants during the busiest times in a given year (usually September – December), but this vehicle could be utilized more, perhaps targeted to specific time-bound NYLO deliverables.

About substantive messaging: One of the most important assets of NYLO is its access to countries' UN missions in New York, particularly its regular liaison with the Permanent Representatives who often are very influential in their home countries. As indicated in the section on effectiveness, most interviewees concurred that when a certain information is requested from NYLO, when it is approached, the response is swift. However, some interviewees mentioned cases when a follow up on a certain issue was expected from NYLO and did not materialize, or when there was a misunderstanding of what had been communicated at the UNGA and how that was presented by NYLO.

While the overall perception of the efficiency of NYLO substantive messaging, according to the interview responses, was positive, many interviewees and particularly the UNCCD staff commented that the information sharing between NYLO and the Bonn headquarters could be improved. There had been misunderstandings caused by diverse messages from NYLO to the UN missions in New York and from the Bonn technical staff to the national focal points in the ministries of environment or agriculture; these misunderstandings had sometimes further grown as the ministries of the national focal point and the ministries for foreign affairs, under which the UN missions operate, had not shared their information. One interviewee also commented on a case of an uncoordinated message from the Bonn and New York offices to the GEF. In addition to the reputational and even functional risks that such misunderstandings entail for the Convention process, they also tend to be frustrating for the involved staff and potentially damaging for effective collegial relationships.

Being under direct supervision of the UNCCD Executive Secretary facilitates quick decision-making on many political matters that NYLO typically deals with. At the same time, it has led to a certain distancing of NYLO from other secretariat units, exacerbated by ineffective information sharing arrangements and practices. Emails from NYLO are often sent only to the office of the Executive Secretary, although their content would be relevant to others as well. While it is common practice in the secretariat to avoid including the Executive Secretary in lengthy email discussion chains and thus send to his office only focused and targeted messages, usually other involved colleagues are also kept informed, even if not by the same email. Most of the interviewed UNCCD staff agreed that there should be a protocol which would stipulate the list of people who should be copied by default, unless a certain issue is deemed confidential. This could be done as part of an overall Operating Procedures Manual (which is planned to be developed).

NYLO is often absent from substantive meetings in Bonn – it does not have proper facilities for online participation, and the six-hour time difference between Bonn and New York means that NYLO will be able to attend meetings only from mid-afternoon Bonn time. It seems that neither NYLO nor the substantive units have, with some exceptions recently, actively sought to schedule relevant meetings accordingly, although NYLO participation could significantly improve the flow of information. This may be amended soon: since early 2020, the UNCCD management team has scheduled its meetings to the afternoon in order to include also the NYLO chief. The newly established target team structure to run the implementation of the UNCCD work programme is also expected to facilitate inclusive information-sharing within the secretariat, including the NYLO, and the GM.

To ensure coherence and enhance the technical content in its messaging, NYLO should work more closely with the External Relations, Policy and Advocacy unit (ERPA), as that is where the UNCCD policy and advocacy matters as well as partnerships are developed and largely also implemented. In addition, ERPA was recently assigned to be in charge of the regional coordination units (RCUs) that are being evolved into regional liaison offices (RLOs) that will focus on advocacy and partnership building – tasks very similar to those of NYLO. Although moving NYLO under ERPA might not work for a variety of reasons – NYLO's position directly under the Executive Secretary provides it with important political leverage, and as per UN rules, director-level NYLO chief cannot report to a lower level ERPA chief -

their information sharing and coordination should be considerably improved. For that to happen, NYLO participation in relevant ERPA meetings and processes would be an obvious starting point, with the aim to ensure that NYLO staff becomes familiar with the mainstream UNCCD policy and advocacy approaches, content and messages and may thus more efficiently adjust and use them for its activities in New York. There should also be regular virtual meetings with the emerging RLOs of ERPA. Linking the region-specific knowledge with the New York diplomacy could be helpful for both NYLO and the RLOs, as the latter are likely to be aware of the necessary preparatory work regionally before the matters are brought to the level of New York.

From its side, NYLO could prompt ERPA and also other units in Bonn on information it obtains in New York: on meetings and initiatives of potential interest; on various type of stakeholders working in the areas of the mandate of the UNCCD, on potential avenues for resource mobilization, etc. However, it should be noted that the staff and other resource constrains of NYLO would limit its own possibilities of becoming engaged with the follow-up to many such meetings, initiatives and partnerships. The fear of raising more expectations than can be met by its limited staff and other resources may have served as a disincentive for NYLO to expand its outreach, and thus resulted in some lost opportunities. The scope and focus of NYLO should be addressed in the context of the overall planning process of the secretariat and the GM, so that the activities of NYLO would serve clear priorities and related resource needs could be realistically assessed.

As a small office, NYLO cannot be expected to be fully up to date on all technical matters under the UNCCD and its work could be focused on those policy areas in which it could bring most added value. This would entail more detailed planning of the work of NYLO, with due attention to coherence and complementarity to the work of the UNCCD office in Bonn. Another option to be considered could be to rotate (temporarily or for a longer term) some technical staff of ERPA to NYLO, to work on a topic that entails solid substantive knowledge and that is in a particularly active phase in New York.

The UNCCD secretariat is a small and close-knit work community, and the staff in Bonn often interacts without many formalities that are followed in larger, more hierarchical UN organisations. Very different from that, the work culture in the New York UN offices, including NYLO, tends to follow a formal diplomatic, grade-conscious approach. Some Bonn-based UNCCD interviewees had experienced these differences in the working cultures and brought up occasional hindrances in communication with NYLO: they noted that as the NYLO chief is at a high UN rank of a Director, messages from colleagues lower than the unit chiefs may not receive immediate attention. This may have resulted in information backlogs with higher level staff in Bonn. To avoid such hindrances, due protocols should be established and observed for communication and other interactions between the Bonn and New York offices; many examples of such protocols may be found from the practices of other UN entities. The teams, that are now being formed could also help with this.

Communications and awareness raising are among the essential activities of NYLO. The UNCCD has a corporate Communication Strategy, which does not include specific aims or tools targeting the stakeholders in New York. At the moment there is no systematic approach to the NYLO communication and external information-sharing; rather, related activities are based on periodic needs and opportunities.

The UNCCD website that is maintained from Bonn is mostly about substantive priorities and processes under the UNCCD, and NYLO is mentioned only in the list of UNCCD staff, similar to other secretariat units. A few interviewees considered that the website should showcase NYLO more prominently, and that it could be an efficient tool for further outreach on UNCCD matters also in New York by including some content targeted specifically to that audience. NYLO could become active also in social media.



*Box 1: Sample of publications for dissemination*

In terms of communication material, at the moment NYLO has a large number of voluminous publications, which are not the best vehicle to address the political contacts. Leaner publications that the secretariat and the GM have produced (see [Box 1](#)) on various topics, and particularly scientific evidence organized as infographics, would be more useful for NYLO activities. Several interviewees commented on the need for this type of material.

