



Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
Nineteenth session**Report of the nineteenth session of the Committee for the
Review of the Implementation of the Convention, held from
15 to 19 March 2021****Contents**

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I. Opening of the session

A. Opening statements

1. On 15 March 2021, the Chair of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), Mr. Andrew Bishop (Guyana), opened the nineteenth session of the Committee (CRIC 19) and made opening remarks.
2. The Chair designated, in line with Rule 24 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties (COP), the CRIC 19 Vice-Chair, Mr. Ahmed Senyaz of Turkey, as Acting CRIC Chair for the session.
3. The Acting CRIC Chair made opening remarks.
4. A statement was also made by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

B. General statements

5. Statements were made by the representatives of Morocco (on behalf of the African Group), Uzbekistan (on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group), Nicaragua (on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries), Hungary (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for the Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV)) and Belarus (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)).
6. A statement was also made by the representative of Portugal (on behalf of the European Union and its Member States).
7. A further statement was made by the representative of Saudi Arabia (on behalf of the Arab Group).
8. A statement was made by the representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the representative of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development.
9. A statement was also made by the representative of the International Dialogue for Environmental Action (IDEA) Public Association of Azerbaijan on behalf of civil society organizations (CSOs).

C. Meetings of the Regional Implementation Annexes

10. Meetings of the Regional Implementation Annexes in preparation for CRIC 19 were held as follows:
 - 23–25 February 2021: Regional Implementation Annex for Africa
 - 2–4 March 2021: Regional Implementation Annex for Asia
 - 16–17 February 2021: Regional Implementation Annex for Latin America and the Caribbean
 - 1–2 March 2021: Regional Implementation Annex for the Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV)
 - 4–5 March 2021: Regional Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)

II. Procedural matters

A. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

11. At its first meeting on 15 March 2021, the Committee adopted the provisional agenda as contained in document ICCD/CRIC(19)/1. The agenda read as follows:

1. Opening of the session;
2. Organizational matters:
 - (a) Adoption of the agenda and schedule of work;
 - (b) Appointment of the Rapporteur of the Committee;
3. Effective implementation of the Convention at national, subregional and regional levels:
 - (a) Update on the implementation of the voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets and related implementation efforts;
 - (b) Update on the operationalization of the LDN Fund;
 - (c) Update on the implementation of the Drought Initiative and related implementation efforts;
4. Interim report of the intergovernmental working group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD;
5. Adoption of the report of the CRIC to the COP;
6. Closure of the session.

12. Also at the first meeting, the Committee approved the schedule of work for the session, as contained in the annex to document ICCD/CRIC(19)/1.

B. Appointment of a Rapporteur to the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

13. At the first meeting on 15 March 2021, the Committee appointed Mr. Hussein Nasrallah (Lebanon) as Rapporteur of its nineteenth and twentieth sessions.

C. Attendance

14. The representatives of the following 138 Parties to the UNCCD attended CRIC 19:

Afghanistan	Belarus	Canada
Albania	Belgium	Central African Republic
Algeria	Belize	Chad
Angola	Benin	Chile
Antigua and Barbuda	Bhutan	China
Argentina	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Colombia
Armenia	Botswana	Costa Rica
Australia	Brazil	Côte d'Ivoire
Austria	Burkina Faso	Czechia
Azerbaijan	Cambodia	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Barbados	Cameroon	

Democratic Republic of the Congo	Lithuania	Senegal
Dominican Republic	Madagascar	Serbia
Ecuador	Malaysia	Seychelles
Egypt	Maldives	Slovakia
El Salvador	Mali	Slovenia
Eritrea	Malta	Somalia
Eswatini	Mauritania	South Africa
Ethiopia	Mexico	South Sudan
European Union	Micronesia (Federated States of)	Spain
Finland	Mongolia	Sri Lanka
Gambia	Montenegro	State of Palestine
Georgia	Morocco	Sudan
Germany	Mozambique	Suriname
Ghana	Myanmar	Sweden
Grenada	Namibia	Switzerland
Guatemala	Nepal	Syrian Arab Republic
Guinea	Netherlands	Tajikistan
Guinea-Bissau	Nicaragua	Thailand
Guyana	Niger	Togo
Hungary	Nigeria	Trinidad and Tobago
India	Oman	Turkey
Indonesia	Pakistan	Turkmenistan
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Palau	Uganda
Israel	Panama	Ukraine
Italy	Paraguay	United Arab Emirates
Jamaica	Peru	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Japan	Philippines	United Republic of Tanzania
Jordan	Poland	United States of America
Kazakhstan	Portugal	Uruguay
Kenya	Qatar	Uzbekistan
Kuwait	Republic of Korea	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Kyrgyzstan	Republic of Moldova	Viet Nam
Latvia	Russian Federation	Zambia
Lebanon	Saint Lucia	Zimbabwe
Lesotho	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	
Libya	Saudi Arabia	

15. The following United Nations organizations, offices and specialized agencies were also represented:

Food and Agriculture Organization
 Global Environment Facility
 Secretariat to the Convention on Biological Diversity
 United Nations Development Programme
 United Nations Environment Programme
 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
 United Nations Industrial Development Organization
 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
 World Bank
 World Meteorological Organization

16. The session was also attended by 15 intergovernmental organizations and 63 CSOs, including non-governmental organizations.

D. Documentation

17. The documentation submitted for the consideration of the Committee is listed in the annex to this report.

III. Summary of discussions

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

18. According to decision 13/COP.13, containing the terms of reference of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), the Committee is to produce a final report on sessions held between ordinary sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COP), containing its recommendations on further steps to be taken to facilitate effective implementation of the Convention.

19. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Executive Secretary decided, in consultation with both the Bureau of the CRIC and the Bureau of the COP, that CRIC 19 would be held in an online format. It was also decided that CRIC 19 would be a non-negotiating session and therefore no contact group should be established during CRIC 19 that otherwise would have sought agreement on the substantive coverage of the conclusion and recommendation section contained in the final report of the session. Instead, Parties at CRIC 19 decided to entrust the rapporteur with finalizing this section of the report with the assistance of the secretariat.

20. The summary of discussions section was compiled by the Rapporteur using, inter alia, recordings of the session that had been posted on the UNCCD website, <https://www.unccd.int/conventioncommittee-review-implementation-convention-cric/cric19-15-19-march-2021-online>, and written submissions, as agreed upon by the Chair in session. The summary of discussion section of the final report of CRIC 19 was also posted on the same website for a duration of two weeks for comments by country Parties to ensure an accurate reflection of the deliberations of country Parties and their development partners during the session.

21. In addition to comments made on the agenda items listed below, clarification was also provided on an issue relating to enabling activities provided for, inter alia, UNCCD reporting. It was stated that in the current GEF-7 cycle, the GEF is making available USD 100,000 for each GEF-eligible country for UNCCD Enabling Activities. Access to funding is provided in the same manner as during GEF-6, namely through an umbrella project managed by

UNEP. Countries wishing to receive funding will need to submit a GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP) endorsement letter to UNEP as usual. The deadline for accessing the funds coincides with the end of the GEF-7 period. However, to allow adequate time for the processing of the requests, OFP endorsement letters should be provided asap, by the end of 2021 at the latest.

1. Update on the implementation of the voluntary land degradation neutrality targets and related implementation efforts

22. Statements were made by the representatives of Morocco (on behalf of the African Group), Uzbekistan (on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group), Argentina (on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries) and Ukraine (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)).

23. A statement was also made by the representative of Portugal (on behalf of the European Union and its Member States).

24. A further statement was made by the representative of Saudi Arabia (on behalf of the Arab Group).

25. In the ensuing interactive discussions, statements were made by the representatives of Egypt, Antigua and Barbuda, Colombia, Turkey, Switzerland, Hungary, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, the United Arab Emirates, Belarus, Kazakhstan (on behalf of Central Asia), Ukraine, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), the United States of America, Palestine, Argentina, Eswatini, the Russian Federation, Ghana, Sudan, Angola, Chile, India and the Syrian Arab Republic.

26. Interventions were made by representatives of the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory, the FAO and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

27. A statement was made by the representative of the CARI Association France on behalf of CSOs.

28. Written statements were considered in lieu of respective interventions for representatives of China, Belize, Nicaragua, Philippines and Guinea.

29. Welcoming the information contained in document ICCD/CRIC(19)/2 and recalling the mandate given by the COP and referred to in this document, most country Parties welcomed with appreciation the support provided by the secretariat, the Global Mechanism (GM) and relevant partners to effectively assist countries in their voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target setting processes and related implementation efforts. Some country Parties reviewed the progress considered at previous COPs, indicating that more country Parties have joined in the voluntary LDN target setting process.

30. Some country Parties called for the secretariat and the GM to continue supporting voluntary LDN target setting processes and encouraged country Parties to review and refine their voluntary LDN targets and promote their adoption at high political level.

31. Noting the cross-sectoral role of land and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15, country Parties stressed the importance of voluntary LDN targets and related implementation efforts as a key contribution to Agenda 2030 and to the achievement of multiple SDGs, including SDGs 2, 13 and 17. In this regard, many country Parties highlighted that voluntary LDN targets, policies and national implementation efforts to address desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) under the Convention should pursue increased coherence and greater synergies with other relevant ongoing processes (e.g. national SDG agendas, nationally determined contributions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), land restoration commitments towards the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, etc.). Some country Parties also highlighted the importance of mainstreaming large-scale land restoration and science-based monitoring as implementation efforts in terms of realizing their own voluntary LDN targets.

32. Country Parties noted, with appreciation, the knowledge sharing, including through the UNCCD Knowledge Hub, and capacity building efforts made by the secretariat and the

GM, as reported in document ICCD/CRIC(19)/2. However, many country Parties highlighted that increased capacity building support is critically required at both national and regional level, particularly related to the development of national LDN monitoring and decision-support systems that use the best available data.

33. One Party pointed out the necessity of setting new dates for regional capacity building workshops that were postponed due to COVID-19, and rescheduling them soon as online workshops. This would allow the cost-efficient handling of these workshops and ensure that more participants could benefit from these activities.

34. Many country Parties requested the GM and the secretariat, within their respective mandates, to develop very much needed national and regional training in LDN assessment, data collection, monitoring and national reporting, building on relevant existing platforms and initiatives such as Trends.Earth, the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System, and the Group on Earth Observations LDN Initiative. Some country Parties also highlighted the importance of facilitating access to high-resolution data on LDN indicators, particularly for Small Island Developing States and country Parties with extensive drylands, and tying the monitoring of the voluntary LDN target setting and achievement to UNCCD national reporting. In this regard, the experience of global land degradation assessment conducted by some country Parties was introduced, which may present other country Parties with the option to access high-resolution data and compile their national reports using this data.

