Enhancing the business sector engagement in the UNCCD

Evaluation report

Elements of a new strategy

January 2021
This study presents an evaluation of the business sector engagement with the UNCCD and suggests elements for a new business sector engagement strategy, building on document review and key informant interviews.

This study was commissioned by the UNCCD Evaluation Office and authored by Universalia Management Group (UMG in August 2020 – January 2021. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the UNCCD secretariat or the Global Mechanism.
Executive Summary

Background

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), through its secretariat and global mechanism (GM), has increasingly engaged with business sector entities in recent years, as these have a critically important role in meeting the objectives of the Convention. Such engagement has been conducted according to the UNCCD’s 2015 Business Engagement Strategy (BES) and has included participation of business sector entities in official UNCCD meetings, advocacy, capacity building, and more.

Recently, an increasing number of business sector entities have expressed growing interest in engaging with the UNCCD, while the types of partnerships have also multiplied. These trends have highlighted the need for the UNCCD to assess its efforts so far in engaging with the business sector and to reflect on its strategy moving forward.

Responding to this need, a study of the UNCCD business sector engagement was commissioned by the UNCCD in July 2020 – January 2021, including an evaluation of business sector engagement and the development of elements for a new business sector engagement strategy. The mandate was carried out by the Universalia Management Group (UMG), drawing on document review and key informant interviews.

Findings from this evaluation are presented below under the following headings: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness and Progress Towards Impact, Efficiency, Sustainability, and Gender Inclusion. Conclusions are summarised and are followed by recommendations, included in full, and finally by certain elements of a new strategy.

Readers are invited to consult the report in its entirety.

Relevance

Business sector engagement is highly relevant for combatting major environmental challenges, as discussed in recent different key agreements and frameworks, while being directly in line with the UNCCD’s priorities. Alignment between business sector interests and those of the Parties has received some but not quite adequate attention, potentially leading to misalignments and limiting the effectiveness of efforts towards land degradation neutrality (LDN) that involve the business sector.

Coherence

Business sector engagement is represented in the UNCCD’s Strategic Framework 2018-2030 and into guidance and approaches to Parties in a modest manner. The development of the 2015 BES filled an important gap at the UNCCD, as a commendable attempt to provide a structure for business sector engagement. It is however more tactical in its approach and has provided limited broader strategic guidance to the Convention.

The units of the secretariat and the GM have managed business sector engagement in an increasingly complementary manner since 2015, though coordination is at times less than optimal.

The UNCCD has not yet explored potential collaborations with other United Nations entities on the matter of business sector engagement.

Effectiveness and Progress Towards Impact

The UNCCD has undertaken important foundational work towards effective business sector engagement. It has tried multiple types of engagement; some situated at a strategic level.
Significant tangible results in terms of LDN are yet to be detected. Still, promising strides have been made and there is potential for more effective action and results. For the business sector, key results of engaging with the UNCCD have been increased visibility, connectedness, and legitimacy. Progress towards LDN was identified as such by some business sector partners, but not all.

Key success factors of business sector engagement have been a growing interest of the business sector in LDN, an openness of the UNCCD to work with business entities, the economic sustainability perspective of the business sector, and the collaboration with the Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI). Challenges to such engagement have been an uneven understanding of the business sector within the UNCCD, limited prioritisation and bandwidth of this area of work within the UNCCD, considerations related to risk and tenure, and an unresolved concern over benefits to be accrued by the business sector from engaging with the UNCCD.

### Efficiency

Business sector engagement has often been guided more by specific activities and outputs than longer-term strategic partnership planning. It has been highly personalised, at times constrained by the complexity of the UNCCD, and by its processes that are not necessarily adapted for the different types of business sector engagement.

Most risks related to business sector engagement are adequately assessed and managed as part of accreditation and procurement processes. The due diligence process is generally satisfactory but does not fully cover the risks associated with more innovative partnerships.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning around business sector engagement has been very limited, with little tracking of the investment of resources in, and the results of, such engagement.

### Sustainability

Of the different types of business sector engagement, funding for LDN projects and the consolidation of sustainable value chains are likely to produce long-term results and to be sustained in the absence of UNCCD support.

At this point in time, replication and scaling of results in terms of business sector engagement are mostly a potentiality rather than an achievement. The potential for such increase in scale is moderate to high and diversified, but it is constrained by the size of the UNCCD and current modalities of its engagement with the business sector.

### Gender Inclusion

The integration of gender inclusion in business sector engagement has been uneven, mostly the product of serendipity rather than of intentionality. In contrast, an intentional approach to gender has more recently been pursued with respect to the design of Transformative Projects and Programmes. As a result of this unevenness, collaborations with business sector entities have made varying and overall moderate contributions to advancing the UNCCD’s aims for gender inclusion, as per its Gender Action Plan.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The evaluation component of this mandate comes at an opportune time, towards the end of a strategy for engaging with the business community. It reflects the UNCCD’s desire to reflect on the continued guidance of the BES and possible strategic adjustments moving forward.

**Recommendation 1:** In their new BSES, the secretariat and the GM should develop a long-term vision for business sector engagement with the UNCCD, identifying key strategic aims and priorities, expected results and associated
modalities of collaboration. The strategy could also specify main thematic areas of engagement;

**Recommendation 2:** The secretariat and/or the GM, in collaboration with partners where feasible, should further develop their analysis, guidance and support targeting both country Parties and the business sector, with the aim of advancing shared understanding and alignment of public and private sector interests, collaboration modalities and expectations for effective country level action addressing land;

**Recommendation 3:** The secretariat and the GM should enhance their tools, facilities, and capacity for effective business sector engagement, including establishing a platform for the business sector, revamping communications targeting the business sector, reviewing the processes to ensure they cover the different types of business sector actors and engagement; and more.

**Recommendation 4:** In view of the limited staff and other resources of the secretariat and the GM, efficiency in business sector engagement should be maximised. This would include streamlining engagement to focus on strategic, high-yields partnerships, clearly defining roles and responsibilities within and among units of the secretariat and the GM, and more.

**Elements of a New Business Sector Engagement Strategy**

A chapter of the current report has been devoted to a study identifying elements to be considered in the development of a forthcoming BSES. It reaffirms the merits of the current strategy, while also providing new direction for a revised strategy moving forward.

The chapter advances certain points of continuity with the 2015 BES. It retains the explicit connection with the ultimate goal of business sector engagement, as well as components of its key constitutive elements. Similarly, it advances the importance of business engagement as a shared responsibility across different units of the secretariat and the GM.

The chapter also proposes new directions on business engagement, with the following elements to be integrated in an eventual updated strategy:

- An intentional and explicit linkage between objectives of the UNCCD, the 2018-2030 Strategic framework, the sought outcomes of the new BSES and the day-to-day activities of business sector engagement has been articulated, while also captured in a Theory of Engagement (ToE).
- A new typology of business sector actors has been introduced. Ultimately, diverse business sector engagement practices must be targeted and tailored to the diversity of business sector entities, and also monitored separately and distinctly.
- A new BSES needs to provide strategic guidance while also being fully operationalised, for instance through an action plan. Also, a catalogue of types of engagement and their respective modalities should be prepared and synthesised into a “brochure” made available to both the Parties and the business sector, intent on favouring improved and effective collaborations.
- The three cross-cutting themes of business sector engagement should be considered for integration into all related planning and implementation, as appropriate. These themes are: gender equality; regionalism; and core business sectors.

Design of the forthcoming strategy will continue through 2021.
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSES</td>
<td>Business Sector Engagement Strategy</td>
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<td>BES</td>
<td>Business Engagement Strategy</td>
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<td>CBD</td>
<td>Convention on Biological Diversity</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-based Organisation</td>
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<td>CES</td>
<td>Canadian Evaluation Society</td>
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<td>COP</td>
<td>Conference of the Parties</td>
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<td>CRIC</td>
<td>Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CST</td>
<td>Committee on Science and Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLDD</td>
<td>Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought</td>
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<tr>
<td>GGWSSI</td>
<td>Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative</td>
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<td>GM</td>
<td>Global Mechanism</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDH</td>
<td>Sustainable Trade Initiative</td>
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<td>LDN</td>
<td>Land Degradation Neutrality</td>
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<td>MEL</td>
<td>Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>NFP</td>
<td>National Focal Point</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD/DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>REDD+</td>
<td>Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation</td>
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<td>ROI</td>
<td>Return on Investment</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
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<td>SLA</td>
<td>Soil Leadership Academy</td>
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<td>TBE</td>
<td>Theory-Based Evaluation</td>
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<td>ToE</td>
<td>Theory of Engagement</td>
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<td>ToR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
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<td>TPP</td>
<td>Transformative Project and Programme</td>
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<td>UMG</td>
<td>Universalia Management Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNCCD</td>
<td>United Nation’s Convention to Combat Desertification</td>
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<td>UNFCCC</td>
<td>UN Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
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<td>WBCSD</td>
<td>World Business Council for Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>WEF</td>
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1. Introduction

1.1 The UNCCD and Business Sector Engagement

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was established in 1994. It is the only legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. To date, 196 countries and one economic integration organisation have accessed the UNCCD, and they advance and guide implementation of the Convention through the Conference of the Parties (COP) as the supreme decision-making body. The UNCCD is serviced by a secretariat that organises the functioning of the Convention as an intergovernmental platform and supports its implementation, and a Global Mechanism (GM) that facilitates the mobilisation of resources for implementation.

While business sector entities are not Parties to the UNCCD, they have a critically important role in meeting the objectives of the Convention – in avoiding and reducing land degradation and restoring already degraded land. Business sector entities have engaged with the Convention and its implementation in many ways over the years, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As the basis of engagement, “business sector” is understood as covering global and national privately-owned companies, publicly-traded corporations, investors and investor groups, industry associations, as well as private and corporate philanthropic foundations. Regarding “engagement”, it is defined for the purposes of this study as “a wide variety of types and forms of involvement in the UNCCD process, financial and non-financial cooperation with the secretariat and the GM, as well as different forms of private investments targeting the aims of the Convention.”

In practice, engagement has included business sector involvement in official UNCCD meetings and related events, as well as partnerships with the secretariat and the GM conducted according to the Business Engagement Strategy (BES). In addition to business sector entities as providers of funding, partnerships through the UNCCD have taken the shape of advocacy, awareness raising and capacity building. As specified in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the study that is reported here, “promoting and mobilising long-term private investments that serve the objectives of the UNCCD, particularly land degradation neutrality, while meeting the interests of the private sector partners remains the priority for any effort to engage private sector entities with the UNCCD.” As for land degradation neutrality (LDN), it has been defined by the COP as “a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources, necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security, remains stable or increases within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems.” Responses to LDN are defined as three types of action: avoiding, reducing, and reversing land degradation; with all focusing on biophysical dimensions. It is also recognised that effective implementation entails broader socio-economic transformative processes ranging from women’s land rights to the development of agricultural value chains, to mention just a few key areas.

Recently, an increasing number of business sector entities have expressed growing interest in engaging with the UNCCD, while the types of partnerships have also multiplied. For many key businesses – in the fields of food, feed and fibre – productive land is the most important asset and its availability has to be secured. At the same time, consumers are increasingly concerned over the sustainability and fairness of the products that they buy, which is pressuring the business sector to rethink the sourcing of materials and to invest

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1 UNCCD (s.d.) Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality. Retrieved from: [https://www.unccd.int/actions/achieving-land-degradation-neutrality](https://www.unccd.int/actions/achieving-land-degradation-neutrality)
sustainably. Until recently, the UNCCD as an intergovernmental platform had yet to consider such normative or operational actions that could effectively motivate or persuade the business sector to advance land degradation neutrality through modifying its practices affecting land use, investing in land restoration or by other means. There was also no UNCCD specific systematic guidance, tools or support measures available for countries to assist them in working with the business sector toward that objective.

With regard to the partnerships of the secretariat and the GM, their approach, internal capacity and processes for business sector collaboration had evolved more on a case-by-case basis than according to a well-defined strategy, which called for an update as well.

In short, the UNCCD was considered to benefit from a comprehensive, updated and effective strategy for business sector engagement in the implementation of the Convention, which would entail defining goals and an approach to achieve them, addressing both the intergovernmental process and the support to be provided through the secretariat and GM.

As the COVID-19 pandemic spread in 2020, the new realities further highlighted and exacerbated the need to effectively link public and private investments to enable the restoration of natural resources. Indeed, the need for revamping the UNCCD business engagement approach and the modalities for the secretariat and the GM became critical.

1.2 Overview and Report Structure

Responding to this timely need, a study of the UNCCD business sector engagement was commissioned by the UNCCD in July 2020 – January 2021, including an evaluation of business sector engagement and the development of elements for a new business sector engagement strategy. The mandate was carried out by the Universalia Management Group (UMG). This Report presents the Study Team’s evaluation findings as well as elements for a new strategy.

The Report is organised as follows:

- Chapter 1 presents the context in which the UNCCD’s business sector engagement is situated;
- Chapter 2 describes the purpose of the study, as well as the methodology and methods employed by the Study Team;
- Chapter 3 discusses relevance findings, related to the alignment of business sector engagement with the priorities of the Convention and of the Parties;
- Chapter 4 examines the coherence of the business sector engagement with the UNCCD’s policies and approaches concerning LDN and drought. It also discusses the adequacy of the current strategy and to what extent business sector engagement is handled in a coordinated manner internally;
- Chapter 5 details findings on the effectiveness and progress towards impact of the engagement, both for the UNCCD and the business sector, and presents factors of effectiveness;
- Chapter 6 analyses the efficiency of the UNCCD’s business sector engagement, notably its risk management;
- Chapter 7 presents sustainability and scalability findings, particularly the likelihood of UNCCD efforts producing long-term, self-sustained, and scalable results;
- Chapter 8 examines the integration of gender inclusion in business sector engagement;
- Chapter 9 summarises findings of the study and offers recommendations for the way forward;
Chapter 10 provides elements of a new business sector strategy; and
Chapter 11 presents the final word of the study.

Several appendices have been prepared for this Report. They provide key methodological details of the mandate, the ToR, and supportive materials for each of the substantive chapters of this Report.
2. Methodology

This chapter summarises the methodology used in the study. It reiterates objectives from the ToR, highlighting: scope and design; tasks associated with data collection, analysis, and reporting; and limitations faced in carrying out the mandate. The study design is set out in full in Appendix III.

2.1 Scope

The current study has a dual purpose: to evaluate the results of UNCCD business sector engagement thus far, and to develop elements for a new business sector engagement strategy. As such, the mandate is both backward and forward-looking; it is primarily formative, with a strong learning dimension as well as a strategic orientation. As part of the retrospective component, the study pursued an evaluative approach built around the OECD/DAC (Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) evaluation criteria, in addition to gender inclusion.

Regarding the forward-looking component, the study developed a framework and key elements for UNCCD business sector engagement. It identifies the contexts and conditions that may lead to effective partnership with the business sector in support of UNCCD Parties, and considers how the UNCCD as an intergovernmental process and though its institutions may optimise business sector engagement for LDN and broader development impact. For this purpose, the study identified likely factors of success for future engagement with the business sector, drawing on insights acquired through the retrospective analytic component of the study.

2.2 Approach and Design

The overall approach to the assignment was underpinned by the following approaches and principles:

- A **strategic mandate** overall, it comprises both retrospective (backward-looking) and prospective (forward-looking) approaches, as presented above.

- A **utilisation-focused** and **participatory** approach was pursued, engaging stakeholders appropriately throughout to ensure the usability of the Final Report. Key users of this study are understood to be: UNCCD staff, Member States, business sector representatives, and representatives from donor countries. Additional stakeholders may also be interested in this study, including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), academics and others.

- A **Theory-Based Evaluation (TBE)** approach was pursued, entailing the construction of a Theory of Engagement (ToE) to represent the potential contribution of the private sector to the UNCCD objectives, as well as the assumptions attached to its engagement. It is expected that the ToE will contribute to guiding UNCCD efforts in engaging with the private sector.

- The mandate was based on a clear and agreed-upon evaluation matrix, for the retrospective component, and series of **key questions**, for the prospective component, structuring and guiding data collection and analysis for this assignment. The matrix and key questions have been included in Appendix IV.
2.3 Data Collection

The Study Team conducted document review and semi-structured interviews to address the evaluation matrix and key questions. A list of the documents reviewed is set out in Appendix VI. Virtual semi-structured interviews were conducted from September to November 2020 with 25 key informants as part of the retrospective phase and with nine as part the prospective phase of the study. These informants represented a variety stakeholder groups (see Appendix V). Both phases had a distinct yet overlapping document review. The prospective phase has also relied on findings and recommendations from the evaluation, as well as on insights gained from a sense-making workshop with key UNCCD staff.

2.4 Analysis and Reporting

To address the different questions, the Study Team drew on the following forms of inquiry: contextual analysis – situating the UNCCD within a wider institutional, historical and political landscape; partnership/collaboration analysis – on the key dimensions of partnership between the UNCCD and the private sector; and interpretive content analysis – to identify themes and patterns and flag diverging views and opposite trends in the data; strategic analysis – constructing a strategic approach for the secretariat and the GM’s engagement with the business sector.

The Study Team organised the data collected in alignment with the different criteria of the evaluation matrix and key questions. This enabled a triangulation of data sources by theme. On the basis of this analysis, the Study Team delivered a preliminary findings workshop that included key UNCCD staff. The Study team also benefited from a sense-making workshop with key UNCCD staff in preparation of the elements of a new BES.

2.5 Limitation

The main limitation to this study has been the limited scope of the mandate, which did not allow for a wide consultation across the different stakeholder groups. While this limitation was not significant enough to compromise the triangulation of findings and the development of elements of a new strategy, it did restrain the disaggregation of perspectives within and among stakeholder groups.
3. Relevance

This chapter examines the extent to which the objectives and design of the business sector engagement respond to the priorities of the Convention and to the priorities of the Parties.

3.1 Findings

Finding 1: Business sector engagement is highly relevant for combatting major environmental challenges, as discussed in recent different key agreements and frameworks. It is also directly in line with the priorities of the UNCCD.

There is widespread agreement in the literature as to the relevance and importance of the UN system engaging the business sector for preserving the environment and ensuring that sustainable development pathways are pursued. This is based on a recognition that the public sector and civil society cannot fight major environmental challenges, such as desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD), alone. Various key agreements and frameworks invite more engagement with the business sector, as for instance the 2030 Agenda, which “calls on all businesses to apply their creativity and innovation to solving sustainable development challenges.”\(^2\) The Paris Agreement, for its part, recognises the importance of “[enhancing] public and private sector participation in the implementation of nationally determined contributions [i.e. national greenhouse gas emissions].”\(^3\) The Addis Ababa Action Agenda also encourages increased business sector participation towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably in adapting business models, in abiding by regulatory frameworks, in investing for sustainable development, and in partaking in partnerships with the public sector on science, technology, innovation, and capacity building.\(^4\) These are key but not comprehensive examples of a growing body of agreements and literature on the crucial need to involve the business sector in sustainability efforts, and of the benefits from doing so.

