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Effective implementation of the Convention at the national, subregional and regional levels

Performance of Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies

Report on the performance of Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies (2016–2017)

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document presents the progress made by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) toward the objectives and outcomes of the UNCCD four-year results framework, as assessed against the outcome indicators that are contained in the results framework. This document also provides brief descriptions of the accomplishments and main activities carried out during the biennium 2016–2017 by each unit of the secretariat and the GM. In addition, this document provides a summary of the resources utilized in 2016–2017.

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I. Introduction

1. In accordance with the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy),¹ the secretariat, the Global Mechanism (GM), the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) plan, carry out and monitor progress in their work by using four-year workplans and costed two-year work programmes. These workplans and work programmes follow a results-based management (RBM) approach, and since the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 12) in 2015, they have been integrated into one comprehensive UNCCD workplan and programme. At the end of each biennium, the secretariat and the GM provide information on their performance in implementing the workplan and programme, following a RBM approach.

2. This performance report presents the results achieved and resources utilized by the secretariat, the GM, the CST and the CRIC in 2016–2017 (as at 31 May 2017), building on the UNCCD results framework contained in decision 1/COP.12. The report provides an overview of the progress made toward the objectives and outcomes of the results framework, as measured against the outcome indicators contained in the results framework. Brief descriptions of the accomplishments and main activities carried out during the biennium 2016–2017 by each unit of the secretariat and the GM are also presented.

3. This document should be read in conjunction with information on the financial performance for the Convention Trust Funds in 2016–2017, which is contained in document ICCD/COP(13)/9.

II. Overview of expenditures

4. Table 1 presents expenditure as at 31 May 2017 by secretariat programme and the GM in the Trust Fund for the Core Budget of the UNCCD amounting to EUR 8.7 million, or 61.2 per cent of the core budget, using the average exchange rate for the first 17 months of the biennium. Additional information is provided with regard to expenditure against the COP-approved budget of EUR 300,000 to facilitate the consideration of the post-2018 strategic priorities of the Convention and EUR 120,000 for supporting the work of the Science-Policy Interface.

5. Table 2 presents expenditure of the core budget by object of expenditure.

6. As may be seen in tables 1 and 2, the secretariat is projecting to fully implement budgeted resources by the end of 2017 after taking into account planned expenditure. Although the secretariat has proposed to manage the same level of resources in the biennium 2018–2019, Parties may wish to take note that the secretariat will find it challenging to continue a zero nominal budget into the biennium 2020–2021.

¹ Decision 3/COP.8.

Table 1
Expenditure by programme as at 31 May 2017
(Euros)

	<i>Approved budget 2016–2017</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 May 2017</i>	<i>Expenditure forecast June–Dec. 2017</i>	<i>Total expenditure 31 Dec 2017</i>	<i>Projected balance as at 31 Dec 2017</i>
<i>I. Secretariat programmes</i>					
A. Executive direction and management	2 050 085	1 319 918	625 023	1 944 941	105 144
B. External relations, policy and advocacy	2 172 900	1 365 686	862 871	2 228 557	(55 657)
C. Knowledge management, science and technology	1 515 800	771 405	672 860	1 444 264	71 536
D. Facilitation of monitoring and implementation	2 437 600	1 667 944	703 483	2 371 427	66 173
E. Administrative services	2 509 051	1 643 309	1 299 095	2 942 404	(433 353)
<i>II. Global Mechanism</i>					
F. Global Mechanism	3 640 300	1 998 685	1 394 684	3 393 369	246 931
Total Core Budget (A–F)	14 325 736	8 766 947	5 558 016	14 324 962	774
Facilitate the consideration of the post-2018 strategic priorities for the Convention	300 000	214 349	50 000	264 349	35 651
Science-Policy Interface	120 000	0	60 000	60 000	60 000

Table 2
Expenditure by object of expenditure in the core budget of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism as at 31 May 2017
(Euros)

<i>Object of expenditure</i>	<i>Approved budget 2016–2017</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 May 2017</i>	<i>Expenditure forecast June–Dec. 2017</i>	<i>Total expenditure 31 Dec 2017</i>	<i>Projected Balance as at 31 Dec 2017</i>
Staff and other personnel costs	10 581 075	6 481 228	3 555 754	10 036 982	544 093
Consultants	691 100	423 772	362 000	785 772	(94 672)
Official travel	660 286	538 600	145 563	684 163	(23 877)
Training	154 000	74 808	38 250	113 058	40 942
Hospitality	22 000	6 339	17 398	23 737	(1 737)
General operating expenses	1 193 375	749 624	797 646	1 547 270	(353 895)
Supplies and equipment	92 000	133 795	66 600	200 395	(108 395)
Joint administration costs (UNBONN/UNOG)	931 900	358 780	574 805	933 585	(1 685)
TOTAL	14 325 736	8 766 947	5 558 016	14 324 962	774

Abbreviations: UNBONN = United Nations in Bonn, UNOG = United Nations Office at Geneva.

7. Table 3 presents expenditure under the core budget for the CST as at 31 May 2017. These expenditures cover the arrangements for meetings of the CST Bureau.

Table 3
Expenditure by object of expenditure in the core budget of the Committee on Science and Technology as at 31 May 2017
 (Euros)

<i>Object of expenditure</i>	<i>Approved budget 2016–2017</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 May 2017</i>	<i>Expenditure as a percentage of the budget</i>
Consultants	0.0	6 470	0.0
Official travel	68 400	4 066	5.9
Logistical arrangements	7 600	1 881	24.8
TOTAL	76 000	12 417	16.3

8. Table 4 provides information on expenditure under the core budget for the CRIC as at 31 May 2017. These expenditures cover the arrangements for meetings of the CRIC Bureau.

Table 4
Expenditure by object of expenditure in the core budget of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention as at 31 May 2017
 (Euros)

<i>Object of expenditure</i>	<i>Approved budget 2016–2017</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 May 2017</i>	<i>Expenditure as a percentage of the budget</i>
Official travel	68 400	8 516	12.5
Logistical arrangements	7 600	73	0.9
TOTAL	76 000	8 589	11.3

9. Tables 5 and 6 provide an overview of the distribution of posts held by staff members on fixed-term appointments. As at 31 May 2017, 51 posts were filled by secretariat staff members and 12 posts were filled by GM staff members.

