

Summary of the Fourteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification: 2-13 September 2019

The fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 14) agreed to increase and further elaborate action on the ground to ensure that the Convention's goals for 2018-2030 are achieved. During the closing plenary, UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw highlighted four key messages from the meeting:

- Land restoration is the cheapest solution to climate change and biodiversity loss;
- Land restoration makes business sense if regulations and incentives to reward investment are in place;
- Drought preparedness and response are critical in the face of climate change; and
- To put people first is to ensure gender balance, engage youth, and secure land rights.

One of the central themes of the COP 14 high-level segment on 9-10 September, was how to build momentum towards a global movement on land restoration. Six ministerial roundtables and high-level interactive dialogues took place over the two days, addressing, among others, land issues related to: climate and renewable energy, rural and urban communities, ecosystem restoration, health, and values-based approaches.

The high-level segment also included dialogues with representatives of civil society organizations, youth, and private sector.

The COP adopted over 30 decisions on, among other topics: how to implement four thematic policy frameworks addressing drought, gender, sand and dust storms, and desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD) as a driver for migration. The COP also agreed to include land tenure as a new thematic area under the Convention. After lengthy negotiations on drought, delegates agreed, subject to the availability of resources, to establish an intergovernmental working group to explore effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD.

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), convened in parallel to the COP. Building on a series of landmark global assessments published in the lead up to COP 14, including the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment and its Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, and the Intergovernmental Panel on

Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Climate Change and Land, the CST adopted six decisions addressing, *inter alia*: guidance for developing a global indicator on drought; interfacing science and policy; and sharing knowledge.

The CRIC adopted seven decisions on, among other issues, enhancing implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through strengthened capacity building.

Other initiatives launched at COP 14 included:

- a road map for scaling up the Africa-led Great Green Wall Initiative to restore 100 million hectares of land and create 10 million green jobs by 2030;
- the new UNCCD interactive Drought Toolbox that aims to strengthen countries' preparedness and resilience; and
- an international coalition on sand and dust storms aimed at mitigating their transboundary impacts on human health, the environment, and key economic sectors.

Taking place just ahead of the UN Summits on Climate Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), COP 14 also sought to craft clear messages about the contribution of nature-based solutions to diverse global goals and targets. On the margins of the conference, a high-level luncheon on land and climate co-hosted by COP 14 President Prakash Javadekar and UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, issued a communiqué underscoring that land resources are the basis for

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human health, livelihoods, food security, and economic, cultural, and spiritual wellbeing. Reiterating findings from recent scientific assessments, the discussions emphasized that restoring degraded lands and achieving land degradation neutrality provides an integrated solution to increase the resilience of ecosystems and populations, as well as to enhance the capacity of land for carbon sequestration. Land use must therefore be an integral part of the climate solution, rather than a cause of greenhouse gas emissions.

COP 14 ended on a note of optimism that there is a growing alignment of the land, climate, and biodiversity agendas, and, with its sharpened focus on land restoration, the UNCCD can offer cost-effective and sustainable solutions to some of the most entrenched global challenges today.

UNCCD COP 14 convened in New Delhi, India, from 2-13 September 2019. Over 8,000 participants, including more than 100 ministers and high-level officials, attended the two-week meeting.

A Brief History of the UNCCD

The UNCCD is one of the three Rio Conventions—along with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)—and was called for in Agenda 21, the programme of action adopted at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, or Earth Summit).

Origins of the UNCCD

Following the Earth Summit, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification (INCD) in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. The INCD met five times between May 1993 and June 1994 and drafted the Convention text as well as four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean. The UNCCD was adopted on 17 June 1994, entered into force on 26 December 1996, and currently has 197 parties. A fifth regional implementation annex, for Central and Eastern Europe, entered into force in 2001.

Key Turning Points

COP 1: The COP and the CST met for the first time in Rome, Italy, in 1997. Delegates 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, which was established under Article 21 of the Convention to assist countries in the mobilization of financial resources to implement the Convention and address desertification, land degradation, and drought.

COP 4: Convening in 2000, in Bonn, Germany, COP 4 adopted the fifth regional annex for Central and Eastern Europe. The COP also adopted a decision on the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council initiative to explore the best options for GEF support of the UNCCD's implementation.

COP 5, meeting in 2001 in Geneva, Switzerland, established the CRIC. The CRIC became a standing subsidiary body of the UNFCCC at COP 9 in 2009.

COP 6: Convening in 2003 in Havana, Cuba, COP 6 delegates designated the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD.

COP 8 convened in Madrid, Spain, in 2007 and adopted its first ten-year strategic plan.

COP 10 convened in 2011, in Changwon City, Republic of Korea. Delegates addressed the governance structure for the Global Mechanism (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: Held in Windhoek, Namibia, in 2013, COP 11 followed the landmark UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20) in June 2012. The discussions highlighted the role of the Convention in achieving a land-degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development, as agreed in the Rio+20 outcome. Among key decisions reached at the COP were: agreement to establish a science-policy interface (SPI) to enhance the UNCCD as a global authority on DLDD and sustainable land management (SLM); and the establishment of an *ad hoc* working group to provide guidance on how to refine impact indicators for monitoring the Convention's implementation.

COP 12: With the adoption of the SDGs and the UNCCD-related target on land degradation neutrality (LDN), a key focus at COP 12, held in Ankara, Turkey, in 2015, was how to further align the UNCCD's goals and parties' action programmes with the global framework. The meeting agreed that parties would strive to achieve a single, unified objective, and that future reporting would focus on three biophysical indicators: trends in land cover, land productivity, and carbon stocks. Delegates also held extensive discussions on how to adapt both the substance, as well as process, of future reporting, with a focus on how to establish and monitor national-level voluntary LDN targets.

COP 13: COP 13 convened in Ordos, China, in 2017. Decisions helped to further align the Convention's future strategy with the 2030 Agenda, in particular through launching global indicators and a unified reporting and monitoring process, and strengthening the scientific bodies that will oversee technical guidance of this process. One of the highlights of the meeting was the adoption of a new Strategic Framework for the period 2018-2030 to succeed the UNCCD 10-year Strategy (2008-2018). The COP also endorsed the scientific conceptual framework for LDN developed by the SPI and launched the LDN Fund—co-managed by the UNCCD's Global Mechanism and investment management firm Mirova—to spearhead large scale land restoration projects. COP 13 further endorsed new thematic priorities for the Convention, notably a standalone Strategic Objective on drought and a new Gender Action Plan, and adopted revised terms of reference for the CRIC.

COP 14 Report

On Monday, 2 September, Sun Guoji, on behalf of COP 13 President Zhang Jianlong, Minister of State Forestry and Grassland Administration, China, opened COP 14. He highlighted achievements since COP 13 and expressed China's continued commitment to combating desertification by offering capacity-building opportunities for developing countries.

Delegates then elected Prakash Javadekar, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, India, as COP 14 President. In his opening remarks, Javadekar noted that human actions have contributed to accelerating climate change, land degradation, and biodiversity loss and that, similarly, strong human intent, intelligence as well as technology will be needed to reverse the damage.

Babul Supriyo, Ministry of State of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, India, made a statement on behalf of the host country in which he presented India's achievements and aspirations relating to desertification and land degradation.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw invited delegates to follow Mahatma Gandhi's legacy in removing obstacles and spreading well-being of peoples, stressing that "science has spelled out what needs to be done. We need to translate this knowledge into policies."

Opening Statements: Palestine, for the Group of 77 and China (G-77/China), warned that if current land degradation trends continue, they will exacerbate desertification, as well as the scale and frequency of sand and dust storms. Finland, on behalf of the European Union and its Member States (EU), emphasized strong linkages between continuous land degradation, climate change, and the biodiversity crisis. The Democratic Republic of Congo, on behalf of the African Group, highlighted concern about the effects of drought and flash floods and emphasized that reaching agreement on a common indicator for drought at this COP could support the integral achievement of the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework. Iraq, for the Asia-Pacific Group, called for means of implementation and support for improving resilience and recognition of special circumstances in the diverse region.

Grenada, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), stressed the need for increased ambition to achieve the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and to protect land as earth's most valuable resource. Malta, on behalf of the Northern Mediterranean Region, highlighted the region as a hotspot for land degradation and called for the optimization of the LDN Fund to support the implementation of national LDN targets. Belarus, on behalf of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), highlighted the importance of National Adaptation Plans and cooperation among countries at regional and subregional levels, and called on the COP to include discussions on the relation between land degradation and migration, peace, and security, as well as the topic of land tenure.

Gram Bharati Samiti, on behalf of civil society organizations (CSOs), highlighted CSO priorities, including: recognizing that community-led initiatives contribute to LDN and attaining land tenure security particularly for women, young people, and vulnerable groups through a COP 14 decision on implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure on Land, Forestry and Fisheries.

Organizational Matters: The COP adopted the agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(14)/1) on Monday, 2 September. Subsequently, delegates approved the election of Vice-Presidents from the following regional groups: Jean Ilunga Muneng (Democratic Republic of Congo) and Kamaye Maazou (Niger) for Africa; Abdulrahman Alfadley (Saudi Arabia) for Asia-Pacific; Carlos Rodriguez (Costa Rica) and Robert Browne (St. Vincent and the Grenadines) for GRULAC; Andrey Kuzmich (Belarus) and Ashot Vardevanyan (Armenia) for CEE; Barbara De Rosa-Joynt (US) and Franz Breitwieser (Austria) for the Western European and Others Group (WEOG); with Rodriguez as COP 14 Rapporteur.

COP 14 also appointed Trevor Benn (Guyana) as Chair of the Committee of the Whole (COW) and adopted the document on accreditation of intergovernmental organizations, CSOs, and representatives from the private sector (ICCD/COP(14)/15 and ICCD/COP(14)/15/Add.1).

The COP then established a Friends of the Chair group to develop the New Delhi Declaration, which was presented during the closing ceremony on Friday, 13 September.

During the two-week meeting, delegates worked their way through the agenda in the COW, as well as in parallel meetings of the UNCCD's two subsidiary bodies, the CRIC and the CST. The following report summarizes the negotiations under these three bodies.

Committee of the Whole

The COW met first on Tuesday, 3 September and established two contact groups. The Contact Group on Programme and Budget was facilitated by R.B. Lal (India). The Contact Group on Other Matters was facilitated by Troy Torrington (Guyana). Work under both contact groups continued throughout both weeks of the meeting. On Thursday, 5 September, the COW reviewed progress in implementing policy advocacy frameworks that address drought, sand and dust storms, gender and migration. On Friday, 6 September, the COW addressed land tenure as new and emerging issues. On Thursday, 12 September, the COW considered: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Implications for the UNCCD; the promotion and strengthening relationships with other relevant conventions and organizations; and other matters. The COW concluded its work on Friday, 13 September.

