



United Nations

ICCD/CRIC(15)/3



Convention to Combat Desertification

Distr.: General
8 August 2016

Original: English

Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

Fifteenth session

Nairobi, 18–20 October 2016

Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda

Implementation experiences

Land degradation neutrality (LDN) target-setting exercise

Report on the voluntary national land degradation neutrality target setting exercise

Report by the Global Mechanism

Summary

Decisions 2 and 3/COP.12 integrate the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 15.3 on land degradation neutrality (LDN), into the implementation process of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and invite Parties to formulate voluntary targets to achieve LDN. The same decisions also request the secretariat and appropriate UNCCD bodies to develop guidance for formulating national LDN targets and initiatives. In response to this decision, the Global Mechanism established the “LDN Target Setting Programme” (LDN TSP) in collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat.

Furthermore, COP 12 decided to review and discuss the LDN target setting exercise at the fifteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 15) (decision 16/COP.12). In line with this request, this document reports on the background of the LDN target setting process and on the objectives, components and timeline of the LDN TSP. It also provides an overview of the current status of the LDN TSP by summarising the activities undertaken so far and outlining the next steps planned. Finally, the report provides conclusions and recommendations for the consideration of Parties at CRIC 15.

GE.16-13665(E)



* 1 6 1 3 6 6 5 *

Please recycle



Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction: Background of the land degradation neutrality target setting exercise.....	1–8	3
II. Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme: objectives, components, timeline, synergies.....	9–16	5
A. Objectives	9	5
B. Components	10–12	5
C. Timeline.....	13	6
D. Synergies	14–16	6
III. Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme: achievements and next steps.....	17–24	7
A. Achievements	17–22	7
B. Next steps	23–24	8
IV. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	25	9
 Annex		
I. A List of countries participating in the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme as of 10 July 2016.....		10

I. Introduction: Background of the land degradation neutrality target setting exercise

Sustainable Development Goals

1. In September 2015, the global community agreed on “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, including 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and 169 targets. Goal 15 urges countries to “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”. More specifically, target 15.3 aims to “combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world” by 2030.

Decisions from the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties

2. In October 2015, the twelfth session of the Conference of Parties (COP 12) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) agreed to integrate the SDGs and related targets into the implementation of the Convention and decided that “striving to achieve SDG target 15.3 is a strong vehicle for driving implementation of the UNCCD” (decision 3/COP.12). In order to enable the UNCCD to “make a significant contribution to achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN)”, the COP decided to invite Parties to “formulate voluntary targets to achieve LDN” and “explore options on how to integrate the voluntary LDN targets in their national action plans (NAP) as part of their overall discussion on the implementation of the SDG” (decision 3/COP.12). Decision 2/COP.12 further invited “affected country Parties, in accordance with decision 22/COP.11, to establish baselines and national-level voluntary LDN targets within their NAPs” and “include voluntary national LDN targets in their national reports, as appropriate”.

3. Moreover, COP 12 noted in decision 8/COP.12 “that a significant proportion of land degradation occurs beyond arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas” and recognized “that Parties may use the UNCCD to guide their policies relating to desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) and voluntary targets when striving to achieve LDN at national and subnational levels”.

4. In order to advance a common understanding of LDN, COP 12 also endorsed the science-based definition of LDN which was developed by the Intergovernmental Working Group on LDN as follows: “LDN is a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems” (decision 3/COP.12).

5. Additionally, decision 3/COP.12 requested UNCCD bodies (a) to provide “guidance for formulating national LDN targets and initiatives” and (b) to facilitate “the use of the UNCCD indicator framework as a contribution to the monitoring, evaluation and communication of progress towards the national LDN targets”. In order to implement this request the Global Mechanism (GM) launched the LDN Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP, or the Programme) in October 2015 (see following sections). Finally, decision 15/COP.12 decided that affected country Parties should “complete the reporting and target setting exercise for review by the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) at its intersessional session that will take place after January 2018”.

