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#### Programme and budget

#### Report of the Evaluation Office

## Report of the Evaluation Office

Note by the secretariat

### *Summary*

The systematic evaluation of activities carried out under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) started in 2014. It is intended to strengthen the external credibility and accountability of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism and enhance their internal culture of learning.

This document presents an overview of the main findings and recommendations of those UNCCD evaluations that were commissioned during the biennium 2016–2017. It also provides information on the follow-up actions concerning the recommendations from the evaluations that were completed by the end of 2015. Furthermore, this document presents the proposed work programme for the UNCCD Evaluation Office for the biennium 2018–2019, accompanied by an indication of the estimated costs.

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## I. Introduction

1. Regulation 7.2 of the United Nations Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation indicates that all activities programmed shall be evaluated over a fixed time period. Regulation 7.1 of the same document refers to the objective of evaluation as (a) to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives; and (b) to enable the Secretariat and Member States to engage in systematic reflection, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the Organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives. Furthermore, Rule 107.1 of the same document states that evaluation findings shall be communicated to Member States through intergovernmental bodies.<sup>1</sup>

2. The systematic evaluation of activities carried out under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) started in 2014. It is intended to strengthen the external credibility and accountability of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) and enhance their internal culture of learning. The evaluations are usually prepared by independent professional evaluators and planned and supervised by the UNCCD Evaluation Office. This office also arranges for knowledge-sharing of the evaluation outcomes and follows up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations.

3. The evaluation reports and related management responses are openly accessible to Parties and other stakeholders through the UNCCD Evaluation Office web page.<sup>2</sup> They are presented at meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP) in the context of the agenda item on programme and budget and represent an important element in informing Parties of progress made toward the objectives of the UNCCD workplan, following a results-based budgeting approach.

4. This document presents an overview of the main findings and recommendations of those UNCCD evaluations that were commissioned during the biennium 2016–2017. It also provides information on the follow-up actions that (i) concern the recommendations made during evaluations completed by the end of 2015 and (ii) target the secretariat and/or the GM. Furthermore, this document presents the proposed work programme for the evaluation office for the biennium 2018–2019, accompanied by an indication of the estimated costs that would be covered from the UNCCD core budget.

## II. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification evaluations in 2016–2017

5. As at 1 June 2017, seven evaluations or assessments commissioned by the UNCCD Evaluation Office during this biennium were completed, and one more is under preparation.<sup>3</sup> An overview of the completed evaluations and assessments, starting with the most recent one, is presented in the following chapters, while the full evaluation reports can be accessed on the Evaluation Office web page.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. ST/SGB/2016/6; please see also the earlier version: ST/SGB/2000/8.

<sup>2</sup> <[www2.unccd.int/about-us/evaluation-office](http://www2.unccd.int/about-us/evaluation-office)>.

<sup>3</sup> The upcoming evaluation will cover UNCCD support to capacity-building.

**A. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the participation of civil society organizations in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (June 2017)**

6. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the UNCCD aimed to (i) assess changes in CSO involvement (i.e. the extent to which results were achieved) in the UNCCD process since the establishment of the Civil Society Organization Panel (CSO Panel) after COP 9; and (ii) clarify how the evolving facilities for CSO involvement, particularly the CSO Panel, contribute to changes in the CSO involvement. The evaluation was limited to the role and activities of the CSOs in the context of the intergovernmental UNCCD process.

7. Building on data collected through interviews, an online survey, and a study of documentation, the evaluation found that CSO participation in the UNCCD is generally considered to provide valuable input to UNCCD processes, and the continuation of CSO involvement is important. A large majority of the respondents participating in the evaluation considered that the CSO Panel has improved the visibility of the priorities of civil society as well as the inclusion of these priorities in UNCCD decision-making at the COP level. However, according to the evaluation, input from accredited CSOs to the UNCCD process tends to focus on the global level (COP and its subsidiary body meetings), with only limited reflection on their work at national/local levels.

