

Synthesis note by the secretariat – The positive role that measures taken under the Convention can play to address desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) as one of the drivers that causes migration

Document ICCD/COP(15)/18 scheduled for consideration at the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was the first multilateral environmental agreement to explicitly address migration and displacement issues in the context of sustainable development. Similarly, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration adopted and endorsed by the UN General Assembly in December 2018 recognizes DLDD as one of the factors that compel people to leave their country of origin.

I. Secretariat support to Parties

The Secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) first provided support to the Great Green Wall (GGW) initiative. Following the One Planet Summit in January 2021, which saw the creation of the GGW Accelerator, the GM was asked to coordinate the GGW Accelerator, i.e. to monitor the financial and technical investments and the impact of projects being implemented.

At the request of some Central Asian countries, the Secretariat has commissioned a study which specifically aims to evaluate the prospects for creating new jobs by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and improving the skills of rural youth and migrants returning to these countries.

Similarly, at the request of some Western Balkan countries and in partnership with the Vienna-based office of the International Organization for Migration, a study was conducted by the Secretariat on the potential role that the diaspora could play in financing land restoration activities.

II. Regional and international cooperation and initiatives

The Secretariat and GM have developed various partnerships to promote sustainable land management policies to effectively address DLDD and induced migration, including with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) through the piloting of the 3S initiative. In the hope of increasing contributions, the Secretariat and IFAD are currently considering how to encourage the diaspora to contribute financially to the land restoration activities implemented by this initiative in some West African countries.

The Secretariat and IFAD are also developing a concept note and funding proposals for the ASAP+ program, IFAD's flagship program to integrate smallholder farmers into environmental and climate finance. The idea here would be to provide further support to three 3S member countries, in particular to reduce the factors of rural migration and unemployment related to climate change.

III. Cross-sectoral cooperation to share information

A. Urban-rural linkages

The Secretariat also works closely with the Policy, Legislation and Governance Section of the UN-Habitat agency, which published a report in 2019 entitled “Rural and urban communities – failing or flourishing together”, whose objective is to guide Parties in revising national and subnational rural, urban and territorial policy frameworks. The publication of a policy brief and a technical guide to strengthen synergies between implementation and monitoring approaches on urban-rural linkages and land degradation neutrality (LDN).

In this regard, a pilot project has been set up by the Secretariat and the United Nations Environment Programme in the framework of the Changwon Initiative launched at COP10, which aims to contribute to the preparation of projects and programs to facilitate the implementation of LDN on the ground. The pilot project addresses an integrated urban–rural approach to be implemented in dryland urban and peri-urban areas of Ethiopia (four locations), with a focus on agroforestry interventions incorporating integrated land use planning and sustainable value chains (e.g. coffee). Multiple development challenges are being addressed here, including rural-urban migration, food security, access to energy and ecosystem protection.

B. Climate and security

The Secretariat has been invited to contribute to the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM), a security-climate coordination mechanism affiliated with the United Nations Department of Political Affairs and Peacebuilding. Its mission is to provide regular climate risk assessments to the Security Council and other UN bodies. The secretariat has contributed to this work by describing the effects of DLDD on migration and instability in fragile areas and providing lessons learned from the 3S Initiative.

A partnership was also created in 2019 between the German think-tank aldephi and the Secretariat, with the objective of setting up a regional dialogue on climate and security issues in North Africa and the Sahel. On this occasion, a background note on this topic was drafted and widely disseminated through the climate diplomacy network.

Finally, the Secretariat has collaborated with the Dutch Clingendael Institute on events and publications related to climate security. For example, an online roundtable was co-organized by the two institutions to address this topic at the Berlin Climate Security Conference 2021.

IV. **Conclusions and recommendations**

- The Secretariat notes that since COP 14, the menu and scope of measures that play a positive role in addressing DLDD as one of the drivers that cause migration have increased and widened, and recalls that the promotion of sustainable agriculture and access to renewable energy offer promising avenues for action to stabilize rural communities, strengthen urban-rural linkages and address migration pressures.

- The Secretariat recalls that most people who migrate do so in search of better employment opportunities. Therefore, to combat migration from DLDD-affected rural areas, priority should be given to land restoration activities that create livelihoods and employment opportunities for local people.

- The Secretariat emphasizes that policy measures to create stronger rural-urban linkages will only be successful if they particularly target vulnerable groups (women, youth, migrants), and provide them with viable employment opportunities. Access to renewable energy, water, and transport infrastructure as well as more sustainable regional food supply chains are some of the entry points to offer meaningful employment and unlock the development potential of remote rural communities.

- The Secretariat also insists that these policy measures should particularly favor youth, as food systems are the world's largest employer of young people, especially in the Global South.