As for the UNCCD, this need has been recognised in several COP decisions (presented in Appendix VII), starting with COP11 in 2013. Business sector engagement is now a topic on the agenda of all UNCCD COPs. Diverse, consulted stakeholders concur on the relevance and vital importance of involving the business sector in working towards achieving the objectives of the UNCCD. This perception was based on four principal reasons. First, the business sector has a major impact on the land, and therefore has (or should have) responsibility for trying to limit its detrimental effects. Second, the business sector brings, and could bring, many valuable assets to the fight against DLDD, particularly in the

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form of funds, expertise, innovation, and a distinct focus on economic sustainability, a fundamentally constitutive contributor to the sustainability of initiatives over time. Third, the very nature of multilateralism is evolving, as it steers away from Party-to-Party interactions and turns towards an opening of interactions to non-Party stakeholders, such as those from the business sector. Finally, the modalities under which the business sector operates can be complementary to those of the public sector and civil society: the business sector tends to work on longer timeframes than individual aid projects, can easily provide funding to other business sector entities, and can in some cases have an impact at a large scale, across countries and continents. On this last point, it must also be recognised that unless intentionally aligned, these modalities may be at odds across the public, business and civil society sectors.

Engaging with the business sector is also a way to address many of the challenges inherent to the implementation of LDN, as identified by national focal points (NFPs), scientists working on land issues, and other key stakeholders in the 2018 UNCCD Science-Policy Interface Survey. Examples of such challenges include insufficient finance and private-public collaboration, but also insufficient awareness of, and high-level commitment to LDN, lack of data for baseline and monitoring, etc. On the vast majority of these challenges, engaging with the business sector could prove beneficial.

**Finding 2:** Alignment between business sector interests and those of the Parties, as manifested in their national frameworks for UNCCD implementation, has received some but not quite adequate attention. There have been cases of misalignment, with few efforts invested in building shared interests, potentially limiting the effectiveness of efforts towards LDN that involve the business sector.

In recent years, the Parties have in some cases perceived that business sector engagement – within the UNCCD, through the LDN Fund, etc. – would translate into funding towards each country’s LDN objectives, as per the LDN targets that they have defined. However, government and business interests frequently differ, or are perceived to differ. More efforts are warranted to identify points of intersection or underlying shared interests between these two types of entities. For example, shared interests may well include productive land, safe and stable societies, increasing wealth, etc. While LDN targets and other frameworks for implementing the UNCCD tend to be developed in collaboration with “relevant governmental offices, scientific institutions and local communities”, the business sector, in its plurality, is rarely part of such discussions, noting of course the challenges of doing so. As a result, countries’ LDN targets and priorities (e.g. priority regions) do not always reconcile with the business sector’s criteria and preferences for investments involving land. In addition, NFPs and governments have made an uneven use of policies, plans, and programmes meant to attract private funding to their countries and create an enabling environment for investments that contribute to LDN. Such policies, plans, and programmes refer to mechanisms that make it easier to invest in higher-risk areas and they may include, for instance tax benefits, seed funding, or mid- to long-term guarantees around tenure (noting that insecure, unclear and/or disputed tenure arrangements present a major challenge to private investment involving land use).

This partial alignment has already had consequences: it has manifested so far mostly under the LDN Fund, where business sector interviewees reported a reluctance of certain investors to liaise with governments on LDN, out of concern that they could be constrained by the targets defined from the perspective of government priorities. Such investors rather invest in bankable projects that align with their own expertise, interests, and internal criteria. The limited identification of areas where both business and public interests meet hinders business sector investments that contribute to LDN and compromises the effectiveness of UNCCD implementation in areas or sectors of prime importance. Shared understanding and alignment of public and private sector interests, modalities and expectations need to be better established at the level of countries as well as business sector actors for the LDN targets and for SDG 15 (Life on Land) to be met.
4. Coherence

This chapter discusses the coherence of business sector engagement with the UNCCD’s Strategic Framework 2018-2030 and with its policies and approaches. It also addresses the appropriateness of the 2015 BES in providing a framework for coherent collaboration with the business sector, and to what extent that collaboration has functioned efficiently and in complementarity. Finally, the chapter examines a potential collaboration between the UNCCD and other UN entities on business sector engagement.

4.1 Findings

Finding 3: Development of the UNCCD 2015 BES filled an important gap at the UNCCD, but has provided limited broader strategic guidance to the Convention. Business sector engagement is represented in the Strategic Framework 2018-2030 in a partial manner, despite its potential for contributing to all UNCCD strategic objectives. It is also modestly integrated into UNCCD guidance and approaches to Parties.

As per the UNCCD’s Strategic Framework 2018-2030, business sector engagement is specifically tied to strategic objective 5 (as presented in the textbox). The Parties are encouraged to implement the Strategy “by taking advantage of partnerships, including public–private partnerships, and innovative agreements”, 5 and this is measured through two indicators:

- Indicator 5.1: Scope of funding sources to address land degradation.
- Indicator 5.2: Affected country Parties have improved capacity to translate their project ideas for UNCCD implementation into high-quality projects.

However, business sector engagement may advance all five strategic objectives, as it can contribute to improving the condition of affected ecosystems and populations, to mitigating and adapting to the effects of drought, and to generating environmental benefits. The contribution of the business sector to these different strategic objectives is currently not captured by indicators for objectives 1 to 4.

Business sector engagement is also integrated to a modest extent into UNCCD guidance and approaches. Internally, several important documents directly relate to the matter, most notably the 2015 BES, and the accreditation and due diligence guidelines. UNCCD staff described the internal guidance documents

available on such engagement as being insufficiently “actionable and grounded in principle” and as providing limited guidance on “operational means and modalities” for collaboration. As for guidance documents meant for the Parties, they touch only little on business sector engagement. It is expected that the topic will feature in the upcoming standard operating procedures for UNCCD staff and that a scientific conceptual framework for LDN in the business sector will be developed in 2020-2021.

Finding 4: The 2015 BES is the first of its kind under the UNCCD and is a commendable attempt to provide a structure for business sector engagement. It is process oriented and detailed. Being more tactical in its approach, it would benefit from an overarching strategic framework of business sector engagement. Awareness and use of the BES have been uneven. As a result, it has provided only modest strategic guidance to the UNCCD.

The UNCCD BES is the first of its kind under the UNCCD. Bearing in mind the limited attention given to business sector collaboration in the Convention process, it is a commendable effort to bring a structured basis for related actions. It is crafted foremost as a process-oriented document comprising important elements of business sector engagement, notably regarding objectives, modalities, conditions for collaboration, as well as principles of due diligence. The key strategic strength of the BES is that it was endorsed by the Parties at COP 12, in 2015: as such, it is a document that bears much weight. However, unlike the Strategic Framework 2018-2020, the BES does not make reference to the context in which it was set, for instance with the Paris Agreement, the UN Guidelines for partnership with the private sector, the MDGs at the time, etc. In addition, while it outlines the ultimate goal of business sector engagement, it would benefit from presenting an overarching and coherent strategic approach clearly connecting this goal with sought outcomes while structuring day-to-day activities of the secretariat and the GM. As such, the different activities and types of engagement could be discussed in terms of how strategic they are towards reaching the ultimate goal of the Convention: this is important for the analysis of how the UNCCD has been delivering on the different elements of its strategy, in Section 5 – Effectiveness.

The BES is not used as the key framework to mobilise the secretariat and the GM, the Parties and the partners around shared priorities: several stakeholders external to the UNCCD, including business sector actors, identified limited knowledge or access to the BES as a gap in their understanding of the Convention’s work with the business sector. Thus, it seems that the business sector would benefit from more strategic guidance from the UNCCD in this respect. In addition, the BES focuses exclusively on SLM, rather than also including LDN or the broader setting of the strategic objectives contained in the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, which narrows the selection of sectors and industries for potential collaborations. It could also distinguish between the different types of business sector entities (e.g. local businesses, global corporations, foundations) and specify, for instance, their respective engagement opportunities and processes with the Parties to the Convention.

Within the secretariat and the GM, awareness of the BES, and therefore its use, has been uneven. Among staff members who engage with the business sector, some use it on a monthly basis, while others rarely use it as a reference for their work, despite its relevance. Consequently, the BES has not been the unifying strategic collaboration framework that similar strategies are in some other organisations. Nonetheless, the secretariat and GM’s private sector engagement overall, as it has been undertaken since 2015, has generally responded to the priorities of the Convention. Some types of engagement have made more direct contributions to LDN than others, particularly the consolidation of sustainable value chains for smallholder producers and the assistance to country Parties in translating their LDN targets into transformative projects and programmes (TPPs), which can be funded through innovative financial mechanisms, inclusive of the business sector.
Finding 5: The units and teams of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism have managed business sector engagement in an increasingly complementary manner since 2015, though coordination is at times less than optimal. A more explicit definition of roles and responsibilities is still needed.

Business sector engagement within the UNCCD requires the involvement of practically all functions of the secretariat, from management and external relations to the science support, communications and regional liaison offices. Most GM teams are also working with the private sector from a variety of perspectives. The 2015 Independent Evaluation of Partnerships Involving the UNCCD pointed to somewhat limited coordination and information-sharing on partnerships, notably business sector partnerships, between the secretariat and the GM. It also recommended that roles and responsibilities between the two in managing partnerships be clearly defined.\(^6\) Five years on, collaboration and communication between the secretariat and the GM have improved. Partners are now generally assigned one main contact person within the UNCCD, which has reduced the risk of working with the same partners in silos and thereby incoherently. Some UNCCD staff members have expressed satisfaction regarding the teamwork at play within the Convention, reporting that “it got much better, now everybody has a role to play.” While the small size of the secretariat and the GM favours collaboration across units, some staff members reported there was still room for improvement to address remaining silos among units or teams: this would improve the coherence and effectiveness of the staff’s work.

Some uncertainties remain in coordination modalities, such as the exact definition of roles and responsibilities among the different units. The BES does not dive into this topic; while it refers to most types of collaboration with the business sector as being done through the secretariat, in effect both the secretariat and the GM have initiated and managed partnerships. This raises questions around the flow of the partnership process, particularly in terms of which units can (and should) initiate what types of collaborations and at what point should other units become involved. So far, cross-unit coordination, joint planning and cross-fertilisation of ideas have been more ad hoc than following structured processes, hence reducing the UNCCD’s capacity to reap all the benefits brought by a “whole-of-organisation” approach. The topic of coordination modalities is expected to be discussed shortly within the UNCCD: it is critical that all secretariat units and the GM operate in complementarity, with effective communication and synergy.

Finding 6: The UNCCD has not yet explored potential collaborations with other UN entities, for instance the other two Rio Conventions, on the matter of business sector engagement.

In developing its business sector engagement, the UNCCD has not yet sought coherence and collaboration with other UN entities. Some stakeholders external to the UNCCD indicated that such collaborations could

\(^6\) UNCCD (2015) *Independent evaluation of partnerships involving the UNCCD secretariat and/or the Global Mechanism*
be highly beneficial to exchange best practices and avoid duplication of work, thus increasing both effectiveness and efficiency. For instance, it was suggested that the three Rio Conventions should share expertise and even have a joint strategy on business sector engagement, which is not the case.

While the three Rio Conventions have important differences, all three value business sector engagement and have accomplished work in this regard. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has been encouraged by its COP to further develop its engagement with the business sector, as represented in objective 4.4 of its Strategic Plan (“Key actors and stakeholders, including the private sector, are engaged in partnership to implement the Convention”). The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has launched the Private Sector Initiative of the Nairobi work programme to increase engagement and established a database to track private sector activities with specific reference to building resilience. The value of strategic alignment is therefore potentially high, while the modalities of such alignment and collaborations remain to be explored.

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5. Effectiveness and Progress Towards Impact

This chapter examines the results of engagement with the business sector, both for the UNCCD and for the business sector. It also examines success factors and challenges to effective engagement.

5.1 Findings

Finding 7: The UNCCD has undertaken important foundational work towards effective business sector engagement. It has tried multiple types of engagement; some situated at a strategic level. Significant tangible results in terms of LDN are yet to be detected. Still, promising strides have been made and there is potential for more effective action and results.

Over the last five years or so, the secretariat and the GM have worked on business sector engagement. Such efforts are ramping up though not yet mature. The work accomplished so far has been diversified and has laid the ground for consolidated, reflective engagement. Over time, the UNCCD has attempted various types of collaborations, some more strategic and effective than others. The types of engagement that have yielded the most important results have been collaborative advocacy products, promoting the establishment of the LDN Fund, and innovative project development in the context of the Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI). Where more work is required is in attracting private companies to become more involved in the UNCCD process, in designing TPPs that meet the interests and modalities of private sector funding, and in capacity building for more inclusive LDN implementation. Funding and in-kind support have yielded varying results towards LDN.

Considering that land has historically been less the focus than other aspects of sustainability, awareness raising and advocacy have proved to be of key strategic importance. Through publications, conferences, workshops, networking, a campaign, the release of a film, and more, the UNCCD has managed to put land on the agenda of some business sector entities and associations. By engaging with these associations, particularly the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), the UNCCD saw its advocacy efforts amplified, reaching the organisation’s almost 200 members. It has also collaborated with different organisations to demonstrate the business case for LDN (“The Business Case for Soil”; “The Business Case for Investing in Soil Health”; “Agricultural Value Chains in Sub-Saharan Africa: From a Development Challenge to a Business Opportunity”; etc.). As a result, over the last few years, the UNCCD has been contacted by a large number of companies seeking information and opportunities for collaboration. In addition, staff members who engage with the business sector have dedicated efforts to convincing their colleagues of the potential benefits of such engagement. Through advocacy work, the team has succeeded in getting land degradation on the radar of different sub-sectors of the business community (including banking, pharmaceuticals, automotive industry, technology, etc.), and on getting the business sector better on the radar of the Convention process, laying the ground for future collaborations.

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9 UNCCD (2016) Knowledge Hub. Available at: https://knowledge.unccd.int/
Another type of engagement that has been highly effective while also directly in line with the goal of widespread LDN has been the mobilisation of investments targeting LDN through the LDN Fund. The UNCCD spearheaded its creation, as well as that of the Technical Assistance Facility (TAF). The LDN Fund was described in the 2017 Evaluation of the LDN Fund Development as an “innovative investment approach” and an example of “meaningful, deep partnership [of the UN system] with the private sector.”\(^{10}\) Since the creation of the Fund, its manager Mirova and the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) managing TAF has attracted more than US$ 175 million from both public and private investors, including mainstream institutional investors as well as large corporations. At the time of writing, the Fund supported five TPPs representing a total financing of US$ 55 million. The TAF supports more than 10 pre- and post-investment assistance projects, all in Latin America, Africa and Asia. While it is too soon to assess in detail results in terms of LDN, the LDN Fund has undeniably provided increased funding for LDN, in realisation of strategic objective 5 of the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework.

The consolidation of sustainable value chains for smallholder producers has also been highly strategic as well as effective, albeit so far at a smaller scale. This work has been accomplished in the context of the GGWSSI, where the UNCCD has acted as a broker between business sector entities providing funding and implementing partners on the ground. Specifically, through these collaborations, the GM has explored innovative approaches to address land degradation and supported the introduction of sustainable production techniques, the facilitation of local processing of dryland products for international export, and the connection of local value chains with global buyers. The GM has also piloted a training programme to favour the creation of “land-based green jobs” as part of sustainable value chains.\(^{11}\) These projects have contributed to LDN in communities of the Sahel and generated lessons that can be used as part of TPP design, at scale.

Some other types of engagement have been situated at a highly strategic level but are still to yield solid, demonstrable results. An example is found in the Business Forums: it has been reported that their purpose was not always clear (e.g., advocacy, innovation, policy dialogue, etc.), that they largely convened already convinced stakeholders, and have been thus far limited in their value for sparking innovative, constructive and ultimately fruitful exchanges. In addition, NFPs and policymakers did not always take advantage of such networking events with the business sector, for instance to promote bankable projects in their countries. Business Forums have also been the occasion for participants to prepare a joint declaration, in which they agree to advancing the implementation of the UNCCD by reducing their land footprint. Yet, the declarations are not binding and are not tied to a clear set of incentives (which could include certification, being showcased in UNCCD publications, etc.). The results of these declarations in terms of changes in practices in the value chain towards LDN are not currently fed back to the UNCCD – or to country Parties, in some cases, as discussed in Section 3 – Relevance – and compiled to track progress. As such, the Business Forums have not been as effective as they could have been. As a first step, their outcomes could be made more visible and known to both the UNCCD stakeholders and the general public.

Other normative work accomplished with the business sector, notably multi-stakeholder roundtables on the potential contribution of the business sector to UNCCD targets in the context of the UNCCD COPs and the involvement of the business sector in policy preparation trajectories of the UNCCD, have hinted at results. It has been reported that these dialogues have attracted new business entities to the UNCCD and have overall been appreciated by certain business sector informants.


\(^{11}\) Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, UNCCD (2019), p.15
The assistance provided to country Parties in developing LDN TPPs that attract private investments is another example of strategic UNCCD work with uncertain results. As of September 2020, the GM had assisted close to 80 countries in translating their LDN targets into TPPs, supporting the development of 55 national concept notes for projects which could be funded through innovative financial mechanisms, including by the business sector. It is however unclear how well these TPPs succeed in effectively receiving private funding – the widely different project cycles, timelines and modalities on which the public and business sectors operate present many practical hindrances for blended finance.

With private sector funding, more than 115 participants (many of them NFPs) have been trained on different aspects of LDN through the Soil Leadership Academy (SLA) and a Training Fair in 2019. The rationale behind these capacity building initiatives was to approach policymakers, capacitate them and share best practices with them, in the hope that they would use the new knowledge to revise land management practices and track their results. While the trainees have generally appreciated the skills that they received, it is not possible to determine whether the capacity building has contributed to progress towards LDN. Informants notably mentioned a disconnect between commitments by NFPs at a global level and actions taken nationally towards LDN, the location and role of NFPs in governments, and changes of NFPs when governments change, as common challenges for benefiting from the built capacity at country level. Furthermore, changes in land management practices as a result of capacity building on the matter have not been monitored.

Finally, the UNCCD has received funding and in-kind support from the private sector for a variety of activities. Examples include the abovementioned capacity building efforts, funded by Syngenta, the Bellagio Conversation to reflect on practical solutions for lasting peace and prosperity in the Sahel funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, and the provision of tablets to COP participants sponsored by Samsung. These cases of funding and sponsorships have been practical, and they have met pressing needs within the UNCCD. Some of them, such as the Samsung sponsorship, are the result of an opportunity having been seized for a specific purpose. Others could benefit from further mainstreaming into the plans and aims of the secretariat and the GM, so as to ensure the relevance and coherence of the actions vis-à-vis the overall UNCCD results framework.

An unexpected result of business sector engagement has been a rise in interest within the UNCCD for such work and an increase in creativity in terms of types of engagement. Experiences so far, notably in the context of the GGWSSI, have spurred ideas for other collaborations, for instance developing a model in which the UNCCD would act as a broker between a business sector entity seeking an opportunity to fund LDN and an implementing organisation executing such project on the ground.

