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

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

Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: gender, Drought Initiative and land tenure

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document provides a summary of the activities undertaken by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism with regard to the implementation of the policy framework and thematic issues on gender (see decision 24/COP.14), drought (see decision 23/COP.14) and land tenure (see decision 26/COP.14), presenting conclusions and further recommendations for consideration by Parties at the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention at its nineteenth session.



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I. Background

1. This document summarizes the main activities and support provided by the secretariat, the Global Mechanism (GM) and other partners with regard to the implementation of the policy framework and thematic issues on gender, drought and land tenure.

2. With respect to gender, by its decision 24/COP.14, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat and the GM to continue supporting Parties in gender mainstreaming and in the implementation of the UNCCD Gender Action Plan (GAP), including continuing support in partnership-building and awareness-raising. Furthermore, the same decision requested the secretariat to develop tools and guidelines for the use of Parties in the thematic areas of the GAP and strengthen gender-related knowledge and capacity, both in the secretariat and the GM. The secretariat was also requested to enhance systematic gender mainstreaming in all work areas and support the implementation of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP).

3. By its decision 23/COP.14, the COP requested the secretariat and the GM to build on the Drought Initiative during the biennium 2020–2021 and called for the establishment of an intergovernmental working group (IWG) on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD. In accordance with decision 14/COP.14, the secretariat and the GM prepared this document to present a summary of the results achieved within the framework of the Drought Initiative and other drought-related activities of the secretariat and the GM and offer recommendations for the consideration of Parties at the nineteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 19). Drought-related activities undertaken by the IWG are presented in document ICCD/CRIC(19)/4 and not included in this report.

4. By its decision 26/COP.14 on land tenure, the COP noted the relevance of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT), negotiated under the aegis of the Committee on World Food Security with the technical support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation (FAO), to the implementation of the Convention. Recognizing that responsible land governance is a fundamental component of sustainable land management (SLM), the decision encourages Parties to follow the VGGT and its principles in the implementation of activities to combat desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) and achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN). As such, the decision requested the secretariat to prepare a technical guide to integrate the VGGT into the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of LDN, explore the options for integrating Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators relevant to land governance into the UNCCD reporting process, and promote awareness-raising on responsible land governance.

II. Report on the follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Gender

A. Introduction

5. The GAP was formed as an outcome of decision 30/COP.13 to support the gender-responsive implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and strengthen the implementation of the advocacy policy framework on gender (see decision 9/COP.10). The GAP has been the backbone of the implementation of gender-related activities undertaken by the secretariat and the GM since its adoption at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13).

6. This section of the document reports on the activities implemented by the secretariat and the GM relevant to decision 24/COP.14. It also contains conclusions and recommendations for consideration by Parties at CRIC 19.

B. General remarks on gender and COVID-19

7. The COVID-19 pandemic represents a decisive hiatus globally. While most people's lives and work have been negatively affected by the crisis, recent evidence suggests that overall women's jobs and livelihoods are more vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. While men reportedly have a higher fatality rate, women and girls are especially hurt by the resulting economic and social fallout.¹ Impacts on women and girls have worsened across the board.² During the first month of the pandemic, estimates suggest that globally informal workers lost an average of 60 per cent of their income; the respective regional estimates stand at 81 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, 70 per cent in Europe and Central Asia, and 22 per cent in Asia and the Pacific. Moreover, estimates show that by 2021, approximately 435 million women and girls will be living on less than USD 1.90 a day; 47 million of them were pushed into poverty as a result of COVID-19.³

9. This is especially true for the millions of rural women and girls who are disproportionately affected by health and economic crises in a number of ways, including but not limited to food security and nutrition, time poverty, access to health facilities, services and economic opportunities, and gender-based violence.⁴

10. The strong message emerging from this evidence is that existing gender inequalities are likely to deepen, rolling back gains in women's income security and social protection, thus constraining their ability to support themselves and their families.⁵

11. While the COVID-19 crisis caused some delays in UNCCD activities, the secretariat and the GM will continue to support UNCCD Parties not only in the implementation of the GAP, but also in making its COVID-19 response people-centered and prioritizing women, youth and the rural poor, which often are the most vulnerable groups.⁶

12. In this regard, the secretariat and the GM very much welcome the contribution from Canada dedicated to the achievement of gender-transformative results across the Convention which – given the crisis – could not be more timely.⁷

C. Gender Action Plan implementation - support to countries

13. Since COP 14, the secretariat and the GM continued their support for the implementation of critical elements of the proposed GAP to aid Parties in their efforts to increase the share of women benefitting from the implementation of LDN and drought and risk mitigation efforts.

¹ United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) (2020): From insights to action. Gender equality in the wake of COVID 19. <<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5142>>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ FAO (2020): Gendered impacts of COVID-19 and equitable policy responses in agriculture, food security and nutrition, <<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CA9198EN.pdf>>.

⁵ UN Women (2020): From insights to action. Gender equality in the wake of COVID 19.

<<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5142>>.

⁶ UNCCD (2020): Supporting the Global Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Land-based Solutions for Healthy People and a Healthy Planet, <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2020-06/1498_UNCCD_%20Covid_%20layout-low%20res-1.pdf>.

⁷ <<https://www.unccd.int/news-events/canada-shows-strong-support-unccd-gender-action-plan>>.

