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

Performance of Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies

Report on the performance of Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies (2018–2019)

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 (see decision 1/COP.13), 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 2018–2019 by each unit of the secretariat and the GM. In addition, this document provides a summary of the resources utilized in 2018–2019.

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I. Introduction

1. The secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) 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. At the end of each biennium, the secretariat and the GM provide information on their performance in implementing the workplan and programme, following an RBM approach.
2. This performance report presents the results achieved and resources utilized by the secretariat and the GM in 2018–2019 (as at 31 May 2019), building on the UNCCD results framework contained in decision 1/COP.13. 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 2018–2019 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 2018–2019, which is contained in document ICCD/COP(14)/8.

II. Overview of expenditures

4. Table 1 presents expenditure as at 31 May 2019 by secretariat programme and the GM in the Trust Fund for the Core Budget of the UNCCD, amounting to EUR 9.7 million, or 67.5 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 1.8 million for the drought initiative.
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 implement 98.6 per cent of budgeted resources by the end of 2019 after taking into account planned expenditure.

Table 1
Expenditure by programme as at 31 May 2019
 (Euros)

	<i>Approved budget 2018–2019</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 May 2019</i>	<i>Expenditure forecast June–Dec. 2019</i>	<i>Total expenditure 31 Dec 2019</i>	<i>Projected balance as at 31 Dec 2019</i>
<i>I. Secretariat programmes</i>					
A. Executive direction and management	2 050 085	1 567 543	690 741	2 258 284	(208,199)
B. External relations, policy and advocacy	2 172 900	1 335 181	630 108	1 965 289	207,611
C. Science, Technology and Implementation	3 953 400	2 542 362	1 269 054	3 811 416	141,984
D. Administrative services	2 050 085	1 567 543	690 741	2 492 215	16,836
<i>II. Global Mechanism</i>					
E. Global Mechanism	3 640 300	2 494 053	1 103 726	3 597 778	42,522
Total Core Budget (A–E)	14 325 736	9 666 259	4 458 723	14 124 982	200 754
Drought Initiative	1 815 651	655 817	877 000	1 532 871	282 780

Table 2
Expenditure by object of expenditure in the core budget of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism as at 31 May 2019

(Euros)

<i>Object of expenditure</i>	<i>Approved budget 2018–2019</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 May 2019</i>	<i>Expenditure forecast June–Dec. 2019</i>	<i>Total expenditure 31 Dec 2019</i>	<i>Projected Balance as at 31 Dec 2019</i>
Staff and other personnel costs	10 581 075	7 362 884	2 808 803	10 171 687	409 388
Consultants	691 100	304 194	463 205	767 399	(76 299)
Official travel	660 286	623 828	141 862	765 690	(105 404)
Training	154 000	65 822	30 000	95 822	58 178
Hospitality	22 000	8 352		8 352	13 648
General operating expenses	1 193 375	469 728	693 300	1 163 028	30 347
Supplies and equipment	92 000	80 140		80 140	11 860
Joint administration costs (UNBONN/UNOG)	931 900	751 311	321 553	1 072 864	(140 964)
TOTAL	14 325 736	9 666 259	4 458 723	14 124 982	200 754

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

7. Table 3 presents expenditure under the core budget for the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) as at 31 May 2019. These expenditures cover the arrangements for meetings of the Bureau of the CST.

Table 3
Expenditure by object of expenditure in the core budget of the Committee on Science and Technology as at 31 May 2019

(Euros)

<i>Object of expenditure</i>	<i>Approved budget 2018– 2019</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 May 2019</i>	<i>Expenditure as a percentage of the budget</i>
Consultants	0.0	12 930	0.0
Official travel	68 400	13 604	20.0
Logistical arrangements	7 600	1 932	25.4
TOTAL	76 000	28 466	37.5

8. Table 4 provides information on expenditure under the core budget for the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) as at 31 May 2019. These expenditures cover the arrangements for meetings of the Bureau of the CRIC.

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 2019

(Euros)

<i>Object of expenditure</i>	<i>Approved budget 2018–2019</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 May 2019</i>	<i>Expenditure as a percentage of the budget</i>
Consultants	0.0	15 097	0.0
Official travel	68 400	9 380	13.7
Logistical arrangements	7 600	00	0.0
TOTAL	76 000	24 477	32.2

9. Tables 5, 6 and 7 provide an overview of the distribution of posts held by staff members on fixed-term appointments. As at 31 May 2019, 55 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 2019

	<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	3	0	0	0	0	3	3 ^a	10	6
P-4	7	5	2	2	0	0	4	4 ^b	13	11
P-3	4	6	3	3	1	1	1	1	9	11
P-2	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	3
Subtotal	21	18	6	6	1	1	8	8	36	33
GS	10	9	0	0	3	3	10	10 ^b	23	22
Total	31	27	6	6	4	4	18	18	59	55

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

^a One staff member is currently serving under a temporary appointment at the D-1 level.

^b 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 2019

	<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	0	0	0	1	0
P-4	2	2	0	0	2	2
P-3	4	4	0	0	4	4
P-2	2	1	1	1	3	2
Subtotal	10	8	1	1	11	9
GS	4	3	0	0	4	3
Total	14	11	1	1	15	12

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

Table 7
Distribution of all filled posts by grade as at 31 May 2019

<i>Grade</i>	<i>EDM</i>	<i>ERPA</i>	<i>STI</i>	<i>AS</i>	<i>GM</i>	<i>Total</i>
USG	1	0	0	0	0	1
D-2	1	0	0	0	0	1
D-1	0	0	0	0	1	1
P-5	2	2	1	1	0	6
P-4	2	0	8	1	2	13
P-3	1	6	2	2	4	15
P-2	0	1	2	0	2	5
Subtotal	7	9	13	4	9	42
GS	4	4	2	12	3	25
Total	11	13	15	16	12	67

Abbreviations: AS = Administrative Services, EDM = Executive Direction and Management, ERPA = External Relations, Policy and Advocacy, GM = Global Mechanism, STI = Science, Technology and Implementation.

10. Table 8 shows the geographical distribution and gender of staff members at the professional level or above appointed to the secretariat and the GM.