Table 5
Comparison of established posts and filled posts by source of funding in the secretariat as at 31 May 2017

	<i>Core</i>		<i>Supplementary</i>		<i>Bonn Fund</i>		<i>Programme support cost</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>
USG	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
D-2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
D-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
P-5	7	4	0	0	0	0	3	3	10	7
P-4	7	6	1	1	0	0	3.5	3.5 ^a	11.5	10.5
P-3	4	6	2	2	1	1	1	1	8	10
P-2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Subtotal	21	20	3	3	1	1	7.5	7.5	32.5	31.5
GS	10	9	0	0	3	3	7.5	7.5 ^a	20.5	19.5
Total	31	29	3	3	4	4	15.0	15.0	53.0	51.0

Abbreviations: USG = Under Secretary-General, D = Director, P = Professional, GS = General Staff.

^a The funding for one P-4 and one GS post is shared between the secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Table 6
Comparison of established posts and filled posts by source of funding in the Global Mechanism as at 31 May 2017

	<i>Core</i>		<i>Supplementary</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>Filled</i>
D-1	1	1	0	0	1	1
P-5	1	1	0	0	1	1
P-4	2	2	0	0	2	2
P-3	4	2	1	1	5	3
P-2	2	1	0	0	2	1
Subtotal	10	7	1	1	11	8
GS	4	4	0	0	4	4
Total	14	11	1	1	15	12

Abbreviations: D = Director, P = Professional, GS = General Staff.

10. Table 7 shows the geographical distribution and gender of staff members at the professional level or above appointed to the secretariat and the GM.

Table 7
Geographical distribution and gender of staff members as at 31 May 2017

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Africa</i>	<i>Asia</i>	<i>LAC</i>	<i>CEE</i>	<i>WEOG</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Filled</i>
USG	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
D-2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
D-1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
P-5	3	1	0	0	4	6	2	8
P-4	1	4	2	0	6	8	5	13
P-3	3	3	2	1	4	8	5	13
P-2	0	1	0	0	2	2	1	3
Subtotal	7	10	4	1	18	26	14	40
Percentage of total	17.5	25.0	10.0	2.5	45.0	65.0	35.0	100.0

Abbreviations: LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean, CEE = Central and Eastern Europe, WEOG = Western European and Others Group, USG = Under Secretary-General, D = Director, P = Professional.

III. Main accomplishments in 2016–2017: the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification results framework

11. The 2016–2019 results framework, as contained in decision 1/COP.12, is constructed around four strategic objectives of The Strategy. It presents four-year (2016–2019) expected main outcomes and related indicators for each strategic objective, taking into account the mandates of the secretariat and the GM as well as the priorities set by the COP. In the next pages, the 2016–2017 achievements are presented as progress made toward the four-year outcomes, with a focus on the content reflected in the indicators. A few performance highlights for each outcome/indicator are provided as well.

12. As may be noted, the secretariat and the GM have made solid progress toward each outcome. The main accomplishments include:

(a) Delivery of support to more than one hundred countries all over the world for establishing targets for LDN; this links the UNCCD implementation firmly with global collaboration on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

(b) Increasing collaboration on the mitigation of and preparedness for drought and sand and dust storms through active partnership-building and technical advice;

(c) Growing recognition of the importance of land in addressing pressing global issues, most notably climate change as well as stability/security, which is accompanied by practical tools and approaches to start taking action;

(d) Further steps in concrete synergies among the Rio conventions, not only through the improved acknowledgement of substantive linkages but also in building shared reporting tools;

(e) Practical tools and policy approaches for the better integration of gender issues in UNCCD implementation;

(f) Significant new financial prospects through the development of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund (LDN Fund) and growing interest from the Green Climate

Fund, as well as the ongoing process to prepare for the next Global Environment Facility (GEF) replenishment;

(g) Continuous internal learning, results-oriented planning, good coordination, knowledge management and efficient administration, resulting in increased overall effectiveness.

Table 8

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification results framework for 2016–2017: an overview of achievements

Indicators and measurement approach

Performance highlights

Strategic objective 1. Improvement in living conditions of affected populations

2016–2019 main outcome: 1.1 Improved resilience to the effects of climate change of people living in affected areas

1.1 The extent to which the UNCCD implementation by Parties contributes to climate change adaptation using land-based approaches

Measurement:

- Support is provided to drought/sand and dust storm preparedness, particularly to early warning systems.
- Support is provided to countries for linking national climate adaptation commitments/priorities with activities on land degradation.

At the Namibia Drought Conference, African countries committed to developing drought resilience policies.

The Science-Policy Interface (SPI) provided science-policy guidance on desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Pilot projects generated evidence-based policy advice and guidance on drought early warning.

A global assessment of sand and dust storms was published.

Practical collaboration on sand and dust storms has advanced through two workshops.

The Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN-TSP) supported countries to link national climate adaptation commitments with LDN targets.

Cooperation with the Green Climate Fund opened up new opportunities for funding land-based adaptation.

2016–2019 main outcome: 1.2 Improved knowledge of reducing socio-economic and environmental vulnerability related to DLDD

1.2 Availability of information to improve socio-economic drivers of sustainable land management (SLM), with a particular focus on UNCCD priorities

Measurement:

- UNCCD activities trigger cooperation and increase awareness of the linkages between land and migration/security.
- Evidence-based practical information and policy tools are made available for countries to support the integration of gender matters submitted for UNCCD implementation.

An African initiative on sustainability, stability and security focusing on migration and instability linked to land was launched with support from the secretariat.

Information on good practices in addressing migration through UNCCD implementation was published.

UNCCD activities triggered strong media attention on the links between DLDD and migration/security.

Country-level case studies provided practical ideas for integrating gender issues into UNCCD implementation.

Improved selection of policy tools and practical approaches for linking gender with UNCCD implementation, including a draft gender action plan, were provided.

UNCCD experiences on integrating gender issues were used for synergies and collaboration with the other Rio conventions and the GEF.

Strategic objective 2: Improved condition of affected ecosystems

2016–2019 main outcome: 2.1 Reduction of the area affected by land degradation

<p>2.1 The extent to which affected country Parties establish targets for addressing land degradation and rehabilitation</p> <p>Measurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of countries that have established or are in the process of establishing LDN targets. 	<p>As at 31 May 2017, 108 countries had committed to setting LDN targets.</p> <p>The SPI provided a scientific conceptual framework to support LDN planning, implementation and monitoring at country level.</p> <p>Technical guidance and default data for LDN target-setting and monitoring was provided to Parties participating in the LDN-TSP.</p> <p>A growing group of partners is supporting LDN target-setting with knowledge, financing or participation in the implementation.</p> <p>First steps were taken to facilitate the identification and preparation of transformative projects.</p> <p>The ‘Greening Drylands’ projects were supported.</p> <p>LDN was increasingly noted in major global political processes.</p>
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2016–2019 main outcome: 2.2 Up-to-date information on the status of DLDD