8. With regard to communication among and to the CSOs, the evaluation noted that several communication platforms and tools are used to disseminate information to the accredited CSOs on UNCCD matters and particularly of the work of the CSO Panel. Nevertheless, the evaluation findings point toward a need for improvements, particularly with regard to communication between the national constituents and the accredited CSOs and the facilitation of dialogue with other non-governmental stakeholders such as the scientific community or the private sector.

9. The evaluation found that the role of CSOs in the UNCCD process, including that of the CSO Panel, is evolving, and the effectiveness and efficiency of CSO participation could be improved through increased clarity on CSO roles and responsibilities and a more strategic shared approach.

10. The evaluation recommends the following actions:

(a) Recommendation 1: An operational guideline or terms of reference, including a time-bound strategic plan, for CSO participation in the UNCCD and the functions and operations of the CSO Panel should be developed;

(b) Recommendation 2: A UNCCD CSO communication plan should be developed;

(c) Recommendation 3: The UNCCD secretariat should continue to support effective participation of accredited CSOs in the UNCCD process at the global, regional and national levels, paying particular attention to: (i) actively engaging new CSOs to become involved in the UNCCD, so as to broaden the substantive basis and influence of the UNCCD CSO community; and (ii) facilitating follow-ups to CSO activities to deepen the impact;

(d) Recommendations 1 and 2 target the community of CSOs accredited to the UNCCD and particularly the CSO Panel, and they are currently being discussed among them. The secretariat accepts recommendation 3 and will be prepared to support the accredited CSOs in taking action on the other recommendations, should they so decide.

## B. Assessment of the Science-Policy Interface (May 2017)

11. At COP 12 in 2015, Parties decided that the work conducted by the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) and its overall achievements since its establishment will be reviewed at the thirteenth session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST 13) (September 2017) in order to decide on the future functioning of the SPI. With the aim of ensuring that the CST session would have available evidence-based, analytical information for the SPI review, the secretariat, in consultation with the CST Bureau, commissioned an external assessment of the SPI. This assessment process was carried out in January–May 2017, and it emphasized the importance of stakeholder feedback: close to 200 people contributed to the assessment through participation in interviews and online surveys.

12. The assessment found that the SPI has made good progress in implementing its 2016–2017 work programme: it is working on all objectives and coordination activities that were assigned to it and many planned outputs have already been delivered. The SPI has effectively organized its work by allocating tasks among members, and the secretariat has provided the necessary services for its functioning. The assessment further found that the SPI produces useful knowledge that is on a solid scientific basis. It is also succeeding in influencing other scientific processes and better involving the scientific community in UNCCD work, although there is yet plenty to be done in these areas. In general, the findings of the assessment indicate that the SPI has made a promising start and the evaluators recommend it should be continued after this ‘trial’ period.

13. With the aim of improving its operations and capacity to deliver, the assessment presents the following eight recommendations that address SPI composition, functioning and resourcing:

(a) The SPI members should contribute through their own work to the improved recognition of the SPI;

(b) Interaction between (i) the SPI and the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; and (ii) the SPI and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change should be formalized;

(c) The CST Bureau, supported by the secretariat, should refine the terms of reference for SPI membership, including more detailed membership criteria, a specification of what is expected from the members and a revision of the process to renew membership;

(d) The SPI should use observers more effectively. The external assessment recommends an increase in the number of observer seats;

(e) Each SPI work programme should be limited to one to two priority topics to be implemented according to a realistic schedule;

(f) The SPI should continue engaging partners to support its substantive work;

(g) The SPI should meet at least twice per year;

(h) The secretariat should continue to ensure that the SPI has adequate resources for its work.

14. The content and recommendations of the assessment provide the background information for the upcoming CST review of the SPI, and they are submitted for the consideration of Parties in document ICCD/COP/CST(13)/6. In considering its work, the secretariat finds the action proposed by the assessment acceptable, provided that the needed resources are made available.