1. Land degradation neutrality

14. To support countries in their efforts to develop a more systematic gender-responsive path to LDN, the GM and the secretariat established a partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) to assist countries in designing gender-responsive land degradation neutrality transformative projects and programmes (LDN TPPs). In particular, the GM provided support to country-level project developers and their technical and financial partners to design effective and gender-responsive LDN TPPs. As of September 2020, the following support and services had been provided:

a. Guidelines and tools:

(a) *Checklist for Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes*⁸ developed in 2018 in collaboration with the secretariat and reviewed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) secretariat and experts serving in the Science-Policy Interface (SPI), available for download on the UNCCD website;

(b) *Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes: Operational Guidance for Country Support*⁹ technical guide, which includes a dedicated section on LDN and gender, launched at COP 14. The guide is available for download on the UNCCD website;

(c) *A Manual for Gender-Responsive Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes*,¹⁰ which is a dedicated guide to mainstream gender in LDN TPPs, developed by UN Women in partnership with IUCN and the GM and launched at COP 14. The guide provides concrete, step-by-step guidance to Parties on integrating gender issues and promoting gender equality in the design of LDN TPPs. The guide is available for download on the UNCCD website;

(d) *Land Degradation Neutrality Interventions to Foster Gender Equality* briefing note, developed in partnership with IUCN, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women, launched at COP 14.

b. Workshop and trainings:

15. Three technical workshops were organized. One took place in Saint Lucia on the subregional LDN transformative project in the Caribbean (September 2018), one took place in the Philippines (October 2018) and one took place in Zambia (May 2019). Two regional workshops were co-organized in Côte d'Ivoire with the African Development Bank and in Thailand with the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization in July 2019. The main objective of the workshops were to develop the capacities of national focal points, policymakers, civil society, the private sector, young green entrepreneurs, women, representations of regional organizations, and implementing partners to design gender-responsive LDN TPPs, helping address land degradation, biodiversity and climate change issues in a synergetic way.

16. In November 2019, the GM also provided an online training session on LDN and gender to the Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale member countries in partnership with the United Nations Forum on Forests.

17. The COVID-19 pandemic led to the postponement of four already scheduled regional-level workshops in Panama City, Panama, for Latin America and Caribbean countries (originally scheduled for April 2020), in Izmir, Turkey, for Central and Eastern European countries (originally scheduled for May 2020), in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, for African countries (originally scheduled for July 2020), and possibly in Egypt for Arab countries (September 2020), and a blended approach (i.e. a combination of online and physical sessions, where possible) is under discussion.

⁸ <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2018-09/LDN%20TPP%20checklist%20final%20draft%20040918.pdf>>.

⁹ <https://catalogue.unccd.int/1224_UNCCD_LDN_TPP_technical_guide_GM.pdf>.

¹⁰ <https://catalogue.unccd.int/1223_Gender_Manual.pdf>.

18. In order not to compromise on the workshops' quality, some adjustment is required to turn the original content of the capacity-building workshop into a suitable virtual format. The original plans for the physical workshops included interactive group discussions with speakers from different time zones, such as representatives from the GEF, the Green Climate Fund and IUCN, among other entities, as well as field excursions to enhance the training. Therefore, current plans to divide the training modules into shorter online sessions, adapt them based on regional priorities and, where possible, combine them with physical in-country meetings and online facilitation by experts not based in the country.

19. As of September 2020, more than 250 participants/national focal points, including civil society organizations (CSOs) and women's farmers groups, received hands-on training on how to include the gender perspective in the LDN project cycle. In addition, based on experience acquired working with IUCN and UN Women, the LDN TPP team of the GM provides direct support and advice vis-à-vis submitted LDN project proposals to ensure that gender is fully considered within LDN TPP project design.

c. Support to project preparation/development:

20. Following approval of a grant from the Canadian Government during 2020, the GM will be supporting technical studies required during the project proposal development phase to ensure gender equality is fully integrated in proposed project interventions. Such studies include a gender gap analysis, gender action plans, and technical briefs

2. Drought

21. In line with decision 1/COP.13, decision 29/COP.13, and decision 23/COP.14, the secretariat, the GM and its partners supported country Parties in the implementation of the Drought Initiative by offering technical advice related to gender and drought issues.

22. At the national level, the GM and the secretariat have actively supported governments in developing national drought plans (NDPs), providing tailored support and advice on how to mainstream gender in each NDP. In particular, a guiding document highlighting gender entry points in the model NDP was prepared to assist the respective country consultants and relevant national stakeholders in developing gender-responsive NDPs. Concurrently, the GM developed a value-driven partnership with counterparts such as the African Risk Capacity to further strengthen gender mainstreaming within the Drought Initiative.

23. As of September 2020, the GM provided gender mainstreaming support to 63 participating countries, among which 36 countries completed the entire process.¹¹ This support included a commented review of the draft NDPs and recommendations for their improvement from a gender perspective.

D. United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women for implementation of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women¹²

24. With its enrolment in UN-SWAP,¹³ the secretariat took a considerable step to strengthen its accountability for gender equality. The UN-SWAP, managed by UN Women,

¹¹ As of September 2020, 24 NDPs are published on the UNCCD website at <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/drought-toolbox/page/drought-planning>>. The secretariat conducted an initial assessment of all the published NDPs and concluded that all the NDPs show strong evidence of the incorporation of a gender perspective.

¹² CEB/2006/2.