<p>2.2 Improved reporting on the status of DLDD, and related activities</p> <p>Measurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparations are done for launching the next phase of national reporting under the UNCCD. - UNCCD knowledge management tools provide knowledge, practices and data concerning DLDD, as well as access to sources of further information. 	<p>The new UNCCD strategy, which presents the objectives that will guide future reporting, was drafted for consideration at COP 13.</p> <p>A global support programme was developed with the United Nations Environment Programme and the GEF for ensuring timely technical assistance to the next national reporting cycle.</p> <p>The performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) portal, templates and guides will be updated for the next reporting cycle.</p> <p>The new integrated UNCCD Knowledge Hub was launched, providing easy access to information from multiple sources.</p> <p>The first edition of the Global Land Outlook was published.</p>
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2016–2019 main outcome: 2.3 Targeted scientific inputs on addressing DLDD

<p>2.3 The extent to which scientific cooperation involving the UNCCD provides robust data and ideas for effective implementation</p> <p>Measurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability of practically oriented scientific advice and information that can be used to support implementation. 	<p>SPI produced two policy briefs and worked on three major studies/reports, namely on the LDN scientific conceptual framework; sustainable land management for addressing DLDD and climate change mitigation and adaptation; and rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands.</p> <p>Various scientific institutions and expert organizations helped in supporting cooperation on drought and sand and dust storms under the UNCCD.</p> <p>The Roster of Independent Experts database was regularly updated.</p> <p>Access to different types of information and best practices was facilitated through the UNCCD Knowledge Hub.</p>
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Strategic objective 3: Generation of global benefits

2016–2019 main outcome: 3.1 SLM and combating DLDD contributes to, and benefits from, activities on climate change and biodiversity, as well as on the implementation of the SDGs

3.1.a The extent to which the UNCCD implementation by Parties contributes to climate change mitigation using land-based approaches

Measurement:

- Availability of information of using land for climate change mitigation.

- UNCCD and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) cooperate on indicators.

- Support is provided to countries for linking national climate mitigation commitments/priorities with activities on land.

3.1.b The extent to which affected country Parties address DLDD and biodiversity loss in a synergistic manner

Measurement:

- The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) land degradation and restoration assessment (LDRA) takes into account UNCCD priorities.

- UNCCD and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) collaborate on indicators.

SPI policy brief on soil carbon was published.

Cooperation with Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) on soil organic carbon resulted in the co-organization of a symposium, the outcomes of which will contribute to various tasks of the IPCC.

UNCCD inputs were taken into account in the development of the IPCC special report on climate change and land.

LDN-TSP supported countries to link national climate change mitigation commitments with LDN targets.

An inter-agency advisory group involving all three Rio conventions, among others, was established to address SDG indicator 15.3.1.

Liaison with the GEF on synergies among the three Rio Conventions.

UNCCD inputs were provided during the preparation of the draft versions of LDRA.

Cooperation with IPBES on capacity building continued.

Regional and subregional events linking UNCCD and CBD priorities were supported.

Strategic objective 4: Resource mobilization through partnerships

2016–2019 main outcome: 4.1 Improved access to resources for implementation

4.1 Scope and extent of funding sources to combat DLDD

Measurement:

- New opportunities for funding DLDD activities are identified and access to them is facilitated.

A private sector managed fund for the financing of successful LDN implementation (LDN Fund) was developed.

Collaboration between the Green Climate Fund and the UNCCD was established.

UNCCD priorities are being shared for consideration in the preparation of the next GEF replenishment.

2016–2019 main outcome: 4.2 Enabling policy environments are improved for the UNCCD implementation at all levels

<i>Indicators and measurement approach</i>	<i>Performance highlights</i>
<p>4.2 The number of countries that have taken measures to develop enabling policy environments for the UNCCD implementation through partnerships</p> <p>Measurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support to national advocacy and coordination on DLDD issues. - Support to the implementation of the Local Environmental Coalition for a Green Union (Front Local Environnemental pour une Union VertE (FLEUVE)) project. - Opportunities for regional exchange and coordination. 	<p>As part of the LDN-TSP, 108 participating countries are organizing national participatory workshops to discuss the integration of LDN into national policies and support the identification of transformative programmes and projects.</p> <p>Further economic profiles were developed as part of LDN-TSP for the participating countries, showcasing the economic and social benefits of increased investments in land.</p> <p>The FLEUVE project provided the participating countries with better capacity to increase investments for SLM and create employment opportunities for local people.</p> <p>Regional meetings were organized prior to CRIC 15, and they will be held again before the start of COP 13.</p>

IV. Accomplishments by the unit of the secretariat

A. Executive Direction and Management

13. The Executive Direction and Management (EDM) programme supported the Executive Secretary in providing strategic direction for the secretariat and the GM, representing the organization externally, consulting with Parties, coordinating cooperation with other organizations and reaching out to stakeholders worldwide to encourage their support for the objectives and implementation of the Convention. Under the lead of the new Deputy Executive Secretary, EDM ensured the overall effectiveness and coherence of the work of the secretariat using a results-oriented planning and monitoring approach. The secretariat continued to focus and prioritize its activities so as to use its limited resources in an optimal manner to respond to the mandates given by Parties. EDM also provided advice on legal, institutional and procedural questions, reviewed the credentials of Parties, and checked/cleared the accreditation of intergovernmental organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs) and private sector entities to the UNCCD.

14. The New York Liaison Office (NYLO), as part of EDM, ensured political visibility for UNCCD issues before the General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council. It pursued advocacy in the High-Level Political Forum and other key processes that follow up on the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, notably on SDG Target 15.3. The General Assembly acknowledged that achieving this target would serve as an SDG accelerator. NYLO carried out targeted outreach to constituencies at the United Nations headquarters and provided information and strategic advice on UNCCD matters to the United Nations Member States and special interest and regional groups. It served as the secretary of the “Group of Friends on DLDD”. NYLO also served as the focal point for relations with the GEF, supported the negotiation of the new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the GEF and participated in the GEF replenishment exercise. NYLO participated into various World Bank programmes such as the Annual Land and Poverty Conference and continued to monitor and influence agenda-setting in key global processes and events, such as the Global Compact on Migration.

15. The UNCCD Evaluation Office, which functions as part of EDM, commissioned seven evaluations during the biennium, and one more will be conducted before the end of 2017. Two of these evaluations were prepared as evidence-based analysis to support review

processes by COP 13, while others served as tools for increased accountability and transparency and facilitated internal learning for improved effectiveness. The Evaluation Office also followed up on earlier UNCCD evaluations, which contributed to, among other things, the development of the LDN-TSP, new UNCCD branding and its approach to communication, and more systematic and targeted partnership-building.²

B. External Relations, Policy and Advocacy

16. The External Relations, Policy and Advocacy (ERPA) programme had three priorities for the biennium 2016–2017:

(a) To translate the implications of the SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda into possible action for the UNCCD process and its Parties;

(b) To translate the implications of the 2015 climate change commitments into possible action for the UNCCD process and its Parties;

(c) To make the case that land degradation and drought are drivers of insecurity (including conflict and migration) and that sustainable land management (SLM) can bring greater stability.

