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

Follow up on policy frameworks and thematic issues

Drought

Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Drought

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 29/COP.13, the Conference of the Parties requested the secretariat to report on the implementation of the Drought Initiative and the various decisions relating to the policy advocacy framework on drought, and to follow up at its fourteenth session.

This report reviews the actions taken by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism in relation to the implementation of the Drought Initiative and related activities in response to decision 29/COP.13. It also incorporates the actions taken with reference to a decision on assessment of the need for any additional arrangements regarding drought under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

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I. Background

1. Decision 9/COP.11 urged the secretariat to increase efforts in policy advocacy, to ensure harmonization, alignment and mutual reinforcement of thematic advocacy policy frameworks in line with the objectives and principles of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and to facilitate gender mainstreaming.
2. Decision 9/COP.12 requested the secretariat to continue improving partnerships fostering capacity development for national drought preparedness planning, drought early warning, risk and vulnerability assessments, and enhanced drought risk mitigation measures.
3. The United Nations General Assembly has in resolution 72/220 called upon “Parties to the Convention to enhance and support the preparation of drought preparedness policies on, inter alia, early warning systems, vulnerability and risk assessment, as well as drought risk mitigation measures”.
4. By its decision 7/COP.13, drought is included as a new strategic objective in the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework to be implemented through national action programmes and other means.
5. By decision 29/COP.13, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies, including the Science-Policy Interface, within their respective mandates to:
 - (a) Implement the Drought Initiative for the biennium 2018–2019 which proposes action on (i) drought preparedness systems, (ii) regional efforts to reduce drought vulnerability and risk, and (iii) a toolbox to boost the resilience of people and ecosystems to drought; and
 - (b) Support countries to develop and implement national drought management policies, as well as the establishment and strengthening of comprehensive drought monitoring, preparedness and early warning systems.
6. Further, the COP requested the secretariat and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies, including the Science-Policy Interface, to:
 - (a) Take a leading role at the institutional level through the strengthening of existing strategic partnerships and the establishment of new strategic partnerships on drought preparedness with relevant stakeholders at all levels, including United Nations agencies, inter alia, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), development partners, public and private sectors, land users and civil society, with a view to ensuring coherence, coordination and complementarity;
 - (b) Develop and finalize the technical guidelines to assist Parties in the implementation of the Drought Resilience, Adaptation and Management Policy framework;
 - (c) Assist Parties, as appropriate, in using the Drought Resilience, Adaptation and Management Policy framework;
 - (d) Increase awareness of drought issues, including through capacity-building, to develop national drought management policies based on the principles of risk reduction; and
 - (e) Promote North-South cooperation, South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, including the transfer of appropriate technology and up-to-date methodologies necessary for developing and improving drought monitoring, seasonal forecasts, preparedness and early warning and information delivery systems.
7. By the same decision, the COP also requested the secretariat to prepare a report, as contained in ICCD/COP(14)/INF.3, for the next Conference of the Parties on the need, if any, for additional arrangements on drought.

8. This document reviews progress made towards meeting the requests made by the COP in decision 29/COP.13, presenting a summary of the results achieved within the framework of the drought initiative and other drought-related activities of the UNCCD secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM). This document also proposes a plan of action for the next steps in addressing drought under the UNCCD, based on the lessons learned during the current biennium. The document concludes with recommendations for action for consideration by Parties at the fourteenth session of the COP (COP 14).

9. Parties may note that by decision 29/COP.13 the COP requested the Science-Policy Interface (SPI), as part of its work programme for the biennium 2018–2019, to provide technical guidance to Parties to support the adoption and implementation of land-based interventions for drought management and mitigation. Related measures taken by the SPI are presented in document ICCD/COP(14)/CST 3, and not included in this document.

10. In addition to the document mentioned above, Parties may read this document in conjunction with documents ICCD/COP(14)/CST/7-ICCD/CRIC(18)/4, ICCD/CRIC(18)/7, ICCD/COP(14)/17, ICCD/COP(14)/5 and ICCD/COP(14)/18.