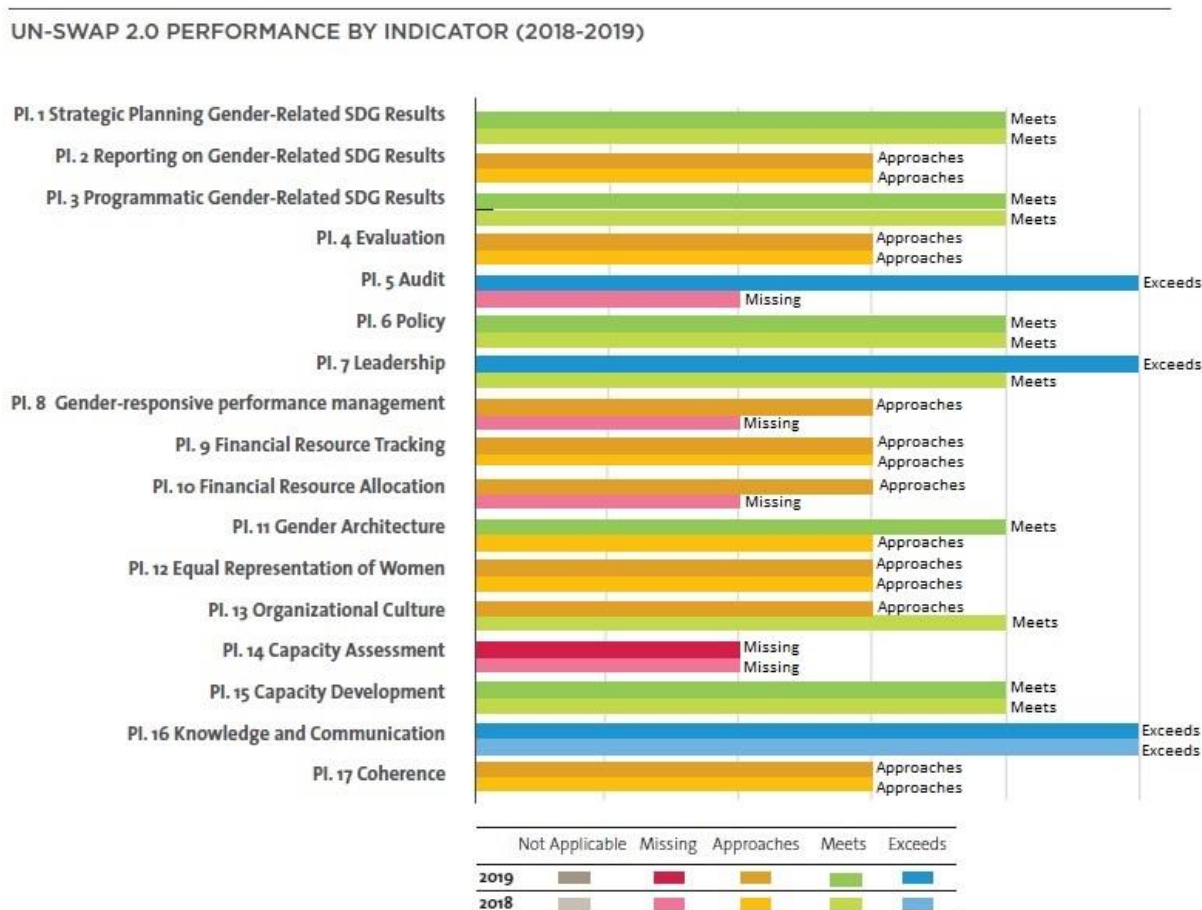
¹³ The UN-SWAP spearheaded by UN Women is the United Nations accountability framework for gender equality and the empowerment of women meant to guide the United Nations system towards the implementation of the United Nations-wide gender policy.<<https://www.unwomen.org/en/docs/2006/12/un-policy-on-gender-equality-and-empowerment-of-women-ceb-2006-2>>.

is the first unified accountability framework in the United Nations common system designed to accelerate and support strengthened gender mainstreaming and gender equality and boost women’s empowerment results in all functions of United Nations system entities.

25. The secretariat submitted its first ever UN-SWAP report in January 2019 (2018 reporting cycle) and its second report in December 2019 (2019 reporting cycle). 2018 constituted the first year of reporting against UN-SWAP 2.0, an expanded and enhanced framework with four new indicators and four strengthened indicators.¹⁴ As such, the 2018 performance establishes a new benchmark for the years to follow. The results of the 2018 UN-SWAP reporting cycle indicated that the UNCCD “met” or “exceeded” requirements for 41 per cent of indicators (7 out of 17 indicators). In 2019, the UNCCD secretariat met or exceeded requirements for 47 per cent of indicators (8 out of 17 indicators). The share of indicators exceeding requirements has increased by 12 percentage points in 2019. Moreover, UNCCD improved performance from four indicators marked as missing in 2018 to only one marked as missing in 2019.

26. The following two figures¹⁵ show the progress made compared to 2018 in detail.

Figure 1
UN-SWAP 2.0 performance by indicator (2018–2019)

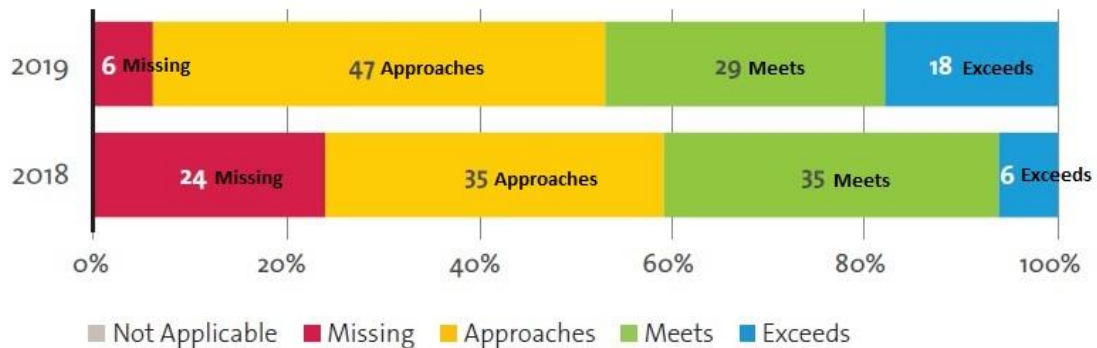


¹⁴ The UN-SWAP consists of 17 performance indicators as follows: 1 Strategic planning gender-related SDG results; 2. Reporting on gender-related SDG results; 3 Programmatic gender-related SDG results not directly captured in the strategic plan; 4 Evaluation; 5 Audit; 6 Policy; 7 Leadership; 8 Gender-responsive performance management; 9 Financial resource tracking; 10 Financial resource allocation; 11 Gender architecture; 12 Equal representation of women; 13 Organizational culture; 14 Capacity assessment; 15 Capacity development; 16 Knowledge and communication; 17 Coherence. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/unsystemcoordination/un-swap/un-swap-2-tn-en.pdf?la=en&vs=2841>.