17. ERPA communicated strategic, relevant and persuasive policy messages, promoted the Convention brand, sourced scientifically sound but compelling data and evidence, and built partnerships with key stakeholders such as civil society, the media and the private sector.

18. Following decision 3/COP.12, ERPA, together with other units of the secretariat and the GM, supported countries in the integration of the **Sustainable Development Goal 15 and related target 15.3** into the implementation of the Convention.

19. ERPA analysed the impact of the SDGs on the UNCCD and compiled experience and best practices concerning LDN into advocacy material. The publication “A Natural Fix: A Joined-up Approach to Delivering the Global Goals for Sustainable Development” noted that to meet the SDGs, it will be vital to manage the linkages and integrated nature of the SDGs, harness synergies and minimize potential conflicts and trade-offs within and between them. It explained how successful implementation of target 15.3 can connect the dots between many of these goals and targets.

20. ERPA coordinated the activities of the secretariat and the GM concerning global cooperation to monitor target 15.3. In February 2016, the secretariat, in collaboration with the CBD, FAO and Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of GEF, organized an expert meeting, which agreed that further work was needed to develop good practice guidance to derive SDG indicator 15.3.1 using progress made under the UNCCD. Subsequently, the secretariat established a formal inter-agency advisory group, composed of the UNCCD, CBD, UNFCCC, FAO, United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) and United Nations Statistics Division, to guide the work of an international team of experts. ERPA represented the secretariat in the meetings of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), which is the process to review and approve the SDG indicator, which operates under the United Nations Statistics Division. The secretariat inputs included a revised metadata document, a work plan for the further development of the indicator, and a note requesting a fast-track review of SDG indicator 15.3.1 to upgrade it to “Tier II” status. Currently, the IAEG-SDGs working group on geospatial information is focusing on three priority indicators, one of which is 15.3.1.

² For more information on the UNCCD evaluations, please consult the report of the UNCCD Evaluation Office that is contained in document ICCD/COP(13)/14.

21. A joint UNCCD-FAO workshop on collaboration to support the achievement of SDG target 15.3 was held in May 2017 in Rome with the aim of optimizing support to countries for monitoring and reporting on the indicator for SDG 15.3, and agreeing on a shared vision and collaborative way forward. The workshop resulted in a roadmap for cooperation to upgrade indicator 15.3.1 to Tier II status and to help implement and monitor SDG target 15.3 in LDN-TSP countries.

22. Following the 2015 UNFCCC COP 21 as well as the exchanges at the 2015 UNCCD COP 12, in which many affected countries called for more cooperation on addressing **drought**, the secretariat has increasingly worked on supporting the establishment of policies and approaches for drought preparedness, as a key tool for enhancing climate change adaptation and resilience, in particular by making the link with good land management. ERPA is leading work on this topic.

23. In August 2016, the secretariat co-organized the African Drought Conference hosted by the Government of Namibia. This conference ended with adoption of The Windhoek Declaration for Enhancing Resilience to Drought in Africa, in which the involved countries commit to implement at national level the Strategic Framework for Drought Resilient and Prepared Africa, guided by the following six priorities: (i) drought policy and governance for drought risk management; (ii) drought monitoring and early warning; (iii) drought vulnerability and impact assessment; (iv) drought mitigation, preparedness, and response; (v) knowledge management and drought awareness; and (vi) reduction in the underlying factors of drought risk. The countries also committed to (i) establish a continent-wide African network with national institutions for drought monitoring and early warning systems; and (ii) convene a biennial African Drought Conference to be held concurrently with the African Drylands Week. The need to improve timely drought information, vulnerability and impact assessments for enhanced mitigation measures at national, regional and continental levels was emphasized during the conference. It triggered a number of follow-up actions, many of which seek to address knowledge gaps that were identified during the conference.

24. One of the follow-up actions was a series of pilot projects on developing comprehensive drought early warning systems (Colombia, Namibia and Nigeria) to guide policy and action for enhanced drought preparedness. With slight variations from one country to another, the pilot projects focused on assessing the status of early warning systems in the countries and proposing related upgrades, identifying main drought impacts and vulnerabilities, and synthesizing existing information on drought response and management by public institutions and practitioners. Each project involved a national stakeholders' wrap-up workshop to validate the results. The preliminary results of these projects will be presented at COP 13. Prior to that, some highlights of these pilot projects will also be presented at a drought conference involving Latin American countries, which will be held in Bolivia in August 2017.

25. The secretariat is continuing its collaboration with WMO within the framework of two programmes that derive from the 2013 High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy: the UN-Water Initiative on Capacity Development to Support National Drought Management Policy and the Integrated Drought Management Programme.

26. With the Office for Outer Space Affairs of the United Nations (UNOOSA) and its affiliated programme, the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER), the secretariat is cooperating on the development of a joint work programme for 2017–2018 to integrate space technology in the implementation of the Convention, including policy documents and technical guidelines on drought and sand and dust storms so as to assist and facilitate capacity-building for affected country Parties. Within the framework of this collaboration, the secretariat and UN-SPIDER have been working on a joint project Strengthening Early

Warning Systems for Drought (SEWS–D) with a focus on the Dry Corridor of Central America.

27. The secretariat, together with the German Development Institute/Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE), carried out a research project on the analysis of drought and food security policies and programmes in two Horn of Africa countries, Ethiopia and Kenya. The regional networks and implications for Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) member countries is also being investigated. The secretariat is also collaborating with various national and international organizations such as the United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS), UNFCCC, University of Bonn, DIE and UNOOSA to help develop better and more relevant drought policies at the national level by organizing a lecture series entitled “Drought Resilience in Sub-Saharan Africa”. The secretariat worked with the Viikki Tropical Resources Institute (VITRI) of the University of Helsinki, Finland on a joint publication on drought, which was published as a special issue of the a scientific online journal *Silva Fennica*. This special issue collates the current knowledge on the biophysical, socioeconomic and policy aspects related to sustainable dryland management and introduces numerous practical examples in areas such as agropastoralism in Morocco and afforestation restoration of saline-sodic soil in the Anatolian Region of Turkey.