II. The Drought Initiative

11. The actions regarding the Drought Initiative, as presented in paragraph 5 above, have been implemented largely through three measures: (a) support to the development of national drought plans; (b) support for regional efforts; and (c) the development of a drought toolbox. In addition, further partnerships and collaboration concerning drought were initiated, and capacity-building was carried out. Related activities are presented in the following chapters.

A. Support to the development of national drought plans

12. By decision 29/COP.13, Parties were invited to use, as appropriate, the Drought Resilience, Adaptation and Management Policy Framework¹ to strengthen their capacity to enhance drought preparedness and provide an appropriate response to drought.

13. In December 2017, the GM, in collaboration with the secretariat, invited countries to participate in the initiative through a call for expressions of interest with requirements set as follows: (a) the existence of an effective meteorological system, such as data on climate, water and soil parameters and socioeconomic and hydrological indicators, to be able to identify the magnitude, spatial extent and potential impacts of droughts; (b) the commitment of the country to fully engage with the national expert to support the data collection and to facilitate national stakeholder consultations; and (c) political commitment at the highest level to promote the adoption, dissemination and eventual use of the national drought plan. A total of 44 countries² responded to the call.

14. Further, the GM recruited qualified national experts to support the development of national drought plans in each of the 44 countries and arranged a professional review of the plans. To ensure consistency and harmonization of the national drought plans among countries and regions, the secretariat prepared supporting documents including a model national drought plan, technical guidelines and a manual on gender mainstreaming to drought preparedness.³

¹ See document ICCD/COP(13)/19.

² Africa: Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, The Gambia, Togo, Zambia, Zimbabwe. Asia: Cambodia, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Marshall Islands, the Philippines, Uzbekistan, Vietnam. Latin America and the Caribbean: Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Paraguay, Venezuela. Central and Eastern Europe: Azerbaijan, Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia.

³ <<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2018-06/model%20drought%20plan.pdf>>.

15. As of April 2019, 30 out of the 44 countries had developed their national drought plans and the remaining 14 are set to finalize theirs by the end of 2019.

16. In direct response to the positive feedback about the Drought Initiative from country Parties at the seventeenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 17) and the number of requests that followed, the GM launched in March 2019 a second call for countries to participate in the Drought Initiative. A total of 27 countries expressed interest in participating in the initiative.

17. As proposed to the Parties at COP 13, the Drought Initiative was planned to support approximately 30 countries in the development of national drought plans. As may be noted above, as of 1 June 2019, 71 countries have expressed interest in participating in the initiative, and most of them are now involved in related activities. The unexpectedly high number of interested countries demonstrates the importance of the initiative, but it also represents an increase in the workload for the secretariat and the GM. In this context, it may be that the secretariat and the GM will be able to complete most, but not all, activities under the Drought Initiative within the planned deadline of the end of 2019. If so, the secretariat proposes that the COP authorizes the use of the remaining balance of funding allocated for the initiative in 2021.

B. Support for regional efforts

18. The implementation of actions regarding the Drought Initiative, as presented in paragraph 5 above, also includes support for regional efforts to reduce drought vulnerability and risk. The secretariat and the GM have begun designing, testing and implementing pilot projects in Central Asia, the Southern African Development Community and the countries of the Permanent Interstate Committee for drought control in the Sahel.

19. In collaboration with FAO and WMO, the secretariat and the GM organized a training session on drought at the margins of CRIC 17 in January 2019, in Georgetown, Guyana. Further relevant information is available in document ICCD/CRIC(18)/8.

20. Further to the CRIC drought training fair on 25–26 January 2019 in Georgetown, Guyana, the group of UNCCD country Parties of Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Mongolia⁴ requested the UNCCD (and WMO) to organize regional training focusing on the specific regional needs on drought preparedness and adaptation.

21. The UNCCD, in close collaboration with WMO, FAO, Global Water Partnership (GWP) and UNEP-DHI, is planning to conduct the requested regional training workshop on the drought toolbox (see below) reflecting the specific regional realities.