To support NYLO in its outreach, a media or a communications person, possibly an intern, could periodically work with NYLO with the specific goal of assisting in the preparation of NYLO-specific communications material and developing relations with the major media based at the UN.

About mobilizing partners and champions: As noted earlier, currently NYLO actively engages with the country missions, regional and interest groups, the UN Secretariat department dealing with the UNGA Second Committee, and the GEF contacts. As mentioned in the section of effectiveness, the Group of Friends on DLDD is a potentially strong ally in promoting the UNCCD priorities in the New York context, but NYLO could work with the Group more efficiently – it could be more active in raising awareness of potentially interested countries of the Group for in broadening the basis of countries that are committed to addressing DLDD.

Furthermore, NYLO could approach New York based think tanks, foundations, civil society organisations and lobby groups that are working on matters of interest to the UNCCD. These organisations could partner with NYLO in promoting the aims of the Convention in the US, as per their specific focus areas. NYLO liaison with them could also serve as the initial steps of establishing collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat or the GM on various aspects of the UNCCD implementation. For approaching such potential partners, NYLO could be supported from Bonn by information about known New York or Washington entities whose objectives are aligned with those of the UNCCD. As feasible, NYLO could also inform Bonn of potential partners and other opportunities as it learns about them, although its own resources are limited for following-up such opportunities. As an example, ERPA is currently working on a strategy on the collaboration with private funds and foundations, and NYLO could be included in this work, to ensure that its expertise is duly utilized. NYLO could be supported to efficiently build and utilize partnerships by providing temporary staff support, either as rotation from Bonn or through interns, with the goal of identifying potential partner organisations and developing relations with them.

About NYLO ability to seize opportunities and plan appropriate timing: As noted earlier, several major developments in the UNCCD process have been built through New York based negotiation processes, with NYLO having an important role. These high-profile processes have ensured the necessary attention and political weight for the completion of decisions that go well beyond the usual scope of the UNCCD process and stakeholders, such as the decision for the GEF to become a financial mechanism for the UNCCD or the inclusion of LDN as one of the targets for the SDGs. In this context, NYLO can be commended for its understanding of the nature of these negotiation processes and their potential for the UNCCD matters, as well as for its expertise in supporting the negotiations to conclude with decisions that have significantly influenced the Convention.

NYLO has also succeeded in identifying opportunities to showcase the UNCCD at the highest level, notably through its support to the organisation of a UNGA high level event on desertification in September 2011, on the eve of the opening of the 66<sup>th</sup> UNGA session, and the decision to hold a High-Level Dialogue on DLDD chaired by the UNGA President, which is planned for this year. The effectiveness of future similar events could be improved by linking their planning better to the objectives and targets of the secretariat. It seems that for some events, the focus of NYLO was on ensuring that a high-level event is accepted to be organised by the respective UN body, and the discussions within the secretariat on the purpose and potential results of that event begun only after this acceptance. Instead, such process should start by identifying which objectives and targets in the secretariat's work programme are in need of attention and support that can be received through the New York setting, and on that basis, NYLO could identify and work on available opportunities.

In addition to broad achievements that represent major milestones for the UNCCD, NYLO expertise could be occasionally utilized also for opportunities that may be smaller in scope but could provide effective, focused backstopping to selected UNCCD priorities. While NYLO could be best placed to identify such opportunities in the New York – Washington area, the concrete action for the UNCCD involvement could be prepared and implemented by the Bonn office.

About NYLO facilities and financial resources: NYLO occupies three rooms in the DC1 building in New York. Half of the rent is covered by CBD. The office is in need of renovation and the update of some hardware is urgent for the efficient functioning of NYLO. NYLO would need a proper video-conferencing set for virtual meetings with the Bonn office, RLOs and other stakeholders outside New York, as this form of meetings is very cost-efficient and used regularly. The office would also benefit from a heavy-duty colour copier for producing printouts of the promotional material. One of the rooms is used to store printed publications, which are piled on the floor in the absence of bookshelves. Using bookshelves would allow to clear out the room for proper use (e.g. for consultants and interns).

NYLO does not have its own budget allocation for organizing side events and campaigns, covering hospitality costs or travels, and it has to request such funding from the Bonn headquarters on a case by case basis. Some interviewees commented that if NYLO had own resources, it could be expected to be more proactive and systematic in initiating activities for higher visibility and political support for the convention.

### 3.2.3. Relevance

This section covers organisational motivation: mandate, mission, goals, and incentives.

*While NYLO contributes to the priorities of the UNCCD secretariat, its role and responsibilities are not clearly defined and many of its activities seem to be of ad hoc nature. Within the secretariat, there are diverse expectations and assumptions of NYLO, which impacts secretariat-wide work culture.*

Section 3.2.1 on effectiveness assessed the extent to which NYLO had succeeded in generating results, building on the general objectives that were identified in section 3.1. That assessment found out that NYLO had conducted its actions on political advocacy effectively, with recognized achievements in ensuring the visibility of the UNCCD in the context of the UN bodies and events, cooperation with New York based country missions as well as the GEF and the World Bank. It also noted that further effort could be made in liaising beyond the UN headquarters constituencies.

With the purpose of understanding better the role of NYLO in the context of the overall performance of the UNCCD secretariat, a table in the next page (see Table 1) shows the main actions taken by the secretariat and by NYLO during the biennium 2018-2019 on two priority policy areas in which NYLO has been active: linkages between land and security/migration, and gender mainstreaming. This table

should not be considered exhaustive – there are numerous internal and external undertakings and exchanges that cannot be reflected in this type of a general listing of actions. Furthermore, as the table only lists actions without analysing their results, the information that it offers on performance must be considered as indicative. Keeping these limitations in mind, the table provides, nevertheless, useful examples of how the work of NYLO connects with that of the rest of the secretariat, indicating the extent of its relevance to the overall UNCCD work programme.

On linkages between land and security/migration, in 2018-2019 the secretariat aimed to increase the use of land-based activities for improving stability and security through improving the recognition of their potential. The targets were about making available related evidence-based information, advancing further regional/international cooperation and country-led initiatives addressing DLDD-migration nexus and stability/security, and improving the recognition of the importance of DLDD-migration nexus by UNGA.

Looking at the information in the table, it may be noted that the secretariat focused its work on security/migration on three main tracks: (1) development of the substantive/policy base together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other partners, (2) support to the African countries in implementing concrete activities under the 3S Initiative, and (3) active advocacy and awareness-raising. NYLO activities were directly relevant to those of the secretariat: they were either components for (such as liaison with IOM, support to 3S ministerial meeting) or complementary to (attention in the UN bodies) the work of the secretariat.