28. In July 2016, the secretariat published a brochure “The Ripple Effect: A Fresh Approach to Reducing Drought Impacts and Building Resilience”. This brochure highlights the impact of current droughts and presents projections for the future. It suggests moving from ‘reactive’ and ‘crisis-based’ approaches towards ‘proactive’ and ‘risk-based’ approaches to drought, and explains how, against this backdrop, the UNCCD is ramping up its work on drought and water scarcity issues at large.

29. As a phenomenon, sand and dust storms (SDS) have many similarities to drought. During the biennium 2016–2017, the secretariat supported cooperation aiming at better understanding of SDS and the development of related policies and measures.

30. The secretariat collaborated with UN Environment in supporting a resolution on SDS at the second session of the UN Environment Assembly in May 2016.³ In September 2016, UNCCD, UN Environment and WMO produced a joint Global Assessment of Sand and Dust Storms at the request of the 70th Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly.⁴ The secretariat participated in the steering committee meeting of the SDS Warning Advisory and Assessment System (SDS-WAS) operated by WMO to coordinate and carry out joint activities on the early warning for SDS.

31. The secretariat also collaborated with UN Environment and WMO in the development of a draft policy framework and technical guide on early warning, economic impact assessments, vulnerability mapping, risk assessment, and the management and source mitigation of SDS. Related to this, pilot projects are being implemented in China and Kuwait to test methodologies for vulnerability mapping and economic impact assessment, respectively. The preliminary results of these projects will be presented at COP 13.

32. The secretariat contributed to and co-hosted two workshops on SDS, held in September 2016 in Songdo, Republic of Korea on economic impact assessment and in October 2016 in Istanbul, Turkey on issues including characteristics, early warning, vulnerability, resilience and mitigation of SDS.

33. ERPA coordinates the activities of the secretariat on **mainstreaming gender** and in 2016–2017 gathered a number of case studies from four countries (Burkina Faso, Chad,

³ UNEP/EA.2/Res.20.

⁴ A/RES/70/195.

Ethiopia and Senegal). In one of the countries, the case studies focused on the integration of gender issues into the land degradation neutrality target-setting exercise while in the other countries, they were to document the role of women's groups in improving income generation while advancing sustainable land management or rehabilitating already degraded land. These case studies were carried out as part of a local-level environmental capacity-building measure (European Commission-funded FLEUVE project) under the African Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative.

34. The secretariat used the insights gained from the case studies to propose a practical gender action plan for consideration at COP 13 and promote synergies relating to gender equality with the UNFCCC and CBD, and to cooperate with partners such as the GEF and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

35. UN Women supported the development of the proposed UNCCD gender action plan and backstopped UNCCD capacity-building work relating to gender mainstreaming. The secretariat continued to work with CBD, GEF and UNFCCC on gender mainstreaming and, under the GEF Gender Partnership (GGP), reviewed the GEF guidelines for mainstreaming gender in GEF projects and programmes in preparation for the November 2017 meeting of the 7th Replenishment of the GEF. An e-course on gender equality and women's empowerment and the environment is being designed through the joint partnership of the GEF Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP) and UNITAR. The gender focal points of the Rio convention secretariats designed and administered a joint survey for the national focal points of the three conventions to ensure effective course targeting and identify potential for joint capacity development and awareness-raising.

36. In February 2017, the secretariat published a brochure "Turning the tide – the gender factor in achieving land degradation neutrality", which looked at gender roles in land use and management, how land rights (or lack of them) influence land degradation, and the potential solutions for gender-responsive decision-making that addresses land degradation.

37. The Initiative on Sustainability, Stability and Security (3S Initiative) is an inter-governmental initiative that aims to present an African perspective on **migration and instability linked to natural resources**. It was launched by Morocco and Senegal and endorsed by the Heads of State and Government at the 1st African Action Summit during the UNFCCC COP 22 in November 2016. The 3S Initiative seeks to tackle the conditions that force people to migrate; trigger conflicts; and increase exposure to extremist groups, such as acute land scarcity, rural unemployment, insecurity of tenure, and competition for natural resources. The ERPA team serves as the secretariat for the 3S Initiative Task Force.

38. The 3S Initiative has been a stepping stone in advancing the partnership, both at the advocacy and operational levels. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), for example, is contributing to a 3S demonstration project to create land-based jobs for migrants, hosted in the IOM transit center in Agadez, Niger, in order to help migrants reintegrate more easily into their countries of origin. The secretariat contributed to the IOM Atlas of Environmental Migration and, in turn, IOM has provided inputs for UNCCD publications.

39. In supporting **civil society involvement** in the UNCCD process, the secretariat, through ERPA, continued supporting the UNCCD Civil Society Organization Panel (CSO Panel). By the end of May 2017, the Panel had met 11 times, and between its meetings it actively collaborated online. It facilitated information-sharing and exchanges among the CSOs accredited to the UNCCD and ensured CSO input to UNCCD meetings and processes such as the SPI. The Panel focused its work during the present biennium on developing recommendations on land rights for the consideration of the Parties. An

independent evaluation of support provided to CSO participation in the UNCCD⁵ (June 2017) stated that “The CSO Panel has improved the visibility of the priorities of the civil society and the inclusion of these priorities in the UNCCD decision-making at the COP level. It has been instrumental also in advocating for CSO priorities in other UNCCD processes, such as the SPI”.

40. ERPA has actively approached non-governmental and civil society organizations that are not yet accredited to the UNCCD, with particular emphasis in involving organizations that have significant political influence, advocacy capacity and networks for on-the-ground implementation. As at 31 May 2017, 127 CSOs have correctly submitted their application to become accredited at COP 13.

41. The secretariat is one of the organizers of the “2017 Desertifactions” meeting, which is a non-state actors’ International Summit dedicated to land degradation and climate change. The meeting will be held at the end of June 2017 in France, and it is expected to bring together over 300 stakeholders from over 50 countries. The Desertifactions 2017 Summit will consist of plenary sessions and thematic workshops intended to assist non-state actors in framing and presenting their position on desertification, land degradation and climate change issues.

Communication

42. The 2016 global observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD) and the High-level Dialogue on the Belt and Road Initiative was hosted by the State Forestry Administration of China (SFA). Four hundred people attended the event, including a high level of attendance from the host country and seven other countries. In addition to the successful global observance event, 87 governmental, intergovernmental and civil society organizations reported on their observance activities to the secretariat. Social reach via Twitter and Weibo during the 100-day WDCD countdown online campaign period reached 444,100 and 1,196,700, respectively. The most popular hashtag on 17 June on Twitter was #2016WDCD.