C. The drought toolbox

22. As part of the Drought Initiative, COP 13 also requested the secretariat to develop a drought toolbox to boost the resilience of people and ecosystems to drought.

23. Further to this decision, the UNCCD, in close collaboration with WMO, FAO, GWP, the National Drought Mitigation Centre (NDMC) of the University of Nebraska and UNEP-DHI developed an online drought toolbox.⁵

24. The online drought toolbox collates practical drought risk mitigation measures and policy options with the aim of providing drought stakeholders with easy access to tools, best practices, methods, evidence and knowledge that countries can deploy to mitigate the impacts of drought. The toolbox is organized in three modules: (a) drought monitoring and early warning; (b) drought vulnerability assessment; and (c) drought risk mitigation measures. The toolbox also includes a decision support tool which is implemented in the

⁴ Countries present at the training fair: Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

⁵ <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/drought-toolbox>>.

form of an interactive online question and answer format. The toolbox was developed as part of the UNCCD Knowledge Hub.

25. Hands-on training of trainers (ToT) for the UNCCD staff involved in the development of the toolbox was conducted by UNEP-DHI (2–4 December 2018, Copenhagen, Denmark). UNEP-DHI led the development of one of the three pillars of the toolbox which focuses on drought monitoring and early warning systems.

26. Further, a validation technical workshop for the toolbox was held from 2–4 May 2019 in Antalya, Turkey. The workshop brought together representatives of fifteen countries to test the new interactive platform that will help design effective solutions to reduce the impacts of drought and develop national drought plans. The participants, which represented 15 countries,⁶ were introduced to the relevant tools for drought early warning and monitoring, methods for assessing vulnerability to drought and appropriate measures for reducing drought impacts.

III. Policy and partnerships

27. The implementation of actions requested by COP 13, as presented in paragraph 6, has been mainly through (a) a review of methods on drought vulnerability assessment; and (b) the strengthening of partnerships and collaboration. The activities are presented in the following chapters.

A. Review of methods in drought vulnerability assessment

28. According to the DRAMP framework (ICCD/COP(13)/19), assessing drought vulnerability and risk entails (a) identifying drought impacts on vulnerable economic sectors including cropping and livestock, biodiversity and ecosystems, energy, tourism and health; (b) assessing the physical, social, economic and environmental pressures on communities before, during and shortly after drought in order to identify who and what is at risk and why; (c) assessing conditions or situations that increase the resistance or susceptibility to drought and the coping capacity of communities affected by drought; and (d) assessing the extent of potential damage or loss in the event of drought.

29. According to ICCD/CRIC(11)/17, national drought management policies should promote strategies that emphasize the development and implementation of pre-impact programmes and preparedness plans as well as policies that are directed towards drought risk reduction. These policies reduce risk by building and consolidating the resilience of livelihoods, establishing more timely and appropriate responses that protect livelihoods and human life, tackling the root causes of vulnerability, and managing the associated drought risks rather than focusing on each individual crisis.

30. Based on the above, the secretariat, together with WMO and FAO, commissioned a study on vulnerability assessment and impact methods on drought. The review identifies three approaches that can be combined for bottom-up vulnerability assessments that (a) focus on people and their livelihoods including the most vulnerable and marginalised groups and individuals; (b) capture changes in the production of ecosystem-services including from agriculture; and (c) account for effects on the water balance at the basin and sub-basin levels under increasing water stress.

31. National assessments can use the findings that are generated through these approaches to identify both long- and short-term effects of drought on their national expenditures and economies. Regional and international development support can build

⁶ Africa: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa. Asia: Cambodia, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey (host), Uzbekistan, Vietnam. Latin America and the Caribbean: Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada. Central and Eastern Europe: Moldova.

institutional capacities to reduce the wider destabilising effects that unmanaged drought risks and persistent vulnerability cause for regional and global economies and security.⁷

B. Partnerships and collaboration

32. The implementation of the Drought Initiative is benefitting from the support of partners. For example, FAO organized a consultation meeting on strategic partnerships for carrying out the Drought Initiative at FAO Headquarters in Rome in April 2018. The meeting saw the creation of the Drought Initiative Working Group that includes the WMO, FAO, GWP, NDMC of the University of Nebraska, UNCCD, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNEP-DHI.