35. Many country Parties acknowledged, with appreciation, the financial resources mobilized to date in order to support Parties' work on voluntary LDN target setting and related implementation efforts, from numerous bilateral and multilateral initiatives (the LDN Target Setting Programme (TSP), Transformative Projects and Programmes (TPPs), the Drought Initiative, Changwon Initiative, Ankara Initiative, Greening Drylands Partnership, Peace Forest Initiative, Great Green Wall, G20 Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats, etc.) and relevant financing windows (the GEF, Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, etc.), as well as the support provided by the secretariat, the GM and technical partners to facilitate access to these financial resources. In this context, many country Parties also stressed the need for increased financial resources specifically dedicated to the implementation of the UNCCD in order to bridge the current financing gap and scale up UNCCD implementation activities related to DLDD. Some country Parties recalled the responsibility of developed country Parties under the Convention to provide affected country Parties with technical and financial support for this purpose.

36. Many country Parties noted that there is a need to strengthen the capacity of the GM, within its mandate, and to increase the resources available in order to meet the steady demand for voluntary LDN target setting or refinement, support the development of a pipeline of TPPs to help country Parties access the financing offered by multilateral development banks, bilateral and multilateral funds, the private sector and other sources of innovative financing, and provide related capacity building and knowledge sharing support.

37. Some country Parties suggested taking the nature-based solutions into consideration as a useful implementation mechanism of the Convention, given its complementarity with the ecosystem-based approach and its ability to set up synergies with the other Rio Conventions.

38. Some country Parties requested further assistance from the GM and the secretariat of the UNCCD, within their respective mandates, in developing the necessary tools to translate the voluntary LDN targets into concrete actions, increasing efficiency in the deployment of existing financial resources, building greater synergy with relevant processes, identifying innovative resources for implementation and promoting the development of large-scale national, multi-country and subregional TPPs, ensuring a geographical balance.

39. Some country Parties emphasized the need for the GM, within its mandate and in collaboration with relevant technical and financial partners, to provide further support in order to improve and accelerate the preparation and development of gender responsive bankable TPPs that jointly address DLDD and increase knowledge sharing among countries and partners.

Comments presented by civil society representatives, United Nations agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations

40. The representatives of the civil society organizations (CSO) presented the following comments:

(a) CSOs suggested that the GM share transparent information regarding the areas of intervention and concrete actions envisaged by the TPPs developed by the country Parties with the support of the GM;

(b) CSOs also suggested that country Parties ensure the effective participation of CSOs, as well as representatives of women, youth and indigenous peoples, in the definition or updating of LDN targets, and in the development and implementation of TPPs. CSOs also suggested that country Parties include the VGGTs in the development and implementation of TPPs;

(c) CSOs proposed that country Parties consider nature-based solutions, such as agroecological practices, in order to avoid land degradation and enable the resilience of agricultural production systems, and CSOs requested that the SPI be mandated to assess the contributions of regenerative agriculture to LDN.

41. The representatives of United Nations agencies and intergovernmental organizations presented the following comments:

(a) Representatives of United Nations agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations congratulated countries for setting the LDN targets and recommended countries to set quantified and mapped targets in line with other country commitments and actions to achieve SDGs. They also acknowledged the need to provide support, guidance and knowledge sharing in order to promote coherence/alignment of the LDN targets and those of the Rio conventions (UNFCCC and CBD) and other global processes (Bonn Challenge), as well as to strengthen the role of the Global Restoration Commitments (GRC) database in promoting the alignment of targets. They also suggested that there is a need for a global report on LDN targets to provide more detail about quantified targets in terms of areas for interventions and investments needed, both to restore land and to avoid and reduce unavoidable degradation;

(b) Representatives of United Nations agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations also congratulated countries for developing TPPs;

(c) Representatives of United Nations agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations requested the strengthened role of the Group on Earth Observations LDN Initiative (GEO-LDN), among others, in order to best support countries with Earth observation data, tools, analytics and capacity building for the cost-effective monitoring and reporting of LDN targets and implementation;

(d) Representatives of United Nations agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations stressed the importance of also including commitments and actions around restoring the rangelands – including grasslands and savannas;

(e) Representatives of United Nations agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations highlighted the multiple ongoing collaborations regarding the sustainable management and restoration of drylands, the reversing of declining trends in pastoral lands, the support for sustainable land management (SLM) and the need for global support and collaboration to address the issue of sand and dust storms (SDS). They also committed to offering further support to countries to combat DLDD by leveraging funds for implementation and by providing proper monitoring tools to countries, among others.

2. Update on the operationalization of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund

42. Statements were made by the representatives of Morocco (on behalf of the African Group), Bhutan (on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group), Panama (on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries) and Georgia (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)).