As can be seen, the UNCCD has tried multiple types of engagement, with varying levels of strategic relevance and yields towards widespread LDN. An overarching challenge in assessing the effectiveness of UNCCD engagement with the business sector is the absence of a system to track and aggregate the results of said engagement, their contribution to long-term development impacts and the attribution of these impacts to specific types of engagement. This is a finding of the 2015 Independent Evaluation of Partnerships Involving the UNCCD which remains valid to this day.

12 For example, 85% of the trainees in the 2019 LDN training considered that the training increased their knowledge of the topics that were considered.
Finding 8: Key results for the business sector of engaging with the UNCCD have been increased visibility, connectedness, and legitimacy. While progress towards LDN has been mentioned by some, others have not perceived it as a significant result.

The main benefits reported by the business sector from engaging with the UNCCD relate to three dimensions, in order of importance: increased visibility, greater connectedness, and improved legitimacy. In collaborating with the UNCCD (e.g. attending events, etc.), business sector entities consider their primary benefit to be an increase in their level of visibility on matters related to land. They become visible to stakeholders around which they normally do not gravitate, such as policymakers and companies working in other sectors, or from other continents. This has resulted in some entities being approached and developing collaborations with new partners, due to the visibility they earned through the UNCCD platform.

The second most important benefit, and a corollary of the first one, is the connections that business sector entities are able to build through the UNCCD. The UNCCD is recognised as a platform and a convener, notably acting as a broker between businesses, implementors, policymakers and regulators, etc., assembling stakeholders during Ministerial and Business Forums, etc. It has been reported that the UNCCD “can pull everybody together because they know the players on the ground, the organisational heads, the government heads, and so on.”

Gains in legitimacy are another key benefit, as business sector entities collaborating with the UNCCD have seen their reputation improve globally. By partnering with a UN entity, and by making this collaboration visible, business sector informants explained that they were now treated as “vetted” organisations, trusted partners on the topic of land. As a result, certain entities reported having been more successful in raising funds, while others receive an increasing quantity of requests for technology and expertise sharing. This again raises concerns for certain stakeholders, internal and external to the UNCCD, who believe the Convention should be highly intentional about its engagement with business sector entities, and the way these are represented in public fora.

Another benefit of engaging with the UNCCD is the support that certain business sector actors reported receiving, namely in terms of expertise, advocacy materials, and other communications tools. It was however generally not mentioned as a key advantage, but rather as a secondary benefit.

While business sector actors have generally expressed satisfaction with the results achieved through their engagement with the UNCCD, most believe that more could be done regarding progress towards LDN. Some UNCCD business sector collaborators perceived this to be an obvious result of their engagement with the Convention, whereas others felt removed from LDN. This is consistent with engagement mostly at a foundational level, which is, in many regards, still to show results in terms of intermediate and long-term outcomes.

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The ministerial dialogue, at the COP is useful: we can influence some of the decision-making process. The platform of the UNCCD is also very important. We do our best to attract partners, but the UNCCD’s platform has a high value, it cannot be replaced.

– Business Sector Entity

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Finding 9: Key success factors of business sector engagement have been a growing interest in LDN of the business sector, an openness of the UNCCD to work with business entities, the economic sustainability perspective of the business sector, and the collaboration with the GGWSSI. Challenges to such engagement have been an uneven understanding of the business sector within the UNCCD, limited prioritisation and bandwidth of this area of work within the UNCCD, considerations related to risk and tenure, and an unresolved concern over benefits to be accrued by the business sector from engaging with the UNCCD.

Factors of success in business sector engagement, and therefore ultimately of results, are the following:

- **The business sector shows growing interest for matters related to sustainability, among which LDN.** This agenda has been put forward by the MDGs and now by the SDGs, particularly SDG 15.3, “By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.”\(^\text{13}\) Due to the advocacy efforts described above, and to the different benefits that the business sector expects to obtain from collaborating with the UNCCD, this sector is increasingly interested in engaging with the Convention. The UNCCD is also very open to finding ways of collaborating with the business sector, which different business sector informants have identified as a strength of their relationship.

- **The business sector sees environmental sustainability work as indissociable from economic sustainability.** This view has the advantage of relying on a long-term vision, with durable results, rather than thinking in terms of projects with a finite duration.

- **The collaboration with the GGWSSI has enabled different types of engagement with the business sector,** particularly brokering of partnerships between businesses and implementors, hence efforts on sustainable value chains, and advocacy. Moreover, the relationship between the UNCCD and the GGWSSI has been favourable for both entities, as they benefitted from increased visibility and interest from the business sector, connection with new organisations, possibility to accomplish work at a regional scale, and efficiencies in sharing resources and materials. As similar approaches and activities as those of the GGWSSI are currently under development in Southern Africa region, there will be opportunities for further collaboration.

Key challenges to fruitful business sector engagement have been identified as follows:

- **Within the UNCCD, there is an uneven understanding of how the business sector thinks and of what it wants, in all its diversity.** This has led to occasional misunderstandings, to a steep learning curve on both sides, and to a varying identification and assessment of market and investment opportunities. At the level of implementation, it has been reported that the UNCCD is yet to acquire expertise in the functioning of value chains, which may result in expectations that are difficult to meet. This challenge is underscored by the lack of a clear value proposition for business sector engagement with the UNCCD.

- **Business sector engagement has historically not been a priority within the UNCCD.** Thus, staff working with the business sector have been few, and often with limited dedicated bandwidth for doing so. This has possibly contributed to a focus placed on the activities and outputs of business

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\(^\text{13}\) United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs – Sustainable Development (s.d.) *Goal 15.* Retrieved from: [https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal15](https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal15)
sector engagement, as opposed to the finality of it. It has constrained the scope and the pace of the efforts accomplished.

- **Engagement with the business sector is also challenged by considerations related to risk and tenure.** Most of the regions around which the UNCCD is trying to engage the business sector are high-risk, for instance the Sahara and the Sahel, as well as Central Asia. The absence of an approach to de-risking investments is a concern for business sector entities who need reassurance before considering such investments. Securing guarantees around tenure is an important challenge, particularly in high-risk areas, thereby hindering investments. To favour business sector investments, there would need to be incentives such as guaranteed and secure access of the land for defined periods, during which it should be restored and could be harvested.

- **Another challenge to engagement with the business sector is an unresolved issue over the legitimacy of singular or ad hoc, as well as bundled benefits to be accrued by the business sector from engaging with the UNCCD, including on the matter of profit-making.** Obviously, business sector entities’ motivation to make profit is legitimate but there is contention around the extent to which the UNCCD should enable or even subsidise such profit-making and other benefits generation (e.g. undue competitive or other advantages from being associated with the UNCCD).

While the secretariat and the GM continue to pursue partnerships with business entities, informants from some such entities have reported perceiving a certain “moral discomfort” among Convention staff related to the level of profit and other benefits that a partner should be legitimately allowed to gain as a result. Without a clear policy statement from the UNCCD on the legitimate accrual of profit and other benefits, such discomfort can be expected to remain, with more problematic inconsistency in approaches and implementation as business sector engagement is scaled up.

> The biggest difficulty for the UN is that if they give us funds for an activity X, the danger is if it is a success and we make a lot of profit. The UN does not want to be accused of that. It holds the UNCCD back tremendously. There must not be too much benefit for the businesses they are working with. That is the elephant in the room.

– Business Sector Entity
6. Efficiency

This chapter examines the way in which business sector engagement has been planned, implemented, and monitored within the UNCCD. It also assesses risk management as it pertains to such engagement.

6.1 Findings

Finding 10: Business sector engagement has often been guided more by specific activities and outputs than longer-term strategic partnership planning. It has been highly personalised, thus allowing the UNCCD to develop meaningful collaborations with business sector entities, but also rendering it vulnerable to turnover and variations in staff skillsets.

Although the secretariat and GM’s business sector engagement has generally contributed to the priorities of the Convention, it has often been guided more by specific activities and outputs than longer-term strategic aims. There have been examples of strategic engagement with the business sector, for instance around the GGWSSI\(^{14}\) and TPP design, but the link between the UNCCD long-term objectives and some other engagements has been less clear. While seizing suitable business sector cooperation opportunities as they appear may respond better to the dynamic of business sector actions than seeking commitments to long-term processes, an overarching framework anchored in a strategic approach, supported by a strong BES, would increase the likelihood of achieving a lasting impact. It seems that for the UNCCD, business sector collaboration success has been understood as achievement in the production of activities and outputs, and thus conveyed to partners. This is consistent with the perception from some business sector informants that their collaboration with the UNCCD was not directly connected to LDN, as it should be, and that the Convention has not yet clearly defined “what success looks like [in terms of business sector engagement].”

This focus on activities and outputs has resulted in a project-based rather than programmatic approach to business sector engagement and collaborations. Project partners have typically signed distinct memoranda of understanding (MoUs) for each project with the secretariat or the GM, without the umbrella of longer-term agreements or similar broader commitments. Such a piecemeal, iterative approach has served to pilot approaches and partnerships, with promising and in some cases effective results. However, the approach has not encouraged the establishment of more strategic result/vision for the cooperation and planning ahead, which has in turn affected the allocation of resources as part of partners’ budgets.

Secretariat and GM engagement with the business sector has been highly personalised and tailored, developed on a case-by-case basis, which has presented the benefits of allowing for creative, meaningful and context-specific collaborations. While such tailored engagement has had its merits, in the UN context it remains subject to the usual management and administrative scrutiny, entailing a formal process of requests to be submitted and approvals to be sought at different levels, for the different collaborations. While the purpose and value of the standard scrutiny has been recognised, some UNCCD staff members have identified the formal process as a source of delays, and at times of false starts, in engaging with the business sector. Such individualised engagement has also had the downside of making collaborations with the business sector vulnerable to turnover and changes of task assignments, and subjected to the variations

\(^{14}\) For instance, the GM has established a list of companies that have parts of their value chain in the Sahara and the Sahel. They have been reaching out to these companies to explore opportunities for engagement.
of staff member skillsets, comfort with innovation and bandwidth. Some partners reported delays and setbacks, as certain steps had to be accomplished again with their new contact point. Nevertheless, business sector stakeholders have reported having had positive experiences overall in their relationship with staff and the UNCCD more broadly, which also suggests that investments made by the UNCCD in these relationships are on balance well worth the costs and challenges.

These characteristics of business sector engagement are consistent with the findings of the 2015 Independent Evaluation of Partnerships Involving the UNCCD. This evaluation found that partnerships (in general, including those with the business sector) were not systematically planned towards the achievement of long-term objectives, but rather managed by activities and outputs. It also concluded that they were managed in an individualised manner, based on the knowledge and assessment of individual UNCCD staff members, which brought advantages and disadvantages as described above, notably that the “diversity of management approaches [made] it difficult to compare partnerships.”¹⁵ The fact that these conclusions still apply nowadays, five years later, is a matter of some concern. UNCCD staff members explained that the limited integration of the evaluation’s recommendations, as they pertain to business sector engagement, were due to the fact that team members engaging with the business sector are working at full capacity.

Finding 11: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning around business sector engagement has been very limited. There appears to be little tracking of the investment of resources in, and the results achieved through, such engagement.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) on business sector engagement has been limited, both at the level of projects and of UNCCD-wide reporting. At the level of business sector partnerships, MoUs rarely include indicators for measurement of success, focusing on the completion of activities or outputs (e.g. participation in events, roundtables, publications, ...) rather than on contributions made to outcomes. There is a need for an effective and widely adopted system to track partnerships, compile their results, and use this information for reporting purposes, as well as for internal learning and continuous improvement.

At the level of the Convention, as discussed as part of Section 4 – Coherence, business sector engagement is measured using two indicators, under strategic objective 5. These relate to the scope of funding sources to address land degradation and to the number of country Parties that have improved their capacity to design high-quality TPPs. Reporting on the LDN Fund’s progress is also part of strategic objective 5. This reporting is not sufficient to capture the wide array of business sector engagement that has been implemented by the secretariat and the GM, as it leaves out different types of engagement (advocacy, Business Forums, normative work, capacity building). While many private sector collaboration activities are referred to in the performance report and/or other documentation submitted to the COP, there is no synthesis or analysis focusing specifically on business sector engagement, which makes it difficult for the Parties (or the secretariat and the GM) to have a comprehensive picture of the status or progress made, which would be helpful for the planning of further activities.

In addition, the resources invested in business sector engagement do not appear to be separately tracked within the UNCCD. Although so far, such resources, be they human or financial, have been very limited, their better accounting in the future could be useful for analyses around efficiency, for instance of the different types of engagement, and their evolution over time. These different constraints were also identified in the 2015 Independent Evaluation of Partnerships Involving the UNCCD, which concluded that

¹⁵ UNCCD (2015) Independent evaluation of partnerships involving the UNCCD secretariat and/or the Global Mechanism, p.8
“consequently, the value of partnerships may be underestimated and misunderstood, which may hinder further partnership building and resource mobilization.” Improved visibility on the results and cost-effectiveness of business sector engagement would make it easier to build a case for enhanced efforts in this regard.

Finding 12: Efficiency in engaging with the business sector has been constrained by the complexity of the UNCCD, and by its processes that are not necessarily adapted for the different types of business sector engagement. There is a discrepancy between the Convention timeline and that of the business sector, which is particularly in evidence as part of TPPs.

Three core characteristics of the UNCCD have limited the efficiency of business sector engagement: the complexity of the Convention as a UN entity; the partial adequacy of its processes; and its pace of action.

The UNCCD, as an international treaty, is built on a formal intergovernmental process tied to strict UN procedures, with expressions and operating modalities that are highly specified and often particular to this Convention. For first time business sector collaborators, the learning curve is reportedly very steep, as business sector entities function in a widely different manner. While business sector collaborators currently appreciate their relationship with the UNCCD, most of them recalled having dealt with delays (and even frustrations) around launch and contracting, pointing to this as a disincentive for business sector engagement. The UNCCD is also constrained by its processes, which are tailored for engagement with Parties but less so with the business sector, and the different types of engagement this includes. Only a few staff members have specific expertise related to business sector engagement, and even their expertise may not be adequate to respond to the requirements of the variety of relations that have been launched by the secretariat and the GM. Some staff members have also reported that at times, the legal, financial or administrative capacity of the secretariat and the GM has not been adequate to handle the business sector interactions. Better performance in this regard would require the acquisition of different skillsets and probably also the development of new internal controls, policies and processes. If the UNCCD seeks to increase its level of ambition in business sector engagement, it needs to ensure commensurate human resources as well as internal processes, policies and safeguards that enable effective and efficient collaboration with the business sector.

With regards to engaging the business sector in country level projects addressing LDN, one important challenge is the discrepancy between the pace at which the processes under the UNCCD and business sector entities operate. This has been particularly evident as part of designing TPPs: the UNCCD experiences indicate that moving from design to implementation can take three years, whereas business sector entities are generally looking to invest in the upcoming six to 12 months – even in cases where they are prepared to make medium to longer-term commitments. While in the case of blended finance, investors could be involved once projects are almost fully developed, certain informants warned that this strategy had been
used for other types of partnerships (e.g. in the context of the GGWSSI) and led to a limited sense of ownership over the projects among business sector entities.

**Finding 13:** Most risks related to business sector engagement are adequately assessed and managed as part of accreditation and procurement processes. As for partnerships with business sector entities, the due diligence process is generally considered satisfactory but does not fully cover the risks associated with more innovative types of partnerships.

Risks regarding business sector engagement are assessed as part of three distinct processes: firstly, when entities seek accreditation to the UNCCD COP; secondly, in the procurement procedure; and lastly, in partnerships.

Businesses and industry entities may be accredited to the COP through a formal application process, if they have expressed interest in participating in meetings of the COP and its subsidiary bodies; have specific expertise in matters relating to the Convention; and participate in the UN Global Compact. In practical terms, accreditation offers business entities an observer status in the COP, according to which they may participate in official UNCCD meetings and in some cases, intervene in plenary debates. However, accreditation does not allow business entities to participate in the negotiations on COP decisions. While it indicates the interest and commitment of the accredited business entity to the UNCCD, accreditation does not yet establish any relations or partnership with the Parties, the secretariat or the GM. It may be noted that contrary to the requirement established in the BES\(^\text{16}\), most partners reported having entered into partnerships with the UNCCD without having been accredited beforehand. The sequenced process that was established in the BES has not systematically been respected. Finally, accreditation is a one-time process: there is no further verification over time and there have not been cases of revocation.

As for the procurement procedure, it is appropriately very rigid: it involves the publication of tenders expressing specific needs, the submission and analysis of technical and financial statements, and the selection of a service provider. While it has been reported that the procedure might dissuade certain business sector entities from collaborating with the UNCCD, this process and its verifications are in line with UN practices and are adequate.

Risk management in terms of partnerships with the business sector entails the application of a due diligence process which includes a checklist of items to verify. The checklist goes beyond the requirements of the UN Global Compact and considers, for instance, the sustainability agreements by which an entity abides, its commitments and publications on the matter, etc. The current checklist does not include sector-specific lines of inquiry, but it is generally considered satisfactory.

However, it appears that the due diligence process might not fully consider risks associated with more varied or innovative types of partnerships. For instance, partnerships geared at implementation are fundamentally different than those that involve funding or sponsorships. Risks in relation to partnerships have also in some cases been variably assessed by staff members at different levels, with certain business sector stakeholders reporting examples of partnerships having “ground to a halt because someone higher in the UNCCD [saw them] as too risky.” This raises concerns as to internal misalignment around risk management, the consequences of which have been delays, false starts, and apprehensions regarding the rest of the partnership.

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\(^{16}\) The BES states that “a potential business sector partner shall show willingness to become active in the UNCCD process overall by undergoing accreditation to the COP and engaging in the SLM Business Forum.”, p.8
CSOs and certain external stakeholders have expressed concerns regarding the current way risks are assessed, which would overlook the risk that business sector partners prioritise profit over the will to solve environmental problems, and be insufficiently transparent to CSOs and to the Parties. These stakeholders warned the UNCCD against engaging in partnerships which could diminish the credibility of the Convention. As for business sector informants, they reported that the due diligence process could be faster and better communicated, which would avoid misunderstandings and frustrations. There is also a worry among UNCCD staff that thorough and lengthy risk assessment could discourage business sector entities, beyond early adopters, of engaging with the UNCCD. Overall, it appears that the current due diligence process is mostly adequate, but it does not sufficiently cover the various risks associated with partnering with the business sector (e.g. risks related to the business sector entity [allegations, lawsuits, ethical issues, …] vs. to the partnership [bilateral or multilateral, involving funding or not, …], risks to the work of the Parties towards LDN, to the UNCCD’s image and credibility, and more), while also requiring a significant amount of time to be conducted.
7. Sustainability

This chapter examines the likelihood of the results of business sector engagement continuing in the long term and remaining if the UNCCD is no longer involved. It also addresses the potential for replicability and scalability of achieved results.

7.1 Findings

Finding 14: Of the different types of business sector engagement, funding for LDN projects, activities and results from the consolidation of sustainable value chains are likely to produce long-term results and to be sustained in the absence of UNCCD support. As for the other results, their potential for long-term impact and self-sustenance is limited.

