

SUMMARY OF THE THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: 6-16 SEPTEMBER 2017

The thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 13) convened in Ordos, Inner Mongolia, China, from 6-16 September 2017. Approximately 1,200 participants gathered for the ten-day meeting, which adopted 37 decisions, including on agenda items related to desertification, land degradation and drought, the target to achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN), and how to align the UNCCD's goals and parties' action programmes with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

During the 11-12 September high-level segment, ministerial roundtables addressed themes of "Land degradation: a challenge to development, prosperity and peace," "Drought and sand and dust storms: early warning and beyond," and "Land degradation neutrality: 'From targets to action... what will it take?'" The high-level segment also included dialogues with representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs), local governments, and the private sector.

The UNCCD's two subsidiary bodies, the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), also convened in parallel to the COP. The CST negotiated six decisions for COP consideration, including cooperation with other intergovernmental scientific panels and bodies, improving the efficiency of the Science-Policy Interface, and promoting the analysis, dissemination and accessibility of best practices and the UNCCD Knowledge Hub. The CRIC also negotiated six decisions for COP consideration, regarding, *inter alia*: development and implementation of strategies through national action programmes to achieve the objectives of the Convention in light of target 15.3 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention, collaboration with the Global Environment Facility; and improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the COP.

In addition to adopting the CST and CRIC decisions, the COP deliberated on, and adopted key decisions on: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its implications for the UNCCD; the future strategic framework of the Convention; effective implementation of the Convention at national, subregional and regional levels; and linking scientific knowledge with decision making. Through these decisions, the COP endorsed the scientific conceptual framework for LDN and

calls upon parties pursuing LDN to consider guidance from this framework; invites parties to identify case studies on LDN implementation to be included in a synthesis to COP 14; and requests the SPI to use the synthesis to report on lessons learned and collaborate with other scientific bodies. The COP also launched the LDN Fund and the Global Land Outlook (GLO).

Participants left the Ordos International Convention and Exhibition Centre, with parting words from UNCCD Executive Secretary Monique Barbut: "Take bold steps for the Convention. We now have a clear, action-oriented, path forward!"

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNCCD

The UNCCD is the centerpiece in the international community's efforts to combat desertification and land degradation in the drylands. The Convention was adopted on 17 June 1994, entered into force on 26 December 1996, and currently has 195 parties. The UNCCD recognizes the physical, biological and socio-economic aspects of desertification, the importance of redirecting technology transfer to be demand-driven, and the importance of involving local communities in combating desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD). The core of the UNCCD is the development of national, sub-regional and regional action programmes by national governments, in cooperation with UN agencies, donors, local communities and non-governmental organizations. The UNCCD,

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as adopted, contained four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean.

COPs 1-12: The COP met annually from 1997-2001. During these meetings, delegates, *inter alia*: selected Bonn, Germany, as the location for the UNCCD's Secretariat and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) as the organization to administer the Global Mechanism (GM), which works with countries on financing strategies for sustainable land management (SLM); approved a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the GM; established an *ad hoc* working group to review and analyze reports on national, sub-regional and regional action programmes; adopted a fifth regional annex for Central and Eastern Europe; established the CRIC; and supported a proposal by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to designate land degradation as a focal area for funding.

COP 8 convened in 2007 in Madrid, Spain, and, *inter alia*, adopted a decision on the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention ("The Strategy"). Delegates also requested the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) to conduct an assessment of the GM for presentation to COP 9. Delegates did not reach agreement on the programme and budget, and an Extraordinary Session of the COP convened at UN Headquarters in New York on 26 November 2007 to conclude this item.

COP 9 convened in 2009, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Delegates focused on items called for by the Strategy and adopted 36 decisions, including on: four-year work plans and two-year work programmes of the CRIC, CST, GM and Secretariat; the JIU assessment of the GM; the terms of reference of the CRIC; arrangements for regional coordination mechanisms; the communication strategy; and the programme and budget.

COP 10 convened in 2011, in Changwon City, Republic of Korea. Delegates adopted 40 decisions, addressing, *inter alia*, the governance structure for the GM, by which parties agreed that the accountability and legal representation of the GM shall be transferred from IFAD to the UNCCD Secretariat.

COP 11 convened in 2013, in Windhoek, Namibia. Delegates adopted 41 decisions, *inter alia*, to: approve new housing arrangements of the GM; initiate follow-up of the outcomes of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20); establish a Science-Policy Interface (SPI) to enhance the UNCCD as a global authority on DLDD and SLM; and endorse the establishment of the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP).

COP 12 convened in 2015, in Ankara, Turkey. Delegates adopted 35 decisions, following deliberations on DLDD, including how to pursue the target to achieve LDN; and how to align the UNCCD's goals and parties' action programmes with the recently adopted SDGs.

CRIC: The CRIC held its first session in Rome, Italy, in 2002, during which delegates considered presentations from the five UNCCD regions, and considered information on financial mechanisms to support the UNCCD's implementation and advice provided by the CST and the GM. From 2003 to 2010, the CRIC tackled a number of issues, including reviewing implementation of the UNCCD, its institutional arrangements, and implementation financing by multilateral agencies and institutions, improving communication and reporting procedures, mobilizing resources for implementation, and collaborating with the GEF. The CRIC also considered: the workplans and programmes for the Convention's bodies; indicators and monitoring the Strategy; principles for improving communication of information; and

recommended adoption of the proposal for an online Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS).

CRIC 10 (2011) discussed the strategic orientation of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies, adopted four operational objectives to assess the implementation of the Convention against performance indicators, and approved an iterative process on reporting procedures and the refinement of methodologies for the review and compilation of best practices.

CRIC 11 (2013) reviewed progress in alignment of national action programmes (NAPs) with the Strategy, considered input from the Intersessional Working Group for the Mid-term Evaluation of the Strategy and the *Ad Hoc* Advisory Group of Technical Experts on "operationally delineating affected areas," and took note of the input from the third special session of the CST (CST S-3) on how best to measure progress in the implementation of the Strategy.

CRIC 12 (2013) approved 12 decisions, including on: best practices in the implementation of the Convention; UNCCD's interaction with the GEF; multi-year workplans of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies; assessment of financial flows for implementation; and assessment of the implementation of the Convention against strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3, and against the operational objectives of the Strategy.

CRIC 13 (2015) assessed the Convention's implementation against its five operational objectives: advocacy, awareness-raising and education; policy framework; science, technology and knowledge; capacity building; and financing and technology transfer. The CRIC also reviewed financial support for the implementation of the Convention, and the formulation, revision and implementation of action programmes in view of the post-2015 sustainable development framework.

CRIC 14 (2015) developed eight decisions, regarding, *inter alia*: collaboration with the GEF; establishment of national-level voluntary LDN targets within NAPs and national reports, including funding to support national target-setting towards achieving LDN; and a results framework with which the CST, CRIC, GM and the Secretariat will organize their work for the period 2016-2019.

CRIC 15 (2016) considered arrangements for a new strategic framework, including its corresponding monitoring and reporting guidelines, to succeed the Strategy after 2018. Recommendations to COP 13 included: the strategic objectives and expected impacts; the implementation framework, including funding for the strategy; the roles of the CRIC and CST, as well as the UNCCD Secretariat and GM; and monitoring, reporting and evaluation arrangements.

CST: The CST has convened parallel meetings at each COP. At CST 1's recommendation, the COP established an *ad hoc* panel to oversee the process of surveying benchmarks and indicators, and decided that CST 2 should consider linkages between traditional and modern knowledge. The CST also recommended that the COP appoint *ad hoc* panels on traditional knowledge and on early warning systems; create a Group of Experts; and, at CST 8, convene future sessions in a predominantly scientific and technical conference-style format, which led to the convening of the UNCCD 1st Scientific Conference at CST 9 in 2009.

The first CST special session (S-1, 2008) considered preparations for CST 9, elements of the Strategy related to the CST, its workplan, and advice to the CRIC on measuring progress on the Strategy's Objectives. CST 9 met concurrently with COP 9, during which the 1st Scientific Conference convened to consider the theme "Biophysical and socio-economic monitoring and assessment of desertification and land degradation, to support decision making in land and water management." CST 9 also

developed decisions to review the experience of the 1st Scientific Conference and recommended two indicators—the proportion of the population in affected areas living above the poverty line, and land cover status—as the minimum required subset of impact indicators for reporting by affected countries beginning in 2012.

CST S-2 (2011) considered the status of work on methodologies and baselines for the effective use of the subset of impact indicators, among other matters. CST 10 established two *ad hoc* working groups: one to continue the iterative participatory process on impact indicator refinement and monitoring and assessment of impacts; and one to further discuss options for the provision of scientific advice to the UNCCD.

CST S-3 (2013) met concurrently with the UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference, which discussed research and best practices in the face of DLDD and proposed methodologies for evaluating the costs and benefits of SLM. CST 11 (2013) forwarded decisions to the COP recommending, *inter alia*, the establishment of the SPI and the SKBP and the establishment of *ad hoc* working groups on the iterative participatory process on impact indicator refinement and monitoring, and options for providing scientific advice to the UNCCD.

CST S-4 (2015) and the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference convened concurrently, and addressed the theme “Combating desertification/land degradation and drought for poverty reduction and sustainable development: the contribution of science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices.” CST 12 (2015) met concurrently with COP 12 and discussed a policy-oriented proposal based on the outcomes of the UNCCD 3rd Scientific Conference; options for improving the CST inputs to decision making; and proposals for the use of land-based indicators across the Rio Conventions. The CST further adopted its work programme for 2016-2017, including tackling issues related to LDN, the restoration of degraded lands, and the role of SLM in addressing DLDD, climate change mitigation, and adaptation.

COP 13 REPORT

Cemal Nogay, on behalf of COP 12 President Veysel Eroğlu, Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs, Turkey, opened COP 13 on Wednesday morning, 6 September. He noted that national LDN targets are being set in 110 countries, and highlighted the food security, biodiversity and climate change co-benefits of combating land degradation, especially for the rural poor.

Delegates then elected Zhang Jianlong, Minister of State Forestry Administration, China, as COP 13 President. In his opening remarks, Zhang noted that over 1.5 billion people in more than 100 countries are exposed to desertification, land degradation, and drought, which causes conflict and thus endangers global peace. He announced China’s intention to declare its LDN voluntary target during COP 13.

Bu Xiaolin, Chair, Inner Mongolia People’s Government, highlighted the achievements of Inner Mongolia in combating desertification in recent years, with a reduction of 2.9 million hectares of affected land since 2000.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Monique Barbut expressed fears that the window of opportunity created from aligning the Convention with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is limited and expectations are “huge,” therefore efforts at this COP and thereafter need to focus on implementation, and translating the LDN targets into action.

OPENING STATEMENTS: Ecuador, for the Group of 77 and China (G-77/China), noted that the 2018 session of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) will offer an opportunity to showcase countries’ progress towards

LDN, and stressed the need to align the LDN Fund with other financial mechanisms.

Estonia, on behalf of the European Union (EU), emphasized their support for the LDN Fund. He stated that gender mainstreaming, scientific research including effective translation, and considerations of local conditions and communities, were critical to achieving desired outcomes.

Kenya, for the African Group, called for COP 13 to consider specific measures to deal with the impacts of drought in the region, and to strengthen the CRIC as an interactive body for sharing of country experiences.

Bhutan, for the Asia-Pacific region, welcomed the inclusion of drought as a specific objective in the new Strategic Framework and underscored the importance of LDN for the implementation of the Convention, as well as the need for transparent and fair resource allocation.

Argentina, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), emphasized the importance of the new Strategic Framework in addressing DLDD, noting this requires means of implementation, especially finance.

Armenia, on behalf of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), stressed the need to align LDN target setting with SDG reporting. He supported the four-year CRIC reporting cycle and called for the CST’s involvement in identifying topics for the intersessional CRIC meetings.

Italy, on behalf of the Northern Mediterranean States, welcomed the technical and financial efforts towards LDN target setting, and stated her support for the four-year reporting cycle and improved role of the CST through the Science, Technology and Implementation unit.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP), for UN organizations and specialized agencies, emphasized UNDP’s role in assisting countries through, *inter alia*: capacity building and policy advocacy; supporting local approaches; and resource mobilization.

The China Green Foundation, on behalf of CSOs, highlighted the impacts of DLDD worldwide, including food insecurity, and displacement and migration; and stressed that land tenure security is a prerequisite for land rehabilitation.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Delegates adopted the agenda and organization of work without amendments (ICCD/COP(13)/1).

On 6 and 9 September, delegates elected the following candidates as Vice-Presidents of COP 13: Richard Mwendandu (Kenya), Abdessamad Hajibi (Morocco), Karma Dema Dorji (Bhutan), Jorge Heider (Argentina), Trevor Benn (Guyana), Andrey Kuzmichof (Belarus), Valeriu Cazac (Moldova), and Barbara De Rosa-Joynt (US).