¹⁵ UN Women (2020): UNCCD. UN-SWAP 2.0 Summary, Analysis and key insights from 2019.

Figure 2
UNCCD, comparative analysis of ratings by year

UNCCD, COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RATINGS BY YEAR



E. Awareness-raising and capacity-building for gender equality and the empowerment of women

27. All communications activities during this reporting period examined gender equality and women's empowerment as an integral component before publishing. In particular UNCCD social media products and campaigns strategically promote the role of women as key partners in SLM, focusing on women's equal and secure access to land as a way to create incentives for managing land wisely, establishing the foundation for women's empowerment, and supporting economic security, gender equality and social justice.

28. For instance, young women have actively participated in the #UNCCDLandHeroes campaign. The campaign's objective was to mobilize youth to take care of land as part of the solution to climate change.¹⁶ The winner is a dynamic duo of young women from Mexico in recognition of their outstanding work to limit the footprint left on land by human production and consumption.¹⁷

29. On a regular basis, the UNCCD Twitter account addresses gender-related issues of pivotal importance such as land rights, food security, or the gender gap,¹⁸ and the UNCCD library and knowledge repository is updated on a daily basis and currently contains over 400 gender-related resources.¹⁹

30. Furthermore, the secretariat has also joined other UN Bonn organizations on 8 March 2020 to celebrate International Women's Day. The digital awareness-raising event focused on realizing women's rights, and the UNCCD secretariat concentrated on women's land rights and provided visual materials on land and gender.²⁰

31. Finally, in partnership with IUCN, the UNDP Global Policy Centre on Resilient Ecosystems and Desertification and the UNCCD-accredited non-governmental organizations Both ENDS and Landesa,²¹ the secretariat inaugurated its first Gender Caucus

¹⁶ <<https://www.unccd.int/news-events/become-unccdlandheroes>>.

¹⁷ UNCCD (2020): Ciencia Mágica from Mexico receives UNCCD Land Heroes Award, <<https://www.unccd.int/news-events/ciencia-magica-mexico-receives-unccd-land-heroes-award>>.

¹⁸ See for example :<<https://twitter.com/UNCCD/status/1236610614300037120?s=20>>; <<https://twitter.com/UNCCD/status/1236248226375835648?s=20>>; <<https://twitter.com/UNCCD/status/1230538864890126337?s=20>>.

¹⁹ See<<http://bit.ly/2OdFcVH>> and <<http://bit.ly/2UCkR1w>>.

²⁰ <<https://www.facebook.com/UNCCD/photos/a.147896434084/10158098002054085/?type=3&theater>>.

²¹ Both ENDS and Landesa both work on land tenure, gender, land and water governance. For more information see <<https://www.bothends.org/en/>> and <<https://www.landesa.org/>>.

at COP 14. The overall goal of the informal caucus was to positively influence the course of events pertinent to gender equality and to enable delegates to look at UNCCD-related themes and decision-making with a gender perspective,²² thereby promoting a gender-responsive approach in the design and content of COP decisions.

32. The Gender Caucus provided space to address key gender-related issues to be discussed at COP 14, such as sand and dust storms, drought, land tenure, the GAP as well as the further development of gender-responsive LDN TPPs. Around 30 participants, women and men, from Parties and CSOs attended the caucus and participated actively in the group discussions.²³

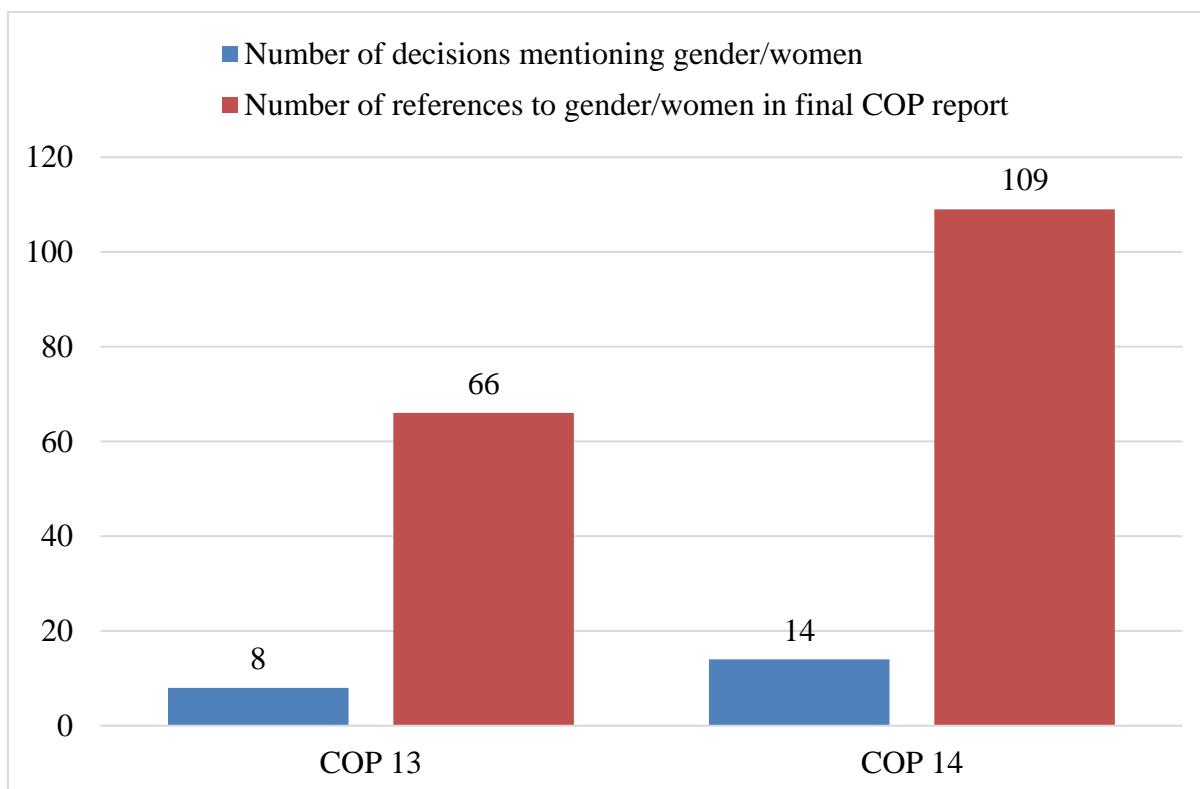
33. As a result, the outcome of COP 14 shows a positive trend vis-à-vis gender mainstreaming, indicating that awareness and capacity relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women increased among delegates (see figure 3).²⁴ The total number of references to gender and/or women in the meeting report from COP 14 (see ICCD/COP(14)/23/Add.1) saw a 65 per cent increase compared to the corresponding meeting report from COP 13 (see ICCD/COP(13)/21/Add.1). The same trend can be observed for the number of decisions that included a reference to gender and/or women. At COP 13, 8 decisions (out of 36 in total, which is 22 per cent) addressed gender issues. Of the 33 COP 14 decisions, 14 decisions (42 per cent) included a gender perspective, a total increase of 75 per cent compared with COP 13 (relative increase 20 per cent).