### **C. Evaluation of the development of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund (February 2017)**

15. This evaluation assessed the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of activities carried out by the GM in developing the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund (LDN Fund), paying particular attention to three work streams that were financed by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. These work streams deal with (i) pipeline development; (ii) monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV); and (iii) communication, marketing and outreach.

16. The evaluation found that the development phase of the LDN Fund was well planned and executed, placing the Fund in a strong position to attract the necessary levels of investment. It noted that a robust, diverse project portfolio had been constructed and described that as a considerable achievement in itself, given the immaturity of the land degradation neutrality (LDN) market. It commended the work carried out to develop the Fund's operational systems and processes, including "a high-quality piece of market research, strong environmental and social standards, and a promising MRV strategy".

17. According to the evaluation, a less tangible but highly notable achievement was the example that the LDN Fund provided of a substantive, practical partnership between the United Nations system and the private sector. Referring to "a close, effective working relationship between the GM and Mirova (the Fund's manager)", the evaluation stated that "the LDN Fund provides a rare case study of how the United Nations system can undertake meaningful, deep engagement with the private sector".

18. The evaluation noted delays in LDN Fund development; however it attributed these delays largely to difficulties associated with the innovative nature of both the investment approach and the overarching LDN concept that is still in its relative infancy.

19. The evaluation makes four recommendations, as follows:

(a) Recommendation 1: The GM and Mirova should develop a more institutionally and geographically diverse portfolio of sourcing partners. This should include partners that are in a position to identify projects that are in a very early stage;

(b) Recommendation 2: The GM and Mirova should develop a strategy for ensuring that project-level monitoring data is aligned with and formally fed in to the relevant national statistical systems. This strategy will need to be supported by clear guidance for project teams;

(c) Recommendation 3: The GM and Mirova should develop additional, portfolio-level key performance indicators and/or commission periodic evaluations to support the measurement of the LDN Fund's broader influence on the LDN investment environment;

(d) Recommendation 4: The GM and Mirova should consider redeveloping the original communications strategy, focusing specifically on the immediate demands of the next 12 months. This may benefit from the support of external communications expertise.

20. In the management response, the GM accepted or partially accepted recommendations 1, 3 and 4, noting specifically that more than 70 investment opportunities have been identified so far from a variety of sources and that the future focus of the GM will be on facilitating the development of these and further investment opportunities into solid projects. The GM rejected recommendation 2, stating that the monitoring data from projects funded through the LDN Fund is more significant in the global context than from the viewpoint of national statistics of individual countries, although this data may

contribute to countries' reporting to the UNCCD and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG target 15.3.

**D. Evaluation of the Global Mechanism project Integrating Climate Change Finance into Sustainable Land Management Strategies (September 2016)**

21. The project Integrating Climate Change Finance into Sustainable Land Management Investment Strategies was an initiative of the GM financed by the European Union and implemented in 2010–2014. It aimed to support nine countries in designing and/or implementing national-level strategies to address climate change mitigation and adaptation based on inherent linkages between land degradation and its impacts on the adaptive capacities of rural populations.

22. The evaluation found the project relevant, even somewhat ahead of its time: the political recognition of the land-climate nexus and related financial opportunities were yet to emerge, and in some participating countries the project must have been among the first steps to bring the two together.

23. It noted that the level of participation of national stakeholders was crucial for the overall performance at country level and that local non-governmental organizations were more effective than external consultants as country-level coordinators. This was particularly visible in one of the participating countries, Senegal, which, through a broad participatory process, succeeded in combining local needs and national policy priorities into a consistent project concept. This project concept has since evolved into a full-fledged project that has been approved for funding by the Green Climate Fund.