43. A statement was also made by the representative of Portugal (on behalf of the European Union and its Member States).
44. A further statement was made by the representative of Saudi Arabia (on behalf of the Arab Group).
45. In the ensuing interactive discussions, statements were made by the representatives of China, Mexico, Colombia, Japan, Brazil, Canada, Switzerland, Philippines and Ghana.
46. A statement was also made by the representative of the FAO.
47. A further statement was made by the representative of the Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment on behalf of CSOs.
48. Written statements were considered in lieu of respective interventions for representatives of Bolivia, Chile, the Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Argentina.
49. Acknowledging the information contained in document ICCD/CRIC (19)/3, country Parties welcomed the update on activities related to the LDN Fund and noted, with appreciation, the progress made by the LDN Fund and its Technical Assistance Facility (TAF) in mobilizing public and private resources that promote sustainable land use and land restoration.
50. Country Parties further commended the LDN Fund for mobilizing blended financial resources, from both public and private partners, to support commercially viable private sector projects combatting land degradation and desertification globally.
51. Country Parties acknowledged the pivotal role that the LDN Fund could play in achieving the strategic objectives of the Convention. In this respect, some country Parties highlighted that the LDN Fund could serve as a successful, replicable model of collaboration between the public and private sector.
52. Some country Parties requested the LDN Fund to facilitate a larger and more regionally and subregionally balanced project portfolio, underscoring their wish to see the geographical expansion of the LDN Fund accelerated to include more projects in dryland areas located in developing countries. Some country Parties also encouraged the development of dedicated private sector financing vehicles at regional level, for example in Central Asia.
53. Some country Parties stressed the need to explore, support and invest in agroecological approaches and projects.
54. Some country Parties requested clarification from the LDN Fund Manager on the selection of a partner to host the TAF, as well as the criteria for the selection of projects, and how national focal points were to be involved in the selection process. One Party expressed deep concern about the fact that its government had no information about a project currently planned for in its territory, which was listed in the pre-session document.
55. Country Parties called on the GM to support increased knowledge sharing on the operations of the LDN Fund.
56. Many country Parties requested that the GM continue to engage with national focal points and facilitate information sharing and awareness raising on the operational modalities, requirements and achievements of the LDN Fund.
57. Country Parties also requested the GM to facilitate capacity building for the private sector and other interested stakeholders to access the LDN Fund.
58. Country Parties further requested the GM to support, with virtual capacity building and training events, country Parties in accessing various innovative and private sources of financing, including, but not limited to, the LDN Fund.
59. One Party requested the support of the GM in organizing a subregional online meeting with relevant international and national actors, with the objective of receiving first-hand information on the requirements to access resources for transformative LDN projects and involving potential local donors in order to promote their participation in the development and implementation of projects through joint funding mechanisms.

60. Some country Parties requested the GM to collaborate with the TAF of the LDN Fund to provide technical pre-investment support to country project developers, in collaboration with partners, to ensure that projects are increasingly feeding into the LDN Fund project pipeline.

61. Several country Parties stressed the importance of the environmental and social standards developed and applied by the LDN Fund and highlighted the need to further facilitate this process to minimize risk and increase the impact of private sector investment on degraded land. In addition, some country Parties stressed the importance of monitoring the expected impacts of the LDN Fund investments for other relevant environmental and social indicators, such as climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, poverty eradication and gender.

62. Some country Parties requested the GM to report, during CRIC sessions, on the activities of the LDN Fund and the application of social and environmental standards and indicators.

63. Many country Parties highlighted the need to take steps to accelerate implementation and scale up the availability of private sector resources for DLDD as the resources mobilized to date are insufficient to achieve national objectives or voluntary LDN targets.

64. Some country Parties emphasized the need to establish an operational and achievable roadmap for the provision of overall financing, including the development of strategies to increase the mobilization of financing that may come from the private sector and other sources.

65. Some country Parties underlined the importance of strengthening other existing financing mechanisms to support country Parties in meeting the objectives of the Convention and the implementation of national action programmes, national drought plans (NDP) and voluntary LDN targets. In this regard, some country Parties requested the LDN Fund to further explore synergies with the Green Climate Fund and the GEF to expand funding earmarked for LDN issues.

66. Some country Parties expressed their views that the LDN Fund should have international public characteristics directly related to the objectives of the country Parties to this Convention.

67. Some country Parties suggested that, in order to increase the benefits of LDN investments on drought mitigation and adaptation, the target setting and prioritization of LDN projects should take into account the relative co-benefit of investments in land degradation, avoidance, reduction, and restoration.

68. Some country Parties stressed the importance of the LDN Fund operating in accordance with robust environmental and social standards, including safeguards in relation to land tenure and stakeholder participation, and requested more information on the subject at future CRIC sessions.

Comments presented by civil society representatives, United Nations agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations

69. The representatives of the CSOs presented the following comments:

(a) CSOs welcomed the objective of the LDN Fund as well as the references made to the complaint and compliance mechanisms for the ESMS. Nonetheless, CSOs highlighted the need to provide additional details on how LDN Fund projects meet the impact criteria and benefit local natural ecosystems and communities as some projects may negatively impact the natural ecosystems;

(b) CSOs also called for more information (b) on the projects financed by the LDN Fund and the lessons learned, as well as favourable contributions for a private sector contribution to sustainable development;

(c) Furthermore, CSOs invited country Parties to consider the opportunity that the Fund may present to support initiatives built on bottom-up approaches which contribute to

the achievement of the voluntary national LDN targets, calling for a robust alliance and partnership in order to avoid and reduce land degradation as well as restore degraded lands.

70. Representatives of United Nations agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations presented the following comments:

One United Nations agency indicated the technical support provided to country Parties and remarked that it would be in a position to play an advisory role, contributing to the LDN Fund and TAF in assessing and selecting potential investment projects that meet social and environmental criteria as well as scientific frameworks.

3. Update on the implementation of the Drought Initiative and related implementation efforts

71. Statements were made by the representatives of Benin, Ghana and Namibia (on behalf of the African Group), Lebanon (on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group), Brazil (on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries) and the Russian Federation (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)).

72. A statement was also made by the representative of the European Commission (on behalf of the European Union and its Member States).

73. A further statement was made by the representative of Saudi Arabia (on behalf of the Arab Group).

74. Statements were made by the representatives of China, Ukraine, Mexico, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Eswatini, Switzerland, the United States of America, Canada, Angola, Argentina, Turkmenistan (on behalf of Central Asia), the Syrian Arab Republic, Israel, Brazil, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana and India.

75. A statement was also made by a representative of Mision Verde Amazonia Colombia on behalf of CSOs.

76. Written statements were considered in lieu of respective interventions for representatives of Pakistan, the FAO, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the World Bank.

77. Country Parties welcomed, with appreciation, document ICCD/CRIC (19)/5, which provides information on the Drought Initiative and related implementation efforts, namely issues related to gender and land tenure.