On 14 September, Acting President Jia Xiaoxia, State Forestry Administration, China, introduced document ICCD/COP(13)/20 on the Credentials of Delegations. The COP adopted the draft decision (ICCD/COP(13)/L.3) on 15 September as presented without comment.

Delegates also adopted the document on accreditation of intergovernmental organizations, CSOs and representatives from the private sector (ICCD/COP(13)/17), noting, *inter alia*, that seven business and industry entities, and 492 CSOs were accredited for COP 13.

Delegates established a Committee of the Whole (COW) on 6 September to consider the following agenda items: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and implications for the UNCCD; effective implementation of the Convention; programme and budget; procedural matters; and any other matters.

CSO OPEN DIALOGUE SESSION

On 9 September, Executive Secretary Barbut opened the session by recalling the inclusion of civil society into UNCCD discussions since 1997, calling it a “wise decision.” She commented that CSOs are the main actors responsible for implementing the Convention, since they work closely with local stakeholders and can bridge the flow of knowledge between government and local communities.

Moderator Liu Fangfei, UNCCD Drylands Ambassador, China, introduced the Green Handkerchief Campaign, designed to combat climate change by encouraging the replacement of disposable with reusable handkerchiefs.

In a keynote address, Bariş Karapinar, IPCC, stated that emissions from the agriculture, forestry and other land-use sectors are among the largest contributors to climate change. Noting that land serves as a significant carbon sink, he urged for its protection, and highlighted the synergies between adaptation and mitigation in SLM. In closing, he acknowledged the efforts of CSOs on the ground towards climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Diallo Ahmed Sékou, Association de Formation et d’Appui au Développement, Mali, for the African Group, emphasized that it is possible to address the environmental and economic challenges Africa is facing. He outlined a project on environmental governance in Mali that achieved good results through activities such as: public and local government awareness raising; training at the grassroots level; environmental grassroots monitoring groups; and land tenure commissions that help prevent disputes and conflicts.

Vũ Thi Bích Hờp, Center for Sustainable Rural Development, Viet Nam, for the Asia Group, showed photos of the recent flash floods in India and Viet Nam, and emphasized climate change impacts and land degradation faced by most Asian countries. Presenting an organic pilot project in rural Viet Nam that uses sustainable practices to raise pigs, she recommended the UNCCD includes some NGO best practices into its Strategic Framework and include CSOs in LDN funding.

Juan Riet, Uruguay, for GRULAC, highlighted an initiative taking place in the semi-arid area of Brazil to improve the capacity of local populations, with a focus on water provision. He said activities such as establishing family networks to collect water and awareness raising, have resulted in an increase in water availability, improved soil fertility, and zero-net deforestation, and called for the increased involvement of local communities in establishing national policies.

Sophiko Akhobadze, Regional Environmental Center for the Caucasus, Georgia, for CEE, discussed a project that applied SLM to mitigate land degradation in rural areas and prevent poverty in Georgia, partly funded by the GEF. She said the project has increased women-led farms from zero to 42, and noted the crucial role of CSOs in SLM, stressing that access to land ownership by poor people is vital for achieving the SDGs.

Robert Tansey, The Nature Conservancy, representing the Western Europe and Others Group, highlighted climate change as one of the most urgent challenges of this century, which threatens to undo decades of conservation work, both in developing and developed countries. He underscored the potential of nature-based solutions to mitigate the challenges of land, fresh water, cities and oceans, and cited CSOs as essential partners in achieving this.

Andrew Lesa, New Zealand, representing Youth, voiced his views that not only young academics, but young farmers, young indigenous, and young marginalized people, including the disabled and unemployed, should be included in the “green

revolution.” He called for additional support from the business and government sectors to youth, to focus on “ruralization,” rather than urbanization, as a solution to climate change impacts.

In the ensuing discussion, countries highlighted, *inter alia*: the positive contributions of CSOs to SLM; urging national mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of SLM; referencing land tenure rights and formally recognizing the role of traditional knowledge; and reminding the COP that the Strategic Framework did not explicitly refer to CSOs.

Detailed coverage of the dialogue session is at <http://enb.iisd.org/vol04/enb04273e.html>.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

On 6 September, the COP elected Nophiso Ngcaba (South Africa) as COW Chair. The COW conducted an initial discussion of most agenda items, and negotiated its decisions in two contact groups throughout the meeting, one contact group on programme and budget matters, facilitated by Patrick Wegerdt (European Commission), and a contact group on matters other than the programme and budget, facilitated by Luis Constantino (Angola). A group of Friends of the Chair was established on 9 September to draft the text of the Ordos Declaration. The COW submitted the draft decisions to the COP on 15 September.

2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION:

Integration of SDG 15 and related target 15.3 which states: “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”, into the implementation of the UNCCD: This agenda item was discussed on 6 September in the COW, and in a contact group on 8, 9 and 12 September. A draft decision was agreed in the COW on 15 September and was adopted by the COP.

The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(13)/2. Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Haiti, and Oman outlined their target-setting efforts, while Belarus highlighted problems faced by national statistical offices in incorporating LDN indicators. The Republic of Korea called for further refinement of the LDN indicators and monitoring guidelines. Uganda, for the African Group, outlined the need to clarify access to the LDN Fund. Uruguay and Brazil said the UNCCD should not restrict itself to a single SDG. UN Environment (UNEP) outlined its work on dust storms, land degradation and drought.

Discussions in the contact group focused on: adding references to the voluntary nature of the LDN targets; specificity of references related to indicators for monitoring and evaluation of achievement of the LDN target; scaling up finance for the achievement of LDN; partnerships to support implementation of the Convention; preparations for the HLPF; and integration of gender responsive approaches.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(13)/L.7), the COP, *inter alia* invites parties that formulate voluntary targets to achieve LDN to:

- ensure that their LDN targets and the activities to achieve these targets are directly linked to their national SDG agendas and create leverage and synergies with their countries’ climate and biodiversity agendas, ideally through joint programming of the three Rio Conventions, at the national level and with the full engagement of relevant stakeholders; and
- use the monitoring and evaluation approach adopted in the decision on the Intergovernmental Working Group on the future strategic framework (IWG-FSF) of the Convention, including the progress indicators therein, where reliable data is

available and taking into consideration national circumstances and, as needed, add additional indicators to monitor, evaluate and communicate progress towards achieving the LDN target.

The COP invites all parties and multilateral and bilateral partners to scale up and facilitate effective financing for combating desertification/land degradation and drought, achieving land degradation neutrality, and advancing the implementation of the Convention in reference to the decision on mobilization of resources. The COP also requests the Secretariat, the GM and appropriate UNCCD bodies, including the SPI, within their respective mandates, to:

- continue to develop partnerships to support the implementation of the Convention and LDN, taking note of, as appropriate, the Changwon Initiative, the Ankara Initiative and other complementary initiatives, to provide scientific and technical support to the parties by, *inter alia*, developing guidance for leveraging the implementation of the Convention and LDN, identifying project opportunities and connecting respective partners for the further development of implementation initiatives, including transformative LDN projects and programmes, promoting gender responsive approaches in line with the gender action plan found in decision ICCD/COP(13)/L.23 (on the draft advocacy policy framework on Gender), and providing advisory support for nationally accredited institutions to the climate finance and other sustainable development finance institutions; and
- contribute to the 2018 HLPF, which will address SDG 15, among others, by engaging with and, as appropriate, facilitating participation in regional meetings and other activities leading up to the 2018 HLPF, and providing inputs, including a potential submission in consultation with the COP Bureau, with the aim of highlighting countries' progress towards the implementation of the Convention and, as appropriate, the achievement of their voluntary LDN targets.

Enhancing the implementation of the UNCCD in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the enhancement, strengthening and promotion of capacity building: This item was introduced on 6 September and forwarded to the COW contact group on other matters. A draft decision was agreed in the COW on 15 September, and was adopted by the COP without amendment.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(13)/L.16), the COP, reaffirming that capacity building at all levels, in particular at the local and community level, is essential for the effective implementation of the Convention, requests the Secretariat, within available resources to, *inter alia*:

- continue targeted capacity building to support the implementation of the Convention, including land degradation neutrality by parties;
- continue fostering partnerships to facilitate capacity development for, *inter alia*, national drought preparedness planning, drought early warning, risk and vulnerability assessments, mitigation of enhanced drought risk, and the impacts of sand and dust storms;
- further develop and promote tools for cost-effective capacity building under the Convention, including, *inter alia*, the Capacity Building Marketplace and the UNCCD Knowledge Hub;
- develop and strengthen partnerships to build the required capacities to mainstream gender in the implementation of the Convention to enhance the role of women and youth in combatting DLDD, and increase the resilience of women vulnerable to DLDD; and

- in cooperation with partners, make scientific knowledge and best practices available for stakeholders through the UNCCD Knowledge Hub, aimed at, *inter alia*, scaling up sustainable land management practices and increasing the knowledge and scientific and technical skills of stakeholders in the Convention.

The future strategic framework of the Convention: On 6 September, IWG-FSF Co-Chairs Stephen Muwaya (Uganda) and Ahmet Şenyaz (Turkey) reported on the two-year process to develop the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework (ICCD/COP(13)/3). They highlighted its alignment to the SDG process and the other Rio Conventions; the adoption of LDN as an ambitious target; and, at just seven pages, its usability for policy makers. They described the main sections, including: a brief introduction; five Strategic Objectives with 17 expected impact and ten progress indicators; and an implementation framework.

Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and Venezuela proposed inclusion of new elements such as sand dunes and migration. Others, including the EU, Ukraine, Republic of Korea, Australia, US, and Switzerland, reiterated their preference for adopting the draft strategic framework as it stands. The COW contact group on other matters discussed this item and finalized a draft decision on 14 September. On 15 September, the draft decision on the future strategic framework was adopted by the COW and subsequently by the COP without amendment.

Final Decision: In this decision (ICCD/COP(13)/L.18), the COP, *inter alia*,

- decides to adopt the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, contained in an annex to the decision;
- strongly encourages parties to apply and, as appropriate, align with the Strategic Framework in their national policies, programmes, plans and processes relating to DLDD;
- decides that, while implementing the Strategic Framework, UNCCD stakeholders should take into account the need for gender-responsive policies and measures, strive to ensure participation of men and women in planning, decision-making and implementation at all levels, and enhance the empowerment of women, girls and youth in the affected areas; and
- encourages parties to further enhance the involvement of civil society in the implementation of the Convention and of the Strategic Framework.

Implementation of the comprehensive communication

strategy and the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020): This item was discussed on 13 September in the COW, and in a contact group on 14 September. A draft decision was agreed in the COW on 15 September, and was adopted by the COP without amendment.

The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(13)/4, noting the need for a revised communication framework that complements the future UNCCD Strategic Framework. She highlighted action taken by the Secretariat resulting from the independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the UNCCD communication strategy, *inter alia*: reorganization of the newsletter; revamping of the UNCCD website and re-branding; outreach on social media; dissemination of human-interest stories; and the continued support to the World Day to Combat Desertification received from parties, notably China and Burkina Faso. Saudi Arabia expressed his dissatisfaction with the document, noting the actions taken were insufficient, and lamenting that initiatives and events organized by his country were not referenced. He called for setting clear objectives and indicators, as included in the independent evaluation.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(13)/L.22), the COP, *inter alia*, agrees to promote the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework and LDN as a tool for enhancing the effective implementation of the Convention. The COP also requests the Secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to:

- develop a short communication plan with objectives, key messages, and channels to consistently advance the Convention's positions;
- translate agreed UNCCD advocacy policy frameworks into appropriate communication tools and platforms, taking into account particular national and regional circumstances, to support parties' efforts in communicating DLDD issues at the national level; and
- increase awareness of SLM among the general public by making information available through various communication tools and platforms.

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AT THE NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL: Additional procedures or institutional mechanisms to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention – Terms of reference of the CRIC: This item was discussed in the COW on 8 September and in a contact group on 14 September. A draft decision was agreed in the COW on 15 September, and was adopted by the COP without amendment.

The Secretariat presented document ICCD/COP(13)/5 and explained that the most significant changes proposed related to the frequency of reporting and the reporting entities. Ukraine, with the EU, supported the proposed four-year integrative reporting cycle, further underlining the CRIC's role as a permanent subsidiary body of the Convention. The EU called for more discussion on the organization and thematic focus of intersessional meetings.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(13)/L.17), the COP, *inter alia*:

- decides to renew the mandate of the CRIC as a standing subsidiary body of the COP to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention and the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework;
- decides that the COP should, no later than at its nineteenth session, review the terms of reference of the CRIC, its operations, and its schedule of meetings with a view to making any necessary modifications;
- decides to adopt the terms of reference of the CRIC, as contained in the annex to this decision; and
- decides that the COP, through its Bureau, is to prepare appropriate modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework with a view to their adoption at COP 14.

Addressing particular regional and national conditions: On 6 September, the Secretariat introduced the relevant documents (ICCD/COP(13)/2 and ICCD/COP(13)/3). Armenia, on behalf of CEE, proposed withdrawing this agenda item as the COP 12 decision on the topic still stands. Delegates took note of the reports.

Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies: Draft advocacy policy frameworks: Gender, Drought, and Sand and Dust Storms: This item was discussed in the COW on 8 September and in a contact group on 14 and 15 September. Draft decisions were agreed in the COW on 15 September, and adopted by the COP without amendment.

The UNCCD Secretariat introduced documents ICCD/COP(13)/19, ICCD/COP(13)/CRP.1 and ICCD/COP(13)/CRP.2,

containing the proposed draft advocacy policy frameworks on gender, drought, and sand and dust storms. South Africa, for the African Group, supported by Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Bolivia, among others, called for a binding protocol to strengthen resilience, capacity building and poverty eradication. Equatorial Guinea suggested including flood preparedness. The EU highlighted the importance of institutional partnerships to, *inter alia*, enhance the expertise of the UNCCD and the sharing of best practices. Canada lauded the focus on women.

Japan, Colombia, Venezuela and Cuba recommended focusing on preparedness. Bosnia and Herzegovina stressed the importance of prevention and adaptation measures in non-arid countries. UN Environment, UN Women and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) offered their continued cooperation with UNCCD on these issues.

Final Decisions: In the decision on **promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies** (ICCD/COP(13)/L.21), the COP, *inter alia*:

- invites the Group on Earth Observation to support the efforts of parties to the UNCCD in implementing the Convention by providing space-based information and *in situ* measurements to assist countries in fulfilling the reporting requirements for SDG indicator 15.3.1 and fostering data access, national capacity building, and the development of standards and protocols;
- requests the Secretariat and appropriate Convention bodies and institutions, within their respective mandates and existing resources, to, *inter alia*: continue working with the Interagency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators in its role as the custodian agency to finalize the methodology and data management protocols for SDG indicator 15.3.1 and begin coordination related to national, regional and global reporting according to the protocols established within the SDG indicator framework; and build on and strengthen collaboration with relevant UN entities and the Rio Conventions secretariats, as well as development partners and relevant international organizations, to support gender mainstreaming at all levels.

In the decision on **gender equality and women's empowerment** for the enhanced and effective implementation of the Convention (ICCD/COP(13)/L.23), the COP, *inter alia*:

- adopts the Gender Plan of Action to support gender-responsive implementation of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework to strengthen the implementation of the advocacy policy framework on gender;
- requests parties and other stakeholders to further mainstream gender equality and empowerment of women and girls into DLDD-related policies and activities; and
- requests the Secretariat and the GM to partner with the Rio Conventions, UN Women and other relevant UN entities, international organizations and development partners to roll out the plan of action and to support parties in piloting the plan of action and in synergies and promoting women's and girls' empowerment in the implementation of the Convention.

In the decision on the **policy advocacy on drought** (ICCD/COP(13)/L.20), the COP, *inter alia*, invites parties to:

- use, as appropriate, the Drought Resilience, Adaptation and Management Policy framework in order to strengthen their capacity to enhance drought preparedness and provide an appropriate response to drought;
- pursue a proactive approach on integrated drought management in the process of developing national drought policies based on the three key pillars of national drought policy: implementing comprehensive drought monitoring and early warning systems; completing vulnerability and impact assessments

for sectors, populations and regions vulnerable to drought; and implementing drought preparedness and risk mitigation measures;

- develop a comprehensive system on drought preparedness that embraces: analyzing drought risk; monitoring the location and intensity of an upcoming drought; communicating alerts to authorities, media and vulnerable communities; and responding to drought warnings;
- promote drought resilience building that is both gender-responsive and prioritizes people in vulnerable situations; and
- consider utilizing the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture initiative as a knowledge-sharing partnership to help countries develop their drought preparedness plans.

The COP invites all parties, multilateral and bilateral partners, and international financing mechanisms to scale up and facilitate effective financing for the implementation of drought mitigation measures at all levels. The COP also requests the Secretariat and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies, including the SPI, within their respective mandates to, *inter alia*:

- implement the drought initiative for the biennium 2018-2019, which proposes action on: drought preparedness systems; regional efforts to reduce drought vulnerability and risk; and a toolbox to boost the resilience of people and ecosystems to drought; and
- support countries to develop and implement national drought management policies, as well as the establishment and strengthening of comprehensive drought monitoring, preparedness and early warning systems.

In the decision on the **Policy Advocacy Framework to Combat Sand and Dust Storms** (ICCD/COP(13)/L.26), the COP, *inter alia*: invites parties to:

- use, as appropriate, the Policy Framework, on a voluntary basis, in policy development and implementation on sand and dust storms at the national and regional or international levels;
- mainstream sand and dust storm issues in national disaster risk reduction policies; and
- promote cooperation on sand and dust storms and facilitate information exchange and knowledge sharing and transfer, as appropriate, in the affected areas.

Securing additional investments and relations with financial mechanisms: Memorandum of Understanding between the UNCCD and the GEF: On 6 September, the Secretariat introduced the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the UNCCD and the GEF (ICCD/COP(13)/18). Ukraine and Jordan called for continued support for countries that have not embarked on LDN target setting. This item was discussed in the COW contact group on other matters on 13 September. On 15 September, the draft decision was adopted by the COW and subsequently by the COP without amendments.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(13)/L.11), the COP, *inter alia*: adopts the new MoU, attached as an annex to the decision; requests the UNCCD Secretariat and invites the GEF Secretariat to make appropriate arrangements to sign the MoU on behalf of the GEF Council and the COP; and requests the UNCCD Secretariat and invites the GEF Secretariat to implement the MoU.

Report of the Global Mechanism: On 6 September, Interim COW Chair Skumsa Mancotywa (South Africa), clarified that this item (ICCD/COP(13)/8-ICCD/CRIC(16)/2 and ICCD/COP(13)/9) would be taken up by the CRIC. Outgoing GM Managing Director, Markus Repnik, outlined achievements since COP 12. Saudi Arabia sought clarification on the extent of GM financial support to countries.

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: Programme and budget for the biennium 2018-2019: The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents (ICCD/COP(13)/7 and ICCD/COP(13)/8-ICCD/CRIC(16)/2) on 6 September. The EU, Japan and Saudi Arabia called for sufficient time to consult among parties, and South Africa and Switzerland requested an increase in the biennium budget. This item was forwarded to the contact group that met throughout the meeting to discuss this, and other budgetary matters.

Financial performance for the Convention's trust funds: The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(13)/9, as well as the audited financial statements for the Convention trust funds ICCD/COP(13)/9-11. The item was forwarded to the contact group on budgetary matters.

Report of the Evaluation Office: The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(13)/14, outlining seven completed evaluations. The item was forwarded to the contact group on budgetary matters.

On 15 September, the COP adopted the decision on programme and budget.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(13)/L.24), the COP approves the programme budget for 2018-2019 of EUR16,188,082. The COP also, *inter alia*:

- recognizes the need to increase the level of the working capital reserve, and authorizes the Executive Secretary to draw on available cash resources from the core budget;
 - invites all parties to note that the core budget contributions are expected on or before 1 January of each year;
 - requests the Executive Secretary to report the status of budget performance to the COP;
 - notes the ongoing discussions at the UN General Assembly on the level of the working capital reserve, and requests the Executive Secretary to prepare a report to COP 14 if a decision is reached;
 - also authorizes the Executive Secretary to establish lower-level positions in addition to the approved staffing table within a budget for staff costs not exceeding EUR 10,581,075 and requests the Executive Secretary to report to the COP at its fourteenth session on the level of positions filled against the approved staffing table; and
 - requests the Executive Secretary to prepare a result-based budget and work programme for the biennium 2020-2021 in line with decision 1/COP.11 on workplans presenting two budget scenarios and work programmes based on the projected needs for the biennium in a zero-nominal growth scenario and a scenario based on further recommended adjustments to the first scenario, and the added costs of savings related to them.
- The COP also approves the amendment to the financial rules of the COP, to replace paragraph 21 with: "The UN shall provide parties with an audited statement of accounts for each year of the financial period." The COP also:
- takes note of the audited financial statements for the GM;
 - authorizes the Executive Secretary to use an amount not exceeding EUR 1,815,651 from the reserves of the trust fund for the core budget to implement the drought initiative, described in ICCD/COP(13)/13;
 - calls on those who have not paid their contributions to the core budget to do so without delay; and
 - requests the Executive Secretary to report on core budget contributions made by parties for prior financial periods.
- Finally, the COP: welcomes the recommendation of the independent evaluations and assessments, and requests the GM to use these recommendations in planning; and takes note of the proposed 2018-2019 workplan of the UNCCD Evaluation Office.

Multi-year workplans of Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies: The Secretariat introduced documents ICCD/COP(13)/8-ICCD/CRIC(16)/2 and ICCD/COP(13)/9 on 6 September, stating that this agenda item would be taken up by the CRIC. The CRIC Secretariat introduced the documents on 7 September. Saudi Arabia asked why there were no quantified indicators. CSOs suggested that they help enhance implementation of LDN targets through communication and awareness raising. GM Managing Director Markus Repnik highlighted four priorities for resource mobilization and project preparation.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(13)/L.5), the COP approves the strategic orientation of the Secretariat, the GM, the CST, and the CRIC, as contained in the results framework 2018-2021 as contained in the annex to the decision, and requests the aforementioned bodies to utilize it in a manner consistent with the Convention; and requests the Secretariat and the GM to prepare a multi-year workplan for the Convention (2020-2023).

Designation of a Convention Secretariat and arrangements for its functioning: Administrative and support arrangements: The Secretariat introduced documents ICCD/COP(13)/8-ICCD/CRIC(16)/2 and ICCD/COP(13)/9 on 6 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(13)/L.6), the COP approves the continuation for a further five-year period of the current institutional linkage to be reviewed by 31 December 2023.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS: Participation and involvement of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the UNCCD: This item was discussed on 13 September in the COW and in a contact group on other matters. A draft decision was agreed in the COW on 14 September, and was adopted by COP without amendment on 15 September.

The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(13)/15 and expressed UNCCD's support for CSOs' participation. The EU suggested that the extension of the CSO Panel should be further discussed. Eritrea outlined the role of CSOs in promoting regional LDN targets. Switzerland questioned the efficiency and consistency of the UNCCD's work programme for the next biennium, and remarked that members of the CSO Panel should also be allowed in contact groups as "silent observers." Kyrgyzstan and Namibia emphasized the role women play, and called for further actions from CSOs towards gender equality.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(13)/L.10), the COP welcomes the work of the CSO Panel and the importance of its continuation, and also welcomes the outcomes and recommendations of the independent evaluation of the effectiveness of Convention support for CSO participation.

The decision further, *inter alia*:

- invites parties to consider the recommendations made by the CSO Panel regarding land rights;
- encourages developed country parties and other parties in a position to do so, and invites international and financial organizations, CSOs and private sector institutions, to consider contributing to the Supplementary Fund and Special Fund of the Convention with the aim of ensuring wider participation of CSOs in meetings and processes of the Convention, as well as the work undertaken by the CSO Panel; and
- requests the Secretariat, subject to the availability of resources, to facilitate the renewal of the membership of the CSO Panel for two years in January 2018.

Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the UNCCD and the business engagement strategy: Involvement of the private sector was discussed in the COW on 13 September and subsequently in the

COW contact group. A draft decision was agreed in the COW on 14 September, and was adopted by COP without amendment on 15 September.

Introducing this item (ICCD/COP(13)/16), the Secretariat highlighted the successful launch of the LDN Fund, the development of value chains, the SLM Business Forum, the first Technology for Sustainable Land Management Fair at COP 13, the Soil Leadership Academy, and the UN Global Compact Principles for Sustainable Soil Management.

CSOs called for CSO involvement in monitoring of initiatives supported by the private sector, especially those identified as transformative projects, and cautioned against viewing these initiatives as a replacement for the regular public funding streams of the Convention.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(9)/L.8), the COP takes note of the results of the initiatives undertaken within the business engagement strategy of the Convention, and requests the Secretariat and the GM to continue engaging the private sector.

The COP further requests the Secretariat to, *inter alia*:

- increase and enhance engagement with the private sector to promote implementation of the Convention and work to that effect in meetings and processes of the Convention, as appropriate; and
- report on the implementation of this decision at COP 14.

The positive role that measures taken under the Convention can play to address DLDD as one of the drivers that causes migration: This item was discussed on 13 September in the COW and in a contact group on other matters until the closing plenary, when the Chair requested a postponement of the COW for 15 minutes to allow delegates to return to the contact group in order to formally agree the draft decision. The COW resumed after a short break, adopted the decision and forwarded it to the COP plenary.

Final Decision: In this decision (ICCD/COP(13)/L.25), the COP invites parties to:

- promote the positive role that measures taken to implement the Convention can play to address DLDD as one of the drivers that can cause migration;
- enhance international cooperation that aims to promote the positive role SLM can play to address DLDD as one of the drivers that causes migration; and
- request the Secretariat to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation with other UN agencies and stakeholders to share information on the linkages between DLDD and migration.

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR COP 14: Draft decisions on the programme of work and the date and venue for COP 14 were adopted by the COP on 15 September without amendment.

