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#### **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: implications for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**

**Modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework**

### **Modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework**

#### **Note by the secretariat**

#### *Summary*

By its decision 7/COP.13 and decision 13/COP.13, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) adopted the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and guided the preparation of its midterm evaluation. In line with these decisions, this document presents a proposal by the Bureau of the COP for modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, for consideration by the COP at its fourteenth session.

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## Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction .....	1–2	3
II. Proposal by the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties: Modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework .....	3–23	3
A. Objectives of the midterm evaluation .....	7–8	4
B. Evaluation scope and criteria .....	9–18	4
C. Modalities and organization of work .....	19–21	5
D. Tentative schedule .....	22–23	6
III. Conclusions and recommendations .....	24–30	6

## I. Introduction

1. By its decision 7/COP.13, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) adopted the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and encouraged Parties to apply this Strategic Framework in their national policies, programmes, plans and processes relating to desertification/land degradation and drought.

2. By its decision 13/COP.13 concerning additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention and the terms of reference of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), the COP further decided that its Bureau is to prepare appropriate modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework with a view to their adoption at the fourteenth session of the COP (COP 14). The proposal by the Bureau of the COP is presented in chapter II of this document.

## II. Proposal by the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties: Modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework

3. By its decision 7/COP.13, the COP adopted the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. The 2018–2030 Strategic Framework establishes the following vision for the UNCCD: “A future that avoids, minimizes and reverses desertification/land degradation and mitigates the effects of drought in affected areas at all levels and strives to achieve a land degradation-neutral world consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, within the scope of the Convention”.

4. The 2018–2030 Strategic Framework sets five strategic objectives that are meant to guide the actions of all UNCCD stakeholders and partners in the period 2018–2030. Meeting these long-term objectives is expected to contribute to achieving the above-mentioned vision within the scope of the Convention, taking into account particular regional and national conditions. The strategic objectives are as follows:

(a) Strategic objective 1: To improve the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification/land degradation, promote sustainable land management and contribute to land degradation neutrality;

(b) Strategic objective 2: To improve the living conditions of affected populations;

(c) Strategic objective 3: To mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems;

(d) Strategic objective 4: To generate global environmental benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD; and

(e) Strategic objective 5: To mobilize substantial and additional financial and non-financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention by building effective partnerships at global and national level.

5. The 2018–2030 Strategic Framework outlines an implementation framework, stating that Parties bear the main responsibility in the implementation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and would need to steer implementation in accordance with their national priorities and in a spirit of international solidarity and partnership. The 2018–2030 Strategic Framework notes that it will be implemented primarily through actions at national or subregional levels, with the support of UNCCD institutions, partners and other relevant stakeholders. It also spells out a number of practical aims that Parties seek to achieve through the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework in the fields of: (a) financial and non-financial resources, (b) policy and planning and (c) actions on the ground and assigns specific responsibilities to the Convention institutions and bodies.

6. By its decision 13/COP.13, the COP decided that it will prepare, through its Bureau, appropriate modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the 2018–

2030 Strategic Framework with a view to their adoption at COP 14 in 2019. Such modalities, criteria and terms of reference are presented in this document.

## **A. Objectives of the midterm evaluation**

7. The purpose of the midterm evaluation is to assess the progress made in implementing the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and achieving its five strategic objectives. It will determine if the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework is working as intended, whether its implementation is meeting the stated aims, and whether/how it is contributing to broader global priorities of sustainable development. The evaluation will inform Parties and other key stakeholders about the successes and challenges in implementation and, through a participatory process, result in recommendations to further improve performance for the remaining period of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

8. The main audience of the midterm evaluation are Parties to the Convention, both as participants in the COP and as countries implementing the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, as well as UNCCD institutions and bodies. The evaluation will also provide valuable information to the scientific community involved in the UNCCD process at different levels, implementation partners and other interested stakeholders.

## **B. Evaluation scope and criteria**

9. The midterm evaluation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework will cover four interrelated components:

- (a) Continued relevance of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework;
- (b) Progress made in achieving the five strategic objectives;
- (c) Consideration of efforts to meet the aims and assignments that were set in the implementation framework of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework; and
- (d) Efficiency of the reporting and review process concerning the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

10. In addition, as a cross-cutting issue, the midterm evaluation will consider how gender-responsive policies and measures are taken into account in the implementation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and in the reporting and review process.

11. The evaluation will focus on two main criteria: relevance and effectiveness. It will also assess efficiency with regard to the reporting and review process. The evaluation approach is outlined below; it will be further developed closer to the evaluation.

### **1. Relevance**

12. The midterm evaluation will assess the extent to which the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework continues to be suited to the changing priorities and approaches in global cooperation on sustainable development, most notably those concerning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the conventions on climate change and biodiversity. It will also consider the alignment of the implementation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework with the policies and strategies of major multilateral partners and the donor community in general.