78. Some country Parties acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected and delayed planned activities, further encouraging the secretariat to the UNCCD and the GM to make the best use of virtual tools to advance the work in order to fulfil the mandates given by the COP.

79. Some country Parties noted that enhancing data availability would support and guide decision makers to improve their policies in order to better address DLDD, taking into consideration the aspects of gender and land tenure.

(a) Drought Initiative

80. Country Parties welcomed the information contained in document ICCD/CRIC (19)/5 and, recalling the mandate given by the COP and referred to in this document, most country Parties also welcomed, with appreciation, the support provided by the secretariat, the GM and relevant partners with regard to the Drought Initiative.

81. Most country Parties noted, with appreciation, the work of the GM and the secretariat in terms of the support provided to countries in developing NDPs.

82. Country Parties welcomed the upgrade and expansion of the Drought Toolbox and the e-learning courses provided via e-learning platforms and some country Parties asked whether gaps remain in the toolkit and, if so, what action is planned to address any gaps identified.

83. Many country Parties recommended the inclusion of NDPs in overall national frameworks in order to improve drought indicators and help build the resilience of land users and communities as they work towards a post-COVID-19 recovery.

84. Some country Parties noted that enhancing data availability would support and guide decision makers to improve their policies in order to better address DLDD.

85. Country Parties also noted the importance of sharing best practices on mitigating the impacts of drought through case studies in order to share experiences and lessons learnt among regions and Parties. One Party proposed an exchange of experience between country Parties on initiatives related to the management of specialized funds and tools to face drought.

86. Some country Parties suggested raising the profile of drought through the establishment of a drought legal framework, taking the example of the CBD Nagoya Protocol and the Paris Agreement, while others commented that new legal frameworks should not be explored, stressing, amongst other things, that drought is more than an environmental issue.

87. Considering the transboundary nature of drought, some country Parties expressed their views that regional institutions should be made into focal agencies to address drought and SDS issues.

88. Many country Parties highlighted the need to move from planning to implementing concrete projects on the ground.

89. To effectively support the implementation of the NDPs, some country Parties recommended the secretariat to the UNCCD and the GM to:

(a) Continue reviewing existing global and regional challenges associated with drought and consider geographical balances in terms of the planning and implementation of regional and national drought projects, especially in the context of the upcoming project supported by the GEF, entitled “Enabling Activities for Implementing UNCCD COP Drought Decisions”;

(b) Consider gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of youth and children in the NDPs and the implementation of drought projects;

(c) Also consider the development of regional and subregional projects to address the issues of drought and SDS given the interconnectedness of these two phenomena;

(d) Develop research programmes on drought with the active participation of local and vulnerable communities and share knowledge and information on data (high-resolution satellite data and indicators) in the context of the ongoing development of NDPs;

(e) Continue to provide training and further strengthen capacity building activities;

(f) Encourage the strengthening of the existing work, as well as the stepping up of international partnerships to this end, and reinforce the work on the Drought Initiative, as well as strengthened synergies among the three Rio conventions;

(g) Adopt an integrated approach, linking drought with humanitarian and development efforts, notably with regards to response, resilience building and sustainable recovery;

(h) Ensure that drought issues are integrated into the LDN target setting and implementation process.

(b) *Gender*

90. Country Parties reiterated the importance of gender and youth issues in combatting DLDD, as well as the relevance of addressing the needs of the most vulnerable people.

91. Country Parties emphasized that women and girls need to be fully involved in the development of policies, projects and programmes related to land and their implementation.

92. Country Parties noted that DLDD has disproportionate impacts on women and that the global COVID-19 crisis is further exacerbating inequalities, especially among women and marginalized groups.

93. Country Parties welcomed the progress made by the secretariat and the GM in making the Convention gender-responsive; they encouraged the continuous work of the UNCCD in providing guidance and capacity building on mainstreaming gender equality, while also highlighting the need for more concrete and systematic actions to improve the gender mainstreaming of the Convention, thereby addressing all aspects of DLDD.

94. Country Parties also welcomed the establishment of the first Gender Caucus at the fourteenth session of the COP and its success in promoting gender issues in the COP decisions, as well as mainstreaming gender in land management issues.

95. Some country Parties noted the support received from the GM in the preparation of the LDN TPP concept notes and in the integration of gender aspects into the TPPs.

96. Country Parties emphasized awareness raising and capacity building on gender and its full integration into the Convention as a cross-cutting issue, including gender-responsive decision making, the collection of sex and age disaggregated data, and the promotion of gender-responsive SLM best practices.

97. Country Parties suggested that the postponed gender workshops could be held virtually.

(c) *Land Tenure*

98. Some country Parties recognized the need for country Parties themselves to take centre stage in implementing the recommendations for improved land governance towards achieving LDN and the objectives of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.

99. Country Parties also recognized the work undertaken by the secretariat and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in preparing the technical guide to integrate the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security into the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of LDN, and indicated that they look forward to the final document to be submitted at the fifteenth session of the COP (COP 15) for their consideration.

100. Some country Parties expressed an interest in fostering legal and political environments that promote women's and vulnerable populations' equitable access to and control over land and resources, including secure and non-discriminatory land tenure. Country Parties also noted the need to strengthen the participation of women in land tenure issues, including through the provision of capacity building.

101. Some country Parties emphasized that national circumstances related to land tenure vary different legislation and policies, and that such differences should be considered in all activities related to the implementation of decision 26/COP.14.

102. In relation to the technical guide, some country Parties highlighted that the process should be transparent and open for the participation of all country Parties and relevant stakeholders, including CSOs, and encouraged the inclusion of inputs from country Parties and regions in the content of the technical guide before it is finalized.