Final Decisions: In the decision on the **programme of work** (ICCD/COP(13)/L.4), the COP includes the following items on the agenda of COP 14 and, if necessary, COP 15:

- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: implications for the UNCCD: (i) Integration of the SDGs and targets into the implementation of the UNCCD and the LDN; (ii) Implementation of the comprehensive communication strategy and the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010–2020);
- effective implementation of the Convention at the national, subregional and regional level: (i) Report of the CRIC and its recommendations to the COP; (ii) Promoting and strengthening relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies; (iii) Follow up on policy frameworks and thematic issues; (iv) Securing of additional investments and relations with financial mechanisms: GM;

- linking scientific knowledge with decision-making: review of the report of the CST and its recommendations to the COP; and
- programme and budget for the biennium 2020-2021; procedural matters: (i) Participation and involvement of CSOs in meetings and processes of the UNCCD; (ii) Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the UNCCD desertification and business engagement strategy.

The COP also decides to include interactive dialogue sessions with relevant stakeholders, including ministers, civil society organizations, the business community, the scientific community, and members of parliament, on relevant agenda items.

In the decision on **date and venue of COP 14** (ICCD/COP(13)/L.2), the COP decides that COP 14 shall be held in Bonn, Germany, the site of the Convention Secretariat, in autumn 2019, or at another venue arranged by the Secretariat in consultation with the COP Bureau in the event that no party makes an offer to host that session and meet the additional costs.

CLOSING OF THE COW: On 15 September, Interim Chair Mancotywa, on behalf of COW Chair Nosipho Ngcaba, opened the COW closing plenary and invited delegates to adopt the decisions before plenary.

Following the adoption of the decisions, the EU read a statement underscoring that language on technology transfer contained in the future Strategic Framework should be in accordance with the relevant sections in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The US, referring to the Ordos Declaration, stated that language adopted by the COW does not alter or affect countries' obligations under international law. She said that the US dissociates itself from all paragraphs that refer to transfer of technology, and reiterated that the World Trade Organization is the appropriate forum for negotiations of trade issues.

Interim Chair Mancotywa said that these two interventions would be reflected in the final COP report. Thanking delegates and contact group facilitators for their hard work, she declared the COW closed at 5:31 pm.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

CRIC 16 opened on 7 September. Following opening remarks by CRIC Chair Aliyu Bananda (Nigeria), UNCCD Executive Secretary Barbut noted the need for the CRIC to develop a sustainable reporting system to help achieve LDN and highlighted that many parties will receive financial support from the GEF to this end. Following opening statements by regional groups, the CRIC adopted the agenda and schedule of work (ICCD/CRIC(16)/1 and Annex 2) without amendment. Delegates established a CRIC contact group, facilitated by Trevor Benn (Guyana), which was tasked with negotiating six draft decisions. Matters related to the workplan and budget were referred to the COW contact group on the programme and budget. The decisions, as well as the report of the CRIC, were adopted by the COP on 14 September.

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AT NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS: Multi-year workplan and performance of Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies: The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents (ICCD/COP(13)/8-ICCD/CRIC(16)/2 and ICCD/CRIC(16)/3) on 7 September. In response to a question from Saudi Arabia about the lack of quantified indicators, the Secretariat clarified that the workplan has been substantially shortened to streamline

negotiations, but that quantitative targets will be set internally. CSOs suggested they can help enhance the implementation of LDN targets through communication and awareness raising campaigns.

Responding to a question on the mandate of the GM, Managing Director Markus Repnik highlighted four priorities for resource mobilization and project preparation: the LDN Fund; the project preparation facility co-managed with the other Rio Conventions that is being set up; support to selected parties in developing national LDN financing vehicles; and support to parties on project resource mobilization.

Discussion of this sub-item was subsequently taken up by the COW contact group on budget. (See page 7).

Review of the CRIC 15 Report: The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/CRIC(15)/7 in plenary on 7 September, noting that it was a special session of the CRIC. On the same day, the CRIC contact group began consideration of a draft decision on mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention, based on recommendations from the CRIC 15 report. The group finalized the draft decision on 8 September, which was subsequently adopted by the CRIC plenary on 13 September.

Final Decision: The decision (ICCD/CRIC(16)/L.2), *inter alia*:

- invites multilateral development banks (MDBs), international development finance institutions, bilateral development organizations, the GEF, climate finance institutions, as well as non-governmental funding facilities, to: scale up financing for activities related to combating DLDD, achieving LDN and advancing the implementation of the Convention, and; consider the introduction of LDN within their investment frameworks and criteria in order to increase the impact of their investments;
- encourages affected country parties that formulate voluntary national LDN targets to: increase efforts towards accessing available resources and financing opportunities, including climate finance; make LDN investments a priority for engagement with providers of concessional finance, including the International Development Association, given that resilience has become an overarching theme for its financing; develop transformative projects and programmes in an effort to move from pilot projects and the proliferation of small projects to increasing scale and impact; and increase efforts to further improve the investment climate and increase coherence among commitments, policies, institutions and investments; and
- requests the Managing Director of the GM to: continue to explore and develop innovative financing mechanisms and funding options, including for technical assistance in support of the preparation of transformative projects and programmes; scale up GM support to parties in their efforts to develop and implement transformative projects and programmes in collaboration with international partners; and step up support, in collaboration with MDBs, international development finance institutions, and climate finance institutions, including the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund, for the resource mobilization efforts of developing countries.

Development and implementation of strategies through NAPs to achieve the objectives of the Convention in light of target 15.3 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Following the Secretariat's introduction of ICCD/COP(13)/2 on 7 September, Madagascar, Lebanon, and Belarus presented their experiences. The Democratic Republic of Congo said the presentations had provided "excellent clues" on how they can develop their own LDN targets. Brazil announced their decision to opt into the LDN Target Setting Programme, becoming the 111th country to do so.

Concluding the session, Repnik highlighted the importance of having a data-based quantified target, political commitments, ensuring multiple benefits, synergies among the Rio Conventions, and upholding the “no one size fits all” principle.

The CRIC contact group began consideration of the related decision text in the evening, and reached agreement on the draft decision on 9 September. The CRIC plenary adopted the decision on 13 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/CRIC(16)/L.1), the COP, *inter alia*:

- invites parties to: formulate data-based, quantifiable and time-bound voluntary targets to achieve LDN in accordance with their specific national circumstances and development priorities; endorse these targets at the highest appropriate level; and use the concept of LDN as one of the means to foster coherence among national policies, actions and commitments;
- further invites parties to enhance the implementation of the Convention and the SDGs; and
- requests the Secretariat, the GM and appropriate UNCCD bodies to continue to support parties in their efforts to achieve LDN.

Securing of additional investment and relations with financial mechanisms - Report by the GEF on its strategies, programmes and projects for financing the agreed incremental costs of activities concerning desertification:

The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/CRIC(16)/4 on 8 September. Chizuru Aoki, GEF, noted the report covers the second and third year of the sixth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF-6), with approved Land Degradation Focal Area projects contributing around 34 million ha, accounting for 28% of the GEF-6 corporate target. She cited the report of the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF, which found, *inter alia*, that these projects were “highly relevant and effective in producing global environmental benefits.”

In the ensuing discussion, many countries expressed appreciation for the GEF’s support. Describing the report as highly informative, the EU welcomed the substantial progress made in implementing COP 12 decisions. He highlighted, as one of the largest contributors to the GEF, the EU was gratified with the positive response, and reported that the UNCCD will enjoy priority under GEF-7.

Many speakers called for follow-up funding at the conclusion of the LDN Target Setting Programme, with Côte d’Ivoire and Argentina asking for clarification about the modalities of future support.

Armenia, Syria, and Egypt highlighted the need to support drought programmes, also pointing to the importance of greater flexibility in disbursing funds to ensure timely responses. Costa Rica said the report shows the importance of GEF assistance in light of parties’ continued calls for additional support from the Secretariat.

Responding to questions on future support modalities, Aoki said countries are free to choose from among 18 UN partner agencies, as well as from international or national NGOs.

The CRIC contact group began consideration of this item on 7 September and agreed on the draft decision on 8 September. The decision was adopted during the CRIC closing plenary on 13 September.

Final Decision: The decision (ICCD/CRIC(16)/L.4) welcomes the findings of the evaluation of the Land Degradation Focal Area by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office, as well as continued support for the implementation of the Convention, in particular the funding of enabling activities in the context of SDG target 15.3. The decision, *inter alia*:

- invites the GEF, during GEF-7, to continue providing technical and financial support for capacity building, reporting and voluntary national LDN target-setting and implementation;
- invites donors to the GEF to give due consideration to the concerns expressed with regard to the allocation of resources across the different focal areas and encourages parties, through the GEF and the Convention’s focal points and their constituencies, to advocate for a balanced allocation of funds among the Rio Conventions during the GEF-7 replenishment process; and
- encourages the GEF to continue and further enhance means to harness opportunities for leveraging synergies among the Rio Conventions and other relevant multilateral environmental agreements, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

THE UNCCD REPORTING AND REVIEW PROCESS IN VIEW OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND TARGETS INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNCCD: Improving the procedures for communication as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the COP was discussed in the CRIC on 8 September and in a contact group on 9 September. A draft decision was adopted in the CRIC on 13 September.

The Secretariat introduced the document on improving the procedures for communication as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the COP (ICCD/CRIC(16)/5) and the reporting template (ICCD/CRIC(16)/INF.1). Ukraine, Kiribati, Zambia, and the Philippines questioned the ability of parties to complete their reporting by CRIC 17, with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria asking for the time frame to be extended.

Many parties highlighted the need to strengthen capacity for reporting, with Kiribati proposing that, given the diversity of some regions, it is preferable to offer such support at the sub-regional level. Venezuela argued that the reports need further simplification, in accordance with previous COP decisions. The Secretariat explained that the reporting timeline was decided at COP 12 to coincide with CRIC 17.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/CRIC(16)/L.3), the COP approves a four-year frequency for UNCCD reporting for countries to provide information on the strategic objectives and the implementation framework of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework. In light of the extensive and time-consuming reporting process involving many institutions and stakeholders at the national level, the COP, *inter alia*:

- requests further guidance from and the continuation of capacity-building measures by the UNCCD Secretariat and other relevant bodies that aim at assisting parties in efficiently using the work of different institutions directly or indirectly involved in providing data for the forthcoming reporting period at the national level, including guidance and capacity-building measures on approaches available to establish monitoring systems for reporting to the UNCCD through the Global Support Programme;
- also requests the Secretariat to consider further simplifying the reporting templates and other reporting tools for future reporting processes, including making the PRAIS platform more user friendly;
- decides to approve a four-year frequency for UNCCD reporting for countries to provide information on the strategic objectives and the implementation framework of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework;
- considers the need for a specific indicator for the strategic objective on drought contained in the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework and requests the CST to assist in the

work relating to the establishment of such a monitoring framework; and

- requests the Secretariat, as the custodian agency for SDG indicator 15.3.1, to use the information submitted to it by parties in their national reports that is relevant to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a contribution to the overall follow-up and review by the HLPF, and to continue to cooperate with relevant organizations in the development of methodologies and capacity-building approaches for reporting on the relevant indicators.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS: Programme of work for

CRIC 17: On 13 September, the CRIC adopted the programme of work for CRIC 17, after discussion in the CRIC contact group that morning.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/CRIC(16)/L.6), the COP agrees to include the following items on the agenda of CRIC 17: inputs from regional meetings in preparation for CRIC 17; implementation using the progress indicators contained in the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework; implementation of voluntary LDN targets; implementation framework of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework; financial flows for the implementation of the Convention; procedures for communication of information, as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the COP; and default data and the proposed methodology to formulate national voluntary LDN targets.

Date and venue of the seventeenth session of the committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention: On 13 September, the CRIC adopted a decision on the date and venue of CRIC 17 after a brief discussion in the CRIC contact group that same morning.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/CRIC(16)/L.5), the CRIC agrees that, subject to the availability of resources, CRIC 17 should be held in the second half of 2018, at the most cost-effective venue of either Bonn, Germany, the site of the Convention Secretariat, or in any other venue with UN conference facilities in the event that no party makes an offer to host the session and meet the additional financial costs.

CLOSING OF THE CRIC: CRIC Chair Bananda opened the closing session on Thursday afternoon, 13 September. Delegates adopted all six CRIC decisions by acclamation. The meeting also elected four Vice-Chairs to the Bureau of CRIC 17 and 18: Nino Chikovani (Georgia); Anna Luise (Italy); Jorge Luis García Rodríguez (Mexico); and Teofilus Nghitila (Namibia).

Rapporteur Raymond Baptiste (Grenada) presented the CRIC 16 report for adoption. He reviewed the process and outcome of the CRIC decisions, lauding the cooperation from members of the contact group, and urging ongoing practical actions. The CRIC approved the draft report as presented on the understanding that the Rapporteur would complete it with the assistance of the Secretariat.