24. The evaluation made numerous recommendations that mostly targeted the continuation of the work carried out in the nine participating countries. In terms of general recommendations, the evaluation stated, among other matters, that:

(a) Capacity development is essential for accessing funding devoted to climate change, writing good project proposals and optimizing the overall project acquisition process, including negotiations with donors and financing mechanisms;

(b) Mainstreaming technical concepts (such as sustainable land management (SLM) or adaptation measures) into broad policy frameworks is a demanding consultative process, and joining forces with relevant large international organizations or initiatives (such as TerrAfrica for this project) increases the likelihood of success;

(c) Information dissemination targeting local-level stakeholders requires the use of local languages, which needs to be taken into account as early as the project design phase.

25. The GM has taken note of the evaluation recommendations and will use them in its future activities, as feasible.

**E. Evaluation of the performance review and assessment of implementation system (May 2016)**

26. The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the UNCCD performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) against the following criteria: (i) effectiveness; (ii) efficiency; (iii) relevance; and (iv) sustainability, and to use the resulting information to support the consideration of the future use of PRAIS for the new UNCCD reporting requirements.

27. According to the evaluation, PRAIS, launched in 2010, was an important first step in the process toward “a paradigm shift on monitoring and assessment within the UNCCD”: its use of standardized reporting templates helped to operationalize the concept of quantifiable, indicator-based reporting. PRAIS templates focused on performance indicators and monitoring of operational objectives (OOs) and respective targets; they were less effective in integrating strategic objectives (SOs) and the financial indicators under both OOs and SOs. The evaluation noted that the emphasis of PRAIS on performance review shifted the focus from national reporting to procedural, institutional and organizational performance.

28. The evaluation stated that the first revision of PRAIS in 2014 led to improved reporting efficiency in terms of the number of reports submitted. It noted, however, that the revised PRAIS did not succeed in generating baselines on progress in combatting desertification/land degradation or drought ‘on the ground’, nor in producing analytical assessments of needed priority action to foster the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy).

29. In terms of technical features and cost-efficiency, the evaluation found that while the PRAIS templates could be updated by the secretariat, the PRAIS portal modifications required external support and additional resources. It highlighted the potential of improved usage of other UNCCD knowledge management tools, cooperation in national reporting among the Rio conventions, and other available reporting systems as cost-efficient solutions for long-term reporting facilities.

30. At the time of the evaluation, there were many ongoing processes directly relevant to reporting under the UNCCD, and the evaluation recognized that the details of the future reporting system can only be defined after these processes are more advanced. In this context, the evaluation made broad recommendations that are summarized below:

(a) Recommendation 1: The effectiveness and relevance of reporting under the UNCCD is improved through the following:

(i) The future focus of national reporting shall be on progress made ‘on the ground’ in reaching the SOs and by incorporating the national LDN targets;

(ii) Affected country Parties shall draw up qualitative narratives, accompanied by quantitative information only where useful. These shall reflect corrective measures that have been taken or are planned and that are linked to progress toward the SOs or LDN targets;

(b) Recommendation 2: The cost-efficiency and sustainability of the UNCCD reporting system is improved, which may include the following:

(i) The secretariat shall ensure that the reporting templates can be changed without significant costs;

(ii) The secretariat shall provide public/online access to the reporting tools through a dedicated page as part of the UNCCD website instead of a separate online reporting portal;

(c) Recommendation 3: The PRAIS ‘brand’ for UNCCD reporting is maintained, and the new modalities for reporting are ‘relaunched’ as PRAIS3.

31. In the management response, the secretariat appreciated the evaluation as an analysis of the state and elements of PRAIS. The recommendations were partially/provisionally accepted, with the understanding that the eventual action to be taken would be determined after the substantive scope of national reporting and related approaches are agreed at the COP level.

## F. Evaluation of the Changwon Initiative (April 2016)

32. Launched in 2011, the Changwon Initiative provided the UNCCD with financial, technical and strategic support from the Korea Forest Service (KFS). This evaluation assessed the Initiative's overall performance and contribution to results achieved under the UNCCD.

