



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Science writer to produce a report reflecting national experience in the UNCCD 2022 reporting process

Consultancy reference number: CCD/23/C/99

Background

Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management with its headquarters located in Bonn, Germany.

Country Parties are required under the Convention to communicate, through the UNCCD secretariat, reports on measures undertaken to implement the Convention. The process of national reporting is an indispensable tool to bring forward effective planning and implementation of the Convention and the achievement of the UNCCD strategic objectives at global and national levels.

Since 2018, the UNCCD reporting process has contributed to a regular review of progress made in the implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.¹ Furthermore, through the national reporting process, the UNCCD secretariat in its capacity as custodian agency for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicator 15.3.1 “Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area”, gather information on progress towards SDG target 15.3² as a contribution to the overall follow-up and review by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

During the latest reporting process, in 2022, a total of 126 national reports³ were submitted by country Parties through the UNCCD reporting platform, the Performance Review and Assessment of the Implementation System (PRAIS).⁴ The reports contain national level data and information on progress towards the five UNCCD strategic objectives, based on an agreed set of indicators,⁵ as well as information on country Parties’ experiences in implementing the Convention.

The information submitted through the national reports has been analyzed to generate global and regional aggregates. A preliminary analysis of the information is contained in the official documentation prepared for the 21st session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 21).⁶ A data dashboard has also been developed for the display and analysis of reported data on key indicators.⁷ Furthermore, information on SDG indicator 15.3.1 gathered through the national reporting process is contained in the Global SDG indicators Data Platform⁸ and in the 2023 SDG reports.⁹

¹ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/other/unccd-2018-2030-strategic-framework>.

² SDG target 15.3: “By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation neutral world”.

³ National reports are available for download at: <https://www.unccd.int/our-work/country-profiles>, by selecting a country clicking on the “PRAIS 4” link, where available.

⁴ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/prais4-reporting-platform>.

⁵ For more information on the UNCCD indicator and monitoring framework see: <https://prais4-reporting-manual.readthedocs.io/en/latest/introduction.html#indicator-and-monitoring-framework>.

⁶ See documents ICCD/CRIC(21)/2, ICCD/CRIC(21)/3, ICCD/CRIC(21)/4, ICCD/CRIC(21)/5 and ICCD/CRIC(21)/6, available at: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/official-documents/cric-21-samarkand-uzbekistan-2023>.

⁷ <https://data.unccd.int/>

⁸ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal>.

⁹ See the SDG Report 2023: Special Edition at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/>, and the Statistical Annex at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2023/E_2023_64_Statistical_Annex_I_and_II.pdf.



Objective of consultancy

A visually engaging and easily digestible report, for both online and print publishing, tailored to an informed but non-technical audience.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Under the overall management of the Chief of the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) unit of the UNCCD, and the direct supervision of an assigned Programme Officer in the STI Unit, the consultant will produce content for a report reflecting national experience in the UNCCD 2022 reporting process.

The report shall contain, among others:

- a summary of key numbers and messages from the analysis of the reported information;
- a short excursus into how the data revolution has transformed the UNCCD national reporting process;
- a curated compilation of country Parties' experiences, good practices and lessons learnt in the preparation of their 2022 national reports;
- a curated compilation of country Parties' experiences in implementing sustainable land management, rehabilitation and restoration practices for the recovery of degraded land;
- a summary of lessons learnt;
- a forward-looking section on the future of reporting.

The report should meet the needs of an informed but non-technical audience, ensuring that reporting insights and findings and their underlying complexities are communicated in accessible and easy to understand language. The content should be concise and not exceed 50 pages.

With the support of a data visualization and information design agency, the objective is to produce a visually engaging and easily digestible report, for both online and print publishing. While the consultant will be responsible for content development, the data visualization and information design agency will be responsible for data visualization, publication design and layout, editing and proofreading of the publication. The consultant will also collaborate with the information design agency on data visualization on a conceptual level.