²² The term 'gender perspective' is a way of seeing or analysing which looks at the impact of gender on people's opportunities, social roles, and interactions. This way of seeing is what enables one to carry out gender analysis and subsequently to mainstream a gender perspective into any proposed programme, policy or organization.

²³ See the first UNCCD Gender Caucus concept and summary report at <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/GENDER%20caucus%20final.pdf>.

²⁴ For this quantitative analysis, the COP 13 and COP 14 reports were examined for evidence of the incorporation of a gender perspective, as determined by the presence of the following keywords: gender, women, women's and girls. Documents containing at least one occurrence of a keyword were considered to include a gender perspective. See documents ICCD/COP(13)/21/Add.1 and ICCD/COP(14)/23/Add.1.

Figure 3
References to gender and women in UNCCD documents



F. Conclusions

34. In light of the COVID-19 crisis and considering the determination and commitment of Parties to make the implementation of the Convention gender-responsive and transformative, the creation of a supportive enabling environment at national level is essential. This emphasizes that governments are the key actors in bringing about the required change.

35. Although Parties are strongly committed to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women, experience shows that many Parties need support to develop gender-responsive and transformative actions. This is because gender-relevant tools such as gender analysis, gender impact assessment, collection of sex-disaggregated data, and the formulation of gender-responsive indicators for monitoring and evaluation are not applied and implemented in a systematic fashion, indicating gender mainstreaming capacity gaps. By contrast, whenever support is provided – like the development of gender-responsive LDN TPPs and NDPs demonstrate – this yields better results in terms of gender mainstreaming and lays a more substantive foundation to make the implementation of the Convention gender-responsive and transformative.

36. To help country Parties achieve their gender-related objectives, it is crucial that the secretariat, the GM, and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies, including the Science-Policy Interface, all continue their hands-on support to countries and systematically mainstream gender throughout their internal work cycle by considering gender-based differences when looking at any environmental and/or social phenomena, policies or processes to ensure that that men and women benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

37. The UN-SWAP reporting exercise is an effective instrument to demonstrate progress made in establishing and enhancing the internal structures and knowledge of the secretariat and the GM in view of gender equality and the empowerment of women. This is an important component to ensure the gender-responsive implementation of the Convention

because it also supports a better gender-related service to Parties. It should be therefore considered as an essential cornerstone for the implementation of the GAP.

38. Finally, the Gender Caucus proved to be an excellent tool to increase gender-aware action among delegates and should be continued. To continue with the positive trend, Parties are encouraged to actively participate in the next Gender Caucus planned to be held at COP 15.

G. Recommendations

39. Parties at CRIC 19 may wish to consider the proposals contained in this document with a view to initiating early consultations on draft decisions to be forwarded to COP 15.

40. Parties may wish to:

(a) *Strongly encourage* Parties to take advantage of the gender-related guidelines and advice provided by Convention institutions with an aim to establish an enabling environment at the national level both for the implementation of the GAP and a gender-responsive implementation of the Convention;

(b) *Request* the secretariat, the GM and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies, including the Science-Policy Interface, to continue their hands-on support and advice to Parties in order to assist them in achieving their gender-related objectives as per the GAP;

(c) *Also request* the secretariat and the GM to further improve its UN-SWAP 2.0 performance and compliance with UN-SWAP 2.0 indicators;

(d) *Further request* the secretariat and the GM, within the available budget, to continue organizing the Gender Caucus every two years, preferably at the beginning of each COP, and *encourage* Parties and other stakeholders to make good use of this cost-effective opportunity to support the gender-responsive implementation of the Convention;

(e) *Request* the secretariat, the GM and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies, including the Science-Policy Interface, to continue its work in line with decision 24/COP.14;

(f) *Also request* the secretariat and the GM to support capacity development to ensure gender transformation and equality throughout all activities supporting the implementation of the Convention.