103. Some country Parties requested that the technical guide (1) be conclusive, adaptable and flexible in method, (2) respect national contexts and national legislation, (3) differentiate between the needs and capacities of state actors and non-state actors, (4) be voluntary in nature, and (5) consider the funding needed to address issues around tenure.

104. Some country Parties noted that the technical guide and its implementation will go beyond the capacity of individual Parties. As such, country Parties emphasized the need for capacity building and appropriate financial support and technical assistance for, inter alia, awareness raising, training, policy guidelines, policy and legal reviews, the development of social and environmental safeguards, the integration of multi-stakeholder platforms, the

gathering of relevant data and the development and exchange of case studies for evidence of best practices.

105. Some country Parties also noted the importance of international and regional knowledge exchange and the need to establish partnerships with relevant stakeholders, such as the FAO, in the implementation of the technical guide and in the provision of capacity building related to the guide.

106. Some country Parties further noted the need to mainstream land tenure in decisions made on investments and the implementation of projects aiming to achieve LDN, bearing in mind the perspectives of indigenous peoples and local communities.

Comments presented by civil society representatives, United Nations agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations

107. The representatives of the CSOs presented the following comments:

(a) With regard to drought preparedness and mitigation, the civil society representative highlighted the necessity of developing initiatives with a holistic approach and combining efforts from different countries to improve drought management based on early warning systems; and requested the country Parties to consider that effective communication between government, funders and civil society is key to enhancing the resilience of communities and ecosystems;

(b) Also with regard to land tenure policies, the civil society representative suggested that the Science-Policy Interface be mandated to provide substantive evidence on how the integration of VGGT may improve the resilience of land users in the context of a post-COVID recovery;

(c) The civil society representative encouraged country Parties to consider the technical guide to integrate the VGGT into the implementation of the UNCCD and LDN, urging them to be proactive in ensuring the adoption and implementation of legal frameworks that guarantee access and adequate management of land to minority groups, such as pastoralists and indigenous peoples, and that guarantee equal land use and ownership rights for women.

108. Representatives of United Nations agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations presented the following comments:

(a) The observers to the Convention emphasized their continuous support in addressing issues related to drought, gender and land tenure in policy and implementation, recognizing the critical overlaps in gender and land tenure and their contribution to LDN;

(b) The observers highlighted the importance of strengthening synergies and coherence with existing frameworks, thereby amplifying efforts to address DLDD.

B. Interim report of the intergovernmental working group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

109. Statements were made by the representatives of Namibia (on behalf of the African Group), Philippines (on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group), Ecuador (on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries) and Montenegro (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)).

110. Statements were also made by the representatives of China, Uzbekistan (on behalf of Central Asia), Mexico, the Russian Federation, Argentina, Canada, the United States of America, Pakistan, Angola, Switzerland, Niger, Botswana, Eswatini and Egypt.

111. A further statement was made by the representative of the European Commission (on behalf of the European Union and its Member States).

112. A statement was made by the representative of Saudi Arabia (on behalf of the Arab Group).

113. A statement was also made by the representatives of the World Meteorological Organization and the FAO.

114. A further statement was made by the representative of the Environmental Monitoring Group on behalf of CSOs.

115. Written statements were considered in lieu of respective interventions for representatives of the Union for the Mediterranean.

116. This document reflects the feedback as expressed by country Parties to the interim report of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD.

117. Country Parties welcomed the work and activities of the members of the IWG to address the issue of drought in a comprehensive manner.

118. Country Parties also welcomed the IWG's reference to the positive experience of the Drought Initiative and the collaboration between United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders.

119. Most country Parties highlighted that drought events are expected to become more severe and frequent, further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, with dire impacts mostly on water and agricultural sectors, consequently affecting people's lives, communities, livelihoods, ecosystems and the economy at large.

120. Some country Parties also highlighted the importance of collaboration among institutions from different sectors and of ensuring high-level political support and leadership. Country Parties noted that drought issues require shared responsibility among several agencies and institutions and that the UNCCD has a specific niche on linking environment and development to SLM.

121. Some country Parties also noted the linkages between drought and its impacts on health in relation to the current pandemic and stressed the need to diminish vulnerability to drought as well as to future pandemics.

122. As the issue of drought is addressed in the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework, some country Parties urged that full attention be paid to the implementation of drought-related decisions within the Convention, and that the capacities of country Parties be further enhanced relative to drought monitoring and early warning systems, vulnerability, impact assessment and risk mitigation measures.

123. Some country Parties highlighted their expectations for the final IWG report to be a balanced document, providing pragmatic, comprehensive recommendations and concrete options, further recommending that the IWG substantiate the options with reasons and clarifications for country Parties to consider at COP 15. It was also highlighted that the IWG is not a negotiating body.

1. Comments on the overall content of the interim report and suggestions for consideration in the final report of the Intergovernmental Working Group

124. Some country Parties noted that the IWG comprises a broad range of experts and called for the IWG to have more representatives from the different regions.

125. Some country Parties also noted that more focus is required on drought preparedness, response and recovery and the implementation of integrated drought management programmes, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized communities.

126. Some country Parties highlighted that vulnerability and the economic impacts of drought can be experienced across sectors and stakeholders, and that the coordination and interlinkages among policies and programmes in different sectors remain a challenge.

127. Some country Parties noted the importance of assessing the benefits of action against the cost of inaction around drought in order to make an economic case for the urgency of addressing drought, not only to governments and policy makers, but also to the private sector. Some country Parties encouraged the IWG to provide practical recommendations and

guidance to country Parties on how to transition from reactive to proactive drought management.

