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Securing of additional investments and relations with financial mechanisms

Update on the Global Support Programme in support of UNCCD reporting

Report by the Global Mechanism on update on the Global Support Programme in support of UNCCD reporting

Summary

This document contains an update on the Global Support Programme I (GSP I) and Global Support Programme II (GSP II). It provides a brief background of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) reporting and its linkage with the UNCCD strategic frameworks. The activities of GSP I and GSP II and their major achievements are also described. Finally, the document provides conclusions and recommendations for the consideration of Parties at the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

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I. Introduction

1. Country Party signatories to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) are obligated to report on the measures taken to implement the Convention at national level in accordance with decision 11/COP.1. Seven reporting cycles have been completed since the beginning of UNCCD reporting in 1999.
2. The national UNCCD reports enabled the Convention to identify trends and directions for future action to combat desertification and land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought. The reports submitted by country Parties and other entities are reviewed, analysed and presented at the sessions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) and recommendations made for consideration by the Conference of the Parties (COP).
3. Over the last decade, the UNCCD has undertaken various steps to make the UNCCD process more efficient, transparent, accountable and focused, including:
 - (a) The Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS) and its methodological tools (i.e. performance and impact indicators) contributed to a quantitative assessment of progress in the implementation of the Convention and evidence-based decision-making by its governing bodies;
 - (b) In 2007, the adoption of the 10-Year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) (The Strategy) at the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8) paved the way for a results-based approach to global and national efforts for the implementation of the Convention. This Strategy facilitated a more systematic review of the implementation of the Convention; and
 - (c) In 2017, the adoption of The UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework at COP 13 further enhanced the reporting and review process within the Convention, taking into account the framework defined by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
4. In order to support country Parties in using the PRAIS portal, the Enabling Paradigm Shift on Monitoring and Assessment within the UNCCD (2010–2011) project was developed by the secretariat, the Global Mechanism (GM) of the UNCCD and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). This project aimed to strengthen the reporting and review process for implementation of the Convention and its Strategy and National Action Plans.
5. After completion of this project in 2011, the number of reports submitted to the secretariat during the 2012–2013 reporting cycle significantly declined, which was noted at COP 11. A survey conducted among country Parties at the twelfth session of the CRIC (CRIC 12) revealed that nearly two thirds of all reporting entities experienced difficulties with the PRAIS portal, mainly for technical reasons. Nearly all country Parties expressed the need for a support mechanism for the reporting process.
6. Following decision 16/COP.11, Global Support Programme I (GSP I) was jointly established by the secretariat and GM of the UNCCD and UNEP with funding from the GEF to support reporting to the Convention, including the provision and continuous improvement of reporting tools, knowledge sharing, training and capacity building at the regional/subregional levels, as well as technical backstopping.
7. Based on the lessons learned from GSP I, country Parties expressed the need for a continuation of capacity building for the next reporting process at COP 13. Decision 15/COP.13 requested the secretariat and the GM and UNEP to provide targeted and timely support for capacity building for reporting at national and global level. This led to the development and implementation of GSP II.
8. The main objective of this report is to provide an update on the GSP I and II in order to inform country Parties in view of the upcoming UNCCD reporting cycle.

II. Global Support Programmes I and II – achievements and status

9. The GSP I started in 2014 with the aim of increasing the quantity and improving the quality of information available for the 2014–2015 reporting cycle. The programme supported the simplification of the PRAIS reporting platform and provided technical assistance through capacity building workshops, the development of a user guidance manual, online training and the development of data quality framework. During the 2014–2015 reporting cycle, a 90 per cent reporting rate (177 Parties) was achieved with the support of the GSP I. The quality of data and information was also improved through the quality assurance mechanism put in place by the programme.

10. The GSP II started in 2017, with the objective of supporting country Parties in establishing sound reporting and monitoring systems to report on the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. The three major expected outcomes of the GSP II are as follows:

(a) That Parties know how to use the tools to prepare national reports for 2017–2018 UNCCD reporting and are informed of others' progress and experiences;

(b) That Parties have the skills to collect, manage, analyse and monitor quantitative data related to UNCCD biophysical progress indicators; and

(c) That Parties are able to identify opportunities for UNCCD implementation.