Programme and Budget: *Programme and budget for the biennium 2020–2021:* This item was first discussed in the COW on Tuesday, 3 September. The UNCCD Secretariat introduced the relevant documents (ICCD/COP(14)/6, ICCD/COP(14)/7-ICCD/CRIC(18)/2), pointing to a 1.5% budgetary increase to reflect inflation. This item was forwarded to the Contact Group on Programme on Budget. The group met during the second week of the COP, and concluded its work on Thursday, 12 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.18), the COP approves the programme budget for 2020-2021 of EUR 16,430,903. Among other issues, the COP:

- decides to maintain the level of the working capital reserve at 12% of the estimated annual expenditure in the Trust Fund for the core budget;
- authorizes the Executive Secretary, on an exceptional basis, to draw upon the available unspent balances or contributions from prior financial periods for 2020-2021 in an amount up to EUR 242,821, provided that the use of the balance does not reduce the working capital reserve, and that any such utilization be distributed to programmes and the GM proportionate to the approved budget;
- authorizes the Executive Secretary to make transfers between each of the main appropriation lines up to an aggregate limit of 20% of the total estimated expenditure for those appropriation lines, provided that a further limitation of up to minus 25% of each such appropriation line shall apply, and requests the Executive Secretary to report to the COP on any such transfers;
- authorizes the Executive Secretary to establish lower-level positions in addition to the approved staffing within a budget for staff costs not to exceed EUR 10,946,166;
- requests the Executive Secretary to analyze the organizational structure and the staffing to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of the approved work programme;
- approves a contingency budget amounting to EUR 2,104,660 for conference servicing, to be added to the programme budget for the biennium 2020-2021 in the event that the General Assembly decides not to provide resources for these activities in the UN regular budget; and

- decides that, to the extent that offsetting voluntary contributions for the purpose expressed in paragraph 11 does not reach this amount, the balance will be included in the contingency budget for conference servicing.

Financial performance for the Convention Trust Funds: The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents (ICCD/COP(14)/8, ICCD/CRIC(18)/3, ICCD/COP(14)/9, ICCD/COP(14)/10, and ICCD/COP(14)/11). Christian Edelmann, UN Board of Auditors, presented key findings from the Board's recent annual audit of the UNCCD, pointing out that the report was being presented for discussion at a COP for the first time. Among areas for improvement, Edelmann noted the need for standardized templates for contracting and enhancing anti-corruption measures to facilitate transparency.

Final Decision: On the financial performance of the Convention trust funds (ICCD/COP(14)/L.18), the COP, *inter alia*:

- approves an amendment to the financial rules of the COP, its subsidiary bodies, and the Convention Secretariat to state that "Contributions made each year by parties on the basis of the indicative scale adopted by consensus by the COP, and based on the most recent scale of assessments of the UN as may be adopted by the General Assembly";
- urges the Executive Secretary to further reduce the environmental impact of the operations of the Secretariat by rationalizing resource use and travel, such as by adopting wider use of videoconferencing facilities;
- requests the Secretariat to foster transparency and accountability, and establish a section on the UNCCD website to publish up-to-date information relevant to the governance of the Convention and the GM;
- authorizes the Executive Secretary, on an exceptional basis, to use the remainder of the amount previously allocated from the reserves of the Trust Fund for the core budget of the UNCCD for the furtherance of the Drought Initiative described in decision ICCD/COP(14)/L.22 (on drought); and
- encourages the Secretariat and the GM to mobilize voluntary contributions as financial and non-financial resources to the Drought Initiative, as appropriate.

Report of the Evaluation Office: The Secretariat introduced the report (ICCD/COP(14)/12), noting that it aims to support internal learnings. Finland, for the EU, expressed appreciation for the increase in domestic and international resources to address land degradation, noting pledges of USD 100 million to the LDN Fund by 2019. Switzerland emphasized that the multi-year work plan should reflect the scope of the Convention, as well as the Strategic Framework, and not only focus on the LDN target. She further noted that the GM's objective is not to scale up implementation, and called for clarifying the scope and objective of the Global Land Outlook to avoid overlaps with other global assessments.

Final Decision: In its decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.18), the COP takes note of the proposed 2020-2021 workplan of the Evaluation Office, and requests the Executive Secretary to report to COP 15 on the outcomes of the evaluations that will be conducted in 2020-2021 and on the action taken to meet the pending recommendations of earlier evaluations, as appropriate.

Programme and budget for the biennium 2020-2021: Multi-year workplan for the Convention institutions (2020-2023): This item was first discussed in the COW on Tuesday, 3 September. The UNCCD Secretariat introduced the relevant documents (ICCD/COP(14)/6, ICCD/COP(14)/7-ICCD/CRIC(18)/2). The workplan was further discussed in the Contact Group on

Programme and Budget, and the COP adopted the decision on Friday, 13 September.

Final Decision: In its decision ICCD/COP(14)/L.12, the COP, among others: requests the Secretariat and the GM to utilize the UNCCD results framework for 2020-2023 in the annex to this decision, organizing their work in a manner consistent with the provisions of the Convention and the decisions taken at COP 14; also requests the Secretariat and the GM to prepare a multi-year workplan for the Convention (2022-2025), utilizing the results-based management approach, to be considered at COP 15.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Implications for the UNCCD: Integration of SDG 15 and Target 15.3 into the implementation of the UNCCD: This item was first discussed on Tuesday, 3 September. The Secretariat introduced the report (ICCD/COP(14)/2) outlining the main achievements, support, and recommendations for countries to integrate SDG 15 (life on land) in the implementation of the Convention. eSwatini, on behalf of the African Group, highlighted the strong momentum for LDN implementation on the continent, and noted that 50 out of 54 countries have completed their LDN target-setting programmes. He called for a transition to the implementation of transformative programmes, and for financial resources to make this happen. He further noted the need for the LDN Fund to provide criteria on access to allow all stakeholders, including the private sector, to make use of the Fund to invest in land restoration.

Colombia stressed the need to recognize recent global scientific assessments in order to mitigate the effects of land degradation and resulting biodiversity loss, and for targeted technical assistance and capacity building to achieve this.

The EU noted that effective implementation goes beyond designing good projects and securing funding and requires political will to address the drivers of DLDD, and the enabling environment through ensuring, *inter alia*, land tenure security and access to technical support.

Guyana stated that incorporating SDG target 15.3 on LDN into the work of the UNCCD offers a strategic opportunity to increase the Convention's visibility, enhance synergies among the Rio Conventions, and accelerate the achievement of the Convention's objectives.

China called for the UNCCD to take the lead in implementing SDG target 15.3 and transformative thinking around governance to generate multidimensional benefits.

The US expressed concern about overemphasis on the LDN target, stating that this risks narrowing the Convention's original mandate. Brazil, supported by Saudi Arabia, emphasized the need for specific consideration of drought.

Belarus highlighted the importance of peatland restoration in its 2030 targets. The Republic of Korea highlighted its contribution to UNCCD implementation, noting the 2011 Changwon Initiative and the new Peace Forest Initiative to be launched during COP 14 to support effective implementation of LDN programmes.

CSOs highlighted their continued commitment to support local and national-level efforts to enhance resilience to DLDD. Argentina called for clarity on the concept of land degradation, noting its broad scope, and for smart design to avoid contradictory outcomes from mitigation measures. He further highlighted difficulties that countries may face subregionally in dealing with both drought and floods.

Responding to the issues raised, the Secretariat outlined its role in supporting countries to identify and utilize financial resources and develop good quality programmes, emphasizing the need to ensure that projects are based on scientific considerations.

He noted the key role of databases and lessons learned from countries, adding that the LDN Fund is one of many financial mechanisms aimed at assisting in the implementation of the Convention. He explained that efforts are being made to clarify the LDN concept and increase synergies with the other Rio Conventions to maximize efficiency in programme implementation.

Final Decision: In its final decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.20), the COP, *inter alia*, requests the Secretariat, the GM and appropriate UNCCD bodies to continue to develop partnerships to support the implementation of the Convention and LDN. It also calls on parties and other stakeholders to take note of, as appropriate, the Group on Earth Observations LDN Initiative, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the Changwon Initiative, the Ankara Initiative, the Peace Forest Initiative, and other complementary initiatives.

Modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a mid-term evaluation of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework: The Secretariat introduced the item (ICCD/COP(14)/3) on Tuesday, 3 September, noting that the mid-term evaluation should be completed by COP 17 in 2025 and that COP 14 would only provisionally adopt the item. He said that the matter would be considered further.

Ukraine called for ensuring participatory consultation in the mid-term evaluation. South Africa, for the African Group, expressed hope that drought indicators would be agreed at COP 14.

China noted that: further input on the scope and items for evaluation should be elicited from parties; international dynamics such as the UNFCCC process should be considered; and experts should be representative to reflect achievements and issues relating to strategic implementation.

Switzerland noted that scope and criteria should address impact and sustainability and questioned why the component addressing efficiency did not address the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework in its entirety and only focuses on national reporting.

The Philippines stressed the need for developing National Action Plans within the context of the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework. The COW approved the decision on Thursday, 12 September, and it was adopted by the COP on Friday, 13 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.13), the COP, *inter alia*:

- provisionally adopts the modalities, criteria, and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, as proposed by the COP Bureau; and
- decides that COP 16 in 2023 will continue the preparations for the midterm evaluation of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, including the finalization of its modalities, criteria, and terms of reference and the establishment of an intergovernmental working group to oversee the evaluation process.

Implementation of the UNCCD communication plan and the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020): On 11 September, COW Chair Benn introduced document ICCD/COP(14)/4 on supporting the UNCCD stakeholders and potential stakeholders in implementing the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework and reviewing the actions taken by the Secretariat.

Parties agreed on the importance of ensuring synergies with the 2030 Agenda in outreach activities of the Convention, with some noting such linkages would help to make complex UNCCD terminology more accessible.

The COW Contact Group on Other Matters discussed this topic from 11-13 September. The COW approved and forwarded the decision to the COP, which adopted it on 13 September.

Final Decision: In its decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.16), the COP calls for parties and invites civil society organizations, the media, the private sector, and all other relevant stakeholders to leverage international awareness-raising opportunities for outreach, including to women, girls, and youth, around actions to combat DLDD, and achieve LDN and drought resilience.

The COP encourages parties to consider identifying key audiences in order to most effectively leverage outreach around action to combat DLDD and drought and to achieve LDN.

The COP invites parties to:

- raise public awareness and promote youth engagement on UNCCD issues by linking them to other sustainable development challenges, underlining the pivotal role of productive land in implementing the Convention and achieving the SDGs, while addressing gender equality and women's empowerment as an integral part of these messages; and
- actively support the implementation of the UNCCD communication plan by providing the Secretariat success stories, people-focused stories, and photo/video footage from the field.

The COP requests the Secretariat, among other actions, to:

- review the communication plan and base it on the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework in its entirety;
- identify key audiences and propose relevant options for increasing awareness about the objectives of the Convention;
- raise the profile of UNCCD outreach programmes and products;
- maximize the traditional and social media outreach potential by developing new multimedia content based on scientific and technical data; and
- build communications capacity for appropriate staff of the Secretariat and the GM in order to strengthen support for communication activities.

Effective Implementation of the Convention at National, Subregional and Regional Level: Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions, and agencies:

The Secretariat introduced its report (ICCD/COP(14)/5) on 11 September, providing a summary of a select number of activities and highlighting their efficacy in promoting and strengthening these relationships as well as enhancing the implementation of the Convention and proposing recommendations for promoting and strengthening existing and new relationships. The Secretariat highlighted, among other actions, the launch of the UNCCD GEO-LDN initiative, collaboration with UN Women, new partnerships on drought, and sand and dust storms, and legacy initiatives of various COP presidencies.

Parties emphasized the need to integrate means of implementation with joint work among the Rio Conventions, citing recent guidance from the UNCCD SPI on land-based indicators as a good practice in this regard. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands underscored that land health and productivity are closely linked to the quality of wetlands, including peatlands, and welcomed recognition of this link in the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Land. The UN Forum on Forests outlined how progress on the UN Strategic Plan for Forests—notably the target to increase global forest cover to 120 million hectares by 2030—contributes to LDN. The launch of the Peace Forest Initiative at COP 14 was also highlighted.

The COW Contact Group on Other Matters discussed this topic from 11-13 September. The COW approved and forwarded the decision to the COP, which adopted it on 13 September.