Chair Bananda closed CRIC 16 at 4:03 pm.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

On 6 September, Chair Hamid Čustovič (Bosnia and Herzegovina) opened the meeting. UNCCD Executive Secretary Barbut, in her opening remarks, reminded delegates of the first Conference on Desertification exactly 40 years ago and urged them to develop a bold and feasible work programme to address the most glaring gaps, through producing scientific guidance that is understandable to decision makers.

REGIONAL STATEMENTS AND INTEREST GROUPS:

The EU emphasized science as a prerequisite for combating DLDD, and monitoring and reporting on land restoration. He

welcomed ongoing efforts to make information accessible to all stakeholders through the Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal, now the UNCCD Knowledge Hub.

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), welcoming future collaboration with the SPI, noted that the SPI made regular contributions to the IPBES land degradation and restoration assessment.

Nigeria, for the African Group, recommended: considering African specific issues in the LDN conceptual framework; linking LDN indicators to poverty and indigenous knowledge; and capacity development, particularly on monitoring soil organic carbon stocks.

DesertNet International, for CSOs, welcomed the inclusion of issues related to responsible governance, protection of user rights and gender issues in the LDN conceptual framework, and supported the extension of the SPI.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: Delegates adopted the agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/1) without amendment.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OTHER THAN THE CST CHAIR: Delegates nominated Jean-Luc Chotte (France) as rapporteur and facilitator of the CST contact group.

ITEMS RESULTING FROM THE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE SCIENCE-POLICY INTERFACE FOR THE BIENNIUM 2016-2017: The scientific conceptual framework for land degradation neutrality: The Secretariat introduced the scientific conceptual framework for LDN (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/2) on 6 and 7 September in plenary. The issue was also discussed in the CST contact group on 8 and 9 September.

Delegates discussed harmonizing indicators across conventions, including traditional knowledge, and improving mechanisms for monitoring. The GM explained that the framework had been used to support countries participating in the LDN target setting programme and further assistance was available through resource mobilization. Switzerland stated that scientific findings should not be reviewed by political bodies such as the COP Bureau. The CST adopted the draft decision with minor editorial adjustments on 9 September, and forwarded it to the COP on 14 September, where it was adopted without amendment. Morocco recommended a closer collaboration between the SPI and CST regarding the exchange of documents prior to publication.

Sustainable land management for addressing desertification/land degradation and drought, climate change mitigation and adaptation: On 7 September, the Secretariat introduced the document (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/3) on behalf of the SPI. Delegates called for greater collaboration with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and relevant policy and science platforms, academic research activities on LDN, and more collaboration with regional experts. Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, SPI, presented on the SPI's cooperation with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on a special report on this topic, and suggested that land degradation be included in calls for research funding opportunities. Luca Montanarella, Global Soil Partnership Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS), reported on the Global Symposium on Soil Organic Carbon.

Rehabilitation, restoration and reclamation measures and practices in degraded lands: The Secretariat introduced the document (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/4) on 7 September, and Jeff Herrick, US, presented on progress of the UN Environment International Resource Panel (IRP) report on land restoration, ecosystem resilience and their contribution to poverty eradication.

Switzerland, and others, supported cooperation between the SPI and IRP, stating it would reduce duplication of efforts. On the IPBES Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment (LDRA), Anne Larigauderie, Executive Secretary, and Robert Scholes, Co-Chair, IPBES, discussed the LDRA report to be presented at UNCCD COP 14, and delegates called for accurate dissemination of its results to smallholders.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/L.1), the COP, *inter alia*, calls on the CST to, endorse the scientific conceptual framework for LDN summarized in document ICCD/COP(13)/CST/2, and calls on parties pursuing LDN to consider guidance from the conceptual framework. It also invites parties to identify case studies on LDN implementation to be included in a synthesis report at COP 14, and requests the SPI to use the synthesis to report on lessons learned.

The COP also welcomes the scientific assessment of SLM in addressing DLDD; invites parties to use locally adapted SLM practices to achieve land-based national objectives, and to develop meaningful stakeholder engagement throughout the implementation phases of SLM, while calling on parties to develop policy instruments that overcome barriers to the large-scale implementation of SLM; and requests the SPI to continue working on the assessment.

The COP requests the SPI to further cooperate with the IRP of UN Environment through the preparation of a report on land restoration and the SDGs.

INTERFACING SCIENCE AND POLICY, AND

SHARING KNOWLEDGE: Review of the Science-Policy

Interface and its achievements: On 8 September, the Secretariat introduced this item (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/6) and highlighted that the external assessment of the SPI recommended: formalizing the interactions of the SPI with IPBES and the IPCC; refining SPI membership criteria; and limiting the SPI work programme to one or two priority topics.

All delegates commended the work done by the SPI. Morocco emphasized improving the interface between policy and science and giving parties greater opportunity to review SPI results. The US underscored the benefits of the SPI scientific support compared to previous arrangements and urged collaboration with other bodies rather than setting limited priorities for its work programme. Argentina, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, and South Africa suggested improved regional balance in the SPI membership and, supported by Georgia, on behalf of CEE, and Micronesia, emphasized the need for improved communication with country focal points. Israel cautioned against a large membership increase. Japan recommended the SPI focus on global priorities for realistic results in a limited timeframe, offering contribution from their experts. Delegates supported extending the mandate of the SPI to the end of COP 16, called for improved exchanges among stakeholders, suggested building on existing networks, and a greater role for CSOs and opportunities for their participation. On 8 September, the CST contact group agreed on a draft decision on improving the efficiency of the SPI, which was approved by the CST and forwarded to the COP on 9 September. On 14 September, the COP adopted the decision without amendments.

Final Decision: In its decision (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/L.3), the COP, *inter alia*: decides to: continue the SPI and extend its current mandate to the end of COP 16; renew the SPI membership with a rotating system; extend exceptionally for two years, for the biennium 2018-2019, the membership of no more than eight current SPI members and add two more observer seats to the SPI; and request the CST Bureau, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to define the process for the staged renewal of the SPI

membership and revise the SPI terms of reference and selection criteria accordingly.

The COP also requests the SPI to submit a proposal for its work programme at each regular CST session, with a focus on one or two broad, globally-relevant, priority topics related to DLDD and to continue to cooperate with other international scientific bodies addressing DLDD issues. The COP also requests the Secretariat to: clarify the potential benefits, costs, conditions and procedures for establishing more formal relationships between the SPI and IPBES, IPCC, ITPS and the UN Environment IRP; and facilitate communication between the SPI and the science and technology correspondents of parties.

Work programme of the Science-Policy Interface for the biennium 2018-2019: On 8 September the Secretariat introduced documents ICCD/COP(13)/CST/7 and ICCD/COP(13)/CST/INF.2. Many countries expressed support for the work programme of the SPI for 2018-2019, with South Africa raising concern about the budget gap of EUR 205,000 and suggesting that the CST and UNCCD seek recommendations to fill this gap. Switzerland, the EU, and the US welcomed continued coordination with other scientific bodies to strengthen the scientific foundation of the SPI and reduce inefficiencies.

On the focus of the SPI's work, Mexico, El Salvador, Bolivia, Venezuela, and Namibia requested that special attention is given to research on drought and how it increases vulnerability, and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia called for a focus on sand and dust storms. CSOs requested that local issues be considered to a greater extent in developing guidance on LDN. The CST contact group discussed this agenda item and on 9 September the CST forwarded the draft decision to the COP, which adopted the decision without amendments on 14 September.

Final Decision: In its decision (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/L.4), the COP, *inter alia*: adopts the SPI work programme for the biennium 2018-2019; requests the Executive Secretary to present synthesis reports, including policy-oriented recommendations on the following objectives of the SPI work programme at CST 14: objective 1.1 (providing advice on the design and implementation of LDN-related policies and initiatives that bring about multiple benefits and synergies with other Rio Conventions); objective 1.2 (providing science-based evidence on the potential contribution of LDN to enhancing the well-being, livelihoods and environmental conditions of people affected by DLDD); and objective 2 (providing guidance to support the adoption and implementation of land-based interventions for drought management and mitigation); and to report on the coordination activities conducted by the SPI during the biennium 2018-2019 at CST 14.

Promoting the analysis, dissemination and accessibility of best practices and the UNCCD Knowledge Hub: On 8 September, the Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(13)/CST/8, and presented the UNCCD Knowledge Hub and the Global Database on SLM of the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT).

Argentina recommended that unofficial information in the Knowledge Hub be kept distinct from official information from countries. South Africa announced the establishment of the African WOCAT. The US noted the Knowledge Hub should not create its own database, but facilitate access to existing ones.

Kenya suggested the use of indigenous knowledge and previous research conducted in Africa to enhance reporting on DLDD. Japan proposed that each country updates its national reports directly through the national focal points. Pakistan recommended including NGO publications in WOCAT, and China requested that NGOs be incorporated into the Knowledge Hub. On 8 September, the CST contact group agreed on a draft decision

on promoting the analysis, dissemination, and accessibility of best practices and the UNCCD Knowledge Hub. On 9 September, the CST forwarded the draft decision to the COP, which adopted the decision on 14 September without amendments.

Final Decision: In its decision (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/L.5), the COP, *inter alia*: requests the Secretariat to continue expanding and enhancing the UNCCD Knowledge Hub; encourages parties and invites other stakeholders to continue sharing relevant information on DLDD and SLM through the UNCCD Knowledge Hub; requests the Secretariat to clearly identify the different sources of information and the different categories in the UNCCD Knowledge Hub; and invites parties and financial institutions to support the maintenance, expansion, and further enhancement and development of the UNCCD Knowledge Hub.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS: Programme of work for CST 14: On 8 September, the Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(13)/CST/7 and ICCD/COP(13)/CST/INF.2 on the programme of work for CST 14.

This item was discussed during the CST contact group on 9 September. Later that day, in the CST plenary, Brazil recommended the Committee reflect on the role of the CST for the next COP. On 9 September, the CST adopted the draft decision with minor editorial adjustments, and on 14 September, the COP adopted the decision without amendment.

Final Decision: In its decision (ICCD/COP(13)/CST/L.6), the COP decides that: the CST should focus on the objectives and coordination activities identified in the work programme of the SPI for 2018-2019; and CST 14 should be designed to facilitate a dialogue between the parties and the SPI on the policy implications of the scientific outputs, in order to enable the formulation of policy relevant recommendations.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE CST: On 9 September, Jean-Luc Chotte, CST Vice-Chair and Rapporteur, reported on the six decisions adopted by the CST that were transmitted to the COP. Delegates elected as Vice-Chairs for CST 14 Carl Fiati (Ghana), María Angélica Fernández (Colombia), German Kust (Russian Federation), and Ahmet Şenyaz (Turkey). The CST approved the draft report of the session, on the understanding that the Rapporteur would complete it with the assistance of the Secretariat.

In his closing remarks, CST Chair Čustovič stated that with the LDN conceptual framework, the SPI has provided both solid scientific advice and a practical tool for decision makers, and expressed new optimism at the ability of the Convention to reach visible results on the ground. He closed the meeting at 4:13 pm.

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

The High-Level Segment took place from 11-12 September, and included an opening session, three parallel roundtables, and three dialogue sessions.

OPENING SESSION: On 11 September, COP 13 President Zhang Jianlong welcomed delegates to the High-Level Segment, and presented a video showcasing Chinese achievements in combating desertification.

Wang Yang, Vice Premier, delivered a message on behalf of Chinese President Xi Jinping, emphasizing the priority of ecological preservation, and the importance of prevention in combating desertification and land degradation. Wang, in a keynote address, acknowledged the effective role played by the UNCCD in attaining global common ground towards addressing desertification, and emphasized: the value in setting up a global ecological cooperation system; promoting communication and experience sharing among parties; encouraging incentives

for countries to combat desertification; and promoting green development to improve people's livelihoods holistically.

In a video message, UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted that measures to combat land degradation are central to the 2030 Agenda and urged COP 13 to be bold in delivering concrete solutions to the challenges faced.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Monique Barbut noted that with a revised Strategic Framework and bold LDN targets, the Convention is "at an exciting point." Stressing the negative consequences of DLDD, she encouraged delegates to learn from, and employ, the many strategies of land restoration, including China's efforts to restore 6,000 square kilometers of the Kubuqi Desert, which has lifted 100,000 people out of poverty.

María Victoria Chiriboga, Undersecretary of Climate Change, Ecuador, on behalf of the G-77/China, reiterated commitment to effective engagement in the COP, and called for strengthening the Strategic Framework and LDN indicators, and increasing regionally-specific responses to drought, and global efforts to address sand and dust storms.

Richard Mwendandu, Director of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, Ministry of Environment, Kenya, for the African States, highlighted the need to focus on transformative projects to implement the LDN targets, which require political commitment and up-scaled finance.

Rawea Mizel Mahmood, General Director, Forests and Desertification Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture, Iraq, for Asia-Pacific States, welcomed the inclusion of the specific objective on drought in the new Strategic Framework, and underscored LDN as a vehicle to implement the Convention, highlighting collaboration among the Rio Conventions and capacity development as priority areas.

