



# UNCCD CSO PANEL NEWSLETTER

## CRIC19

Online Summit  
15 -19 March 2021

*Dear Members of the Accredited CSOs to the UNCCD,*

*It is a pleasure to share with you a special issue of our newsletter that provides information on the upcoming online summit - **19<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)** to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) as well as the **CSOs Preparatory Meeting for CRIC19**.*

*Ahead of CRIC19, we urge you all to take the opportunity to contribute to the scoping process and deliberations of the Committee in order to strengthen the policy impact of civil society. Our ambition is to help the CSOs, indigenous people and local communities to be heard on all land matters, so please keep sharing your experiences and call for action from the desertification crisis frontlines.*

*More information on CRIC19 and the registration for online meetings is available on the CSO Panel website at: [www.csopanel.org](http://www.csopanel.org)*

*We look forward to seeing you all at the Summit!*

*Your CSO Panel*

## CRIC19



The nineteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 19) to the UNCCD will be organized online from 15 to 19 March 2021. The daily online meetings will last for two hours from 12.30 – 2.30 p.m. Bonn time (Central European Time).

The CRIC 19 will review the effective implementation of the Convention at national, sub regional and regional levels including updates on the voluntary land degradation neutrality target setting process, operationalization of the [Land Degradation Neutrality Fund](#) and implementation of the [Drought Initiative](#). The [Intergovernmental Working Group](#) on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD will present its interim report for consideration by Parties at CRIC19.

CRIC19 online **REGISTRATION** is now opened here: [www.indico.un.org/event/1000071](http://www.indico.un.org/event/1000071)

Registration is open for the representatives of accredited CSOs only. Note: a nomination letter from your organization is needed upon registration.

Sessions will be held using interprety platform. All technical information to connect once registered are available [here](#).

Meetings of affected country Parties of the Convention's regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe in preparation to CRIC 19 are organized online since February 2021. Further information on the meetings can be found in below sections.

Full version of Agenda and preparatory CRIC documents in English, French and Spanish) is available [here](#).



United Nations

ICCD/CRIC(19)/1



**Convention to Combat  
Desertification**

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Original: English

## I. Provisional agenda

1. Opening of the session;
2. Organizational matters:
  - (a) Adoption of the agenda and schedule of work;
  - (b) Appointment of the Rapporteur of the Committee;
3. Effective implementation of the Convention at national, subregional and regional levels:
  - (a) Update on the implementation of the voluntary land degradation neutrality targets and related implementation efforts;
  - (b) Update on the operationalization of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund;
  - (c) Update on the implementation of the Drought Initiative and related implementation efforts;
4. Interim report of the intergovernmental working group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD;
5. Adoption of the report of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention to the Conference of the Parties;
6. Closure of the session.

## Fast Facts about CRIC19

- > The UNCCD [Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention](#) (CRIC) takes place every year but can be moved to coincide with the [Conference of the Parties](#) (COP) depending on the status of submission of national reports For example, CRIC18 was held in New Delhi, India at the same time as COP14.
- > The Convention has **197 Parties**, including one regional group, the European Union
- > About **500 delegates** are expected to attend

## CSOs Preparatory Meeting for CRIC19



10 March 2021

On 10 March 2021, UNCCD CSO Panel is hosting an online meeting aimed to prepare CSOs for the upcoming UNCCD CRIC19 event.

The preparatory meeting intends to provide an early input to the scoping process of the committee and will explore the CRIC19 agenda items and review preparation of the CSO statements for the presentation during CRIC.

Registration is open for the representatives of all CSOs that are accredited to UNCCD.

You can **REGISTER** to the preparatory meeting [HERE](#), and once registered a connecting Zoom link will be sent to you afterward.

Ahead of CRIC19 preparations, the Panel seeks assistance of active CSOs that would like pitch in to help draft the CSO statements. Any interested candidates are kindly asked to email the panel directly at [csopanel@unccd.int](mailto:csopanel@unccd.int)

The CSO panel has prepared short synthesis and comments on the official documents for CRIC to examine. These synthesis can be found on our website at [www.csopanel.org/cric19](http://www.csopanel.org/cric19)



## CSOs Preparatory Meeting for CRIC19

No	Description
1	Introduction: Welcoming address and Presentation of the meeting agenda
2	Presentation of the CSO Panel members and their work programme / overall activities conducted and outputs
3	Welcoming addresses: Executive Secretary of the UNCCD
4	General introduction of the CRIC19 and its Agenda items
5	<b>Presentation of synthesis reports, insights of participants for preparation of the CSOs statements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Opening statement</li><li>✓ The implementation of the voluntary land degradation neutrality targets <i>ICCD/CRIC(19)/2</i></li><li>✓ The operationalization of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund <i>ICCD/CRIC(19)/3</i></li><li>✓ The intergovernmental working group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD <i>ICCD/CRIC(19)/4</i></li><li>✓ Policy frameworks and thematic issues: gender, Drought Initiative and land tenure <i>ICCD/CRIC(19)/5</i></li><li>✓ Closing statement</li></ul>
6	Question and answers session
7	Organizational ways to finalize CSO's statements
8	Summary Report of the Regional Meetings
9	Closing Remarks

