



**United Nations**  
Convention to Combat  
Desertification

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# PRESS KIT

SEVENTEENTH SESSION  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (CRIC 17)

**28-30 JANUARY 2019**

**ARTHUR CHUNG CONFERENCE CENTER**

**GEORGETOWN, GUYANA**

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## Requirements for Participation

The Seventeenth Session of the Committee for the Review of Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (CRIC 17) will be hosted by the Government of Guyana. The session will open on Monday, 28 January 2019. Working hours will normally be from 10:00hrs to 13:00hrs and from 15:00hrs to 18:00hrs.

## Registration

To attend the Conference, all the media representatives are required to register and obtain clearance from the Secretariat to cover the meeting. The following documentation is required to complete the online pre-registration and obtain clearance to cover the meeting:

- A letter of introduction from the bureau chief on a letterhead of the media house or publisher you will represent (freelance journalists can obtain this from the editor of a media house that is willing to support them)
- A copy of the passport, for foreigner journalists, and a government approved photo identification card, for Guyanese journalists
- A recent passport-size colour photograph not larger than 35 x 45 mm
- A valid press card (optional)
- Duly filled online accreditation form

Online pre-registration for media representatives opened on **22 November 2018** and ends on **10 January 2019**. Online pre-registration is accessible via the UNCCD CRIC17 webpage: [www.unccd.int/cric-17-online-registration](http://www.unccd.int/cric-17-online-registration) >.

Foreign journalists are especially encouraged to register online during this period in order to obtain the documentation they need to apply for visas or fundraise to attend the Conference. Journalists from Guyana are also encouraged to pre-register as this will speed up the on-site issuance of badges upon arrival at the start of the Conference.

As soon as the online registration is cleared, the UNCCD secretariat sends a QR-coded confirmation of pre-registration to each applicant by e-mail. Any foreign journalist who needs an official invitation letter should email the request with a copy of the validated confirmation to the UNCCD press office address provided at the end of this message.

Once the pre-registration period is closed, registration will resume on site just prior to the start of the Conference. Onsite registration for journalists will take place from Monday, **28 January to Wednesday, 30 January** and from **8:30 am to 12:30 pm and from 2 pm to 5 pm**. Any changes to the opening hours of the registration desk will be communicated in the Official *Journal* of the session. Those applying onsite must submit all the required documents in original, except the photo, which will be taken on site.



Pre-registered journalists will finalize their registration on-site and collect their badges at the Conference Center from **27 January 2019 through 30 January 2019** during the registration hours. To collect their badges, applicants must present the originals of the documentation that was submitted electronically. A photo will be taken on site if none was submitted electronically. Presentation of the pre-issued QR-coded confirmation letter will accelerate onsite registration.

### **Visas, Health and other Requirements**

Journalists are responsible for making their own travel arrangements and hotel reservations and for getting the required visas, health and other insurances needed to enter Guyana. All foreign journalists, including those travelling as part of their government delegation, are advised to apply for their visas early.

A visa can be obtained by visiting the closest Embassy of Guyana. Alternatively, apply online by filling the visa application form at <http://staging.doc.gov.gy/> and submitting a scanned copy of the passport bio-data page. Guidance about visas will be provided via the website mentioned above. Online visa application started on **Thursday, 26 October 2018**.

Additional information relating to the Conference in Guyana is provided in the document titled, "*Information for participants*", provided online via this link:

<[https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2018-10/CRIC17%20\\_Information%20for%20participants.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2018-10/CRIC17%20_Information%20for%20participants.pdf)>

### **Press Conferences**

The press conference will take place on Monday, 29 January 2019 either immediately following the opening plenary or at 13:15-13:45 hrs. Please check the *Daily Journal* for the exact time. It will be held in room.... with xxx Minister of Environment of Guyana and Ms. Monique Barbut, UNCCD Executive Secretary, UNCCD. No other press conference is envisioned at the end of the meeting.

### **Interviews**

Journalists are advised to contact Ms Wischnewski to arrange interview appointments involving UNCCD secretariat staff. Journalists may also contact Mr. James to arrange interviews involving staff from the Government of Guyana. The contacts of Ms. Wischnewski and Mr. James are provided at the end of this section.

The names of the interviewees listed in each of the sub-sections are proposals. Journalists are advised to contact the interviewees directly. However, if the interviewees receive too many requests for exclusive, we may arrange group meetings to facilitate their work.

### **Press Facilities and Working Modalities**

Identity badges must be worn at all times while on the Conference premises. Access to the session venue is permitted only upon presentation of a valid badge.



Access to the meeting rooms and venues depends on the accreditation form under which one participates. A dedicated working space exclusively for the press and media will be provided at the conference venue. However, media representatives need to bring their own working tools.

At least two official press conferences are envisioned: at the start and at the end of the Conference. A media kit on the Conference will be issued by 14 December 2018.