Ion Perju, Advisor to the President on Agro-Industrial and Public Administration Issues, Moldova, on behalf of CEE, noted that 11 countries from the CEE have been involved in the process to achieve LDN, with two setting national targets. He urged inclusion of drought into the COP's outcome document, and welcomed the extension of the SPI.

Lina Pohl, Minister of Environment, El Salvador, for GRULAC, said the new Framework, and agreements on financing, technology transfer and capacity building are significant outcomes of COP 13. She called for resources to enable Regional Coordination Units and the CRIC to fulfil their supportive role to parties.

Siim Kiisler, Minister of Environment, Estonia, on behalf of the EU, highlighted the importance of: engaging local communities and other non-state actors; translating sound science into practical policy recommendations; and engaging multilateral institutions and the private sector for financing.

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, M'Boro Indigenous Women and People Association, Chad, on behalf of CSOs, called on parties to adopt the COP decision on land rights to ensure millions of farmers, local communities, indigenous peoples, and women have secure access to land, as this is fundamental to achieving the goal of the Convention.

Yang Liu, Chinese Academy of Forestry, for Youth, encouraged governments and all stakeholders to: commit to equal and quality education for all youth, particularly women and girls; support investments in green economy to increase the appeal of green jobs for young people; and support opportunities for exchange and volunteering experiences for youth.

GEF CEO and Chairperson Naoko Ishii lauded China's commitment to control desertification through its local practices, and emphasized: countries' commitment to achieve LDN targets provides a strong vehicle to drive implementation of the UNCCD;

promotion of holistic land management is key to biodiversity, and addressing water and climate change issues; and the need for the private sector to involve smallholder farmers.

Joseph Chenoth, Apostolic Nuncio to Japan, delivered a message from Pope Francis. He expressed gratification for efforts at COP 13 to awaken the interest and commitment of young people and hoped that, while dealing with specific issues and goals, COP 13 will adopt an integrated approach linked to wider issues confronting humanity.

HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLES: On 11 September, three high-level roundtable discussions took place.

Land degradation: a challenge to development, prosperity and peace: The roundtable was chaired by Sydney Alexander Samuels Milson, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources, Guatemala, and moderated by Manoel Sobral Filho, Director, UN Forum on Forests. Samuels Milson highlighted that droughts have affected 2.8 million people in Central America, compelling rural people to migrate.

Louise Arbour, UN Special Representative for International Migration, via video, stated that environmental drivers affect migration together with other social, political, economic and demographic factors but that the fundamental linkage is clear. She welcomed the UNCCD's discussions on migration, pointing to other initiatives, such as the negotiation of a UN global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

Abdulrahman Bello Dambazau, Minister of Interior, Nigeria, said desertification and mismanagement of natural resources are contributing to conflict in Nigeria among land users. Noting that land is at the center of the peace and development nexus, he stressed the importance of the Great Green Wall project for combating desertification, thus regenerating land for job creation and preventing migration.

Camara Alahgie, President, Gambian Returnees Association, recounted his own experience as a migrant, common to thousands of young Africans, which led him to establish an association that helps young Gambians remain in the country.

Several countries acknowledged the links between desertification, land degradation, poverty and migration, and the need for a better understanding of these linkages, supported by data, in order to address the root causes. Several delegates described conflicts resulting from natural resources mismanagement and DLDD, and some shared national level actions to rehabilitate land and promote land-based employment generation to stop outmigration, outlining approaches such as agroforestry systems.

Drought and sand and dust storms: early warning and beyond: Opening the session, Chair Abdullah Ahmed Al-Sabah, Director-General, Environment Public Authority, Kuwait, said sand and dust storms in his country account for US\$190 million in losses annually.

Moderator Erik Solheim, Executive Director, UN Environment, proposed three discussion questions: how to strengthen regional cooperation; how to improve science and data; and how to scale up successful practices.

Noting her country has experienced six dry years in a row, Lina Pohl, Minister of Environment, El Salvador, discussed the development of a drought early warning system, a reforestation programme, and a land management strategy.

Oppah Muchinguri, Minister of Environment and Climate, Zimbabwe, highlighted the impacts of drought on rural communities, especially women and children.

Discussant Zhang Xinsheng, President, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), emphasized nature-based

solutions through, *inter alia*, restoring the ecosystem functions of soil, scaling up land rehabilitation, and mainstreaming SLM.

In the subsequent discussion, delegates highlighted: the value of partnerships, financing and technology transfer to strengthen resilience; the importance of involving partners in existing platforms on drought, meteorology and agriculture; the role of the SPI in integrating early warning data; and the importance of engaging local communities.

Land degradation neutrality: "From targets to action... what will it take?": The session was chaired by Johanita Ndahimananjara, Minister of Environment, Madagascar, who challenged countries to share how they will move from commitments to actions.

Moderator Cristiana Paşca Palmer, CBD Executive Secretary, challenged countries to identify what it will take to: move from targets to actions; design national LDN targets; and obtain adequate resources to achieve LDN targets and unlock private sector investment.

Gustavo Fonseca, Director of Programmes, GEF, shared lessons in providing technical and financial support to countries in developing LDN targets, including: the need to look beyond the land degradation focal area for resource mobilization and to leverage resources from closely-linked projects; and ensuring good governance.

Christopher Knowles, Climate Director, European Investment Bank, highlighted requirements to attain LDN, including political will and leadership at all levels, projects that are bankable and sensible at the economic level, and incorporating the "holy grail" of private sector capital.

During the subsequent discussion, many countries: reaffirmed their commitment to LDN and the SDGs; shared best practices; emphasized the co-benefits of synergies among the Rio Conventions; underscored that LDN targets are better achieved when addressed as part of a larger initiative; called for involving stakeholders whose actions directly impact land; and stated that governments and the private sector should share financial risks and benefits.

Detailed coverage of the roundtable discussions is available at <http://enb.iisd.org/vol04/enb04274e.html>

DIALOGUES WITH CIVIL SOCIETY, LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR: On 12 September, three dialogues were held.

Gender and Land Rights: Barbara Thomson, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, South Africa, moderator, stated "no land, no development." She emphasized the causal links between land rights and environmental degradation, and welcomed the UNCCD Strategic Framework objective to improve livelihoods and increase local people's participation, including women, in decision making.

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, M'Boro Indigenous Women and People Association, Chad, noted that women are largely excluded from formal land tenure rights despite their role as farmers and pastoralists, and called for a monitoring system for gender inclusiveness within the UNCCD, and a COP 13 decision on land rights.

Ulrich Apel, Senior Environment Specialist, GEF, highlighted examples of the GEF's systematic inclusion of gender aspects, and noted that gender considerations in GEF projects have risen from 56% in the fifth replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund (GEF-5) to 97% in GEF-6.

Ana Di Pangraco, Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, Argentina, underscoring the unequal distribution of land ownership between men and women in Latin America, urged

governments to protect environmental defenders, and called on COP 13 to adopt a decision on land rights to provide women with more secure access to land.

Shah Abdus Salam, Development Wheel, Bangladesh, emphasizing land's contribution to socio-economic conditions and agricultural livelihoods in developing countries, lamented that women's role in the work force is not recognized properly by his national government, and women are not sufficiently involved in decision making.

In conclusion, Thomson suggested two key messages: women must be meaningfully included in the design and implementation of programmes; and power is expressed through official decision-making structures, hence a decision on this matter has to be realized.

Local Governments: Session moderator Pawel Salek, Secretary of State, Ministry of Environment, Poland, noted that synergies among the Rio Conventions and cooperation among local governments are the key to sustainable development, and combating DLDD and climate change. He discussed Poland's urban climate change adaptation plans and forest carbon fund.

Shi Yanjie, Vice Mayor of Ordos, China, recalling the city's history of desertification and the region's rehabilitation successes, emphasized the inclusion of the private sector and social capital in the sand-based ecological industry.

Ashok Sridharan, Mayor of Bonn, Germany, called for "city optimizers," who should consider all challenges and strategies facing urban areas, discuss them with all stakeholders to create common benefits and buy-in, and to "think of land" when planning future developments.

Ahmed Aziz Diallo, Mayor of Dori, Burkina Faso, outlined how local communities in his country are able to fight against DLDD, through decentralization and a rights-based approach.

Roland Ries, Mayor of Strasbourg, France, highlighted: the importance of linking communities, cities and regions through the concept of territorial governance; and the urgent need to combat land degradation globally "otherwise one billion children will have no alternative but to flee."

Manuel António Lopes de Araújo, Mayor of Quelimane, Mozambique, outlined his city's experience of reversing mangrove land-clearing practices to meet housing needs, and emphasized education initiatives on the importance of mangroves and alternative building technologies.

During the ensuing discussion, many countries highlighted: the role of local governments and indigenous knowledge in SLM and planning; experiences with governance decentralization to combat DLDD; and the critical role women play in implementing SLM to achieve LDN. Jan Szyszko, Minister of Environment, Poland, concluded the session by inviting COP 13 participants to attend the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change COP in Poland in 2018.

The Private Sector and LDN: Moderator Daniel Calleja Crespo, Director-General for Environment, European Commission, challenged participants to consider: governments' action to promote green investments and identify priority sectors for business involvement; increasing capacity development for bankable projects; and monitoring and evaluation of business engagement in the sustainable development agenda.

Matthew Reddy, Director, Forest Solutions Group and Climate Smart Agriculture, World Business Council for Sustainable Development, highlighted how the business sector is orienting its actions in response to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, emphasizing landscape connectivity initiatives and private sector interest in blended finance.

Philippe Zaouati, Chief Executive Officer, Mirova, emphasized the need to mobilize the private sector, particularly to access finance. He lauded the green bond market in China as a solution to involve stakeholders, and stated that LDN could be integrated into green financing.

Gloverson Moro, Head, Research and Development, Syngenta Asia-Pacific, stressed the importance of innovation and business in agriculture. He added that cooperation among academia, farmers, and enterprise is key to reversing land degradation and gaining traction for sustainable development.

Wang Wenbiao, Chairman, Elion Resources Group, shared the experience of Elion in combating desertification in the Kubuqi Desert of Inner Mongolia, which also provided an opportunity to innovate and build wealth, stating that it was a "good example" of private-public partnerships (PPP).

Responding to the issues raised, Reddy stressed the importance of ensuring that PPPs: include environmental safeguards; contribute to food security and rural livelihoods; and integrate scaled-up approaches to land management. Zaouati emphasized training would attract young people to green technologies and finance. Moro proposed partnering with CSOs for greater impact on livelihoods. Wang emphasized the role of industries in the Kubuqi model and of training for local farmers.

More detailed coverage of the dialogues can be found at <http://enb.iisd.org/vol04/enb04275e.html>

CLOSING: COP 13 President Zhang Jianlong concluded the High-Level Segment on Tuesday afternoon, and invited session chairs and moderators to summarize the roundtables and dialogues.

Canada announced its re-established support for the UNCCD. She stated that, like poverty, desertification affects women and girls disproportionately, which Canada aims to address through its new feminist international assistance policy.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Barbut presented COP 13 President Zhang Jianlong with a Certificate of Excellence for his contribution to combating desertification. Receiving the award, Zhang said he will "cherish it forever" and that it also belongs to hundreds of thousands of people that have contributed to halt land degradation in the region. Jianlong thanked high-level representatives for their active participation and declared the High-Level Segment closed at 5:30 pm.

CLOSING PLENARY

On Friday afternoon, 15 September, Jia Xiaoxia, State Forestry Administration, China, on behalf of COP 13 President Zhang Jianlong, invited CRIC Chair Aliyu Bananda to present a brief summary of the CRIC session. The COP then adopted 6 CRIC decisions without discussion.

Jia then invited delegates to elect officers other than the President. Delegates elected Omer Muhammad (Pakistan) as CST 14 Chair, and Samuel Mabilin Contreras (Philippines) as CRIC Chair for the 17th and 18th sessions.

The COP then adopted the decisions forwarded to it by the COW.

Following this, the COP adopted the decision on the special segment of parallel ministerial high-level roundtable discussions (ICCD/COP(13)/L.1), in which the COP takes note of the Chairs' summaries, and decides to include these as an annex to the COP 13 report.

The COP further considered and adopted draft decisions on the declaration of CSOs attending the COP (ICCD/COP(13)/L.12), the Youth Forum (ICCD/COP(13)/L.13), and the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum (ICCD/COP(13)/L.9).

Adoption of the Ordos Declaration: On 9 September, a Friends of the Chair group was established to prepare a draft Ordos Declaration. During the closing plenary, COP 13 President Zhang Jianlong presented the Ordos Declaration (ICCD/COP(13)/L.14), in which ministers and high-level representatives, *inter alia*:

- welcome the commitment of the Government of China to work with parties to combat desertification, drought and sand and dust storms, especially in Asia and Africa, and to provide support to the “Belt and Road Cooperative Mechanism for Combating Desertification”;
- confirm that DLDD are major environmental, economic and social challenges for global sustainable development, in particular for poverty, poor health, lack of food security, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, reduced resilience to climate change, and forced migration;
- consider sand and dust storms, and the resulting loss of fertile soil, as an emerging, cross-sectoral, transboundary challenge that is exacerbated by unsustainable land management and water use that can aggravate existing environmental challenges; and
- acknowledge the call, championed by civil society, for better access, control and stewardship over land, including strengthening tenure security, access and user rights for women and men, in particular the poor and vulnerable, as well as indigenous peoples and local communities, as a critical element of sustainable development.