In the absence of inter-governmentally agreed normative guidance, which would be perhaps the most typical measure produced in a UN treaty process such as the UNCCD but is yet to be developed, it seems that the results that are most likely to continue in the long term are those achieved by the LDN Fund, the private funding accessed for TPPs, and the consolidation of sustainable value chains. The LDN Fund is a highly sustainable mechanism that is fully operational and functioning independently from the UNCCD. It is managing its own funds and includes a TAF which provides pre- and post-investment assistance. The LDN Fund’s life is set at 15 years, after which it is intended that successive funds will be launched to extend the investment period. It is thus expected to yield results in the decades to come.

Results accomplished as part of TPP design involving business sector funding are also sustainable: they unfold throughout the duration of the projects and programmes, long after the interventions of the UNCCD to assist in designing the projects and unlocking private funding have ended. While it is unclear how much success the UNCCD has had so far in unlocking such funding for TPPs, this type of engagement nonetheless is bound to produce medium-term results as projects are generally implemented over several years. Also, Parties that benefit from GM support for project development acquire or deepen an expertise and a network which can be used to obtain further funding, with or without GM support.

As for the consolidation of sustainable value chains at community level in the context of the GGWSSI, the nature of the efforts accomplished on the ground is fundamentally oriented towards achieving sustainability. Involved organisations aim to empower communities of smallholders so they benefit from and maintain natural resources, and to connect them with buyers at national, regional, and global level. Such work is inherently tied to economic sustainability, as the different actors along the value chain draw a financial benefit from maintaining the value chain in the long term, thus establishing self-perpetuating sustainable land management systems. The involvement and empowerment of community-based organisations (CBOs) and cooperatives as local governance structures is yet another factor of sustainability: it renders the smallholder producer more autonomous from external intervention.

It should also be noted that business sector entities that were already involved in LDN prior to engaging with the UNCCD perform work that is expected to last and self-perpetuate. It is highly likely that the

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business sector entities will maintain their efforts going forward, even if UNCCD engagement or support were to end. As for entities that are new to LDN, it is currently not likely that engagement with the Convention will produce long term results, in the absence of binding commitments to LDN tied to a system of incentives. It is also doubtful that advocacy and normative work accomplished so far, as well as commitments made, would suffice for these entities to pursue LDN efforts without further engagement with the UNCCD. Indeed, few organisations work specifically on the topic of land and could ensure that business sector entities are held accountable for their commitments. Among them, certain business associations that are committed to LDN could develop a system of incentives for their members that would increase the sustainability of work towards LDN.

Finding 15: At this point in time, replication and scaling of results in terms of business sector engagement are mostly a potentiality rather than an achievement. The potential for such increase in scale is moderate to high and diversified, but it is constrained by the size of the UNCCD and current modalities of its engagement with the business sector.

The LDN Fund represents an important and showcase example of large-scale achievement in terms of business sector engagement. The rest of the UNCCD’s private sector engagement presents moderate to high potential for replication and scaling, yet this has not been actualised so far. The LDN Fund, with its investment target of US$ 300 million, is set up to operate at scale, both in terms of scope of investments and of geographies. Moreover, the Fund has had another impact at scale: it has transformed Mirova’s business, leading the fund manager to develop a whole new line of work in the field of sustainability (funds related to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation [REDD+], marine ecosystems and coral reefs, and more).

As for the secretariat and GM’s direct engagement with the business sector, multiple types of engagement could be replicated and scaled up. The collaboration with the GGWSSI presents particularly high potential, as it provides an umbrella for projects that can be implemented and replicated in more than 20 countries. The African Union (AU) is also in the process of developing a similar approach in Southern Africa, which further increases the potential scale of the UNCCD’s impact. Projects piloted in the context of the GGWSSI can also be used as models for TPPs at a larger scale, while providing insights into the use of land-based economic activities for rural livelihoods and creation of employment opportunities in the drylands. Successful TPPs involving private funding are also highly replicable, either across regions, across sectors, or both.

Efforts in terms of advocacy and policy dialogues could be diversified and intensified, in order to expand the UNCCD’s reach into different sectors and types of business sector entities. In turn, this could lead to increased participation and representation of diverse segments of the business sector at Business Forums and as part of accredited entities to the UNCCD. At the moment, only 10 accredited entities are from the business sector – in addition to some foundations which are accredited as CSOs.

The potential for replication and scaling of business sector engagement is however limited by the size of the UNCCD and by the bandwidth allocated to such engagement. At the moment, team members engaged in such work are almost at full capacity. Certain modalities of business sector engagement also act as constraints to scaling, such as the multiplicity of types of engagement, the individualised nature of the collaborations, and the case-by-case nature of much engagement.
8. Gender Inclusion

This chapter discusses the integration of gender inclusion in business sector engagement and the extent to which the latter has contributed to advancing the UNCCD aims for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

8.1 Findings

**Finding 16:** The integration of gender inclusion in business sector engagement has been uneven. When it has happened, it has generally been the product of serendipity more than of intentionality. In contrast, an intentional approach to gender has more recently been pursued with respect to the design of TPPs.

Gender inclusion has not been an expressed priority as part of business sector engagement within the UNCCD. The 2015 BES does not include any reference to gender inclusion: indeed, the BES preceded the rise in importance of this topic for the UNCCD and the adoption in September 2017 of the Convention’s Gender Action Plan. The Action Plan now requires that gender be mainstreamed into UNCCD activities; and so far, this has been done unevenly for business sector engagement. For instance, gender inclusion was not meaningfully integrated as part of most collaborations, such as Business Forums, awareness raising, and advocacy work: it was neither a requirement, nor an area of focus. In terms of capacity building efforts, one module was offered on “Gender Matters for LDN” at the Training Fair 2019, at the UNCCD’s initiative. While this is relevant, it remains rather limited in scope. It is noteworthy that this module on gender is the only mention of gender inclusion as part of MoUs signed with the business sector: it is otherwise not mentioned. This includes the consolidation of sustainable value chains, where most smallholder producers are women: requirements around gender were neither contracted, nor monitored as part of the collaboration. While this work on gender has been transformational, it has been coincidental with the UNCCD’s growing focus on the matter rather than the result of intentionality.

Efforts in assisting Parties in designing TPPs to be funded notably by the business sector are an exception: they constitute an example of conscious integration of gender inclusion into business sector engagement. The GM is equipped since September 2019 with a Manual for Gender-Responsive LDN TPPs. When designing TPPs, the GM now aims for the highest levels of gender inclusion, i.e. either gender-responsive (addresses differential needs of women as well as equitable distribution of benefits among genders)

“The project is entirely focused on women [...], but it was never explicit at the onset with the UNCCD. It was a happy coincidence. – Business Sector Partner

“The UNCCD talks a lot about gender in their documents, but it has not been at the forefront of their work. I do not believe it is a priority area for them. – External Stakeholder

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or gender-transformative (contributes to changes in norms, power structures and roots of gender inequalities and discriminations).

Overall, it appears that apart from the case of project design and for the theme of one training module, conscious efforts remain to be made to mainstream gender inclusion as part of partnerships with the business sector. Additional training and tools could contribute to this endeavour, as certain staff members reported not yet being equipped to appropriately integrate gender inclusion into business sector engagement. Finally, due diligence tools currently do not include an assessment of the track record of potential business sector partners in terms of their gender impact and their efforts to close the gender gap. There could be a reflection on the desirability of such added checks, which could lead either to some potential partners being filtered out or to the prioritisation of gender inclusion in working with them.

**Finding 17:** As a result of the uneven integration of gender inclusion in business sector engagement, collaborations with such entities have made varying and overall moderate contributions to advancing the UNCCD’s aims for gender inclusion, as per the Gender Action Plan.

Business sector engagement efforts have made varying contributions towards the objectives of the Gender Action Plan (see textbox). The most impactful work, gender-wise, has been done mobilising resources (objective 5) to allow for the establishment of sustainable value chains with smallholder producers. Such work has been situated at the highest level, gender transformative, as it has assisted women in improving their livelihoods (objective 2) and acting as agents of change (objective 1), thus challenging local power dynamics.

### Objectives of the Gender Action Plan

1. To enhance women’s role as agents of change by addressing the gender inequalities they face;
2. To build the capacities of women and girls to access the resources they need to improve their livelihoods, manage land sustainably and become resilient to drought;
3. To build the technical capacities of UNCCD stakeholders at all levels to design and implement gender-responsive plans and programmes, including in LDN interventions;
4. To develop a baseline on gender-related issues in land degradation and desertification, and monitor, report and regularly review progress in the implementation and achievement of objectives;
5. To mobilize adequate resources to achieve these objectives.

*Source: UNCCD’s Gender Action Plan*

Another type of work worth highlighting is the assistance provided to the country Parties in designing TPPs: it is likely that this work has built the Parties’ capacities to create gender-responsive plans and programmes (objective 3) and mobilised adequate resources (objective 5) to implement TPPs which contributed to objectives 1 and 2.

As for capacity building efforts, namely the module on Gender Matters, it has been positioned to contribute to objective 3, building capacities to create gender-responsive plans and programmes. Out of 173 participants in the 2019 Training Fair, only 11 attended the two-day gender training. As discussed as part of Section 5 – Effectiveness and Progress Towards Impact, available data does not allow for an assessment of the effectiveness of the training in terms of leading to the design of gender-responsive LDN plans and programmes.

So far, business sector engagement has not contributed to objective 4, develop a baseline on gender-related issues in land degradation and monitor progress in the achievement of objectives. Also, other types of collaborations (e.g. events, advocacy) did not adequately integrate gender inclusion dimensions and therefore have not yielded significant results which would contribute to the UNCCD’s aims in this regard.
9. Evaluation Conclusions and Recommendations

Recognition of the critical and diverse roles of the business sector in advancing the objectives of the UNCCD, most notably in terms of LDN, was evident throughout the evaluation process, from the views of the UNCCD staff to those of business sector representatives, as well as in the literature. Similarly evident was the need to further develop and refine the UNCCD approach to business sector engagement at all levels, so it is both more strategic and coherent, while being aligned with the limited resources and mandate of the UNCCD.

Against this setting, the evaluation found that the first BES has been a commendable attempt to provide a structure for business sector engagement, and the secretariat and the GM have undertaken important foundational work in advancing multiple types of engagement. Promising strides have been made, although tangible LDN results are yet to be detected, and there is potential for further effective action and results.

For that to materialise, a new business sector engagement strategy (BSES) would benefit from a more strategic approach that goes beyond case-by-case partnerships and spells out clear aims for such engagement for the UNCCD, for both the short/medium term and the long term. The new BSES would also benefit from laying out well-defined and complementary roles and responsibilities for the secretariat, the GM and their different units, to further build on the increasing coordination among them in terms of business sector engagement.

Based on the data collected for this evaluation, important success factors of business sector engagement have been the economic sustainability perspective of the business sector and its growing interest in LDN, and opportunities to collaborate around high-profile international cooperation processes such as the GGWSSI. On the other hand, so far, business sector collaboration with the secretariat and the GM has mostly been around general policy and advocacy work (with a few exceptions), with little implementation in the field. This is reflected also in the information received from business sector stakeholders that participated in this evaluation: when talking about key results and expectations for engaging with the UNCCD, they emphasised increased visibility, connectedness, and legitimacy, while LDN or similar aims were mentioned by certain entities, but not all.

Many findings of this evaluation further specify the challenges in engaging the business sector with the UNCCD implementation and LDN, including the following key points:

- There is a general perception of a mismatch between UNCCD country priorities (such as the LDN targets) and business sector interests. More effort could be invested in supporting the identification of shared interests, particularly through further guidance and capacity building targeting country level stakeholders, and in supporting the creation of an enabling environment for investments that contribute to LDN.

- UNCCD as an intergovernmental treaty body is a complex structure, and its operational modalities and requirements differ significantly from those of the business sector. Private companies will need backstopping that “speaks their language” for integrating UNCCD priorities into their operations.

Business sector stakeholders that participated in this evaluation appreciated the enthusiasm and openness of the UNCCD staff to work with business entities. However, some also noted that the secretariat and the GM have very limited staff and other resources for partnering with the business sector, and until recently they have not had any staff with specific expertise in business sector engagement. More active collaboration with other UN entities, for instance the other two Rio Conventions, in business sector...
partnerships could compensate for the limited resources of the UNCCD and increase the likelihood of achieving results at scale.

The evaluation also found that the secretariat and the GM have adequately assessed and managed most risks related to business sector engagement as part of accreditation and procurement processes. The due diligence process is considered to be overall satisfactory, while it could be reviewed to fully cover the risks associated with more innovative business sector partnerships. Systematic MEL focusing on business sector engagement (e.g. tracking investment and results achieved from activities to outcomes) could be developed.

Finally, gender inclusion has been more recently and intentionally integrated into the design of TPPs, in accordance with the UNCCD’s Gender Action Plan, but has otherwise been part of business sector engagement mostly as the product of serendipity rather than of intentionality. As a result, collaborations with business sector entities have made varying and overall moderate contributions to advancing the UNCCD’s aims for gender inclusion.

In the light of the evaluation findings, the following key recommendations are made, many of which are integrated into the Elements of a New BSES that is presented in the next pages:

**Recommendation 1:** In their new BSES, the secretariat and the GM should develop a long-term vision for business sector engagement with the UNCCD, identifying key strategic aims and priorities, expected results and associated modalities of collaboration. The strategy could also specify main thematic areas of engagement;

**Recommendation 2:** The secretariat and/or the GM, in collaboration with partners where feasible, should further develop their analysis, guidance and support targeting both country Parties and the business sector, with the aim of advancing shared understanding and alignment of public and private sector interests, collaboration modalities and expectations for effective country level action addressing land;

**Recommendation 3:** The secretariat and the GM should enhance their tools, facilities, and capacity for effective business sector engagement, including:

- Establishing a platform for the business sector to collaborate, access and share information, and exchange views on matters relevant to UNCCD priorities;
- Revamping communications targeting the business sector, for improved transparency and alignment;
- Reviewing the processes (e.g., around due diligence) to ensure they cover the different types of business sector actors and engagement;
- Favouring more collaboration and complementarity across the secretariat and the GM, for instance through the creation of a business sector task team;
- Improving knowledge management on business sector engagement through a systematic tracking of related resources and results, and periodic reporting on related matters for external purposes; and
- Promoting internal learning and staff training on matters relevant to business sector engagement.

**Recommendation 4:** In view of the limited staff and other resources of the secretariat and the GM, efficiency in business sector engagement should be maximised. This would include streamlining engagement to focus on strategic, high-yields partnerships, clearly defining roles and responsibilities within and among units of the secretariat and the GM, taking advantage of existing efforts and materials from other UN institutions on the matter, and engaging in collaborations with said institutions.
10. Elements of a New Business Sector Engagement Strategy

This chapter presents different elements to inform the development and design of a new UNCCD BSES. It draws on insights from the evaluation as well as from a separate, prospective round of data collection. The chapter introduces a framework for business sector engagement, discusses the global and long-term vision as well as strategic implementation, integrates cross-cutting themes, and examines operationalisation and the process to develop the BSES.

10.1 Framework

A revised BSES must be first and foremost a strategic document, to frame and provide overall guidance to measures to be taken under the UNCCD as well as the secretariat and GM activities related to the business sector. For this purpose, the elements to inform the revised BSES presented herein are anchored in a validated Business Sector ToE (see Appendix II), which creates a bridge between the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework’s objectives and the promotion of LDN and related land-based interventions in line with SDG target 15.3. Furthermore, a BSES should situate the UNCCD process as well as the secretariat and the GM’s engagement with the private sector within a wider global context and cooperative landscape, focusing on the specific needs concerning business sector engagement in the UNCCD implementation, while synergistic with other UN frameworks on business engagement.\(^{18}\) It should support the Convention process and the work of the secretariat and GM, providing a living and dynamic reference, informing decision-making on a whole range of issues.

10.2 Global and Long-term Vision

**Long-Term Outcomes**

The UNCCD anchors all of its work in the vision of its 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, which recognises engagement with the business sector as critical to the realisation of its strategic objectives. Business sector entities influence the achievement of these objectives well beyond the sphere of their own direct operations – e.g. they make important choices also when sourcing their materials and selecting the suppliers as the basis of the production, and again in the process of distributing and selling their products. Indeed, engagement with the business sector should be based on a shared understanding of the critical importance of addressing the Convention objectives through corporate measures, while supporting both Parties and the business sector to identify and effectively carry out such measures.

In strategising its work with the business sector, the UNCCD is aware that this sector is not uniform, and thus its strategic approach must be multi-faceted and tailored to the following different types of business

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sector entities: companies (global and national, privately-owned and publicly-traded), investors and investor groups, industry associations, and foundations. For this reason, the UNCCD should aim to enable widespread business behavioural change among those that play a role in LDN, thus primarily companies and industry associations, while supporting and further advancing the leadership of business sector champions sharing UNCCD values and priorities.

The business sector does not operate in a vacuum, but rather within a complex organisational, legal, political, and institutional landscape. Businesses do not only generate economic value; they are also central actors in environmental and societal development – and related transformations. They can be active contributors to valuing nature by refining their business models, and they can also create new partnerships across supply chains and sectors, invest in the landscapes where they operate, and together with the public sector, promote ambitious policies and play a leadership role toward LDN.

**Intermediate Outcomes**

Aiming to advance the potential of the business sector to contribute to the objectives of the Convention, the new UNCCD BSES should speak to this multi-faceted system in its component parts but with the purpose of transforming it as a whole. It will do this by working to bring together a global community, inclusive of business sector actors and considerations, that:

- Is constituted of established and respected norms, policies and practices that promote LDN;
- Has empowered populations, organisations, and institutions to actively produce and promote these norms, policies and practices;
- Has the necessary resources – knowledge, capacity and financing – and a conducive environment that enable the application of these norms, policies and practices; and
- Reflects widespread and concrete business sector commitment to LDN, manifesting both in industry business models and in the outward commitments that are articulated.

In each of these areas, the business community, in support and partnership with the secretariat and GM, has a critical range of roles to play.

In order for this global community to be built, it will be crucial for the UNCCD to take a systematic look at its approach, activities and the tools that it is providing to the Parties and the business community, as well as other key stakeholders such as civil society, to become familiar and effectively use the normative, policy and operational measures that support business sector engagement to advance UNCCD strategic objectives and LDN. The secretariat and GM have key roles to play in supporting the identification and meeting of knowledge and capacity needs and, most notably, convening the business sector to become more aware of and committed to the objectives of the Convention.

**10.3 Strategic Implementation**

**Strategic Outputs**

Guided by a clear vision articulated in its foundational and strategic documents, rooted in a systems analysis of the challenges ahead and of the leverage points for systems change, the UNCCD’s BSES should be anchored in its ToE’s three Strategic Outputs, around which all of its activities and deliverables are pursued. These Strategic Outputs are intended to create the Immediate Outcomes understood to usher in the more fundamental systems change, as sought by the Strategy. As the secretariat and the GM have limited staff
and other resources for implementing the BSES, these outputs are expected to be created in collaboration with other organisations and institutions, and building on existing knowledge, where possible.

The three Strategic Outputs, and related main deliverables that may be revised from time to time, of the UNCCD BSES should be focused on “Norms, Policies and Practices”, “Brokering and Convening”, and “Implementation Support”.