## CRIC19 DOCUMENTS & CSO SYNTHESIS REPORTS

### CSO Synthesis of the Global Mechanism report on the implementation of the voluntary land degradation neutrality targets and related implementation efforts: [ICCD/CRIC\(19\)/2](#)

While the GM's support to countries in setting the LDN targets is considered effective, this process depends on the active engagement of the appointed UNCCD focal points in each country, and the political commitment of countries to the LDN is ultimately manifested through the adoption of the targets at a high level (ministers, inter-ministerial bodies, councils of ministers or heads of state). The process of defining the LDN targets has identified areas of capacity building that countries need to address. These include in particular the capacity to conduct monitoring and evaluation of the LDN which relies heavily on the processing of geospatial data.

The Global Mechanism's support to countries in developing transformative projects and programs has created an important pipeline of project ideas, and the report highlights the technical and financial needs of countries to finalize project development.

The report also includes recommendations that will be considered by the Parties at the CRIC, which may decide to forward them to the COP for further consideration. **READ MORE [HERE](#).**

**September 2015:** The international community has adopted the Agenda for Sustainable Development to 2030, which includes **17 sustainable development goals (SDGs)**.

**Goal 15 of SDGs** urges countries to "preserve and restore terrestrial ecosystems, ensuring their sustainable use, manage forests sustainably, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt the loss of biodiversity".

**October 2015:** UNCCD COP12 decides that **Land Degradation Neutrality** is an important means to promote the implementation of the Convention (decision 3/COP.12). The Global Mechanism establishes a programme of support to countries in setting LDN targets.

**Target 15.3 of SDGs** aims at "combating desertification, restoring degraded land and soils, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and working towards a land degradation neutral world". The monitoring of this indicator is based on the combination of three sub-indicators : (1) Land cover, (2) Land productivity and (3) Carbon stocks.

**September 2017:** UNCCD COP13 endorses **the scientific conceptual framework for the LDN** developed by the Science-Policy Interface (SPI). COP13 invites Parties to define voluntary targets for the TDN (decision 2/COP.13) and to develop transformative projects. To this end, COP13 requests the Global Mechanism to increase support to Parties (decision 13/COP.13)

**The LDN target-setting program** implemented in countries and supported by the Global Mechanism is structured around 4 pillars:

1. Leveraging LDN: engaging decision-makers and stakeholders
2. Assessing LDN: assessing the current state of the land and factors of degradation
3. Define LDN targets and associated measures: quantified ambitions for the country, and political scope
4. Achieving LDN: integration of NDT targets and associated measures into national policies, and identification of transformative projects

**April 2019:** publication of an evaluation report of the LDN target-setting program.

**Land Degradation Neutrality:** A state in which the quantity and quality of land resources needed to support ecosystem functions and services and improve food security remain stable or increase. A neutral state is not the absence of degradation, for the SPI it is a balance to be achieved by minimizing the "losses" of healthy land and maximizing the "gains" of healthy land. For this, three actions are necessary: avoiding land degradation, reducing the impact of ongoing land degradation processes, and restoring degraded land.

**September 2019:** COP14 invites Parties to identify relevant case studies on the implementation of the LDN for presentation in a synthesis report to COP15 in 2021 (decision 13/COP.14) The Global Mechanism and other relevant actors were requested to continue their support to facilitate the achievement of the LDN (decision 2/COP.14)

The program, supported by the GEF, has helped countries develop their LDN targets.

- At the national level, these processes have been participatory but with little consideration of gender issues.
- There is a risk that the initial momentum will be lost if target setting is not quickly followed by the development and financing of transformative projects.
- The implementation of the program revealed a general lack of availability of data at the national level on land productivity and soil organic carbon.

The Global Mechanism and its partners have published knowledge-sharing materials highlighting the linkages between the NDT and other SDOs: landscape restoration, gender equality, poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation, water management, etc. The Global Mechanism has also published a number of knowledge-sharing materials on the NDT and other SDOs.

The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) has developed a database on global commitments to the restoration and sustainable use of land and terrestrial ecosystems.

Credit:

Manon Albagnac - CARI - Sahel Désertification

The Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Fund, initiated by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and independently managed by [Mirova](#), is a first-of-its-kind impact investment fund investing in profit-generating [sustainable land management \(SLM\)](#) and land restoration projects in developing countries.