With regard to gender mainstreaming, in 2018-2019 the secretariat aimed to ensure that gender issues are increasingly taken into account in plans to address desertification/land degradation, which was to be achieved through the provision of UNCCD guidance and technical advice on integrating gender issues into the implementation and design of plans and projects concerning LDN, drought and sand and dust storms, as well as to the DLDD -migration work. The secretariat in collaboration with partners focused on supporting the capacity of Parties to integrate gender issues into projects and programming for the UNCCD implementation. In addition, the secretariat raised awareness and advocated on the role of women in the implementation of the UNCCD. NYLO supported the organisation of high-level events on gender and provided inputs to the Commission on the Status of Women, which is the highest intergovernmental body for gender matters.

While NYLO focused on activities in its competence areas and completed these activities successfully, it is difficult to assess their value for meeting the practical-results oriented aim of the secretariat. The NYLO activities contributed to the visibility of the UNCCD work on gender in general but had no specified role in advancing gender mainstreaming into projects and programming for the UNCCD implementation, which had been set as the target for the secretariat.

These two examples concerning the work of NYLO in the context of the overall work programme of the secretariat pave the way for various conclusions. They confirm that NYLO can significantly complement the activities of the secretariat with its New York based political advocacy and liaison functions. At the same time, they also indicate that NYLO contribution works best when there's a clearly identified purpose and channel for using the specific strengths and skills of NYLO. Enhancing the general visibility of the UNCCD perspective on a given topic, as was done in the example concerning gender mainstreaming, is always useful, but NYLO has the ability to deliver much more for a right topic in a right setting. Keeping in mind its limited size and resources, NYLO should further sharpen its focus on topics and tasks that require the type of attention and support that can be elevated through its New York based liaison. This would mean that NYLO becomes more actively involved in some topics or processes and more selective in committing to others, directing its inputs to those that are most likely to generate tangible results to benefit the UNCCD.

Table 1. Main actions of the secretariat and NYLO on security/migration and gender

<b>Outcome 2.1 Affected country Parties use land-based activities for improving stability and security;</b> <b>Indicator 2.1 The potential of land-based activities in improving security and stability is recognized</b>	
Targets:	2.1.1 ERPA: Improved, evidence-based information of the potential of UNCCD implementation in addressing migration is made available 2.1.2 ERPA: UNCCD activities trigger further regional/international cooperation and country-led initiatives addressing DLDD-migration nexus and stability/security 2.1.3 EDM/NYLO: The importance of DLDD-migration nexus is increasingly recognized by UNGA
<i>Secretariat actions</i>	<i>NYLO actions</i>
An IOM-UNCCD study on the land degradation-security nexus Support to the African initiative on sustainability, stability and security (3S): - assistance to 13 countries to develop projects that link land restoration with job creation to address migration; - support to a network of senior officials advising the 3S countries' Head of State - development of the 3S website and communications; - cooperation with development banks and IFAD on support to 3S projects; and - support to the organization of several ministerial meetings, steering committee meetings, press conferences and informal consultations. Cooperation with IOM, ILO and UN DPPA on policy and advocacy Speaker in numerous meetings, including two G20 meetings and a ministerial Climate-Security conference. Reporting to the COP on action taken, backstopping the negotiations of related decisions	- Support to the organization of a UN Security Council session on the nexus between DLDD and conflicts, including a statement of the Executive Secretary to the Council - Support to one ministerial meeting on the 3S Initiative - Panelist at the IOM event on the land and migration nexus - Support to the Group of Friends and liaison with UN Special Representative of the Office for International Migration for integrating land issues into the Global Compact on Migration - Inclusion of the land degradation-security nexus matters in the SG report to UNGA and support to their consideration in the related decision
<b>Outcome 2.2 Gender issues are increasingly taken into account in plans to address desertification/land degradation</b> <b>Indicator 2.2 Affected country Parties use the UNCCD guidance and technical advice on integrating gender issues into the implementation and design of transformative LDN projects</b>	
Targets:	2.2.1 ERPA: Mainstreaming of gender issues is integrated to the support for LDN implementation, the Drought Initiative and sand and dust storms (SDS), as well as to the work on DLDD-migration nexus.
<i>Secretariat actions</i>	<i>NYLO actions</i>
Jointly with UN Women, IUCN and UNDP: - for designing transformative LDN projects and programmes, a policy brief, a checklist and a manual for gender-responsiveness, three technical workshops and provision of a help desk - for national drought plans, technical advice and pilot projects on gender entry points - for sand and dust storms, integration of gender aspects into guidance on assessing and addressing SDS risks With various partners, development of an open online course and training on gender Representation at selected events focusing on the empowerment of women Publication of gender related op-eds, press releases and media stories. Reporting to the COP on action taken, backstopping the negotiations of related decisions	Co-organization of a ministerial side event on empowering rural women Co-hosting of a ministerial event on climate change adaptation and empowering women through the sustainable management of natural resources UNCCD inputs to and representation in the Commission on the Status of Women

Effective targeting of NYLO work would entail a streamlined understanding of its role across the secretariat. At the moment, while there is no disagreement of what are the main tasks of NYLO broadly - ensuring visibility for UNCCD issues in the main UN bodies and events, outreach and information-sharing to New York based missions and other key constituencies, and liaison with the GEF and the World Bank - there seems to be diverse views of and expectations from NYLO concerning the scope of its work and the results it should produce. For example, some Bonn-based secretariat staff would like NYLO to actively liaise with UN Women that is a key partner for the UNCCD gender work and headquartered in New York; and some others consider that NYLO should participate more in the substantive preparatory work concerning cooperation in the GEF context. Other examples of these diverse views were provided in the section on effectiveness. NYLO, on the other hand, sees itself as an extension of the secretariat's Executive Direction and Management (EDM) unit in New York. Indeed, NYLO represents the secretariat in a broad range of matters, but it has no role in most management functions dealing with planning, overseeing and coordinating the work of the secretariat and partially also the GM, which are essential tasks of the EDM. Rather NYLO work is part of the policy and advocacy functions of the secretariat, targeting specifically the New York based constituencies. In this regard, its aims and working modalities resemble more those of the External Relations, Policy and Advocacy unit (ERPA) than the EDM. Although integrating NYLO into ERPA may not be feasible, as explained in section 3.2.2 on efficiency, closer collaboration and coordination between the two entities is likely to be the most critical factor for enhancing the effectiveness of NYLO, and thereby adding to its relevance.

*A more precise definition of NYLO's mandate and operational modalities at the level of the secretariat, accompanied by time-bound work programmes detailing expected results and main activities would be important for ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of its activities.*

Further examination of the results of the work of NYLO through available documentation and comments from the secretariat staff indicates that it is involved in many key UNCCD activities and actively representing the UNCCD in many processes and events in New York. However, in many cases it seems difficult to formulate the exact contribution of NYLO to the expected outcomes and targets of the secretariat. It would be tempting to argue, in line with section 3.1, that this is because of the cross-cutting nature of its work and the lack of its "own" targets in the work programme, but that would undermine the importance of NYLO. It has a solid, specific purpose in the set-up of the secretariat, which can continue to lead to significant results if there is improved clarity of what such results can be and how they can be achieved.