**Norms, Policies and Practices**

The UNCCD as an intergovernmental process will promote such norms, policies and practices that facilitate the integration of UNCCD strategic objectives and LDN into business operations. The secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with partners, will compile, develop and distribute information that may be provided to Parties and other stakeholders, including initiatives for possible measure to be taken at the level of the COP. The secretariat and the GM will also prepare and distribute information targeting the business sector, aiming to assist private businesses to advance LDN in their operations and to measure and report on related results.

- The secretariat and/or the GM will further develop their analysis and advocacy of the potential benefits for business sector in committing to UNCCD implementation, including separate messages or products focusing on specific topics such as LDN, drought, addressing climate change or biodiversity.

- The secretariat and/or GM will provide further guidance to Parties and other country-level stakeholders for identifying what type of actions related to their LDN targets or other national UNCCD implementation frameworks would be responsive to the interests of the business sector, what could be the most useful business sector instruments for such actions, and how potential business sector gains could be defined, along with the governmental expected results, in order to raise the interest of private investors and other actors.

- The secretariat and/or the GM, building on existing similar information and in collaboration with partners, will develop practical guidance for the private sector on how to integrate LDN into business operations, including on:
  - Methods for assessing potential land degradation risks and for interpreting the results of assessments in planned business operations, aiming to select such approaches and modalities that generate positive impact on land;
  - Accessing information of proven approaches, alternative technologies, and good practices to respond to the identified risks; and
  - Tools for analysing the impact of the implemented business actions on land, and for reporting on the results for LDN.

- The secretariat and the GM will translate the evolving UNCCD framework for advancing gender equality and land rights into practical recommendations for business sector operations.

- The secretariat and the GM will continue liaising with international financial institutions in order to promote the integration of LDN and related guidance for the business sector into the partnership approaches and programmes of these institutions.

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19 This section draws from the methodology presented in *Science-based targets for Nature. Initial guidance for Business*. Science-based targets network, Global Commons Alliance. September 2020.
Brokering and Convening

The UNCCD is essentially a framework for joining the forces of different types of stakeholders to advance the shared interest of healthy land; and for now, the business sector is yet to be fully engaged. In the Convention process, the secretariat and the GM have the main convening role, not only as keepers of the formal accreditation process (that has offered little benefit to business entities), but also outside the official meetings. Bringing private sector entities together in a continuous, structured manner and with the support of other key business sector intermediaries and conveners can make a major difference in raising awareness and generating commitment to addressing land degradation.

- The secretariat and the GM will continue their collaboration with WBCSD and the World Economic Forum (WEF), as well as other potential partners, for launching a private sector platform to promote commitment and investments from companies. This platform will offer a channel for business entities to access and share information on land and soil as well as technologies, innovations and approaches that are useful for their operations. It will promote partnerships and joint initiatives among the participating companies on specific themes (such as joining global restoration efforts) and for major efforts such as the GGWSSI.

- The secretariat and the GM will upgrade and revamp their communications and knowledge management targeting the business sector, starting by transforming the respective UNCCD website section into a more relevant, informative and dynamic space for business entities. The secretariat and the GM may also consider launching a periodic business sector newsletter to distribute information around the private sector platform and on selected projects, studies and events that concern land matters from the perspective of the business sector.

- The secretariat and the GM will revise the concept of the Business Forums to facilitate more tangible contribution to the UNCCD process and to enhance their visibility. This could mean stronger focus and more precise outcomes (for example, launching an initiative or announcement of commitments) for each Forum. Part of each Forum may be used to benefit the UNCCD business sector platform, as a “summit” or a working meeting bringing together active platform participants.

- The secretariat and the GM will continue to host, co-organise and participate in events, campaigns and dialogues to support business sector engagement to LDN and the UNCCD strategic objectives.

Implementation Support

The UNCCD will promote measures that facilitate country level business sector investments that contribute to LDN and the implementation of the Convention in a broader manner. The secretariat and the GM will pursue strategic partnerships with business entities, which may result in, for example, programmes for technology transfer or capacity building, or tested pilot approaches and practices that can be used as examples for replication. The GM will also serve as an intermediary for mobilising private investments to UNCCD implementation at national, regional and global levels.

- The GM, in collaboration with other UN system organisations, international financial institutions and other partners, will continue to explore measures that serve as incentives and mitigate risks for business sector engagement to LDN, and to arrange for related capacity building for the UNCCD stakeholders.

- The GM will further develop its support to countries for engaging the business sector in the development and implementation of transformative LDN projects through integration of the guidance mentioned above into the TPP programme and, as feasible, promoting the planned projects in the context of the private sector platform.
The secretariat and the GM will continue advocating for business sector involvement in a range of financing mechanisms to advance UNCCD strategic objectives and support LDN.

Immediate Outcomes

As the UNCCD delivers on its Strategic Outputs, it will lay the foundations for a transformation and leadership of the business sector, moving closer to the broader realisation of UNCCD strategic objectives and LDN more broadly. Thus, Strategic Outputs of the BSES are expected to produce the following immediate outcomes, in the short-to-medium term, on their own and in complementarity with one another:

- **A favourable environment for business involvement**: There is a widespread understanding of business sector benefits of contributing to LDN and UNCCD strategic objectives, and better clarity of the measures and conditions for integrating LDN into business sector operations.

- **Improved capacity at country level for integrating LDN into business sector operations**: Parties and other key national level stakeholders have improved capacity for connecting private and public interests towards contributing to LDN, which offers the business sector appropriate and tailored opportunities for committing and participating actively in advancing LDN.

- **Increased business attention and engagement on LDN**: The business sector is increasingly aware of LDN and how to address it in its operations, and on open initiatives and projects. There is a platform of peers for exchanges, visibility and new partnerships. Accessing business relevant information of LDN is easier than before.

- **Increasing business involvement in LDN implementation**: Launching of innovative projects that promote LDN with business sector participation, from co-creation to piloting and scaling. There is increasing integration of LDN into private companies’ business models and value chains, as part of routine business sector operational planning.

- **Broadening financial base for LDN**: Increasing business sector engagement results in new financing not only as direct investments that are responsive to LDN, but also in the form of arrangements that make it easier to mobilise private sector funding, such as co-financing, blended finance, catalytic capital, guarantees, and impact bonds.

Activities

In practical terms, the secretariat and GM should conduct business sector engagement through a number of Activities. The range of Activities presented below are guided by, and intended to realise, the UNCCD’s BSES Strategic Outputs. These Activities would include:

- **Research, analysis and guidance**: Preparation of studies, briefings and guidelines in collaboration with partners;

- **Knowledge management**: Effective management and dissemination of knowledge targeting business sector engagement;

- **Hosting**: Hosting and co-hosting a business sector platform, events, campaigns, and policy dialogues involving the business sector;

- **Liaison and partnership**: Active liaison with the business sector and related interest groups, organisations and expert institutions, intent on building innovative partnerships;

- **Advocacy and communications**: Targeting, informing, and enabling business sector engagement;
- **Capacity building**: Provision and promotion of capacity building and other support measures to assist Parties and other key stakeholders in the design of projects that address UNCCD objectives while meeting the interests of the business sector;

- **Project development support**: Provision of technical input and management support in the development of innovative LDN projects;

- **Resource mobilisation**: Mobilisation of initial, pilot, or catalytic financial resources from the business sector; and

- **MEL**: Promotion of MEL on business sector engagement towards UNCCD implementation.

### 10.4 Cross-cutting Themes

The BSES is situated within the wider priorities of the UNCCD. All of its Activities should thereby take into consideration the following cross-cutting priorities: Gender Equality; Regionalism; Core Business Sectors.

#### Gender Equality

Gender equality should be mainstreamed intentionally across business sector engagement, whenever appropriate, in order to advance the five objectives of the UNCCD’s Gender Action Plan. In addition to forming part of the guidance for project design, gender equality should be part of the due diligence checklist that the team uses in assessing potential partners.

#### Regionalism

In its engagement with the business sector, the secretariat and the GM should adjust their approach to the specific characteristics of each region/area and, as feasible, prioritise their support to regions that are considered most in need of assistance, where land degradation issues are most pressing.

#### Core Business Sectors

In developing engagement with the business sector, the secretariat and the GM should continue to deepen a sectoral, and sometimes intentionally cross-sectoral, approach. Engagement should be geared towards sectors with the heaviest land footprint, including food, feed and fibre. In the current and post-COVID-19 context, partners with great potential to foster land-based jobs and economic recovery will be sought. Finally, given that different sectors value and even require specific expertise and skillsets, the UNCCD could strategically incorporate them over time, as it builds its capacity in this field.

### 10.5 Operationalisation

For the new BSES to be implemented both effectively and efficiently, the UNCCD will need to assess and determine the level of priority and of resources to be allocated to business sector engagement. The secretariat and the GM will be required develop the institutional culture, guidance and mechanisms, as well as capacities for the realisation of this strategy. This should be defined as part of an action plan that serves to operationalise the BSES, and to be shared and used by the different units of the secretariat and the GM.

Adoption of the new BSES should lead to a review and further development of the existing tools and processes to ensure alignment internally. For their own financial cooperation with the business sector, the secretariat and the GM may revisit the due diligence procedure, to ensure that it adequately covers the different types of business sector actors and corollary engagement, allowing for both risk assessment and
mitigation, while also being nimble and sufficiently transparent to be effectively managed and to satisfy the information needs of UNCCD stakeholders. The secretariat and the GM should align with recent UN efforts to develop a UN SDG Common Approach to Prospect Research and Due Diligence for Business Sector Partnerships.\textsuperscript{20}

For optimal efficiency, it will be necessary to clearly define complementary roles and responsibilities within the secretariat and the GM. As part of a whole-of-organisation approach, a business sector task team should be established to favour the pooling of resources towards the shared goal of business sector engagement. This would favour cross-fertilisation and coherent actions, while also enabling the more tailored and individualised engagement, all within a shared strategic purpose and approach.

Finally, the secretariat and the GM would benefit from building a catalogue of types of engagement specifying their modalities of engagement for different types of business sector entities (including value proposition for both the UNCCD and partners, the level of risk assessment required, the involvement of secretariat and GM units, the sequencing of engagement, etc.). A brochure synthesising key elements should be made available to both the Parties and the business sector, to ensure relevant information is shared and socialised, intent on favouring improving and effective collaborations.

### 10.6 Process

As with the design of the previous BES, the new BSES would benefit from being further developed through an appropriately participatory process anchored in the involvement of the different units of the secretariat and the GM, various business sector entities, as well as civil society organisations. This could include exchanges to promote lessons learnt, best practices and tools related to business sector engagement so far. The design process could also entail a consultation of the Parties and possibly also their approval for the new strategy.

11. Final Word

The evaluation component of this mandate comes at an opportune time, towards the end of a strategy for engaging with the business community (i.e., its existing BES), which itself has overlapped with the UNCCD’s 10-Year Strategy (2008-2018) and its 2018-2030 Strategic Framework. It reflects the UNCCD’s desire to reflect on the continued guidance of the BES and possible strategic adjustments moving forward. The evaluation produced straddles the two periods, while placing greater emphasis on the latter, with a forward-looking interest. In a similar vein, the Evaluation Office commissioned a study to identify elements to be considered in the development of a forthcoming BSES. A chapter of the current report has been devoted to this matter, which reaffirms the merits of the current strategy, while also providing new direction for a revised strategy moving forward.

The chapter on the elements of a new BSES advances certain points of continuity with the 2015 BES. It retains the explicit connection with the ultimate goal of business sector engagement, as well as components of its key constitutive elements (i.e. objectives, general modalities, principles of due diligence, etc.). Similarly, it advances the importance of business engagement being a shared responsibility across different units of the secretariat and the GM.

The chapter also proposes new directions on business engagement, with the following elements to be integrated in an eventual updated strategy:

- An intentional and explicit linkage between objectives of the UNCCD, the 2018-2030 Strategic framework, the sought outcomes of the new BSES and the day-to-day activities of business sector engagement has been articulated, while also captured in a ToE. Doing so aims at ensuring a coherent, strategic, and efficient approach to business sector engagement, which is based in a long-term vision that lends purpose to activities and outputs.

- A new typology of business sector actors (i.e. companies, investors, industry associations, and foundations), with differentiation in engagement between them has been introduced, and will need further attention. Ultimately, diverse business sector engagement practices must be targeted and tailored to the diversity of business sector entities, and also monitored separately and distinctly.

- A new BSES must provide strategic guidance while also being fully operationalised. For instance, a strategy should either be accompanied by, or include an action plan that is shared, socialised and used by the different units of the secretariat and the GM. Also, a catalogue of types of engagement and their respective modalities will need to be prepared and synthesised into a “brochure” made available to both the Parties and the business sector, intent on favouring improved and effective collaborations.

- The three cross-cutting themes of business sector engagement will need to be considered for integration into all related planning and implementation, as appropriate. These themes are: gender equality – to advance the objectives of the UNCCD’s Gender Action Plan; regionalism, to focus engagement on regions that are at higher risk of DLDD; and core business sectors, to prioritise heavy footprint sectors and adopt differentiated approaches.

It will be crucial for the new BSES, when it is finalised, to offer some flexibility for business sector engagement while also providing a sophisticated framework for structured engagement at scale. This strategy should provide guidance and allow the UNCCD to take concrete but very strategically directed action. Concrete action without a strategy is not good enough, but by following the strategy the UNCCD will
be able to implement concrete, impactful actions. Of course, the new BSES will require the approval of Parties and the support of other key stakeholders, and then socialisation with the secretariat the GM.

Design of the forthcoming strategy will continue through 2021, while highly relevant and related discussions are underway at the UN on business sector engagement towards achievement of the SDGs, the development of common due diligence processes, and other key matters. The UNCCD has much to share (in its experience with companies and industry associations) and also derive (particularly on engagement with investors and foundations) from engaging in such events and processes, as it moves towards developing and then finalising its new strategy.
Appendix I  List of Findings

Finding 1: Business sector engagement is highly relevant for combatting major environmental challenges, as discussed in recent different key agreements and frameworks. It is also directly in line with the priorities of the UNCCD.

Finding 2: Alignment between business sector interests and those of the Parties, as manifested in their national frameworks for UNCCD implementation, has received some but not quite adequate attention. There have been cases of misalignment, with few efforts invested in building shared interests, potentially limiting the effectiveness of efforts towards LDN that involve the business sector.

Finding 3: Development of the UNCCD 2015 BES filled an important gap at the UNCCD, but has provided limited broader strategic guidance to the Convention. Business sector engagement is represented in the Strategic Framework 2018-2030 in a partial manner, despite its potential for contributing to all UNCCD strategic objectives. It is also modestly integrated into UNCCD guidance and approaches to Parties.

Finding 4: The 2015 BES is the first of its kind under the UNCCD and is a commendable attempt to provide a structure for business sector engagement. It is process oriented and detailed. Being more tactical in its approach, it would benefit from an overarching strategic framework of business sector engagement. Awareness and use of the BES have been uneven. As a result, it has provided only modest strategic guidance to the UNCCD.

Finding 5: The units and teams of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism have managed business sector engagement in an increasingly complementary manner since 2015, though coordination is at times less than optimal. A more explicit definition of roles and responsibilities is still needed.

Finding 6: The UNCCD has not yet explored potential collaborations with other UN entities, for instance the other two Rio Conventions, on the matter of business sector engagement.

Finding 7: The UNCCD has undertaken important foundational work towards effective business sector engagement. It has tried multiple types of engagement; some situated at a strategic level. Significant tangible results in terms of LDN are yet to be detected. Still, promising strides have been made and there is potential for more effective action and results.

Finding 8: Key results for the business sector of engaging with the UNCCD have been increased visibility, connectedness, and legitimacy. While progress towards LDN has been mentioned by some, others have not perceived it as a significant result.

Finding 9: Key success factors of business sector engagement have been a growing interest in LDN of the business sector, an openness of the UNCCD to work with business entities, the economic sustainability perspective of the business sector, and the collaboration with the GGWSSI. Challenges to such engagement have been an uneven understanding of the business sector within the UNCCD, limited prioritisation and bandwidth of this area of work within the UNCCD, considerations related to risk and tenure, and an unresolved concern over benefits to be accrued by the business sector from engaging with the UNCCD.
Finding 10: Business sector engagement has often been guided more by specific activities and outputs than longer-term strategic partnership planning. It has been highly personalised, thus allowing the UNCCD to develop meaningful collaborations with business sector entities, but also rendering it vulnerable to turnover and variations in staff skillsets.

Finding 11: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning around business sector engagement has been very limited. There appears to be little tracking of the investment of resources in, and the results achieved through, such engagement.

Finding 12: Efficiency in engaging with the business sector has been constrained by the complexity of the UNCCD, and by its processes that are not necessarily adapted for the different types of business sector engagement. There is a discrepancy between the Convention timeline and that of the business sector, which is particularly in evidence as part of TPPs.

Finding 13: Most risks related to business sector engagement are adequately assessed and managed as part of accreditation and procurement processes. As for partnerships with business sector entities, the due diligence process is generally considered satisfactory but does not fully cover the risks associated with more innovative types of partnerships.

Finding 14: Of the different types of business sector engagement, funding for LDN projects, activities and results from the consolidation of sustainable value chains are likely to produce long-term results and to be sustained in the absence of UNCCD support. As for the other results, their potential for long-term impact and self-sustenance is limited.

Finding 15: At this point in time, replication and scaling of results in terms of business sector engagement are mostly a potentiality rather than an achievement. The potential for such increase in scale is moderate to high and diversified, but it is constrained by the size of the UNCCD and current modalities of its engagement with the business sector.

Finding 16: The integration of gender inclusion in business sector engagement has been uneven. When it has happened, it has generally been the product of serendipity more than of intentionality. In contrast, an intentional approach to gender has more recently been pursued with respect to the design of TPPs.