33. The evaluation found that the Changwon Initiative performed a vital role in some of the most significant results achieved by the UNCCD during the period 2012–2015, many of which were linked to developing and testing the concept of LDN. The evaluation stated that the supported activities helped to prepare the technical, scientific and political ground for the adoption of SDG target 15.3, which was considered by many evaluation correspondents to be the single most important UNCCD-related development in recent years.

34. According to the evaluation, the Changwon Initiative was valuable for the secretariat in numerous ways. As predictable financial support, it facilitated the timely planning of the activities that it supported. It offered political backing and enabled the needed action to give impetus and momentum to the UNCCD agenda, motivating Parties to join the action. It also served as a learning process for the secretariat on partnerships with 'new', non-traditional donors.

35. While the general assessment of the Changwon Initiative was positive, the evaluation also identified aspects of the work that could have been stronger. The Changwon Initiative lacked clearly defined targets and indicators, as well as precise links to the UNCCD results framework. Its 'brand' as a global initiative was not clear. The implementation did not always meet the set schedule, and the knowledge and promotional value potential of the activities supported by the Changwon Initiative was not fully realized.

36. The evaluation recommendations are summarized below:

(a) Recommendation 1: As the Changwon Initiative has generated significant results for the UNCCD and provided valuable learning opportunities to both the UNCCD secretariat and KFS, its continuation is recommended;

(b) Recommendation 2: For future work plans under the Changwon Initiative, the secretariat – in consultation with KFS – should define a results framework that is clearly linked to the overall UNCCD priorities for the time period in concern, reflects the shared aims of the two partners and provides the basis for systematic monitoring and assessment of progress;

(c) Recommendation 3: Building on the experience gained from the Changwon Initiative, the secretariat should ensure that its future agreements with donor partners are aligned with the prevailing UNCCD results framework;

(d) Recommendation 4: The secretariat should analyse and address the reasons behind the occasional delays in implementing the Changwon Initiative, with a view to ensuring that such delays are avoided in the future;

(e) Recommendation 5: The secretariat should further work on the financial information flows in order to ensure that project managers have continuous updates on the status of funding;

(f) Recommendation 6: The secretariat should ensure that best practices identified through the Land for Life Programme and the Greening Drylands Partnership are routinely integrated within relevant UNCCD knowledge management platforms and processes.

37. In the management response, the secretariat, after consulting with KFS, accepted or partially accepted all recommendations, and by now the follow-up work is well underway.

38. The secretariat disagreed with the finding concerning the financial information flows, stating that a recent audit by the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services, which had focused on the administration of voluntary contributions, had not found any problems in the information flows.

## **G. Evaluation of the economic valuation activities of the Global Mechanism (September 2016)**

39. In 2012–2015, the GM supported six countries in making the case for financing SLM initiatives by demonstrating the economic benefits of SLM and the costs of unsustainable land use; in most countries the support was part of the process of developing integrated financing strategies. This evaluation assessed the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the economic valuation activities of the GM, using two perspectives: global level developments and activities in three out of the six participating countries. It reflected the findings against the emerging LDN concept and LDN target-setting.

40. According to the evaluation, the three countries that were studied had made varying levels of progress, largely depending on their political priorities and existing readiness to pursue SLM. In general, the evaluation found that the economic valuation of information activities met a recognized demand at national level (filled a gap), and that the GM succeeded in engaging national-level stakeholders. It commended the GM country assessment methodology as simple to apply while generating defensible findings.

41. With regard to global-level developments, the evaluation noted that GM work on the economic valuation of land was an input to a growing body of evidence for the full range of values to be derived from land. The Offering Sustainable Land-use Options (OSLO) Consortium that the GM had established served as a scientifically ambitious expert forum to consider country-level action. It contributed to the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative, which is now carrying out many national economic valuation activities.

42. On economic valuation in the LDN context, the evaluation states that “While LDN planning requires assessments of land capability, resilience and the wider political enabling environment, socio-economic factors are critical since they form the key part of the case for resource mobilization and for balancing LDN with other social and economic imperatives. The economic valuation of land is a correspondingly key part of the case for LDN, one that is particularly important to laying out the relative merits of different options for rehabilitating land. As such, LDN emerges alongside or even replaces the process of developing integrated financial strategies as the main driver for work on the economic valuation of land”.