Table 8

Geographical distribution and gender of all filled posts at the professional category and above as at 31 May 2019

<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	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
D-2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
D-1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
P-5	3	1	0	0	2	4	2	6
P-4	1	4	2	0	6	7	6	13
P-3	2	3	2	1	7	8	7	15
P-2	1	1	0	0	3	4	1	5
Subtotal	8	10	5	1	18	26	16	42
Percentage of total	19.0	23.8	11.9	2.4	42.9	62.0	38.0	100.0

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

III. Main accomplishments in 2018–2019: The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification results framework

11. The 2018–2021 results framework, as contained in decision 1/COP.13, is constructed around the five strategic objectives of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. It presents four-year (2018–2021) 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.

12. In the next pages, the 2018–2019 achievements are presented as brief statements on how the work carried out by the secretariat and the GM has contributed to meeting the strategic objectives. Following each strategic objective, a more detailed description of the progress made toward the respective four-year outcomes, with a focus on the content reflected in their indicators, is presented as well.

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

13. With the support of the secretariat and the GM, the majority of country Parties identified national priorities, as the land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets, to effectively address desertification/land degradation and committed to related action. The new UNCCD national reporting system established the basis for continuous monitoring of progress in national implementation. It ensured cost-effectiveness and comparability of data by using existing data sources as the basis, while motivating national ownership and capacity development by requesting countries to refine the proposed data. Both the LDN targets and the UNCCD national reporting are directly linked with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and thus contribute to the global cooperation priorities.

14. The potential of LDN as an accelerator and integrator for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its critical role in carbon sequestration and the implementation of the Paris Agreement has gained increased recognition and has also become acknowledged by the United Nations General Assembly. The secretariat and the GM contributed to better awareness of LDN and related measures, facilitated the work of the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) on LDN, and ensured continuous dissemination of new LDN information. Their awareness-raising and advocacy functions and the availability of scientific

information that can be used for political decision-making are critical for mustering the needed political, technical and financial support for the countries to progress toward LDN.

2018–2021 main outcome 1.1: Reduction of the area affected by desertification/land degradation

Over 120 affected countries have worked on national planning of priority actions to address desertification/land degradation through the LDN target-setting, several “Greening Drylands” projects were implemented, and awareness of LDN and related measures was raised.

Indicator 1.1: Affected country Parties implement activities towards achieving the targets they have set for addressing land degradation and rehabilitation.

In 2018–2019, the focus of activities toward this outcome was on establishing national voluntary LDN targets and preparing for the launch of related projects. As at 31 May 2019, 122 countries had joined the GM-led LDN Target-Setting Programme (LDN TSP) to establish their LDN targets and develop the baseline data for measuring progress against those targets. The countries were supported to establish national LDN working groups, identify LDN trends and drivers, define national LDN baselines and targets, and secure political commitment to achieve those targets. The LDN TSP offered: (a) technical guidance on the operationalization and measurement of the LDN indicators; (b) default LDN datasets to support baseline development and target-setting; (c) financial support for the organization of in-country workshops, consultations and travel; and (d) – for most participating countries – the employment of a national consultant. For each country, the core deliverables were a final report compiling national analyses along with the baselines and targets, and a high-level note confirming political commitment to the national LDN targets.

As at 31 May 2019, 84 countries had established their voluntary LDN targets. A compilation of national information about the LDN targets in 64 countries as well as LDN country profiles of 30 countries were made available through the UNCCD Knowledge Hub. 67 countries had mapped ideas for transformative LDN projects and programmes.¹

An independent terminal evaluation of the LDN TSP was concluded in April 2019. This evaluation assessed the programme against the criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, progress to impact and sustainability, as well as a cross-cutting criterion looking at participation and gender mainstreaming. The results of the evaluation were largely positive, and the high volume of co-financing that was mobilized and the results of establishing national baselines and defining national LDN targets were commended in particular. The knowledge management and gender integration aspects of the programme were found to be lower than planned, but overall the evaluation stated that the programme had succeeded in laying critical foundations for achieving the long-term impact of LDN.

The implementation of “Greening Drylands” projects aiming to support LDN activities continued in Armenia, Belarus and Ecuador, and planning of actions advanced in Benin and Ethiopia. Most of the activities under these projects are about land restoration; for example, in Belarus, 900 hectares of dried peatlands were rehabilitated.

With the aim of increasing awareness of LDN activities and approaches, related information and publications were disseminated and promoted through regular updates to the UNCCD social media channels and library, in addition to the Knowledge Hub repository.

LDN matters were brought up in the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development that reviewed in depth the progress made on Goal 15 concerning life on land. In the ministerial declaration of that forum, the participating countries committed to stepping up efforts on all fronts to tackle desertification, land degradation, erosion and drought, and called upon all United Nations Member States and observers to implement the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework as a framework to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.

2018–2021 main outcome 1.2: Up-to-date information on the status of desertification/land degradation

First national reporting against the UNCCD strategic objectives was successfully completed and the link between UNCCD reporting and SDG monitoring was strengthened.

Indicator 1.2: Affected country Parties report on the status of land degradation and related activities.

A functional reporting system, including an updated PRAIS (performance review and assessment of implementation system) portal, was developed. New reporting templates were introduced and the template for reporting against the strategic objectives was pre-filled for each country with the default data from existing sources. A specific template was developed for civil society organizations (CSOs). Via the PRAIS portal, Parties had access to tools for processing and validating geospatial data and for data visualization, with the aim of supporting the analysis of data.

To support countries in preparing their reports, a glossary and detailed manuals were provided for the reporting templates. Five regional training workshops and an e-learning course were organized, and an online helpdesk was

¹ More information about the land degradation neutrality transformative project development is under outcome 5.2.

available throughout the reporting process. A team of data consultants assisted in ensuring the quality of data, notably on issues relating to statistical data and the three land-based indicators. In addition, a team of regional consultants supported the non-technical aspects of the reporting process. The activities carried out for and during the reporting process were financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through a Global Support Programme (GSP) implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) and executed by the GM, in collaboration with the secretariat.