Besides long-term financing, technical assistance is provided to projects by an associated donor-funded Technical Assistance Facility managed by [IDH](#), increasing positive development impacts, reducing environmental, social, and governance (ESG) risks, and facilitating knowledge sharing.

Although the Fund targets positive impacts in terms of climate, biodiversity, fight against poverty, and promotion of gender equality and operates according to robust environmental and social standards, which are integrated into a comprehensive E&S Management System (ESMS), the report doesn't include details of the projects' impact on natural ecosystem restoration. Civil Society Organizations are concerned about the expansion of large-scale reforestation activities in Africa through the timber sector. The planted trees include introduced species as a monoculture plantation within a natural ecosystem. It is likely that one of the introduced planted tree species negatively impacts the natural ecosystem. CSOs would like to access the detailed information flow through a website or database to show how the projects are functioning and how local communities/organizations are involved in the projects' design, implementation, and evaluation processes. **READ MORE [HERE](#).**

### CSO Synthesis of the Intergovernmental Working Group on effective policy implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD: [CCD/CRIC\(19\)/4](#)

*Gender issues* – The Secretary has helped the parties to incorporate the cross-cutting gender issue both in the formulation of programs and projects, as well as in the plans and decisions of the COP. Significant progress has been made in the incorporation of gender mainstreaming in the measures for the Land Degradation Neutrality, through the generation of guidelines and tools, the development of training workshops aimed for policymakers, civil society, and the private sector. The Government of Canada will provide financial support for the Global Mechanism (GM) to provide technical support to formulators in incorporating gender issues in project interventions. In developing of national plans against drought (NDPs) both GM and the Secretariat have provided support to 63 countries for the gender mainstreaming, of which 36 have completed the process and there are 29 NDPs published on the Convention website. Since 2018, the Secretariat was incorporated into UN-SWAP showed progress in gender criteria implemented.

*Drought initiative* - Looking at more resilient communities and ecosystems moving from a reactive approach (based on the crisis) to a proactive approach (based on risk management). The Secretariat and the GM have developed technical documents, guidelines, and a technical note to facilitate national processes in the development of the NDPs. Of 73 countries that initially expressed interest in joining the drought initiative, as of October 2020, only 64 were actively participating in the preparation of their NDP, of which 59 have completed or are about to finalize the drafts. Only 41 countries completed the whole process including the national validation of the final version of NDP. Only 29 NDPs were updated and published on the website of the convention. A database of toolkit and instruments for drought management has been made. Two regional projects on drought risk management have been launched in Central Asia and Southern Africa, with the objective of developing a regional strategic management framework and building technical and institutional capacity.

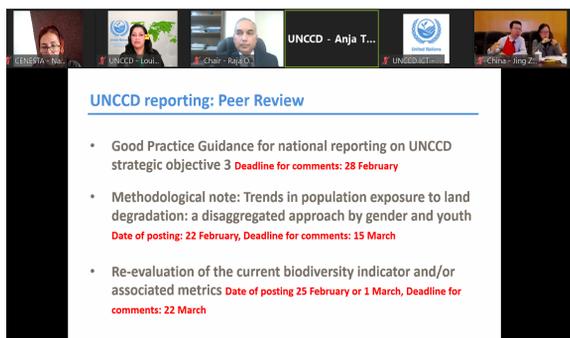
*Land tenure* - The Secretariat was requested to prepare a technical guide with FAO to integrate VGGT in the application of the Convention and the implementation of LDN, considering national contexts. The Secretariat and FAO began the process of participatory consultation for the preparation of the guidance in June 2020, in which more than 100 representatives from governments, civil society, academy, UN and intergovernmental organizations participated; five countries presented findings from case studies. Other electronic consultation sessions were held to discuss the guidelines to be included in the VGGT technical guide within the framework of the LDN, and finally the Secretariat and FAO ended up addressing the enabling factors, obstacles and advantages of integrating VGGT into the implementation of the Convention and achievement of LDN. Progress of technical guidance will be presented at CRIC19 and subsequently discussed at COP 15. **READ MORE [HERE](#).**