Finding 17: As a result of the uneven integration of gender inclusion in business sector engagement, collaborations with such entities have made varying and overall moderate contributions to advancing the UNCCD’s aims for gender inclusion, as per the Gender Action Plan.
Appendix II  UNCCD Theory of Engagement

Figure II.1  UNCCD’s ToE

UNCCD THEORY OF BUSINESS SECTOR ENGAGEMENT (VALIDATED DRAFT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSUMPTIONS</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>STRATEGIC OUTPUTS</th>
<th>IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES</th>
<th>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES</th>
<th>LONG-TERM OUTCOMES</th>
<th>GOAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS SECTOR ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021</td>
<td>RESEARCH, ANALYSIS, GUIDANCE</td>
<td>KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>A FAVOURABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT</td>
<td>RESPECTED LDN NORMS, POLICIES AND PRACTICES</td>
<td>WIDESPREAD BUSINESS BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE AND LEADERSHIP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>HOSTING (Platform, Events, etc.)</td>
<td>IMPROVED CAPACITY AT COUNTRY LEVEL</td>
<td>EMPOWERED POPULATIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HOSTING (Platform, Events, etc.)</td>
<td>LIAISON AND PARTNERING</td>
<td>INCREASING BUSINESS ATTENTION AND ENGAGEMENT</td>
<td>KNOWLEDGE, CAPACITY AND FINANCIAL RESOURCE BASE FOR LDN</td>
<td>REALISATION OF OBJECTIVES OF PARTIES ON UNCCD &amp; 2018-30 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LIAISON AND PARTNERING</td>
<td>ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS</td>
<td>INCREASING BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT IN LDN IMPLEMENTATION</td>
<td>WIDESPREAD AND CONCRETE BUSINESS INDUSTRY COMMITMENT TO LDN</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATIONS</td>
<td>CAPACITY BUILDING</td>
<td>BROADENING FINANCIAL BASE FOR LDN</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CAPACITY BUILDING</td>
<td>PROJECT DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT</td>
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<td>IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT</td>
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<td></td>
<td>IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT</td>
<td>RESOURCE MOBILISATION</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RESOURCE MOBILISATION</td>
<td>MEL</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

UNCCD 2018-2030 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES:

- GENDER EQUALITY
- REGIONALISM
- CORE BUSINESS SECTORS
### Figure II.2 Assumptions Related to UNCCD's ToE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A1.a</strong> Synergy with other UN Frameworks on business engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A1.b</strong> Full alignment of secretariat and Global Mechanism on shared priorities and differentiated responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A1.c</strong> The UNCCD has strategic and adapted policies and processes to engage with the business sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2.a</strong> The UNCCD is perceived as a partner of choice by the business sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2.b</strong> Identification of adequate business sector actors for the purposes of the BSES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2.c</strong> UNCCD institutional mechanisms and capacities (human, financial and other) are in place for implementing business sector engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2.d</strong> The business sector is willing to invest in engaging with the UNCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2.e</strong> Reporting on business sector engagement is appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2.f</strong> Cross-cutting priorities are appropriately integrated into the UNCCD BSES, Activities and Strategic Outputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A3.a</strong> Parties are receptive, willing and able to engage with the business sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A3.b</strong> The UNCCD engages with early adopters and then with multipliers in order to have greater impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A3.c</strong> The business sector has the ability to mobilise sufficient financial and other resources to have significant impact in promoting LDN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A4.a</strong> Business sector elite share a scientific consensus around LDN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A4.b</strong> The business sector, civil society and government relations are based in shared values of equitable land management</td>
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</table>
Appendix III Methodology

Scope
In this context, the UNCCD secretariat has launched the current study with a double purpose: to evaluate the results of UNCCD business sector engagement thus far, and to develop elements for a new business sector engagement strategy. As such, the mandate was both backward and forward-looking: it is primarily formative, with a strong learning dimension as well as a strategic orientation.

As part of the retrospective component, the study pursued an evaluative approach towards developing a clear understanding of what have been the results achieved, what worked well and what did not in terms of engagement efforts to date. This component is built around the OECD/DAC (Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) evaluation criteria, namely relevance, coherence, effectiveness and progress towards impact, efficiency, and sustainability. In addition, gender inclusion was assessed as a cross-cutting theme. See Appendix IV for the evaluation matrix.

Regarding the forward-looking component, the study developed a framework for UNCCD business sector engagement moving forward. It identifies the contexts and conditions that may lead to effective partnership with the business sector in support of UNCCD Parties, and considers how the UNCCD as an intergovernmental process and through its institutions may optimise business sector engagement for LDN and broader development impact. For this purpose, the study identified likely factors of success for future engagement with the business sector, drawing on insights acquired through the retrospective analytic component of the study. Factors of success are both inward-looking and sensitive to external matters. Looking inward, the study speaks to matters of UNCCD institutional structure and management. Looking to external factors, the study identifies actual and potential UNCCD approaches, support mechanisms and incentives for a more effective engagement with the business sector committed to the pursuit of LDN.

The study presents the retrospective and prospective components as distinct sections of the same report. Both components will together comprise one unified report. Importantly, elements of the new business sector strategy are be grounded in the findings of the retrospective and evaluative sections of the report, as well as derive from a second round of data collection (literature review and consultations with stakeholders).

Approach and Design
The overall approach to the assignment is underpinned by the following approaches and principles:

i. A strategic mandate overall, it comprises both retrospective (backward-looking) and prospective (forward-looking) approaches, as presented above. On the one hand, the strategic evaluation set out a process that involves assessing the private sector engagement efforts accomplished to-date. On the other hand, the strategic evaluation will directly inform the development of elements for a new private sector engagement strategy. It is expected that these elements will capture the relevant dimensions of previous efforts and reflections on private sector engagement within the UNCCD, notably through the work of the secretariat and the GM. For a broader future perspective, the lessons learned were considered in the context of more recent priorities and aspirations, accompanied by an analysis of general trends, ways and means of private sector support to the global development agenda as it is currently being done in a few selected comparator organisations.
ii. A utilisation-focused and participatory approach was pursued, engaging stakeholders appropriately throughout to ensure the usability of the Final Report. With this in mind, key users of this study are understood to be: UNCCD staff, private sector representatives, Member States, and representatives from donor countries. Additional stakeholders may also be interested in this study, including Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), academics and others.

iii. A TBE approach was pursued, entailing the construction of a ToE to represent the potential contribution of the private sector to the UNCCD objectives, as well as the assumptions attached to its engagement. The ToE allowed the Study Team to represent the private sector engagement in the UNCCD implementation visually; which was then refined and validated throughout the mandate. The ToE served to identify bottlenecks, for which potential measures will be suggested as part of the forward-looking component of the study. Finally, it is expected that the ToE will contribute to guiding UNCCD efforts in engaging with the private sector. The ToE will likely include, but not be limited to:

- Objectives: Land degradation is prevented, Private sector entities commit to LDN, private sector entities invest in LDN implementation (e.g. African Great Green Wall Initiative), private sector entities improve land use practices within their supply chain, etc.
- Methods: Normative guidance generated through COP decisions, observation/ participation of the private sector in COPs and ministerial dialogues, accreditation of private sector entities, mechanism for engaging the private sector (e.g. Sustainable Land Management Business Forum), tailored communications with private sector entities, due diligence and checklist to minimise risks, certification scheme for private sector entities, etc.
- Processes: Partnership modalities, organisational management and development, accreditation (or certification) processes, targeted norms, policies and support mechanisms to assist the Parties, etc.

iv. A range of methods and techniques were undertaken in line with the TBE, utilisation-focused and participatory approaches being planned. These are a data collection performed through document review and semi-structure interviews, data management, as well as data analysis using partnership/collaboration analysis and interpretive content analysis. The study also included a preliminary findings meeting, to discuss the findings and the recommendations of the evaluation, as well as a sense-making session, as an opportunity for data collection on the new strategy.

v. The mandate will be based on a clear and agreed-upon evaluation matrix, to structure and guide data collection and analysis for this assignment. The evaluation matrix has been included in Appendix IV.

**Methods**

**Data Collection**

Data collection for this assignment was undertaken through a mixed-methods approach, as follows:

- **Document review** of all relevant existing documents and data held by the UNCCD and of certain documents in the literature that are deemed of use to the study. UNCCD documents include COP decisions and documents, current methodologies and tools, engagement strategies, Sustainable Land Management Business Forum declarations, etc. A number of selected external documents on private sector engagement will further inform the study.

- **Semi-structured Interviews** were undertaken with key informants, which were selected with the support of UNCCD staff. As part of the retrospective component of the mandate, the Study Team interviewed 26 stakeholders, as follows:
  - Relevant UNCCD staff (9)
- Member State (1)
- Business sector organisation (1)
- Business sector entities (3)
- Implementing organisations (3)
- CSOs of the Civil Society Panel (selected organisation) (5)
- Other collaborators (LDN Fund, IDH, African Union Commission, consultant) (4).

For the prospective component of the study, the Study Team interviewed seven informants:

- UN entities (7)
- Consultants (2).

**Data Analysis and Management**

The following types of analysis were undertaken for the retrospective component of this mandate:

- **Partnership/ Collaboration Analysis**: Analysis was undertaken of key dimensions of partnership between the UNCCD and the private sector, with focus on the activities of the secretariat and the GM. This entailed examining the UNCCD’s existing BES and operational procedure as well as its overall partnership approach, the roll out of the BES and corresponding procedure with the diversity of stakeholders, the results of the partnerships, and the extent to which the diversity of stakeholders perceive these partnerships to have been useful.

- **Interpretive Content Analysis**: Document and interview notes were analysed to identify common trends, themes, and patterns. Interpretive content analysis was used to flag diverging views and opposite trends. Emerging issues and trends constitute the raw material for crafting preliminary hypotheses and observations that were subsequently refined to feed into the distinct, though complementary sections of the report.

As for the prospective component, the Study Team will rely on findings and recommendations from the evaluation, as well as on a separate round of data collection and analysis specifically targeted at the development of elements for a new private sector engagement strategy. The literature review will focus on certain comparator organisations, as relevant, namely the Biodiversity Convention, the Ozone Treaty in Nairobi, the Montreal Protocol, the GCF and the Global Compact. Some interviews will also be conducted during this second round, notably with the OECD/DAC team. In order to harvest insights among UNCCD management and staff on the new private sector engagement strategy, the Study Team will also facilitate a sense-making workshop on this topic. This prospective component aims to answer questions listed as part of Appendix IV, as well as possibly other ones.

In terms of **Data Management**, the Study Team used a series of online data management tools to manage both the study process and data produced in an effective and coherent way. Thus, the Study Team relied on Dedoose data management software to organise all document review and interview data under predefined headings (or codes) that align with the evaluation criteria and the key and sub-questions under those criteria. This facilitated the clustering of themes across different data sources and types of informants.

**Quality Assurance**

In addition to adhering to the norms and standards of the OECD/DAC Evaluation Quality Standards and the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) standards, Universalia has strong internal mechanisms in place to ensure quality control, which were exercised throughout this mandate. All work products and deliverables were
reviewed internally to meet or surpass the highest professional standards, ensuring the validity, reliability and usability of the report, its analysis and recommendations.

**Limitation**

The main limitation to this study has been the limited scope of the mandate, which did not allow for a wide consultation across the different stakeholder groups. While this limitation was not significant enough to compromise the triangulation of findings and the development of elements of a new strategy, it did restrain the disaggregation of perspectives within and among stakeholder groups.
Appendix IV  Evaluation Matrix

Below is the final evaluation matrix for this mandate, based on a reading of the ToR and on conversations with selected UNCCD staff members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>KEY QUESTIONS</th>
<th>SUB-QUESTIONS</th>
<th>DATA SOURCES</th>
<th>DATA COLLECTION METHODS</th>
<th>FINDINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Relevance</td>
<td>1.1. To what extent do the objectives and design of the private sector partnerships and other types of private sector engagement respond to the priorities of the Convention, as stated in the UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030?</td>
<td>1.2.1. To what extent, and by whom, is the private sector engagement strategy used?</td>
<td>Private Sector Partnerships &amp; Financing documents, UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030</td>
<td>Document review</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2. Does the current private sector engagement strategy provide an adequate framework for coherent, i.e. efficient, collaboration with the private sector?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews with UNCCD staff</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3. How could the responsiveness of the private sector engagement to the priorities of the Parties, as reflected in relevant COP decisions, be further improved?</td>
<td>1.3.1. What should be the future focus areas for private sector engagement under the UNCCD, and why?</td>
<td>Relevant COP decisions, BES, other existing strategies</td>
<td>Document review</td>
<td>Elements of a new strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.3.2. How could the private sector become an active partner for the UNCCD agenda for post-COVID-19 realities?</td>
<td>Interviews with various types of stakeholders</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td>Elements of a new strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITERIA</td>
<td>KEY QUESTIONS</td>
<td>SUB-QUESTIONS</td>
<td>DATA SOURCES</td>
<td>DATA COLLECTION METHODS</td>
<td>FINDINGS</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Coherence</td>
<td>2.1. How do the UNCCD private sector interactions support other approaches and activities toward meeting the objectives of the UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030?</td>
<td>2.1.1. To what extent is private sector collaboration integrated into UNCCD policies and approaches concerning LDN and drought?</td>
<td>Private Sector Partnerships &amp; Financing documents, UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030, UNCCD policies and approaches concerning LDN and drought, UNCCD guidance and approaches</td>
<td>Document review</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.1.2. How might private sector collaboration be further built into the UNCCD guidance and approaches?</td>
<td>Interviews with UNCCD staff</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2. To what extent are the private sector cooperation aims of the secretariat and of the GM aligned?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Private Sector Partnerships &amp; Financing documents, UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030, UNCCD guidance and approaches</td>
<td>Document review</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews with UNCCD staff</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Effectiveness and progress toward impact</td>
<td>3.1. What are the results of the engagement of the private sector so far?</td>
<td>3.1.1. How have they contributed to the achievement of the UNCCD priorities and the expected outcomes of the secretariat and the GM?</td>
<td>Private Sector Partnerships &amp; Financing documents, UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030, results framework (secretariat and GM)</td>
<td>Document review</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.1.2. Have some types of engagement been more effective than others?</td>
<td>Interviews with various types of stakeholders</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.1.3. What have been their success factors?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRITERIA</td>
<td>KEY QUESTIONS</td>
<td>SUB-QUESTIONS</td>
<td>DATA SOURCES</td>
<td>DATA COLLECTION METHODS</td>
<td>FINDINGS</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1.4.</td>
<td>What bottlenecks and challenges are in evidence to the achievement of results (e.g. domestic policies and regulations on land use planning, capacity to identify and access market opportunities, public institutions’ capacity to incentivise sustainable use of land resources, measures for risk mitigation, etc.)?</td>
<td>Interviews with various types of stakeholders</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td>9</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.</td>
<td>What are the unexpected results of the engagement of the private sector so far, if any?</td>
<td>Private Sector Partnerships &amp; Financing documents, UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030, results framework (secretariat and GM), other existing strategies</td>
<td>Document review</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.</td>
<td>What kind of private sector engagement outcomes would be most effective in supporting future UNCCD implementation (e.g. innovation, technology, expertise concerning market-based solutions, advocacy to inform more sustainable policies, network development and outreach, etc.)?</td>
<td>Interviews with various types of stakeholders</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td>7</td>
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4.1. Are the private sector partnerships adequately captured by the results framework of the UNCCD secretariat and the GM?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>KEY QUESTIONS</th>
<th>SUB-QUESTIONS</th>
<th>DATA SOURCES</th>
<th>DATA COLLECTION METHODS</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>4.1.2. Are the capacities and competencies of the secretariat and the GM, including those on legal requirements and administrative procedures for private sector engagement, commensurate to related needs?</td>
<td>results framework (secretariat and GM), legal requirements and administrative procedures for private sector engagement, UNCCD fit for purpose report, risk management framework(s)</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1.3. Are the various risk factors of private sector engagement addressed?</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.1.4. What should be the next steps in this regard?</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sustainability</td>
<td>5.1. Will the results that have been achieved through the private sector engagement remain if the secretariat and/or the GM are no longer involved in related activities?</td>
<td>5.1.1. What is the likelihood of the benefits of the private sector supported projects or advocacy tools continuing in the long term?</td>
<td>Private Sector Partnerships &amp; Financing documents, results framework (secretariat and GM)</td>
<td>Document review</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.1.2. Could some of the achieved results be replicated or scaled up?</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gender Inclusion</td>
<td>6.1. How do the UNCCD private sector partnerships address gender in their objectives (outputs, outcomes)?</td>
<td>6.2.1. Have some partnerships explicitly contributed to gender equality or women’s empowerment?</td>
<td>Private Sector Partnerships &amp; Financing documents, results framework (secretariat and GM), UN Women Private Sector Accountability Framework</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gender Inclusion</td>
<td>6.2. To which extent has the private sector engagement in the UNCCD contributed to advancing the UNCCD aims for gender equality and the empowerment of women?</td>
<td>6.2.1. Have some partnerships explicitly contributed to gender equality or women’s empowerment?</td>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As for the prospective component of the study, it aims to answer the following questions, as well as possibly other ones:

- Why is the private sector engagement in addressing desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) critically important?
- How could the private sector contribute to addressing DLDD?
- How could the UNCCD as an intergovernmental treaty process influence private sector to take action to address DLDD?
  - Are there some priorities in this regard?
- What should/could the UNCCD Parties do to make that happen? Through the UNCCD process? In their own country?
  - What kind of support would they need? What would be the priorities in this regard?
- How could the UNCCD secretariat and/or the GM assist the UNCCD process to take action?
  - How could they support the Parties in influencing private sector to take action to address DLDD?
  - What are the specific objectives or modalities for the secretariat and the GM in this regard? How should they be achieved?
# Appendix V  Stakeholders Consulted

**Table V.1  List of Stakeholders Consulted**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LAST NAME</th>
<th>FIRST NAME</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>ORGANISATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albagnac</td>
<td>Manon</td>
<td>Project Manager, Sahel Desertification</td>
<td>CARI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awaregya</td>
<td>Julius</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Organization for Indigenous Initiatives and Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>Louise</td>
<td>Director, Global Mechanism</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmpili</td>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>Deputy Executive Secretary</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burger</td>
<td>Patrice</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>CARI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiocchia</td>
<td>Morgane</td>
<td>Associate Programme Officer, Partnerships/Resource Mobilisation</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grimard</td>
<td>Andréanne</td>
<td>ESG &amp; Impact Director</td>
<td>Ecotierra and the Urapi Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jauffret</td>
<td>Sandrine</td>
<td>Programme Officer, Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jia</td>
<td>Xiaoxia</td>
<td>Head of Science &amp; Technology Committee Integrated Support/ Regional Coordinator for Asia and Pacific</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lei</td>
<td>Soi Ha</td>
<td>Budgets and Finance Officer</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindow</td>
<td>Lyndle</td>
<td>Unit Chief, Administrative Services</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luo</td>
<td>Wei (Yvonne)</td>
<td>International Cooperation Department Director, Board Office Director</td>
<td>Elion Resources Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medel Garcia</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Unit Chief, External Relations, Policy and Advocacy</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montoiro</td>
<td>Marcos</td>
<td>Programme Officer, Partnerships/Resource Mobilisation</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutambirwa</td>
<td>Cathrine</td>
<td>Programme Manager LDN and Land Restoration</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naqvi</td>
<td>Munazza</td>
<td>Programme Officer</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nordheim-Larsen</td>
<td>Camilla</td>
<td>Programme Coordinator, Private Sector Partnerships &amp; Financing</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
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## RETROSPECTIVE COMPONENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oettle</td>
<td>Noel</td>
<td>Senior Advisor</td>
<td>Environmental Monitoring Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
<td>Hansol</td>
<td>Associate Programme Officer, Private Sector Partnerships &amp; Financing</td>
<td>UNCCD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queru</td>
<td>Gautier</td>
<td>Director, LDN Fund</td>
<td>Mirova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodriguez</td>
<td>Silvia</td>
<td>Rector of Adaptation, Climate Change and Mitigation, Direction for Climate Change Adaptation and Desertification</td>
<td>Ministry of Environment, Peru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salter</td>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>Co-Founder</td>
<td>Aduna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seck</td>
<td>Emmanuel</td>
<td>Programme Manager, Environment – Knowledge Management</td>
<td>ENDA Energy Environment Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siantonas</td>
<td>Tony</td>
<td>Director, Scaling Positive Agriculture</td>
<td>WBCSD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skirrow</td>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>TREE AID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soeftestad</td>
<td>Lars</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>Supras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stam</td>
<td>Nienke</td>
<td>Programme Director Landscape Finance</td>
<td>IDH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangem</td>
<td>Elvis</td>
<td>Coordinator, Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative</td>
<td>African Union Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vats</td>
<td>Varun</td>
<td>Global Lead, Public Policy and Partnerships</td>
<td>Syngenta</td>
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## PROSPECTIVE COMPONENT