33. GWP Eastern Africa supported through contributions to capacity-building, case studies, guidance documents and tailored analysis for Ethiopia and Sudan in the development of their national drought plans. GWP's multi-stakeholder platforms (Country Water Partnerships) in the countries were mobilized to contribute to the consultative meetings of the various partners.

34. The GWP/WMO-led Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP)⁸ organized, in collaboration with the GWP Country Water Partnerships, the UNCCD national focal points and the UNCCD national consultants, multi-stakeholder consultations in Burkina Faso, Benin and Niger. The aim of these meetings was to enable the drought stakeholders to provide technical contributions to the development of the national drought plans and to share technical expertise and experiences from national, regional and global perspectives.

35. The IDMP Central and Eastern Europe, together with the Drought Management Centre for South Eastern Europe (DMCSEE), collaborated with the UNCCD national focal points and the UNCCD Drought Initiative consultants in Macedonia, Serbia and Moldova.

36. The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also supported the implementation of the Drought Initiative. While UfM funded the development of national drought plans in Jordan and Mauritania, UNDP funded Iran, Somalia and Morocco's development of national drought plans.

37. The secretariat collaborated with FAO in the framework of the Global Framework for Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG). The secretariat leads a working group on "drought preparedness" with member organizations including WMO, FAO, GWP, UNESCO, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the International Water Youth Network and the United States National Drought Mitigation Center. The first International Forum on WASAG was held in Praia, Cape Verde from 19 to 22 March 2019. The forum identified practical and innovative solutions to address water scarcity in agriculture as elaborated in the "Praia commitment".⁹

38. Furthermore, the secretariat represented the UNCCD in the UN-Water, IDMP and WASAG steering committees for various processes and events and provided UNCCD inputs to technical workshops concerning drought and sustainable water management. This representation and the partnerships mentioned above resulted in not only raised awareness of the Drought Initiative but also created opportunity for important partnerships to support development of the drought toolbox and national drought planning processes.

IV. Need, if any, for additional arrangements on drought

39. At COP 13, Parties had an active debate on ways and means to strengthen action to address drought under the UNCCD, with suggestions ranging from the development of

⁷ Further information on the review is available at <<https://www.unccd.int/issues/land-and-drought>>.

⁸ <<http://www.droughtmanagement.info/>>.

⁹ <<http://www.fao.org/land-water/events/ws-forum/praisia-commitment/en/>>.

technical guidelines to exploring the possibility of a legally binding drought protocol. As presented in the earlier sections of this document, the COP decided on numerous measures to address drought, which have been implemented during the biennium.

40. The COP also requested the secretariat to prepare a report on the need, if any, for additional arrangements on drought, for consideration at COP 14. In doing so, the secretariat sought to clarify the nature of such additional arrangements, what these would entail in terms of their expected contribution to addressing drought, and the measures and resources needed for their establishment under the UNCCD. This work targeted numerous potential additional arrangements, which can be categorized into (a) technical approaches, (b) financing instruments, and (c) legal instruments. Addressing drought under the UNCCD was defined as focusing on drought risk management, particularly on reducing impact, risk mitigation, prevention and preparedness.

41. The UNCCD secretariat prepared a menu of options for countries in order to address drought under the UNCCD. The scope for the UNCCD to pursue these options is elaborated in document ICCD/COP(14)/INF.3, bringing together the technical, financing and legal considerations. The options covered in the document are explained below.

A. Technical approaches

42. *Restoration, maintenance and enhancement of drought buffers* consisting of reserves of water that is stored in surface water bodies, groundwater aquifers, and soils and maintenance of the hydrological cycle. Under Sustainable Development Goal 6.4.2, all countries are already committed to review national water availability on an annual basis and to provide quantified accounts to demonstrate changes over time. During droughts, the reserves of water are usually depleted. In cases where the drought buffers are not replenished after the drought, populations are left more exposed and vulnerable to subsequent droughts.