11. The main deliverables of the GSP II include (a) the introduction of an interactive simplified reporting template; (b) the preparation of e-learning tools, online tutorials and user guidance manuals; (c) the provision of technical backstopping through an online helpdesk and regional experts; (d) the provision of global default data for the UNCCD biophysical indicators (i.e. land cover, land productivity and soil organic carbon); (e) the assessment of financial flows designated for the implementation of the Convention; (f) the organization of regional capacity building workshops; and (g) the provision of technical assistance and guidance to establish monitoring systems related to UNCCD indicators at national level.

12. In the context of the GSP II, the secretariat provided default data related to biophysical indicators to country Parties for the first time for the 2017–2018 reporting cycle. Considering the availability of quantitative data and synergies with the SDG 15.3.1 reporting, country Parties were encouraged to involve the National Statistics Office (NSO) and other specialized institutions and stakeholders in the reporting process.

13. During the 2017–2018 reporting cycle, a 71 per cent reporting rate (141 Parties) was achieved with the support of the GSP II. The programme also helped country Parties to increase the consistency and reliability of the data and information provided by the reporting entities.

14. CRIC17 deliberations underscored the need for capacity building and suggested continuous targeted support for reporting and monitoring using the UNCCD indicators. The regional capacity building workshops were conducted at a large scale, involving a wide range of stakeholders at regional level. GSP II is playing a key role in highlighting the significance of the UNCCD indicators to monitor land resources and creating awareness about land degradation and desertification and the UNCCD agenda in the context of SDGs.

15. Through the support provided under the GSP II at global and regional levels, the GM sought operational synergies at national level with the GEF-funded Umbrella Project activities, implemented by UNEP, which further supported the country-level data/information compilation and timely submission of the national UNCCD reports.

III. Future potential areas of support for United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification reporting

16. Learning from the implementation experience of the GSP I and II, and based on the comments received from country Parties during the GSP activities as well as at CRIC 17,

future support for UNCCD reporting may include, inter alia, three areas of particular importance to facilitate the continuous improvement of the reporting process:

(a) The provision of updated and improved reporting tools, including a system whereby geospatial data, default data and general reporting tools will be available to Parties at an adequate time prior to the next reporting period that also can be used for national monitoring. The improved reporting tools may also include new and improved data sets of UNCCD biophysical indicators to be made available to Parties as well as a quality assurance system to be put in place enough in advance of reporting deadlines to ensure quality checks for reports;

(b) The delivery of capacity building activities for Parties, including through e-learning modules on reporting, on-line tutorials and regional workshops with hands-on training on land degradation monitoring tools, also in the context of the SDG reporting process. Such activities would be complemented by continuous regular backstopping to be provided to Parties during the reporting period; and

(c) The strengthening of partnerships with relevant organizations to continue improving the tracking of financial resources for UNCCD implementation.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

17. The GSP I and II have effectively increased the capacities of country Parties to fulfil their reporting requirements under the UNCCD.

18. Reporting under the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework requires country Parties to integrate all available spatial data sources and involve data providers, including NSOs and other relevant stakeholders, including the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), under the framework of its GEO LDN initiative, in the reporting process in coherence with the SDG process.

19. The following are recommendations for possible consideration by the Parties at COP 14:

(a) **Invite the GEF to continue providing support to country Parties to meet their reporting obligations under the Convention by providing adequate financial resources through its Enabling Activities funding;**

(b) **Also invite UNEP, in collaboration with the secretariat and the GM of the UNCCD, to develop a new support programme in consultation with the GEF secretariat to enable country Parties to meet the reporting obligations of the UNCCD for the next reporting cycle;**

(c) **Encourage country Parties to enhance linkages with national spatial data infrastructure and data providers, including NSOs, to ensure the integration and harmonization of relevant data for the UNCCD reporting process in coherence with the SDG process;**

(d) **Request the secretariat and the GM of the UNCCD to further strengthen their collaboration and partnerships with relevant organizations, including on data management related to the UNCCD indicators and tracking of financial flows for the implementation of the Convention;**

(e) **Invite UNEP to continue providing well-coordinated and timely support for UNCCD reporting at national level through the Umbrella Project; and**

(f) **Encourage the secretariat, the GM of the UNCCD and UNEP to ensure close coordination and synergies between any new global support programme and the Umbrella Project for the upcoming UNCCD reporting cycle.**