43. The recommendations made by the evaluation are summarized as follows:

(a) Recommendation 1: While demonstrating the economic value of land is not the key to unlocking committed implementation of the Convention, it is a useful argument to deploy in a context which may be becoming more favourable. In trying to ensure that the findings of economic valuation studies are acted upon and translated into strong LDN plans and targets, the GM needs to be sensitive to the need to tailor findings to a national political and cultural context and remain committed to the utility of methodologies and simplicity of output;

(b) Recommendation 2: The GM should consider the value of a short report summarizing the experiences of the six countries and/or a checklist of lessons learned to aid other states intent on embarking on an economic valuation analysis;

(c) Recommendation 3: The GM should assess the intensity of the process of developing economic valuation-based LDN plans and how feasible it is for states to develop such plans with support that requires less direct involvement of the GM. It should also plot a more systematic approach to transmitting findings to the international level;

(d) Recommendation 4: The GM needs to be clearer as to how it works with others. Whatever the exact role it takes in the next phase, its choice about the space it will occupy should be made in conscious awareness of, and as a result of dialogue with, other key actors.

44. In its management response, the GM accepted all recommendations with slight modifications to the proposed approaches and has started to work on related activities.

### **III. Follow-up to earlier United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification evaluations**

45. In order to follow up on the evaluation recommendations, the secretariat and/or the GM shall prepare a management response for each independent evaluation in which they indicate whether they accept, partially accept or reject the recommendations. For those recommendations that are accepted or partially accepted, the secretariat and/or the GM outline the action that they plan to take in order to meet the recommendation. The management responses are made public together with the evaluation reports, and they should be considered as essential components of the evaluation reports.

46. The commitments to meet the recommendations that the secretariat and/or the GM make through the management responses should be followed up on and updated in the light of changing circumstances, where needed, on a yearly basis. The follow-up process for each recommendation shall end as soon as it is met or partially met, depending on the level of commitment made in the management response.

47. The secretariat and/or the GM prepare management responses only for those evaluations that address their own work. Evaluations that mostly target other stakeholders in their recommendations, such as the recent assessment of the Science-Policy Interface that supports a review by the CST and decision-making by the COP, will not entail a secretariat or GM management response.

48. This section provides an overview of action taken on the recommendations contained in evaluation reports that were completed by the end of 2016 and that addressed the work of the secretariat and/or the GM. It may be noted that for two out of the three evaluations presented below, namely on communication and partnerships, the need for improvements was already recognized before the evaluation took place. For these, the evaluation provided external, evidence-based advice on what should be improved and how, which facilitated the internal reform process.

#### **A. Evaluation of the Land Degradation Neutrality Pilot Project (November 2015)**

49. This evaluation provided an overall independent assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the Land Degradation Neutrality Pilot Project. It measured the extent to which the project had offered 'proof of concept', that is whether the LDN can drive progress towards the implementation of the UNCCD, reviewed how far the project had enabled baseline research, the identification of critical processes and target-setting, and tested for direct outcomes relating to national planning and implementation. The results of the evaluation were used for refining project delivery for the larger-scale

LDN Target-Setting Programme (LDN-TSP) that currently involves 108 countries (including the LDN pilot countries), and through that, the evaluation recommendations were for the most part met.