Land degradation neutrality pilot project

6. The LDN TSP builds on the experience gained during the LDN pilot project which was coordinated by the secretariat in 2014/2015. The LDN pilot project assisted 14 affected country Parties¹ that agreed to implement an LDN approach in (a) testing the indicators framework adopted by the COP, in particular the use of a core set of progress indicators for monitoring LDN; and (b) the formulation of possible LDN national targets based on the aforementioned indicators, and (c) their integration into the NAPs and any other relevant national strategy to combat land degradation. Information on the implementation of the LDN pilot project was reported to Parties at CRIC 14.²

Land Degradation Neutrality monitoring

7. In terms of monitoring progress towards LDN under the UNCCD, COP 12 invited Parties to “use the monitoring and evaluation approach adopted in decision 22/COP.11 including the progress indicators” (Decision 3/COP.12). This is in line with ongoing efforts to define the methodology and possible data sets for SDG indicator 15.3.1 formulated as the “proportion of land that is degraded over total land area”.³ This is based on the report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to the 47th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission, which agreed, as a practical starting point, on a proposed global indicator framework for the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁴ The UNCCD secretariat has taken the lead on a comprehensive international expert consultation process and has established an Inter-Agency Advisory Group on SDG indicator 15.3.1 to draw up a detailed work plan to produce a final methodology package that is coherent with the progress indicators/metrics adopted in decision 22/COP.11, namely:⁵

- (a) Trends in land cover;
- (b) Trends in land productivity or functioning of the land;
- (c) Trends in carbon stock above and below ground.

Science-Policy Interface conceptual framework

8. In order to further advance the understanding of the LDN approach, COP 12 asked the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface (SPI) to “provide scientific guidance to the operationalization of the voluntary LDN target” (decision 21/COP.12; Objective 1 of the SPI Work Programme 2016–2017). The SPI implemented this request by developing, in collaboration with external experts, a comprehensive conceptual framework for LDN. The

¹ Algeria, Armenia, Belarus, Bhutan, Chad, Chile, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Grenada, Indonesia, Italy, Namibia, Senegal and Turkey. National reports available:

<www.unccd.int/en/programmes/RioConventions/RioPlus20/Pages/LDN-Project-Country-Reports.aspx>.

² ICCD/CRIC(14)/4, entitled “Formulation, revision and implementation of action programmes in view of the post-2015 development agenda” and ICCD/COP(12)/CST/3-ICCD/CRIC(14)/7, entitled “Refinement of the UNCCD monitoring and evaluation framework in view of the post-2015 development agenda: strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3”.

³ Report of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (E/CN.3/2016/2/Rev.1). Available at <<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-2-IAEG-SDGs-Rev1-E.pdf>>.

⁴ Statistical Commission. Report on the forty-seventh session (8-11 March 2016) (E/2016/24-E/CN.3/2016/34). Available at <<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/Report-on-the-47th-session-of-the-statistical-commission-E.pdf>>.

⁵ Available at <<http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/metadata-compilation/Metadata-Goal-15.pdf>>.

LDN conceptual framework, which was still under review when this document was being written, is intended to provide a scientifically-sound basis for understanding LDN, and to inform the development of practical guidance for implementing and monitoring progress towards achieving the LDN target. As such, it served as a scientific basis for developing the technical guide for LDN target setting (see section III).

II. Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme: objectives, components, timeline, synergies

A. Objectives

9. The main objective of the LDN TSP is to enable country Parties to define national baselines, set voluntary LDN targets and identify associated measures to achieve them. The Programme contributes to the UNCCD results framework for 2016–2019 and its outcome indicator 2.1 “The extent to which affected country Parties establish targets for addressing land degradation and rehabilitation” (see annex to decision 1/COP.12).