43. Practical measures to enhance the drought buffers include *sustainable land and water management, ecosystem restoration, watershed management and integrating the management of floods and droughts*. Strategic measures to enhance the drought buffers include improvement of the systems in place to monitor, assess and manage water resource availability, including hydrological *drought monitors and early warning systems*. Some countries and basin authorities already have policy commitments in place to reduce their water deficits. Additional arrangements could help to widen and strengthen commitments, tighten systems for tracking progress and encourage exchanges of knowledge and capacities.

44. *Reduce rainfall-dependence of economies and households* by diversifying economic opportunities alongside continuing rainfed crop and livestock production. In most vulnerable communities, households are aware of opportunities to diversify their incomes away from dependence on rainfed crop and livestock production and to build up capital and assets that would cushion their exposure to drought. However, they may require targeted support to enable them to do so.

45. *Regional technical hubs* can provide a means to share and strengthen context-relevant solutions, such as basin and catchment management, increasing water productivity, water saving technologies, reducing diffuse and point-source pollution, improving water treatment and recycling wastewater. Strategic measures to enhance water productivity and recycling include the improvement of systems in place to monitor, assess and manage water resource extractions, return flows and quality threats during drought and non-drought periods. Awareness-raising and education are key to building human capacities for successful technical interventions and drought-risk management.

B. Financing instruments

46. Effective drought risk management is crucial to increasing economic growth, improving food security, and reducing poverty. Although levels of risk vary within and between countries, lower-income and highly agriculture-dependent countries are

particularly vulnerable to drought-related risks. In these countries, there is an urgent need to better assess risks, understand the interconnections between different types of risk, and improve drought risk management strategies.

47. Many financing instruments have been created and tested to address drought risk, with mixed results to date in successfully upscaling pilots. More work is needed to develop risk management tools against the impact of drought that are tailored to the specific needs and conditions of individual countries, and to understand the range of available financial instruments to manage drought risk.

48. The GM has developed a menu of options regarding financing mechanisms and instruments which countries can access for drought preparedness and risk mitigation. These options are presented in document ICCD/COP/14/INF.3 mentioned above, which provides information on:

(a) Drought insurance products such as (i) Individual Crop Insurance, (ii) Weather Index Insurance, and (iii) Area-yield Index Insurance;

(b) Insurance-linked debt securities such as (i) Catastrophe Bonds and (ii) Drought Bonds;

(c) Official Development Aid (ODA)-backed Bonds to protect against drought.

49. Drought onsets are often complex and slow, and the diffuse nature of their damage make the task of comprehensively and accurately determining the cost of drought a highly challenging one. Selected methods for estimating the cost of inaction on drought are presented in document ICCD/COP/14/INF.3, to assist countries in selecting the appropriate financing instruments for drought preparedness and risk mitigation.

C. Legal instruments

50. In 2018, the UNCCD Evaluation Office prepared a prospective assessment focusing on the viability of a variety of legal instruments in addressing drought under the UNCCD. This assessment¹⁰ covers eight types of legal instruments of both “hard law” and “soft law”, which are commonly used in international environmental cooperation: protocols, amendments and annexes, principles, declarations, decisions, standards and gentleman’s agreements. The assessment outlines the main characteristics of each instrument, including their common definition, information about the preparatory process and approval, monitoring and reporting routines, and institutional and budgetary requirements. The assessment also provides examples of the use of each instrument in other international processes, mostly from within the United Nations system. For each legal instrument, its potential use for addressing drought under the UNCCD is considered, building on the generic information and the examples and, where feasible, the use of the instrument under the UNCCD so far.

51. Key points of the assessment on each of the reviewed legal instruments are briefly presented below. Parties may note that relevant, comparable information about institutional and budgetary requirements, which could be used to credibly indicate similar requirements under the UNCCD, was available for only one instrument (a protocol). For the other instruments, there was such a variety of these requirements that using them to establish a reasonable indication for the UNCCD was not meaningful.