III. Report on the follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Drought

A. Introduction

41. Drought is a complex and slow-onset natural hazard with significant economic and ecological consequences. Globally, the cost of droughts is estimated to be around USD 80 billion per year.²⁵ Drought is likely to become more frequent, intense and severe. With climate change, rainfall will become more erratic.²⁶

²⁵ Carolwicz, M. (1996). Natural hazards need not lead to natural disasters. EOS 77(16): 149-153 in World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and Global Water Partnership (GWP) (2017). Benefits of action and costs of inaction: Drought mitigation and preparedness – a literature review (N. Gerber and A. Mirzabaev). Integrated Drought Management Programme Working Paper 1. WMO, Geneva, Switzerland and GWP, Stockholm, Sweden.

²⁶ Spinoni, J., J. Vogt, G. Naumann, P. Barbosa and A. Dosio. 2018. Will drought events become more frequent and severe in Europe? Int. J. Climatol. 38: 1718–1736.; Damania, Richard; Desbureaux, Sébastien; Hyland, Marie; Islam, Asif; Moore, Scott; Rodella, Aude-Sophie; Russ, Jason; Zaveri, Esha. 2017. Uncharted Waters: The New Economics of Water Scarcity and Variability. World Bank,

42. In respect of the increasing awareness of the devastating impacts of drought, United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/220 called upon Parties to the Convention to enhance and support the preparation of drought preparedness policies on, inter alia, early warning systems, vulnerability and risk assessment, as well as drought risk mitigation measures.

43. Following the request contained in decision 29/COP.13, the UNCCD has also taken major steps towards developing and implementing a global strategy under the Convention (i.e. the Drought Initiative, which focuses on drought preparedness systems, regional efforts to reduce drought vulnerability and risk, and a toolbox to boost the resilience of people and ecosystems to drought) to enhance the resilience of communities and ecosystems to drought, thereby promoting a paradigm shift in approach to drought management from a reactive and crisis-based approach towards a proactive and risk-based approach.

44. Since the launch of the Drought Initiative, the GM and the secretariat have provided a range of tailored support programmes to country Parties, including on the development of NDPs; further upgrades and expansion of the Drought Toolbox; facilitation of consultations between the members of the IWG on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the Convention; expansion of collaboration and partnerships with relevant agencies; and the development of regional projects, including the Regional Project on Drought Risk Management for Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Countries and the Regional Project on Drought Risk Management for Central Asia. The GM is also working to identify potential and innovative financing instruments for addressing drought in order to make available related information and guidance for facilitating the access of Parties to these instruments.

B. National drought plans

45. Consistent with decision 29/COP.13, the GM supports country Parties in developing NDPs in order to effectively mitigate the risks and impacts of drought at national and subnational levels. Furthermore, in collaboration with the GM, the secretariat developed technical documents and guidelines (e.g. the Drought Resilience, Adaptation and Management Policy (DRAMP) framework and a technical note on mainstreaming gender in NDPs) to facilitate relevant national processes in the preparation of the NDPs.

46. The NDPs commonly indicate that there is an increasing trend in the severity and frequency of droughts. The effect of drought on freshwater resources for domestic, agricultural, and industrial use remains a critical challenge. For countries that depend heavily on river discharge, the drought-induced decline in precipitation levels, reduced runoff and river discharge are posing risks to the affected populations as well as critical sectors of the economy. NDPs commonly recognize the gendered differentiation of drought impacts as well as the need for drought mitigation and policy approaches that are gender-sensitized. Most NDPs pointed to the need for stronger drought forecasting, monitoring and preparedness and improved means for drought risk mitigation, in addition to financial support.

47. GM support for NDPs is comprised of the following elements: recruitment of a qualified national expert to support and coordinate with governments in the development of the NDP as well as technical support from the GM to each national process.

48. As of October 2020, 64 countries are actively participating in the development of their NDPs out of the 73 countries which initially expressed their interest in joining the Drought Initiative. Fifty-nine countries have either finalized or are in the process of finalizing the full-fledged NDP drafts. Forty-one countries completed the entire process, including national validation of the final NDP. The GM expects that most of the actively participating countries would either complete the entire process or produce the final documents by the end of 2020. All the completed NDPs that are validated and authorized to

Washington, DC.

be published online by the respective government can be found on the UNCCD Knowledge Hub website.²⁷

C. Drought Toolbox

49. The COP, through its decision 23/COP.14, requested the secretariat and the GM to further upgrade and expand the Drought Toolbox in collaboration with regional and subregional stakeholders and build capacity on its effective usage, including on early warning and monitoring systems, impact and vulnerability assessments, and drought risk mitigation measures.

50. The Drought Toolbox was launched at COP 14. Since then, additions to the database of available tools have been made based on suggestions received from Parties, partners and other stakeholders. A section on available tools outside of the Drought Toolbox has also been added in the survey that was sent to national focal points in January 2020. This information has been compiled as input for the IWG. In cooperation with two partners (FAO and the UNEP-DHI Centre on Water and Environment), a number of online webinars were organized and, pending the availability of funds, further online trainings are being planned for 2021.

51. With regard to capacity-building, scheduled regional training workshops in Antalya, Turkey, for African countries and Montevideo, Uruguay for South American countries had to be cancelled due to the pandemic.

52. A planned regional workshop for Central Asia in March was also cancelled. Instead, a ‘train-the-trainer’ session took place to enable the regional partner to conduct online sessions.

53. An initial session of a workshop about the development of NDPs in South America is planned to take place virtually on 23–24 November 2020. If the pandemic situation allows travel, the virtual component of the workshop will be followed by an in-person session on 28–29 April 2021 in Montevideo, Uruguay. For the workshop in Turkey, a physical meeting is planned to be held in Ankara or Antalya as soon as the pandemic situation allows travel.

D. Regional drought projects

54. In accordance with decision 29/COP.13 and decision 23/COP.14, the secretariat and the GM launched regional projects on drought risk management in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region based on a request received from country Parties.