B. Components

10. At national level, the Programme supports interested country Parties in the following areas:

(a) *LDN baseline setting*: Providing information on methodologies and approaches related to the assessment of the LDN baseline at country level; identifying priority areas for LDN implementation; supporting national LDN data processing units to gather and process suitable (sub)national data; and providing default estimates from global data sources to complement national data;

(b) *LDN measures and targets*: Setting measurable, verifiable and time-bound national voluntary targets and identifying specific measures to achieve these targets based on an analysis of the drivers of land degradation;

(c) *LDN investment opportunities*: Identifying investment priorities to achieve the LDN target, including the scaling up of successful pilot projects and large-scale transformative LDN projects;

(d) *LDN multi-stakeholder consultations*: Under government leadership, facilitating stakeholder participation in the LDN target setting process. The Programme supports the functioning of national LDN working groups, bringing together key stakeholders, including national government and state agencies, the private sector, civil society organisations, the scientific community, and development partners. The Programme may also support national consultation workshops in discussing and validating the LDN baseline and measures defined.

11. At global level, the Programme facilitates technical support, knowledge sharing and cooperation among peers through:

(a) *Country peer learning*: Providing information and lessons-learned on the LDN target setting process, with particular emphasis on peer learning among countries. This includes the establishment of a help-desk platform to facilitate communication on technical enquiries from participating countries and the technical advisory team of the UNCCD;

(b) *Global analysis*: Using a coherent approach across all countries, the Programme analyses national-level information at global and regional levels in order to identify global trends related to LDN target setting. The data will be made available during relevant COP and CRIC sessions;

(c) *Advocacy*: Sensitising policy makers on the relevance of LDN target setting in terms of achieving the SDGs and supporting the mainstreaming of LDN in global, (sub)regional and national processes;

(d) *LDN target setting partnerships*: Creating strategic partnerships to support Programme implementation and create leverage, including partnerships with service/knowledge providers (e.g. space/remote sensing agencies) and financial and technical partners for LDN target setting and related implementation at country level (e.g. bilateral and multilateral agencies).

12. The engagement of the GM – through the LDN TSP – in national LDN target setting exercises will ensure coherence, leverage and joint learning as explained below:

(a) *Coherence* – by providing a coherent methodological approach to LDN data sourcing and assessment in cooperation with global data providers;

(b) *Leverage* – by ensuring the consistent and synergistic use of multi-partner funding, facilitating the transition from strategic planning of LDN baselines and measures to implementation of the LDN response hierarchy, i.e. avoid, minimize and reverse land degradation;

(c) *Joint learning* – by facilitating the sharing of experiences and lessons-learned within and between countries.

C. Timeline

13. The LDN TSP is organized into three initial phases:

(a) *Launch phase* (November 2015–July 2016), including the establishment of the Programme team, creation of a Programme website and help-desk platform, preparation of a technical guide for LDN target setting and organisation of regional inception workshops;

(b) *Implementation phase* (July 2016–June 2017), focusing on country-level programme activities, including the establishment of LDN baselines, targets and associated measures; and

(c) *Consolidation phase* (July–December 2017), including the analysis and dissemination of information on regional and global LDN trends.

D. Synergies

14. The Programme builds on the successful LDN pilot project implemented by 14 LDN champion countries in 2014–15 and takes into account the lessons-learned as well as the outcomes of an independent evaluation. The indicators used to monitor progress towards LDN targets will also be used to inform the UNCCD reporting process with regard to progress towards the UNCCD strategic objectives, thus supporting Parties' reporting.

15. The LDN target setting process should be mainstreamed in ongoing country-led LDN and UNCCD processes, including national SDG processes and regional initiatives such as the Great Green Wall for the Sahel and Sahara Initiative.

16. The Programme identifies and harnesses synergies between the Programme and countries' efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Most national climate plans include land-based activities that contribute directly to the achievement of LDN and vice versa. The identified land-climate interlinkages will help identify entry points to more effectively tap into climate finance from entities such as the Green Climate Fund.

III. Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme: achievements and next steps

A. Achievements

17. By 10 July 2016, 95 countries committed to setting national LDN targets and expressed an interest in participating in the Programme (see annex 1). The Programme team was established, including staff and consultants from the GM and the UNCCD secretariat; the Programme website was set up;⁶ an internal communication protocol with country Parties and interested stakeholders and partners was established; and the Programme help-desk platform was created.

