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Item 4 (c) of the provisional agenda
Securing of additional investments and relations with financial mechanisms
Report by the Global Mechanism on progress made in the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention

Report by the Global Mechanism on progress made in the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention*

Summary

This document reports on progress made in the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention during the 2018–2019 biennium and provides an overview of the activities taken by the Global Mechanism under three categories: (a) establishing conducive enabling environments at national level; (b) supporting country Parties in accessing existing funding; and (c) fostering new funding by spearheading the development of new and innovative funding mechanisms.

Finally, the report provides recommendations for the consideration of Parties at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Conference of the Parties.

* The present report was submitted late to conference services as a result of administrative constraints.
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I. **Introduction: Decisions taken by the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties guiding the resource mobilization work of the Global Mechanism**

1. At its thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) requested the Global Mechanism (GM) of the UNCCD to report at COP 14 on the implementation of decision 14/COP.13 on the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention. The same decision requested the GM continue exploring and developing innovative financing mechanisms and funding options to scale up support for country Parties in their efforts to develop and implement transformative projects and programmes and to step up support, in collaboration with other international funding entities, for the resource mobilization efforts of developing countries in support of achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN) and the implementation of the Convention.

2. The GM has also been involved, in coordination with the secretariat, in the implementation of other decisions taken at COP13, including:
   - (a) Supporting country Parties in achieving LDN through the formulation and implementation of voluntary LDN targets and the alignment of National Action Programmes with the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and by strengthening international cooperation among the three Rio Conventions and other related initiatives in support of LDN (decision 2/COP.13) as well as continuing to develop partnerships to support the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of LDN (decision 3/COP.13);
   - (b) Increasing and enhancing engagement with the private sector to promote the implementation of the Convention (decision 6/COP.13);
   - (c) Enhancing partnerships in support of the implementation of the Convention, including to support gender mainstreaming and drought monitoring, preparedness, early warning systems, vulnerability and risk assessment (decision 9/COP.13); and
   - (d) Implementing the Drought Initiative (decision 29/COP.13).

3. This document reports on the main activities undertaken by the GM during the 2018–2019 biennium in support of mobilizing resources for the implementation of the Convention as requested by decision 14/COP.13. Such activities also include those related to the above-mentioned decisions.

II. **General framework of the Global Mechanism activities**

A. **Overall structure**

4. Actions leading to resource mobilization in support of the implementation of the Convention comprise a set of activities reflected in the breadth of decisions that the COP has made with respect to the GM, particularly at COP 13. Based on the guidance provided in these decisions, 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 in accordance with countries' specific national circumstances, for the implementation of the Convention. This includes supporting the processes of:
     - (i) Identifying needs;
     - (ii) Addressing gaps;
     - (iii) Identifying synergies with ongoing national processes; and
     - (iv) Supporting the development and strengthening of national and institutional capacities and arrangements;
(b) Supporting country Parties in accessing existing funding by assisting them in the preparation of LDN transformative projects and programmes (TPP) proposals and engaging funding entities to highlight the alignment between their respective mandates and the activities of the Convention in order to facilitate the flow of resources in support of the implementation of the Convention; and

(c) Fostering new funding by spearheading the development of new and innovative funding mechanisms, including those involving the private sector, advocating for increased allocation of resources by new and existing funding entities to activities related to the implementation of the Convention, supporting the implementation of innovative pilot projects to promote the adoption of good practices and facilitating the replication and scaling up of relevant activities and lessons learned.

5. In this context, the activities undertaken by the GM during the 2018–2019 biennium are further discussed in this document under each of the above-mentioned categories as listed in Table 1.