43. The 2017 global observance of WDCD was held on 15 June 2017 in Ouagadougou, hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Green Economy and Climate Change of Burkina Faso. A high-level ministerial forum was scheduled during the observance event under the 2017 WDCD theme “Our Land. Our Home. Our Future”. Three Heads of State and several ministers and high-ranking officials were among the more than four hundred participants attending the ceremonies.

44. Drylands Ambassadors contributed by participating in the 2016 WDCD social media and global observance events; organizing the exhibition “Save the Earth, Save the Land” at the United Nations Headquarters opened by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; and serving as keynote speakers and panelists at national events.

45. The UNCCD visual identity was revised; the new UNCCD logo was launched in January 2017. Corresponding changes were made also to the GM logo. New UNCCD communication and promotional products now follow this ‘re-branding’.

46. During the biennium 2016–2017, the secretariat improved and streamlined the dissemination of UNCCD information. Starting in January 2017, several e-newsletters were consolidated as the bi-weekly UNCCD News Alert, which has a specific focus on the latest news and developments. Currently, the UNCCD News Alert has more than 23,000 active subscribers. In November 2016, a reconfigured UNCCD website was launched. This website is more user-focused, easier to navigate (aided by a stronger, more consistently

⁵ The evaluation report will be available by the end of June 2017 at <www2.unccd.int/about-us/evaluation-office>.

applied visual), and has a more thematic, issues-based structure. The website now encompasses the work of both the secretariat and the GM. Since the launch of the new website, the number of unique visitors has been close to or over 50,000 every month.

47. The secretariat produced a total of 17 publications in multiple United Nations languages. In 2016, the secretariat also issued two formal calls to UNCCD stakeholders and members of the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (UNDDD) for the submission of human interest stories. The stories submitted were published as part of the series “Land for Life: Create Life, Transform Lives” in English and French. A 3-minute video for social media and a 27-minute film for broadcast media were produced and offered for use free of cost to all stakeholders for the observance of the 2017 WDCD.

48. UNCCD media outreach was carried out primarily through the media database that has grown from 1,000 subscribers in 2009 to over 4,000 subscribers by the end of the biennium. In 2016–2017, this outreach was enhanced through partnerships and cooperation with other United Nations and intergovernmental partners. Strategic outreach continued on the basis of relations developed with individual journalists working for global media or wire services such as Reuters, SciDev.Net, Xinhua News Agency and La Prensa. The UNCCD entered into partnership with Inter Press Service to support public outreach to niche readers and platforms at national level, to which the secretariat would not normally have access.

49. At least 30 media pieces are disseminated from the secretariat each year, including opinions and interviews. The number of online press and broadcast mentions of the UNCCD nearly doubled over the last three years, with a good geographic spread, including op-eds in major international publications. A key achievement during the biennium was support provided to the production of a National Geographic film focusing on the combined effects of desertification and climate change in the Sahel on driving migration within the region and to Europe. The initiative and partnership created unprecedented interest in other global media, with the BBC, Al Jazeera and Le Monde publishing on the subject during the same period. The New York Times published three opinion pieces and a front-page news article on the film. Two media trainings were conducted during the biennium.

C. Science, Technology and Implementation

50. The Science, Technology and Implementation programme (STI) supports scientific cooperation, facilitates reporting and assesses information submitted by Parties; it services both the CST and the CRIC, as well as the respective Bureaux. The Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) are part of STI, and they also manage the secretariat’s capacity-building and knowledge management functions.

51. In the biennium 2016–2017, the priorities of STI were the following:

- (a) To support the intergovernmental working group established by the COP at its twelfth session in drafting a new strategy for the UNCCD;
- (b) To further develop the UNCCD reporting, review and assessment approach;
- (c) To support country Parties in setting LDN targets by ensuring a scientifically-sound basis for planning, implementing and monitoring LDN, and by providing capacity-building and technical advice;
- (d) To facilitate the access of Parties and other stakeholders to scientific knowledge and best practices concerning various aspects of land rehabilitation and restoration, SLM practices that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as drought mitigation.

52. The UNCCD 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) was set to end in 2018, and the COP, at its twelfth session, decided to establish an **Intergovernmental Working Group on the Future Strategic Framework of the Convention (IWG-FSF)**, which was tasked to consider any future strategic approach for the implementation of the UNCCD. The scope and mandate of the working group was defined to include an assessment of the current Strategy, including the effectiveness of its implementation and the relevance of progress indicators for the future period; a consideration of options for the possible future strategic approach for the Convention; and a proposal of an approach the Convention should adopt for its future strategic direction.

53. The IWG-FSF, comprising two co-chairs and 23 other members, began its work and, with assistance from the secretariat, convened three meetings: in April 2016, July 2016 and October 2016. The draft that was prepared at its second meeting, although still containing some brackets, was submitted for comments by Parties at CRIC 15. At its third meeting, which took place immediately after the CRIC, the group completed its proposal for the draft Strategy, titled “The UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework”. While this draft will be formally presented for consideration at COP 13, the group will meet once more at the margins of the upcoming COP with the aim of integrating into the draft a new strategic objective on drought that was proposed during the third meeting.

54. The new strategic approach will, if adopted, impact future **reporting** under the UNCCD. In addition, LDN has been introduced to the work of the Convention, and progress indicators used under the UNCCD will also be used to measure progress in achieving SDG target 15.3. Consequently, there are many new developments that require consideration in the next national reporting, which is scheduled to commence right after COP 13. The secretariat and the GM have developed a global support programme in consultation with UN Environment and the GEF to provide technical assistance to the forthcoming reporting process, which involves activities ranging from capacity-building on data collection to the upgrading of the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) portal. This programme will commence as soon as Parties have taken a decision on the new strategic orientation of this Convention. At country level, the RCUs, in coordination with UN Environment, will facilitate timely access to the funding.

55. **On land degradation neutrality**, STI supported the SPI in developing a scientific conceptual framework for LDN. This conceptual framework is intended to provide a scientifically-sound basis for planning, implementing and monitoring LDN for those Parties that choose to pursue LDN. It was published in February 2017 in the form of a technical report and a science-policy brief.⁶

56. STI had also a key role in preparing for the provision of default data for an LDN baseline. Such data on the three indicators in the LDN monitoring framework was provided to all participating countries through the LDN-TSP led by the GM, and a growing number of countries were provided with additional disaggregated data at watershed level as well as high resolution data for small island States.

57. The **RCUs** were instrumental in bringing forth the LDN-TSP: they provided political support to the LDN-TSP and reached out to NFPs and regional organizations. RCUs assisted in recruiting the regional and national consultants and provided them with advice on political matters and helped organize the regional and subregional inception

⁶ A summary of the main scientific findings related to the operationalization of LDN as well as conclusions and proposals for consideration by CST 13 are contained in document ICCD/COP(13)/CST/2.

workshops and consultations. The RCUs also had a role in LDN-TSP communications and in supporting the management and monitoring of the project.