## 2. Effectiveness

13. The midterm evaluation will assess the progress made toward the strategic objectives, building on the indicators that are being used for each objective and taking into account the expected impact that is stated in the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. Of particular importance will be the linkage with SDG Target 15.3 on land degradation neutrality.

14. With regard to the aims contained in the three fields<sup>1</sup> specified in the implementation framework of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, the midterm evaluation will seek to identify successes for potential replication and shortcomings as lessons learned, which may be used to improve the implementation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

15. Further on the implementation framework, the midterm evaluation will assess the effectiveness of action taken by Convention institutions and bodies to support the Parties in implementing the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, based on the tasks specified for each of them in the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

## 3. Efficiency

16. Closely interlinked with the assessment of the effectiveness of action taken by Convention institutions and bodies, the midterm evaluation will briefly consider the efficiency of the UNCCD national reporting and review process.

## 4. Cross-cutting issue: Gender

17. In addition to the above criteria, the midterm evaluation will consider how gender-responsive policies and measures are taken into account in the implementation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and in the reporting and review process.

18. Building on the evaluation criteria outlined above, the evaluation will be based on a number of evaluation questions that will be defined in detail closer to the evaluation.

## C. Modalities and organization of work

19. The evaluation will be supervised by an intergovernmental working group, consisting of members that will be proposed by each regional group and nominated by the COP. The UNCCD secretariat will support the work of the working group.

20. The evaluation will be based on factual findings that are considered through a participatory process and eventually submitted to the COP for a decision on the way forward. The corresponding elements of the evaluation process will be as follows:

(a) An independent assessment, to be supervised by the intergovernmental working group and carried out by an external evaluation expert using the evaluation criteria. The assessment will present findings on the evaluation components (continued relevance of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework; progress toward the strategic objectives; the implementation framework; the reporting and review process; and gender aspects) based on sound, verified evidence and objective analysis, and clearly documented in the assessment report. The assessment will also present conclusions and provisional recommendations for possible future action to further enhance the implementation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework:

(b) A participatory consultation on the conclusions and recommendations of the independent assessment, to be conducted during an intersessional meeting of the CRIC; and

(c) A COP decision, which will present Parties' agreement on the action to be taken to further enhance the implementation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

<sup>1</sup> The three fields are financial and non-financial resources, policy and planning, and actions on the ground.

21. With regard to the background material to be used for the midterm evaluation, the national reports submitted by Parties in 2018 and 2022 will provide the key data for assessing the progress made toward achieving the strategic objectives and for considering the aims of the implementation framework.

#### **D. Tentative schedule**

22. The 2018–2030 Strategic Framework is set to last 13 years, with 2024 as the midpoint. The midterm evaluation will take place in 2024–2025, so that the intergovernmental working group would start its work, including the commissioning of the independent assessment, during the first half of 2024. The participatory consultations would take place at the CRIC during the second half of 2024, and the COP would make a final decision on the matter at its seventeenth session in 2025.

23. As the timing of the midterm evaluation is several years from now, preparations will be finalized at COP 16 in 2023. With support from its Bureau, the COP will outline the terms of reference for the intergovernmental working group, develop further specifications for the group itself and nominate the members proposed by each regional group. It will also update, as needed, the modalities, criteria and terms of reference that are presented in this document.

### **III. Conclusions and recommendations**

24. **When deciding on modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework based on the proposal by its Bureau, the COP may wish to consider the following elements:**

25. *Recalling* decisions 7/COP.13 and 13/COP.13 by which the COP adopted the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and guided the preparation of the midterm evaluation,

26. *Acknowledging* the importance of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework in improving the effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention,

27. *Noting* that the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework will reach its midpoint in 2024,

28. *Welcoming with appreciation* the proposal of the Bureau of the COP on the modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework,

29. *Provisionally adopting* the modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, as proposed by the Bureau of the COP in document ICCD/COP(14)/3,

30. *Decides* that the COP will, at its sixteenth session in 2023, continue the preparations for the midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, including the finalization of its modalities, criteria and terms of reference and the establishment of an intergovernmental working group to oversee the evaluation process and, for this purpose:

(a) *Requests* the Bureau of the COP to review and, as needed, update the provisionally adopted modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, with a view to their adoption at COP 16;

(b) *Also requests* the Bureau of the COP to outline the terms of reference for an intergovernmental working group for the midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, including the purpose, composition and main working modalities of the intergovernmental working group, for the consideration of the COP at its sixteenth session; and

(c) *Further requests* the secretariat to include the estimated resource needs for the midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework in its

**proposed 2024–2025 programme and budget that will be submitted to the COP at its sixteenth session.**

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