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belmonte</td>
<td>Wivina</td>
<td>Principal Advisor – Partnerships</td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brasil</td>
<td>Bianca</td>
<td>Programme Manager</td>
<td>CBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaplan</td>
<td>Marcus</td>
<td>Senior Evaluator</td>
<td>DEval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mabrouk</td>
<td>Mohammed</td>
<td>Administrator, Private Sector Unit</td>
<td>UNEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malha</td>
<td>François</td>
<td>Due Diligence and Corporate Research Officer</td>
<td>UNICEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nocelli Pac</td>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>Programme Management Officer, Private Sector Unit</td>
<td>UNEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orth</td>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>Senior Evaluator and Team Leader</td>
<td>DEval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner</td>
<td>Mia</td>
<td>Programme Management Analyst, Private Sector Unit</td>
<td>UNEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yousuf</td>
<td>Kamar</td>
<td>Head, Private Sector Unit</td>
<td>UNEP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix VI  Documents Consulted

Business Forum Declarations

▪ UNCCD Business Forum (2011) Declaration by the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum
▪ UNCCD COP (2013) Declaration by the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum (Decision 38/COP.11)
▪ UNCCD COP (2017) Declaration from the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum (Decision 33/COP.13)
▪ UNCCD COP (2019) Declaration from the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum (Decision 30/COP.14)

COP Decisions

▪ UNCCD (2015) Revised Procedures for the accreditation of civil society organizations and representatives from the private sector to the Conference of Parties and their participation in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (Note by the secretariat)
▪ UNCCD (2017) Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (Note by the secretariat)
▪ UNCCD (2019) Accreditation of intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations and representatives from the private sector, and admission of observers (Note by the secretariat)
▪ UNCCD (2019) Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the business engagement strategy (Note by the secretariat)
▪ UNCCD COP (2017) Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the business engagement strategy (Decision 6/COP.13)

Methodology Documents

▪ European Evaluation Society (s.d.) Evaluation of Public-Private Partnership Projects: Initiatives and Lessons Learned from a Survey of Ex-Post Evaluations
▪ OECD (2018) Measuring the results of private sector engagement through development co-operation
▪ UN (2016) UN Women Private Sector Accountability Framework UNW-PSF
▪ UNDP (s.d.) UNDP Gender Assessment Leaflet
Partnership Documents

- Aduna (s.d.) Value chain Annex Description
- Ecotierra (2018) Urapi Sustainable Land Use
- Link to President Hollande Speech at COP22
- LDN Fund (s.d.) Moringa Project
- Rockefeller Foundation and UNCCD (2019) Grant agreement between Rockefeller and UNCCD
- Rockefeller Foundation and UNCCD (2019) Growing prosperity from the natural resources of the Sahel- Background Document
- Rockefeller Foundation and UNCCD (2019) Land of Opportunities- Practical Solutions for lasting peace and prosperity in the Sahel
- Rockefeller Foundation and UNCCD (2019) Land of Opportunities- Practical Solutions for lasting peace and prosperity in the Sahel- List of Participants
- Rockefeller Foundation and UNCCD (2019) Request for Proposal (RFP) Branding and Marketing Services- Sahel Initiative
- Rockefeller Foundation and UNCCD (2019) RFP scores
- Rockefeller Foundation and UNCCD (2019) Sahel Initiative
- Rockefeller Foundation and UNCCD (2020) Grant agreement between Rockefeller and UNCCD
- Rockefeller Foundation and UNCCD (2020) Interim report- UNCCD Agreement between the Rockefeller Foundation and the UNCCD
- Rockefeller Foundation and UNCCD (2020) Rockefeller contribution to the UNCCD- for the Bellagio Conversation on the Sahel
- Rockefeller Foundation and UNCCD (2020) Grant agreement between Rockefeller and UNCCD
- Syngenta (2014) Letter of Agreement between the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD Secretariat) and Syngenta Crop Protection AG (Syngenta) for the
Contribution of a Project Manager and Financial Resources by Syngenta to the UNCCD Secretariat on the Occasion of the Development and Implementation of the Soil Leadership Academy (SLA)

- Syngenta (2014) Memorandum of Understanding between the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Syngenta Crop Protection AG ("Syngenta")
- Syngenta (2014) Voluntary contribution by Syngenta Crop Protection in 2014 to support Soil Leadership Academy (SLA) Financial Utilization report as at 28 February 2019
- Timberland and UNCCD (2019) Collaboration agreement between Timberland, A Division of VF Outdoor LLC and The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
UNCCD Documents

- UNCCD (2015) Independent evaluation of partnerships involving the UNCCD secretariat and/or the Global Mechanism
- UNCCD (2016) Knowledge Hub. Available at: https://knowledge.unccd.int/
- UNCCD (2017) The future strategic framework of the Convention
- UNCCD (2019) Organizational Chart- UNCCD
- UNCCD (2019) Reviewing our way of working: fit for purpose
- UNCCD (2019) Reviewing our way of working: Fit for Purpose- Report of the task team
- UNCCD (2020) UNCCD work programme for 2020-2021
- UNCCD (s.d.) Application form to be submitted by civil society organizations, including the private sector, for the accreditation to the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies
- UNCCD (s.d.) On the mandate of the UNCCD and its secretariat
- UNCCD (s.d.) Overview of the draft 2020-2021 work programme
- UNCCD (s.d.) The UNCCD & Business: Partnership Opportunities for Sustainable Land Management
- UNCCD (s.d.) UNCCD results-based work programme planning

Other Business Sector Engagement Strategies

- OECD (2016) Engaging the private sector in development co-operation: Learning from peers
- SIDA (s.d.) Collaboration with the private sector
- USAID (s.d.) USAID Private Sector Engagement Policy
- UNEP (s.d.) UNEP’s Strategy for Private Sector Engagement

Other Evaluations

- FAO (2019) Evaluation of the FAO Strategy for Partnerships with the Private Sector
- GEF (2017) Evaluation of the GEF’s Engagement with the Private Sector Volume I
- UNHCR (2019) Evaluating UNHCR’s Engagement with the Private Sector
- UNICDO (2014) UNIDO's Public Private Partnerships

Other documents

Appendix VII  Additional Information – Relevance

The following COP decisions relate specifically to business sector engagement:

**Decision 5/COP.11**

Revised procedures for the accreditation of civil society organizations and representatives from the private sector to the Conference of the Parties and their participation in meetings and processes of the UNCCD

2. Requests the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to further promote the involvement of business and private entities in UNCCD meetings and processes, and to develop a business engagement strategy outlining the objectives, modalities and conditions of UNCCD partnerships with business and private entities for consideration and approval of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties ad interim and for consideration by the Conference of Parties at its twelfth session.

3. Urges those Parties, organizations and private sector entities in a position to do so to make voluntary and in-kind contributions to support a wider participation of civil society organizations in UNCCD meetings; and requests the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to, as appropriate, explore ways and means to raise more funding in this regard through specific initiatives based on substantive inputs from civil society organizations in the intergovernmental process.

**Decision 6/COP.12**

Business engagement strategy and participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

1. Takes note of the UNCCD business engagement strategy as contained in annex I to document ICCD/COP(12)/3, and requests the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue implementing it when engaging in partnership with the private sector;

2. Also request the secretariat to submit future amendments of the business engagement strategy to the Conference of the Parties for consideration and approval;

3. Further requests the Executive Secretary to report to the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth session on the implementation of the present decision, including on any developments in the engagement with the private sector.

**Decision 6/COP.13**

Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the business engagement strategy

1. Takes note of the results of the initiatives undertaken within the business engagement strategy of the Convention, and requests the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue engaging the private sector;
2. Requests the secretariat to increase and enhance engagement with the private sector to promote implementation of the Convention and work to that effect in meetings and processes of the Convention, as appropriate;

3. Also requests the secretariat to report on the implementation of this decision at the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

**Decision 6/COP.14**

**Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the business engagement strategy**

1. Takes note of the initiatives undertaken within the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification business engagement strategy;

2. Requests the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification business engagement strategy when engaging in partnerships with the private sector;

3. Also requests the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, within their respective mandates, to evaluate options to be presented for consideration at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties for promoting greater participation of the private sector, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, in the development and mainstreaming of innovative and sustainable solutions for combating desertification/land degradation and drought and achieving land degradation neutrality, including in agriculture, agricultural technology, food systems, water, rangelands, mining, forestry and renewable energy;

4. Further requests the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to report at future sessions of the Conference of the Parties on the measures taken to facilitate and encourage the participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

Challenges to the implementation of LDN, as per the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface Survey (late 2018):
Quotes from Key Informants

Involvement of the business sector towards LDN is...

“Very important, we cannot ignore the business sector. We need to include business sector, understand it in the design of policy frameworks but also in the implementation. The business sector has a lot to offer: innovation, learning, experience, funds, expertise, management, resources, scaling up projects. If a government were to take on some commitments on soils, if we take up commitments it is cross-countries, cross-sectors. It is a big advantage: scale. We can go beyond national borders. It is only one example.”

- Business Sector Entity

“Very important, because the private sector is also responsible for these problems and can also bring solutions. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda in 2015 said we need the private sector to meet the goals.”

- Business Sector Entity

“Extremely important – if you want to successfully implement a sustainable programme, you need to link it to the needs of the people. [...] How do you encourage farmers to engage in sustainable land management? For that to work, you need to use a business approach. You need to encourage them to plant the economically important trees.”

- External Stakeholder

“Very important. Many of those that are using the land and thus degrading the land, and are interested in the land not being degraded, is the business sector. Agribusiness, extractives, etc., it is in their own interest that the land can still be usable. There is a large number of companies who are looking into that.”

- UNCCD Staff

On alignment between business sector interests and those of the Parties:
“There have been cases where we reluctantly engaged with governments. What we fear is that the governments that have made strategies for LDN, sometimes they prioritise certain areas – we do not want to be limited in our choices because of government priorities.”

- Business Sector Entity

“In private sector partnerships, we sometimes try to discuss with the national stakeholders, but we don’t always have the right people around the table with the right mindset to develop these kinds of structures. [...] In [country X], for instance, a company is restoring degraded land. But the government said, ‘this is not the priority’. We sat together and discussed this. It was a constructive conversation, the government widened its priority area and collaborated. We had to speak two languages (public and business sector interests).

- Business Sector Entity

“A good project operator was found to restore degraded land, with significant impact and an acceptable profitability for the project, but the NFP said it was in another region that we should invest. If our role was only to address the environmental issue, we would invest in that region, but we also need to attract investors. We realised that there was this mismatch between where the project should be and where it had been launched. There should be an incentive to work in priority areas, some support. This is how to govern in a market economy. Tax breaks, interesting infrastructure, roads, etc. Like any other economical development. Create the conditions for the market to come.

- Business Sector Entity
Appendix VIII  Additional Information – Coherence

Quotes from Key Informants

“Business sector engagement is mentioned in the Strategic Framework 2018-2030, it is the last strategic objective – making more resources available. It could be mainstreamed, it is currently not mentioned in each workstream. There are things that we should mention as part of all the issues – gender for instance.”

- UNCCD Staff

“Operationalisation of papers and strategies sometimes is an issue. Sometimes the papers just stay on the website and are not used much.”

- UNCCD Staff

“There is a gap: the BES is really cross-cutting, we should involve all the teams to better define the next steps to implement the document. There should be an action plan.”

- UNCCD Staff

“The secretariat and GM have slightly diverging mandates. In terms of business sector engagement, there is no sharp division, difficult to draw a line. We are aiming for coordination. It is a grey area, where one ends and where the other one begins.”

- UNCCD Staff

“The secretariat leads on policy, outreach. The mandate of the GM is to mobilise resources. We will interact with the same companies but on different topics. We should work altogether. Through an MoU you can define all these aspects.”

- UNCCD Staff

On synergies with the other two Rio Conventions:

“Sometimes I am under the impression that there is duplication in the different initiatives. The three Rio Conventions, there should be a lot more synergies, they should share rather than duplicate. Nature-based solutions are at the intersection of the three Conventions. There could be a common dynamic.”

- Business Sector Entity

“The three Rio Conventions, I see there is potential to collaborate more closely, they could have a joint strategy on private sector engagement – let’s not duplicate work.”

- Business Sector Entity
Appendix IX Additional Information – Effectiveness and Progress Towards Impact

Quotes from Key Informants

“Sometimes the business sector and the Convention have related in ways that do not further the objectives of the Convention.”
- External Stakeholder

“The GGWSII is already very inclusive to accommodate public and private sector interest, it aims to mobilise more interest and contributions from that side of the world. We are entering a new phase, taking bold actions. For the time being, we receive a lot of different requests from companies (CSR, public commitments, etc.) that want to fund the initiative. They make spontaneous requests, we organise a call, then set up sometimes very promising partnerships. There are a lot of initiatives coming from the private sector. We see opportunities where it fructified.”
- UNCCD Staff

“There are good examples of how the UNCCD has been able to connect investors with value chains, leading to more sustainable and long-term results than if UNCCD was implementing the project.”
- External Stakeholder

“I don't consider the role of the Business Forums as important as it could and should have been. There was no time for discussion, no long questions that required answers, no criticism – there was no time for it. They preferred to use the time for presentations by invited companies.”
- External Stakeholder

“The project was very successful, we were provided with some donor funding, we used that towards many activities, they have been successful and have impact. These are results that you can build upon. It has been a worthwhile journey.”
- Business Sector Entity

“At the Business Forums, you meet with business people, you are still not necessarily engaged with businesses in the strict sense of the term. The businesses that you tend to see in the Business Forums, you might be seeing the person responsible for corporate social responsibility or sustainability or ethical practices, probably someone who is already bought in the sector. You are not getting this fresh injection of new blood, new thoughts, questions, etc.”
- Business Sector Entity

“We got very tangible and concrete results. We have been aware of issues related to land degradation since early on, we could put together teams to address these issues, better understand the drivers, get access to science, and help build a new activity. It is now much bigger.”
- Business Sector Entity

“When [company X] approached UNCCD, they wanted to fund activities on the ground. Because we are a trusted partner, we were selected to respond to those needs quickly and deliver on these things. It is
something we would like to replicate. If it had not been for the UNCCD, we would not come on these companies’ radar.”

- Business Sector Entity

“A lot of these business days, we need to define what is the purpose – if it is about advocacy, the goal would be developing that statement to policymakers. If it is about innovation, you could discuss new developments, civil society partners adopting new technologies into their projects. They are useful, but their outcome needs to be defined. It should not only be getting people together on the back of the COP. The outcome should be framed clearly, and in a way that helps UNCCD.”

- Business Sector Entity

“The assumption is that the UN will outsource work on the ground and then the private sector will come in on its white horse and leverage that work. There is a huge area of naivety within UNCCD in terms of how value chains work. Value chains are longer than UNCCD thinks. There are exporters and manufacturers and brands and consumers. The UNCCD is blind to that. These value chains need to function to enable the impact of the work on the ground.”

- Business Sector Entity

“Sometimes I sense a little disconnect in terms of how they operate and view the world, vs us. For instance, someone from UNCCD commented that it was more an economic development project, because it aims to increase the income of the producers, but of course! If it is a private sector investment, there is always an economic aspect. If you are going to engage the private sector, you need to recognise that they will need to generate a return, and that will be at the same level as the environmental aspect.”

- Business Sector Entity

On results for the business sector:

“We have mutual benefits: our partnership has helped bring both more visibility, and more support – technical, financial, sympathy. UNCCD has permitted us to raise a lot of resources.”

- External Stakeholder

“The UNCCD plays a role of facilitation – they know the players on the ground, they know the organisational heads, they know the government heads, they can pull everybody together. Consolidation, facilitation, convening, introducing, matchmaking. I have met and engaged with different organisations and individuals through the UN, which I would otherwise have not had visibility into – and vice versa. The UNCCD, because they are so interconnected, they have this ability to create these pairings.”

- Business Sector Entity

“Through the Ministerial Dialogues, we can influence some of the decision-making process. During Business Forums, the business sector is the heart of the seminar, businesses can exchange and make their voice heard. [...] We also get international popularity by participating in UNCCD events. Through UNCCD introductions, we receive a lot of requests for collaboration. Popularity is what we get.”

- Business Sector Entity

“The UNCCD is a convening partner, they connected the dots between worlds that normally do not talk. It is very unique, bridging two worlds. Facilitating the interface between public policy issues and businesses.”

- Business Sector Entity
Appendix X  Additional Information – Efficiency

Quotes from Key Informants

“We are going a bit all over the place now with the private sector, and we are possibly spread too thin. We are a very small team.”

- UNCCD Staff

“We have been opportunistic more than systematic. We are currently in conversations with fashion, food, cosmetics, airlines. It would be great to have more thinking per sector.”

- UNCCD Staff

“It is sometimes difficult to have a clear cut to discuss the nature of partnerships that we can have with an interested partner. The UNCCD will benefit a lot from a clear taxonomy of private sector actors that we can work with, what are the modalities that given partners can enjoy. That categorisation would be helpful. If you look at the MoUs, they clearly show the parameters of our collaboration. We want to have clear operational means and modalities that are legally and politically endorsed by our parties and our management, and we can use it without having to go to management each time. It needs to be systematised.”

- UNCCD Staff

“It is a bit ad hoc, we are a small organisation. We are flexible to be a bit looser, it might mean that we are not as strategic as we could. [...] We don’t have hundreds of partnerships. It is manageable through our current processes. If it grows to something much greater, we will need to review our team size.”

- UNCCD Staff

“There have been cases of failures. The timelines of the business sector are much shorter than ours. Our process require that we take measures that are necessary. [...] If you look at project design and implementation, designing a project you need 3 years to move from design to implementation. Within the private sector, it is another story. They need 9-12 months to invest.”

- UNCCD Staff

“The GGWSSI and its objective, it will only succeed if it gets wide support from the rest of the world, a big marketing operation – you get into something the UN has no experience or capacity to handle. I have been engaged in a number of discussions around this and how it is rolled out, it involves marketing, sales, business development, public relations, social media, press, advertising, handling of donations, so many different aspects. The UN does not have these kinds of skillsets in. Managing films, the release, the diffusion – luckily there was a very competent individual who spotted the opportunity and ran with it, but otherwise there is a need for a whole suite of skills that the UN is not equipped to provide.”

- Business Sector Entity

“There are some very inspiring and motivating people at UNCCD, action-driven. We have a personal relationship. The institution itself is more complex to handle, it is a different world. They were not comfortable dealing with the business sector, sometimes we did not understand each other. The distinction
between the GM and the secretariat was unclear. And the turnover in staff made it difficult to deal with in the long run.”

- Business Sector Entity

“At the moment, the private sector is only part of the fundraising. But all the rest, to advance the objectives of the Convention, is not part of the results framework.”