52. A *protocol* is a formal legal instrument that follows standardized phases of negotiation, approval and national ratification. Experience from other conventions indicate that protocols require precision of content to be successful: a well-defined objective, exact rules and clear assignment of implementation responsibilities. Negotiating such content on drought risk management globally is likely to be challenging and time-taking, possibly stretching over eight to ten years. Experience from other conventions also indicates that

¹⁰ A summary of the assessment is contained in document ICCD/COP(14)/INF.3, and the full version is available on <https://www.unccd.int/about-us/evaluation-office>.

protocols require reporting and review processes that are relevant to their provisions, and they also tend to involve additional institutional facilities and specialized staff. Using the UNFCCC/Kyoto and the CBD/Cartagena Protocols as reference, a protocol on drought could increase the UNCCD regular budget by around 1.8 to 3.6 million euros per biennium,¹¹ to be paid by those countries that decide to join the protocol.

53. *Annexes and amendments* have an equal legal status with the Convention text, and they are meant to further develop or spell out details of an existing provision. For example, the five UNCCD regional implementation annexes specify the provisions on implementation for each region. The preparation and approval of annexes and amendments follow standard, formal phases but usually the process is lighter than that for the protocols. In many conventions, annexes and amendments are used for precise procedural, scientific and administrative lists that remain valid indefinitely. Similarly, the ideal use of a UNCCD annex or amendment on drought could be to specify continuous (technical) measures to be taken toward broader political UNCCD aims concerning drought. This would entail that Parties have already agreed on such broad political aims; if that agreement is missing, there could be a high risk of Parties deciding to stay outside the annex or amendment by non-acceptance.

54. *Principles*¹² are typically about critically important matters on which countries differ significantly, either in terms of national implementation or political interest, so that reaching an agreement on detailed rules would be difficult. They describe wide standards or objectives that allow for various interpretations and implementation measures and may serve as the first step for setting more specific rules. Under the UNCCD, principles could establish generally formulated norms of various aspects of addressing drought, leaving the definition of exact measures to the country or regional level. Principles are usually prepared through formal negotiations that could be opened for a broader group of stakeholders than for a protocol or an annex/amendment, including for example interested international organizations, scientific institutions and non-governmental organizations. Principles do not require particular acceptance procedures; they are valid as soon as they are agreed upon. Political commitment to principles may be underlined through their adoption or endorsement at high level.

55. *Declarations* are formal statements, proclamations or announcements of intent. For addressing drought under the UNCCD, a declaration would be a political statement about Parties' commitment, expressing the aspirations of the participating countries, which could later be translated into concrete action by the COP or at the country or regional level. A declaration could be drafted by one or more countries with support from the Convention secretariat and considered and adopted at high level.

56. *Decisions* are formal expressions of the opinion or will of the Parties and the main tools for them jointly to bring forward the Convention. They can cover any kinds of actions and topics if Parties are willing to agree on them, and being fast to prepare, they are particularly useful for integrating new information and constantly evolving modalities into the UNCCD process. The effectiveness of decisions can be improved by increasing the specificity of the language, so that the commitments that they contain are explicit and their implementation easy to monitor. Since 2013, several UNCCD COP decisions have included requests concerning drought, which have led to a variety of actions, from inter-organizational partnerships to national level support.

57. *International standards* are documented agreements containing technical specifications or other precise criteria to ensure that materials, products, processes and

¹¹ The funding for the Kyoto and Cartagena Protocols has varied between 15 per cent and 30 per cent of the UNFCCC and CBD secretariats' regular budgets. Applying the same percentages to the regular budget of the UNCCD secretariat (for the biennium 2018–2019, approximately 10.7 million euros) results in a total increase of 1.8 – 3.6 million euros to the UNCCD budget.

