

## **Synthesis note – Report by the Intergovernmental Working Group on drought**

Document ICCD/COP(15)/20 scheduled for consideration at the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention

The Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) on drought was established at COP24 by decision 23, and its mission is to take stock of existing policies, partnerships and institutional arrangements on drought preparedness and response. The objective is then to provide recommendations on measures that can be taken to effectively address this issue within the framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), with a wider holistic and integrated approach to disaster risk reduction and enhancing the resilience of communities, economies and ecosystems. It emphasizes the priority of combating drought at all scales and in both developed and developing countries. The working group also recalls that many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be achieved without a proactive fight against drought, including the SDGs on poverty, hunger, health, access to water, inequality, climate change, life on earth, etc. Hence there is the need to address the systemic drivers of drought exposure and vulnerability, impacts and overall risks.

The report provided by the working group will be considered at the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention. The report identifies weaknesses in the existing systems for drought early warning, preparedness and response as well as the gaps in the collection, transmission and use of data by stakeholders. The working group then details general recommendations to reduce the risks and impacts of drought, and lists eight immediate steps forward that can be recommended for the drafting of decisions and actions by the Parties. Finally, the relevance of a potential implementation of a drought protocol was discussed.

### **I. Numerous gaps and weaknesses**

#### **A. Gaps in data collection and needs assessments**

The working group emphasizes the need to fully integrate local data, especially from the most affected areas, into the national dialogue, especially when allocating budgets. The challenge here is the lack of financial and human capacity to carry out monitoring of vulnerabilities, of disaster and risk reduction (DDR) preparedness in the most affected areas. While the report notes the challenge of financing drought preparedness, it emphasizes the critical need to include the private sector in this financing. To bring the private sector on board, governments and public sector agencies should insist on the benefits of investing in building resilience, especially since their very business may be threatened by drought impacts. Mention is also made in the report of existing innovative financial "risk-sharing" mechanisms that can be used in this regard, including bonds, microfinance, and insurance products.

According to the working group, there is a need to invest in systematic drought monitoring and early warning systems to counter the potential adverse effects of land management interventions on drought risks, by increasing irrigation water extraction, misapplication and/or ill adapted afforestation.

#### **B. Gaps in monitoring of drought effects and effectiveness of the proactive approach**

The working group identifies weaknesses in the current systems for drought Early Warning because in the most affected areas these are not effectively triggering proactive actions early enough ahead of the onset of droughts, actions that could help limit the damage caused. In the best-case scenarios, early actions triggered by early warning systems (EWS) may include 6-12 months forward-looking food and water supply focused activities. However, to put in place sustainable land management systems, it takes much longer, between 1 and 10 years. EWS should not completely be put aside, but rather improved to allow for a more proactive approach to drought risks. Finally, sharing knowledge and experience between countries will allow those who have more difficulty in developing effective systems to learn from their neighbours.

## **II. General recommendations of the working group**

- Land-based interventions are particularly relevant to mitigate drought risks and impacts on vulnerable communities, sectors, and ecosystems. This should be an essential element of a global green recovery.
- It is essential to provide financial resources as well as access to necessary technologies to countries particularly affected by drought, especially African countries.
- The effective fight against drought can only be achieved through the establishment of early warning and drought monitoring systems in all countries, and the systematic and rigorous communication of these data to higher levels, to frequently re-evaluate and consequently increase the effectiveness of these systems and the policies taken accordingly.
- It would be appropriate for a global target (such as the 1.5 degree target of the Paris Agreement) to be established under the UNCCD in relation to drought. This could then be translated into political commitments at the national level as well as concrete measures at the local level.

## **III. Consideration of a drought protocol**

On the thorny issue of the drought protocol, some members of the working group are in favour of it, while others are fiercely opposed to it. For these defenders, this protocol would be the only solution to consider more systematically and on a larger scale the major issue of desertification. For others, a new instrument of this type would require additional financial resources and time without necessarily getting things done. The working group therefore did not reach a consensus on this issue.

The report states that it would take a minimum of two years to prepare a draft of a potential drought protocol, and much longer to come up with a legally binding agreement for the parties. An analysis of the existing institutional framework, its effectiveness and its shortcomings, would first have to be carried out to accompany any proposal for a new global action instrument.

## **IV. Recommendations to the Parties for Decision at COP15**

1. All Parties shall maintain their existing commitment to pursue concerted policies, partnerships and progressively enhanced implementation of drought risk and impact management at all levels as a continuous process.
2. Parties should request the secretariat to encourage and support Communities of Learning and Practice (CLPs) to pursue co-learning and collaboration for drought risk and impact management issues.
3. Parties with assistance of regional institutions, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders, should establish accessible, inclusive, effective monitoring, early warning and action systems that support droughtresilient ecosystems, societies and economies.
4. Parties should support the secretariat and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies including the Science and Policy Interface to enhance their capacity to assess the effectiveness of UNCCDs strategic actions addressing drought.
5. Parties should call upon the Secretariat, the Global Mechanism (GM) and other appropriate UNCCD bodies to provide additional technical knowledge and support for the development of national capacities and a global assessment process to examine and identify the financing needs and opportunities for drought management activities in relation to those already existing.
6. Parties should call upon the UNCCD Secretariat including the Global Mechanism (GM) to take stock, together with relevant multilateral and bilateral partners, of the current processes and funding levels for drought management, with a view to improve and enhance them.
7. The UNCCD should continue to strengthen and enhance as well as forge new strategic partnerships at all levels, across sectors and with different public, private and civil society organizations.
8. Parties may wish to consider a further process to continue to discuss if and which further initiatives or new institutional arrangements (e.g. drought protocol or political declaration or other) could be established.