The Declaration also:

- welcomes the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework;
- commits to facilitate, for parties that wish to do so, the voluntary LDN target-setting process, and to provide sufficient support to national efforts to turn defined LDN targets into effective projects and equitable action;
- pledges to further integrate SLM objectives and practices into relevant policies, plans and investments to contribute to achieving LDN;
- invites the private sector and other stakeholders to step up investments to achieve LDN at the national level;
- encourages the public and private sector to continue to invest in developing technologies, methods and tools to combat DLDD in different regions, and to boost knowledge exchange (including of traditional knowledge, with the consent of the knowledge holders), capacity building and sharing of technologies;
- prioritizes, as appropriate, those initiatives that benefit the most vulnerable and that seek to empower those who have the least capacity to cope with the consequences of DLDD;
- pledges to address the gender inequalities that undermine progress in the implementation of the Convention;
- promotes approaches that bring together government, private sector, and local communities to provide economic and ecosystem services that can be shared by business and local farmers who have previously been affected by land degradation and poverty, for example “green desert economics” as demonstrated in Kubuqi Desert, Ordos; and
- invites local governments, in particular, to collaborate to create inclusive and sustainable cities using SLM approaches and integrated land use planning.

The COP then adopted the report of the meeting (ICCD/COP(13)/L.19) as orally presented by COP 13 Rapporteur Trevor Benn (Guyana). He noted that the credentials of Cambodia, Malta, Zambia, and Zimbabwe will be included in the final report, which will also include statements made during the closing plenary. The Conference adopted the report without comments.

CLOSING STATEMENTS: COP President Zhang Jianlong listed five major outcomes of the COP 13, and added that encouraging the youth to take action, “plants a seed in their heart” to contribute to future efforts to combat desertification.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Barbut affirmed that COP 13 took bold steps for the Convention, which now has a clear, action-oriented path forward. She summarized the new initiatives established during COP 13, including on drought, migration, gender, and sand and dust storms, as well as the launching of the LDN Fund and the Global Land Outlook. She encouraged participants to act to implement LDN, and concluded by thanking the Chinese hosts and all others involved.

Algeria submitted the resolution on the expression of gratitude to the Government and people of the People’s Republic of China (ICCD/COP(13)/L.15). She commended China for the excellent organization and commitment to the COP. The resolution was subsequently adopted by the COP.

Ecuador, on behalf of the G-77/China, welcomed the new Strategic Framework and the new initiative on drought. He commended Brazil, India, and Liberia for joining the LDN target setting programme, bringing the total number to 113, and said the programme has been a part of bringing LDN from concept to reality. He welcomed the launch of the LDN Fund and stated that achieving LDN requires new, additional and substantial financial resources.

The EU expressed satisfaction with the alignment of the new Strategic Framework with the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and that further action on drought will now be taken by the UNCCD. She highlighted that the Global Land Outlook will play a key role as a guide towards achieving LDN, and welcomed the resolution relating to migration, stating it is important to provide visibility to DLDD as one of the drivers of migration.

Kenya, on behalf of the African Group, emphasized the adoption of the UNCCD Strategic Framework as a landmark decision, but noted a continued need to bring drought to the same level of focus as desertification and land degradation issues. He expressed satisfaction for financial support to the UNCCD through the GEF and the launch of the LDN Fund, calling for equal allocation of GEF resources among the Rio Conventions.

Iraq, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, expressed satisfaction with the outcomes of the COP, emphasizing the decisions relating to the Strategic Framework, which is aligned with the SDGs, LDN, and capacity building as important steps for the implementation of the Convention, and stressed that DLDD are global issues that require global efforts.

Peru, on behalf of GRULAC, reiterated the biodiversity and environment value of the region and the importance of effective measures including financial resources and capacity building. He urged developed countries to make new commitments in this regard to support developing countries in mitigating drought.

Belarus, on behalf of CEE, described the decisions adopted as a breakthrough that will strengthen the soul of the UNCCD and implementation of its programme of work. He identified the adoption of the Strategic Framework as a key decision, as it builds on existing achievements, and introduces new elements, including SDG target 15.3 on LDN, and a new initiative on drought.

Egypt, on behalf of the Arab Group, thanked the Chinese hosts and acknowledged the “constructive spirit” used throughout the COP, particularly on, *inter alia*: droughts, sand and dust storms, and migration.

AIDER, Peru, on behalf of CSOs, noted that CSOs were key stakeholders to the Convention. She invited the UNCCD COP to

promote land tenure security as well as the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT) in implementing the LDN, while ensuring free, prior and informed consent. She concluded that, given the CSOs' commitment to the implementation of LDN, they should be fully included in future processes.

COP 13 President Zhang gaveled the meeting to a close at 6:45 pm.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF COP 13

UNCCD COMES OF AGE IN CHINA

"Do not be afraid of growing slowly, be afraid only of standing still." – Chinese proverb

After years of slow growth, COP 13 opened on a note of expectation, in part due to the magnificent venue and exemplary organizational skills of the hosts that inspired numerous references to Chinese wisdom throughout the meeting. Both the CST and the CRIC completed their work ahead of schedule, while several decisions at the heart of the negotiations, including adoption of the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, alignment of the Convention with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and improved reporting and monitoring procedures, were not as contentious as some expected. The heavy lifting done by the Intergovernmental Working Group on the future strategic framework (IWG-FSF)—and the special methodological session of the CRIC in October 2016—appeared to have paid dividends in Ordos. As noted in numerous opening speeches, COP 12's adoption of LDN as its primary, voluntary, target, underpinned by the start of national LDN target-setting processes by more than half of UNCCD parties, was worthy of celebration.

This brief analysis outlines some of the key outcomes and achievements of COP 13 and explores how these could help propel the Convention forward in its next strategic phase.

LDN: UNCCD'S SAVING GRACE

"When everybody adds fuel, the flames rise high." – Chinese proverb

The foremost achievement of COP 12 was reaching agreement on LDN as a concrete—albeit voluntary—target to guide the implementation and monitoring of the Convention, and ensure its alignment to the SDGs. For many observers, therefore, Brazil's announcement at the start of the negotiations that it would join the "target setting club" (together with India and Liberia bringing the tally to 113) was a good indicator of progress since COP 12 in Ankara. Brazil, with the US and several other GRULAC members, had opposed setting LDN targets for the UNCCD as a whole, recalling the Convention's mandate to focus on dry, semi-arid and dry sub-humid regions, especially in Africa. Brazil's decision was therefore a clear indication that while the LDN target is voluntary, many have accepted its value for re-energizing implementation on the ground, especially through ongoing efforts to align existing NAPs to the 2030 Agenda through SDG target 15.3.

With COP 12 also noting the need to mobilize sufficient means of implementation for countries to establish their LDN targets and kick start implementation, the launch of the LDN Fund at the close of the High-Level Segment further raised hopes of maintaining momentum from the previous COP. Co-promoted by the GM and Mirova, a French-based asset management company, the LDN Fund is described as the first-ever "privately managed global impact investment vehicle" specifically targeted to support SDG implementation. The Fund's launch was broadly welcomed by COP 13 delegates, although the initial capitalization of

US\$300 million was far less than the initially announced annual target of US\$2 billion. The potential to enhance implementation synergies and ease countries' reporting burden, was further highlighted with the GM's announcement that the planned Project Preparation Facility, jointly operated with the other two Rio Conventions, is close to operationalization, with the aim of supporting projects that simultaneously deliver on the targets of all three Conventions.

Despite these promising signals, however, CSOs and some countries continued to express concern that large-scale and profit-driven land investments will focus on the low hanging fruit and will not advance the Convention's primary goal of contributing to improved livelihoods for communities living in some of the world's poorest and most degraded areas through supporting SLM. Various COP 13 decisions have therefore underscored the need to mobilize additional financial resources for the Convention from multiple sources and ensuring the highest environmental and social standards in implementing LDN projects. In addition, the Strategic Framework does take note of the potential contribution of the VGGT to the effective implementation of the Convention.

STRENGTHENING SCIENCE-POLICY LINKAGES: A TALE OF TWO "LAUNCHES"

"There are three ways to learn wisdom: reflection, imitation and experience, of which experience is the bitterest.... We must be ready to share our wisdom." – UNCCD Executive Secretary Monique Barbut citing Confucius during the opening of the High-Level Segment

From the outset, one of the core contradictions at the heart of the CST's work has been how to ensure scientific credibility, while also packaging complex messages in a language that can inspire action on the ground, including by smallholders. On the first count at least, many CST members appeared satisfied with the performance of the Convention's scientific advisory body, the SPI, whose mandate was under review after four years of work. They broadly welcomed the positive external evaluation—due in large part to the well-received scientific conceptual framework for LDN that was finalized prior to the COP—lauding the 20-member body for its efficiency and the steps made towards greater synergies with the IPCC, IPBES and other scientific initiatives. The presentation of the progress report on the IPBES Land Degradation Restoration Assessment (LDRA) Further served as a reminder that the UNCCD can also "outsource" scientific work, thus enabling the SPI to focus its energies on priority needs identified by the CST.

Another UNCCD knowledge product, the Global Land Outlook (GLO), also presented for the first time at COP 13, appeared designed to bridge the science-policy-practice gap by focusing its message primarily at practitioners, both policy makers as well as stakeholders on the ground. Initially announced at the Fourth Special Session of the Committee on Science and Technology in Cancun in 2015, the GLO aims to provide a comprehensive and authoritative analysis of key DLDD trends globally, partly modeled on UN Environment's Global Environment Outlook series, and with a view to providing policy makers with a sound empirical basis for decision making and action. As Executive Secretary Barbut explained during the launch event, "The Outlook presents a vision for transforming the way in which we use and manage land because we are all decision-makers and our choices can make a difference—even small steps matter." While the GLO's COP debut was relatively low key—it took place in the exhibition hall and was not formally presented at the CST—the Secretariat's outreach team pointed out that its public launch was a resounding success, with many international media channels

featuring stories. As one staffer noted, the UNCCD “got the messaging right” by highlighting the scale of the problem through compelling numbers and personal stories that appeal to a broader public. So, while it did not fully endorse future work on the GLO in the SPI’s work programme for the coming biennium, the fact that the CST requested the UNCCD’s scientific advisory body to participate and contribute from the inception of a “possible” follow-up edition indicates that there is an opportunity to tweak the focus and messaging of this, as well as other UNCCD knowledge products.

LEARNING AND CAPACITY BUILDING: THE MISSING LINK?

“Among any three people walking, I will find something to learn for sure” – Confucius

The role of knowledge sharing and capacity building in disseminating and adapting best practices to control DLDD has always been at the heart of this Convention. In calling for a specific COP decision on capacity development, proponents therefore sought to enhance the implementation of the UNCCD through “deepening, strengthening and promotion of capacity building.” One of the underlying intentions was not only to strengthen the scientific and technical skills of UNCCD stakeholders but to “democratize” information sharing through effectively tapping diverse knowledge sources and actors. This latter point was particularly emphasized by CSOs, who repeatedly expressed their disappointment that—unlike the private sector—their role was not explicitly recognized in the initial draft of the Strategic Framework. They reminded delegates that many SLM solutions, such as terracing, water harvesting and agroforestry techniques, are low cost and easily replicable, and it is CSOs that are at the forefront in working with local communities to scale up these practices. This critique echoes concerns expressed at previous COPs that the UNCCD’s efforts to include the private sector appears to have come at the cost of alienating CSOs and that the Convention may need to find a way to engage more meaningfully with both constituencies.

The institutional component of capacity building, while not explicitly mentioned in the decision, was a core theme, especially among GRULAC countries. This seemed to highlight the general perception that virtual spaces—such as the broadly welcomed UNCCD Knowledge Hub—cannot fully compensate for the role played by “physical” nodes closer to where the Convention is implemented. Several regional groups called for a renewed focus on resource mobilization to strengthen regional and subregional coordinating units, which, in the view of some, have been unable to fulfil their mandate of facilitating knowledge exchange, especially with regard to context-specific lessons learned.

As for the COP itself as an opportunity for learning and consensus making, some observers pointed out that this COP, breaking with past tradition, chose to discuss most of its substantive issues in closed contact groups. Plenary sessions were left with official statements and real negotiations only took place behind closed doors, where non-parties are not allowed and small delegations have less capacity to participate meaningfully.

WHAT NEXT FOR THE UNCCD?