Final Decision: In the decision ICCD/COP(14)/L.21, the COP requests the Secretariat and appropriate Convention bodies and institutions, within their respective mandates and existing resources, to, among other actions:

- seek new partnerships to further enhance the implementation of the Convention and the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework in the context of the Paris Agreement and emerging issues such as the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030;
- continue working with the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality Initiative for the next UNCCD reporting cycle 2021-2022 and SDG reporting;
- build on the collaboration initiated with relevant UN entities to support gender mainstreaming at all levels, but especially at the national and subnational levels; and
- continue to strengthen collaboration with the Rio Conventions Secretariats and relevant UN entities, as well as with development partners and relevant international and regional organizations, to support activities on sand and dust storms, drought monitoring, preparedness, and early warning systems, drought vulnerability assessments and drought risk mitigation measures.

The COP invites developed country parties, other parties in a position to do so, international financial organizations, civil society organizations, and private sector institutions to consider contributing, financially or in-kind, to initiatives related to desertification, DLDD, particularly the Group on Earth Observations LDN Initiative.

Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Migration: On Thursday, 5 September, the COW reviewed progress in implementing policy advocacy frameworks that address, among others, migration. The issue was then discussed in the Contact Group on Other Matters and the COP adopted the decision on Friday, 13 September.

Final Decision: In its decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.6), the COP invites parties, to consider promoting the restoration of degraded land as one way of changing the narrative in communities impacted by desertification/land degradation and drought, and allowing UNCCD to focus on new opportunities and solutions which offer hope to young people; and requests the Secretariat to also support regional and international cooperation and initiatives that aim to promote the positive role SLM can play to address desertification/land degradation and drought as one of the drivers of migration.

Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Gender: The Secretariat introduced the document (ICCD/COP(14)/7 – ICCD/CRIC(18)/2, ICCD/COP(14)/8) on 5 September, reporting efforts made by the Secretariat, the GM, and their partners to support countries in rolling out the Gender Action Plan (GAP) and outlining recommendations to further improve the action plan and its implementation.

Regarding the inclusion of women, youth, and vulnerable groups in policy development on land degradation, the African Group underscored the importance of creating enabling environments to make the implementation of the Convention gender-responsive and transformative. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) highlighted some gender-sensitive tools, including sex-disaggregated data and activities aimed at the economic empowerment of rural women.

Regarding gender justice, CSOs called for COP 14 to recognize the role of gender justice in fighting land degradation and desertification.

The COW Contact Group on Other Matters discussed this topic and forwarded the final decision to the COP for adoption on 12 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.4), the COP encourages parties to create enabling environments at the national level to make implementation of the Convention gender-responsive and transformative. The COP further requests the Secretariat, the GM, and appropriate UNCCD bodies, including the SPI, to continue their support to UNCCD country parties on gender mainstreaming and the implementation of the GAP. The COP also requests the Secretariat to strengthen gender-related knowledge and capacity, both in the Secretariat and the GM, by providing training to all staff on gender mainstreaming methods, tools, and techniques on a regular basis.

Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Drought: The Secretariat introduced the reports (ICCD/COP(14)/16 and ICCD/COP(14)/INF.3) on 5 September, reviewing actions taken by the Secretariat and the GM in relation to the implementation of the Drought Initiative and on the need for any additional arrangements regarding drought under the UNCCD.

The African Group reiterated its call for a legally-binding instrument on drought, stating it would enhance the holistic implementation of the Convention and provide better support and assistance to parties.

Regarding a common indicator for drought, many parties expressed appreciation for progress in developing a multi-tiered indicator on drought and technical and financial support to facilitate experience sharing among countries. Several countries welcomed the development of the Drought Toolbox. Ukraine stressed the relevance of the proposed framework in unifying the work of diverse organizations involved in drought monitoring. The Dominican Republic underscored the link between drought and LDN, and called for institutional collaboration to integrate meteorological and hydrological data into the monitoring framework.

Regarding financial support, Malawi called on the international community to establish a land-degradation fund that operates less like a private financial instrument, but is more supportive and accessible to struggling economies.

The COW Contact Group on Other Matters further discussed this topic. Highlights of these discussions included the role of various collaborative initiatives in support of drought preparedness and other priorities of affected countries, but views remained divided over calls by some parties to establish an intergovernmental working group to make proposals on effective measures and arrangements for addressing drought under the UNCCD. The COW approved and forwarded the decision to the COP, which adopted it on 13 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.22), the COP establishes an intergovernmental working group (IWG), subject to the availability of resources, on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD, with a view to presenting its findings and recommendations to parties for their consideration at COP 15 and that this IWG will have, *inter alia*, the following terms of reference:

- take stock of and review the existing policy, implementation and institutional coordination frameworks, including partnerships, on drought preparedness and response and

to consider options for appropriate policy, advocacy, and implementation measures at all levels for addressing drought effectively under the Convention;

- comprise parties, international organizations, the SPI, CSOs, and key stakeholders, as appropriate; and
- consist of a maximum of three party representatives from each regional implementation annex of the Convention.

The COP further decides that the Secretariat, in consultation with the COP Bureau, will nominate participants from key stakeholders, including UN organizations, the SPI, and other scientific organizations, regional organizations, and CSOs, with a maximum of 15 additional members.

Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Sand and dust storms: The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(14)/17 on 5 September, concerning UNCCD institutions and bodies to collaborate with other relevant UN entities and specialized organizations in the process of assisting parties in implementing the Policy Advocacy Framework, in particular anthropogenic sand and dust storms (SDS) source mitigation and strengthening resilience.

Regarding transboundary and regional impacts, many countries reiterated that the impacts of SDS are transboundary in nature. Argentina highlighted the importance of addressing SDS in both source and destination countries, and called for the UNCCD to direct its limited resources towards reinforcing synergistic approaches to drought management. China called for enhanced international collaboration, including through developing joint standards on SDS intensity. Iran said the rich body of traditional and modern knowledge on SDS hot spots could inform regional initiatives.

Regarding science, tools, and mechanisms, the EU encouraged affected countries to make use of the SDS Compendium. Guyana called for strengthened data collection to enhance understanding of the impact of SDS on marine environments. Representatives of research institutions encouraged parties to make use of their expertise. CSOs called for collaboration with community-based organizations to develop localized early warning systems and disaster management plans. CEE stressed the role of science and outlined the establishment of technical centers in the region.

Regarding means of implementation, the Asia-Pacific Group called for support for improving resilience and recognition of special circumstances in the diverse region. Japan noted that the Convention does not mention SDS, stating this underscores the need to prioritize SLM as a drought mitigation measure.

Regarding linkages, the Asia-Pacific Group welcomed the focus on, among other topics, migration, pragmatic solutions to sand and dust storms, land tenure, gender, and the links between urban and rural landscapes. The G-77/China called for greater integration of measures and actions and suggested that achieving SDG target 15.3 on LDN would contribute to improved economic growth and poverty reduction, while building greater resilience to climate change impacts.

The COW Contact Group on Other Matters further discussed this topic. The COW approved and forwarded the decision to the COP, which adopted it on 12 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.2), the COP invites parties, as appropriate, to:

- further explore options to integrate mitigation measures addressing anthropogenic sources of sand and dust storms into the subnational, national and regional implementation of the Convention;

- enhance the preparedness and resilience of vulnerable ecosystems and populations to the adverse and negative impacts of sand and dust storms; and
- strengthen multi-stakeholder platforms and regional initiatives that contribute to addressing sand and dust storms, taking note of the regional and subregional nature of the impacts.

The COP also requests the Secretariat and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies to:

- finalize and publish the Sand and Dust Storms Compendium;
- refine, in cooperation with other relevant agencies, the Global Sand and Dust Storms Source Base-map at the global, regional, and national levels; and
- build the capacity of parties to address sand and dust storms by developing a toolbox, including decision-making support tools.

The COP further requests the GM, within its scope and mandate, to support the development of transformative desertification, land degradation and drought projects and financing options related to anthropogenic sand and dust storms source mitigation.

New and emerging issues: Land tenure: On 6 September, the Secretariat introduced its report (ICCD/COP(14)/20) about the inclusion of a new agenda item on land tenure for consideration at COP 14, including a background document that examined, among other issues, the integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure on Land, Forestry and Fisheries (VGGT) into LDN.

Regarding the integration of the VGGT in the UNCCD process, the EU stressed that responsible land governance is intrinsically linked to achieving SDG target 15.3 and stressed that investments in land restoration respect principles enshrined in the VGGT. While welcoming the contribution of the VGGT, Chile said more work needs to be done to achieve “certainty on land tenure.” Colombia questioned whether the UNCCD was the appropriate forum to consider the issue. Japan cautioned against expanding the scope of the Convention and, with others, emphasized the voluntary nature of the VGGT. Stressing that the Voluntary Guidelines were developed in the context of food security and are already well established, Brazil objected to any further elaboration of the land tenure concept and preferred to focus on how the guidelines inform ongoing UNCCD programmes.

Regarding national frameworks, many countries acknowledged the importance of land governance for achieving LDN, but emphasized the importance of respecting national circumstances and policy frameworks. China noted that land tenure is a new and crosscutting item and there is a need to examine the UNCCD’s mandate in taking up this work. Argentina and Brazil noted that countries use varying definitions of land tenure and, with Colombia, cautioned against creating additional reporting burdens on countries.

Regarding gender equality, traditional knowledge, youth, and small-scale farming, the EU, Namibia, and Benin highlighted the importance of ensuring gender equity in land tenure systems, while the Philippines called for considering the interests of smallholder farmers. The Holy See emphasized ancient value and knowledge from the indigenous peoples in land tenure management. CSOs underscored the urgent need to secure land-based livelihoods, calling for recognition of customary land tenure, especially in areas managed by indigenous peoples. Gabon called for recognition of different land tenure regimes at country level, with others emphasizing the need for reform processes to take into account cultural and ethnological aspects of land tenure systems.

The COW Contact Group on Other Matters further discussed this topic. Delegates negotiated contested references to, *inter alia*, sovereignty and the principle of free, prior, and informed consent. With little progress made, Contact Group Chair Torrington invited delegations to hold informal consultations to try and reach consensus. In the evening of 12 September, after accepting compromise language proposed during consultations by concerned parties, the land tenure text was agreed. The COW approved and forwarded the decision to the COP, which adopted it on 12 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.17), the COP encourages the parties to follow the VGGT in the implementation of activities to combat DLDD and achieve LDN and invites parties to review and, where appropriate, adopt national land governance legislation and procedures in order to support sustainable land use and land restoration.

The COP further encourages parties to:

- recognize legitimate tenure rights, including customary rights, consistent with the national legal framework;
- provide effective, timely, and affordable access to justice and transparent dispute resolution mechanisms;
- recognize and promote fair and inclusive community-based conflict resolution mechanisms; and
- promote responsible and sustainable private and public investments in combating DLDD, including restoration programmes that adhere to environmental and social safeguards in line with the VGGT, and national legislation.

The COP invites parties to:

- legally recognize equal use and ownership rights of land for women and the enhancement of women's equal access to land and land tenure security as well as the promotion of gender-sensitive measures to combat DLDD and achieve LDN, taking into account the national context; and
- ensure that measures to combat DLDD are carried out in a non-discriminatory and participatory way so that they promote equal tenure rights and access to land for all, in particular vulnerable and marginal groups, within the national context.

The COP requests the Secretariat to:

- explore options for the integration of existing globally agreed SDG indicators relevant to land governance into the UNCCD reporting process, with a view to avoiding duplication of reporting efforts and ensuring the widest reach among different national contexts; and
- collaborate with FAO and other relevant partners to produce a technical guide on how to integrate the VGGT into the implementation of the Convention and LDN, for consideration by COP 15.