128. Some country Parties suggested that the IWG report include information on how to enhance access to existing knowledge, including access to economic tools, innovative financing instruments and approaches to improve knowledge exchange among Parties.

129. Some country Parties also recommended that the IWG pay attention to success stories and facilitate experience-sharing between countries.

130. With respect to the key pillars of drought management – “early warning and monitoring systems”, “vulnerability and assessment”, as well as “drought risk mitigation measures” – some country Parties noted the need to include a future climate perspective that allows the evaluation of drought trends under climate change scenarios in order to design adaptation pathways according to these future perspectives.

131. Some country Parties also noted that the issues of land degradation and soil moisture drought are not sufficiently reflected in the interim report.

132. Some country Parties emphasized that the IWG should also focus on the issue of water and sanitation in the response to drought, particularly in rural areas where factors such as malnutrition and lack of hygiene are prevalent.

133. Some country Parties suggested that the IWG final report include the preservation of pasture lands.

134. Some country Parties recommended the development of a more coherent response at international level. One Party, on behalf of a group of Parties, proposed tasking an existing United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanism, such as the United Nations Environment Management Group, to carry out an assessment of the United Nations-wide approach to drought, and put forward proposals to improve coordination and address any existing gaps. It was also suggested that this approach be discussed by country Parties at COP 15.

135. Some country Parties expressed an interest in seeing the work of the IWG and the tools it highlights to help country Parties to determine where and when land degradation and water scarcity are increasing drought impacts and affecting Parties’ ability to adapt due to reduced resilience, and indicated that this information could be useful to help motivate and prioritize LDN and other investments.

2. Suggestions from country Parties on capacity building, knowledge management, finance and technology

136. Several country Parties raised the importance of paying more attention to capacity building, knowledge management, the sharing of best practices and indigenous knowledge, as well as new technologies. Most country Parties stressed the need for enhanced North-South and South-South cooperation and technology transfer to foster drought impact mitigation.

137. With regards to monitoring and early warning systems, some country Parties recommended an exploration of the potential of mobile applications and other new technologies, which can transform the nature of the drought monitoring systems.

138. Some country Parties recalled the importance of securing the adequate mobilization of resources, particularly to affected Parties, from all possible funding sources. Some country Parties also requested the IWG to focus on the need to develop comprehensive financing strategies, including innovative financing tools.

139. Some country Parties highlighted the need to integrate drought-related measures into development programmes.

140. Some country Parties called for the establishment of the necessary funding mechanisms to support drought-related activities under the secretariat and the GM.

141. Furthermore, some country Parties took note of parallel and overlapping initiatives, which are already well funded, inviting the IWG to explore options for improving engagement and collaboration with existing initiatives as well as access to existing financial instruments, and how to integrate dedicated programmes and funding schemes on drought risk management.

3. Suggestions from country Parties with regards to national drought plans

142. Some country Parties noted their active engagement in the development of NDPs, including through sharing knowledge, experience and best practices, and that this process is also valuable for the work of the IWG.

143. Some country Parties invited the IWG to synthesize knowledge gaps, especially regarding the integration of the tools and concepts available in the Drought Initiative for national drought management.

144. Some country Parties suggested that the IWG include an assessment of financing needs specifically to implement NDPs.

145. Some country Parties also suggested that the UNCCD consider a process for drought resilience similar to the LDN TSP and the private/public sector financing comparable to the LDN Fund.

146. Some country Parties further suggested that the "Policy and Governance" task group of the IWG focus on evaluating the management models already established within the NDPs.

147. Some country Parties encouraged the IWG to consider how Parties' drought plans could be leveraged for greater national level visibility and political support, and how improvements to the drought toolkit could make it an even more useful resource.

4. Suggestions from country Parties with regards to addressing drought at regional and subregional levels

148. Most country Parties suggested that the IWG identify options and best practices to address drought at the regional level, with individual country Parties making specific suggestions to the IWG to, inter alia:

(a) consider economic, environmental and social drought impacts, as well as the climate and geographical features of regions;

(b) tailor guidance to specific regions for effective drought action plans and their implementation;

(c) present regional experiences of successful practices in drought monitoring, early warning systems and risk mitigation approaches for knowledge sharing and the strengthening of partnerships with other regions;

(d) structure part of the IWG report in the form of a regional list of case studies, drought-related projects and their long- and short-term drought management measures;

(e) engage more with regional and subregional expert organizations to leverage their expertise in order to help strengthen Parties' capacity to improve drought-related resilience, particularly for data collection, monitoring, and assessment, and support the implementation of drought management and risk mitigation and response measures;

(f) work towards enhancing the review of regional initiatives, programmes, fora and knowledge hubs.

5. Suggestions from country Parties with regards to institutional frameworks to address drought

149. Some country Parties emphasized the need for the IWG to consider how to maintain and strengthen existing legal frameworks and financing mechanisms instead of building new ones, in order to improve efficiency and avoid long negotiations which might impede the current momentum on drought-related issues, thereby binding important resources. Some

country Parties also emphasized the need for the IWG to further build on the success of the Drought Initiative and leverage existing data and information, programmes and resources to allow the UNCCD to support concrete outcomes for country Parties in the very short term.

150. Mindful of the complexity of the drought issue and the need for all country Parties to help support and address drought effectively, some country Parties emphasized the need for the IWG to explore a process to develop a formal, legally binding agreement or protocol on drought that reflects the different contexts of the countries. Some other country Parties emphasized that there is no consensus on the need for or added value of any such agreement, that the issue of creating a new legal instrument was a non-starter and that they would not join if one were created. It was also noted that the respective agreement should be accompanied by necessary financial resources for its implementation.