50. In line with the evaluation recommendations 1 and 2, more effort was made under the LDN-TSP to guide participants in the use and analysis of data provided centrally and to support those holding national and global datasets to identify the best mix of sources to use in each case. The GM established a ‘data team’ to assist LDN-TSP countries on issues concerning data, monitoring and verification. The LDN concept and methodology and the use of global/national datasets was further defined, including through methodological guidance from the Science-Policy Interface. The pilot countries’ experiences and lessons learned from ‘pioneering’ the LDN approaches were made available through a publication.<sup>4</sup>

51. With regard to quality control to test the LDN targets for their strength of evidence base and realism (evaluation recommendations 1(iii) and 4), periodic UNCCD national reporting will review and assesses progress, building on the defined data and agreed indicators. In the meantime, the GM is working with the pilot countries on the development of transformative projects, which are needed for launching action toward meeting the targets. Partnerships have been initiated to ensure long-term support for the preparation of LDN projects, and the development of the LDN Fund, a public-private investment facility targeting LDN activities, is well underway.

52. Evaluation recommendation 3 called for the consultation of CSOs and beneficiaries to be made central to the design and delivery of pilot interventions. While setting the LDN targets is seen first and foremost as a governmental responsibility, the GM has encouraged the involvement of other stakeholders, particularly civil society and the private sector. As part of LDN-TSP, all participating countries have established an LDN working group that usually functions within existing institutional structures. These groups have been the platform for stakeholder involvement, and they have also supported ‘anchoring’ the LDN targets to other national priorities and commitments, which is critical for ensuring national ownership (evaluation recommendation 5) and planning for long-term action.

## **B. Evaluation of the effectiveness of communication under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (September 2015)**

53. This evaluation looked at a variety of communication aspects, including messaging, content, different communication channels, visual branding, staffing and the strategic approach, with the aim of providing practical recommendations for strengthening UNCCD communication. Most of its recommendations have been met, and the action taken by the secretariat is described in the following paragraphs.

54. In line with evaluation recommendations 1 and 7 on streamlining UNCCD messaging and focusing on long-term strategic issues, the communication narrative of the secretariat was developed around one key strategic theme of SDG target 15.3 on land degradation neutrality, with the aim of embodying this new dimension of the UNCCD. This theme is used as the framework for capturing the attention of wider audiences beyond the conventional UNCCD stakeholders by highlighting specific topics, for example the relationship between land degradation and migration.

55. As requested in evaluation recommendation 2, an updated UNCCD website was launched in November 2016. This website is more user-focused, easier to navigate (aided by a stronger, more consistently applied visual), and has a more thematic, issues-based

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<sup>4</sup> <[www2.unccd.int/news-events/three-new-publications-land-degradation-neutrality-target-setting](http://www2.unccd.int/news-events/three-new-publications-land-degradation-neutrality-target-setting)>.

structure. The website now encompasses the work of both the secretariat and the GM. An online specialist to manage both the UNCCD website and social media (evaluation recommendation 4) is currently being recruited.

56. The UNCCD visual identity was upgraded (evaluation recommendation 3): the UNCCD corporate logo was revisited in terms of its design and representativeness and the new logo was launched in January 2017. Corresponding changes were made also to the GM logo. New UNCCD communication and promotional products are to follow this rebranding. In line with evaluation recommendation 5, the secretariat uses infographics and at-a-glance summaries more extensively in its communication materials and on the new website.

57. With regard to supporting journalist training on UNCCD issues (evaluation recommendation 6), the secretariat continues working with its partners to organize trainings back-to-back with suitable meetings and events.

58. The approach and tools for monitoring communication (evaluation recommendation 8) have been further developed, paying particular attention to social media use.

### **C. Evaluation of partnerships involving the secretariat and/or the Global Mechanism**

59. This evaluation considered the UNCCD partnerships in terms of both processes and outcomes: as operational and functional relationships and as tools for supporting progress toward achieving objectives and leveraging resources. The evaluation recommendations called for a more strategic approach and better planning of partnerships involving the secretariat and/or the GM and underlined the importance of focusing the partnerships to support their stated priorities. The secretariat and the GM have met all of the evaluation recommendations and an overview of the action taken is presented in the following paragraphs.