Procedural Matters: Participation and involvement of CSOs in meetings and processes of the UNCCD: This matter was considered on Wednesday, 11 September. The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(14)/13 and reiterated the UNCCD's support for CSO participation. CSO Representative, China Green Foundation, read out the updated membership of the CSO selection panel, and highlighted the Panel's initiatives and progress on such issues as land tenure and gender. India expressed appreciation for CSOs' involvement in the UNCCD process and suggested that enhancing their involvement in the implementation of the Convention should be subject to the availability of financial resources in line with national circumstances. The Secretariat took note of the suggestion.

Centre d'Actions et de Réalisations Internationales, speaking for CSOs, recommended securing land access and improving direct access to finance to local communities, in particular youth

and women involved in land restoration. He explained how CSO projects can play crucial role in preventing migration from rural areas, and stressed the need for more focus on transitioning to sustainable consumption and production patterns.

On Thursday, 12 September during the COW plenary, the Global Youth Caucus on Desertification and Land called for a more open COP process allowing youth to participate more meaningfully and at all levels in matters related to decision making, implementation, and monitoring. Youth supported ending the use of toxic chemicals in agriculture, and adopting a legally binding instrument on drought.

The COW then approved the decisions

Final Decisions: In its decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.10), the COP:

- encourages those countries with no or few CSOs accredited to the UNCCD to promote the involvement of their CSOs in the UNCCD process;
- requests the Secretariat to continue working with key stakeholders, including youth, faith-based organizations, local governments, farmers, pastoralists, women's organizations, indigenous peoples, and local communities; and
- urges developed country parties and invites other parties in a position to do so, international 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 and inclusion of CSOs in the UNCCD process.

In its decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.3), the COP takes note with appreciation of the CSO Declaration and decides to include the declaration as an annex to the COP 14 report.

In its decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.1), the COP welcomes the organization of the Youth Forum from 6-7 September and decides to include the Declaration of the Youth Forum as an annex to the COP 14 report.

Participation and involvement of the private sector in meetings and processes of the UNCCD and the business engagement strategy: This item (ICCD/COP(14)/14) was introduced on Wednesday, 11 September, by the Secretariat. COW Chair Benn proposed, and parties agreed, that this agenda item will be incorporated into the work of the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum.

India and Brazil supported the initiative to engage business. Brazil noted that the private sector could help to stimulate improved practices in the agricultural sector "since it is in their interest to be sustainable." Both ENDS, speaking for CSOs, stressed, however, that due diligence and transparency are needed.

On 12 September, during the COW plenary, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, speaking on behalf of Business, called for improved harmonization among UN frameworks and called on governments to adopt a "new deal" for nature. He further called for providing enabling environments and developing clear policies and targets, including on:

- rewarding sustainable use of nature;
- enabling public and private sector dialogues;
- harnessing the role of market-based mechanisms including carbon markets; and
- strengthening local land tenure in particular for youth and women.

The COW then approved the decision, including the declaration from the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.8) on the Declaration from the Sustainable Land Management Business

Forum, the COP: welcomes contributions to the Forum; takes note of the UNCCD New Delhi Declaration from Business; and decides to include it an annex to the COP 14 report.

Adoption of the COW Report: On Friday, 13 September, COW Chair Benn invited delegates to recommend the decisions for adoption by the COP. He invited CRIC Chair to present the report of the CRIC, which was then approved and forwarded to the COP. In closing remarks, Chair Benn, noting that if justice perishes, human life has lost its meaning, urged all parties to act justly towards land and earth's precious natural resources. In closing, he thanked delegates and contact group facilitators for their hard work, he closed the COW.

Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

CRIC 18 opened on Tuesday, 3 September with welcome remarks by CRIC Chair Samuel Contreras (Philippines). UNCCD Executive Secretary Thiaw highlighted some goals for the CRIC, including: setting process indicators and baselines; measuring progress; and securing funding for implementation. Namibia, on behalf of the African Group, emphasized focusing on ground action to reverse DLDD and the need for capacity building and technology transfer.

In their statements, representatives of regional groups highlighted, among other issues:

- the need to boost developing countries' capacity to enhance science to combat DLDD, while respecting divergent needs and realities across countries and regions;
- growing scientific recognition that LDN is an SDG accelerator and the role of the SPI in developing indicators to monitor the Convention's progress; and
- the need to focus on long-term actions rather than emergency responses.

Speaking for CEE, Georgia described CRIC 17 as an important milestone in tracking progress under the new UNCCD Strategic Framework, but expressed concern about the shortened duration of the meeting, which makes it difficult to accommodate the expanded CRIC agenda.

Both ENDS, for CSOs, highlighted land tenure security, knowledge on sustainable practices, and access to financing to support land restoration as three crucial elements of an enabling environment at the local level.

Organizational Matters: The CRIC adopted the agenda (ICCD/CRIC(18)/1) and established a Contact Group on matters relating to the Committee chaired by Skumsa Ntshanga (South Africa).

During the CRIC closing session on Thursday, 12 September, the CRIC approved the election of four CRIC Vice-Chairs for its nineteenth and twentieth sessions: Nino Chikovani (Georgia), Hussein Nasrallah (Lebanon), Saliha Fortas (Algeria), and Ahmet Şenyaz (Turkey).

Effective implementation of the Convention at national, subregional and regional levels: Multi-year workplan for Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies: These items and relevant documentation on the multi-year workplan for Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies (ICCD/COP(14)/7-ICCD/CRIC(18)/2) and performance of the Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies (ICCD/CRIC(18)/3 and ICCD/CRIC(18)/7) were introduced by the Secretariat on Tuesday, 3 September. There was no discussion of these items.

Performance of the Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies: This item (ICCD/CRIC(18)/3 and ICCD/CRIC(18)/7)

was introduced on Tuesday, 3 September. There was no discussion on this item.

Review of the report of the CRIC on its 17th session: CRIC Rapporteur Anna Luise introduced the CRIC 17 report (ICCD/CRIC(17)/9) on 4 September, highlighting parties' recommendations on, among other issues, capacity building, monitoring LDN, and the gender action plan. In response, eSwatini called for concrete ideas and an implementation plan for the CRIC 17 outcomes as the key objective of CRIC 18. Saudi Arabia echoed the importance of capacity building for the development of national data sets.

In the subsequent discussions, the CRIC Contact Group began consideration of a draft decision on assessment of the implementation of the Convention against the strategic objectives of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, based on recommendations from the CRIC 17 report.

The group finalized the draft decision on 10 September, which was adopted by the COP on 12 September.

Final Decision: In its decision (ICCD/CRIC(18)/L.4), the COP, *inter alia*:

- requests the Secretariat and the GM, within their respective mandates and subject to availability of resources, and invites potential actors and other bilateral and multilateral partners in a position to do so, to support developing country parties in the implementation of the Convention through capacity building, financing, and voluntary technology transfer on mutually agreed terms;
- urges parties to mainstream gender inclusivity to further strengthen the implementation of the Convention and LDN and ensure long-term success; and
- requests the Secretariat to strengthen gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation in the implementation of the Gender Action Plan by collaborating with relevant partners to gather sex- and age-disaggregated data and presenting the data in user-friendly formats.

Securing of additional investments and relations with financial mechanisms: Report by the GEF on the financing of programmes and projects concerning desertification, land degradation, and drought: On 4 September, the UNCCD Secretariat introduced the document (ICCD/CRIC(18)/5). Chizuru Aoki, GEF, highlighted an increase of 10% in the Land Degradation Focal Area national allocation for GEF-7 compared to GEF-6, noting a total of 75 projects and programmes were approved for funding.

In the ensuing discussion, many countries expressed their overall appreciation for the GEF support, but noted funding remained inadequate. Lebanon sought clarification on how the increased allocation can support implementation of the UNCCD Strategic Framework, including the strategic objective on drought. Saudi Arabia stressed the need to enhance support for capacity building, particularly on national reporting and data collection. The EU noted the importance of maximizing resources through synergies with the LDN Fund and other financial mechanisms, as well as approaching new donors. In response, Aoki said that considering the many priorities, GEF resources need to serve more areas beyond the land agenda. She encouraged innovative, flexible, and integrated measures to maximize the effectiveness of the available funding.

The CRIC Contact Group began working on the draft decision and finalized text on collaboration with the GEF on 6 September. The final outcome was adopted during the CRIC closing plenary on 12 September and forwarded to the COP.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/CRIC(18)/L.1), the COP requests the GM to continue its collaboration with the GEF. The COP invites the GEF, *inter alia*, to:

- continue support for countries in programming GEF Land Degradation Focal Area resources to combat desertification and achieve their voluntary LDN targets;
- support the implementation of relevant aspects of the national drought plans and other drought-related activities within its mandate; and
- continue supporting parties to meet their reporting obligations under the Convention.

Update on the Global Support Programme in support of UNCCD reporting: The Secretariat introduced the report (ICCD/CRIC(18)/6) on Wednesday, 4 September. Switzerland proposed differentiating between the reporting obligations of affected and non-affected parties. India called for improving coordination and synergies and for better datasets for reporting on land degradation.

Report by the GM on progress made in the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention: The Secretariat introduced the report (ICCD/CRIC(18)/7) on Wednesday, 4 September. Argentina noted that the Convention's focus on dry and arid lands does not always align with private sector interests. eSwatini called for making the business case for land degradation to attract private sector investment. Switzerland observed that resource mobilization, the main task of the GM, was not fully considered in the report.

eSwatini, with the Dominican Republic and Angola, underscored the need to mobilize resources to ensure they reach the most vulnerable people through transformative projects and programmes. Colombia, supported by the US, emphasized the need for resource mobilization to focus on implementing the Convention and improving existing processes. CSOs highlighted the need for appropriate financial mechanisms to support people and communities in SLM practices and proposed mobilizing the GEF Small Grants Programmes to enable communities to restore land. In response, Juan Carlos Mendoza, Managing Director, GM, explained that the GM aims to maximize the level of support on all aspects of LDN, guided by recent COP decisions. He noted that resource mobilization cannot take place in a vacuum, adding that something of value has to be brought to the table in the form of a mandate from parties, as well as technical work, such as target setting, to enhance credibility.

Final Decision: In its decision (ICCD/CRIC(18)/L.6), the COP:

- requests the Secretariat and the GM to continue mobilizing funding from all sources;
- requests the GM to continue strengthening and establishing new partnerships with relevant institutions to facilitate the mobilization of resources, and to broaden its outreach to non-traditional funding sources; and
- requests the Secretariat and the GM to support country-level activities towards the implementation of voluntary LDN targets, and facilitate the mobilization of adequate financial resources from all sources of funding.

Improving the Procedures for Communication of Information as well as the Quality and Formats of Reports to be Submitted to the COP: Outcomes of the work of the CST on a monitoring framework for the strategic objective on drought: On 4 September, UNCCD Lead Scientist Barron Orr introduced the document (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/7-ICCD/CRIC(18)/4). He explained how the Global Multi-Hazard Alert System (GMAS) framework developed by the World

Meteorological Organization (WMO) can serve as basis for harmonizing national drought mapping and reporting across countries. The Dominican Republic underscored the link between drought and LDN, and called for institutional collaboration to integrate meteorological and hydrological data into the monitoring framework. Argentina stressed the importance of global data and indicators applicable at the national level. In response, Orr noted the close relationship between indicators for drought, land degradation, and biological loss, and underlined that achieving LDN requires consideration of each land type. This item was forwarded to the contact group for further discussion and finalized on 10 September. A draft decision was adopted in the CRIC plenary and the COP on 12 September.