151. Some country Parties noted that a policy framework on drought may draw attention to increased collaboration with existing mechanisms on drought-related issues in an integrated manner, noting the importance of addressing land degradation as a means of reducing the impact of drought and calling for synergies to be fostered with the other Rio conventions.

152. One Party proposed the establishment of an initial process to set voluntary national targets on drought within the framework of public policies, such as the NDPs. This could be similar to that of the voluntary LDN targets. The Party also suggested that all country Parties establish realistic targets to combat this phenomenon, preferably in a preventive manner. This will enable the mitigation of climate change impacts on forest areas (protected and under-management schemes), livestock and agriculture, while also guaranteeing water supply for the population.

6. Specific comments on the wording and sections for consideration in the final report of the IWG

153. Some country Parties highlighted that the terminology used in the report should be in line with agreed instruments, such as those of the FAO, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Trade Organization, United Nations resolutions and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development to ensure that the economic, social and environmental aspects of recovery are included in a balanced way. Consistent with multilaterally agreed language are, for example, terms such as “economic incentives”, “food price stabilization”, “smart and sustainable management”, “green finance” and “green and sustainable recovery”.

154. Some country Parties noted that, as drought is a natural phenomenon, reducing drought episodes is not possible. Rather, the focus should be on mitigating the impacts of drought and understanding the impacts of anthropogenic factors on drought at both national and international levels. As such, it was suggested that reference be made to drought preparedness as the “promotion of a dignified and productive coexistence with drought and natural aridity”.

155. Several interventions mentioned that, according to the approaches of disaster risk management, country action with respect to drought management should be called a “prospective” rather than “proactive” approach, as mentioned in paragraph 85 of document ICCD/CRIC(19)/4.

7. Comments presented by civil society representatives, United Nations agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations

156. The representatives of the CSOs presented the following comments:

(a) The civil society representative proposed that the IWG consider the knowledge, practices and know-how of local communities, especially the knowledge of women, pastoralists and oasis dwellers, relative to water conservation and sustainable use;

(b) The civil society representatives also noted that the subsequent work of the IWG should consider the importance of water as a global public good and address the significance of good governance and the shared management of resources, including conflict-

sensitive programming that is locally appropriate and addresses how climate change and other environmental drivers of conflict can be mitigated in order to deliver the necessary benefits to people in fragile and conflict-affected states;

(c) Considering the current context of societal fragility, dislocation and migration on an unprecedented scale, the civil society representative urged the IWG to consider how climate change and other environmental drivers of conflict can be mitigated in order to deliver the necessary benefits to people in fragile and conflict-affected states.

157. Representatives of United Nations agencies and Intergovernmental Organizations presented the following comments:

The observers to the Convention highlighted the importance of addressing drought to increase resilience to threats and crises; they also noted their support for the IWG and drought-related actions on awareness raising, capacity building, drought classification and monitoring, as well as on building partnerships and regional networks.

IV. Conclusion of the session

A. Adoption of the report of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention to the Conference of the Parties

158. The CRIC 19 Rapporteur, Mr. Hussein Nasrallah (Lebanon), introduced and recommended for adoption by the Committee the proceedings part of the CRIC 19 draft report as contained in document ICCD/CRIC(19)/L.1.

159. At its fifth meeting, the Committee adopted the CRIC 19 draft report with the understanding that recordings of the session and written statements that could not be delivered in-session will be used after the session to produce the substantive part followed by a review by the country Parties for a period of two weeks, and entrusted the Rapporteur to finalize it with the assistance of the UNCCD secretariat.

B. Closure of the session

160. The Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, made a concluding statement.

161. Concluding statements were also made by the representatives of Morocco (on behalf of the African Group), Pakistan (on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group), Nicaragua (on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries), Hungary (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for the Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV) and Armenia (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)).

162. A further statement was made by the representative of the European Commission (on behalf of the European Union and its Member States).

163. A statement was made by the representative of Saudi Arabia (on behalf of the Arab Group).

164. A concluding statement was also made by a representative of India on behalf of the President of COP 14.

165. A further statement was made by the representative of the Association CARI_France on behalf of CSOs.

166. A written statement was considered in lieu of a respective intervention for the representative of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

167. The Acting CRIC 19 Chair, Mr. Ahmet Senyaz, made closing remarks and declared CRIC 19 closed.

Annex**Documents before the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention at its nineteenth session**

<i>Document symbol</i>	<i>Title</i>
ICCD/CRIC(19)/1	Provisional agenda and annotations. Note by the secretariat
ICCD/CRIC(19)/2	Update on the implementation of the voluntary land degradation neutrality targets and related implementation efforts. Report by the Global Mechanism
ICCD/CRIC(19)/2/Corr.1	Update on the implementation of the voluntary land degradation neutrality targets and related implementation efforts. Report by the Global Mechanism. Corrigendum
ICCD/CRIC(19)/3	Operationalization of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund. Report by the Global Mechanism
ICCD/CRIC(19)/3/Corr.1	Operationalization of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund. Report by the Global Mechanism. Corrigendum
ICCD/CRIC(19)/4	Interim report of the intergovernmental working group on effective policy implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD. Report by the intergovernmental working group
ICCD/CRIC(19)/4/Corr.1	Interim report of the intergovernmental working group on effective policy implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD. Report by the intergovernmental working group. Corrigendum
ICCD/CRIC(19)/5	Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: gender, Drought Initiative and land tenure. Note by the secretariat
ICCD/CRIC(19)/5/Corr.1	Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: gender, Drought Initiative and land tenure. Note by the secretariat. Corrigendum
ICCD/CRIC(19)/INF.1	List of participants