More specifically, the consultant's duties will include, but not be limited to:

- Research/review data and information contained in the national reports, supplementary files to the national report, the CRIC 21 documentation, the PRAIS database, the UNCCD data dashboard and other resources made available by the UNCCD secretariat in order to select suitable content for the report. Organize the material and prepare an annotated outline of the report in consultation with the UNCCD secretariat.
- Compile, in annotated form, a broad range of case studies and good practice examples describing either countries' experiences in the preparation of their 2022 national reports, or country Parties' experiences in implementing sustainable land management, rehabilitation and restoration practices for the recovery of degraded land.
- Detail 15-20 case studies and good practice examples, selected in consultation with the STI Unit, from developed and developing countries, and from all UNCCD Regional Implementation Annexes:
 - Case studies related to countries' experiences in the preparation of their 2022 national reports should describe to the extent possible:
 - successful use of national data sources and assumptions for reporting;
 - stakeholders involved in data preparation or report validation;
 - land degradation decision support tools used.



- Case studies related to countries' experiences in implementing sustainable land management, rehabilitation and restoration practices for the recovery of degraded land should describe to the extent possible:
 - the problem being addressed;
 - the hotspots of land degradation and brightspots of land improvement;
 - the drivers of change (direct and indirect);
 - the levers of positive responses;
 - the type of intervention (i.e., relevance of the target to the land degradation neutrality response hierarchy);
 - planned or ongoing actions;
 - outcomes and areas of success.
- If necessary, liaise with countries of selected case studies to verify that their experience is adequately described or to provide additional information.
- Summarize lesson learnt for successful reporting and efficacious recovery of degraded land that could be shared and replicated in other countries.
- Produce a 30-50 page report (6,000-10,000 words) that presents the results from the above tasks and that communicate scientific and technical information to a non-technical audience, including policy and decision makers of signatory countries, the public and the media. Submit a draft version of the report for discussion with the UNCCD secretariat and revise it accordingly.
- Participate in consultations with the data visualization and information design agency and contribute ideas to develop compelling data visualizations.

Deliverables

- Annotated outline and intermediate draft version of the report submitted for discussion with the UNCCD secretariat and revised accordingly;
- 30-50 page (6,000-10,000 word) document of draft text, table and graphs in a format that can be converted easily to glossy publication.

Contractual terms

The service of the selected consultant is estimated to be for a period of 03 months between mid-January to mid-April 2024. This contract is based on deliverables and payment is defined by outputs.

Requirements

- Advanced university degree (master's degree or equivalent) in natural/environmental science or related discipline is required.
- A minimum of 10 years of experience in science writing.
- Substantial record of science-based and data-driven communications/publications in the natural/environmental sciences that target a non-technical audience.
- Familiarity or basic understanding of the UNCCD reporting process would be a strong asset.
- Use of relevant computer software, electronic tools and databases.
- Solid writing and analytical abilities with sensitivity to nuance.
- Ability to tailor language, tone, style, and format to match audience.
- For this consultancy fluency in English language (both oral and written) is required.
- Knowledge of other UN languages is an asset.

Special notice

Only individuals who can act as independent, individual economical operators are qualified to apply. Individuals who can provide their services only on account of an institution or enterprise not in their individual capacity are not eligible under this procedure.



Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered “staff members” under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations Secretariat and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultant and individual contractor is responsible for determining tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.

Submission of application

The following documents should be sent to staffing@unccd.int as **one document**: UNCCD Personal History Form¹⁰ /CV and cover letter, specifying the following in the email subject line: **CCD/23/C/99**.

The deadline for applications is **07 January 2024**. Only applications submitted by the deadline and with complete documentation will be taken into consideration.

Due to the volume of applications received, receipt of applications cannot be acknowledged individually. Please address your application as indicated above and please do not address or copy your application to an individual at the Secretariat or Global Mechanism. Candidates who do not receive any feedback within three months of the deadline should consider their application as unsuccessful.

Date of issuance: 21 December 2023

¹⁰ UNCCD P-11 form in electronic fill-in .pdf OR .docx format available: <https://www.unccd.int/about-us/secretariat/vacancies/applying-unccd>