55. The regional projects aim at developing a regional strategic framework for regional drought management and guiding the long-term objective for developing technical and institutional capacity to manage drought through enhanced data sharing on, inter alia, early warning and monitoring systems, vulnerability and impact mapping, and drought risk mitigation measures.

56. IUCN and the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia have been selected, respectively, as the executing agencies for the Regional Project on Drought Risk Management for Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Countries and Regional Project on Drought Risk Management for Central Asia.

57. The SADC project was launched in August 2020 and is planned for a duration of eighteen months. Stakeholder mapping in the region was fully appraised, involving country focal points, experts, water managers and policymakers. Collaborative synergies with key partners were identified including FAO, the International Water Management Institute and the World Bank.

²⁷ <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/drought-toolbox/page/drought-planning>>.

58. Launched in January 2020, the Central Asia project is expected to last until the end of 2021. A stocktaking exercise of national drought management policies, strategies and other drought and climate-related data collection in each of the countries was completed, while a comprehensive regional drought risk management and mitigation strategy was drafted and is set to be discussed with regional development partners and UNCCD national focal points. Several online regional working group meetings were organized in the process of preparing the regional strategy. Drought risk profiling and vulnerability mapping for the region is being undertaken within the project framework.

E. Drought risk finance

59. Decision 23/COP.14 requests the GM to identify potential and innovative financing instruments, based on clearly identified added value, for addressing drought. Based on this decision, the GM is in the process of developing a technical report that identifies potential public and private financing instruments and mechanisms for drought in order to make available related information and guidance for facilitating the access of Parties to these instruments. Findings from this process will be submitted to the ongoing IWG process for the consideration of its members.

F. Recommendations

60. Parties at CRIC 19 may wish to consider the proposals contained in this document with a view to initiating early consultations on draft decisions to be forwarded to COP 15.

61. Parties may wish to:

(a) *Encourage* Parties to continue to use the Drought Toolbox in their endeavour to mitigate the impacts of droughts and contribute to the further upgrade of the Drought Toolbox by submitting to the secretariat more drought tools from their experiences on the ground;

(b) *Request* the secretariat, the GM and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies, including the Science-Policy Interface, to support Parties in the implementation of their national drought plans by carrying out more hands-on trainings and online webinars, subject to availability of funds, on the Drought Toolbox and the DRAMP guidelines adopted at COP 14;

(c) *Also request* the secretariat and the GM to ensure the Regional Project on Drought Risk Management for Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Countries and the Regional Project on Drought Risk Management for Central Asia are implemented in accordance with their respective plans, including by holding wider consultations among the countries in the regions, and continue supporting other countries to develop similar projects and related capacity-building activities;

(d) *Encourage* development partners and financing institutions, in particular the GEF, to support the implementation of NDPs;

(e) *Also encourage* country Parties that have developed NDPs to prioritize the implementation of the identified actions.

IV. Report on the follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: land tenure

A. Introduction

62. One of the causal linkages between land tenure and land degradation is the different forms and degrees of how securely land is held by the legitimate tenure rights bearer (owner, occupant, renter or user). While a diverse set of variables operate to drive land resources toward conservation, sustainable management or degradation, the contribution of

tenure security is, broadly, that those who hold land securely are able and motivated to invest in resource conservation practices with a view to long-term health and productivity, without fear that their land can be unjustly taken or encroached upon.²⁸

63. Those who do not have a feeling of holding land securely may end up degrading land by not being able to invest in it in a long-term perspective. They thus try to get as much as possible out of the land in the short term and are disincentivized to invest in their land in the long term.²⁹

64. Two other important causal linkages between responsible governance of tenure and land degradation are sprawling uncontrolled land conversion and a lack of coordination between sectors and between stakeholders.

65. Land tenure security can lead to good land stewardship if all facets of the enabling environment are addressed together. The implementation of decision 26/COP.14 could provide an opportunity to accelerate the implementation of the VGGT, with the aim of optimizing the use of land for the benefit of all, while ensuring the achievement of LDN.

66. Decision 26/COP.14 encouraged countries to address specific principles contained in the VGGT to address land tenure and requested the secretariat to carry out three main tasks regarding land tenure. These tasks focus on policy, reporting and awareness-raising.

B. Policy – preparation of a technical guide

67. The secretariat was requested, together with FAO and other partners, to produce a technical guide on how to integrate the VGGT into the implementation of the Convention and LDN, taking into account national contexts for consideration by Parties at COP 15.

68. Following preparatory consultation in early 2020, FAO and the secretariat have established that the preparation of this technical guide should build on an inclusive multi-stakeholders process through a series of e-consultations of stakeholders and experts and the formulation of case studies from various countries across continents and draw from the wealth of projects/programmes that FAO has been supporting on governance of tenure and SLM. The technical guide targets an audience of policymakers and decision-makers in a concise and concrete manner.

69. The secretariat and FAO launched the process with a multi-stakeholder consultation held on the 2020 Desertification and Drought Day on 17 June 2020. Over 100 representatives from governments, civil society, academia, the United Nations and intergovernmental organizations attended the meeting. Five countries³⁰ presented first insights from case studies of integrating land tenure and governance into LDN under a range of institutional, legal and agro-ecological conditions.

70. The consultation facilitated exchanges to identify challenges, enablers and barriers that could ensure the inclusive participation of women, indigenous peoples and youth in areas related to land tenure. Potential solutions to overcome challenges related to the lack of sectoral integration and lack of data available to generate evidence on the role of tenure to achieve LDN were discussed.