“Build on the past and prepare for the future.” – Chinese proverb

UNCCD ministerial dialogues typically focus on emerging policy themes, and COP 13 was no exception. The topics this year received strong endorsement in the final outcomes: drought, which was the top issue for the African Group, has received additional attention after being incorporated as the one specific

strategic objective of the Strategic Framework. The decision on gender equality and women’s empowerment adopted a gender plan of action, thus re-establishing, in the views of some delegates and CSOs, a better balance between the environmental and social focus of the Convention, in line with the 2030 Agenda. The proposed decision on exploring the links between DLDD, peace and security, commonly referred to as the “migration decision,” however, had a shakier landing in Ordos. The co-sponsoring of the resolution by the EU and Senegal had significant symbolic value by revealing the global and interconnected nature of DLDD impacts. However, there was reluctance to open negotiations on the text, with some delegations pointing to issues of procedure as it was introduced from the floor, rather than through a substantive report prepared in advance of the COP to guide discussions. Ultimately, the decision fared better than expected, with delegates agreeing to enhance international cooperation and promote the positive role that SLM can play to address DLDD as one of the drivers of migration. Similarly, following extended negotiations on the closing day of the COP, delegates also adopted a brief decision text on sand and dust storms, the theme of the third ministerial roundtable.

China’s announcement that it will continue to support the “Belt and Road Cooperative Mechanism for Combating Desertification,” a multi-stakeholder partnership that is spearheading green economy projects across dozens of countries in the region and beyond, offered a practical example of how to translate such global issues into concrete action on the ground.

On balance, it is safe to conclude that COP 13 delivered on at least four fronts: agreeing on the Strategic Framework and a substantive programme aligned to the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda; reaffirming the role of its scientific advisory bodies; launching a unified reporting and monitoring process; and enhancing means of implementation through the launch of the LDN Fund and continued collaboration with the GEF. Many believe, therefore, that the UNCCD is on more secure footing and, especially on LDN, starting to set the agenda for enhanced synergies with the other Rio Conventions. Nevertheless, the actual effectiveness of the LDN Fund to deliver on its promise of promoting “transformational” projects for the majority of parties is, in the view of some, yet to be determined.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Climate Week NYC 2017: The 9th annual Climate Week NYC will take place during the General Debate of the UN General Assembly. It will gather leaders from business and government to demonstrate how continued investment in innovation, technology and clean energy will drive profitability and lead us towards a net-zero emissions global economy. **dates:** 18-24 September 2017 **location:** New York City, US **contact:** The Climate Group **email:** info@theclimategroup.org **www:** <https://www.theclimategroup.org/ClimateWeekNYC>

ESCWA Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Compact on Migration: The first phase of the preparatory process for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration includes preparatory meetings hosted by the UN Regional Commissions. **dates:** 26-27 September 2017 **location:** Beirut, Lebanon **contact:** UN Refugees and Migrants **email:** <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/contact> **www:** <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/regional-consultations>

2017 Environment and Emergencies Forum: The Environment and Emergencies Forum (EEF) is a global event organized by UN Environment and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The 2017

Environment and Emergencies Forum will explore the nexus of environmental risk and humanitarian crisis against global trends. It will provide a platform for taking action to strengthen environmental resilience through an increased focus on the readiness of stakeholders to address the environmental dimensions of emergencies. **dates:** 26-28 September 2017 **location:** Nairobi, Kenya **contact:** UN Environment/OCHA Joint Unit **email:** ochaunep@un.org **www:** <http://ecentre.org/cef/>

Sixth Informal Thematic Session for the Global Compact on Migration: The first phase of the preparatory process for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration includes a series of six informal thematic sessions, organized by the UN General Assembly President. The sixth thematic session will address, “Irregular migration and regular pathways, including decent work, labour mobility, recognition of skills and qualifications and other relevant measures.” **dates:** 12-13 October 2017 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** UN Refugees and Migrants **email:** <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/contact> **www:** <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/labour-mobility>

Reducing Inequality in a Turbulent World: Scaling-up Strategies to Secure Indigenous, Community and Women’s Land Rights: This conference aims to advance joint efforts to secure the land and resource rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, and women. **dates:** 4-5 October 2017 **location:** Stockholm, Sweden **contact:** Rights and Resources Initiative **email:** conference@rightsandresources.org **www:** <https://communitylandrights.org/>

Second Multi-stakeholder Hearing on the Global Compact on Migration: The first phase of the preparatory process for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration includes informal interactive multi-stakeholder hearings. **date:** 11 October 2017 **location:** Geneva, Switzerland **contact:** UN Refugees and Migrants **email:** <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/contact> **www:** <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/multi-stakeholder-hearings-0>

Forty-fourth Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS 44): The forty-fourth Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS 44) will convene under the theme, “Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition.” The agenda of the session will cover: CFS and the SDGs; nutrition; policy convergence; workstreams and activity updates; an independent evaluation of CFS; and critical and emerging issues for food security and nutrition. **dates:** 9-13 October 2017 **location:** Rome, Italy **contact:** CFS Secretariat **email:** cfs@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/cfs/home/plenary/cfs44/en/>

UNECA Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Compact on Migration: The first phase of the preparatory process for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration includes preparatory meetings by the UN Regional Commissions. The UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) is organizing the African regional preparatory meeting. **dates:** 14-15 October 2017 **location:** Kigali, Rwanda **contact:** UN Refugees and Migrants **email:** <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/contact> **www:** <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/regional-consultations>

People’s Climate Summit 2017: This event will take place immediately prior to, and in parallel with, UNFCCC COP 23. The People’s Climate Summit will provide a space for networking and information exchange on issues related to climate justice. Evening panels will take place on 3-5 November. On 6-7 November, over 50 workshops will debate how to put a social-ecological transition into practice, consider global struggles for climate justice, and share skills and build networks. **dates:** 3-7 November 2017 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** People’s Climate Summit **email:** contact@pcs2017.org **www:** <https://pcs2017.org/>

UNFCCC COP 23: The 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 23) to the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will be organized by Fiji and hosted at the headquarters of the UNFCCC Secretariat in Bonn, Germany. **dates:** 6-17 November 2017 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** UNFCCC Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-1000 **fax:** +49-228-815-1999 **email:** secretariat@unfccc.int **www:** http://unfccc.int/meetings/bonn_nov_2017/meeting/10084.php

ESCAP Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Compact on Migration: The first phase of the preparatory process for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration will include preparatory meetings by the UN Regional Commissions. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) will organize a regional preparatory meeting. **dates:** 6-8 November 2017 **location:** Bangkok, Thailand **contact:** UN Refugees and Migrants **email:** <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/contact> **www:** <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/regional-consultations>

Sustainable Innovation Forum 2017: This business-focused event will be held during COP 23. Now in its eighth year, the event is expected to gather over 600 participants, including national and local policy makers, UN agencies, business leaders, investors and international NGOs. Debate and discussions will be held on: renewable energy; circular economy; sustainable land and water management; carbon markets; climate finance; and climate innovation in emerging regions. **dates:** 13-14 November 2017 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** Climate Action **phone:** +44-20-7871-0173 **fax:** +44-20-7871-0101 **email:** info@climateactionprogramme.org **www:** <http://www.cop-23.org/>

Conference on Land Policy in Africa (CLPA-2017): The Conference will convene under the theme, “The Africa We Want: Achieving socioeconomic transformation through inclusive and equitable access to land by the youth,” which supports the African Union declaration of 2017 as the Year of Youth. The format of the Conference will include plenary and parallel sessions, side events, exhibitions, and the use of social media to reach a broader audience, including youth. It aims to deepen capacity for land policy in Africa through improved access to knowledge and information on land policy development and implementation. **dates:** 14-17 November 2017 **location:** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **contact:** UN Economic Commission for Africa **email:** eca-africallandconference@un.org **www:** <http://www.uneca.org/clpa2017>

53rd Meeting of the GEF Council: The meeting will be preceded by the GEF CSO Consultation, on 27 November. On the final day, the Council will convene as the Council of the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), also at the same location. **dates:** 28-30 November 2017 **location:** Washington D.C., US **contact:** GEF Secretariat **email:** <https://www.thegef.org/contact> **www:** <https://www.thegef.org/council-meetings>

4th Global Science Conference on Climate Smart Agriculture: The 4th Global Science conference on Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) will be organized around the theme “Catalyzing local innovations and action to accelerate scaling up of CSA.” **dates:** 28-30 November 2017 **location:** Johannesburg, South Africa **contact:** Conference Organizers **email:** csa2015.montpellier@agropolis.fr **www:** <http://csa2017.nepad.org/en/>

World Soil Day 2017: World Soil Day has been commemorated annually since 2013, following the adoption of a Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) Council resolution calling on the wider UN

System to recognize 5 December as World Soil Day and to institutionalize its observance. **date:** 5 December 2017 **location:** worldwide **contact:** Global Soil Partnership Secretariat **email:** GSP-Secretariat@fao.org **www:** <http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/world-soil-day/en>

CBD SBSTTA-21 and Article 8(j) Working Group-10: The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) will address, *inter alia*, the links between the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the SDGs, biodiversity and health, and biodiversity mainstreaming in the energy, mining and infrastructure sectors. The tenth meeting of the CBD *Ad Hoc* Open-ended Working Group on Article 8(j) and Related Provisions will meet in parallel to SBSTTA-21. **dates:** 11-16 December 2017 **location:** Montreal, Quebec, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

Third Multi-stakeholder Hearing on the Global Compact on Migration: The preparatory process for the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration will include informal interactive multi-stakeholder hearings. **date:** 18 December 2017 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **contact:** UN Refugees and Migrants **email:** <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/contact> **www:** <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/regional-consultations>

Global Landscapes Forum: The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is designed to produce and disseminate knowledge and accelerate action to build more resilient, climate friendly, diverse, equitable and productive landscapes. The GLF uses this approach around five broad themes: restoration, financing, rights, measuring progress, and food and livelihoods. The science-led Forum convenes diverse stakeholders to share knowledge and best practice to produce collaborative contributions to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **dates:** 19-20 December 2017 **location:** Bonn, Germany **contact:** Global Landscapes Forum **email:** <http://www.landscapes.org/contact-us/> **www:** <http://www.landscapes.org/glf-bonn/>

IPBES-6: The sixth session of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Plenary will consider for approval four regional assessments of biodiversity and ecosystem services and the thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration. The plenary is also expected to conduct regular elections of the Multi-Disciplinary Expert Panel and consider the review of effectiveness of the Platform. **dates:** 18-24 March 2018 **location:** Medellin, Colombia **contact:** IPBES Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-0570 **email:** secretariat@ipbes.net **www:** www.ipbes.net/

CBD SBSTTA-22: The twenty-second meeting of the CBD SBSTTA will address, *inter alia*: protected areas, marine and coastal biodiversity, biodiversity and climate change, and digital sequence information on genetic resources. **dates:** 2-7 July 2018 **location:** Montreal, Quebec, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/meetings/>

CBD SBI-2: The CBD Subsidiary Body on Implementation will address: review of the effectiveness of the Nagoya Protocol, the global multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism under the Protocol, and specialized international access and benefit-sharing mechanisms in light of Nagoya Protocol Article 10. **dates:** 9-13 July 2018 **location:** Montreal, Quebec, Canada **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=5691>

CBD COP14: The fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity is anticipated

to be held in November 2018 in Egypt. **dates:** 10-22 November 2018 (to be confirmed) **location:** Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt (to be confirmed) **contact:** CBD Secretariat **phone:** +1-514-288-2220 **fax:** +1-514-288-6588 **email:** secretariat@cbd.int **www:** www.cbd.int/meetings/

UNCCD CRIC 17: CRIC 17 is tentatively scheduled to take place in Bonn, Germany, or any other venue with UN conference facilities in the event that no party makes an offer to host the session and meet the additional costs. **dates:** second half of 2018 **location:** TBD **contact:** UNCCD Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2800 **fax:** +49-228-815-2898/99 **email:** secretariat@unccd.int **www:** <http://www.unccd.int>

UNCCD COP 14: COP 14 is tentatively scheduled to take place in Bonn, Germany, in autumn 2019, or at another venue arranged by the Secretariat in consultation with the COP Bureau, in the event that no party makes an offer to host the session and meet the additional costs. **dates:** final quarter of 2019 **location:** TBD **contact:** UNCCD Secretariat **phone:** +49-228-815-2800 **fax:** +49-228-815-2898/99 **email:** secretariat@unccd.int **www:** <http://www.unccd.int>

For additional meetings, see <http://sdg.iisd.org>

GLOSSARY

CBD	Convention of Biological Diversity
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
COP	Conference of the Parties
COW	Committee of the Whole
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
CSOs	Civil society organizations
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
DLDD	Desertification, land degradation and drought
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GLO	Global Land Outlook
GM	Global Mechanism
GRULAC	Group of Latin American and Caribbean States
HLPF	UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRP	UN Environment International Resource Panel
ITPS	Global Soil Partnership Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils
IWG-FSF	Intergovernmental Working Group on the future strategic framework
LDN	Land degradation neutrality
LDRA	IPBES Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment
MDBs	Multilateral development banks
NAP	National Action Programme
PRAIS	Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLM	Sustainable land management
SKBP	Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal
SPI	Science-Policy Interface
Strategy	10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests