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Final report by the Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought

Summary

The Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought (IWG on Drought) was established by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification at its fifteenth session and tasked with identifying and evaluating all options to effectively manage drought under the Convention, including supporting a shift from reactive to proactive drought risk management. This document constitutes the final report of the IWG on Drought.



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I. Executive summary

1. Drought has devastating social, ecological and economic impacts. The need to build drought-resilient systems is imminent. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) has a unique mandate and position to foster drought management at all levels.

2. At its fifteenth session (2022), the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to establish an Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought (IWG on Drought) during the triennium 2022–2024 tasked with identifying and evaluating all options, including, inter alia, global policy instruments and regional policy frameworks, and linking, where relevant, to national plans, as appropriate, to effectively manage drought under the Convention, including supporting a shift from reactive to proactive drought management (see decision 23/COP.15).

3. The IWG on Drought convened a total of six in-person meetings and multiple hybrid and virtual meetings between November 2022 and June 2024. The group explored a broad range of options. Seven options have been derived for consideration by the COP at its sixteenth session (COP 16) from an originally compiled list of 48 options.

4. The presentation of each option includes a definition, possible elements, processes, institutional arrangements and mechanisms for establishment, as well as an evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). The different characteristics and SWOTs provide the justifications to present all options as suitable to improve the effective management of drought under the Convention. All options presented are compatible, and combinations of options may be envisaged.

5. The options are presented below in alphabetical order:

(a) **Amendment to the Convention:** This option refers to the formal alteration of the provisions contained in the UNCCD, which is a legally binding agreement under international law. The amendment is therefore also legally binding;

(b) **COP decision on collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF):** This option implies adopting a COP decision on collaboration with the GEF, aiming to strengthen the programmatic relevance of and the funding for building drought resilience;

(c) **COP guidance to the Global Mechanism (GM):** This option implies adopting a COP decision that provides guidance to the GM, aiming to strengthen the capacity of affected Parties to access finance and implement their national drought plans, thus contributing to a more proactive drought management;

(d) **Global framework on drought resilience:** This option is an overarching strategic policy instrument which would imply setting a global goal and time-bound targets and indicators; proposed actions to achieve these targets; and the establishment of monitoring and learning systems;

(e) **Political declaration:** This option is a formal statement, proclamation, or announcement of intent, generally signed by high-level representatives. In this case, the political declaration could be the outcome of a high-level segment of the COP;

(f) **Protocol:** This option is a legally binding instrument adopted under the Convention that can offer a broad and comprehensive legal approach to addressing drought at all levels. It outlines specific commitments for the Parties that ratify it, and includes provisions on principles, goal(s) and targets, and institutional arrangements;

(g) **Special and ambitious COP decision on drought:** COP decisions are resolutions made by the COP which offer a quick and continuous process for the implementation of the Convention. This option refers to a COP decision that would focus on drought and include special and ambitious clauses.

6. Regarding the structure of the report, the relevant context is provided in section II; the findings on each option are presented in section III; and final remarks, including overarching considerations for all the options, are provided in section IV.

7. The options are presented in alphabetical order to avoid any hierarchy. The group decided not to rank options and to instead focus on providing an objective assessment to COP 16 to adopt, develop and implement policy instruments to address drought issues.

II. Introduction

8. Drought has devastating social, ecological and economic impacts. Recent drought events are unprecedented and demonstrate these far-reaching impacts on all sectors, such as agriculture, energy, transportation and health. Several factors contribute to the increasing impacts. While drought is partially a natural phenomenon of climate variability, the climate crisis is increasing drought frequency, severity and duration for decades to come, and the immediate effects are already being felt. In addition, global warming is increasing rapid onset/intensification of droughts (flash droughts). Land, soil and vegetation degradation reduce the buffer capacities of land for water and favour both the emergence and impacts of droughts. Overexploitation and unsustainable use of water exacerbate impacts on the resilience of ecosystems and on – growing – populations residing in drought-vulnerable places. While drought affects people from all nations, it has a disproportionate impact on communities in vulnerable situations, especially in those countries prone to drought and/or desertification.

9. The need to build drought-resilient systems is imminent. Drought is a global threat and requires global solutions. Droughts can cause ecosystem dysfunction or collapse; they contribute to climate change and biodiversity loss, threaten agricultural systems, food security, incomes and livelihoods, destabilize communities and societies, and contribute to migration and conflicts. The losses of lives and economic impacts are the highest of all natural disasters, and are estimated to be in the billions of United States dollars annually.¹

10. The UNCCD has a unique mandate and position to foster drought management at all levels, in particular but not exclusively in combination with efforts to promote sustainable land management and achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN). However, the understanding of what drought risk management encompasses has gradually changed since the UNCCD's creation. The need to enhance action is recognized and reflected in many decisions adopted under the UNCCD in recent years.

11. Actions at the global level which can trigger improved and proactive drought management at all levels include: (i) raising political and public awareness; (ii) fostering political will; (iii) identifying and disseminating proactive and integrated drought risk management practices; (iv) collecting and sharing knowledge; (v) mainstreaming drought management considerations into all relevant policy areas, including integrated water resource management, disaster risk reduction, agriculture, nature conservation, and security; (vi) implementing the three pillars of integrated drought management (monitoring and early warning; risk and impact assessment; and risk mitigation, preparedness and response); (vii) mobilizing resources; (viii) monitoring, evaluation and learning; and (ix) linking with other global processes and actors, including those working on climate change and biodiversity loss.

12. At its fifteenth session (2022), the COP, building upon the work of the Intergovernmental Working Group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD conducted over the biennium 2020–2021, decided to establish a new IWG on Drought during the triennium 2022–2024 (see decision 23/COP.15, para. 13). The COP also decided that the IWG on Drought would have the following terms of reference: (a) Review and analyse all the reports which came out of the (first) IWG on Drought, as well as other relevant documents and COP decisions related to drought; (b) Identify and evaluate all options, including, inter alia, global policy instruments and regional policy frameworks, and linking, where relevant, to national plans, as appropriate, to effectively manage drought under the Convention, including supporting a shift from reactive to proactive drought management; and (c) Prepare justifications and outline possible

¹ Tsegai D. et al. (2023), *Global Drought Snapshot – the need for proactive action*. Bonn, UNCCD. <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2023-12/Global%20drought%20snapshot%202023.pdf>.

elements, processes, institutional arrangements and mechanisms for establishment for each policy option (see decision 23/COP.15, para. 14).

13. According to decision 23/COP.15, para. 15, the IWG on Drought should have the following members: three representatives nominated by each of the regional groups (the five Regional Implementation Annexes, the European Union and its Members States, and the group known as JUSCANZ²). Additionally, the IWG on Drought included two representatives from civil society organizations as observers; two independent experts; and two representatives from international organizations. The IWG on Drought was co-chaired by Mr. Alfred Prospere and Mr. Michael Brüntrup. The UNCCD secretariat supported the work of the IWG on Drought and serviced its meetings.

14. The IWG on Drought convened a total of six meetings, held in-person with possibilities of virtual participation: first meeting (November 2022, in Bonn, Germany); second meeting (March 2023, in Yerevan, Armenia); third meeting (June 2023, in Madrid, Spain); fourth meeting (November 2023, in Samarkand, Uzbekistan); fifth meeting (March 2024, in La Serena, Chile); and sixth meeting (June 2024, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia). In addition, the IWG on Drought held several virtual meetings and also worked through smaller task groups over the period 2023–2024. Several experts were invited over the course of the work of the IWG on Drought to present specific aspects of some options. Two meetings were held with the Intergovernmental Working Group to Oversee the UNCCD 2018–2030 Midterm Evaluation Process: One physical meeting was held during the twenty-first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), and one virtual meeting was held in May 2024.

15. This document constitutes the final report of the IWG on Drought and provides its findings, which consist of seven options with their respective descriptions and evaluations, in line with the IWG on Drought's terms of reference and in the form of a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis. All options presented in this report will have to interact with national plans to effectively manage drought.

III. Findings – seven options to effectively manage drought under the Convention

16. In line with the IWG on Drought's terms of reference, the options presented³ in this report for consideration at COP 16 are described below, including their definition, possible elements, processes, institutional arrangements and mechanisms. Building on these descriptive components, the IWG on Drought has prepared a SWOT analysis for each option, which constitute their justifications.

17. For purposes of the analyses presented in this report, the common understanding of SWOT has been slightly adapted, and the definitions are as follows:

- (a) **Strengths** = Positive characteristics that show the potential of the option to enhance the effective management of drought under the Convention;
- (b) **Weaknesses** = Negative characteristics that undermine the potential of the option to enhance the effective management of drought under the Convention;
- (c) **Opportunities** = Anticipated developments that could boost the effective implementation of the option, or possible positive effects that could result from the establishment and implementation of the option;
- (d) **Threats** = Risks that could hamper the establishment or the effective implementation of the option, or possible negative effects that could result from the establishment and implementation of the option.

² Japan, United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

³ It should be noted that the options presented are limited to the mandate of and the policy options that could be promoted by the UNCCD.

A. Amendment to the Convention

1. Definition

18. A United Nations convention is a legally binding agreement under international law signed and ratified by sovereign states, and an “amendment to a convention” refers to the formal alteration of the provisions contained therein. An amendment is therefore also legally binding.

19. Amendments are generally used to make minor changes to very specific parts of a convention; however, a broader and comprehensive amendment of the UNCCD could also be envisaged.

20. Amendments to the UNCCD are governed by its own clauses – Articles 30 and 31, in particular – and by the Vienna Convention of the Law of the Treaties for matters not specified in the text of the UNCCD. An amendment to the UNCCD could modify any part of it, both by deleting or adding text. If a Party to the UNCCD does not ratify an amendment, that Party continues to be bound by the original text.

21. There are numerous relevant precedents that could be recalled from other treaties (including conventions and protocols), such as:

(a) The first amendment to the Espoo Convention (Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context), which was adopted at the second meeting of the Parties and entered into force on 26 August 2014;

(b) The Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer), adopted in 2016;

(c) The Doha Amendment, adopted in 2012, which modified the Kyoto Protocol (to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) to establish a second commitment period: 2013–2020. This amendment entered into force on 31 December 2020.

22. Within the framework of the UNCCD, no amendments have been adopted to date. However, the establishment of Regional Implementation Annex V (Central and Eastern Europe) is quite relevant, as within the framework of the UNCCD, annexes and amendments to the Convention are both proposed and adopted in the same way. The adoption of Regional Implementation Annexes differs slightly from the procedure used for other annexes and amendments, but it is still rather similar.

2. Elements

23. The structure and content of an amendment would depend on the specific provisions that Parties decide to amend.

24. Regarding this option, an amendment to the UNCCD could have the following objectives, among others:

(a) Revise or update the definitions contained in Article 1. New definitions could also be added, such as “proactive drought management”, “integrated drought management”, “drought resilience” or “proactive and integrated drought risk management”;

(b) Revise or update the guiding principles of the Convention contained in Article 3. New principles could also be added, such as the principles of proactive and integrated drought risk management;

(c) Revise the focus of the UNCCD, including the objective contained in Article 2, to give drought resilience a more prominent position in the text of the Convention;

(d) Revise or update the existing obligations for Parties. For instance, implementing proactive and integrated drought management or adopting this approach in national action programmes could be made mandatory;

(e) Create new bodies or revise or modify the mandate of the current ones.

3. Process

25. The text of the UNCCD explains the procedure for proposal, negotiation, approval and entry into force of an amendment. Article 30 states that any Party may propose an amendment. Proposed amendments must be communicated to Parties six months in advance, and they are adopted at ordinary sessions of the COP. If reaching consensus is not possible, they can be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the Parties present and voting.

26. An amendment enters into force for the Parties having accepted it on the ninetieth day after the date of receipt of the instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession of at least two thirds of the Parties to the Convention. The amendment shall enter into force for any other Party on the ninetieth day after the date on which that Party deposits its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

4. Institutional arrangements/mechanisms

27. The amendment could be implemented by the current institutions and mechanisms of the Convention. New institutions may be created through an amendment by adding new articles to Part IV (Institutions) of the text of the Convention. Moreover, an amendment could modify the articles referring to existing institutions to strengthen them, broaden their scope or change their focus. For instance, an amendment could modify the provisions referring to the GM or the monitoring framework of the UNCCD to make them more effective in relation to drought. An amendment could also create additional mechanisms, such as a compliance mechanism.

5. Evaluation

Table 1
SWOT analysis for an amendment to the Convention

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendments are legally binding, which encourages Parties to fulfil their commitments. • Amendments can be useful to complement non-legally binding instruments if there is need for a specific provision to be legally binding. • The process for approval and adoption is clearly defined in the text of the Convention. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The changes made to a convention through an amendment are generally rather limited, as gathering enough support from Parties for a radical and comprehensive change is highly challenging. • Amendments do not generally include specific, technical or scientific details.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An amendment could adapt the text of the UNCCD to new political, scientific and technical developments, making it more effective. • An amendment could enhance political attention and access to resources for proactive and integrate drought risk management and drought resilience. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adoption and ratification processes could be quite long, especially for a comprehensive amendment. • A two-thirds majority vote is required to adopt an amendment. Therefore, if there is not enough support by the end of the negotiations, it may not be possible to adopt it. • Amendments are binding only for the Parties that ratify them. Therefore, if an amendment is adopted, it may only apply to

	<p>some Parties to the UNCCD, leading to a fragmented framework.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parties must comply with the provisions of amendments, which may require changes to national laws and policies. • Launching negotiations on an amendment might lead to unexpected changes to the text of the UNCCD.
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B. Decision on collaboration with the Global Environment Facility

1. Definition

28. This option implies adopting a COP decision on collaboration with the GEF, aiming to strengthen the programmatic relevance of and the funding for building drought resilience.

2. Elements

29. A COP decision on collaboration with the GEF could include an invitation to the GEF Council and participants in the negotiations of the ninth replenishment of the Global Environment (GEF-9) to enhance the efforts of the GEF to enable UNCCD Parties to develop and implement their national drought plans according to the principles of integrated drought management. Further, such a decision could include:

Preambular elements

(a) A reference to the findings of the recent Independent Evaluation Office report on GEF support to drylands countries, which highlights that water scarcity and drought is starting to be addressed in the GEF-7 and GEF-8 programming directions;

(b) An acknowledgement of (i) the GEF-7 Land Degradation Focal Area Strategy; (ii) the first two years of GEF-8; and (iii) the full flexibility characterizing the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) regarding the use of the national allocations from GEF-8 to support the implementation of the Rio conventions;

Operative elements

Land Degradation Focal Area

(c) A request for an expansion, in the GEF-9 (2026–2030), of the objective of the GEF-8 Land Degradation Focal Area Strategy (2022–2026) that focuses on the impacts of drought, and to develop it in a way that supports a more proactive management of drought by beneficiary countries;

(d) A request to increase the financial resources allocated to this Land Degradation Focal Area objective – considering the findings of the Financial Needs Assessment of the GM – to support programming that is better matching with the priorities of drought-prone countries;

(e) A request to adapt the name of the focal area currently named “Land Degradation, primarily Desertification and Deforestation” into “Land Degradation and Drought” to better reflect the growing environmental and socioeconomic impacts of droughts and the preponderance of this issue in the UNCCD discussions;

STAR allocation formula

(f) A request to adapt the STAR formula to give more weight to the “Drought sensitiveness” part of the “Global Benefit Index for Land Degradation” component of the

current STAR formula⁴ and to the gross domestic product (GDP) index⁵ in order to favour most vulnerable countries facing the highest capacity constraints related to drought;

Drought-relevant indicators

(g) A request for an assessment of the Independent Evaluation Office regarding support to countries affected by drought⁶ and for the GEF to adapt or add relevant drought-related indicators and targets to the Core Indicators of the expected Global Environment Benefits of GEF-9 and within its results measurement framework, accordingly;

Integrated programmes and synergies

(h) A request to mainstream GEF's proactive drought management approach, which is already embedded within the GEF-8 Ecosystem Restoration Integrated Program through, for example, integrating a focus on the improvement of the water-holding capacity of soils into other integrated programmes;

(i) A request to develop a new integrated programme that synergically addresses proactive drought prevention and management, taking into account key biodiversity and climate challenges linked to drought causes and consequences;

(j) A request to further incentivize (i) the submission of multi-focal area and multi-trust fund projects aimed at enhancing water resource management and resilience; and (ii) coordination with relevant initiatives and actors⁷ supporting climate change adaptation, to strengthen early warning, preparedness, mitigation, recovery, inclusive monitoring systems and capacity-building linked to proactive drought management;

Repurposing harmful subsidies

(k) A request to support countries in repurposing the environmentally harmful subsidies contributing to drought towards increasing resilience;

Coordination of national focal points

(l) A request to contributing and recipient countries to increase their efforts in national coordination to ensure appropriate allocation of funding (including to and from the GEF and Green Climate Fund) towards proactive drought management planning and implementation to secure flows towards existing and future projects.

3. Process

30. The process to give guidance to the GM could include the following steps:

(a) A decision on collaboration with the GEF would be prepared by the Secretariat and negotiated and adopted at COP 16.

(b) UNCCD secretariat engagement with the GEF Council regarding the negotiation of the GEF-9 replenishment.

⁴ GEF Secretariat (2022), *Updating the system for transparent allocation of resources*. Washington DC, GEF, https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-06/EN_GEF.C.62.04_Updating%20the%20System%20for%20Transparent%20Allocation%20of%20Resources%20%28STAR%29.pdf:

- Increasing the coefficient of “proportion of Dryland area” (b) from 0.6 to 0.7;
- Decreasing the coefficients of “need to control land degradation in production systems” (a) from 0.2 to 0.1;
- Maintaining stable the weight of “proportion of rural population (c) = 0.2.

⁵ Ibid: Increasing this coefficient from -0.16 to -0.2.

⁶ Including an analysis of (i) GEF support to the preparation, update and implementation of national drought plans; (ii) the use of the full flexibility of the STAR allocations to assess to what extent land degradation and proactive drought management are prioritized by the most drought-affected countries; and (iii) the proactive character of interventions, their structural impact, and lessons learned.

⁷ For example, Least Developed Countries Fund, Special Climate Change Fund, Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, Climate Investment Fund, Global Biodiversity Fund, Loss and Damage Fund, International Financial Institutions, Regional Development Banks.

(c) Adoption of GEF-9 programmatic directions reflecting guidance that requests a more ambitious drought-sensitive strategy with better results in drought-prone and affected countries.

(d) Possible amendment to the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the UNCCD and the GEF secretariats, if relevant in relation to the adopted decision.

4. Institutional arrangements/mechanisms

31. The GEF serves as a financial mechanism of UNCCD (see decision 6/COP.6 and Articles 20 and 21 of the Convention). In line with their MOU, the COP adopts decisions on the collaboration with the GEF, inviting the GEF Council to implement strategic changes and operational improvements to better support the mandate of the UNCCD. The GEF ensures a thorough follow up and duly justifies any discarded or partial response to these decisions by GEF Council members.

5. Evaluation

Table 2

SWOT analysis for a decision on collaboration with the Global Environment Facility

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The efficiency and adaptability of the GEF is proven, it is directly responsive to the COP, fits global environmental goals and is achievable in the short run. Extra resources are made available with no additional cost incurred by beneficiary countries. Extra resources are made available with fair and transparent allocation based on needs, prioritizing the most drought-prone and/or drought-affected Parties and least developed countries. Appropriate GEF-9 programmatic directions can directly enhance support to the implementation of proactive drought risk management activities. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEF contribution may be limited to guidelines under its mandate and conditions. The first concrete results will be visible only after the programming is followed by project implementation. No impact on the GEF application process. The adaptability of programmatic directions is limited once adopted (for a period of four years).
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The adoption of new programming directions better addressing proactive drought management can help to better mainstream this approach in the biodiversity and climate change focal area strategies. Appropriate GEF-9 programmatic directions can directly enhance support to the implementation of proactive drought risk management activities. Stronger focus on proactive drought risk management in GEF-9 could deliver on 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of support will depend on the level of replenishment and allocation to the Land Degradation and Drought Focal Area. GEF's results measurement framework does not capture drought-related results. While unlikely, there may be a reduction/too modest increase of the financial contributions pledged to GEF-9 compared to GEF-8 (USD 5.33 billion). There may be possible reluctance from middle-income countries regarding the revision of the GEF STAR formula in favour of least developed countries, or

<p>policy objectives and be further emphasized in subsequent GEF cycles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened GEF collaboration comes with an increase of political commitment and awareness of benefits of drought resilience, ecosystem resilience, global environmental benefits and climate change adaptation. 	<p>other GEF Council members in case of competition with other environmental priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEF beneficiaries might choose to use their STAR allocation but not prioritize the proactive management of drought.
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C. Conference of the Parties guidance to the Global Mechanism

1. Definition

32. This option implies adopting a COP decision providing guidance to the GM that aims to strengthen the capacity of affected Parties to access finance and implement their national drought plans, contributing to more proactive drought management.

2. Elements

33. COP guidance to the GM could include the following elements:

Project preparation partnership

(a) An acknowledgement of the GM's Project Preparation Partnership for Transformative Land-Based Solutions, which seeks to accelerate the preparation of investment-ready land-based solutions;

(b) A request to scale it up to enhance access to finance through capacity-building and technical assistance regarding the design of projects that are tailored to identified donors and investors;

(c) A request to support the identification of financing needs and opportunities for drought risk reduction and resilience-building activities, including the repurposing of harmful subsidies, partnerships with the private sector and domestic revenue mobilization;

(d) A request to reach out to the Adaptation Fund, Green Climate Fund, the GEF and other relevant sources of funding to mainstream proactive drought management considerations into their project pipeline and achieve synergies with existing and emerging funding streams;

(e) A recommendation to Parties to increase their efforts in national coordination to ensure appropriate allocation of funding (including to the GM) towards proactive drought management planning and implementation to secure optimal flows towards existing and future projects;

Knowledge-building

(f) A request to estimate the economic returns in cases when harmful subsidies are repurposed and adequately rechannelled towards virtuous practices, which increase drought resilience;

(g) A request to assess the economic returns from the use of insurance products, bonds and microfinance (financial services for the poor, such as savings, credit and insurance), building on a multitude of previous reports;⁸

⁸ Ikeda J. et. Al., (2021), *Guidance Note on Drought Finance, Chapter 3, Incorporating a Drought Finance Strategy into National Drought Action Plans and Policies*. Global Mechanism,

(h) A request to assess the effect of investments in sustainable land management on resilience against droughts;

(i) A request to formulate lessons learned from the Drought Initiative to define how to best move forward with it.

3. Process

34. The process to give guidance to the GM could include the following steps:

(a) COP gives guidance to the GM through a COP decision;

(b) Enhancing of GM in-house capacity for support to Parties to (i) design projects and programmes that meet the quality requirements of public and private funders; and (ii) acquire the expertise to express their needs in the form of investment-ready projects tailored to specific funding sources, addressing systemic water/land/economy-related issues;

(c) GM conducts an analysis of the economic returns of the use of traditional and innovative financing approaches.

4. Institutional arrangements/mechanisms

35. The GM is an institution established within the framework of the UNCCD and is mandated to assist countries in the mobilization of financial resources from the public and private sector for activities that prevent, control or reverse desertification/land degradation and drought. It is responsive to the policy orientations of the Parties.

5. Evaluation

Table 3

SWOT analysis for Conference of the Parties guidance to the Global Mechanism

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The guidance to the GM fits with established responsibilities. The GM work plan can adapt relatively quickly to COP guidance. The value-for-money ratio of developing projects tailored to the donors and investors will likely be good. Enhanced capacity will be generated to mobilize public and private finance resources and prospects for transformative projects. No extra costs will be incurred by beneficiaries for institutional capacity-building, with a fair/flexible distribution based on the needs/demands. Increased political commitment and awareness of drought risks and of the benefits of drought resilience will result from well-framed projects and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There might be increased costs related to additional tasks for the GM to implement guidance. An uncertain timeline might emerge for capacity enhancement.

[https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-09/IWG%20task%20group%20report%203%20Drought%20finance%20.pdf)

[09/IWG%20task%20group%20report%203%20Drought%20finance%20.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-09/IWG%20task%20group%20report%203%20Drought%20finance%20.pdf).

King C. et al. (2022), *A rapid review of effective financing for policy, implementation and partnerships addressing drought risks*. Rome, FAO, <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/4b4b23be-3a35-4126-bf0d-a439d38ef422>.

Augenstein P. et al. (2022), *The Blue Paper - Drought Risks, Resilience and Restoration. The Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought*. Bonn, UNCCD, [unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-06/The_Blue_Paper_%28compressed%29_0.pdf](https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-06/The_Blue_Paper_%28compressed%29_0.pdf).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased ecosystem functions and resilience are to be expected, along with global environmental benefits, climate change adaptation, and significant reduction of emergency relief costs. GM-supported proposals can include the ones oriented towards governance, infrastructure and risk management. 	
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant and scalable projects could emerge with more substantial and long-term impacts, including reduced drought consequences and enhanced community resilience. GM-supported projects will incorporate results tracking and show results, including impacts on the hydrological balance and economies of affected areas. Matching project proposals with private sector expectations reduces private sector costs and risks, potentially increasing private investment. Jobs in drought-prone areas could be retained or created, both in the short-term during project implementation and in the long-term if market dynamics are capitalized upon. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional resources to the GM might not materialize. The project proposals might not lead to quick additional funding.

D. Global Framework on Drought Resilience

1. Definition

36. A Global Framework for Drought Resilience is an overarching strategic policy instrument that would support a shift from reactive and crisis-based to proactive and risk-based drought management. The framework would establish and progressively enhance the political will, tools, cooperation, synergies, and mobilization of means of implementation needed for such a shift at all levels. This would imply setting a global goal, time-bound targets and indicators, proposed actions to achieve these targets, and monitoring and learning systems. Such a framework would guide, catalyse and mainstream the implementation of proactive and integrated drought management policies, programmes, plans and initiatives at all levels.

2. Elements

37. The Global Framework on Drought Resilience could include the elements outlined below.

a. Principles

38. The framework should spell out that proactive drought risk management respects the following principles:

(a) Under the UNCCD, an emphasis should be put on sustainable land and water management, nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based approaches and the conservation, protection and restoration of ecosystems;

(b) Integrated drought management should be elaborated and implemented in a participatory, human rights-based and gender-responsive approach, building on the best available science as well as Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and local knowledge systems;

(c) Drought management strategies should encompass the three pillars of integrated drought risk management: monitoring and early warning; vulnerability and impact assessment; and mitigation, preparedness and response;

(d) Drought management strategies should not be static, but instead be embedded in a drought management cycle, allowing for continuous updates and improvements over time. They should also be multi-sectoral and follow an integrated approach;

(e) Financial sustainability: Resource mobilization from all sources – including adequate investments by both public and private sectors, domestically and through international partnerships – should aim at generating sufficient returns to become self-sustaining.

b. Global goal and targets

39. A goal and a set of associated targets and indicators would be included to guide the implementation of the framework. The targets⁹ would serve as tangible, short-term and actionable “translations” of a general policy goal.

c. Monitoring, reporting and learning systems

40. Global monitoring and reporting systems would be set up with the objective to review collective progress against the implementation of the global framework with its goal(s), target(s) and indicator(s) based on UNCCD standardized reporting from Parties. Respective monitoring and reporting could be set in place at national level. A learning system would be set up and would include the convening of regular learning events involving exchange of experience and inputs from other stakeholders involved in the implementation and support. Such events could consider the inclusion of dedicated sessions focused on regional approaches.

3. Process

41. The process to give guidance to the GM could include the following steps:

(a) Adoption of a COP decision at COP 16 that establishes an intersessional process to develop a framework. Once developed, the framework could be adopted by the COP at a subsequent session;

(b) Develop programmes, resource mobilization strategies or initiatives to facilitate the implementation of the global framework.

4. Institutional arrangements/mechanisms

42. The process to give guidance to the GM could include the following:

(a) Existing institutional setups of the UNCCD may support the elaboration of a global framework and its elements; however, new institutional arrangements may also be established, such as a learning system;

(b) The possibilities to integrate these into the existing UNCCD processes (e.g. the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat

⁹ Targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound (SMART) to be effective. Progress towards the achievement of a target needs to be assessable. Formulation of any new target should be done by taking into account the existing targets in relevant multilateral forums.

Desertification (UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework) , the CRIC or the Committee on Science and Technology (CST)) would need to be assessed;

(c) A designated financial institution would support the implementation of the framework.

5. Evaluation

Table 4

SWOT analysis for a Global Framework on Drought Resilience

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A global framework is highly visible, which creates more justification and impetus for Parties to fulfil their commitments. • The process for approval and adoption is clearly defined and there are clear precedents in other processes. • A global framework can integrate many different components, adding up to a comprehensive option. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parties need time and additional resources to consider changes to national laws. • Creating specific targets directly related to the different dimensions of drought and proactive drought risk management is complex.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A global framework can enable work to begin and evolve toward the possible creation of further instruments. • It would allow for changes over time in terms of precision, approach, scope and ambition. • The framework could generate the mobilization of further resources. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a globally applicable and balanced framework relevant for all vastly different regions will raise challenges.

E. Political declaration

1. Definition

43. A political declaration is a formal statement, proclamation, or announcement of intent, and is generally signed by high-level representatives. It is useful for boosting visibility and raising high-level awareness.

44. Political declarations are aspirational in nature and usually contain broad provisions which express globally accepted messages that address overarching concerns rather than new or specific topics. They tend to focus on the goals rather than on the actions to be adopted.

45. They do not normally entail ratification procedures, as they are not legally binding. They may contain strong political commitments, but they cannot include any legal provisions.

46. Strong declarations are generally echoed by future decisions, declarations or resolutions both outside and inside the UNCCD.

47. Several political declarations have been adopted during the high-level segment of the COP over the years, such as:

- (a) The Ordos Declaration (COP 13, 2017);
- (b) The Abidjan Call (COP 15, 2022);
- (c) The Abidjan Declaration on Achieving Gender Equality for Successful Land Restoration (COP 15, 2022).

2. Elements

48. Political declarations can be very diverse, but the following objectives would be the most typical:

- (a) Raising awareness and creating visibility, especially among high-level representatives;
- (b) Emphasizing the importance of enhancing cooperation among all relevant stakeholders at all levels;
- (c) Setting political commitments;
- (d) Highlighting existing successful mechanisms, processes and initiatives;
- (e) Strengthening the integration of drought resilience in future mechanisms or activities, processes and declarations;
- (f) Making recommendations.

49. A political declaration could also highlight the additional political value of a **resolution by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGA) and/or the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA)** on this matter and call on Parties to work towards the adoption of such resolutions and towards the integration of drought resilience in these or other forums.

50. Political declarations are usually made up of a title, a preamble and an operative part.

51. The title generally refers to the theme of the declaration and/or the place where it is signed.

52. The preamble includes clauses that start with a verb in present participle, such as “Recalling”, “Welcoming” or “Acknowledging”. Among other things, in this section the high-level representatives signing the declaration may acknowledge the impacts of drought on both people and the environment; welcome relevant processes, events or initiatives; recall previous declarations, decisions or actions; and/or reaffirm relevant principles.

53. The operative part is where specific actions, initiatives or measures are proposed by the signatories. Each clause in this section starts with a verb in present tense, such as “Invite”, “Call upon” or “Urge.” The strength of the declaration can be boosted by using strong verbs such as “Call on” or “Commit”. This section could include clauses such as: “We, the Ministers and high-level representatives gathered for the high-level segment at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification...” and could include paragraphs focusing on:

- (a) An emphasis of the key role that drought management and governance play in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- (b) A call upon all Parties and relevant partners to prioritize the development and implementation of national drought plans and policies;
- (c) Stressing the need to implement integrated and proactive drought management and governance;
- (d) Urging financial mechanisms and institutions to ensure the availability of sufficient financial resources to fund drought resilience;
- (e) A commitment to promoting the integration of drought resilience in relevant multilateral processes and forums;

(f) Stressing the need to guarantee the involvement of all relevant stakeholders (including, for example, relevant financial actors, national governments and local communities) in the preparation and implementation of drought policies.

3. Process

54. Political declarations are often adopted as the outcome of a high-level segment or event, which could take place as part of a session of the COP. They should have a sponsor, which may be the COP host country. The draft text of the political declaration should be circulated in advance among all Parties for their consideration and comments to smooth the negotiation process in-session during the COP, which is normally done through a “Friends of the Chair Group”.

55. There are several ways for a COP to adopt a political declaration, such as:

- (a) Referring to a political declaration in its report in Part I: Proceedings;
- (b) Including a political declaration in a COP decision as an annex, which would state that the COP ‘welcomes’ (preferable/stronger) or ‘takes note’ of the declaration.

4. Institutional arrangements/mechanisms

56. Political declarations do not generally establish new institutional arrangements, but they may promote their creation or strengthen existing ones. Clauses on means of implementation may be included in a declaration, which would not create legally binding commitments, but could (i) reaffirm the need for sufficient financial resources and other types of support or for robust monitoring systems or other mechanisms; and (ii) make recommendations in this regard.

5. Evaluation

Table 5

SWOT analysis for a political declaration

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political declarations are effective instruments to raise high-level awareness and make political commitments. Due to being signed by high-level representatives, these instruments generally have a lot of visibility. Their adoption is straightforward and does not require ratification nor entail important additional costs. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declarations cannot have legally binding commitments or compliance mechanisms. Therefore, the effectiveness depends on the political will of the Parties. Political declarations often lack scientific or technical explanations. Visibility of the political declaration is usually short-lived.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The increasing importance attached to drought makes it more likely that means of implementation would be provided for the implementation of a political declaration on this topic. Political declarations could lead to increased political awareness and will to implement proactive and integrated drought risk 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of binding commitments may lead to some countries not implementing the declaration. The lack of binding commitments may lead to insufficient resources for implementation.

management, which could benefit other initiatives on this topic.	
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F. Protocol

1. Definition

57. A protocol is a legally binding instrument adopted under the Convention that can offer a broad and comprehensive legal approach to addressing drought at all levels. It outlines specific commitments for the Parties that ratify it, including in relation to proactive and integrated drought risk management, including risk and vulnerability assessment, monitoring, early warning, mitigation, response, and recovery related to drought.

2. Elements

58. A protocol to the UNCCD could contain the following elements:

- (a) A preamble to provide context and guidance, recalling relevant UNCCD provisions and principles and relevant COP decisions, initiatives and processes as well as a statement describing the interlinkage between proactive and integrated drought risk management and desertification and land degradation;
- (b) Provisions on scope and objective to emphasize the global character of the protocol in that it embraces all continents and ecoregions to ensure political commitment to proactively and comprehensively manage drought;
- (c) Principles to guide the implementation of the protocol, which could include the application of a proactive, people-centred and participatory approach;
- (d) Measures by Parties, including obligations regarding prevention, preparedness measures and early warning; the duty to mitigate; recovery actions; the setting of a goal and target(s),¹⁰ and the use of indicators; and public awareness and collaboration;
- (e) Provisions on resource mobilization and financial mechanisms that stress their critical role in successfully addressing drought and encompass financial support for the implementation of the protocol;
- (f) Provisions on institutional arrangements;
- (g) Provisions on capacity-building;
- (h) Provisions on monitoring, compliance and reporting;
- (i) Provisions on final clauses, including on signature, ratification, entry into force, dispute settlement, amendments and the depositary.

3. Process

59. COP 16 would adopt a decision to launch an open-ended intergovernmental negotiation process and specify its mandate.

¹⁰ Targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound (SMART) to be effective. Progress towards the achievement of a target needs to be assessable. Formulation of any new target should be done by taking into account the existing targets in relevant multilateral forums.

60. The result would be presented to the COP. Once adopted by consensus, the protocol would be circulated by the depositary to all UNCCD Parties. It would enter into force for the Parties that ratify it and in accordance with its own provisions, typically upon ratification by the required number of Parties.

4. Institutional arrangements/mechanisms

61. The protocol could be serviced by mechanisms and arrangements of the UNCCD, which can save costs and increase synergies and coherence. These would include:

- (a) The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the protocol as the supreme decision-making body;
- (b) The UNCCD secretariat;
- (c) Other UNCCD subsidiary bodies.

62. If needed, additional bodies could be created specifically for the protocol.

63. Leveraging existing or establishing new institutional arrangements and mechanisms that should be anchored in the protocol include:

- (a) A financial mechanism;
- (b) A coordination and cooperation mechanism;
- (c) Monitoring, review, compliance and reporting mechanisms and learning systems.

5. Evaluation

Table 6
SWOT analysis for a protocol

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launching and negotiating a protocol provides a platform for leaders and politicians to engage with a dedicated focus on drought and raises its political profile and attention. • Establishing a compliance mechanism enhances long-term stable political commitment and the accountability of Parties to address drought effectively and proactively. • Provides a robust legal basis and direction, which assists the Parties and relevant stakeholders in developing relevant policies and measures to strengthen the implementation of the Convention with regard to drought. • Provides a holistic, comprehensive and coherent approach to addressing drought with a mechanism for enhanced monitoring and evaluation, work plans, setting of targets and work programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The negotiation process and ratification (and therefore, entry into force) may take time. • Ratification of the protocol by all Parties is not guaranteed. • The protocol will require additional operational costs; therefore, a better coordinated resource allocation would be required. • Parties would need time to consider changes that may be needed to national laws and policies.

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing institutions of the Convention could be utilized to service the protocol, thus reducing operational costs. A protocol can lead to stronger coordination and involvement of partners, programmes and initiatives, and to increasing impact on the ground. A protocol can provide an opportunity for Parties, regional and international organizations, stakeholders, and local level implementers to advocate for increased human, technical and financial resources for drought. Having a protocol could attract more resources for proactive drought actions from various financing mechanisms, including having a specific window under the GEF. The secretariat's visibility could be increased via additional protocol-related roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unwillingness or lack of political commitment could lead to the protocol not being adopted or to ratification by a low number of Parties as well as to limited capacity to mobilize required resources. The additional costs that come with its operationalization may lead to reluctance by some Parties. Raising the resources to support the participatory negotiation process might be difficult if countries in a position to finance the process are not fully convinced of the need for a protocol. The secretariat could be overwhelmed by additional protocol-related roles.

G. Special and ambitious Conference of the Parties decision on drought

1. Definition

64. UNCCD COP decisions are resolutions made by the COP to the UNCCD. These instruments offer a quick and continuous process for the implementation of the Convention.

65. COP decisions are not generally considered of the same legally binding nature as conventions, protocols and amendments. Nonetheless, they may include binding and non-binding clauses, depending on the wording, as long as they are within the mandate and framework of the UNCCD. However, the UNCCD does not have a compliance mechanism to force Parties to implement COP decisions. Furthermore, the strongest language used in these instruments when making requests to Parties still implies a petitionary nature (expressions such as “requests”, “urges” or “calls upon”). Binding wording, such as “decides”, is used for clauses directed at the institutions and subsidiary bodies of the UNCCD.

2. Elements

66. This COP decision could have the following objectives:

(a) Raise global awareness and increase the commitment of Parties to implement proactive and integrated drought risk management and governance;

(b) Boost the importance attached to measures to address drought in the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and in the discussions of future COP, CST, Science-Policy Interface and CRIC sessions;

(c) Strengthen existing bodies and instruments on drought, create new ones, and encourage their use;

(d) Suggest ways to scale up effective means of implementation for proactive and integrated drought risk management and governance.

67. COP decisions generally have a title, a preamble and an operative part.

68. The title should be innovative and impactful to distinguish the new decision from previous ones, highlight its importance, or focus on something specific.

69. The preamble includes clauses starting with a verb in present participle, such as “Recalling” or “Noting”. In the preamble, the COP may recall previous relevant decisions or actions, acknowledge facts, reaffirm commitments or principles, or welcome the work of existing initiatives and processes.

70. The operative clauses are where specific actions, initiatives, or measures are decided upon. Each clause in this section starts with a verb in present tense, such as “Invites”, “Encourages” or “Decides”. The strength of the decision can be boosted by using stronger verbs such as “Calls on” or “Requests”.

71. At the end of this section, the COP generally requests the secretariat to report on the implementation of the decision at future sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies.

72. This decision would be strong and would propose innovative measures, such as:

(a) A request to the secretariat to assess the possibility of developing an International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard on proactive and integrated drought risk management and governance;

(b) A decision to update the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework to give proactive and integrated drought risk management and governance a more central role;

(c) Encouragement of Parties to integrate measures to address drought in all relevant policies;

(d) A request to the secretariat to propose a voluntary target setting programme¹¹ for drought resilience, following in the footsteps of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP);

(e) A call on Parties to promote the integration of proactive drought risk management and governance in instruments negotiated under other relevant forums and processes, such as the UNGA or the UNEA;

(f) A call on Parties to redirect harmful subsidies towards sustainable land management and measures to build drought resilience.

3. Process

73. The procedure to adopt a COP decision is defined by the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties (see decision 1/COP.1). In practice, draft decisions are generally prepared by the secretariat, which distributes them at least six weeks before a session of the COP. Negotiations on the text take place during the COP in the meetings of one of the contact groups of the Committee of the Whole. An agreement on the text is normally achieved in the contact group, and ultimately the COP plenary would adopt the decision (by consensus, given that rule 47.1 of the rules of procedure on voting on matters of substance has not been adopted).

4. Institutional arrangements/mechanisms

74. COP decisions are implemented mainly through existing bodies, institutions and mechanisms of the Convention. However, changes to these bodies, institutions and mechanisms could be proposed to strengthen their work. Moreover, additional institutional arrangements within the framework of the UNCCD could be established; the creation of the IWG on Drought by decision 23/COP.15 is a good example of this.

¹¹ Targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound (SMART) to be effective. Progress towards the achievement of a target needs to be assessable. Formulation of any new target should be done by taking into account the existing targets in relevant multilateral forums.

5. Evaluation

Table 7

SWOT analysis for a special and ambitious Conference of the Parties decision on drought

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adoption process is fast and straightforward. • Substantial costs are not necessary to prepare and adopt COP decisions. • COP decisions are effective instruments to promote the implementation of the Convention if radical changes are not required. • They may include binding and non-binding clauses, depending on the recipient of the requests and the wording used. • COP decisions can include more specific scientific and technical details than other types of political texts. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No compliance mechanism may be included in COP decisions to force Parties and other stakeholders to implement it. Therefore, their effectiveness depends on the political will of the Parties.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional decisions may be made at subsequent sessions of the COP to adapt or renew the work being carried out for new circumstances. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of these instruments can be very limited if there is not enough political will. • Resources may vary greatly between countries, leading to inequality in terms of implementation.

IV. Final remarks

75. In the IWG on Drought, there was a consensus among all experts on the need for strengthened action at all levels and to raise political momentum to enhance drought management and governance under the UNCCD. However, the members expressed a range of views on how to effectively address drought.

76. Many different options could be considered to effectively manage drought under the Convention. Nonetheless, all of them should promote integrated and proactive drought risk management to support a shift from a reactive and crisis-based approach to proactive and risk-based management led by Parties and with the full participation of all relevant stakeholders, ensuring a gender-responsive approach at all levels. This would help to ensure that building resilience to drought is considered in the preparation and implementation of all related policies and actions, including those aimed at achieving land degradation neutrality and integrated water resource management.

77. The seven options presented in this report were considered to be the most relevant ones after evaluating all policy instruments/options reviewed in this context. All of them were considered to have the potential to enhance the implementation of the Convention in relation

to drought, which would have a catalytic effect in terms of enhancing policies, plans and initiatives at all levels.

78. There was consensus among all members that all the options are compatible; some of them could even be considered complementary. Therefore, at COP 16 Parties could decide to select one or several of the presented options and/or some of their elements.

79. Some of the policy options proposed have a shorter preparation process and could be ready for adoption already at COP 16, while the preparation of others, if selected, would require the establishment of a new process.

80. Parties are therefore encouraged to carefully read and consider the descriptions and SWOT analyses presented for all the options in chapter III (Findings) of this report so that they may select the preferred option(s) at COP 16.