¹² "Principles" have varying interpretations in international environmental law. In this document, they are applied as general norms, which are frequently found in the preambular section of various treaties, setting out the overall approaches or rules for implementing the treaty, or used as independent instruments of (emerging) international environmental law.

services are fit for their purpose. They may be mandatory or voluntary. In 2017, the International Organization for Standardization published a new standard, ISO 14055, for identifying good practices in combating desertification and land degradation, based on assessment of the drivers of land degradation and risks associated with current and past practices, for use by private and public sector organizations with responsibility for land management. Similarly, an international standard could be initiated for measures for drought impact mitigation, for example. However, any detailed technical standard with monitoring and verification responsibilities would require the expertise of an existing international standard system, with the UNCCD taking the role of an adviser.

58. *Gentlemen's agreements* are voluntary collaboration arrangements, such as declarations of intent, joint statements, Memoranda of Understanding or joint press releases, among two or more participants, on topics of shared interest. They may involve different types of participants that focus on a joint objective while implementing their activities in various ways. For the UNCCD process, a gentleman's agreement could be used to complement the normative guidance and policy approaches of the Convention, as a tool for targeted collaboration among willing participants. As voluntary commitments, gentlemen's agreements are not subject to COP decisions, but they could be registered under the UNCCD process or information on their outcomes and successful practices could be brought up in the UNCCD national reporting and review process.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

59. **The Drought Initiative has helped boost collaboration among United Nations agencies and countries on drought preparedness, mitigation and planning activities. It has raised political momentum at the global and regional levels. For example:**

(a) **In the framework of the Drought Initiative and under the institutional leadership of the UNCCD, FAO, WMO, UNEP, NDMC, UNESCO and GWP established a working group on drought to facilitate the implementation of the Drought Initiative;**

(b) **In the framework of WASAG, the UNCCD secretariat is leading an alliance of organizations on drought with members ranging from UNESCO to IWMI, the Water Youth Network, FAO, WMO and GWP.**

60. **Having more than 70 countries working on national drought plans within the framework of the Drought Initiative, and the launch and subsequent dissemination of the drought toolbox at COP 14, will facilitate achieving the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework that sets mitigation, adapting to, and managing the effects of drought to enhance the resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems as a strategic objective for the Convention.**

61. **The technical guidelines, model national drought plan and the gender mainstreaming documents provide useful guidance in assisting countries to develop, modify and/or update their national drought plans within the framework of the Drought Initiative.**

62. **In line with the outcomes of the Drought Initiative and the identified technical, financial and institutional gaps as presented in the national drought plans, the Convention can begin to devise innovative options and approaches under the UNCCD to help countries mitigate the impacts of drought and to contribute to achieving land degradation neutrality. A range of options have been identified.**

63. **The COP at its fourteenth session may wish to consider:**

(a) **Building on the drought initiative during the biennium 2020–2021 by:**

(i) **Supporting participating countries in finalizing and validating their national drought plans;**

- (ii) Considering the integration of additional tools to further upgrade and expand the drought toolbox;
 - (iii) Enhancing the capacity of participating countries to assess drought impacts and their vulnerability; and
 - (iv) Expanding collaboration and partnerships with agencies such as WMO, FAO, GWP, UNEP and UNESCO and relevant regional platforms to design and test innovative approaches to supporting countries in mitigating the impacts of drought;
 - (b) Encouraging the use, as appropriate, of the drought toolbox, developed within the framework of the Drought Initiative, to strengthen their preparedness for drought;
 - (c) Use of a variety of technical approaches such as sustainable land and water management, ecosystem restoration and watershed management by making available related information, hydrological monitoring systems, technical assistance and capacity-building, and promoting peer-to-peer knowledge sharing;
 - (d) Exploring potential financing instruments for addressing drought, as initiated under the Drought Initiative, such as insurance products and bonds, and to make available related information and guidance, for facilitating the access of Parties to these instruments; and
 - (e) Establishing, in collaboration with the SPI and other relevant United Nations entities and international organizations, global principles or other complementary arrangements for mitigating the effects of drought.
-