141 countries (approximately 80 percent of all Parties) submitted a national report. Of them, approximately 92 percent reported quantitative data for the three key biophysical indicators under strategic objective 1 (indicators for land cover, land productivity and soil organic carbon (SOC)). The data contained in those 127 reports that were submitted within the given deadline was reviewed at CRIC 17 held in Georgetown, Guyana in January 2019, resulting in recommendations on a range of actions for consideration at COP 14.

To further support countries' ability to process, interpret and validate geospatial data, the secretariat collaborated with the Group of Earth Observations (GEO) on a new LDN initiative. This initiative, launched in November 2018, aims to bring together Earth observation data providers and governments to develop the quality standards, analytical tools and capacity-building needed to strengthen land degradation monitoring and reporting, using remote sensing and data collected on site.

The UNCCD is the custodian agency for the SDG 15 land degradation indicator, and the national reporting under the Convention contributes to the regional and global reporting on the SDG 15.3 target. The secretariat has actively participated in the development of the Good Practice Guidance on the SDG 15.3.1 indicator, and the outcomes of 2018–2019 UNCCD reporting provide a critical share of the data on this SDG indicator. This data will be featured for the first time in 2019 in the official documentation for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, both in the progress reports and the statistical documents.

2018–2021 main outcome 1.3: Affected country Parties use science-based policy-relevant information deriving from the UNCCD in addressing desertification/land degradation, promoting sustainable land management and contributing to LDN.

The SPI was supported in producing two peer-reviewed technical reports to guide the implementation of LDN, one focusing on enhancing soil organic carbon and another one on creating an enabling environment. The SPI reports and other science-based policy-relevant information of LDN were disseminated online and through the representation functions of the secretariat.

Indicator 1.3 Scientific cooperation involving the UNCCD delivers policy-relevant science-based information for addressing desertification/land degradation, promoting sustainable land management (SLM) and contributing to LDN.

The first objective of the SPI work programme for 2018–2019 was to provide refined guidance for the implementation of LDN through two subobjectives: (1) advice on the design and implementation of LDN-related policies and initiatives that bring about multiple environmental and development benefits and synergies with other Rio conventions, in particular for climate change adaptation and mitigation actions; and (2) science-based evidence on the potential contribution of LDN to enhancing the well-being and livelihoods as well as the environmental conditions of people affected by desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD). For subobjective 1, the SPI produced a technical report which provides guidance to help countries (a) identify suitable context-specific SLM technologies and approaches to maintain or enhance SOC stocks and (b) estimate and monitor SOC for land-use planning and for monitoring LDN. For subobjective 2, the SPI produced a technical report based on a global survey to support countries in creating an enabling environment for LDN planning and implementation, which focused on four dimensions: appropriate and inclusive policies and regulations; engaged institutions; access to finance; and an effective science–policy interface.

The UNCCD Knowledge Hub was also developed to offer national focal points and other interested stakeholders easy access to SPI products and other science-based policy-relevant information, including a new section on SLM. The UNCCD Science-Policy Blog was launched in April 2018 for scientists, experts, practitioners, policy-makers and journalists to share their insights, expertise and ideas with other UNCCD stakeholders.

The secretariat provided scientific inputs concerning DLDD, LDN and SLM to numerous requests from researchers and journalists, contributed on request to relevant publications, and presented in several major scientific congresses as well as in bilateral talks with various countries, organizations and foundations.

B. Strategic objective 2: To improve the living conditions of affected populations

15. The potential of land-based activities in addressing stability and security was increasingly recognized, and the UNCCD has become an important partner to many

organizations working on related matters. The African Initiative on Sustainability, Stability and Security (3S Initiative) provided political leadership and supported the participating countries in translating their aims into concrete action. These developments pave the way for a more effective use of UNCCD implementation to address stability and security issues.

16. The role of women is often critically important for maintaining and improving soil fertility and the productivity of land. Gender issues were integrated into all UNCCD guidance for activities and programmes concerning LDN, drought, and sand and dust storms, with the aim of ensuring that women can be active agents of positive change as well as beneficiaries in addressing DLDD.

2018–2021 main outcome 2.1: Affected country Parties use land-based activities for improving stability and security

The secretariat made available evidence-based information about the potential of land-based activities in addressing stability and security, building on good practices and lessons learned. Further examples, as well as political spearheading, is delivered through the 3S Initiative, and support to country level actions is mobilized through new partnerships.

Indicator 2.1: The potential of land-based activities in improving security and stability is recognized.

With the aim of making available evidence-based information on the land degradation-security nexus, the secretariat launched a call for examples of related good practices in 2018. The contributions that were received formed the basis of a study that the secretariat has commissioned on the role that measures taken to implement the Convention can play in addressing DLDD as one of the drivers that cause migration. The study identifies remaining gaps in research and policy and provides policy recommendations on ways forward.

With support from the secretariat, seven African countries developed project concept notes to demonstrate that restoring degraded lands can play a significant role in stabilizing communities and reducing irregular migration. These concept notes are part of the 3S Initiative, and while each of them has specific national aims, all include activities that restore degraded lands, improve productivity and help avoid further degradation, create land-based jobs that restore/rehabilitate lands, reduce the land degradation-related drivers of migration/youth radicalization, strengthen value chains for local produce, and ensure access and tenure to the land that is to be rehabilitated or restored.

The secretariat assisted the 3S Initiative in preparing the strategic documents supporting its governance, developing its website² and communication tools, and conducting effective high-level advocacy. Examples of 3S Initiative countries' high-level advocacy include the statements delivered by the respective Heads of States and Governments at the United Nations General Assembly and their inputs to the Global Compact for Migration process, which resulted in the recognition of DLDD as one of the drivers that cause migration in the Compact. To further support the 3S Initiative, the secretariat is collaborating with the African Development Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the European Investment Bank to identify joint actions to create jobs for unemployed rural youth and potential and returning migrants.