### Summary report on The Regional Meetings for the Parties of the Implementation

#### • Annex II (Asia): 2-4 March 2021

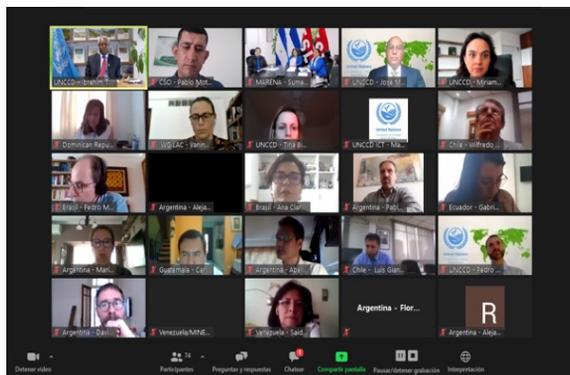
The Regional Meeting for the Parties of the Implementation Annex II/Asia was chaired by Dr. Omer Raja from Pakistan along with a reporter from South Korea. The meeting brought about 73 delegates from the Asian parties to exchange and review their progress towards the implementation of the UNCCD. The UNCCD Executive Secretary's opening speech focused on the importance of land restoration worldwide and the important role of the Asian countries in land restoration in terms of the area size and the number of the population, particularly the majority of the world poor who live in Asia. Mr. Thiaw said, 'Investing in Sustainable land Management is vital and can contribute to poverty alleviation, climate change, and reducing the biodiversity loss. The post-recovery efforts in the world should take into consideration to invest in land. Land restoration is possible and achievable if we want to restore nature and the economy. He recommended all stakeholders of the UNCCD to take responsibility for sensitizing the world on three keywords of this year's Drought Day slogan of the 17th of June "Restoration. Land. Recovery.", which is a very clear message to invest in the land". The Asian delegates addressed various topics of the CRIC19 agenda items.

During the three days of the regional meeting, various presentations were made to the delegates according to the official agenda of CRIC10 on LDN Target Setting Programme (TSP), an update on the operationalization of the LDN Fund, policy frameworks, and Intergovernmental Working Group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought. **READ MORE [HERE](#).**



#### • Annex III (Latin America and the Caribbean): 16 - 17 February 2021

Preparatory meetings of the GRULAC were chaired by Nicaragua and the rapporteur from Chile. More than 75 delegates from the countries of the region, the Secretariat members and one delegate of CSO as observer participated in the meetings. The Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw made the opening inviting the parties to identify paths and join efforts to fight against desertification and remembered that Latin America and the Caribbean have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic increasing the consequences of land degradation and drought. Six presentations were made by Secretariat members.



The main points addressed during the meetings were – to establish a new fund for the improvement of financial support mechanisms for transformative projects and programs or make the LDN Fund, led by Mirova, more flexible, and that profitability and Internal Rate Return criteria should not be an impediment to accessing the financial support in land investments; - improve the definition of drought and formulate policies based on early warning of risk management, while also remembering that cooperation between stakeholders is necessary to fight drought with programs or projects that cover regions and not just a specific country; - crucial participation of communities in the understanding of vulnerability, resilience and adaptation to extreme drought events. During the second preparatory meeting, Mr. Pablo Motta a CSO's observer requested the floor and presented to the Parties, members of GRULAC, the draft CSO statements for CRIC19 on policy frameworks related to gender, drought and land tenure.

- **Annex IV (Northern Mediterranean): 1-2 March 2021**

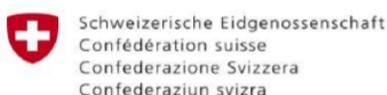
The Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Annex IV countries - Northern Mediterranean was chaired by Turkey, allowing the national representatives to review the items on the agenda of the CRIC. Representatives of the Secretariat of the Convention, the Global Mechanism and MIROVA under the Neutrality Fund, each presented in detail the contents of the reports to be discussed at the CRIC. The countries were able to ask their questions of clarification and share their experiences concerning in particular the implementation of land degradation neutrality and the drought initiative. In particular, we learn that Portugal is planning to establish its voluntary NDT targets in the near future and wishes to benefit from the sharing of experiences of other countries. Sharing of experiences is also identified as necessary regarding drought monitoring systems, and Slovenia could particularly contribute by drawing on its expertise in this area.

- **Annex V (Central and Eastern Europe): 4-5 March 2021**

The regional preparatory meeting organized for the Annex V countries was chaired by Belarus along with a reporter from Serbia and attended by 47 participants from the CEE region. In his opening speech, the UNCCD Executive Secretary emphasized that 13.5 million hectares have been pledged in CEE region calling the region to join its forces for mobilization of financial resources, pointing out some of the great initiatives like the the Great Green Wall. Having reviewed the CRIC19 official documents, CEE countries have presented and shared their contributions and experience within the voluntary national reviews. It was suggested to integrate LDN targets in the broader process of SDG implementation by - maintaining the LDN profile on a high level in the region; - organizing the capacity building support workshop and trainings; - continuing to work on mobilization of resources; - attracting more partners; focusing the UNCCD knowledge hub more on the regions; - strengthening the LDN monitoring and data collection from the region. After the presentation of the LDN Fund, the region emphasized that it is interested in a separate training by Mirova, as there's very little knowledge on the Fund in the region.



**THANKS EVERYONE FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS!**



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