18. Several country Parties and multilateral and bilateral organisations confirmed their commitment to providing financial resources to support the implementation of the Programme, including the Governments of France, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Luxemburg, the Republic of Turkey, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The World Conservation Union and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are supporting the process as GEF implementing agencies. Other country Parties and organisations expressed an interest in supporting the process, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Resource Institute.

19. The GM, in collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat, developed a technical guide for LDN target setting. The guide provides operational direction by leading readers through the LDN target setting process. It provides both technical information on LDN target setting and monitoring (including the application of the UNCCD progress indicators, identification of land degradation 'hotspots', baseline setting and target formulation) and recommendations for creating leverage at country level and establishing a multi-stakeholder process for LDN target setting (including stakeholder mapping, establishment/strengthening of national LDN working groups and implementation of LDN TSP country work plans). During finalisation, this practical guide benefitted from feedback from Parties participating in the regional inception workshops.

20. During the launch phase of the Programme, the GM, with support from the UNCCD secretariat and in cooperation with various partners and the respective host countries, conducted four regional inception workshops on the LDN target setting process:

- (a) Konya, Turkey, 28–30 May 2016 for African countries (Regional Implementation Annex 1),
- (b) Batumi, Georgia, 06–07 June 2016 for Central and Eastern European and Central Asian countries (Regional Implementation Annexes IV and V),
- (c) Bangkok, Thailand, 12–13 July 2016 for Asian and Pacific countries (Regional Implementation Annex III); and

⁶ <www.global-mechanism.org/content/supporting-countries-set-land-degradation-neutrality-targets>.

(d) Buenos Aires, Argentina, 20–21 July for Latin American and Caribbean countries (Regional Implementation Annex II).

21. The regional inception workshops brought together the Programme team, country counterparts represented by the UNCCD focal point institution, and international partners supporting the Programme. The main objectives of the inception workshops were to

- (a) Familiarize workshop participants with the LDN target setting process;
 - (b) Identify opportunities for leverage through the LDN target setting process;
- and
- (c) Create a mutual understanding of the LDN target setting process and mutual accountabilities of country Parties participating in the Programme and the GM and UNCCD secretariat.

22. The achievements of the Programme will be shared with country Parties during CRIC 15 through the present report and an interactive dialogue session where Parties and other stakeholders participating in the Programme can share their experiences and experts can offer further guidance on LDN target setting. Additionally, the GM will organize (i) an LDN inception workshop for countries having expressed an interest in participating in the Programme after the regional inception workshops took place; (ii) a workshop for countries that participated in the LDN pilot project; and (iii) a meeting with international partners supporting the programme.

B. Next steps

23. Following the finalisation of the launch phase, programme implementation will focus on country-level support for the LDN target setting process until mid-2017. Key milestones to be achieved during the process include:

(a) *Government leadership and stakeholder engagement ensured:* The Programme will support stakeholder participation by carrying out rapid stakeholder mapping and establishing/strengthening national LDN working groups. A leverage plan will be prepared to help identify country-specific opportunities. Country-specific work plans will be formulated, implemented and monitored and country-specific capacity-building needs for implementation of the LDN target setting process will be identified and subsequently addressed in cooperation with the Soil Leadership Academy of the UNCCD secretariat.⁷

(b) *LDN baseline established and mapped.* The Programme will support the establishment of LDN baselines by providing LDN-related global datasets as outlined in Decision 15/COP.12 and in collaboration with the GEF-funded Global Support Programme, implemented by UNEP and executed by the GM. In addition, the assessment of land degradation trends, the identification of direct and indirect drivers of land degradation and the validation of results by key stakeholders is supported by the Programme.

(c) *LDN targets and associated measures defined.* Country Parties are encouraged to define measurable targets on what the country wants to achieve in terms of LDN. In addition, key policy and technical measures are identified to achieve the LDN targets defined at national level.