The secretariat has continued to partner with the International Organization for Migration to increase understanding of the challenges and opportunities relating to the interlinkages between human mobility and land degradation and create political momentum to bring these questions into global policy agendas. Other important partners for the land degradation-security nexus include the International Labour Organization, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Climate Security Mechanism housed within the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

2018–2021 main outcome 2.2: Gender issues are increasingly taken into account in plans to address DLDD

The secretariat and the GM, in collaboration with partners, provided guidance and training to Parties and other key stakeholders for the integration of gender issues into the activities and programmes concerning LDN, drought, and sand and dust storms. The secretariat joined the United Nations system framework for strengthening its own accountability and monitoring of the implementation of gender equality.

Indicator 2.2: Affected country Parties use UNCCD guidance and technical advice on integrating gender issues into UNCCD implementation and the design of transformative LDN projects.

In line with the Gender Action Plan adopted at COP 13, the secretariat and the GM, together with UN Women, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP),

² <www.3s-initiative.org>.

promoted the integration of gender issues into the activities and programmes concerning LDN, drought and sand and dust storms.

A checklist for gender-responsiveness was developed as part of the guidance for designing transformative LDN projects and programmes. Three technical workshops on gender mainstreaming in LDN programming were organized, providing training on how to include the gender perspective in the LDN project cycle to more than 100 national focal points and representatives of CSOs and women's farmers groups. Further regional workshops are planned in Africa and Asia. Building on the experiences and lessons learned during the workshops, UN Women, in partnership with IUCN and the UNCCD, developed a manual that provides step-by-step guidance to Parties on integrating gender issues and promoting gender equality in the design of transformative LDN projects. In addition, a policy brief on gender and LDN was developed, and a gender help desk was established to assist in the gender responsiveness of LDN project proposals.

In the context of the Drought Initiative, the secretariat and the GM provided technical advice on gender issues. A guiding paper highlighting gender entry points in the national drought plan was prepared, and the above-mentioned gender help desk was assigned to support also the national drought plans that are prepared under the Drought Initiative. UNDP is currently supporting three countries in piloting the development of a gender-responsive national drought plan.

The first step towards gender mainstreaming in activities concerning sand and dust storms was taken by the secretariat with UN Women, as the sand and dust storms compendium, prepared by the secretariat in collaboration with the SPI and numerous partners, was reviewed to ensure that gender considerations are addressed throughout the publication.

In addition to promoting the integration of gender issues into the above-mentioned activities and programmes, the secretariat and the GM organized and contributed to a range of capacity-building and awareness-raising activities on gender. These activities include participation in the development of the Open Online Course on Gender and Environment led by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), a gender mainstreaming training course back-to-back with CRIC 17 in January 2019, high-level representation at selected events focusing on the empowerment of women, and the publication of various related op-eds, press releases and media stories.

To strengthen its own accountability around gender equality, the secretariat enrolled in the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP) in 2018, which is the first unified accountability framework in the United Nations system to accelerate and support strengthened gender mainstreaming in all functions of United Nations system entities. The first UN-SWAP report was submitted in January 2019, and its review will provide an assessment on the status of gender mainstreaming in the UNCCD and indications of potential areas for improvement.

2018–2021 main outcome 3.1: The effects of drought are better mitigated and managed, building on the support and information deriving from the UNCCD

Over 70 countries have joined the UNCCD Drought Initiative with the aim of developing their national drought plan, and the online Drought Toolbox offers easy access to best practices, methods, evidence and knowledge that countries can deploy to mitigate the impacts of drought. SPI developed the concept of 'drought-smart land management' and guidance for its application.

Indicator 3.1: Affected country Parties use the UNCCD guidance and technical advice concerning drought and sand and dust storms.

2018–2021 main outcome 3.2: Early warning concerning drought and/or sand and dust storms is increasingly applied, building on the support and information deriving from the UNCCD

The secretariat produced guidance for conducting bottom-up drought vulnerability assessments that contribute to broader national risk and vulnerability assessments.

On sand and dust storms, a global base map was developed to provide initial baseline data and a source area map, with the aim of facilitating sand and dust storms monitoring, related planning and risk assessments. Guidance on assessing and addressing the risks posed by sand and dust storms and further practical information through pilot projects are also under preparation.

Active collaboration and coordination with a growing group of partners was a critical aspect of the success of activities for both drought and sand and dust storms.

Indicator 3.2: Partnerships and collaboration are established on early warning concerning drought and/or sand and dust storms.

As the activities and outputs concerning outcomes 3.1 and 3.2 are closely interlinked, they are presented together below, with one section on drought and another one on sand and dust storms.

Drought: The secretariat and the GM implemented the Drought Initiative 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, a review of methods for drought vulnerability assessments, new partnerships and collaboration, and capacity-building were carried out.

For the Drought Initiative, the secretariat prepared background documentation to support national drought planning, including a model national drought plan, technical guidelines and a manual on gender mainstreaming for drought preparedness. The GM made two calls for expressions of interest to countries for participating in the Initiative, the first of which resulted in 44 responses and the second in 27 responses. Qualified national experts were recruited to support the national process, and a professional review of the draft plans was arranged as well.

As at 31 May 2019, 30 countries had developed their national drought plans and the remaining 14 countries from the first call are set to finalize theirs by the end of the year. Engagement has started with most of the 27 countries from the second call.

In terms of regional cooperation, the secretariat and the GM have begun designing, testing and implementing pilot projects in Southern and Western Africa as well as Central Asia. A regional training measure focusing on drought preparedness and adaptation is planned for countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The Drought Toolbox, prepared as part of the Drought Initiative, was launched in May 2019, after being validated through a technical workshop. This online toolbox was prepared in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Water Partnership, the National Drought Mitigation Center of the University of Nebraska, the UNEP-DHI Partnership and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). It compiles practical drought risk mitigation measures and policy options with the aim of providing drought stakeholders with easy access to best practices, methods, evidence and knowledge to mitigate the impacts of drought. The toolbox was developed as part of the UNCCD Knowledge Hub.

The secretariat, together with FAO and WMO, commissioned a study on vulnerability assessment methods related to drought. The review identifies three approaches that can be combined for bottom-up vulnerability assessments, which can contribute to broader national assessments to identify both the long- and short-term impact of drought on their national expenditures and economies.

All UNCCD activities concerning drought are implemented in cooperation with partners. In addition to the partners mentioned above, the secretariat and the GM are also working with the Drought Management Centre for South Eastern Europe, the International Water Management Institute, the International Water Youth Network, UfM, UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and UN Water, among other entities.