While NYLO work is generally relevant for the identified needs of the UNCCD Parties and the overall objectives and targets of the UNCCD, its de-facto (as there is no clear terms of reference) role is heavily focused on advocacy at the UNGA level, largely on unlocking the political level support of the UN Member States and key constituencies. As to other work of the secretariat and ERPA in particular – in relation to policy development, building synergies and partnerships, NYLO could be more prominent, in particular in relation to reaching out to important non-state stakeholders such as CSOs, private sector entities and foundations. As noted earlier, however, NYLO staffing and resource limitations require such outreach to be strictly targeted. The lack of a clear, coordinated work programme and setting of NYLO specific targets/milestones does not allow prioritization of demands and ensuring NYLO responsiveness to expectations in a transparent manner. It affects the secretariat's internal work culture and does not incentivize NYLO to seize new opportunities.

Quite often, NYLO advocacy is done ad-hoc, with the exception of the regular activities related to the annual resolutions and reports. NYLO represents the UNCCD in meetings and events that it perceives to be of high importance; at times, however, its participation is only aiming to generally enhancing the visibility of the UNCCD and its priorities. Planning of the NYLO representation to serve a pre-identified purpose, such as including specific UNCCD interests in the meeting outcomes or launching an initiative on

a UNCCD priority topic, could significantly improve its effectiveness. Closer coordination with ERPA, in addition to EDM, would be critical for ensuring the overall relevance of NYLO representation.

Preparing a work programme (a task list with expected results, deriving from the overall work programme of the secretariat and the GM) specifically for NYLO, keeping in mind the capacity of the office, would mitigate coordination issues as well as the work atmosphere. It would enable NYLO to focus on the essential tasks in a transparent way and provide the basis for assessing its performance on a sound basis.

### **3.2.4. Sustainability**

Costs of the NYLO staff are covered from the secretariat's programme support costs similarly to, for example, those of the UNCCD administrative staff. Although the funding source is extra-budgetary, it can be considered rather stable. As the work of NYLO is also recognized by the COP, it seems justified to say that there are no major challenges to the overall sustainability of NYLO.

However, there are some other points that should be considered in the context of assessing sustainability. NYLO does not have an operating budget which currently does not seem to hinder its work, but could become an issue if it will be expected in the future to organize more events, travel more or conduct substantive work with external consultancy support. Secondly, as described earlier, two out of the three NYLO staff are shared with the CBD secretariat through a cost-sharing arrangement that also covers the NYLO premises. The UNCCD secretariat should ensure that it gets its fair share of this arrangement, and that its investment in New York liaison functions – which is bigger than that of the other two Rio Conventions – provides commensurate results. Depending on the ambition level of future NYLO tasks, the secretariat could also opt to either covering the full costs of the currently shared professional level post and thus having a second full-time officer in NYLO; or giving up its half of that post and continuing with one full-time senior level staff. Both of these options could maintain the cost-sharing arrangement concerning the offices and programme assistance as they are currently.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

In section 3.1, the generic objectives of NYLO were provisionally defined as follows:

1. UNCCD issues are reflected in relevant New York based intergovernmental policy making processes;
2. The Permanent Missions, the United Nations General Assembly and its organs, relevant UN system organisations and major interest/regional groups represented in New York are aware of and supportive to the implementation of the Convention;
3. The GEF secretariat is aware of the UNCCD priorities and reflects them in its activities;
4. Relevant organizations headquartered in North America such as the World Bank, the secretariat of the Convention of Biological Diversity and major civil society organizations are aware of the UNCCD priorities, and information of their developments is delivered to the secretariat and the GM; and
5. New land-related partnerships and initiatives involving various stakeholders, notably youth, women, civil society and academia, are launched.

The findings of this evaluation indicate that NYLO has made solid progress toward most of the objectives although less attention was given to the fourth and the fifth one – in fact, the first two objectives seem to describe well the essence of NYLO work and results, as well as its primary target groups, and thereby outline the specific nature and purpose of NYLO as part of the UNCCD secretariat. The remaining three objectives are relevant too and NYLO has made some related achievements, but for the most part the

activities targeting these objectives are planned and conducted by Bonn-based secretariat staff while NYLO has a supportive or complementary role.

On this basis, the overall objectives of NYLO could be revised as follows:

1. UNCCD issues are reflected in relevant New York based intergovernmental policy making processes;
2. The Permanent Missions, the United Nations General Assembly and its organs, relevant UN system organisations and major interest/regional groups represented in New York are aware of and supportive to the implementation of the Convention;
3. Other relevant organizations, stakeholders and processes in New York and/or Washington are, when feasible, informed of the UNCCD priorities and their support to the implementation of the Convention is facilitated.

These three objectives do not serve as the work programme for the NYLO; instead they should be seen as its general *raison d'être* or mission statement. For the overall effectiveness and coherence of the activities of the UNCCD secretariat, the action to be taken by NYLO should derive from the aims and targets of the corporate work programme of the UNCCD secretariat and the GM, while building on the specific strengths and opportunities of NYLO. Similar to other units of the secretariat, NYLO could formulate its internal work programme for each biennium, detailing the main activities to be carried out and identifying the milestones to be reached. This would assist NYLO in ensuring that its work is coordinated with and adds value to the work of the Bonn-based secretariat's work.

The findings of this evaluation indicate that NYLO can be particularly effective when, *inter alia*:

- It promotes a topic that is directly relevant for a process that is centralized to New York (such as LDN – SDGs);
- It advocates for a topic that is brand new or particularly high on the political agenda (such as land – security/migration nexus); and
- It advocates for a topic for which attention/approval beyond the UNCCD constituency is necessary (such the decision for the GEF to become a financial mechanism for the UNCCD).

Looking at the current priorities of the secretariat, particularly the recent brochure on the work programme adjustments<sup>9</sup>, NYLO could translate this criteria to, for example, taking an active role in promoting the recognition of the role of land in the UN system “Building back better” process of supporting recovery from the corona virus, as well as in the cooperation plans for the prevention and preparedness actions concerning future zoonotic disease outbreaks.

NYLO has limited resources, and careful analysis and selection of the processes and channels it contributes to will assist in focusing on those that are most likely to product best results for the UNCCD without spreading too thin. For example, the “Building back better” process of the UN system is active in so many fronts at the moment that contributing to all of them would not be possible and probably not useful either. NYLO should identify and select (only) those activities in which the UNCCD message will have a good visibility and/or that reach an audience that would be specifically important for the UNCCD.