58. RCUS actively advocated and supported partnerships for the UNCCD within their regions. They provided inputs to major events and processes relevant to DLDD in their region, provided information on UNCCD priorities and activities to the national focal points and other stakeholders and identified potential partner organizations and institutions. They also organized the regional meetings back-to-back to CRIC 15 and will organize similar meetings also before COP 13.

59. Supporting the work of the **SPI** was among the highest priorities of STI in the biennium 2016-2017. In line with its work programme, the SPI worked on three major studies/reports, namely on the scientific conceptual framework for LDN; SLM for addressing DLDD and climate change mitigation and adaptation; and rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands. It also conducted the planned coordination activities involving (a) the LDRA conducted by the IPBES; (b) the development of the Global Land Outlook; (c) the ITPS; and (d) the IPCC.

60. At its thirteenth session, the CST will review the SPI, and the secretariat commissioned an external assessment of the SPI with the aim of ensuring that the CST session would have available evidence-based, analytical information for the SPI review. The findings of this assessment “confirm 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 ... From the stakeholder feedback it is clear 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 the UNCCD work, although there is yet plenty to be done in these areas”.⁷

61. In 2016, the **IPCC** approved the publication of a Special Report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems, to be published in 2019. The secretariat and representatives from the SPI have begun collaborating with the IPCC secretariat on the structure of the report and have also participated in the scoping meeting that resulted in an outline of the report. The secretariat was a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the FAO-IPCC Expert Meeting on Climate Change, Land Use and Food Security in January 2017. In March 2017, the secretariat and the SPI co-organized, with FAO, ITPS, IPCC and WMO, a Global Symposium on Soil Organic Carbon, which highlighted the role of soils and the management of soil organic carbon (SOC) in advancing the climate change and sustainable development agendas. The outcome document is expected to contribute to the IPCC in its regular reports, starting with the “Special Report on Climate Change and Land” and the refinement of the inventory guidelines as well as to the reporting processes under the UNFCCC, UNCCD and the SDGs.

62. With regard to the **IPBES**, the secretariat reviewed and commented on the first and second order drafts of the LDRA, including the Summary for Policymakers. The secretariat continues to contribute to the IPBES capacity-building process through participation in technical and expert meetings and the sharing of expertise, among other means.

63. During the biennium, the **Capacity Building Marketplace** continued its important role in supporting key UNCCD processes. It offered access to numerous e-learning courses, university courses and other capacity-building material, and provided information on open

⁷ Document ICCD/COP(13)/CST/6.

vacancies, fellowships and grants concerning land management. The offerings of the Marketplace are increasingly available in languages other than English.

64. STI held various capacity-building exercises. Among these are 15 lectures at universities around the world; several exhibitions on the UNCCD, the development and publication of four e-learning courses on the UNCCD process, several quizzes, the holding of panel discussions and competitions, as well as partnerships to support capacity-building at the subregional, national, local and community levels.

65. STI coordinates the improvement of the UNCCD **knowledge management** infrastructure. In 2016, the Science Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP) pilot was expanded and rebranded as the UNCCD Knowledge Hub, which is designed to function as the main knowledge platform for UNCCD stakeholders, providing easy access to information from multiple sources. It will offer:

- (a) Information to support LDN-TSP;
- (b) Access to a wide range of relevant knowledge-sharing systems (close to 950 knowledge-sharing systems were listed by May 2017);
- (c) Up-to-date information on relevant publications, articles and information resources from the UNCCD e-Library;
- (d) The roster of independent experts (in May 2017, 1,292 experts were listed);
- (e) Best practices from the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) platform.

D. Administrative Services

66. The Administrative Services (AS) programme, combining the former units for administration and finance services and for conference servicing, is tasked with ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of services to the secretariat and the GM with regard to financial management, human resources, travel, procurement and information technology, as well as conference servicing, in accordance with the regulations and rules of the United Nations and the UNCCD.

67. In the biennium 2016–2017, AS continued to implement and roll out new components of the Umoja system, which is an administrative reform initiative designed to help the United Nations operate more effectively by integrating and streamlining business processes that manage financial, human and physical resources within a single global solution for many organizations of the United Nations. With this biennium being only the second one under the new accounting standards for the UNCCD, the programme continued its efforts with the implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, in consultation with the Board of Auditors and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, which has the overall aim of ensuring that more current information on assets, liabilities, revenue and expense is now available to management and governing bodies.

68. With regard to conference servicing, the secretariat organized CRIC 15 at the United Nations Office at Nairobi from 18–20 October 2016, prior to which a tripartite agreement was negotiated and concluded with the Government of Kenya and the United Nations. For the meeting, the secretariat prepared the invitations, facilitated participation and carried out related conference services and facilities plans, including the organization of one preparatory planning mission. Eight pre-session documents for translation were processed in time with an overall documentation submission compliance rate to the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) of 100 per cent.

69. The organization of COP 13, CRIC 16 and CST 13 is underway, and the host country agreement is currently under negotiation with the Government of China. Twenty-seven pre-session documents for translation by UNOG and twelve information documents are being processed by the secretariat. Three planning missions in preparation of COP 13 have been organized by the UNCCD and include representatives from UNOG and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS).

70. Five Bonn-based meetings of the COP, CRIC and CST Bureaux were organized, and one COP Bureau meeting took place at the invitation of the President of COP 12 in Istanbul, Turkey in January 2017. Three Adaptation Fund Board meetings were organized; a fourth will be organized in October 2017.

V. Accomplishments of the Global Mechanism

71. In 2016-2017, the GM aimed to support country Parties to start pursuing the LDN at the national level and to open up new and innovative opportunities for increasing investments. The activities of the GM centred on three major themes, which are:

- (a) LDN action;
- (b) Land, economics and the private sector;
- (c) Land, resilience and security.

72. In all of these themes, the GM focused on selected key priorities and leveraged its work through strategic partnerships.

A. Land degradation neutrality action

73. Following the invitation contained in decision 3/COP.12 to formulate national voluntary LDN targets, the majority of country Parties (108 countries as of May 2017) have committed to set voluntary LDN targets and are advancing in the process of setting these targets and identifying policies and measures to achieve them. The GM, in collaboration with the secretariat, established the LDN-TSP with the objective of supporting country Parties that have committed to set voluntary LDN targets in establishing national LDN baselines, setting voluntary LDN targets, and identifying associate measures to achieve LDN.