In 2018–2019, objective 2 of the SPI is about providing guidance for the adoption and implementation of land-based interventions for drought management and mitigation. To meet this objective, the SPI carried out an extensive scientific review, followed by an assessment of 14 categories of SLM measures in 4 land use types, which built on existing UNCCD initiatives in the context of LDN. The assessment, contained in a technical report entitled “Land-drought nexus: enhancing the role of land-based interventions in drought mitigation and risk management”, resulted in a scientifically sound basis to understand how land management can contribute to drought mitigation and risk management, leading to a proposal for a new concept of drought-smart land management and practical guidance, which is to be scaled up. A summary of its key findings and related conclusions and proposals have been submitted for consideration by the CST.

Sand and dust storms: The secretariat, in collaboration with the SPI, UNEP and the WMO, has developed a Global Sand and Dust Storms Base-Map that presents initial global level baseline data and a source area map, including hotspots. This map is built on open-access global data sets and information, including remote sensing imagery, with a focus on soil surface status. It is meant to assist in defining sand and dust storm source patterns, including small-scale and point sources, which is important for planning mitigation, source monitoring, early warning, and risk, impact and vulnerability assessments concerning sand and dust storms. In the development of the Base-Map, national and regional pilot projects were initiated to test and improve resolution and accuracy and to provide input to the calibration and interpolation of parameters in the data processing. A prototype of a web-based user interface is under development.

With the aim of providing information and methodologies to define the scope of sand and dust storm impacts and the plans to address these impacts, the secretariat, in collaboration with the FAO, SPI, UNDP, UN Environment, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, UN Women, WMO and the World Health Organization, is developing a science-based communication with the working title “Sand and dust storms compendium: Information and guidance on assessing and addressing the risks posed by sand and dust storms”. The compendium will include approaches and methodology frameworks for gender aggregated data collection, assessment, monitoring, forecasting, early warning, impact mitigation and preparedness, and source mapping.

Pilot projects with a focus on sand and dust storm impact mitigation have been initiated to assist in the development of national and regional plans and frameworks in China, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Mongolia, Nigeria, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Iraq, Mongolia and Pakistan were assisted in integrating measures concerning sand and dust storm source mitigation into their work on LDN target-setting.

In collaboration with the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology, UNEP and WMO, the secretariat organized training on sand and dust storms back-to-back with CRIC 17 in January 2019. Building on the draft compendium, the secretariat, in collaboration with UNEP and WMO, is developing further training modules and e-learning material on sand and dust storms risk management.

With regard to partnerships and coordination, the secretariat attended the United Nations General Assembly High-level Interactive Dialogue on Sand and Dust Storms, held in July 2018, to discuss action-oriented recommendations and address the challenges faced by the affected countries, including ways to improve policy coordination at the global level. This Dialogue contributed to the launching of the United Nations Coalition to Combat Sand and Dust Storms in September 2018, which also involves the UNCCD. The Coalition aims to prepare a global response to sand and dust storms, including a strategy and action plan, which could result in the development of a United Nations system-wide approach to addressing sand and dust storms.

The secretariat has also collaborated with the Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought Northeast Asia Network in the development of a subregional plan of action for the prevention and control of dust and sand storms; and with UNEP, WMO and other specialized agencies, institutions and countries in organizing meetings, training sessions and workshops on sand and dust storms.

C. Strategic objective 3: To mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems

17. Over 70 countries are developing comprehensive national drought plans that promote proactive drought preparedness and risk mitigation measures. The SPI guided the implementation of these measures by offering a conceptual and scientific basis for integrating them into LDN implementation, thus contributing to a more coherent and cost-effective implementation of the UNCCD.

18. Important pieces of information on both drought and sand and dust storms were produced during the biennium 2018–2019. The online Drought Toolbox, guidance for conducting bottom-up drought vulnerability assessments, the Global Sand and Dust Storms Base-Map and the sand and dust storms compendium are meant to provide practical, easily accessible support to countries for carrying out their activities. The usefulness of the information was further improved by targeted capacity-building.

19. The secretariat and the GM used partnerships, coordination and collaboration, ranging from joint publications to participation in United Nations system-wide strategic planning, as critically important success factors for all activities on drought and sand and dust storms.

D. Strategic objective 4: To generate global environmental benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD

20. Contribution to the aims of the two other Rio conventions was among the priority aspects of many activities supported by the secretariat and the GM, including the preparation of the LDN transformative projects and programmes, national reporting, and guidance on drought preparedness and sand and dust storms. During the biennium 2018–2019, progress was also made in linking the scientific work under the three conventions, notably through SPI participation in the scientific review of the reports of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). These reports will guide future work on biodiversity and climate change, and the inputs resulting from SPI participation will assist in the inclusion of UNCCD priorities in activities under the other conventions and vice versa.

2018–2021 main outcome 4.1: The UNCCD process contributes to, and benefits from, synergies with the other Rio conventions and related cooperation processes on climate change and biodiversity

Through the SPI, the UNCCD inputs are effectively incorporated into the work of the IPCC and IPBES.

Indicator 4.1: IPCC and IPBES take into account the inputs from the UNCCD.

Indicator 4.2: Development of joint indicators with the other Rio conventions advances.

A large part of the work on advancing cooperation and synergies with the conventions on climate change and biodiversity is embedded into the outcomes under other strategic objectives. This section focuses on the secretariat's support to the SPI in contributing to the work of the IPCC and IPBES and cooperation with activities of the UNFCCC and CBD.

The UNCCD was recognized as a key potential user of and key contributor to the IPBES Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration. The SPI and the secretariat submitted over 500 comments to the IPBES assessment with the aim of ensuring that the assessment is of relevance to the UNCCD process and the needs of its Parties. The secretariat also commented on the relevance of key policy messages of the assessment for ongoing LDN activities. The recommendations of the IPBES assessment are submitted for the consideration of Parties within the official documentation for CST 14.