Final Decision: In its decision (ICCD/CRIC(18)/L.2), the COP, among others:

- requests the Secretariat to strengthen coordination efforts with the UN agencies involved;
- requests the Secretariat to provide default data for strategic objectives suitable for subsetting;
- encourages the SPI, in its review of the IPBES Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment, to update the CST on the direct and indirect drivers of land degradation and compare this review with the information reported by country parties;
- requests the Secretariat and the GM and encourages parties to assess and further refine the baseline to be used in future reporting cycles;
- adopts the criteria, methodology, and tiered approach for the establishment of an indicator and monitoring framework for UNCCD strategic objective 3; and
- decides that affected parties are requested to report individually or in combination for level 1 indicator "trends in proportion of land that is under drought over total land area," level 2 indicator "trends in proportion of population exposed to drought over total population," and/or level 3 indicator "trends in degree of drought vulnerability," as deemed appropriate according to national and subnational conditions and circumstances.

Development and promotion of activities for targeted capacity building to further the implementation of the Convention: On 4 September, the UNCCD Secretariat introduced the report (ICCD/CRIC(18)/8). India noted that targeted LDN interventions will require sustainable capacity building. Cambodia emphasized the important role of local communities in implementation. Welcoming ongoing capacity-building efforts and resources, Grenada highlighted challenges facing small island developing states in moving from theory to practical action, calling for resources to be more focused and strategic.

Kenya recommended targeted capacity building for national reporting and measurement indicators. Guyana called for focusing capacity building on women, youth, and local authorities. Discussion on this item continued in the CRIC Contact Group and was finalized on 10 September. A draft decision on enhancing the implementation of the UNCCD in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the enhancement, strengthening, and promotion of capacity building was adopted on 12 September by the COP.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/CRIC(18)/L.3), the COP requests the Secretariat to, among others:

- continue targeted capacity building to support gender responsive and transformative implementation of the Convention, and to further strengthen and deepen both formal and informal partnerships to better facilitate the UNCCD capacity-building process;

- invites technical and financial institutions and other stakeholders to provide technical and financial support to UNCCD-accredited CSOs that are involved in and/or need capacity-building to facilitate their greater and more effective contribution to and participation in the implementation process. The COP also requests the Secretariat, the GM, and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies to, among others:
- continue supporting capacity-building efforts, in collaboration with relevant partners, to facilitate the achievement of LDN, with particular focus on LDN monitoring and the effective development of LDN transformative projects and programmes;
- foster collaboration on drought impact mitigation capacity-building activities by building on existing partnerships with, but not limited to, WMO, FAO, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the UN Environment Programme, the National Drought Mitigation Center, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, and UN Water, and establishing new partnerships; and
- conduct online as well as face-to-face UNCCD Drought Toolbox training sessions.

Date and venue of CRIC 19: On 12 September, the CRIC adopted a decision on the date and venue of CRIC 19.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/CRIC(18)/L.5), the CRIC agrees that CRIC 19 should be held in the second half of 2020 at the most cost-effective venue at the site of the Convention Secretariat, 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 financial costs.

Procedural Matters: Programme of work for CRIC 19: On 10 September, the CRIC finalized the programme of work for CRIC 19, after discussion in the CRIC Contact Group. The final document was adopted by the CRIC plenary and the COP on 12 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/CRIC(18)/L.7), the COP agrees to include the following items on the agenda of CRIC 19:

- update on the implementation of voluntary LDN targets and related implementation efforts;
- update on the implementation of the Drought Initiative and related implementation efforts;
- update on the operationalization of the LDN Fund;
- development and promotion of activities for targeted capacity building to further the implementation of the Convention; and
- procedures for the communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the COP.

Closing of CRIC 18: On Thursday, 12 September, the CRIC Chair presented, and parties adopted without comment, the seven draft decisions prepared by the CRIC.

Lauding CRIC 18 as truly successful, Chair Contreras reflected that a friendly exchange of opinions among parties allowed for the ultimate success despite divergent views on certain issues.

Chair Contreras gaveled the CRIC to a close at 3:35 pm.

Committee on Science and Technology

On 3 September, CST Chair Carl Fiati (Ghana) opened the meeting. UNCCD Executive Secretary Thiaw noted the SPI team had fulfilled its CST 13 mandate, drawing attention to proposals for action, based on the synthesis and assessment of the latest science contained in the technical papers. He highlighted the need to increase positive impacts of land restoration and rehabilitation and to address links between land and consumption and production patterns and flows.

Regional Statements and Interest Groups: eSwatini for the African Group, noted that the recent assessment reports from IPBES and IPCC highlight land use change as the largest driver of biodiversity loss with the greatest impact on the environment.

The EU welcomed the SPI's publications, as well as partnerships aimed at avoiding duplication of work. He noted, *inter alia*, the focus on: drought management; guidance on creating enabling frameworks and disincentivizing unsustainable land practices; and on workable rather than theoretical solutions.

Bhutan, for the Asia-Pacific Group, welcomed the SPI recommendations on land, drought, and water linkages and further called for cooperative work at all levels to disseminate and translate identified technologies and knowledge into direct benefits for local land users.

Colombia, on behalf of GRULAC, recognized the potential impact of research by scientific panels, urging for improved technologies and mitigation strategies to reduce the direct impacts of drought on ecosystems and soil degradation.

Malta, on behalf of the Northern Mediterranean Region, called for a comprehensive understanding of the causes of DLDD and noted the role of science in generating tools to avoid, manage, and reverse degradation of land and ecosystems, and provide an approach to achieving LDN.

Russia, on behalf of CEE, stressed the role of science and outlined the establishment of technical centers in the region to support: the generation of scientific evidence to prevent and manage droughts; the sustainable use of forests and peatlands; and the monitoring of sand and dust storms.

The Environmental Monitoring Group, on behalf of CSOs, observed that while the earth is in a climate crisis, scientific knowledge is also expanding exponentially. He urged "moving on" from exclusively focusing on LDN as the "mantra" of the past years to optimize land use through finding practical solutions to ensure carbon "stays in the soil."

Organizational Matters: On 3 September 2019, the CST adopted its agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/1) and elected Ahmet Senyaz (Turkey) as Rapporteur.

During the closing plenary on Friday, 6 September, delegates elected as Vice-Chairs for CST 15, Anna Luise (Italy), Ratko Ristic (Serbia), Pablo Viegas (Argentina), and Karma Dema Dorji (Bhutan).

Items Resulting from the Work Programme of the SPI for the Biennium 2018-2019: Refined guidance for implementation of LDN under objective 1: On 3 September, the Secretariat introduced the document (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/2) containing key findings from the SPI's two thematic assessments and ensuing technical reports: Realizing the Carbon Benefits of Sustainable Land Management Practices: Guidelines for Estimation of Soil Organic Carbon in the Context of LDN Planning and Monitoring; and Creating an Enabling Environment for LDN and its Potential Contribution to Enhancing Well-being, Livelihoods and the Environment. SPI member Mariam Akhtar-Schuster described the rigorous peer-review process that the reports had gone through.

Regarding soil organic carbon issues (SOC), parties noted: the importance of SOC and highlighted that other indicators, such as economic and social criteria, should also be included when researching drivers of DLDD; that UNCCD pertinent information on SOC was difficult for countries to access; and the need for a mechanism that relates to soil organic carbon.

Regarding an enabling environment for LDN, parties: called for specifying the economic benefits of sustainable land use and LDN policies; stressed the importance of technology in policy implementation; pointed to unique sustainable land use challenges

experienced in drylands; and emphasized the need for linking land tenure security to LDN, preventing land grabbing, and ensuring respect for the ecological capacity of nature on land.

The CST Contact Group, with Matti Nummelin (Finland) as facilitator, discussed these reports from 3-6 September 2019. The CST approved and forwarded the decision to the COP which adopted the decision on Friday, 6 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/L.1), the COP encourages parties to, among others:

- promote SLM technologies, practices, and approaches that contribute to maintaining or increasing SOC for multiple benefits;
- use SOC as an indicator to monitor SLM interventions to support the achievement of LDN;
- align SOC monitoring to national LDN monitoring;
- share with land managers at national and subnational levels the guidance provided in document ICCD/COP(14)/CST/2 (on policy-oriented recommendations resulting from guidance for the implementation of LDN); and
- take into account land tenure and land-use planning conditions, as appropriate, for creating an enabling policy and regulatory environment for LDN, following the VGGT.

The COP further invites relevant technical partners to help develop/refine SOC estimation tools/models for application in LDN assessments. The COP also requests the Secretariat and the GM to support national efforts to build capacity for improved assessment and monitoring of (a) land degradation neutrality; (b) multiple benefits; and (c) trade-offs to support integrated land-use planning.

The COP also encourages parties and other stakeholders to:

- integrate gender-responsive actions to promote women, youth, and girls through the gender-inclusive design of preliminary LDN assessments;
- develop gender-responsive LDN interventions based on women's participation in decision-making for enabling inclusive land governance; and
- take into account gender dimensions responsive to the concerns of women, youth, and girls in land-use planning and in the design of interventions towards achieving LDN.

Coordination Activities of the SPI Work Programme 2018-2019: Chair Fiati introduced the item on 3 September (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/4) and SPI member Mariam Akhtar-Schuster highlighted the SPI's cooperation with other intergovernmental scientific panels and bodies, including IPBES, IPCC, the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils, the International Resource Panel, and Global Land Indicators Initiative.

Delegations highlighted gaps between the main text and the recommendations, particularly on youth and gender issues, the inclusion of indigenous communities, as well as the need for a regional and multi-level scope for information sharing. In response, the Secretariat noted that while some of these issues are being addressed by other bodies, they could be considered further in the future. Responding to calls for addressing means of implementation in the reports, the SPI pointed out that such recommendations would be beyond the scope of their assessment.

The issue was further discussed in the CST Contact Group on 3-5 September 2019. The CST forwarded the decision to the COP, which adopted the decision on Friday, 6 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/L.6), the COP encourages parties, where and as appropriate, to incorporate LDN into policy and planning across sectors in an integrated way to safeguard biodiversity, ecosystem services and livelihoods by a set of measures listed in the decision.

The COP also encourages parties to:

- document and report on experiences and lessons learned for all three levels of the LDN response hierarchy, particularly measures to avoid land degradation;
- where appropriate, in partnership with relevant technical and financial partners, to develop national capacities for assessing land potential in order to facilitate choices that encourage better land-use practices that support the achievement of LDN; and
- when appropriate, enhance the potential to achieve LDN by systematically linking the flows of consumption to the land that produces what is being consumed, which would involve a set of seven measures listed in the decision.

The COP requests the SPI, in close collaboration with the Secretariat, to continue to contribute to and cooperate with other scientific panels and bodies dealing with DLDD issues.

The COP also invites relevant partners to contribute to exploring options for better collaboration among relevant major restoration and rehabilitation initiatives.

The COP requests the Secretariat to:

- update the list of direct and indirect drivers of land degradation listed in UNCCD reporting templates to reflect those listed in an annex to the decision;
- explore enhancing UNCCD reporting through the compilation of the spatial extent and status of relevant restoration and rehabilitation activities at national and subnational levels; and
- continue its efforts to clarify the potential benefits, costs, conditions, and procedures for establishing more formal relationships with the SPI and other scientific panels and bodies.

The annex includes two tables to be considered in the update of the reporting templates. Table 1 lists direct anthropogenic drivers of land degradation identified in the IPBES Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration. Table 2 lists indirect drivers of land degradation identified in the IPBES Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration and their relationship with the SDGs.

Guidance to support the adoption and implementation of land-based interventions for drought management and mitigation under objective 2: The Secretariat introduced this item on 4 September (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/3) and SPI member Mark Svoboda presented the process and assessment approach used by the SPI to produce the technical report.

Several parties cautioned against introducing drought-smart land management as a new concept. Lead author Alisher Mirzabaev said the aim is not to introduce new terminology but to link drought and land management. Parties raised concerns over the classification of land-use types in the report, noting the omission of savanna landscapes and called for greater clarity on water management; sharing information on drought-resistant plant varieties; and including references to "youth" and "persons with disabilities" in the context of strengthening local capacities.