(d) *LDN leverage opportunities tapped into.* Parties are encouraged to identify how LDN action guided by a target would contribute to the achievement of the country's

⁷ <www.unccd.int/en/Stakeholders/private_sector/Pages/Soil-Leadership-Academy.aspx>.

main development priorities and how international commitments, through the three Rio Conventions, for instance, could be integrated into the LDN target.

(e) *LDN transformative projects/programmes and innovative finance mapped out.* The Programme supports the pre-identification of selected investment opportunities that could be turned into financeable proposals for transformative LDN projects/programmes.

24. At global level, the Programme supports peer learning, advocacy activities and partnership-building through participation in selected meetings at regional and international levels.

IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

25. **The following are conclusions and recommendations for possible consideration by Parties at CRIC 15:**

(a) *Tap into opportunities provided by LDN target setting:* Encourages Parties to fully exploit the opportunities of the target setting process, inter alia, by fostering policy coherence and integrating commitments (e.g. restoration, climate) into the LDN target and implementation action, and tapping into climate finance. Requests the UNCCD secretariat and the GM to fully support Parties in this endeavour;

(b) *Develop transformative projects:* Encourages Parties to develop large-scale transformative "signature" projects and to scale up and bundle smaller/pilot projects into larger programmes, supported by multi-partner arrangements and by tapping into innovative finance opportunities. Requests the UNCCD secretariat and the GM to support Parties in this endeavour;

(c) *Build on lessons learned:* Encourages Parties to build on and learn from emerging lessons, to share knowledge and to learn from each other. Requests the UNCCD secretariat and the GM to facilitate this peer exchange and learning;

(d) *GM of the UNCCD to further mobilize resources for increased support:* Requests the GM of the UNCCD to mobilize additional development partners and resources for the target setting process and to support Parties in mobilising resources for transformative projects to meet their LDN targets.

Annex I

A List of countries participating in the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme as of 10 July 2016

Countries participating in the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme as of 10 July 2016

Africa (Annex I)

1	Benin
2	Burkina Faso
3	Cameroon
4	Cape Verde
5	Central African Republic
6	Côte d'Ivoire
7	Democratic Republic of the Congo
8	Egypt
9	Equatorial Guinea
10	Eritrea
11	Gambia
12	Ghana
13	Guinea
14	Guinea-Bissau
15	Kenya
16	Lesotho
17	Madagascar
18	Malawi
19	Mali
20	Mauritania
21	Mauritius
22	Morocco
23	Niger
24	Nigeria
25	Republic of the Congo
26	São Tomé and Príncipe

Countries participating in the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme as of 10 July 2016

27	Seychelles
28	Sierra Leone
29	South Africa
30	South Sudan
31	Sudan
32	Swaziland
33	Togo
34	Uganda
35	Zimbabwe

Asia (Annex II)

36	Bangladesh
37	Cambodia
38	China
39	Iran
40	Iraq
41	Jordan
42	Kuwait
43	Lebanon
44	Nepal
45	Niue
46	Philippines
47	Samoa
48	Sri Lanka
49	Syria
50	Thailand
51	Timor-Leste
52	Vietnam

Latin America and the Caribbean (Annex III)

53	Argentina
54	Dominica
55	Dominican Republic
56	El Salvador

Countries participating in the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme as of 10 July 2016

57	Guyana
58	Haiti
59	Jamaica
60	Mexico
61	Nicaragua
62	Paraguay
63	Peru
64	St. Kitts and Nevis
65	St. Lucia
66	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
67	Suriname
68	Trinidad and Tobago
69	Uruguay
	Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV) & Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)
70	Azerbaijan
71	Bosnia Herzegovina
72	Croatia
73	FYR Macedonia
74	Georgia
75	Kyrgyzstan
76	Moldova
77	Montenegro
78	Russia
79	Serbia
80	Ukraine
81	Uzbekistan
	LDN Pilot countries
82	Algeria
83	Armenia
84	Belarus
85	Bhutan

*Countries participating in the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme as of
10 July 2016*

86	Chad
87	Chile
88	Costa Rica
89	Ethiopia
90	Grenada
91	Indonesia
92	Italy
93	Namibia
94	Senegal
95	Turkey