The SPI, in close collaboration with the secretariat, clarified the potential benefits, costs, conditions and procedures for establishing a more formal relationship with IPBES. On that basis, a Memorandum of Cooperation was prepared and, in January 2019, signed between the secretariats of the IPBES and the UNCCD.

The SPI contributed to the scientific review of the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land, submitting 250 and 461 comments on the first and second order drafts, respectively. The SPI also developed a plan for the review of the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, particularly the working group II assessment of impacts, adaptation and vulnerability and the working group III assessment of mitigation of climate, when these become available. The secretariat provided inputs to the work of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies on the "Koronivia joint work on agriculture", placing particular emphasis on methods and approaches for assessing adaptation, adaptation co-benefits and resilience; improved soil carbon, soil health and soil fertility under grassland and cropland; as well as integrated systems, including water management.

In April 2019, the secretariat and the SPI organized a session at the climate change National Adaptation Plan Expo with a focus on identifying challenges in pursuing projects and programmes designed to meet climate change adaptation and LDN targets simultaneously. The session revealed that addressing land degradation and climate change adaptation are often pursued independently: (a) lack of awareness about the compatibility of adaptation and LDN approaches; (b) the fear of "double counting"; (c) limited formally-endorsed guidance; and (d) a lack of emphasis on these synergies in existing project preparation facilities.

Two initiatives have been central to efforts of the secretariat to encourage the development of indicators relevant to all three Rio conventions. The GEO LDN Initiative that was presented under outcome 1.2 bridges related GEO initiatives focused on biodiversity and climate change. The secretariat also participates in the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, which has added these indicators to the list of indicators relevant to Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

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

21. The GM approached resource mobilization from various mutually supportive perspectives.

22. Countries were provided hands-on support to develop "bankable" projects based on their LDN targets, with a focus on avoiding the usual bottlenecks at an early phase of the project preparation.

23. The GEF and other multilateral financial institutions were familiarized with the main aspects of LDN so as to advance the integration of LDN into the programming frameworks of these institutions and thereby make it easier for LDN projects to access the funding.

24. Potential practices to simultaneously restore degraded land, increase the productivity of small-scale farming and generate new land-based jobs were piloted, with the aim of identifying approaches that are attractive to investors and donors as well as clear to implement.

25. The information and evidence gained through the above-mentioned pilot projects were used for effective advocacy, notably with regard to the Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI), which has reached an unprecedented audience ranging from top level decision-makers to the general public.

26. The impacts of these activities, as investments advancing land restoration, are likely to materialize outside the UNCCD process. While they may be reflected in the next rounds of national reports, one indication of success is already available: the LDN Fund, which was developed through the active involvement of the GM and is now fully functional, having received over USD 100 million in commitments and launched its first project in January 2019.

2018–2021 main outcome 5.1: Improved access to resources for implementation

24 countries were supported by the GM in translating their LDN targets into “bankable” projects, and access to major funding sources was facilitated through guidance to both the affected countries and the financial institutions.

The GM explored sustainable value chains for smallholder producers, approaches to generate land-based green jobs, and innovative partnerships with the aim of promoting investments in land restoration. The experiences gained through GM activities in the context of the GGWSSI provided valuable guidance in this regard, and they also served as material for effective advocacy.

Indicator 5.1: Scope of funding sources to address land degradation.

Indicator 5.2: Affected country Parties have improved capacity to translate their project ideas for UNCCD implementation into high-quality projects.

The GM assists country Parties in translating the technical and planning work concerning the national voluntary LDN targets into LDN transformative projects and programmes (TPPs). This assistance focuses on the early stages of project preparation and encourages the use of locally adapted technology and practices, innovative financial mechanisms (e.g. blended finance), and measures to address also biodiversity and/or climate change issues as well as design gender-responsive projects. As at 31 May 2019, the GM was supporting the development of 24 projects in countries that had requested assistance in developing LDN TPPs. This included the provision of national experts to assist the country stakeholders in preparing the project proposals, technical guidance on both format and content, support in linking the projects to other relevant ongoing activities, as well as training.

The GM has continued collaborating with the GEF in supporting the activities of the UNCCD, including the provision of inputs to the development of TPP concept notes targeting GEF funding; the development of a checklist for the LDN TPP to help country-level project developers and their technical and financial partners seeking funding from the GEF and other financing institutions; technical advice to the GEF Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes; and support to enabling activities of the GEF concerning UNCCD obligations. The GM is also engaging other multilateral funding and technical entities in capacity-building events to disseminate information on the technical aspects of LDN and facilitate exchanges with the UNCCD national focal points and other key stakeholders.

In the context of the GGWSSI, the GM has sought to identify and further develop innovative approaches to address land degradation and secure related resources. Through the *Front Local Environnemental pour une Union Verte* (local environmental coalition for a green union) (FLEUVE) project, the GM supported local communities to boost investments in land restoration and green job creation through demand-driven value chains. This included the introduction and upscaling of sustainable forest and agricultural production techniques, facilitating in-country processing of valuable dryland products (e.g. moringa, baobab) to organic standards for international export, as well as linking smallholder producers to global buyers. The GM has also piloted a Great Green Entrepreneurs training programme to spearhead the creation of ‘land-based green jobs’ through the establishment of sustainable value chains. These activities are generating lessons on how to use land-based economic activities to trigger improved rural livelihoods and provide new opportunities particularly for vulnerable youth and women in the drylands. The GM is incorporating these lessons into the design of new projects that can promote additional investments by using land restoration activities to highlight the enormous potential arising from the rich natural and human endowments of the Sahel.

With the aim of raising awareness and mobilizing new partners for the GGWSSI, the GM has continued its advocacy campaign “Growing a World Wonder” that has so far reached millions of people through mass media outreach, virtual reality, high-level events and civil society outreach. The campaign has been covered in a number of media outlets such as The Guardian, the Daily Telegraph and the BBC, and has resulted in funding for GGWSSI from private and public actors. A comprehensive report on the status of the GGWSSI, as well as a high-profile documentary and music production, are currently under preparation.

The LDN Fund, whose development was supported by the GM, is now a fully functional independent impact investment fund managed by a private sector investment management firm Mirova. As of 31 May 2019, it has announced more than USD 100 million in commitments from a wide range of investors. Its first investment in a revenue-generating SLM and land restoration project was made in January 2019. Also, the grant-making LDN Fund technical assistance facility, which is to provide technical support for projects that have the potential to receive funding through the LDN Fund and can be investment-ready within 24 months, has now become operational and issued a call for proposals, having secured USD 5 million for its functioning.

IV. Accomplishments by the unit of the secretariat

A. Executive Direction and Management

27. 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, coordinating cooperation with other organizations and reaching out to stakeholders worldwide to encourage their support for the objectives and implementation of the Convention. 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, CSOs and private sector entities to the UNCCD.

28. The New York Liaison Office (NYLO), as part of EDM, ensured political visibility for UNCCD issues before the United Nations 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 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. 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 secretariat of the “Group of Friends on DLDD”. NYLO also served as the focal point for relations with the GEF and participated in various World Bank programmes, such as the Annual Land and Poverty Conference, and continued to monitor and provide input to agenda-setting in key global processes and events, such as the Global Compact on Migration.

29. The UNCCD Evaluation Office, which functions as part of EDM, commissioned four evaluations during the biennium, and two more will be conducted before the end of 2019. The Evaluation Office also followed up on earlier UNCCD evaluations.

B. External Relations, Policy and Advocacy

30. The External Relations, Policy and Advocacy (ERPA) programme helps to position land and drought issues on key global and regional agendas and works to expand the engagement of critical stakeholders and partners. During the biennium 2018–2019, ERPA focused on the following four priorities:

- (a) Mainstreaming of policies that support the accelerated implementation of the Convention;
- (b) Increased recognition of the role of improved land and water management in delivering greater security and livelihood opportunities;
- (c) Partnerships and synergies so that UNCCD implementation delivers value; and
- (d) Streamlining and revitalizing of corporate communications of the UNCCD.

31. On the mainstreaming of policies, ERPA promoted LDN as an accelerator for delivering on multiple SDGs and advocated for land degradation and drought issues to be addressed in complementary sectoral approaches. It managed the implementation of the

UNCCD Gender Action Plan, coordinated the support provided by the UNCCD secretariat to the 3S Initiative, and advocated for the critical role of productive land in major global processes and events concerning migration. ERPA supported the implementation of the UNCCD Drought Initiative by providing technical and policy expertise in the development of national drought plans and coordinating the development of the Drought Toolbox, and carried out all activities concerning sand and dust storms under the UNCCD.

32. On ensuring that partnerships and synergies for UNCCD implementation deliver value, ERPA collaborated actively with stakeholder groups that are critical for the effective implementation of the Convention. Of these, CSOs were particularly important. ERPA supported the CSO Panel in meeting the recommendations of the 2017 independent evaluation, involving (i) the development of operational guidelines and a strategic plan for CSO participation in the UNCCD and the functioning of the Panel; and (ii) the establishment of a communication plan for the Panel. Further in line with the evaluation recommendations, ERPA continued supporting the effective participation of accredited CSOs in the UNCCD process at the global, regional and national levels, and facilitating the accreditation of CSOs. As at 31 May 2019, close to 60 new organizations had submitted their documents for accreditation as observers to the COP.

33. Following the launch of the new visual identity, the adoption of the revised UNCCD strategy at COP 13 and appointment of the new Executive Secretary, the implementation of the UNCCD Communication Plan was reviewed. The strategic orientation and the role of communication for advocacy were refined. More emphasis was placed on heightened visibility in the global media and digital transformation. ERPA collaborated with the SPI and Parties to produce engaging and policy-relevant materials such as brochures, guides and tools, and ensured that the UNCCD corporate website, social media channels, newsletter and the information services of the library are populated with dynamic and interactive content, which resulted in the increase of approximately 7,000 new subscribers to the newsletter and over 5,000 new followers on Twitter. Of the social media campaigns, the 2018 World Day to Combat Desertification was particularly successful: its hashtag received over 4.7 million impressions. ERPA carried out media outreach, journalist training and the placement of opinion editorials and ‘think pieces’ in leading influential and policy-relevant news outlets. ERPA also supported a UNCCD presence on a calendar of strategic advocacy and high-profile events that leverage significant impact and reach.

C. Science, Technology and Implementation

34. The Science, Technology and Implementation (STI) programme supports scientific cooperation, facilitates national reporting and review processes, and supports countries within each Regional Implementation Annex to implement the Convention. It also manages the secretariat’s functions on capacity-building and knowledge management.

35. Scientific cooperation is mostly supported through the CST and its SPI. In the biennium 2018–2019, STI supported the SPI in meeting its objectives for providing refined guidance for LDN implementation as well as for land-based interventions for drought management and mitigation. It also supported SPI coordination activities with six other scientific mechanisms and the preparation of policy options derived from the work of those mechanisms. In addition to substantive support, STI facilitated communication among the SPI members and organized a coordinating workshop and three full-fledged SPI meetings. The fourth SPI meeting is planned for August 2019. STI administered the consultants that supported the work of the SPI and assisted in the preparation and analysis of the online SPI survey on LDN.

36. In addition to supporting the SPI work programme implementation, STI made the substantive preparations for the meetings of the Bureau of the CST as well as the CST 14 session. It represented the secretariat in scientific meetings and processes and in bilateral talks with various countries, organizations and foundations, provided scientific input to requests from researchers and journalists, and contributed to relevant publications.

37. STI assisted Parties in the 2018–2019 national reporting, which enabled the CRIC to assess the implementation of the Convention, preparing default data and an indicator

framework that is synchronized with that of the SDG process and facilitating Parties in their efforts to use national data. STI prepared the reporting templates, detailed manuals and a glossary, managed the update of the PRAIS portal, arranged for the data quality checks and participated in the organization of regional training workshops and e-learning course. It also prepared for the meetings of the Bureau of the CRIC and supported the Bureau in the organization and handling of the CRIC sessions.

38. The UNCCD online Capacity Building Marketplace continued to attract visitors: 2,800 per month. Its offerings were continuously updated, with particular attention paid to increasing the availability of material in French and Spanish. The Capacity Building Marketplace served as the channel for various online training and e-learning courses on key UNCCD topics, including LDN TSP, the development of transformative projects, national reporting and gender mainstreaming. It hosted campaigns, competitions and exhibitions that reached new audiences and thereby raised awareness on the UNCCD among the general public.