Table 1

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B. Principles guiding the Global Mechanism implementation of decisions by the Conference of the Parties

6. When implementing the relevant COP decisions, the GM has sought to maximize the impact of its support and ensure that it is fully aligned with national priorities by undertaking its activities under three principles:

   (a) **Additionality and complementarity**: The GM seeks to address financial and technical capacity gaps when implementing the Convention. It aims to avoid duplicating or competing with existing initiatives, thus ensuring that all its activities remain within its capacities and mandates, while generating operational synergies with other initiatives at the national level;

   (b) **Results orientation**: The GM undertakes resource mobilization activities for specific country or regional projects that deliver results on the ground; and

   (c) **Integration**: The GM seeks to aggregate and facilitate the “connecting the dots” process so that financing and knowledge in support of the Convention can reach country Parties.
III. Establishing enabling environments

A. Voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme

7. The GM submitted a report\(^1\) on the LDN Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP) to the seventeenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC17). The report provided a detailed description of the objectives, building blocks, delivery, timeline, synergies and initial results of the Programme. The LDN TSP is closely linked to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target 15.3 at the global and national levels. The LDN TSP implementation is fully aligned with the UNCCD reporting process and the SDG Good Practice Guide on SDG Indicator 15.3.1, “proportion of land that is degraded over total land area”.\(^2\) Since the submission of this report at CRIC17, two key developments have taken place:

(a) While incorporating some of the key elements discussed by country Parties at CRIC17, the activities of the LDN TSP delivered by the GM and the secretariat of the UNCCD in collaboration with 18 international partners, were extended to support additional countries, bringing the total number of participating countries in the Programme to 122 by 31 May 2019. Additionally, the GM has continued delivering comprehensive capacity-building and knowledge sharing activities aimed at increasing national capacity for LDN during the 2018–2019 biennium, as detailed in document ICCD/CRIC(18)/8; and

(b) As reported in document ICCD/COP(14)/12, an independent terminal evaluation of the LDN TSP was successfully completed in April 2019. This evaluation assessed the performance of the Programme against the criteria of: (i) relevance, (ii) efficiency, (iii) effectiveness, (iv) progress to impact, (v) sustainability and (vi) a cross-cutting criterion looking at participation and the extent to which the project integrated gender considerations.

8. Some of the key conclusions of the above-mentioned evaluation are:

(a) The LDN TSP was highly relevant to the needs of participating countries and the priorities of the project partners. The number of countries involved, the variety of institutions within those countries, and the breadth of technical and financial partners that supported delivery also helped to raise the profile and understanding of LDN and the UNCCD, exposing many stakeholders to the concept of LDN for the first time;

(b) The LDN TSP was also found to be a cost- and time-efficient process, with a rapid delivery achieved through a combination of a well-structured, easily replicated process and a centralised operating model. Particularly noteworthy were the significant efficiencies gained through the high volume of co-financing mobilised, both cash and in-kind. However, the centralised operating model sometimes resulted in a reduced sense of ownership for some countries;

(c) The LDN TSP’s relevance and efficiency in turn supported effective delivery: most project outputs and outcomes have been achieved, with the number of participating countries greatly exceeding original projections. Especially effective was the work to deliver the core outputs of establishing national baselines and defining national LDN targets. However, some aspects could have been more effective: limited work was undertaken on knowledge management (including outreach and the facilitation of peer-to-peer learning), and the LDN TSP’s approach to capacity-building and development was insufficient to address some countries’ needs;

(d) A key output of the LDN TSP – the establishment of National Working Groups – helped to build ownership of the process and ensured relatively broad participation, albeit with considerable variation across countries. The gender aspects of the LDN TSP were not fully incorporated into the initial project’s design but this gap was addressed as part of follow-

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\(^1\) Document ICCD/CRIC(17)/3.

up gender-focused work during implementation to more effectively integrate gender in the implementation of the LDN targets and measures, as described in section IV.B below; and

(e) Crucially, the whole process has laid critical foundations for reaching the long-term impact of achieving LDN. Within most participating countries, the project has helped to generate considerable interest and momentum around LDN. But the potential loss of this initial momentum was identified as the primary risk to the project’s sustainability and long-term impact. The most important next step towards the impact and sustainability identified was the development of concepts for transformative projects and securing investment for their delivery. Building political commitment, raising broader awareness of LDN, and continuous capacity-building and development were also pinpointed as crucial factors.

B. Preparation of national drought plans

9. The secretariat and the GM have jointly implemented the Drought Initiative. The GM has focused particularly on supporting the development of national drought plans. This was carried out through two calls for countries to participate in the Initiative. A total of 44 countries joined the process of developing national drought plans in the first call, and 27 additional countries expressed interest to join in the second call. As of 31 May 2019, 29 countries have finalized their national drought plans.

10. Key lessons learned from developing national drought plans in the participating countries demonstrate that the drought portfolio is often spread among different ministries and institutions within a country, and that there is a need to facilitate coordination among different ministries and institutions and establish a triggering mechanism of actions to follow before, during and after drought events. An overview of the Drought Initiative can be found in the document ICCD/COP(14)/16: “Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Drought”.

C. Implementation of the Global Support Programme II

11. The aim of the Global Support Programme (GSP) II, implemented through a Global Environment Facility (GEF)-funded United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) project, is to support country Parties in reporting on and monitoring the UNCCD 2018−2030 Strategic Framework. The GSP II has provided capacity-building to country Parties through e-learning platforms, online tutorials, help desks, regional experts and hands-on training in land degradation monitoring tools such as Trends.Earth.

12. The GSP II also carried out an analysis of global financial flows for UNCCD implementation (ICCD/CRIC(17)/INF.3). This included an assessment of existing and emerging public as well as private international and national flows, providing an overview of the existing information gaps on UNCCD-related financing. A study to identify potential barriers and opportunities to increase finance for implementation of the UNCCD is planned under the GSP II.

IV. Facilitate access to existing funding

A. Development of Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes

13. The objective of the GM in supporting the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes (TPP) is to assist country Parties in translating the technical and planning work undertaken as part of the LDN TSP into projects and programmes that contribute to achieving the voluntary LDN targets. Country Parties have emphasized, in particular, the need for support during the early stages of project preparation. This phase of work, for which limited sources of funding are available, is critical to conceptualizing projects and programmes and engaging both national and international technical and financial partners that can support preparation and implementation.
14. The support that the GM provides to country Parties aims to design and implement gender-responsive LDN TPP through sustainable and inclusive interventions at scale (e.g. in landscapes), while featuring innovation in terms of locally adapted technology and practices, financial mechanisms (e.g. blended finance) and measures to reverse land degradation trends, biodiversity losses and adapt to and mitigate climate change. In response to country demands, the GM has supported countries in developing gender-responsive LDN TPP through five workstreams:

(a) Technical support in developing an LDN TPP concept note, taking into account:

(i) The principles of the LDN Scientific Conceptual Framework by applying the LDN TPP Checklist,\(^3\) developed by the GM with the secretariat and scientifically reviewed by the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface (SPI), and

(ii) The LDN TPP opportunities identified in the context of the LDN TSP;

(b) Facilitating dialogue with national and international stakeholders, including implementing and financing partners;

(c) Mainstreaming gender in LDN TPP through a partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN);

(d) Supporting the development of fully-fledged project/programme proposals once the concept note has been approved; and

(e) Establishing strong synergies with the Sustainability, Stability, Security (3S) initiative\(^4\) in jointly preparing project/programme concept notes in supporting the countries involved in the 3S initiative.

15. Based on experiences accumulated through the LDN TPP activities to date and the relevant tools developed, the GM plans to launch a call for requests for support to assist additional countries in developing LDN TPP, subject to the availability of resources and based on requests from countries. The selection process will take place after COP 14.

16. With reference to decision 18/COP.13 (paras 3 and 4) and considering that country Parties that have already adopted LDN targets are still in the early stages of undertaking LDN implementation-related activities, it is considered premature to conduct a comprehensive review of case studies on LDN implementation for discussion at COP 14. Instead, such review could be envisioned for COP 15.

B. Mainstreaming of gender in land degradation neutrality and the Drought Initiative

17. The UNCCD Gender Action Plan (GAP) was adopted by COP 13 (decision 30/COP.13) to support the gender-responsive implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and to strengthen the implementation of the advocacy policy framework on gender (decision 9/COP.10). During the biennium 2018–2019, the GM has supported country Parties in including critical elements of the GAP in the implementation of LDN and drought and risk mitigation efforts. In addition to supporting the implementation of the GAP, the GM has supported country Parties in facilitating access to existing sources of funding for LDN TPP, considering that addressing gender issues is key requirement to accessing most sources of funding, including the GEF.

18. To support country Parties in their efforts to pave a more systematic gender-responsive path in the context of LDN and the Drought Initiative, the GM has established partnerships with UN Women and the IUCN. In addition to technical collaboration, the GM has also mobilized resources from partners to support the implementation of relevant activities.

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3 \(<https://knowledge.unccd.int/checklistLDNTPP>\).
4 \(<www.unccd.int/actions/sustainability-stability-security>\).
19. The GM has provided support to country Parties in mainstreaming gender through the following activities:

   (a) **Gender help desk**: A gender help desk was established to review LDN TPP proposals and national drought plans and provide guidance on how to strengthen their gender responsiveness, ensuring that they meet the gender requirements of the funding sources, including the GEF and the Green Climate Fund. The technical review of LDN TPP proposals and national drought plans includes recommendations on identifying entry points for gender mainstreaming and relevant stakeholders that should be consulted to ensure gender-responsive results;

   (b) **Capacity-building workshops**: Together with the UN Women and the IUCN, the GM conducted capacity-building workshops to provide technical advice on integrating gender issues into LDN TPP and strengthen the capacities of country Parties to integrate gender into the implementation of the UNCCD; and

   (c) **Manual on integration of gender in LDN**: The GM, UN Women and the IUCN are developing a manual to support the integration of gender equality into LDN TPP development and financing. The manual provides step-by-step guidance to country Parties on integrating gender issues and promoting gender equality in the design of LDN TPP, taking into account the gender requirements of the funding sources.

20. Based on the experience and lessons learned during the biennium 2018–2019, the GM will continue partnering with UN Women and the IUCN in supporting country Parties in mainstreaming gender in LDN TPP and national drought plans as well as accessing funding through capacity-building workshops on gender mainstreaming and the gender help desk to review LDN TPP concept notes, project/programme documents and feasibility studies.

C. **Partnerships with the Global Environment Facility and other funding entities**

21. The GM has continued collaborating with the GEF in support of the activities of the UNCCD. During its current cycle, GEF-7, the GEF secretariat has incorporated the LDN concept under the Land Degradation focal area. The GM support has been provided through four main lines of action:

   (a) Contributing, on a demand basis, to the development of TPP concept notes targeting GEF funding;

   (b) Developing a checklist for LDN TPP to be used as voluntary guideline to help country-level project developers and their technical and financial partners seeking funding from the GEF and other financing institutions for LDN;

   (c) Providing technical advisory support in the planning phase of the GEF Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes;\(^5\) and

   (d) Collaborating with the GEF and other partner agencies in supporting GEF enabling activities to assist country Parties in fulfilling their obligations to the UNCCD, including the facilitation of operational synergies with relevant projects/programmes, such as the GSP\(^6\) (with the GM being its executing agency), as well as UNEP’s Umbrella Project.

22. The GM is also engaging multilateral funding and technical entities in capacity-building events to disseminate technical aspects of LDN and facilitate exchanges with the UNCCD national focal points and other stakeholders. The first event took place in late 2018 at the West African Development Bank headquarters and similar capacity-building sessions are scheduled in the second half of 2019 in collaboration with entities such as the African Development Bank and the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization.

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\(^6\) Please refer to document ICCD/CRIC(18)/6 for further information.
V. Fostering new funding and innovative pilot projects

A. Facilitation of activities in support of the operationalization of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund

23. Following decision 3/COP.12, the GM spearheaded the development of the LDN Fund. With the support of the Governments of France, Luxembourg, Norway, and the Rockefeller Foundation, the GM undertook the initial design of the Fund and conducted feasibility studies and a market assessment to foster the development and operationalization of the Fund. Through a competitive process, a private sector investment management firm, Mirova, was chosen as Fund Manager.

24. The LDN Fund has been established as an independent impact investment fund that invests in revenue-generating sustainable land management and land restoration projects worldwide. A key aspect identified during the overall design of the LDN Fund structure was the need to have, in addition to the long-term financing to be provided by the Fund, a mechanism to provide technical support to potential investees to put them in a strong position to take advantage of the resources provided by the LDN Fund. Therefore, the LDN Fund also has a donor-funded grant-making technical assistance facility (LDN TAF) to provide technical support for projects with the potential to receive funding through the LDN Fund and be investment-ready within 24 months. The LDN-TAF pre-investment assistance focuses on enhancing technical, operational and financial design and structures, as well as providing project preparedness support that considers broader social and environmental impacts. The LDN-TAF has received USD 5 million in donor contributions from the GEF and the Agence Française de Développement. As of May 2019, the LDN Fund has announced more than USD 100 million of commitments from a wide range of investors and made its first investment in January 2019.

25. The United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, comprising more than 50 United Nations agencies, programmes and offices, regional economic commissions and other relevant international institutions, highlights in its most recent report the importance of sustainable investment private markets for achieving the SDGs. Given the many linkages between the aims of the UNCCD and the SDGs, Convention bodies may consider engaging bilateral and multilateral institutions actively engaged in facilitating these innovative financing initiatives and strengthening the environmental and social safeguards and gender policies part of such investment processes. Such engagement will enhance the understanding by the UNCCD stakeholders of ongoing market developments and facilitate the ability of the UNCCD to influence emerging private sustainable financing paradigms.

B. Advocacy and innovative pilot projects in support of the Great Green Wall initiative

26. The Great Green Wall is a major African-led initiative with a bold ambition for a ‘green’ Africa along a 7,775 km stretch from the Atlantic Coast of Senegal to the east coast of Djibouti. The Great Green Wall Initiative aims to be part of the solution to urgent global challenges, including climate change, food security and migration. The GM has been a key partner in the Great Green Wall Initiative, in particular through the implementation of the Front Local Environnemental pour une Union Verte (FLEUVE) project in collaboration with the African Union Commission, and with co-financing from the European Commission. As part of efforts to identify innovative approaches to address land degradation, the GM supported local authorities in strengthening the capacity of local communities to boost investments in land restoration and green job creation through demand driven value chains.

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27. The GM is currently documenting the lessons learned from the FLEUVE project to be published later this year. While the final evaluation of the project is currently being carried out, the members of the Project Steering Committee concluded that innovative replicable concepts had been tested in the FLEUVE (e.g. value chain, renewable energy) and should underpin future initiatives. The members of the Committee also agreed that the GM had demonstrated its niche in advocacy and communication, and boosting the visibility of the Great Green Wall initiative through the project, which should be scaled up further.

28. The value chain model developed under the FLEUVE project is focused on support along the entire value chain in the creation of green jobs – from individual farmer in the Sahel to supermarket shelf in Europe. 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 for distribution in European supermarkets. The uniqueness of this model is that the global buyers underwrite the purchase of the products from the women-led cooperative groups before the start of the project, thereby ensuring their long-term sustainability. The successful completion of this pilot, expected in 2019, shows the viability of this integrated value-chain model. The GM will be supporting Burkina Faso, Ghana and Niger in upscaling this type of activity with funding provided by the Government of Italy.

29. In this context, 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. The programme builds on the GM’s partnership with Aduna – a social enterprise exporting baobab and moringa internationally – in the development and establishment of demand-driven supply chains for valuable dryland products. A first training session was held in April 2019 for the countries participating in FLEUVE. The training programme will be further developed and replicated in other countries.

30. The GM also mobilized funding from the Government of Ireland to develop a “State of the Great Green Wall” Report in cooperation with Great Green Wall partners. This landmark report will provide a big picture overview and authoritative analysis, including a comprehensive evaluation of the status of implementation, key challenges and opportunities, as well as recommendations and a clear roadmap for achieving the 2030 Great Green Wall vision. The grant will also finance the design of pilot projects to fill gaps which will be identified in the report.

31. The GM has launched a global campaign on the Great Green Wall, Growing a World Wonder Public Advocacy Campaign, which has generated substantial interest among the general public. The campaign aims to create global awareness of the Great Green Wall on issues such as land degradation, food security and climate change in public spheres, policy debates, media, and cultural sectors. The campaign is expected to inspire a global popular movement to deliver this African-led initiative by 2030. It centres on the narrative that the Great Green Wall is a symbol of hope in the face of challenges arising from climate change, food insecurity, migration and resource-driven conflict. This type of outreach has highlighted new roles that the private sector, foundations and the general public may have in contributing resources for the implementation of the Convention.

32. So far, the campaign has reached millions of people through mass media outreach, virtual reality, heads of state events and civil society outreach. The forthcoming release of a Great Green Wall documentary, co-produced by the GM (with Oscar-nominated filmmaker, Fernando Meirelles and Malian singer Inna Modja), and an accompanying fundraising album with major African artists, are expected to create significant opportunities for resource mobilization from traditional donors as well as through private sector investments and citizen donation mechanisms.

VI. Recommendations

33. The COP may wish to consider the following at its fourteenth session:
(a) Requesting the GM and the secretariat of the UNCCD, in collaboration with relevant international partners and subject to the availability of financial resources, to:

(i) Continue supporting the process of LDN target setting in those country Parties that may still wish to engage in this voluntary process; and

(ii) Also continue sharing relevant knowledge and lessons learned on the outcomes of national LDN target setting processes;

(b) Also requesting the GM and the secretariat of the UNCCD, in collaboration with relevant international partners and subject to the availability of financial resources, to continue supporting the development and implementation of national drought plans;

(c) Inviting Parties to identify relevant case studies on LDN implementation, and requesting:

(i) The secretariat, in collaboration with the GM, to collect these case studies and prepare a synthesis for presentation to COP 15, and

(ii) The SPI to contribute to the review of the outcomes of this synthesis;

(d) Requesting the GM, in collaboration with the GEF and relevant international partners and subject to the availability of financial resources, to continue supporting the early-stage development of LDN TPP in response to country Party requests;

(e) Also requesting the GM, in collaboration with the secretariat and relevant partners and subject to the availability of financial resources, to support country Parties in establishing the necessary enabling environment for UNCCD implementation, including in the context of LDN and drought-related initiatives;

(f) Further requesting the GM to continue spearheading the development of innovative funding mechanisms to support the implementation of the Convention, including by attracting resources from, inter alia, the private sector, blended finance, and citizen donations;

(g) Requesting the GM to continue building partnerships with the private sector and other relevant partners, in particular, to promote the establishment of sustainable value chains for dryland products;

(h) Also requesting the GM to establish linkages with other bodies engaged in innovative resource mobilization, including the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force in Financing for Development, multilateral financial institutions, and national development banks; and

(i) Further requesting the GM, with relevant partners, continue supporting country Parties in their efforts to mainstream gender in UNCCD implementation to facilitate resource mobilization, including targeted capacity-building support country Parties, in order to meet the gender requirements of the target funding sources.