The evaluation findings indicate that better coordination and complementarity of the activities of NYLO and those of the Bonn-based secretariat, particularly ERPA, could improve the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of the activities of NYLO. This would involve ensuring that NYLO advocacy is based on coherent and coordinated messaging that focus on those points for which the secretariat would most need, or benefit from, attention by the New York constituencies. Closer coordination with ERPA could

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.unccd.int/news-events/unccd-and-covid-19-crisis-land-based-solutions-people-and-planet>

also serve in improving the technical knowledge level of NYLO, so that it would have better preparedness for identifying substantive linkages and opportunities that could be useful for the UNCCD. In practical terms, increased NYLO participation in the internal meetings and preparatory processes that are led by ERPA could provide NYLO with continuous updates on the latest UNCCD policy advocacy developments, and also offer ERPA information of the related needs and tendencies in New York. To avoid further communication problems, as described in section 3.2.2, the expectations for efficient exchanges should be clarified and joint procedures agreed to.

Finally, the evaluation found that NYLO resources are not optimal for its effective functioning. Its office equipment is in a serious need of an update, and there are some questions about the staff that are shared with the CBD secretariat. Furthermore, any significant extension of the scope or volume of the work of NYLO would most likely require additional resources, either as funding for activities or temporary rotation/recruitment of staff with specific expertise. One option for partly mitigating the limited resources of NYLO could be to further engage committed country partners in the activities of NYLO, notably through the Group of Friends.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the findings and their analysis, the evaluation recommends the following actions with the aim to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of the activities of NYLO:

- 1. In collaboration with the Bonn-based secretariat units, particularly EDM and ERPA, NYLO formulates for every biennium a brief work programme that derives directly from the secretariat's corporate work programme.**

The NYLO work programme should specify the aims and main activities of NYLO, focus on activities that benefit from the specific opportunities and strengths of NYLO, and clarify the added value of NYLO activities to the corporate work programme.

- 2. NYLO revises its approach to partnerships.**

NYLO should enhance its support to the Group of Friends, with the aim to ensure that the Group remains active in supporting the UNCCD priorities and that new countries extend their support to addressing DLDD.

In collaboration with ERPA, NYLO should also consider how it could facilitate partnerships between the secretariat and relevant New York or Washington based organisations, identify a small number of potential partners, and establish a road map for their engagement.

- 3. The secretariat continues improving regular information sharing between NYLO and the Bonn-based units.**

NYLO should continue and, as feasible, increase its online participation in selected teams, working groups and meetings in Bonn, with the aim to ensure that it remains updated on main UNCCD developments that are relevant to its work and that its messages and approaches are coherent with those of the Bonn-based units.

NYLO and the Bonn-based units should agree on the procedures for correspondence, for everyone to follow.

- 4. The secretariat ensures that NYLO resources are commensurate to its workload.**

The NYLO office should be properly furnished, including an up-to-date equipment for video-conferencing.

The secretariat should establish an approach for mobilizing human resources for temporary support to NYLO on communications, partnership building and other tasks that require additional expertise

or support. Such approach may include more active use of internships, arrangements for rotating Bonn-based staff, and recruitment of consultants, among others.  
The secretariat should address the issues concerning the cost-sharing arrangement with the CBD secretariat in order to ensure that the human resources available for NYLO are adequate for its tasks and that the arrangement is equitable and fair.

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1: Terms of Reference

#### Evaluation of the UNCCD New York Liaison Office

Consultancy Reference number: CCD/19/EDM/78

*Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification - UNCCD - is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. Its 10-Year Strategy states as the vision "to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability". The Convention's 197 Parties work together to improve the living conditions for people in areas affected by land degradation, to maintain and restore land and soil productivity, and to mitigate the effects of drought. The UNCCD is particularly committed to a bottom-up approach, encouraging the participation of local people in combating desertification and land degradation.*

*Decision-making under the UNCCD is done at the Conference of the Parties (COP) that brings together all signatories to the Convention every two years. The COP is assisted by two subsidiary bodies: the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC). The work under the UNCCD is supported by two entities: the UNCCD secretariat that organizes the intergovernmental process and facilitates cooperation and information exchange among countries, development partners, the scientific community, the civil society and other key stakeholders; and the Global Mechanism (GM) that promotes the mobilization of resources for sustainable land management.*

*In the course of 2019, the UNCCD secretariat has been going through an organisational update process with the aim to focus its strategic approach and better use its strengths and resources in delivering on the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework. This update process seeks to strengthen the role and influence of the UNCCD as a science-policy authority on desertification, land degradation and drought, and to increase its importance as an instrument for national action on land. It also aims to elevate the organizational effectiveness of the secretariat and the GM through improved internal coherence and coordination, updated staff capacities, and empowered managers.*

#### Background

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The New York Liaison Office - NYLO - is located in the UN headquarters in New York, USA. It is assigned to ensure visibility for UNCCD issues in the United Nations bodies and events of high political importance, notably the General Assembly, the Security Council and the High-level Political Forum. It also undertakes targeted outreach to constituencies at the United Nations Headquarters, most notably the UN secretariat, and provides information and advice on UNCCD matters to United Nations Member States, regional and interest groups at the General Assembly level. It promotes land-related partnerships and initiatives involving various stakeholders, notably youth, women, civil society and academia. In collaboration with other units of the secretariat and the GM, NYLO advocates for further attention to UNCCD priorities in the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and World Bank programmes, as well as in the follow-up to key global processes and events. Since September 2013, NYLO has also serviced the activities of the Group of Friends on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought.

NYLO is currently staffed by one director-level staff, 50% of a professional and 50% of a general staff (shared with the Convention on Biological Diversity). In the structure of the UNCCD secretariat, it is part

of the Executive Direction and Management, reporting directly to the Executive Secretary. NYLO does not have a budget of its own, but uses the resources allocated to the UNCCD and CBD secretariats.

NYLO has proven to be an important extension of the secretariat at the heart of the UN, and it has a long history of solid achievements. In order to pursue this trend and to enhance its contribution to the overall results by the UNCCD secretariat, the UNCCD secretariat launches an evaluation of the NYLO, and related terms of reference are presented in this document.

## **Objectives and main users of the evaluations**

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The evaluation will consider the performance of NYLO in the light of the overall mandate, aims and functions of the secretariat taking into account the aims of the organisational update process and, as feasible, in comparison to liaison offices of other organisations. On that basis, it will make suggestions on the future role and potential of NYLO with the aim to further develop and target its contribution to the UNCCD, and to strengthen its capacity to deliver against growing expectations.

The evaluation will be primarily for internal learning within the UNCCD secretariat. Its findings will help the Executive Secretary in developing the effectiveness and efficiency of the secretariat. The findings and conclusions that will be generated through the evaluation may be of interest and use also for other stakeholders working on the UNCCD and/or specific liaison functions.

