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Procedural matters

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

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

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 6/COP.12, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat to address the participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, including the implementation of the business engagement strategy considered by the COP at the same session.

The COP requested the Executive Secretary to report on the implementation of the decision at its thirteenth session (COP 13).

This document contains the reports of the Executive Secretary on the measures undertaken by the secretariat to implement the above-mentioned decision and provides recommendations for consideration at COP 13.

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I. Background information

1. Decision 5/COP.11 requested the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) to promote the involvement of business and private entities in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and to develop a business engagement strategy outlining the objectives, modalities and conditions of UNCCD partnerships with business and private entities for the consideration and approval of the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties (COP) ad interim and for consideration by the COP at its twelfth session (COP 12).
2. At its twelfth session, the COP decided to take note of the business engagement strategy of the UNCCD, presented by the secretariat, and requested the secretariat and the GM to continue implementing it when engaging in partnerships with the private sector.

II. Implementation of the business engagement strategy

3. The business engagement strategy was implemented following the decision by the COP. In the last two years, the secretariat and the GM have used the strategy to engage with the private sector and did not require a revision of said strategy. Consequently, no further amendments have been included since COP 12.
4. The secretariat has continued its collaboration with the United Nations Global Compact and other organizations of the United Nations, mainly Multilateral Environmental Agreements, with the aim of sharing information and coordinating the involvement of the private sector.

III. Concrete involvement of business and industry entities

5. Since the end of 2015, the secretariat and the GM have engaged in partnerships with several business and industry entities with the aim of strengthening the involvement of the private sector in the implementation of the Convention.
6. The following concrete partnerships and programmes have been undertaken with the private sector following the guidelines described in the business engagement strategy, including the due diligence for the engagement of the private sector.

A. Land Degradation Neutrality Fund

7. The development of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund (LDN Fund) has made substantial progress since COP 12. Following the competitive selection of a private sector LDN Fund structuring partner, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in December 2015 between the GM and Mirova, the Natixis Asset Management investment subsidiary in charge. Both parties committed to co-developing the Fund and providing resources for this undertaking. The GM received financial support for the development of the LDN Fund from the governments of France, Luxembourg and Norway, as well as the Rockefeller Foundation.
8. The LDN Fund project established partnerships with private investors, particularly institutional investors, financial intermediaries and private sector project promoters. An independent evaluation of the LDN Fund project, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, stated that the LDN Fund project is an example of a practical partnership between the

United Nations system and the private sector based on a close and effective working relationship between the GM and Mirova.

9. The evaluation concludes that even before their formal launch, the LDN Fund projects offer a rare case study into how the United Nations system can undertake meaningful, deep engagement with the private sector.

B. Development of value chains

10. The GM aims to further step up its engagement with the private sector in order to create green jobs and strengthen the resilience of rural communities across the Great Green Wall. The objective of the demand-based and business driven approach is to focus on the market potential of under-utilized natural products in the region, including Moringa, Fonio and Baobab, among others.

11. Through the establishment of local cooperatives, these products will be developed to a suitably high standard for the international market, with underwritten agreements by committed international buyers such as Aduna to ensure long-term sustainability.

12. The approach will be tested with the development of value chains for organic-certified Moringa – an emerging superfood in international markets – in Northern Ghana. A fully-fledged programme will be developed following this 'proof of concept' to demonstrate the transformative potential of the approach.

C. Sustainable Land Management Business Forum

13. The government of Turkey, the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, the World Business Council for sustainable Development (WBCSD) and the UNCCD secretariat organized the third Sustainable Land Management Business Forum (SLM Business Forum) on the sidelines of COP 12. More than 100 business representatives adopted the Ankara Declaration, which identifies land degradation neutrality (LDN) as a business opportunity, and called on all companies to join them in their collaborative efforts to implement sustainable land management (SLM) practices and land restoration.

14. The fourth session of the SLM Business Forum will be held back to back with COP 13 with the support of the government of China and the Elion Group. The session will focus on the necessary steps to assist in the transition towards a sustainable global economy.

D. Technology for Sustainable Land Management Fair

15. The UNCCD will organize its first ever Technology for Sustainable Land Management Fair on the sidelines of COP 13. This technology fair will offer participants the opportunity to assess, discuss and view demonstrations of efficient and innovative soil protection and rehabilitation technology, as well as methodologies and approaches to mitigate land degradation and address drought. It will facilitate contact and interaction among land users, policy-makers, academic/research institutions and the private sector in terms of the technological products and services available to support SLM and the mitigation of drought.

16. It is expected that 30–40 different SLM and drought-mitigation technologies will be showcased, including several from the private sector. It is expected to be an innovative

event in the area of SLM technology transfer, helpful for public, academic and civil society institutions.

E. Soil Leadership Academy

17. The Soil Leadership Academy (SLA) project is coordinated by the secretariat of the UNCCD. It has been developed as a public-private partnership with members of the WBCSD, notably Syngenta. It is an open, transparent and inclusive framework that stimulates knowledge and experience-exchange in areas relevant to LDN implementation. The purpose of the SLA is to inspire and support stakeholders and decision-makers to take practical action for LDN and to scale up the implementation of sustainable land and water management practices.

18. SLA activities have focused on supporting the LDN-related processes, including the LDN Target Setting Programme. SLA has helped identify relevant existing knowledge products, contributed to stakeholder interaction and LDN capacity-building efforts, and supported LDN communication and awareness.

F. United Nations Global Compact Principles for Sustainable Soil Management¹

19. In 2016, the United Nations Global Compact launched the voluntary business Principles for Sustainable Soil Management as way to involve its members in designing and delivering effective, scalable and practical solutions to protect and restore soils, maintain soil-based ecosystem services and enhance soil productivity.

20. The Principles for Sustainable Soil Management were conceived as a framework for principle-based collaboration between business, the United Nations, governments, civil society and other stakeholders. Companies are invited to support the Principles for Sustainable Soil Management and to report on progress in this area through their annual Communication on Progress.

IV. Conclusion and recommendations

21. The COP may wish to take note of the initiatives undertaken within the business engagement strategy of the UNCCD and request the secretariat and the GM to continue implementing them when engaging in partnership with the private sector;

22. The COP may also wish to request the secretariat to report at COP 14 on the measures taken to facilitate and encourage the participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the UNCCD.

¹ <www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/agriculture_and_food/soil-principles.pdf>.