

## Decision 16/COP.14

### Follow-up on the work programme of the Science-Policy Interface for the biennium 2018–2019: Objective 1

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Recalling* decision 23/COP.11 and decision 19/COP.12,

*Also recalling* decision 3/COP.13, decision 18/COP.13 and decision 21/COP.13,

*Further recalling* the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, its vision for a future that minimizes and reverses desertification/land degradation and mitigates the effects of drought in affected areas at all levels, and strives to achieve a land degradation-neutral world consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, within the scope of the Convention and in particular strategic objective 1 to improve the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification/land degradation, promote sustainable land management and contribute to land degradation neutrality,

*Acknowledging* the work conducted by the Science-Policy Interface in implementing its work programme for the biennium 2018–2019,

*Also acknowledging* that the scientific conceptual framework for land degradation neutrality<sup>1</sup> provides guidance for planning, financing, implementing and monitoring land degradation neutrality,

*Recognizing* that sustainable land management, pursued in the context of land degradation neutrality with a focus on maintaining and/or increasing soil organic carbon, can contribute significantly to (a) addressing desertification/land degradation and drought; (b) addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation; (c) providing a foundation for the conservation of biodiversity; and (d) achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals,

*Also recognizing* that creating an enabling environment for land degradation neutrality is fundamental to realizing the potential contribution of land degradation neutrality to enhancing the well-being and livelihoods of people affected by desertification/land degradation and drought,

*Recalling* article 24 of the Convention stating that the Committee on Science and Technology provides information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought,

*Recognizing* that Parties take this information and advice and use it as appropriate within their national context,

*Having considered* document ICCD/COP(14)/CST/2 and the conclusions and recommendations contained therein,

#### **Refined guidance for the implementation of land degradation neutrality**

1. *Encourages* Parties to:

(a) Promote sustainable land management technologies, practices and approaches that contribute to maintaining or increasing soil organic carbon for multiple benefits;

(b) Use soil organic carbon as an indicator to monitor sustainable land management interventions to support the achievement of land degradation neutrality;

(c) Align soil organic carbon monitoring to national land degradation neutrality monitoring; and

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<sup>1</sup> Decision 18/COP.13.

(d) Share the guidance provided in document ICCD/COP(14)/CST/2 with land managers at national and subnational levels;

2. *Invites* technical partners specializing in sustainable land management, in collaboration with relevant scientific and technical bodies (e.g. Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils of the Global Soil Partnership) and in conjunction with the Science-Policy Interface in line with its work programme for the biennium 2018–2019, to design a framework for the management of soil organic carbon for land degradation neutrality to support investment decisions;

3. *Also invites* relevant technical partners to help develop/refine soil organic carbon estimation tools/models for application in land degradation neutrality assessments on sites where detailed measurements of soil organic carbon are not available or not cost-effective;

4. *Further invites* country Parties to develop partnerships with relevant technical and financial partners to strengthen national-level coordination and capacity for soil organic carbon measurement and monitoring by, inter alia:

(a) Strengthening capacities of technical institutions and human resources by providing guidance on estimating and monitoring soil organic carbon for land-use planning, land degradation neutrality monitoring and other applications;

(b) Developing/reinforcing skills for designing soil sampling approaches and implementing measurement and monitoring programmes by, inter alia, exploring advanced technologies;

(c) Developing/enhancing processes, including those used in laboratory and in the field, for quality assurance, sample storage and data retention to support the development of tools/models for soil organic carbon estimation;

(d) Promoting the sharing of data on soil organic carbon estimation among country Parties;

5. *Encourages* Parties and other stakeholders to:

(a) Integrate gender-responsive actions to promote women, youth and girls through the gender-inclusive design of preliminary land degradation neutrality assessments recommended by the scientific conceptual framework for land degradation neutrality;

(b) Develop gender-responsive land degradation neutrality interventions based on women's participation in decision-making for enabling inclusive land governance; and

(c) Take into account gender dimensions responsive to the concerns of women, youth and girls in land-use planning and in the design of interventions towards achieving land degradation neutrality;

6. *Invites* country Parties, as appropriate, to raise the profile of and mainstream land degradation neutrality in national policy agendas;