Following discussions in the Contact Group from 4-6 September, the CST forwarded the decision to the COP, which adopted it on Friday, 6 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/L.5), the COP invites parties to take measures to ensure, as appropriate, that their institutions dedicated to drought management integrate land use, land-use change, and land degradation as factors in drought and drought risk management practices and policies, while also ensuring that their land and water use institutions integrate drought-smart land management practices, climate

variability, and climate change impacts into their relevant policies and initiatives.

The COP also invites parties and international organizations and cooperating partners to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination in their policies and programmes to promote the interventions necessary for optimized adoption, implementation, and scaling-up of drought-smart land management to landscape level, focusing on a set of five enablers, listed in the decision.

The COP further requests the Secretariat among others, to facilitate coordination and interaction between LDN and drought risk management communities, notably by creating a common understanding of definitions and the cross-sectoral nature of drought risk management and land management.

Interfacing Science and Policy, and Sharing Knowledge:

The SPI, the UNCCD Knowledge Hub, and the analysis, dissemination and accessibility of best practices: Chair

Fiati introduced the document (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/5) on 5 September, and the Secretariat outlined modalities for the SPI in 2018 and 2019, expanding on the Drought Toolbox.

Several countries:

- commended the quality of information available through the Knowledge Hub;
- raised concerns about potential duplication of research by other scientific bodies;
- enquired about the functionality of the Knowledge Hub and its ability to provide early-warning information; and
- encouraged cooperation with the other Rio Conventions and the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) to support the dissemination of SLM best practices.

Responding to the interventions, the Secretariat explained that the Toolbox seeks to reduce overlaps in the work of different organizations and gave the example of reporting on LDN and climate change adaptation to illustrate how overlaps sometimes occur because some stakeholders may be wary of using similar terminology to avoid “double counting.”

Following negotiations in the Contact Group on 5 and 6 September, the CST forwarded the decision to the COP, which adopted the decision on Friday, 6 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/L.2), the COP requests the CST Bureau to refine the SPI renewal procedures so that all applicants to a single call for new members could be considered in the process of identifying and selecting global independent scientists as well as in the regional processes for identifying and nominating one scientist to represent each respective region.

The COP requests the Secretariat to:

- continue the mobilization of resources for the effective functioning of the SPI and to continue the expansion and further enhancement of the UNCCD Knowledge Hub; and
- work in coordination with other Rio Conventions and relevant partners to ensure coherence and alignment in the way ecosystem-based adaptation, ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction, nature-based solutions, and SLM are categorized through the UNCCD science-policy instruments and the UNCCD Knowledge Hub.

The COP invites developed country parties and others in a position to do so to support the activities of the SPI and invites parties and financial and technical institutions to support the maintenance, expansion, and further enhancement and development of the UNCCD Knowledge Hub.

Finally, the COP requests the Secretariat to report at COP 15 on the implementation of this decision, measures taken to

facilitate sharing of knowledge, and the interfacing of science and policy.

Work programme of the SPI for the biennium 2020-2021:

The Secretariat presented document ICCD/COP(14)/CST/6 and provided feedback on comments received from parties in a survey regarding the work of the SPI, including on potential deliverables.

Parties: proposed language on provisions for scientific guidelines linked to the work of the GM; said the objectives and deliverables should remain within the scope of the Convention; and asked for more information on collaboration with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Following negotiations in the Contact Group on 5 and 6 September, the CST forwarded the decision to the COP, which adopted it on Friday, 6 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/L.3), the COP adopts the SPI Work Programme for the Biennium 2020-2021 annexed to the decision, and its priorities. The SPI Work Programme for the Biennium 2020-2021 contains two tables specifying objectives and deliverables as well as coordination of activities and sub-activities. The COP also requests the Executive Secretary to present three synthesis reports at CST 15, including policy-oriented recommendations on objective 1.1 and objective 2, and policy-oriented recommendations resulting from the coordination activities conducted by the SPI during the biennium 2020-2021, at CST 15.

Monitoring framework for the strategic objective on drought:

CST Chair Fiati introduced the documents (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/7 and ICCD/CRIC(18)/4) on 4 September 2019. The Secretariat elaborated on the GMAS framework, and presented a flexible tiered approach to address initial drought vulnerability analyses with less variables, while acknowledging that it might be too cumbersome for countries to report on.

During the discussions, parties: outlined the country’s drought forecasting and early-warning operating system with “rolling” observations and real-time updating capabilities; called for regional cooperation on fighting drought and protecting forests; and stressed the value of including the traditional knowledge of local populations, with the latter warning that “unless we adapt, we will have to move.” Several delegates discussed interlinked ecosystem issues, with others stressing water depletion and scarcity, and the status of soil fertility, soil erosion, and agricultural productivity. Highlighting socio-economic aspects, the Arab Group called for a clear definition of drought.

The issue of drought was also considered by the COW on 5 September, and subsequently in the COW Contact Group on Other Matters, and the COP adopted a decision on Friday, 13 September. These discussions and the decision are summarized in the COW section of this report.

Procedural Matters: Programme of work for CST 15: Chair Fiati introduced this item without any comments. The decision was approved by the CST, and adopted by the COP on Friday, 6 September.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/CST/L.4), the COP decides that CST 15 should:

- focus, *inter alia*, on the objectives and coordination activities identified in the work programme of the SPI for the biennium 2020-2021; and
- be organized in such a way as to facilitate a thematic dialogue between the parties and the SPI regarding the policy implications of the scientific outputs, and to enable the formulation of concise policy-relevant recommendations.

Adoption of the Report of the CST: During the closing plenary on 6 September, the Arab Group requested extending future CST sessions by one day to reduce delegates' workload and allow smaller delegations to attend all sessions and contact group meetings. India lauded the innovative work undertaken by SPI members and contributing scientists.

The African Group requested that draft decisions be shared with all parties, so that they are able to brief their heads of delegation for the High-Level Segment.

CST Rapporteur Ahmet Senyaz shared his observations on the work done by the Committee over the last two years, highlighting: the creation of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework, including the synergies between Conventions; and, the fruitful work of the SPI, which produced three reports to support decision-makers in the effective implementation of the Convention.

The CST approved the draft report of the session and forwarded it to the COP.

In closing remarks, Chair Fiati thanked Matti Nummelin for his facilitation of the Contact Group and lauded the successful completion of the CST's work. He said the excellent quality of decisions demonstrated parties' determination and cooperation.

Open Dialogue Session with Civil Society

At the first of two open dialogue sessions with civil society, which took place on Thursday, 5 September, delegates focused on the inclusion of land tenure in the context of LDN. Civil society representatives from each of the regions described lessons and best practices, including:

- the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in enhancing transparency and advocacy efforts;
- competition for natural resources stem from inadequate regulation and misallocation of lands to extractive industries; and
- action should be taken through existing governance processes so as not to create new reporting obligations for countries.

A summary of these discussions is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol04/enb04284e.html>

The second of the open dialogue sessions took place on Wednesday, 11 September, and focused on intergenerational equity, land tenure, food security, green jobs, and migration. The session was organized around two rounds of discussions: intergenerational "testimonies for legacy," aimed at stimulating an exchange between older and younger participants, and learning from civil society initiatives on the ground.

A summary of these discussions is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol04/enb04288e.html>

High-Level Segment

COP 14 President Prakash Javadekar opened the two-day High-Level Segment on Monday, 9 September. He pledged India's commitment to use its presidency to reverse the negative contribution of human activities to land degradation. UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw reminded delegates of the common goal of ensuring a safe, prosperous and equitable society for every child born today. UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed called for greater collaboration across the UN system, deploying and investing resources wisely, and scaling up collective ambition to bring solutions that "let people thrive, not just survive."

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced his government's support for, among other actions, an initiative for enhanced South-South Cooperation that aims to share India's

experiences with cost-effective and sustainable land management strategies; and a "Global Water Action Agenda" to maximize synergies through holistic land and water management.

Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, highlighted the vulnerability of small island developing states, and Zhang Jianlong, Minister of State Forestry and Grassland Administration, China, and COP 13 President, outlined a series of intergovernmental and national actions that have been achieved since the last COP.

Formal Statements: On Monday and Tuesday, high-level representatives of the different regions provided statements and reflected on: the profound impacts of combating desertification has on eradication of poverty and hunger, resource conflicts, inequalities, and stimulating economic development; and the need for a common global indicator on drought, and global commitment to increase support for this strategic objective. A summary of these statements is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol04/enb04286e.html> and <http://enb.iisd.org/vol04/enb04287e.html>

Special Segment 1: Three ministerial roundtable discussions took place on Monday, 9 September. A summary of these discussions is available online at: <https://enb.iisd.org/vol04/enb04286e.html>

Roundtable 1: Land, climate and renewable energy: Ovais Sarmad, Deputy Executive Secretary, UNFCCC, Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Hoesung Lee, Chair, IPCC, delivered keynote presentations. Delegates then shared climate change impacts in their countries. Others discussed negative as well as positive effects of climate change on energy security. While some pointed to reduced capacity for hydropower generation due to decreasing water flows, others emphasized the value of biofuels and cogeneration in achieving cleaner and more efficient energy use.

Speakers highlighted co-benefits from implementing the UNCCD, such as the links between afforestation, LDN, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. They also outlined their national determined contributions under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The discussions also outlined resource mobilization strategies by the Green Climate Fund and others aimed at closing the USD 300 billion gap in financing SLM.

Roundtable 2: Rural and urban communities – "failing or flourishing together": Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union, and Naoko Ishii, CEO and Chair, GEF, delivered keynote addresses. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), addressed delegates via video message.

In the ensuing discussion, participants acknowledged the importance of linkages and cooperation between urban and rural areas, and pointed to opportunities for SLM. The discussion also featured strategies to mitigate negative impacts on ecosystems and resources for both rural and urban dwellers. Participants called for: education and awareness raising; a comprehensive restoration plan for land, water bodies, and forests to rejuvenate rural areas; development of medium-sized towns to stimulate employment and entrepreneurship; and initiatives to preserve the rural identity.

Roundtable 3: Fostering a global movement for ecosystem restoration: Inger Anderson, Executive Director, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and Co-Chair Mahendra Reddy, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime

Development, Waterways and Environment, Fiji, provided keynote presentations.

In the ensuing discussion, speakers highlighted various factors in promoting and scaling up ecosystem restoration initiatives; enabling policies that mobilize entire societies to address DLDD; institutional innovation; fostering South-South cooperation; and ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment.

On ensuring multiple benefits of ecosystem restoration, many parties identified: ensuring synergies among scientific panels of the three Conventions; the carbon benefits of restoration and rehabilitation; involving scientists and information holders to avoid exacerbating land degradation, such as planting inappropriate or invasive species.

Special Segment 2: On Tuesday, 10 September, three interactive dialogues took place. A summary of these discussions is available at: <http://enb.iisd.org/vol04/enb04287e.html>

Interactive dialogue 1: A values-based approach to land stewardship: Participants called for a "values revolution" through collective human action and a shift in consumption and production patterns, and highlighted, among other issues: initiatives based on ecological economics; concrete support to mobilize youth; and shared values aimed at a sustainable and transformative development model. Participants also called for mapping out a wise direction for the world to attain sustainable management of resources, and more concrete actions to be taken to address the depletion of resources.

Interactive dialogue 2: Healthy land–healthy people: In this dialogue, participants described land as an important, critical resource for human wellbeing that is under severe pressure, with around 2.2 billion people affected by land degradation worldwide, as well as that a lack of knowledge on gender-differentiated health impacts results in a "one-size-fits-only-men" syndrome. Participants also stressed challenges including the impacts of soil pollution on food safety and security and the consequences of population growth and resulting pressure on existing, cultivable land was highlighted, as well as the notion of intergenerational equity.