## **Scope and approach of the evaluation**

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The evaluation will consider the performance of NYLO according to the following criteria:

- Effectiveness: What are the results achieved by NYLO? How have they contributed to the overall objectives and targets of the secretariat? Have they responded to identified needs of the Parties; have they served purposes specific to Parties' UN missions in New York and/or the UN secretariat and other UN offices there?
- Efficiency: Are the resources of NYLO used in an optimal manner to obtain its results?
- Relevance: Are the activities of NYLO relevant to the overall objectives and targets of the UNCCD? Are they relevant to the identified needs of the UNCCD Parties, and the work of the Convention secretariat?
- Sustainability: What is the financial viability of NYLO? How well is its staffing suited to its main tasks?

On effectiveness, the UNCCD workplan does not specify any results or targets for NYLO against which its effectiveness could be assessed. Instead, the workplan considers NYLO as an integral part of the Executive Direction and Management and in that context, reporting of its work consists primarily of status updates of the tasks and deliverables (outputs) that have been assigned to it. In order to have a solid basis for assessing effectiveness, the evaluation process will start by "mapping" the expectations concerning NYLO: it will consider the specific tasks and responsibilities of NYLO in liaising with the UN headquarters and related stakeholders, as well as its various inputs to the work of different units of the secretariat. It will also include a quick research of similar liaison functions of the secretariats of the two other Rio Conventions, the UNFCCC and the CBD, with the view of using their services as reference material for identifying the key outputs and activities under the UNCCD.

Assessing efficiency will consider the resource use of NYLO in comparison to other secretariat units, and it will also use information about the resource use/services provided under the other two Rio Conventions.

Relevance as a criterium for NYLO will include two aspects: assessing the responsiveness of NYLO results and activities to the overall objectives and targets the secretariat; and consideration of the relevance of UNCCD presence to the processes and collaboration of various stakeholders, groups and offices in New York.

On sustainability, the evaluation will analyse the financial basis of NYLO.

The evaluation will consider the findings concerning the above criteria, with the aim to clarify the mandate, priorities and optimal functioning of NYLO as well as related resources; and to identify areas for further effectiveness gains. It may recommend changes or reorientation of NYLO and/or new approaches to collaboration and coordination between NYLO and the headquarters.

The evaluation will be constructed around a set of questions that will be finalized at the beginning of the evaluation process. The overall key questions that the evaluation is expected to respond to are as follows:

- What are and what should be the main objectives and goals to be achieved by NYLO?
- Who are and who should be the main key stakeholders that NYLO works with?
- What kind of strategies, factors and functions of NYLO would optimize the achievement of its objectives and goals?
- What is and what should be the role of NYLO within the secretariat? Are there changes to be made; if yes, what kind of changes?
- How could the information sharing and coordination between NYLO and the Bonn headquarters be improved? What kind of support would NYLO need most from the headquarters? What support could it best offer to the units of the secretariat, or to the GM?

### **Methodology and main deliverables**

The evaluation will be prepared in three main phases, which will be for inception, data collection, and synthesis and dissemination of findings. The main deliverables of each phase are presented in the following table.

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Methodological focus</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>
Inception	Structuring the evaluation Mapping of the NYLO tasks	Inception report
Data collection	Document review and interviews	Data compilation
Synthesis and dissemination	Synthesis and analysis of data Preparation of conclusions and recommendations Feedback from the UNCCD staff Finalization of the report	Summary presentation of main findings and conclusions  Evaluation report

The evaluation will start by exchanges with the UNCCD Evaluation Office on the UNCCD and general aspects of the evaluation process, followed by study of key documentation concerning the work of NYLO, such as briefings and meeting reports. With the aim to have a better idea of the work of the secretariat and the role of NYLO, the evaluator will interact with NYLO staff as well as other relevant secretariat staff. For structuring these interactions, the evaluator will use suitable methodologies such as a SWOT analysis or an organisational assessment approach that allows for rapid analysis. S/he will consider various aspects relevant to the performance of NYLO, including its relationship with the secretariat (planning, coordination, sharing of resources); key features of location in the UN headquarters (stakeholder cooperation, information-sharing, use of facilities); NYLO visibility and public relations; and its information management.

On this basis, the evaluator will prepare a provisional ‘mapping’ of the main tasks and responsibilities of NYLO, including information on possible outputs and outcomes consistent with the overall UNCCD results framework. The evaluator will finalize the preliminary evaluation questions and define the approach and

methodology for answering each question and prepare a work plan and schedule for completing the evaluation. The main features of the mapping, the evaluation questions and methodological details, the approach and the schedule will be contained in the first deliverable of the evaluation, the inception report.

The data collection phase is to some extent parallel with the inception phase, as information needed for the mapping of the NYLO tasks will often be also data on performance. In addition to further analysis of that information, this phase may include interviews with some key stakeholders that NYLO works with in New York and further exchanges with the secretariat staff. Data collection will also involve brief studies of the liaison offices or similar functions of the other Rio Convention secretariats and possibly also other organizations whose mandate and working modalities are not very different from those of the UNCCD secretariat.

The synthesis phase will be devoted to the preparation of the final report, which will contain the findings against the evaluation criteria and responses to the evaluation questions. Among other aspects, the report will outline the current and, as feasible, potential future aims, tasks and responsibilities of NYLO, and assess NYLO's capacities, structure and resources in relation to the aims, tasks and responsibilities. It will also consider the framework/mechanisms for enhanced information sharing and coordination between NYLO and the Bonn headquarters.

As the first draft of the evaluation report is ready, the evaluator will prepare a 3-5 page summary of findings and emerging conclusions and recommendations. This summary will be presented to, and discussed with, NYLO and other relevant UNCCD staff, with the aim to ensure factual correctness of the information contained in the assessment and to exchange views on draft recommendations.

The final report will be submitted to the secretariat and published through regular UNCCD communication channels. All drafts and reports prepared during the assessment will be in English and submitted as an electronic version (Word document).

## **Evaluation criteria**

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The evaluator will be recruited and supervised by the UNCCD Evaluation Office, while NYLO and other relevant UNCCD secretariat staff will support the evaluation process by facilitating access to all relevant information sources and documents and providing feedback on the questions, notes and reports delivered by the evaluator. The candidate should meet the following qualifications:

- Professional expertise in international development cooperation. Work experience involving a New York office of a UN system organization will be an asset.
- Experience in conducting development evaluations or organizational performance assessments in an international context. Experience in such evaluations/assessments in the UN context will be an asset.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills; experience in producing high quality written reports.
- Fluency in English.

The candidate to be selected may not have prior involvement in the activities that are being evaluated.

## **Indicative timetable**

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The assignment will start as soon as possible. The fee will be a lump sum based on the UN standards for consultancy remuneration, taking into account the level of expertise of the consultant and the workload for completing the assessment.