71. A second consultation was organized on 10 July 2020 looking specifically at additional case studies submitted by partners and institutions from Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Republic of Moldova and Togo. Furthermore, the purpose of the meeting was to identify lessons learned and agree on key issues for the development of the annotated outline of the technical guide. Discussions focused on the development of land governance guidelines together with the local communities, tenure security to address land abandonment, land consolidation for land conservation, the mechanisms available to improve women's access to land to foster inclusive agricultural development, and the multi-

²⁸ UNCCD (2020): New and emerging issues: land tenure (ICCD/COP(14)/20) <<https://www.unccd.int/official-documentscop-14-new-delhi-india-2019/iccdcop1420>>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Guyana, Mongolia, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Tunisia.

stakeholder platforms that could be used to engage different stakeholders to discuss land tenure issues in the context of the UNCCD.

72. The next e-consultation³¹ took place on 21 August 2020 and focused on the enablers for integrating land tenure into LDN. The exchanges have allowed for agreement on the main enablers, which are based on abstract principles. As this technical guide is geared towards providing Parties with a tool for action and building on the case studies and literature review, the secretariat and FAO came to formulate pathways which address the enablers, barriers and benefits to integrating the VGGT into the implementation of the Convention and achievement of LDN.

73. The next e-consultation will take place in the middle of November to validate the more concrete action-oriented pathways to integrating land tenure security in the implementation of the Convention and achievement of LDN.

74. The pathways will address the barriers and enablers identified early in the technical guide formulation process for the integration of the VGGT into national LDN target-setting and implementation and the application of the VGGT in LDN programmes at local level. As such, it will look at policy alignment and the non-generation of negative incentives through an analysis of the policies, laws and incentives (at macro level) that support individual choice in adopting SLM (at micro level).

75. In the preparation process of the technical guide, the secretariat and other partners, in consultation with FAO, are planning to involve a group of countries and organize national consultations to receive appropriate feedback on the pathways. The countries will be selected according to geographical criteria, taking into consideration their demonstrated interest and involvement in the implementation of the VGGT and their involvement in the LDN process.

76. During the e-consultations and groundwork organized, it was highlighted that there is a need to mainstream land tenure in decisions related to investment in land and in the implementation of projects aiming at achieving LDN. At the same time, it was clear to all that promoting gender-sensitive measures will be key to enhancing equal access for all to land and land tenure security.

77. The outcomes of consultations at country level together with the progress made in the preparation of the technical guide will be discussed during the CRIC session with a view to finalizing the technical guide and presenting it at COP 15 for its consideration.

C. Reporting – Sustainable Development Goal indicators relevant to land governance

78. Parties also requested the secretariat, in consultation with the CRIC Bureau, to explore options for the integration of existing globally agreed SDG indicators relevant to land governance into the UNCCD reporting process.

79. The secretariat is studying the data available for the SDG indicators relevant to land governance and will report back to the Parties during the CRIC session. The availability of data for each of the indicators would be relevant to determine the possibility for the Parties to report in the next reporting cycle.

D. Awareness-raising

80. The secretariat was requested to explore options to promote awareness-raising on responsible land governance for combating DLDD, particularly among vulnerable populations, including indigenous peoples and local communities.

81. In this regard, the secretariat is working together with the International Land Coalition, the Land Portal and the Secretariat of the Committee on World Food Security to

³¹ This document contains information on the e-consultation activities organized until end of September 2020.

pre-define an awareness-raising strategy, taking a gender-sensitive approach, that could be presented to the Parties at COP 15.

82. In addition to this, there are plans to develop a specific training course with the UNCCD Capacity Building Marketplace to assist in raising awareness on responsible land governance among targeted stakeholders.

83. Following the adoption of decision 26/COP.14, the secretariat has been involved in multiple events presenting the relevant elements of the land tenure decision adopted within the UNCCD process.

84. In this context, the United Nations Human Rights Council organized a dialogue on Human Rights and Climate Change on the sidelines of the 127th session of the Human Rights Committee. This dialogue included a discussion on land which raised important issues of land rights in the context of climate change, highlighting the need for structural solutions and issues relating to the rights of rural women and indigenous peoples and industrial forest plantations.

85. Decision 1/CP.25 of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) requested the Chair of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) to organize a dialogue at the fifty-second session of the SBSTA on the relationship between land-related and climate change adaptation-related matters. The submissions presented by the Parties and observers to the UNFCCC process include elements of land rights and tenure which are interlinked with the work of the UNCCD secretariat. After discussions with the UNFCCC SBSTA Chair, the secretariat presented a submission highlighting the work undertaken by UNCCD Parties on tenure and the forthcoming finalization of the technical guide mentioned in paragraph 67 above. The UNCCD secretariat has agreed to work closely with the UNFCCC SBSTA Chair for the organization of the above-mentioned dialogue.

86. In preparing the forthcoming Global Land Outlook, its steering committee also decided to prepare a working document framing the global action and local impact and looking at the nexus between land tenure, resource rights and land restoration. In the same framework, the next meeting of the United Nations Environment Assembly will focus on the theme “Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals” and look at the protection and restoration of nature. The secretariat will work together with United Nations Environment Programme staff in preparing a document on land tenure and restoration to be presented on the sidelines of the event and which will be linked to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

E. Recommendations

87. Parties at CRIC 19 may wish to consider the proposals contained in this document with a view to initiating early consultations on draft decisions to be forwarded to COP 15.

88. Parties may wish to:

(a) *Encourage* Parties to continue with the implementation of decision 26/COP.14 on land tenure, particularly by following the VGGT principles in the implementation of activities to combat DLDD and achieve LDN;

(b) *Request* Parties to consider at COP 15 the technical guide on how to integrate the VGGT into the implementation of the Convention and activities to achieve LDN;

(c) *Also request* the secretariat, in collaboration with FAO and other relevant institutions, to support Parties in the implementation of the technical guide, including in terms of awareness-raising;

(d) *Further request* the GM to and *recommend* that the GEF ensure the mainstreaming of land tenure in decisions related to investment in land and in the implementation of projects aiming at achieving LDN.