7. *Also invites* country Parties with land degradation neutrality voluntary targets to do so in pursuance of their national plans, strategies and action programmes by:

(a) Institutionalizing horizontal and vertical coordination taking into account multi-stakeholder participation in support of land degradation neutrality mainstreaming and implementation beyond the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme;

(b) Strengthening/developing mechanisms that support land degradation neutrality implementation and enforcement to better coordinate top-down and bottom-up actions related to land degradation neutrality;

(c) Ensuring institutional arrangements to enable the upscaling and outscaling of best practices;

(d) Supporting capacity-building to develop, implement and monitor land degradation neutrality interventions; and

(e) Encouraging the involvement of stakeholders for the adoption of sustainable land management technologies and approaches;

8. *Further invites* country Parties to develop partnerships with technical and financial bodies/entities to assess financial and capacity development needs to create an enabling environment for land degradation neutrality through mechanisms including, inter alia:

(a) Conducting financial needs assessments at national and other levels for achieving each national land degradation neutrality target; and

(b) Developing and investing in capabilities for land degradation neutrality monitoring and assessment, taking into account national data availability and local expertise;

9. *Encourages* country Parties to take into account land tenure and land-use planning conditions, as appropriate, for creating an enabling policy and regulatory environment for land degradation neutrality, following the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security to manage impacts of land degradation neutrality measures on land tenure by, inter alia:

(a) Integrating land tenure security into national strategies to achieve land degradation neutrality;

(b) Reconsidering programmes aimed at solely providing individual land titles, as these often fail to increase land tenure security;

(c) Recognizing and protecting customary land governance systems in national laws to enable customary land rights holders to be partners in land degradation neutrality;

(d) Recognizing the need to protect local communities from dispossession and loss of access to land when implementing policies and investments aiming at land degradation neutrality;

(e) Enhancing national capacities for the effective implementation of integrated land-use planning, establishing the full integration of a neutrality framework for counterbalancing assessed losses with equal or greater gains, and applying the land degradation neutrality response hierarchy for measures to avoid, reduce and/or reverse land degradation;

(f) Estimating the cumulative impacts of land-use decisions by assessing trends in land degradation neutrality indicators;

(g) Accounting for actors involved in private land governance who have an increasingly prominent role in shaping land governance and can therefore be instrumental to achieving land degradation neutrality;

10. *Invites* Parties and cooperating partners working on science-policy aspects relating to the enabling environment for land degradation neutrality to further engage in raising awareness and understanding of land degradation neutrality by:

(a) Enhancing awareness through facilitated access to information on land degradation neutrality beyond the lead entities already engaged in land degradation neutrality, including entities at higher political, administrative, policymaking and academic levels, and the public in general;

(b) Supporting research, training, capacity-building and the development of land governance systems conducive to avoiding, reducing and reversing land degradation;

(c) Synthesizing and/or developing science-based methods to support land-use planning, including the use of scenario analysis and assessment of trade-offs;

11. *Requests* the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to support national efforts to build capacity for improved assessment and monitoring of (a) land degradation neutrality; (b) multiple benefits; and (c) trade-offs to support integrated land-use planning;

12. *Invites* Parties pursuing voluntary land degradation neutrality targets to further engage in achieving multiple environmental, social, cultural and economic benefits in the context of land degradation neutrality by:

(a) Leveraging sustainable land-use activities and land-use planning for enhancing soil organic carbon and increasing land productivity;

(b) Creating multifunctional landscapes that simultaneously address land degradation neutrality, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and the conservation of biological diversity;

(c) Applying available scientific tools and approaches to help build national and subnational capacities to evaluate environmental, economic and social co-benefits and trade-offs, as well as multiple benefits;

(d) Assessing multiple benefits during the design of land degradation neutrality programmes and initiatives, quantifying those potential benefits wherever possible;

(e) Engaging local communities and affected stakeholders at all phases of the design and implementation of land degradation neutrality programmes and initiatives to ensure that well-being and livelihood needs and outcomes, as well as potential trade-offs and multiple benefits, are effectively identified, discussed and taken into account; and

(f) Developing and implementing the land degradation neutrality national leverage plans within the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme to optimize multiple benefits from land degradation neutrality and minimize trade-offs or unintended consequences.

*4<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting  
6 September 2019*