- UNCCD Staff

“The UNCCD should not work for profits but for sustainability. I would like to see accreditation requirements to reflect this nuance.”

- External Stakeholder

“We can get very excited when a company reaches out to us, without following our steps. Maybe we need regular reminders of the tools we have, that took so much hard work to deliver. Companies are eager to get involved with us, the UN flag has a powerful image. It is very important that everybody within UNCCD is aware of what we have. There are high potential and also risks.”

- UNCCD Staff
Appendix XI  Additional Information – Sustainability

“In all our projects, we have a longer term view in developing complete value chains. The business sector is very key to reinforce the capacity of stakeholders and smallholders. We need to capacitate the latter to reach viability and include their production in the value chain. It is key to create an enabling environment with the private sector, so they buy from the local level. It should be done on a fair-trade mode. [...] There is work done through the GGWSSI which should be scaled up.”

- UNCCD Staff

“Where we have been running programmes, the results stay. You will have that legacy. Will the business sector maintain its engagement, that I don’t know. I don’t think the UNCCD has snowballed it enough that it can take off on its own.”

- Business Sector Entity

“By and by, large investors will leave one day. The best approach is what UNCCD is doing – maintain the impact investors, the venture capitalists, have them interested, work with CSOs and local groups. The community groups will stay, whether or not the investors leave. Those local NGOs, that is also a source of involvement, besides being an important source of sustainability and knowledge/technological transfer. It is in-house expertise, not someone from Bonn dropping by and leaving.”

- External Stakeholder
Appendix XII  Additional Information – Gender Inclusion

“Gender inclusion is becoming part of the checklist, as part of our project management manual. How is gender factored in. There are different levels that we should be looking at. And do you want to kick an entity out if they don’t meet this criterion. This is a new area for us, how can we be more gender inclusive.”

- UNCCD Staff

“As per our Gender Action Plan, we are requested to integrate and mainstream gender into all our activities. We want private companies paying attention to this issue. We will bring that up at the next COP. It is not even mentioned one time in the BES.”

- UNCCD Staff

“UNCCD talks a lot about gender in their documents, but it has not been at the forefront of their work. It is not a priority area. In the field it is important though, so it gets done. LDN projects are women-led because it does not involve land ownership or resource ownership. It was very small at the time, now it is much bigger. Those women make much more money than men who are cattle herders – and with less investment. It is much more lucrative.”

- External Stakeholder

“Gender was never discussed explicitly, it was not contracted or anything. It is part of what we do, but it was never asked to us.”

- Business Sector Entity
Appendix XIII  Terms of Reference

Enhancing the private sector engagement in the UNCCD

Terms of reference for a consultancy for evaluating private sector engagement and developing elements for a related strategic approach

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 196 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 that promotes the mobilization of resources for sustainable land management.

Background

The private sector is an important stakeholder in a sustainably managed world. By 2050, the world's population will have increased to over 9 billion, with twice the current demand for agricultural products. By 2030, 80% of the global population is expected to become consumers. Providing for this growing class of consumers is an exciting challenge. However, with unsustainable land practices reducing essential soil nutrients, the future business potential is undermined. Many businesses depend on the availability of productive land and at the same time, they are among the key stakeholders for ensuring that land degradation is avoided and reduced and already degraded land is restored.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires a massive step up in resource mobilization and collective efforts for development impact. More broadly, the 2030 Agenda “calls on all businesses to apply their creativity and innovation to solving sustainable development challenges”. In the post-COVID 19 realities, responsible private sector investments are particularly important, as they will eventually bear the main burden of “building back better” – generating the supply of commodities, rebuilding the economy and creating jobs, while ensuring the sustainability of the natural resource base and the wellbeing of people.

The UNCCD as a multilateral environmental agreement is essentially an inter-governmental normative platform, while successful implementation of its provisions and decisions requires the involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders dealing with land, including the private sector. In line with the 2030 Agenda, the UNCCD has engaged in multiple ways with private sector companies and organizations. Below are some examples of their involvement.
Some private sector companies and organizations have taken a formal observer status, which entitles them to participate in official meetings of the governing bodies of the UNCCD. A private company may apply for the observer status when it (a) has expressed interest in participating in UNCCD meetings; (b) has specific expertise in matters relating to the Convention; and (c) participates in the United Nations Global Compact.

Since 2011, a Sustainable Land Management Business Forum event has been organized every two years in the side-lines of each UNCCD Conference of the Parties (COP). These Forums have brought together representatives from major companies and organizations to examine the challenges associated with corporate activities on land and soil and to showcase best practices and lessons learned from businesses.

Since 2013, the official agenda of the COP has included ministerial dialogues with the private sector aiming at strengthening collaboration with the business and industry entities in the implementation of the Convention; and every COP has made a decision specifically on the involvement of the private sector and requested the secretariat to report on related measures.

In addition to private sector involvement in the official UNCCD meetings and related events, the Convention secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) have established partnerships with the private sector. The partnerships are conducted according to the UNCCD Business Engagement Strategy, considered by COP 12 in 2015, outlining the objectives, modalities and conditions for collaboration. A due diligence procedure is also in place to assess the engagement with the private sector. Below are examples of the secretariat and the GM partnerships with the private sector.

- The secretariat has collaborated with private sector entities in advocating for land degradation neutrality. For example, the secretariat supported the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) in the preparation of a 2018 report highlighting the business case for investing in soil health. All Business Forums have also been organized through collaboration with private sector entities and the secretariat.

- The secretariat supported the International Organization of Standardization (ISO) in developing a standard to serve the objectives of the UNCCD. ISO 14055-1:2017 “Environmental management – Guidelines for establishing good practices for combatting land degradation and desertification in arid and non-arid regions” – was published in October 2017.

- The secretariat has raised funding from private sector companies for specific tasks in its work programme. For example, the secretariat manages a privately funded Soil Leadership Academy that supports public and private sector decision-makers and professionals to advance land degradation neutrality through targeted capacity building.

- The GM had a key role in launching the establishment of the LDN Fund, an impact investment fund for land degradation neutrality blending resources from the public, private and philanthropic sectors.

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21 In the case where an organisation does not participate in the United Nations Global Compact, clearance prior to its accreditation shall be requested from the United Nations Procurement Division and the United Nations Ethics Office.

22 [https://www.wbcsd.org/Programs/Food-and-Nature/Food-Land-Use/Climate-Smart-Agriculture/Resources/The-Business-Case-for-Investing-in-Soil-Health](https://www.wbcsd.org/Programs/Food-and-Nature/Food-Land-Use/Climate-Smart-Agriculture/Resources/The-Business-Case-for-Investing-in-Soil-Health)
The GM worked on the operational guidance, project pipeline development and outreach of the Fund, while the overall management of the Fund was assigned to a private sector investment management firm following a competitive process. Since the official launching of the LDN Fund in September 2017, the GM has ended its active involvement in the operations and has now only an advisory status, notably in advising the LDN Fund and its Technical Assistance Facility on project development opportunities.

- In the context of the African Great Green Wall Initiative, the GM has promoted the creation of “land-based green jobs” through the establishment of sustainable value chains for dryland products with the potential for export to international markets. A public-private-partnership with Aduna, a private health food brand and social business, has been established to provide training on demand-based and business-driven approach at local level, and the same business has committed to buy the resulting production.

- The GM has also worked with private sector entities in the Great Green Wall global campaign, promoting awareness-raising and support to activities in land restoration. For example, a Danish fashion company Vero Moda recently launched a campaign in collaboration with the GM to donate to the Great Green Wall Initiative a portion of the proceeds from selling its shopping bags. The global apparel company Timberland is also a partner of the GM on the Great Green Wall Initiative, financing campaign activities as well as projects on the ground.

As may be noted from the above, many roles that the private sector entities take in the context of the UNCCD differ from the “traditional” perception of private sector support to international environmental cooperation as financing/charity: private sector entities are partners for advocacy, awareness raising and capacity building in addition to making financial contributions. Brokering the expansion of this non-financial collaboration to areas where private sector partners are particularly resourceful, such as technological innovations and technical expertise, could effectively support the UNCCD Parties in implementing the Convention. At the same time, promoting and mobilizing long-term private investments that serve the objectives of the UNCCD, particularly land degradation neutrality, while meeting the interests of the private sector partners remains the priority for any effort to engage private sector entities with the UNCCD.

In recent years, the UNCCD has witnessed an increasing interest from the private sector in terms of both participation in the formal Convention process and partnerships with the secretariat and the GM. For the latter, the interaction has taken multiple forms, as indicated in the examples above. While these developments are highly positive, they also raise many questions about the potential and results of different types and mechanisms of private sector engagement vis-à-vis the objectives of the UNCCD and its institutions, and the preparedness and capacity of the secretariat and the GM to effectively collaborate with private sector entities.

Underlying the questions on immediate results and technical/management details of the private sector engagement are also broader, more strategic aspects concerning the longer-term role of the private sector in the implementation of the UNCCD. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, as the economies open again, effective linking of public and private investments to support the restoration of natural resources is particularly important. It is a pre-condition for any effort to improve long-term resilience and preparedness for future crisis, especially for the poorest.

Ideally, caring for land should become as common for the private sector as avoiding toxic substances in products or meeting the minimum standards for employee well-being. On the other hand, many areas affected by DLDD hold great potential for sustainable economic growth, which could be materialized through increased private investments. For both aspects, the UNCCD could serve as an effective platform for progress with targeted norms, policies and support mechanisms to assist its Parties. For that to happen,
the secretariat and the GM need an effective strategy for the private sector engagement, which would entail defining medium and long-term goals for interaction and collaboration with the private sector, as well as outlining the approach for meeting these goals.

Against this background, the UNCCD secretariat is launching a study with a double purpose: to evaluate the results of the private sector engagement in the UNCCD so far, and to develop elements for a new private sector engagement strategy. The evaluation and the consideration of the private sector engagement strategy will be conducted in line with the terms of reference contained in this document.

Objectives and main users of the evaluations

The overall aim of the study is to strengthen the understanding within the UNCCD process of how to engage and partner with the private sector in the context of the post-COVID-19 realities, and thereby support the UNCCD Parties in further increasing private sector contribution to meeting the objectives of the Convention. It will serve two main purposes: evaluating the results achieved through the involvement of the private sector in the UNCCD so far and identifying elements for further development of the UNCCD strategy for private sector engagement.

Through assessing the achieved results, the study will draw lessons from what worked well and what did not, and identify likely factors of success for future collaboration with the private sector, taking into account the characteristics of the UNCCD and its institutions. It will consider the capacity of the secretariat and the GM to effectively collaborate with the private sector. This component of the study will contribute to the further development of the UNCCD management, policy and administrative tools for the use of the secretariat and the GM when working with the private sector.

The study will also look at the private sector engagement in the implementation of the UNCCD in a broader sense, with the aim to identify (1) potential measures (norms, policies, incentives...) that could effectively influence the private sector to advance land degradation neutrality in business actions; and (2) approaches and support mechanisms that could assist the UNCCD Parties in attracting private investments that contribute to the implementation of the UNCCD.

The main audience of the study will be the management team of the UNCCD secretariat and the GM as well UNCCD staff working with the private sector. The findings and recommendations will be reported internally and brought to the attention of the UNCCD COP 15 in 2021, and they are likely to be of interest also to the private sector partners as well as interested stakeholders working on land matters in cooperation with the private sector.

Scope and approach of the evaluation

The study will seek to improve the understanding of the contexts and conditions that could lead to successful partnership with market-based entities in support of the UNCCD Parties, and assist the UNCCD process to increase effective private sector engagement for land degradation neutrality and broader development impact. While the study will include stocktaking of results achieved so far, its focus will be on providing elements for strategic planning.

For the purposes of the study, “private sector” is defined broadly, covering privately owned companies, organizations such as WBCSD and the World Economic Forum as well as private philanthropic foundations. Similarly, “engagement” is understood to cover a wide variety of types and forms of involvement in the UNCCD process, financial and non-financial cooperation with the secretariat and the GM, as well as different forms of private investments targeting the aims of the Convention.
The study will consist of two interlinked components:

1) Evaluation of the results of the private sector engagement in the UNCCD process, including activities in the context of the UNCCD COP and collaboration with the secretariat and the GM; and

2) Consideration of elements for enhancing private sector engagement in the UNCCD implementation

Evaluation of the results of the private sector engagement in the UNCCD process

The first component of the study will be loosely built around the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria\(^\text{23}\), with analysis of progress toward impact included into the considerations of effectiveness. In addition, gender aspects will be considered as cross-cutting issue.

Below are the criteria with provisional evaluation questions; the final questions and the evaluation matrix will be defined at an early stage of the evaluation process.

**Relevance:** To which extent the objectives and design of the private sector partnerships and other types of private sector engagement respond to the priorities of the Convention, as stated in the UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030? Are they relevant to the results framework of the UNCCD secretariat and the GM? How could the responsiveness of the private sector engagement to the priorities of the Parties, as reflected in relevant COP decisions, be further improved? What should be the future focus areas for private sector engagement under the UNCCD, and why? How could the private sector become an active partner for the UNCCD agenda for post-COVID-19 realities?

**Cohere:** How do the UNCCD private sector interactions support other approaches and activities toward meeting the objectives the UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030? Are private sector cooperation aims of the secretariat and those of the GM aligned? To which extent the private sector collaboration is integrated into UNCCD policies and approaches concerning LDN and drought? How the role of private sector collaboration could be further built into the UNCCD guidance and approaches?

**Effectiveness and progress toward impact:** What are the results of the engagement of the private sector so far? How have they contributed to the achievement of the UNCCD priorities and the expected outcomes of the secretariat and the GM? Have some types of engagement been more effective than others? What have been their success factors? Have there been unexpected results? What kind of private sector engagement outcomes would be most effective in supporting future UNCCD implementation?

**Efficiency:** How private sector engagement is planned and managed within the secretariat and the GM? Is the private sector engagement strategy used; does it provide an adequate framework for coherent collaboration with the private sector? Are the capacities and competencies of the secretariat and the GM, including those on legal requirements and administrative procedures for private sector engagement, commensurate to related needs? Are the various risk factors of private sector engagement addressed? What should be the next steps in this regard?

**Sustainability:** Will the results that have been achieved through the private sector engagement remain if the secretariat and/or the GM are no longer involved in related activities? What is the likelihood of the benefits of the private sector supported projects continuing in the long term? Could some of the achieved results be replicated or scaled up?

**Gender inclusion:** How do the UNCCD private sector partnerships address gender in their objectives (outputs, outcomes)? To which extent has the private sector engagement in the UNCCD contributed to

\(^{23}\) [https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm](https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm)
advancing the UNCCD aims for gender equality and the empowerment of women? Have some partnerships explicitly contributed to gender equality or women’s empowerment?

The first component is expected to result in practical conclusions and recommendations that would support the further development of partnerships between the secretariat and the GM and the private sector. It would also contribute to the identification of elements for broader considerations of enhancing private sector engagement in the UNCCD implementation under the second element.

Consideration of elements for a strategy for enhancing private sector engagement

The second component moves the study focus from the Convention institutions and processes to the Parties, with the main question of how to support them to engage the private sector in the implementation of the UNCCD. The bottlenecks and challenges to be addressed may include, for example, domestic policies and regulations on land use planning, capacity to identify and access market opportunities, public institutions’ capacity to incentivize sustainable use of land resources, as well as measures for risk mitigation.

Private sector may support country level efforts to address land degradation in various ways: in addition to financial resources that enable investments well beyond those that can be offered by public funding, it can bring innovation and technologies and provide expertise concerning market-based solutions. The private sector may also serve as an effective partner for advocacy to inform more sustainable policies, and its networks and operations provide effective channels to reach large populations.

In the light of the above, the second component of the study will consider the potential of the UNCCD as an intergovernmental process, and through the partnerships of the secretariat and the GM, to support the Parties of the Convention in meeting the challenges and seizing the opportunities to engage private sector in addressing land degradation.

The study will identify a small number of key objectives for private sector engagement in the context of the UNCCD implementation and, building on the results of the first component, suggest potential measures that could effectively support the meeting of the identified objectives. Such measures may serve in influencing the private sector to advance land degradation neutrality in business actions; and they may also be approaches and support mechanisms to assist the UNCCD Parties in attracting private investments that contribute to the implementation of the UNCCD. This component of the study will support and contribute to the exchanges within the secretariat and the GM, and possibly also among other UNCCD stakeholders, concerning the strategic approach of the UNCCD for private sector engagement.

This component may cover a broad range of matters, and its scope and focus will be discussed and specified at the beginning of the evaluation process. Considerations may include sector-specific insights and industry knowledge as well as political economy and local system characteristics to inform how the UNCCD can engage the private sector to achieve optimal outcomes.

Organization of work and main deliverables

The study will be carried out in the following three phases:

1. The inception phase, which will include
   - a preliminary desk review and introductory interviews with the UNCCD staff;
   - preparation of the evaluation matrix and final evaluation questions;
   - agreement on the scope and focus of the second component;
   - planning of the schedule for the study; and
   - preparation of the inception report.
(2) The data collection and analysis phase, which will include further desk review and interviews with private sector representatives, UNCCD staff and, as feasible, other stakeholders

(3) The reporting phase, which will include

- a preliminary summary of the main content of the draft report and its presentation to the UNCCD staff, possibly through a staff workshop; and
- preparation of the final report.

As background information, the study will use relevant documentation such as partnership agreements, progress reports and meeting conclusions, earlier evaluations and case studies on related topics, and interviews with representatives of the private sector partners as well as the UNCCD staff. The consultant may also interview a small number of other stakeholders for additional views. In addition, the study may briefly consider information on private sector engagement in other selected organizations and entities whose mandate and working modalities are not very different from those of the UNCCD secretariat. For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature could be approached for this purpose. Furthermore, for the second component of the evaluation, the material to be considered will include selected recent reports and studies concerning private sector engagement in advancing development objectives.

All drafts and reports prepared during the assessment will be in English and submitted as an electronic version (Word document).

**Evaluation criteria**

The consultant is recruited and managed by the UNCCD Evaluation Office. The UNCCD staff will support the study process by facilitating access to information sources and documents related to the private sector engagement, and through active participation and provision of feedback, particularly for the second component of the study.

The candidate should meet the following qualifications:

- Experience in international development cooperation processes and projects dealing with topics relevant to the UNCCD and/or private sector engagement.
- Expertise in development evaluations, preferably in the UN context.
- Experience in strategic planning involving multilateral environmental agreements in international environmental cooperation will be an asset.
- Experience in including gender aspects in the evaluation questions and process.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills; experience in producing high quality written reports.
- Fluency in English. Fluency in other UN official languages will be an asset.

The candidate to be selected may not have prior involvement in the activities that are being evaluated under the first component of the study.

**Indicative timetable**

The assignment will start as soon as possible; the exact timetable and duration will be agreed with the Evaluation Office. 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 required for completing the assessment.
Submission of application

Applications should be submitted by e-mail to staffing@unccd.int with a UNCCD Personal History Form24, CV and cover letter, specifying the reference number: CCD/20/EDM/26 in the subject line.

The deadline for applications is 30 June 2020. 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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