60. The secretariat and the GM have worked together on ‘strategizing’ the UNCCD partnership approach (evaluation recommendations 1, 3 and 4). In August 2016, they completed a UNCCD partnership strategy (for internal use) that:

(a) Establishes the principles and practices that govern their partnering arrangements and guides the selection and development of partnerships to maximize their effectiveness;

(b) Brings together important insights from past and current partnership work and sets out an overall context and guidance for the development of appropriate tools and processes;

(c) Provides an overarching vision for the partnerships of the secretariat and the GM and creates a general corporate approach to the variety of partnerships under the UNCCD.

61. Consistent with the overall principles contained in the UNCCD partnership strategy, the secretariat has also defined more detailed approaches for (i) business sector engagement; and (ii) scientific partnerships. The business sector engagement approach was prepared through a broad consultative process involving the COP and civil society.

62. The secretariat and the GM have jointly reviewed their partnerships with the aim of focusing on those that are the most productive and most responsive to UNCCD priorities (evaluation recommendations 1 and 3). The number of partnerships is now lower than previously, and most partnerships are active relationships delivering tangible results that directly contribute to the achievement of the objectives in the UNCCD workplan. In addition to the ‘traditional’ financing partnerships, many new UNCCD partnerships deal

with knowledge sharing and implementation support that are critically important in bringing forth effective action, as they complement the capacities and mandates of the secretariat and the GM.

63. The secretariat and the GM continuously coordinate their activities in shared partnerships, and their roles and responsibilities in these partnerships are clearly defined (evaluation recommendation 7). The LDN-TSP is a prime example of such cooperation and coordination.

64. With regard to establishing clear expectations and a basis for monitoring partnerships (evaluation recommendations 5 and 6), the secretariat is now defining a results framework, building on the UNCCD workplan, for all major partnerships. These frameworks enable effective monitoring and review of partnership performance and they directly contribute to the UNCCD corporate monitoring and performance reporting process. However, it may be noted that for most partnerships, the results planning and monitoring remains a relatively light arrangement, so as to avoid additional costs.

65. On broadening the partnership basis beyond public sector partners (evaluation recommendations 2 and 9), the GM has significantly increased its partnerships supporting effective action at country level. For example, the LDN-TSP involves 17 partnerships with global or regional reach that have operational abilities at national level. Work with private sector partners has intensified, most notably through the development of the LDN Fund as a public-private partnership.

#### IV. Evaluation Office: 2018–2019 work programme

66. The proposed 2018–2019 UNCCD Evaluation Office work programme is presented in the table. This programme may be adjusted in the light of other tasks or further evaluation or assessment requirements assigned by the COP.

67. The UNCCD Evaluation Office has one professional staff funded from the programme support costs. An allocation from the UNCCD core budget is proposed for recruiting independent evaluators and publicizing the results. Evaluations of activities that have been funded from extrabudgetary sources will be covered from the budget of each activity.

Table  
**2018–2019 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Evaluation Office work programme**  
 (euros)

| <i>Evaluations</i>   | <i>Proposed core budget allocation</i> |
|--|--|
| Evaluation of the effectiveness of the regional coordination functions of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification secretariat  | 12 000                                 |
| Evaluation of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target-Setting Project (with partners)   | 0                                      |
| Evaluation of the Soil Leadership Academy  | 0                                      |
| Evaluation of the Global Land Outlook  | 0                                      |
| Terminal evaluation of the Front Local Environnemental pour une Union Verte (FLEUVE) (Local Environmental Coalition for a Green Union) Project | 0                                      |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>12 000</b>                          |

## V. Conclusions and recommendations

68. This document presents the main outcomes and recommendations of evaluations that have been carried out during the biennium 2016–2017, as well as the action taken by the secretariat and the GM to meet the recommendations of the earlier evaluations.

69. This document also presents the provisional plan for the evaluations to be carried out in the coming biennium. The COP may wish to:

- (a) Take note of the proposed evaluation office work programme;
  - (b) Request the Executive Secretary to report to the COP at its fourteenth session on the outcomes of the evaluations that will be conducted in 2018–2019 and on the action taken to meet the pending recommendations of earlier evaluations.
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