### **Media Training**

A pre-conference media training is expected to take place in Georgetown on 27 January 2019. The training is designed to enable journalists to understand the process and issues to be covered by CRIC 17 and, thereafter, by the Fourteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties to be held in Fall 2019.

### **Contact Information**

For information about accreditation, participation, interviews or other media-related inquiries, contact:

If you have questions regarding participation at CRIC 17, contact:

Ms. Wagaki Wischniewski  
Public Information and Media Officer  
UNCCD, Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1  
53113 Bonn, Germany  
Tel: +49-228-815 2820  
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Cell: +49 173 268 7593 (roaming)  
Email: [press@unccd.int](mailto:press@unccd.int)

If you have questions regarding travelling or staying Guyana or about stories to cover while in Guyana or about the media training, contact:

Mr. Royden James  
Public Relations/ Communications Officer  
Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission  
22 Upper Hadfield Street, Durban Backlands  
Georgetown, Guyana  
Office: +226 6490 EXT 1010  
Cell: +592 674 0649  
Email: [rjames@glsc.gov.gy](mailto:rjames@glsc.gov.gy)



## **CRIC 17 Substance and Documentation**

The documentation for this session is being posted on the UNCCD CRIC 17 page on a rolling basis. A special section for media is designated. All updates, including the press releases issued in relation to CRIC 17 will be available under this menu. The link to the page is here:

<https://www.unccd.int/convention/committee-review-implementation-convention-cric/cric17-28-30-january-2019-georgetown>.

## ***Agenda and Daily Journal***

The tentative agenda is also available and accessible via the link above. Once the Committee begins, a *Daily Journal* will be issued every morning. The journal contains all the events of the day, including informal or any amendments made to the agenda and additional meetings. Generally, the online version of the *Daily Journal* is issued at 00:00hrs on the day of the meeting.

## **Assessment of Implementation and Procedures for communication of information**

Monday, 28 January 2019, 10:00–13:00hrs

Tuesday, 29 January 2019, 10:00–13:00 and 15:00–18:00hrs

One of the most exciting outcomes of CRIC 17 is the possibility to answer one fundamental question: did things get better relative to where we were in 2015? Better in terms of: vegetative cover; the productivity of the land; the content of soil organic carbon; the proportion of the affected population that crossed over the poverty line; the recovery on endangered species; water quality; and financing of initiatives to fight land degradation. Further, the Committee will be in a position use the aggregated data to provide the most accurate picture to date about the status of land degradation globally.

This is largely possible because of the data size and the consistency in the method used. In total, 145 of the 197 Parties to the Convention submitted the data required to assess all of these dimensions. The data about land degradation was gathered using the same methodology, Earth Observations, and is therefore, comparable. This is not only the first time the Parties to the Convention have done so. Scientists have observed that the measurement of land degradation is the most unique when compared to the approaches being used to measure the indicators linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is a significant development considering that about 1500 different indicators of land degradation were in use between 1996 and 2009.

In 2009, on the advice of the Committee on Science and Technology, governments agreed to use 11 measurable indicators, including two mandatory ones, to assess how implementation of the Convention improves ecosystems and the living conditions of the people affected by land degradation. These were further refined to a smaller set of indicators. Using these indicators, the Parties also agreed to establish the status of the land and populations affected by land



degradation as at 2015, the base year against which they will measure whether things are getting better or worse.

Countries will report the changes every four years, with the next reporting expected in 2022. The results have added value because countries can use them to report progress in the achievement of SDG target 15.3.1 on land degradation neutrality. Scientists suggest the 2022 reporting will also be an important marker because the methodology will be repeated for the first time. It will help countries to see whether the land's health is improving or declining. Change in soil organic carbon is generally a slow process that may not show up in four years, but would do so in 8 years, which would signal a dramatic change in the land quality. By contrast, scientists expect the marker of vegetation cover due to land use change, for example, from forests to farmland to be the most evident in the short term, within a 4-year time frame. The productivity of the land may also be evident depending on the climate effects.

After the CRIC17 delegates conclude their analyses of the results from the data gathered, they will propose recommendations for action that Parties can take to change negative trends or to accelerate and amplify positive trends. They will also consider recommendations aimed at improving the quality of the data. The recommendations will form the basis for negotiations and decision-making with governments meet at their next Conference of the Parties towards the end of 2019.

For more information on this topic contact: UNCCD Lead Scientist, Barron Orr, [Borr@unccd.int](mailto:Borr@unccd.int)

### Story Ideas

1. It is generally estimated that nearly 30% of the land is degraded. But now, for the first time we have the most accurate data yet about the status of land degradation globally. What does the data tell us? Is the situation better or worse than generally assumed? What is it that the data does not tell us?
2. The LDN target is a measure of SDG 15.3.1. Some people claim that the measurement of this target is the most unique in approach so far, and the most advanced in monitoring and gathering the data. How so?
3. The assessment of the LDN target through Earth Observation data will be carried out regularly? How often? What challenges need to be overcome to ensure every country submits the data.



Interviewees (TBC)

Specialist (UNCCD)

Barron Orr (CST Secretary,  
Secretariat, Rep SPI)

Scientists

GEO LDN Initiative Co-chairs:  
Antje Hecheltjen

Niel Sims, CSIRO

Amos Kabobah, UENR

Douglas Cripe, GEO secretariat

Civil Society Organizations

Alex Zvoleff, Conservation  
International (CI)

Mariano Gonzalez-Roglich, CI

Quick Facts about land degradation

- 2 billion hectares of land are degraded globally – equal to about 30% of the Earth. 169 countries have declared they are affected by desertification, land degradation and/or drought
- Most of the degraded land can be rehabilitated and restored using a variety of techniques such as no till agriculture, *Zai*, farmer managed natural regeneration and agroforestry.
- The cost of rehabilitating a hectare of land ranges from USD20 to USD300 depending on the techniques and technologies applied
- The land degradation neutrality indicator is a powerful signal of the land's health because it integrates three dimensions – its fertility, biological diversity and content of carbon in the soil
- The restoration of degraded lands can accelerate the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals

Resources

1. Background documents on Assessment of Implementation of Strategic Objectives 1-5. Document ICCD/CRIC(17)/2, ICCD/CRIC(17)/4, ICCD/CRIC(17)/5, ICCD/CRIC(17)/6, ICCD/CRIC(17)/7, ICCD/CRIC(17)/8, ICCD/CRIC(17)/INF.2:  
<https://www.unccd.int/official-documents/cric17-georgetown-guyana-2019>
2. Global Land Outlook, *First Edition*. UNCCD 2017:  
[https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2017-09/GLO\\_Full\\_Report\\_low\\_res.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2017-09/GLO_Full_Report_low_res.pdf)





3. *A Better World: Volume 4, Life on Land, Actions and Commitments to the SDG* has a wide range and large number of examples of how degraded land is restored, and an explanation of Earth Observation. <http://library.unccd.int/Details/books/992>

#### Social Media

#CRIC17, #SDG

#### Partners organizations for the outreach

@UN

@UNEP

@UNDP

@Adamrogers

### **LDN Target Setting**

Training Fair, 25–26 January 2019

Interactive Dialogue, 28 January 2019

Over 2 billion hectares of land are degraded. Approximately 20 percent of the Earth's vegetated land surface showed persistent declining trends in productivity the space of just 15 years, from 1998 to 2013. In that year – 2013 – some 169 countries declared they are affected by desertification, land degradation and drought.

In a positive turn, 80 countries have set firm country targets and plans on how to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal target of achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN) by 2030.<sup>1</sup> Another 40 countries are in process. Simply put, a country that achieves LDN will ensure the vegetative cover, land productivity and organic carbon content in the soil, at a minimum, do not decline below the levels they were at in 2015. Each of these countries has set targets after consulting with a broad range of stakeholders in their countries. The targets are then given teeth through a designated formal process, such as legislation, executive order or domestic law-making process.

CRIC 17 delegates will focus on LDN in two forms: a training fair and an interactive dialogue. The Training Fair titled, *Perspectives on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Implementation*, will take place on 24–25 January. The objective is to deepen understanding between the LDN target-setting processes as a basis to boost action and mobilize finance to achieve LDN. During the training key partners engaged in supporting countries in this endeavour, such as the Secretariats of the Global Environment Facility and the Green Climate Fund, and implementing partners such as International Union of the Conservation of Nature, Food and Agriculture Organization of the

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<sup>1</sup> SDG Goal 15, Target 15.3.1 aims to “combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.”



United Nations, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Environment Programme, with share their views on LDN.

The training is expected to help participants understand the LDN concept and identify key approaches to promote LDN implementation. It will also help the UNCCD to uncover any critical gaps to be fixed to facilitate a smooth and systematic process from setting of targets to promoting action on the ground.

The Interactive Dialogue on *Progress made in setting land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets and advancing LDN implementation* will take place on Monday afternoon, 28 January between 3 and 6pm. The focus is a retrospective and in depth look at the target setting process in order to draw out the most important lessons learned. It is expected that taking stock of the impact that the UNCCD-supported exercises had in implementing the SDG target will show whether the approach can be applied to support policy development and to diagnose challenges faced in other areas of the Convention at the country-level. Delegates are also expected to identify and agree on a few key recommendations to push forward the momentum gained so far. The Conference of the Parties will decide which of recommendations to act on when it meets at the end of 2019.

For more information on this topic contact: Sven Walter, [swalter@unccd.int](mailto:swalter@unccd.int)

#### Story ideas

At least 120 of the 197 UN Member States are developing national targets for one of the 169 Sustainable Development Goal targets to be achieved by 2030.

1. How does progress in this achievement compare to the other 168 targets? Which other targets/goals are benefitting from this achievement, and how?
2. How well is the Caribbean region positioned in this regard?
3. What are the top five priorities for action identified under target setting

#### Background Reading Material

1. Official document titled, *Progress made in setting land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets and advancing towards LDN implementation (interactive dialogue session)*, document # ICCD/CRIC(17)/3: <https://www.unccd.int/official-documents/cric17-georgetown-guyana-2019/iccdcric173>
2. Progress in LDN Target Setting by countries: <https://www.unccd.int/actions/ldn-target-setting-programme>
3. Pilot Country Reports: <https://knowledge.unccd.int/knowledge-products-and-pillars/ldn-target-setting-building-blocks/lessons-learned-14-pilot-4>
4. The Global Land Outlook. *First Edition*.

#### Partners organizations for the outreach

@GEF, @GCF, @IUCN, @UNEP, @FAO, @UNDP



## Innovative Financing

Interactive Dialogue, 29 January 2019

Land that becomes barren has a financial cost. From the 2 billion hectares of land that is barren globally, an estimated 6.3-10.6 trillion USD every year – about USD870 -1,450 per person of ecosystem services is lost every year.<sup>2</sup> In Africa, for instance, the loss of 280 million tonnes of cereal crops could be prevented by managing soil effectively in about 105 million hectares of land.<sup>3</sup> For a poor country such as Central African Republic, the cost of land degradation is [equivalent to about 40% of the country's Gross Domestic Product](#) is a substantial loss.

From 2012-2016, close to 13.1 billion USD was contributed – in the context of the Convention – to address issues relating to land degradation or mitigate the effects of drought in the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid regions of the world. This translates to about 2.8 billion USD per year, and to an increase of 12% over the 2007-2011 period. The analysis<sup>4</sup> by UNCCD from the reports submitted by the Parties to the Convention also shows that domestic resources targeted for these actions increased or remained stable in about 66% of the countries. In addition, 39% of the countries also raised funds from innovative sources of finance.

Past initiatives to restore degrading land have relied on development assistance. But there is growing recognition that actions to avoid, reduce or reverse land degradation are not just financially viable; they are economically sensible and sound. On average, one US dollar invested to recover degraded land returns 5 USD.<sup>5</sup> A key obstacle is the mismatch between the long time (at least 5-10 years) it takes land users to show results and the short-time (maximum 5 years) that politicians need to demonstrate positive results for their investments they made.<sup>6</sup>

The Interactive Dialogue on *Identifying emerging innovative financing and opportunities to combat land degradation* has three objectives: (i) to highlight innovative approaches that countries can develop to access additional resources for the Convention's activities from the traditional finance mechanisms; (ii) to introduce new sources of finance, such as the Green Climate Fund, that have not be sufficiently tapped into; and (iii) to showcase innovative public-private-partnerships financing approaches that involve the private sector and civil society organizations.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/pdf/ELD-SRPS\\_08\\_screen\\_150dpi.pdf](http://www.eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/pdf/ELD-SRPS_08_screen_150dpi.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/pdf/ELD-unep-report\\_07\\_spec\\_72dpi.pdf](http://www.eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/pdf/ELD-unep-report_07_spec_72dpi.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> UNCCD, 2018. *Preliminary analysis – strategic objective 5: To mobilize substantial and additional financial and non-financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention by building effective partnerships at global and national level.*

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.zef.de/eld.html>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/pdf/ELD-main-report\\_en\\_10\\_web\\_72dpi.pdf](http://www.eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/pdf/ELD-main-report_en_10_web_72dpi.pdf)



The Dialogue is expected to generate ideas about innovative fundraising and financing approaches that could benefit the implementation of the Convention both in bringing new money as well as helping parties to access resources that already exist.

For more information on this topic contact: Juan Carlos Mendoza, [JMendoza@unccd.int](mailto:JMendoza@unccd.int)

#### Story Ideas

1. Start-up ideas to tend degraded land and make it a sustainable business
2. How to pitch a project on improving barren land and generate jobs in rural areas
3. The role of pension funds in investing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG15
4. Why investing in land make sense for impact investors

#### Contacts of Interviewees (TBC)

#### Background Reading Material

5. Official document titled: *Preliminary analysis – strategic objective 5: To mobilize substantial and additional financial and non-financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention by building effective partnerships at global and national level, document no. ICCD/CRIC(17)/7.* : <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2018-11/cric7%20-%20advance.pdf>
6. Economics of Land Degradation Initiative, Report for the Private Sector. [http://www.eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/pdf/ELD-SRPS\\_08\\_screen\\_150dpi.pdf](http://www.eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/pdf/ELD-SRPS_08_screen_150dpi.pdf)
7. The Cost of land degradation by country: <https://www.unccd.int/actions/ldn-target-setting-programme/ldn-country-profiles>

#### Partners organizations for the outreach

@GEF

@GCF

## **Gender**

Training Fair: 25-26 January 2019

Interactive Dialogue: Monday, 28 January 2019, 16:30 to 18:00 PM

The Convention text agreed in 1994 gives women a prominent role in the global efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. Although a lot of decisions were taken in the past to mainstream gender, last year, the governments bound by the Convention adopted their first-ever Gender Action Plan (GAP). The goal of the Action plan is to support and enhance the implementation of the gender-related decisions and mandates the Parties have agreed to since 1996 when the Convention became legal. In particular, the GAP targets four key areas of action – land rights, access to resources, access to technology and knowledge, and participation in



decision-making. These are considered necessary means for women to both achieve the Convention's objectives goals and gender equality. The GAP is considered as an important tool for making the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework gender-responsive<sup>7</sup> by improving the living conditions of the populations affected by desertification<sup>8</sup> and increasing the resilience of communities to drought.<sup>9</sup>

The governments also agreed to roll-out the action plan when implementing the LDN Transformative Projects and the Drought Initiative, to build the required capacities through partnerships to support gender-responsiveness and use the lessons learned to refine and improve the Action Plan before their next meeting in Fall 2019. In this connection, they expressed interest in holding consultations about the effectiveness of the GAP based on the pilot experiences. The CRIC 17 interactive session on gender is organized in response to these actions.

The Interactive dialogue is an opportunity to provide feedback and/or share the first experiences in GAP implementation and to utilize the expertise of partners and Parties in order to refine approaches going forward. Delegates will have the opportunity to consult on how to effectively and meaningfully implement the GAP at national and project levels, to identify factors that are bottlenecks to success, to refine the approach on reporting and documenting results achieved and to make suggestions about how the gender equality agenda can be further enhanced. The discussions and recommendations deriving from this interactive session will be included in the final report of CRIC 17, which will be used to draft related decisions to be considered by the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 14).

The interactive dialogue will bring contributions from a panel of speakers composed of three (3) country Parties, an inter-governmental organization and a representative of the civil society in order to capture their different experiences. Some of the planned areas of focus are:

- Benefits of gender-responsive implementation of the Convention (National success story/experience/lessons learned)
- Documenting evidence: Collecting sex-disaggregated data for monitoring, evaluation and reporting (Good praxis/national experience – lessons learned)
- Why the GAP is an important milestone for gender equality and how to move the gender equality agenda forward? ( Support for implementation/Potential future focus areas )
- Ways and means towards a gender responsive implementation of the convention especially with an eye on successful LDN transformative projects (experience of lessons learned /entry points /recommendations )
- What UNCCD parties can do to reduce or eliminate gender discrimination in land rights/productive resources?

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<sup>7</sup> Decision 7/COP3 paragraph 3

<sup>8</sup> Strategic Objective 2.3

<sup>9</sup> Strategic Objective 3.2



For more information, contact: Corinna Voigt, [cvoigt@unccd.int](mailto:cvoigt@unccd.int)

### Story Ideas

1. Sex disaggregated data are paramount for meaningful gender analysis to happen. Which countries have made good progress? What obstacles have they overcome?
2. What examples exist of gender mainstreaming in LDN target setting and the drought initiatives?
3. What are the top five concerns identified on mainstreaming gender in pursuing land degradation neutrality and mitigating the effects of drought?

### Background Documents

1. Preliminary Analysis – strategic objective 2: To improve the living conditions of affected populations. Note by the secretariat document No. ICCD/CRIC(17)/4
2. Gender Plan of Action: [https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2018-01/GAP%20ENG%20%20low%20res\\_0.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2018-01/GAP%20ENG%20%20low%20res_0.pdf)
3. Website: <https://www.unccd.int/actions/gender-action-plan>

### Social Media

#### ***Hashtags (TBD)***

### Organizational partners

@IUCN  
@GEF  
@UNWomen  
@GGCA

## **Drought Initiative**

Training Fair, 25-26 January 2019

Drought is no longer limited to dry lands. It is affecting every climatic region. Seventy countries are regularly hit by drought, and more than 20 have declared a national emergency related to drought in the last two years. Rainfall will become more erratic, with longer and deeper periods of drought due to climate change. The typical impacts of drought include reduced crop yields, reduced soil moisture, drying out of water bodies, water supply shortages, power outages, degraded health, stalled economic momentum, migration and even death of people, animals and wildlife as well as high child mortality and stunted growth in children, condemning generations into lifetime of poverty.

Last September, the Conference of the Parties requested the UNCCD secretariat to implement a drought initiative during the 2018-2019 biennium. The Initiative elaborates actions to put in place



drought preparedness systems to boost the resilience of people and ecosystems against droughts. A proactive approach to drought can reduce the often disastrous impacts droughts have on livelihoods and economies. Only a few countries, such as USA, Australia, Mexico, China, Chile, Turkey, Thailand, Greece and Austria, had a national drought preparedness plan at the time the Initiative was agreed. Today, 44 countries are engaged in the drought initiative, and are developing their national drought plans. The first drafts are expected to be ready by January 2019.

The 2-day training fair on drought has two objectives. First, to continue the help to countries to build drought resilience by setting up drought preparedness systems. An interactive learning experience for up to 20 countries will provide analyses of the bottlenecks of and opportunities for Drought preparedness. Second, to support countries by providing them with “a toolbox” of recognized techniques from which to choose the best fit for action once they determine the right course of action, given their specific circumstances. The toolbox is a one stop-shop containing drought risk mitigation tools and methods. It is being developed by the UNCCD and its partners, including UN Environment Programme (UNEP), World Meteorological Office (WMO), and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

There are four expected outcomes. First, participants will receive training on the development of national drought plans. Second, they will use the opportunity for mutual learning and exchange of experiences to further refine the draft plans in readiness for finalization before COP14. Third, using a “simulation” exercise, they will generate drought monitoring and communications approaches and vulnerability and impact assessment. Fourth, participants will receive practical training on the land management tools/techniques in the *drought toolbox* that are used in the field to mitigate drought risk/response.

The training is organized in partnership with WMO and FAO, in collaboration with UNEP and UN Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

For more information on this topic contact: Daniel Tsegai, [DTsegai@unccd.int](mailto:DTsegai@unccd.int)

### Story Ideas

Droughts have devastated vulnerable communities especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America since the turn of the Millennium.

1. What barriers hindered progress in the past?
2. What can we expect going forward? Have the countries that have suffered the most severe or frequent impacts developed their plans?
3. How do the drought plans of Colombia, Namibia, Ethiopia and Kenya compare to those of Australia and United States?
4. What are the five most important safeguards for protecting vulnerable communities from drought?



### Contacts of Interviewees (TBC)

Government

Trevor Benn (Guyana NFP)

Scientist

Expert

Robert Stefanski (WMO)

Eduardo Mansour (FAO)

### Quick Facts about Drought

- Food shortages and price increases may triple by 2040 because of extreme and erratic weather, mainly drought. But this is not a problem for the future. It is a problem for the here and now.
- In a recent FAO report, drought emerged - by far- as the single most destructive natural disaster costing farmers in the developing world billions of dollars each year (USD 29 billion from 2005-2015).
- Globally, the cost of droughts is estimated to be around USD80 billion/ year<sup>10</sup>. This does not include indirect impacts, such as the effects of increased salinity, the quality of water (human health) or other far-reaching social and economic impacts, for example, conflict and civil unrest, migration and food security.
- Droughts are 4 times costlier for economies than floods (World Bank report)<sup>11</sup>. The same report also shows that droughts wipe out enough produce to feed 81 million people (equivalent to the population of Germany) every day for the entire year.<sup>12</sup>

### Social Media

#drought

### Partners organizations for the outreach

@WMO

@UNISDR

@UNEP

### Facebook Live

Recording of the training

## **Sand and Dust Storms**

Training Fair, 25-26 January 2019

Sand and dust storms (SDS) directly affect 151 or 77% of the UNCCD country parties, of which 45 countries, or 23% of the parties, are classified as SDS source areas. Most of the source countries - 38 of 45 - are in Africa and Asia.<sup>13</sup> Sand and Dust storms cross boundaries,<sup>14</sup> carry pollutants that

<sup>10</sup> Carolwicz (1996), Natural hazards need not lead to natural disasters. *EOS* 77(16): 149-153.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.myndnow.com/news/bismarck-news/floods-are-bad-but-droughts-may-be-worse/843747476>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-drought-development/droughts-wipe-out-enough-to-feed-81-million-people-world-bank-idUSKBN1CT2ER>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/9/6/1053/htm>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/26/orange-snow-transforms-eastern-europe-into-mars>





have negative impacts on health,<sup>15</sup> and may even kill and cause injury and property loss.<sup>16</sup> Dust pollution in West Africa increases infant and child mortality.<sup>17</sup>

In the past, most governments tackled these growing challenges either on their own or as regional organizations. In September 2017, the Parties to the Convention recognized the Convention as an appropriate platform to address sand and dust storms, and took a first step towards tackling the menace together. Parties are invited to explore the anthropogenic sources of sand and dust storms, mainstream sand and dust storms in national disaster risk reduction policies and cooperate and facilitate information exchange and share and transfer knowledge to affected areas.<sup>18</sup>

Titled, *Building Resilience to Sand and Dust Storms*, the training fair which will be held on 25-26 January 2019 at the Arthur Chung Conference Center in Georgetown, Guyana, has four objectives. First, participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of how to manage the risks associated with sand and dust storms. Second, they will be exposed to several frameworks for policy and decision making. Third, participants will learn the tools and techniques of SDS risk management and policy making. Fourth, participants will develop and implement a comprehensive national SDS policy/plan/programme model, complete with first-hand experiences and evidence.

There are three expected outcomes. First, the report of the meeting will inform and contribute some of the background materials prepared on this issue in preparation for the Fourteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties. Second, the contributions by the participants will provide input for the finalization of the technical guide and toolbox on sand and dust storms that is being developed. Third, the session is expected to develop an outline of what a comprehensive national SDS policy, plan or programme may look like. The outputs considered at CRIC17 will provide valuable input for COP14 to be held in Fall 2019.

The training is organized in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme and World Meteorological Organization.

For more information on this topic contact: Utchang Kang, [ukang@unccd.int](mailto:ukang@unccd.int)

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<sup>15</sup> <https://tidsskriftet.no/en/2017/10/global-helse/vanishing-aral-sea-health-consequences-environmental-disaster>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/surge-in-dust-storms-in-india-due-to-change-in-global-wind-patterns-1272436-2018-06-28>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/materials/papers/csae-wps-2016-03.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Decision 31/COP13.



### Story Ideas

- Sand and dust storms have been around for Millennia. There are sand storms and dust storms? Which of these two threats is worse or presents a bigger threat? Why should the world be concerned about either sand or dust storms?
- The toolkit for addressing sand and dust-storms is nearly complete. What you need to know about it?

### Contacts of Interviewees

TBD

### Background Reading Material

1. UNCCD page on sand and dust storms: <https://www.unccd.int/actions/sand-and-dust-storms>
2. UNCCD Policy Framework for Sand and Dust Storms:  
[https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-09/ICCD\\_COP\(13\)\\_19\\_Corr.1-1714882E.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-09/ICCD_COP(13)_19_Corr.1-1714882E.pdf)
3. Global Assessment of Dust and Sand Storms:  
<http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/7681>

### Social Media

@WMO

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification?**

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (UNCCD), was adopted on 17 June 1994 in Paris, France, and entered into force in 1996. The Convention has 197 Parties. It is implemented on the basis of five regional implementation annexes; for Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean. For more information on the regional annexes see Fact Sheets 11-15 available online at the following address: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/regions>

At the 20-year review of the Rio Conference in June 2012, world leaders called for global action in three key areas in the context of the Convention. First, to *strive towards a land-degradation neutral world* so that land degradation does not exceed the pace of land rehabilitation and its recovery from degradation. Second, to monitor, globally, land degradation and land restoration. Third, to strengthen the scientific basis of the Convention.

### **What is the mandate of the Convention?**

The objective of the Convention is to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought by taking effective action at all levels through international cooperation and partnership in order to achieve sustainable development in the affected areas. In 2017, the Conference of the Parties adopted the 2018-2030 strategic framework to implement the Convention, with five strategic objectives to be achieved during this period. The 2018-2030 strategic framework is available in all UN languages at: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/about-convention>

### **Why Does the Issue Matter?**

The issues of desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) are still overlooked in political and private sector agendas at all levels. Therefore, raising awareness about the human impacts - both costs and benefits - of decisions on land management and ecosystems is vital, for timely action. More so as the negative effects of climate change on degraded land are increasingly evident.

The pressures on our land resources are huge, and expected to grow due to competing demands for its use, particularly to meet the very basic demands of food, water and energy. And at the same time, a significant proportion of the natural and managed ecosystems are in decline.



Over the last two decades alone, about 20 percent of the Earth's vegetated surface has shown consistent declines in productivity. Furthermore, land degradation negatively affects more than 1.3 billion people living directly off these lands and over 3.2 billion negatively impacted.<sup>19</sup>

Land degradation can manifest in many ways. For example, over 150 UNCCD country parties are affected directly by Sand and Dust Storms, with 45 of these classified as SDS source areas.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, over 70 countries are regularly hit by drought. In the last two years alone, more than 20 countries declared a national emergency due to drought. Already, more two decades ago, the direct impacts of drought were estimated to cost about USD80 billion per year,<sup>21</sup> and they are projected to grow in their spread, severity and frequency. Long term droughts, for instance, will become three times more common.<sup>22</sup> These realities do not bode well for the future, when considered in the context of a changing climate that will bring about more extreme and erratic weather.

### What is CRIC?

The Parties to the Convention meet every two years in a Conference – the Conference of the Parties (COP) – to negotiate and take decisions for collective action. Their next meeting, the Fourteenth Session of the Conference of Parties (COP 14) in fall 2019, is tentatively scheduled to take place in Bonn, Germany, unless a government offers to host it. In between COP sessions, the Parties work through a bureau that they elect, known as the COP Bureau, which is headed by a COP President.<sup>23</sup> In practice, it is the country that hosted the last COP.

Preparations for the COP sessions are *made inter alia through* the Convention's subsidiary bodies that eventually prepare options and recommendations for action that the COP considers and decides on. The main task for the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) is to assess the progress the countries have made in carrying out past decisions along the strategic framework for implementing the Convention. Once they agree on the achievements and shortcomings, they agree on various options for future action and propose them for the COP to consider. Additional information about the current mandate of the CRIC and the reports of their meetings are available here: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/committee-review-implementation-convention-cric>

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<sup>19</sup> Data from *The Global Land Outlook* (UNCCD 2017) and *The Assessment of Land Degradation* (IPBES 2018).

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/9/6/1053/htm>.

<sup>21</sup> Carolwicz (1996), Natural hazards need not lead to natural disasters. EOS 77(16):149-153.

<sup>22</sup> Sheffield, J and Eric F Wood (2007). Projected Changes in drought occurrence under future global warming for multi-model, multi-scenario, IPCC AR4 Simulations, accessed 12 December 2018, <https://iri.columbia.edu/~blyon/REFERENCES/P32.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> For more information on the COP see Article 22 of the Convention.



## Why is CRIC 17 Important?

Composed of all Parties to the Convention, along with other stakeholders, CRIC 17 will take place in Georgetown, Guyana, from 28-30 January 2019. More information is available here: <https://www.unccd.int/actions/achieving-land-degradation-neutrality>

This is the first time countries have reported on the extent of degraded land globally. This is a major turning point for the Convention. It is also the first time countries all over the world are reporting on the LDN target in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thus, a major output expected from CRIC 17 is a review of the baselines reported by Parties against which they will report their progress in combatting land degradation going forward, at least up to 2030.

CRIC 17 is the first time Parties will have the opportunity to assess data on land degradation that is based on the same three indicators - land cover, soil organic carbon and net primary productivity - that is gathered across these countries, using the same scientific approach. The Parties are expected to discuss: (i) the possibility of establishing baselines for these three indicators and (ii) how to use these baselines to monitor implementation over the next 4 years, when the next review is due.

The other major output is a preliminary assessment of the progress the international community is making in its five strategic areas of action: (i) improving the condition of ecosystems affected by desertification/land degradation; (ii) improving the condition of affected populations; (iii) mitigating, adapting to and managing the effects of drought; (iv) generating global benefits; and (v) mobilizing substantial and additional resources to support the implementation of the Convention. The assessment will be based on progress made in three indicators: the population living below the relative poverty line and/or income inequality in affected areas; access to safe drinking water; and abundance and distribution of selected species.<sup>24</sup>

Delegates at CRIC 17 will also engage in three issue-oriented interactive dialogues. They will consider the implementation of the voluntary land degradation neutrality targets. So far, 120 countries have committed to implement these targets. The dialogue on gender will focus on the stakeholders' initial experiences in implementing the Gender Action Plan that was adopted in September 2017. The third dialogue will attempt to identify innovative financing opportunities to combat land degradation.

The detailed agenda of CRIC 17 is available here: [https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2018-11/CRIC1%20-%20advance\\_0.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2018-11/CRIC1%20-%20advance_0.pdf).

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<sup>24</sup> See the UNCCD Reporting Template: [https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2018-07/UNCCD\\_template\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2018-07/UNCCD_template_EN.pdf).



All the documents related to CRIC 17 will be posted here: <https://www.unccd.int/official-documents/cric17-georgetown-guyana-2019>

The Soil Leadership Academy, which is a part-sponsor of CRIC 17, will hold a training fair on the issues of drought, gender, land degradation neutrality and sand and dust storms, back-to-back with CRIC 17.

### **What facilities are available to the media?**

A press area will be available at the Conference Centre for use by accredited media. It will have network ports for use as well as a wireless network throughout the conference area. The venue for the press conferences will be communicated to the media in a timely manner via the daily journal, conference monitors and media advisories.

### **Can I get funded to attend CRIC 17?**

In recognition of media independence, the secretariat does not provide financial or travel support for media. The secretariat will ensure all *bona fide* media representatives get their accreditation swiftly once they apply, to enable them to mobilize the resources they need to participate. Online applications for registration and accreditation for CRIC17 are open until 10 January 2019. To register, go to: <https://reg.unog.ch/event/27508/>

Additional information about accommodation and local travel is provided in the *Information note for Participants*.<sup>25</sup> A list of hotels in Georgetown including indicative rates is posted on the CRIC17 website.

On occasion, the UNCCD secretariat supports the participation of media in order to build their capacity to report on this issue effectively. For CRIC17, the UNCCD in collaboration with the Government of Guyana, will sponsor the participation of a few journalists from the Caribbean region to cover CRIC 17 and participate in a media training to be held back-to-back with CRIC17. Selection will follow a transparent, competitive selection process. For details, see: <https://www.unccd.int/news-events/cric17-media-training-call-applications>

### **When can I pick up my access badge?**

Registration for the media will take place in accordance with the registration schedule of all participants. Journalists can pre-register online before 10 January 2019. Pre-registered journalists will get a confirmation of their participation before the conference begins. After that date all registration will take place on site starting on Sunday 27 January 2019. Detailed information about the exact dates and times is available in the *Information for Participants*, available on the CRIC17 website: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/committee-review-implementation-convention-cric/cric17-28-30-january-2019-georgetown>.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.unccd.int/convention/committee-review-implementation-convention-cric/cric17-28-30-january-2019-georgetown>