74. The building blocks of the LDN-TSP are:

(a) **Leveraging LDN:** LDN target-setting is not a stand-alone process but provides opportunities for coordination across ministries and sectors involved in land management. By finding common answers to:

- (i) Why does LDN matter?
- (ii) What should we leverage?
- (iii) Who should be engaged?

countries can succeed in leveraging LDN;

(b) **Assessing LDN:** Assessing the current state of land degradation and its drivers is the basis for setting LDN targets, making informed decisions on what action to take, and tracking progress;

(c) **Setting LDN targets and associated measures:** LDN targets define a country's ambitions in terms of combatting land degradation. LDN measures comprise a whole range of interventions to avoid, reduce or reverse land degradation;

(d) **Achieving LDN:** An enabling environment is a prerequisite for achieving LDN. It makes integrating the LDN concept into national policies easier and identifying transformative LDN programmes and projects possible.⁸

75. As at 31 May 2017, 108 countries have committed to translate the global SDG target 15.3 into country-specific targets and actions.

76. In order to implement the LDN TSP, the GM established partnerships on knowledge, implementation and financing with several international and national partners. LDN default data was made available through partnerships with the European Space Agency, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, and the International Soil Reference and Information Centre. Implementation and/or financial partnerships were developed with the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the GEF, UN Environment, UNDP, FAO and the Soil Leadership Academy. Several bilateral partners have provided financial support to the LDN-TSP, including the Governments of France, Germany, Luxemburg, Republic of Korea, Spain, Turkey, and Trinidad and Tobago. The GM is also supporting country Parties in pursuing LDN by preparing country profiles that aim at making the case on why to invest in LDN by showcasing the multiple socioeconomic returns of investing in land.

77. Scaling up and scaling out successful LDN initiatives and other SLM practices requires transformative projects that ideally contribute to LDN targets; deliver multiple benefits (including climate benefits and SDGs); build on good practices with high social impact; enhance national capacities; and leverage innovative finance, including the private sector. As part of the LDN-TSP, the GM is working with selected LDN pilot countries in mapping out opportunities for transformative projects. Next steps will include support to countries in identifying transformative LDN project opportunities, further advisory services to national entities in developing transformative LDN projects, partnerships with international partners to support the implementation of transformative projects and development and promotion of a gender responsive approach in the identified LDN transformative projects and programs.

B. Land, economics and the private sector

78. Taking into consideration that action to achieve LDN as set out in SDG 15.3 can deliver multiple benefits, LDN has the potential to become a vehicle to catalyse substantial amounts of sustainable development financing for the implementation of the Convention, including climate finance.

79. Decision 3/COP.12 requested the Managing Director of the GM to develop options for increasing incentives and financial support, including assisting in the possible creation of an independent LDN Fund to be made available for the full realization of LDN initiatives. In response to this request, the development of the LDN Fund has advanced steadily since COP 12. Following an open tender selection process, Mirova, the responsible investment subsidiary of Natixis Global Asset Management Group, was selected as the LDN Fund structuring partner. The close public-private sector collaboration between the GM and Mirova has worked very well; a recent independent evaluation of LDN Fund

⁸ More detailed information on the LDN-TSP is contained in document ICCD/COP(13)/2.

development⁹ actually stated that “the LDN Fund provides a rare case study of how the UN system can undertake meaningful, deep engagement with the private sector”.

80. The development of the LDN Fund has advanced well: a robust, diverse portfolio of over 70 potential projects has been constructed, and the Fund’s operational systems and processes, including market research, environmental and social standards, and a monitoring, reporting and verification strategy, are close to completion.

81. Financial support for the development of the LDN Fund and implementation of the MoU was raised in the form of grants provided by the Governments of France, Luxembourg and Norway as well as by the Rockefeller Foundation. In November 2016, the European Investment Bank announced that they have started a due diligence process towards a cornerstone investment into the LDN Fund. In addition to the European Investment Bank, several public and private investors expressed interest in capitalizing the Fund, and many of them are conducting their due diligence process at the time of writing this document, indicating that the launch of the LDN Fund and its first investments will take place in the coming months.

82. In order to further increase financing for the Convention, the GM has started its engagement with multilateral development banks and other funding sources of relevance for the implementation of the Convention. Among these activities, an engagement road map with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was developed, and envisioned joint activities include fostering a common approach on climate and land use with the aim of promoting transformative land-based climate actions.

C. Land, resilience and security

83. The GM is implementing project as part of the Great Green Wall Initiative. The FLEUVE project (2014–2018) is co-financed by the European Commission. FLEUVE aims to strengthen the capacities of local communities to help boost investments in land restoration and create employment opportunities or ‘green jobs’. The project is driven by local people themselves to strengthen community resilience to land degradation, drought and climate variability. The GM also led a project promoting SLM in migration-prone areas in West Africa through the use of innovative financing mechanisms. The three-year project, funded by the Government of Italy, supported Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal in efforts to prevent land degradation and restore degraded land areas by increasing investments in SLM.

84. Micro-investment projects are currently being implemented under FLEUVE in 23 communities across five Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Senegal. The project is complemented by regional-level capacity-building activities and the dissemination of good practices on SLM and innovative financing. Its outcomes will benefit not only the involved communities and countries, but will also help demonstrate how to build resilience on a large scale across the Great Green Wall. During UNFCCC COP 21 in Paris in 2015, Heads of State and leaders of major international agencies pledged 4 billion US dollars over the next five years to step up the implementation of the Great Green Wall Initiative. Main FLEUVE partners are the African Union, FAO, International Union for Conservation of Nature, the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the GEF, as well as three networks of community-based organizations: Réseau Sahel Désertification, Réseau Associatif de Développement Durable des Oasis and Drynet.

⁹ <www2.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2017-03/LDN%20Fund%20development%20evaluation%20report.pdf>.

85. The UNCCD has launched a public awareness campaign led by the GM on the Great Green Wall Initiative called ‘Growing a World Wonder’. The campaign aims to boost global awareness of the initiative in public spheres, policy debates and media and cultural sectors with a clear view of inspiring long-term public and private investment in the initiative.

86. A virtual reality film was developed as part of the campaign. This film transports viewers to ground level where communities are growing this new world wonder. The film, which first premiered at the 2015 UNFCCC COP 21 to world leaders, has since featured at major public events across the world including: the Rio Olympics Opening Ceremony, La Geode Imax Cinema in Paris and the Royal Botanical Gardens of Kew. In October 2016, the film was awarded the Best Documentary prize at the 2016 Screen4All Festival in Paris. A documentary about the Great Green Wall is also in the making in collaboration with the BBC.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

87. The COP may wish to consider the performance of the secretariat and the GM in the biennium 2016–2017 and use this information to support its consideration of the workplan, programme and budget for the coming years.