Interactive dialogue 3: Boosting sustainable value chains for land-based business: In this final dialogue, participants stressed the need for economic diversification and actions towards creating innovative, inclusive, and "entirely new" value chains in order to unlock natural capital, and provide capital and linkages to local and international markets, is contributing to improved livelihoods at the local level. In the ensuing discussion, speakers highlighted the need for: investing in dryland areas to boost local livelihoods; ensuring equitable access to land, knowledge, and funding, especially for women; and promoting international cooperation. On business solutions, speakers called for, *inter alia*, alternatives to chemical fertilizers, insurance for agriculture soil health, water-efficient irrigation systems and investments for sustainable energy at the local level.

Closing of the High-Level Segment: On Tuesday, 10 September, COP President Javadekar invited the respective roundtable and interactive dialogues chairs to present a summary of their proceedings. Remarks by the chairs of the roundtable sessions included:

- land restoration is fundamental to development with positive implications for all the SDGs;
- urbanization requires strategies to incentivize youth to remain in rural areas; and
- desertification and land degradation are a global responsibility, requiring partnerships and scientific knowledge and technology to guide all actions.

The interactive dialogue chairs highlighted:

- the need to protect finite natural capital in the face of rapid population growth, and resulting pressure on global land resources;
- the moral imperative for a broader dialogue with all faiths to inspire collective action to protect global land resources;
- putting humans at the center of efforts towards mitigating the effects of drought in the UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-30;
- the need to empower women and improve governance to enhance land management, water supply systems and the productivity of land; and
- the need to build coalitions to support small-scale farmers and businesses.

In closing, Minister Javadekar lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his commitment to restoring 26 million hectares of land, creating centers of excellence on land issues, and phasing out single-use plastics in India.

Closing Plenary

On Friday afternoon, 13 September, COP 14 President Prakash Javadekar invited delegates to elect officers other than the President. Delegates elected Claude Nyamugabo and Almoustapha Garba for the position of Vice-Presidents of COP 15. The COP then elected Bongani Masuku (eSwatini) as CST 15 Chair, and Trevor Benn (Guyana) as Chair of the 19th and 20th sessions of the CRIC.

Organizational Matters: Credentials of delegations: The COP considered the report (ICCD/COP(14)/22) and approved it in its decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.5).

Adoption of the COW Report: COW Chair Trevor Benn presented the report of the COW, commending negotiators for the finalizing the 18 decisions in the "true spirit of negotiation." The COP adopted the 11 outstanding decisions forwarded by the COW.

Procedural Matters: Programme of work for COP 15: This item (ICCD/COP(14)/5) was introduced in the COW on Thursday, 12 September, without comment. On Friday, 13 September, the COW approved, and the COP adopted the programme of work for COP 15.

Final Decision: In the decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.19), the COP lists items for the COP 15 agenda and decides to hold interactive dialogue sessions with relevant stakeholders. The COP further requests the Secretariat to: prepare an annotated provisional agenda; and circulate at least six weeks prior to COP 15 appropriate documentation for that session and a single document with all draft decisions prepared for parties' consideration.

In the decision on date and venue of COP 15 (ICCD/COP(14)/L.15), the COP decides that COP 15 shall be held in Bonn, Germany, the site of the Convention Secretariat, in autumn 2021, 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.

Adoption of the report of the Special Segment: President Javadekar then invited parties to consider the report on the Special Segment contained in document ICCD/COP(14)/L.9, including two annexes: The New Delhi Declaration and the High-Level Segment Summaries of Round Tables and Interactive Dialogues. The COP adopted the report.

Final Decision: The decision (ICCD/COP(14)/L.9) contains two annexes, including the New Delhi Declaration, in which ministers and high-level representatives, among others:

recognizing that DLDD undermines health, development, and prosperity in all regions; concerned that the impacts of desertification/land degradation and drought are felt most keenly by vulnerable people; acknowledging those practices that conserve and restore land and soil affected by DLDD and floods contribute towards achieving LDN and can also have long-term multiple benefits for the health, well-being, and socio-economic development of the entire society, especially for the livelihoods of the rural poor; and noting the findings of IPBES and IPCC reports:

- encourage the development of community-driven transformative projects and programmes that are gender-responsive, at local, national and regional levels;
- encourage, *inter alia*, the transition and increased access to energy in rural and urban communities, within the scope of the UNCCD;
- encourage a proactive approach to reducing the risks and impacts of desertification/land degradation and drought through the implementation of drought preparedness plans and increased risk mitigation for drought and sand and dust storms;
- promote opportunities that support, as appropriate and applicable, the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement and the development of an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework, taking into consideration land-based solutions for climate action and biodiversity conservation and the mutually supportive implementation of the three Rio Conventions; and
- reaffirm the relevance of the VGGT in the context of national food security for better access, control, and stewardship over land and equitable tenure security, in accordance with relevant national legislation, for the implementation of the Convention and the promotion of sustainable land management.

Adoption of the COP 14 Report: Javadekar then invited COP Rapporteur Enid Chaverri (Costa Rica) to present the report of COP 14, and the COP adopted the report contained in document ICCD/COP(14)/L.7, authorizing the Rapporteur to finalize it after the session.

In his closing statement, Javadekar lauded the level of participation at the conference, including the variety of innovations shared in 145 side events, 45 exhibitions, the Technology for SLM Fair, and the Rio Conventions Pavilion. He highlighted the need to create enabling environments to strengthen the multiple co-benefits to be gained from implementing LDN.

Executive Secretary Thiaw observed progress in all areas of work, and said this would send a clear message to leaders at the upcoming UN Summits, including that the cost-effectiveness of land restoration makes a clear business case for investment. Welcoming the decision on “land rights,” he emphasized that COP 14 “put people at the heart of the Convention.” He also noted the need to prioritize drought, in particular countries’ preparedness to mitigate and manage risks.

Closing Statements: Palestine, on behalf of the G-77/China, cited several threats and challenges arising from DLDD, its impact on ecosystems, and its effect added to extreme poverty. He called for the establishment of new partnerships, in particular for the achievement of the SDGs. Finland, on behalf of the EU, highlighted the importance of the decision on land tenure as an enabler to combat DLDD and spoke about giving CSOs and youth a more important role in the UNCCD process.

Morocco, on behalf of the African Group, reiterated its call for a legally-binding instrument on drought, and expressed satisfaction with the recommendations, decisions, and measures

achieved in this COP. He also called for mobilization of resources to address DLDD, especially in Africa.

Bhutan, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, noted the strengthening synergies of UNCCD with other Rio Conventions could support post-2020 biodiversity framework. Grenada, for GRULAC, highlighted the importance of sustaining financial resources and technological cooperation as crucial for the implementation of the Convention.

Malta, on behalf of the Northern Mediterranean States, stressed the close ties between reversing of land degradation with mitigating and adaptation of climate change.

Azerbaijan, on behalf of Annex 5 countries, emphasized that COP 14 would send a clear message to the global community that land restoration is a long lasting solution for climate change, biodiversity loss, and human wellbeing.

Expressing appreciation to the Secretariat and delegates, Egypt, for the Arab Group, observed that important decisions had been taken, including on drought, and called for greater cooperation on land degradation.

BIOS-Moldova, for CSOs, expressed appreciation for engagement on issues including land tenure and gender, noting however, that at the country-level many requests and recommendations have not been implemented. He then urged all to respond to the global environmental crisis with vision and energy.

COP 14 President Javadekar gavelled the meeting to a close at 6:51 pm.

A Brief Analysis of COP 14

The 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 14) opened in New Delhi against the backdrop of the latest warnings about a looming drought crisis in Africa. According to humanitarian reports, more than 45 million people across 14 countries are facing food shortages in 2019, an indication of the compounded effects of land degradation, climate change, and biodiversity loss that have eroded people’s resilience. In the public perception, especially in Europe, this raised the specter of populations fleeing starvation and risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean. Whether this will happen or not, COP 14 did open on a note of heightened global awareness of the enduring ties between land use and other environmental problems that affect all regions of the world.

High profile scientific studies have also raised awareness about the linkages between land use, climate change, and biodiversity loss. Recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) in particular engaged the media and the wider public in land’s vital role as carbon sink or source.

This cascading evidence—and hopes for substantive commitments when world leaders gather at the UN General Assembly later this month—clearly raised ambitions for the UNCCD COP and its central questions: Can the Convention translate scientific findings into outputs policymakers can leverage? Can delegates find consensus around thematic priorities and enabling factors, such as drought, financing, capacity building, and land tenure? Can the international community recognize the urgency and ramp up commitments?

This brief analysis considers how well parties succeeded in responding to these questions at a conference coinciding with the festival of Ganesh Chaturthi—a celebration of Lord Ganesha as

the god of new beginnings, remover of obstacles, and wisdom and intelligence.

New Beginnings

UNCCD COP 14 represented a number of new beginnings. This COP was the first with Ibrahim Thiaw at the helm as UNCCD Executive Secretary. The COP also benefited from the release of two landmark reports: the IPBES Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment in May 2019 and the IPCC Special Report on Climate and Land in August 2019. Thus the UNCCD set to embark on a new chapter with fresh leadership as well as a definitive scientific call for action.

In advance of COP 14 in January 2019, the Convention body tasked with reviewing implementation progress—the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)—had an opportunity to assess the very first set of reports by countries that had set national targets to achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN) by 2030. COP 14 delegates, therefore, had the opportunity to draw on early lessons learned and explore how to better apply the growing body of scientific evidence to ensure more effective actions on the ground. This was a clear sign the Convention is entering a new era of science-based reporting, made possible by the standardized progress reports now available from the majority of the 120 countries that have begun to implement their national LDN targets.

In response to concerted calls by civil society organizations, COP 14 also took a bold, hard-fought step into the politically-charged arena of land governance. For the first time, the UNCCD COP formally recognized that equitable land tenure can build an enabling environment for large-scale land restoration and meet one of the Convention's core objectives: improving the lives of people living in drylands. Despite some compromises by those who had wanted stronger language on land rights of women and local communities, especially in indigenous-held territories, the adoption of a decision on land tenure was clearly recognized as one of the most important outcomes of COP 14.

That negotiators managed to deliver an agreed text on an issue that was only just added to the COP agenda was viewed as a remarkable outcome on many fronts. When the topic was first brought up in plenary, many delegations, while recognizing that individuals as well as communities need secure land tenure to invest in land restoration, signaled that they would not support being told what to do on a such a sensitive issue of national law and sovereignty. Gauging by the overall mood in the room and informal feedback in the corridors, most expected that a decision on this issue would be postponed to at least the next meeting of the COP. However, while negotiations did progress slowly and with some resistance, the agreed decision does recognize communities' "legitimate tenure rights, including customary land rights" and the importance of ensuring equitable access to land for women. However, language linking this need for inclusion with the principle of free prior and informed consent was not adopted. Nevertheless, by agreeing to language referencing internationally recognized "best practice," notably the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure on Land, Forestry and Fisheries (VGGT), negotiators appear to have found a pragmatic way forward.

In taking this step delegates have set the Convention on a path toward ensuring the most vulnerable and marginalized groups can access land, credit, and technology to invest in sustainable land management (SLM) and earn a decent living off their land. Many also noted the crucial link the land tenure decision has with addressing desertification, land degradation, and drought

(DLDD) as drivers of migration. If communities in drylands have better security of tenure and access to early-warning information, drought insurance, and other services, they are more likely to invest in SLM, thus enhancing resilience and breaking the vicious cycle of worsening drought and resulting conflicts over natural resources that force many to move (unwillingly) from dryland environments.