### **Submission of applications**

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Applications should be submitted by e-mail to [staffing@unccd.int](mailto:staffing@unccd.int) together with cover letter, UN Personal History Form<sup>10</sup> and/or CV specifying reference number: **CCD/19/EDM/78** in the subject line.

The **deadline for applications is 09 December 2019**. Only applications submitted by the deadline will be considered.

Due to the volume of applications received, receipt of applications cannot be acknowledged individually. Please address your application as indicated above and please do not address or copy your application to an individual at the Secretariat or Global Mechanism. Candidates who do not receive any feedback within three months of the deadline should consider their application as unsuccessful.

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Date of issuance: 22 November 2019

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/UNCCD%20P-11%20Form\\_1.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/UNCCD%20P-11%20Form_1.pdf)

## Annex 2: Evaluation Matrix

		<i>Interview questions</i>	<i>UNCCCD</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Information from documents</i>
	<b>1</b> <i>Effectiveness</i>	<b>What are the results achieved by NYLO? How have they contributed to the overall objectives and targets of the secretariat?</b> In particular:			
1	1.1	To what extent did NYLO contribute to Mainstreaming of DLDD and COP decisions into the United Nations' other pillars, including development and peace and security?  <i>Please bring examples of both successes and otherwise. What were the factors helping with this and hindering? What should be done to improve?</i>	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNCCD work programme for 2020-2021</li> <li>NYLO Recent quarterly plans</li> <li>UNCCD performance report 2018 2019</li> </ul>
2	1.2	To what extent did NYLO contribute to UNCCD process contributing to, and benefiting from, synergies with the other Rio Conventions and related cooperation processes on climate change and biodiversity?  <i>Please bring examples of both successes and otherwise. What were the factors helping with this and hindering? What should be done to improve?</i>	X	X	
3	1.3	To what extent did NYLO respond to identified needs of the Parties? How well has it served purposes specific to Parties' UN missions in New York and/or the UN secretariat and other UN offices there?  <i>What were the factors helping with this and hindering? What should be done to improve?</i>	X	X	
4	1.4	To what extent did NYLO contribute to the Establishment of partnerships with renowned think-tanks and research institutions to produce innovative, high-quality, science-based publications that provide increased visibility to the UNCCD and its mandate?  <i>Please bring examples of both successes and otherwise. What were the factors helping with this and hindering? What should be done to improve?</i>	X		
5	1.5	To what extent did NYLO contribute to the increased visibility of UNCCD?  <i>What were the factors helping with this and hindering? What should be done to improve? Please reflect on the utility of the Communications strategy/sub-strategy, adequacy of resources and clarity of the roles</i>	X	X	
6	1.6	To what extent did NYLO contribute to identifying and establishing collaborative partnerships with actors that have good networking capabilities for information dissemination, campaigns, advocacy and eventual partnership for DLDD projects.?	X		

		<i>Interview questions</i>	<i>UNCCCD</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Information from documents</i>
		<i>Please bring examples of both successes and otherwise. What were the factors helping with this and hindering? What should be done to improve?</i>			
7	1.7	To what extent did NYLO ensure availability and reach of updated information on UNCCD issues in the United Nations bodies and events of high political importance?  <i>What were the factors helping with this and hindering? What should be done to improve? Please reflect on the utility of the Communications strategy/sub-strategy, adequacy of resources and clarity of the roles</i>	X	X	
8	1.8	To what extent did NYLO contribute to establishing and maintaining strategic partnerships and collaborations with international financial institutions?  <i>Please bring examples of both successes and otherwise. What were the factors helping with this and hindering? What should be done to improve?</i>	X	X	
9	1.9	To what extent did NYLO contribute to reflecting of UNCCD priorities in GEF and WB programs?  <i>Please bring examples of both successes and otherwise. What were the factors helping with this and hindering? What should be done to improve?</i>	X	X	
10	1.10	To what extent did NYLO contribute to UNCCD's improved access to implementation resources?  <i>Please bring examples of both successes and otherwise. What were the factors helping with this and hindering? What should be done to improve?</i>	X	X	
11	1.11	To what extent did NYLO contribute to promoting south- south and triangular partnerships?  <i>Please bring examples of both successes and otherwise. What were the factors helping with this and hindering? What should be done to improve?</i>	X		
	<b>2. Efficiency</b>				
12	2.1	How efficient are the resources of NYLO used to obtain its results? <i>Why do you think so? What could improve?</i>	X		Information on the budget and spending CVs/job profiles/job descriptions
13	2.2	How efficient is NYLO in information management? <i>Why do you think so? What could improve?</i>	X		Typology, number of targeted events/activities and the information used
14	2.3	How well is information shared and work coordinated between NYLO and the Bonn headquarters?  <i>Why do you think so? What could improve?</i>	X		Examples of communication and support
15	2.4	How well is NYLO supported by the (a) HQ and (b) RCUs?	X		Examples of communication and support

		<i>Interview questions</i>	<i>UNCCCD</i>	<i>Partners</i>	<i>Information from documents</i>
		<i>Why do you think so? What could improve? What kind of support it needs most and more?</i>			
	2.5	How well is NYLO supporting the work of (a) the units of the secretariat, (b) GM?  <i>Why do you think so? What could improve?</i>	X		Typology and examples of activities and value added by NYLO
16	2,6	Does the location in the UN headquarters help in NYLO performing its tasks? If yes, in what way?  <i>Please reflect on affecting (a) promoting stakeholder cooperation; (b) in information sharing, (c) using facilities, etc.?</i>	X	X	
	<b>3. Relevance</b>				
17	3.1	What are and what should be the main objectives and goals to be achieved by NYLO? <i>How well is NYLO's role articulated in the reform strategy for UNCCD? How clear is its current and future role?</i>	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>REVIEWING OUR WAY OF WORKING: FIT FOR PURPOSE: Report of the task team 31 October 2019</li> <li>Evaluation of the UNCCD regional coordination units Final report: August 2019</li> </ul>
18	3.2	Who are and who should be the main key stakeholders that NYLO works with? <i>Who are the stakeholders that NYLO is not actively engaging now and it should? Is it well equipped for that?</i>	X	X	
19	3.3	What is and what should be the role of NYLO within the secretariat? <i>Are there changes to be made; if yes, what kind of changes? -</i>	X		
20	3.4	How relevant are the activities of NYLO to the overall objectives and targets of the UNCCD? <i>Please elaborate. What should change?</i>	X		
21	3.5	How relevant are the activities of NYLO to the identified needs of the UNCCD Parties, and the work of the Convention secretariat?	X	X	
22	3.6	What kind of strategies, factors and functions of NYLO would optimize the achievement of its objectives and goals?	X	X	
	<b>4. Sustainability</b>				
23	4.1	How financially viable is the NYLO? <i>Why do you think so? What could improve?</i>	X		Information on the budget and spending UNCCD audit reports
24	4.2	How well is its staffing suited to its main tasks? <i>Why do you think so? What could improve?</i>	X	X	CVs/job profiles/job descriptions

## Annex 3: UNCCD Results Framework

Table 2 The UNCCD results framework for 2020–2023 as approved by COP 14 (September 2019)

<i>UNCCD strategic objectives</i>	<i>2020–2023 main outcomes</i>	<i>Outcome indicators</i>	<i>2020–2021 main outputs</i>
To improve the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification/land degradation, promote sustainable land management (SLM) and contribute to land degradation neutrality (LDN)	<p>1.1 Reduction of the area affected by desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD)</p> <p>1.2 Up-to-date information on the status of DLDD</p> <p>1.3 Affected Parties use science-based policy-relevant information derived from the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in addressing DLDD and contributing to LDN</p>	<p>1.1 Affected Parties implement activities to achieve the voluntary targets they have set for addressing DLDD</p> <p>1.2 Affected Parties have access to refined default data and upgraded tools for the next national reporting period under the UNCCD</p> <p>1.3 Scientific cooperation involving the UNCCD delivers policy-relevant science-based information for addressing DLDD and contributing to LDN</p>	<p>- Technical advice, partnerships and access to capacity-building to support affected Parties in implementing activities to help achieve their voluntary LDN targets</p> <p>- Further development of the UNCCD reporting system and, with support from partners, improved quality of default data</p> <p>- Support for the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) in providing further guidance on LDN implementation</p> <p>- Publication of the second edition of the Global Land Outlook</p>
To improve the living conditions of affected populations	<p>2.1 Affected Parties use land-based activities to improve employment, stability and security</p> <p>2.2 Gender issues are increasingly taken into account in plans to address DLDD</p>	<p>2.1 The potential of land-based activities in improving employment, security and stability is recognized</p> <p>2.2 Affected Parties use the UNCCD guidance and technical advice on integrating gender issues into UNCCD implementation and the design of transformative projects</p>	<p>- Support for the Initiative on Sustainability, Stability and Security in Africa</p> <p>- Partnerships and policy guidance on using SLM to increase economic opportunities and generate stability</p> <p>- Technical advice, policy guidance and partnerships on integrating gender issues into UNCCD implementation and the design of transformative projects</p>

<p>To mitigate and manage the effects of drought, enhance the resilience of ecosystems and the preparedness of affected populations, and improve response and recovery capabilities</p>	<p>3.1 The effects of drought are better mitigated and managed, building on the support and information derived from the UNCCD</p> <p>3.2 Early warning concerning drought and/or sand and dust storms (SDS) is increasingly applied, building on the support and information derived from the UNCCD</p>	<p>3.1 Affected Parties use the information derived from the UNCCD to complete and implement national drought plans</p> <p>3.2 Affected Parties use the information derived from the UNCCD to mitigate the impact of SDS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support for the SPI in providing guidance for assessing and monitoring the resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems to drought</li> <li>- Roll-out and further development of the Drought Toolbox</li> <li>- Refinements to the global source map and technical guide for mitigating the impact of SDS</li> <li>- Technical advice, partnerships and access to capacity-building to support countries in implementing activities concerning drought and/or SDS</li> </ul>
<p>To generate global environmental benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD</p>	<p>4.1 The UNCCD process contributes to, and benefits from, synergies with the other Rio conventions and related cooperation processes on climate change and biodiversity</p>	<p>4.1 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services take into account the inputs from the UNCCD</p> <p>4.2 The development of joint indicators with the other Rio conventions advances</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support for the SPI in delivering UNCCD priorities and concerns to scientific processes under other conventions</li> <li>- Cooperation on the joint indicators and selected thematic topics with the other Rio conventions</li> <li>- Technical advice and partnerships on integrating land-based activities, particularly those on LDN targets, into national plans concerning climate change and biodiversity</li> </ul>
<p>To mobilize substantial and additional financial and non-financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention by building effective partnerships at global and national level</p>	<p>5.1 Improved access to implementation resources</p>	<p>5.1 Scope of funding sources to address DLDD</p> <p>5.2 Improved capacity of affected country Parties to translate their project ideas for UNCCD implementation into high-quality projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic partnerships and collaborations with international financial institutions</li> <li>- Support for the preparation of high-quality projects</li> </ul>

## Annex 4: List of People Interviewed

### **New York Liaison Office**

1. Melchiade Bukuru, Chief of UNCCD Liaison Office
2. Nandhini Krishna, Deputy Chief of Office. UNCCD/CBD Liaison office
3. Frederika Teixeira, Programme Assistant, UNCCD Liaison Office

### **The UNCCD secretariat and the Global Mechanism**

4. Rajeb Boulharouf, Chief of Staff
5. Lyndle Lindow, Chief of Administration and Finance
6. Louise Baker, Chief, External Relations, Policy and Advocacy Unit (ERPA)
7. Johns Muleso Kharika, Chief of Science, Technology and Innovations Unit (STI)
8. Yukie Hori, UNCCD Spokesperson and Chief of Communications Unit (COMMS)
9. Barron J. Orr, Lead Scientist, STI
10. Xiaoxia Jia, Scientific Officer, STI
11. Wagaki Wischnewski, Public Information and Media Officer, COMMS
12. Sasha Alexander, Policy Officer, ERPA
13. Barbara Bendandi, Policy Officer, ERPA
14. Marie-Paule Lorka-Lavri, Executive Associate to the Executive Secretary
15. Juan-Carlos Mendoza, GM Managing Director
16. Camilla Nordheim-Larsen, GM Programme Officer

### **Representatives of countries (mostly from missions to the UN in New York)**

17. Ecuador (former G77 Presidency): Mr. Andrés David Córdova Chabla, Second Secretary
18. European Union: Helge Elisabeth Zeitler, Counsellor
19. Finland (second half of 2019 EU Presidency): Ms. Katharina Backman, UNCCD Focal Point, Ministry for Foreign Affairs
20. Germany: Jens-Michael Bopp, Adviser
21. Iceland (Friends of DLDD Co- Chair): Ms. Sesselja Sigurdardottir, Counsellor
22. Namibia (Friends of DLDD Co- Chair): Mr. Felix Dimbare Tughuyendere. First Secretary
23. United States: Ms. Barbara M. De Rosa-Joynt, Division Chief for Biodiversity, Office of Conservation and Water, OES/ECW, Department of State.

### **Representatives of organizations**

24. Chizuru Aoki, Lead Environmental Specialist, GEF
25. Ulrich Apel, Senior Environmental Specialist GEF
26. Irena Zubcevic, Chief, Intergovernmental Policy and Review Branch, Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development, UN DESA
27. Federica Pietracci, Senior Program Management Officer, Secretariat of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
28. Michele Candotti, Chief of Staff and Director of the Executive Office, UNDP
29. Carla Mucavi, Director FAO Liaison Office in New York
30. Elizabeth Mrema, Executive Secretary, CBD