39. The first UNCCD Capacity Building Training Fair was held prior to CRIC 17. The training sessions focused on four themes: gender matters for LDN, LDN implementation, drought preparedness, and resilience to sand and dust storms. Of the close to one hundred participants in the training sessions, most were UNCCD national focal points or science and technology correspondents, while many CSO representatives attended as well. As part of the capacity-building activities, STI provided lectures and briefings on the UNCCD and its priority topics in universities and schools.

40. The UNCCD Knowledge Hub has been developed as a single platform to fulfil the knowledge-sharing needs of all UNCCD stakeholders. It consists of all SPI products, the UNCCD e-Library, the Capacity Building Marketplace, the database on SLM best practices, the Global Land Outlook website, information on LDN target-setting and other national programming tools, knowledge-sharing system databases reported by country Parties, the UNCCD roster of experts, the UNCCD Science to Policy Blog, and the UNCCD Drought Toolbox. The Knowledge Hub allows for interlinkages between these different knowledge products. Since its launch in 2016, the number of unique visitors has increased to about 10,000 per month.

41. The Regional Coordination Units (RCUs) support countries within each Regional Implementation Annex of the UNCCD to implement the Convention. During the biennium 2018–2019, they ensured an effective two-way communication flow between Convention institutions and Parties and contributed to the key activities of the secretariat and the GM.

42. The RCUs carried out part of the activities to support to LDN TSP, the Drought Initiative and the national reporting process. They represented the UNCCD in relevant events and processes in the region and kept the secretariat and the GM informed of related outcomes and plans. They also informed the UNCCD national focal points of the UNCCD and its events and developments, delivered responses to the questions of the focal points and assisted them in taking informed decisions on matters concerning the Convention. They supported regional consultation processes and served as the secretariat's liaison for the focal points and other national and regional stakeholders in each Regional Implementation Annex.

D. Administrative Services

43. The Administrative Services programme 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.

44. In the biennium 2018–2019, the unit continued assisting the secretariat and the GM with processing 925 trips, 88 procurement requests, 2,300 vendor payments and 110 recruitments for staff and consultants; organizing 116 workshop events in 45 countries; and finally rolling out a new e-mail system for 120 users.

45. The secretariat has taken steps to streamline work processes utilizing the United Nations Global Centre for Human Resources Services (referred to as OneHR) to conduct all job classifications prior to recruitment of positions, which results in a higher quality of service with a quick turnaround time at less cost. The secretariat will continue to pursue such arrangements within the United Nations system in order to streamline the business process.

46. With regard to conference servicing, the secretariat organized CRIC 17 in Georgetown, Guyana in January 2019. The secretariat prepared the invitations, facilitated participation and carried out related conference services and facilities plans, including the organization of two preparatory planning missions. Seven 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. Conference services provided procedural support to CRIC 17 by conducting the proceedings of the conference, preparing speaking notes for the CRIC Chair as well as summaries and the programme of work for the daily journal and drafting of the report on proceedings of CRIC 17.

47. The organization of COP 14, CRIC 18 and CST 14 is underway, and the host country agreement with the Government of India has been signed. A total of 28 pre-session documents for translation by UNOG and four information documents are being processed by the secretariat. Three planning missions in preparation of COP 14 have been organized by the UNCCD with representatives from UNOG and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security.

48. Six Bonn-based meetings of the Bureaux of the COP, CRIC and CST were organized, and one Bureau of the COP meeting took place at the invitation of the President of COP 13 in Guiyang, China in February 2019. Four Adaptation Fund Board Meetings were also organized; a fifth one will be organized in October 2019.

V. Accomplishments of the Global Mechanism

49. During the biennium 2018–2019, the GM conducted effective resource mobilization under three categories of activities:

- (a) Contributing to the establishment of conducive enabling environments at the national level that facilitate strategic planning for the implementation of the Convention;
- (b) Supporting country Parties in accessing existing funding by assisting them in the preparation of LDN TPP proposals and engaging funding; and
- (c) Fostering new funding by spearheading the development of new and innovative funding mechanisms, advocating for increased allocation of resources by new and existing funding entities and supporting the implementation of innovative pilot projects to promote the adoption of good practices and facilitate replication and scaling up of relevant activities and lessons learned.

50. For establishing enabling environments at the national level, the GM implemented the LDN TSP and the GSP on national reporting and supported the preparation of national drought plans under the UNCCD Drought Initiative. All of these assignments involved a significant number of countries, and for the LDN TSP and the preparation of the national drought plans, the eventual number of participating countries was well above what was planned: the LDN TSP grew from the originally planned 70 to 122 countries, and 71 instead of 30 countries are working on their national drought plans. The three assignments were also substantively demanding, entailing a variety of technical details, and they were carried out in coordination with the secretariat and with the cooperation of several partners.

51. In facilitating access to existing funding, the focus of the GM was on supporting Parties in translating their LDN targets into TPPs. This support addressed some common bottlenecks in project preparation, including the conceptualization of project ideas and adherence to the general requirements of major donors. It also assisted in formulating the projects to include multiple benefits, notably through contributing to the aims of the other Rio conventions, and to be gender-responsive.

52. In addition to supporting project preparation, the GM aimed to facilitate access to existing funding by continuing collaboration with multilateral financial institutions, particularly the GEF. The GM promoted and advised the integration of the LDN concept into the frameworks and approaches guiding the programming of resources, organized training and facilitated exchanges with the UNCCD national focal points and other stakeholders.

53. For fostering new funding and innovative pilot projects, the GM studied and tested local-level land-based investments that support job creation and income generation. Particular attention was placed on the development of value chains and public-private partnerships targeting small-scale producers in the context of the GGWSSI. The results of these activities also supported the efforts of the GM in awareness-raising and advocacy functions concerning GGWSSI.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

54. The COP may wish to consider the performance of the secretariat and the GM in the biennium 2018–2019 and use this information to support its consideration of the workplan, programme and budget for the coming years.