Agreement on the drought decision—another hard-fought outcome—was also a relief for many who had made this one of the core issues of COP 14. African countries, in particular, have long lamented the fact that drought has not been given greater priority "despite it being one of the 'D's' in the title of our Convention." From the onset they argued that agreeing to establish a protocol to the UNCCD would be the best way to ensure that sufficient international resources are directed to this critical issue. However, delegations from traditional donor countries firmly preferred exploring how to use existing early-warning systems and other mechanisms more efficiently. Several delegates also pointed out that negotiating a protocol would take years and deflect energy and resources from addressing today's urgent needs. On the way forward, they favored an informal intersessional process to work out the modalities for providing support to drought-affected parties. The final decision mentions an intergovernmental working group—a more formal interim arrangement proposed by those in favor of a drought protocol—and could therefore be seen as an expression of solidarity by the EU and others who had favored more informal consultation arrangements.

While calls for a drought protocol were shelved, the final decision did recognize the need for enhanced capacity building and coordination by specialized agencies and funders, such as a new drought alliance with the World Meteorological Organization that aims to provide a comprehensive "toolbox" to affected countries and hence bridge the gap between the Convention's drought response with existing initiatives on early warning and disaster risk reduction. As underlined at a high-level luncheon co-hosted by UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and many other side events at the COP, the time had come to marshal global resources more proactively to support drought preparedness and management—rather than only stepping in when emergencies occur and lives lost.

As one of the most directly affected groups, the reaction of African youth to this compromise was telling. They signaled they would keep demanding a legally-binding drought protocol "with recognition and commitments from developed countries to address the humanitarian crisis we face," once again underscoring the inextricable linkages at the nexus of DLDD, climate change, natural resource-based conflict, migration, and security.

Removing Obstacles

Means of implementation are routinely highlighted as the missing link in implementing international agreements. Repeated calls for funding, capacity building, and other technical support were therefore expected. What was more surprising were the questions raised following the progress report by the UNCCD's Global Mechanism, which is tasked with facilitating funding for "transformative" LDN projects (with Mirova, an international impact investment firm). The LDN Fund was launched at the last COP with the explicit mandate to support countries to develop a pipeline of viable projects that can successfully tap private funding resources. Yet while welcoming efforts to attract private investors, there seemed to be an underlying unease that in settings where land governance is weak, this could expose already

vulnerable and marginalized communities to “land grabbing” by external interests. At one of the interactive high-level dialogues focusing on how to ensure that land restoration is linked to sustainable value chains, businesses repeatedly underscored that they too thrive in an environment where legal frameworks are well articulated and enforced. However, questions remained on how a focus on “sustainable business” would translate into investments in those ecosystems and populations that require it the most and where profit margins might not be appealing for most private investors.

The final decision on financial resources contains generic wording calling on various funders and financial mechanisms to broaden their outreach to private and blended finance. Perhaps this is where India’s leadership as COP host could offer alternatives through enhanced South-South Cooperation. In his opening address, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi alluded to India’s post-COP “legacy project” by not only stating its ambition to exceed its 2030 land restoration commitments by 5 million hectares, but also announcing India would establish a center of excellence to share its expertise with other developing countries.

Perhaps the most daunting obstacle faced by parties relates to assessing and reporting on the impacts of domestic actions in a way that promotes synergies across different administrative sectors and multilateral environmental agreements. This is crucial for parties if they are to effectively allocate efforts and resources and use available reporting units most efficiently. Several technocrats suggested that synergies could be improved if governments could better link common indicators and other overlaps across LDN targets, Paris Agreement nationally determined contributions, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change national adaptation plans, and the Convention on Biological Diversity’s post-2020 Biodiversity Framework. In a competitive funding environment, however, the instinct is for different actors to guard their own turf. So the extent to which the announced initiatives can break down silo thinking by existing funds and programmes could be viewed as an important indicator of progress.

Wisdom and Intelligence

“Wisdom is like a baobab tree, no individual can embrace it,” Executive Secretary Thiaw told delegates, continuing, “Transformative policy change is similarly easier when taken collectively.”

Discussions at COP 14, especially those focused on emerging themes, acknowledged that much of the last century’s economic-growth-focused development has not met the needs of humanity. Civil society and youth delegates expanded on this injustice, pointing to their endangered futures. Their message: global population growth to over 10 billion and escalating climate change impacts require seismic shifts in energy and resource consumption as well as sustainable production patterns. Now!

Through its interactive dialogues and ministerial roundtables, which were designed to encourage free exchange and “out-of-the-box” thinking, delegates did attempt to address some of the less tangible issues such as sustainability values and ethics that are critical for the necessary paradigm shift towards a more sustainable future. As Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves reminded delegates during the high-level segment, the state-centric international system was created to provide a more just and peaceful world based on the accumulated wisdom of nations. At COP 14, however, many doubted the effectiveness of this system.

Perhaps by proposing that COP 14 tap into diverse efforts, especially on the ground, and build a “global movement on land restoration,” this COP was acknowledging the general discontent about the slow pace of formal negotiations and attempting to seek inspiration from grassroots movements and informal alliances that are transforming agendas in other forums, including climate change and sustainable energy for all.

Along these lines, a notable success of COP 14 was putting “a human face to land issues” and emphasizing land’s central role in human well-being. Rejecting the Convention’s history as “stepchild of the Rio Conventions,” UNCCD’s Executive Secretary pointed to the critical role of land in meeting climate action and biodiversity goals, stating this means UNCCD “should rather be viewed as the parent.”

In powerful presentations, several community representatives identified themselves as true “guardians of Mother Earth” and through an interactive dialogue with youth, shared rehabilitation success stories of what they refused to call “waste” lands. Prior to the conference, IPCC findings had already confirmed decision-making effectiveness is enhanced when local stakeholders are involved in the selection, evaluation, implementation, and monitoring of policy instruments for land-based climate change adaptation and mitigation. COP 14 participants urged expanding this involvement across generational gaps, so traditional wisdom as well as empowerment can flow to young leaders.

Outlook

As delegates headed home armed with the latest research and technical innovations, as well as lessons learned from diverse initiatives showcased at COP 14, the jury is still out on whether this session sufficiently raised the stakes for effective implementation. Clearly aware that it is time to show—not just talk about—impact, the UNCCD leadership focused on outreach and high-level engagements in what seems to point to a larger strategy to win hearts and minds on the land agenda. The interest displayed by Indian media (a reported 800 journalists registered to cover the conference) does suggest that this approach paid off and builds on the widespread coverage of the recent IPCC and IPBES reports in the mainstream media. The test for the UNCCD and its partners is whether public opinion can be galvanized to push for transformative change on the ground. As the Convention starts on preparations for the midterm evaluation of its current Strategy, upcoming sessions of the COP and the CRIC in particular will be looking for more concrete evidence that this multilateral process in delivering what is “promised.”

Upcoming Meetings

Youth Climate Summit: Young leaders from around the world are convening in advance of the UN Climate Summit to showcase climate solutions and engage with global leaders on climate change. **date:** 21 September 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/youth-summit.shtml>

2019 UN Climate Summit: UN Secretary-General António Guterres will convene the UN Climate Summit under the theme “A Race We Can Win. A Race We Must Win,” to mobilize political and economic momentum at the highest levels to advance climate action. **date:** 23 September 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <http://www.un.org/climatechange>

SDG Summit: The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), under the auspices of the UN General Assembly, will assess progress achieved so far since the adoption

of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015 and provide leadership and guidance on the way forward that will help accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. **dates:** 24-25 September 2019 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgsummit>

GEO Week Ministerial Summit 2019: Under the theme “Earth observations: investments in the digital economy,” Ministers from GEO’s 105 member governments will discuss the integration of Earth observation data into the broader digital economy, critical for sustained, inclusive, economic growth. **dates:** 4-9 November 2019 **location:** Canberra, Australia **www:** <http://www.earthobservations.org/geoweek19.php?t=overview>

17th regular session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN): AMCEN provides advocacy for environmental protection in Africa and aims to ensure basic human needs are met adequately and in a sustainable manner, that social and economic development is realized at all levels, and that agricultural activities and practices meet the food security needs of the region. The 17th meeting will be held under the theme “Taking action for Environmental Sustainability and Prosperity in Africa” and will seek to mobilize African leadership on the CBD post-2020 process and the road to COP 15. **dates:** 11-15 November 2019 **location:** Durban, South Africa **www:** <https://www.unenvironment.org/regions/africa/african-ministerial-conference-environment>

CLPA-2019: The third edition of the Conference on Land Policy in Africa will be held under the theme “Winning the fight against Corruption in the Land Sector: Sustainable Pathway for Africa’s Transformation.” The conference will include master classes, plenary and parallel sessions, side events, exhibitions, and the use of social media to reach a broader audience. **dates:** 25-29 November 2019 **location:** Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire **www:** <https://www.uneca.org/clpa2019>

UNFCCC COP 25: The Santiago Climate Change Conference, which will feature COP 25 to the UNFCCC, the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP 15), and the 2nd session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA 2), will convene along with meetings of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies. The pre-session period will be from 26 November - 1 December 2019. **dates:** 2-13 December 2019 **location:** Santiago, Chile **www:** <https://unfccc.int/santiago>

Global Symposium on Soil Biodiversity (GSOBI20): The Symposium, jointly organized by the Global Soil Partnership (GSP), the Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soils (ITPS), the Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative (GSBI), and the CBD, will bring together international experts with the aim of reviewing the status of knowledge on soil biodiversity and ecosystem services, the sustainable use and conservation of soil biodiversity, and the contributions of soil organisms to the SDGs. **dates:** 10-12 March 2020 **location:** Rome, Italy **www:** <http://www.fao.org/global-soil-partnership/resources/highlights/detail/en/c/1183872/>

Adaptation Futures 2020: The sixth in the Adaptation Futures international conference series on global adaptation will convene on the theme, “Accelerating Adaptation Action and Knowledge to Support Action,” with a particular focus on Asia. **dates:** 27-30 April 2020 **location:** New Delhi, India **www:** <http://adaptationfutures2020.in/>

15th Session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF 15): The 15th session of the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF 15) will address, *inter alia*, implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF), monitoring, assessment and reporting, and

means of implementation. UNFF 15 is expected to adopt the Quadrennial **Programme of Work** for 2021-2024. **dates:** 4-8 May 2020 **location:** UN Headquarters, New York, **www:** <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/>

HLPF 2020: The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) will convene to review implementation of the SDGs and governments will present their Voluntary National Reviews. **dates:** 7-16 July 2020 (to be confirmed) **location:** UN Headquarters, New York **www:** <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

UNCCD CRIC 19: this meeting 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 2020 **location:** TBD **www:** <http://www.unccd.int>

CBD COP 15, COP/MOP 10 to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, and COP/MOP 4 to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing: The 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the tenth Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP/MOP 10) and the fourth Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing (COP/MOP 4) are expected to address a series of issues related to implementation of the Convention and its Protocols, and adopt a post-2020 global biodiversity framework. **dates:** October 2020 (tentative) **location:** Kunming, China **www:** <https://www.cbd.int/cop/>

UNCCD COP 15: COP 15 is tentatively scheduled to take place in Bonn, Germany, in autumn 2021, 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 2021 **location:** TBD **www:** <http://www.unccd.int>

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

Glossary

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| CBD | Convention on 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 |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| GM | Global Mechanism |
| GMAS | Global Multi-Hazard Alert System |
| GRULAC | Latin American and Caribbean Group |
| IPBES | Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| LDN | Land degradation neutrality |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SLM | Sustainable land management |
| SPI | Science-Policy Interface |
| UNCCD | UN Convention to Combat Desertification |
| UNFCCC | UN Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| VGGT | Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests |