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**AU-SAFGRAD Participation to the 15<sup>TH</sup> of the UNCCD Conference of Parties (COP15) Abidjan, Republic of Cote d'Ivoire, Mai 9-20, 2022.**

## **Brief Background**

The fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the meetings of its subsidiary bodies took place in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire from 9 to 20 May 2022. AU-SAFGRAD took actively part with both support to the African negotiators through the negotiation process on drought as well as the co-organization of two (02) side events in collaboration with its partner's namely.

- Development and insecurity in Sahel region: from local community transboundary partnership to international solidarity.
- Galvanizing Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Solutions: Land Restoration and Drought Resilience towards Agriculture and Food Security

In addition, AU-SAFGRAD has organized outreach activity through the exhibition of books and publications in stand.

## **1. Support to the Negotiation Process**

### **1.1 Regional Consultation Meetings**

Prior to COP 15, regional meetings were held on 6th and 7th May 2022 at the COP 15 Venue. All Annexes including the Africa Region Annex I held consultations to formulate common positions on the COP15 Agenda items. The African Group Chaired by Khalid Cherki of Morocco. Highlighted key priorities for the region, coordinated the leadership and composition of Negotiation teams for the various agenda items, the selection and designation of countries and names of officials as office bear to represent Africa in positions of the Conference of Parties and the preparation of opening statements. The Regional meeting was

an opportunity to consolidate and confirm the recommendations made at the Pre COP 15 Africa Regional Preparatory Meeting Held in Marrakesh, Morocco 28- 31 March 2022 preceded by a special meeting on the Africa Consultancy report on Drought policy and the Report of the Inter-Governmental Working Group on Drought held on 26 and 27th March 2022. The two meetings were supported by AU SARFGRAD.

## 1.2 Heads of States and Governments Summit

On the invitation of H.E. Mr Alassane Ouattara, President of Côte d'Ivoire, a Heads of States and Governments Summit was held on 9 May 2022. On 10 May 2022, the Conference held two interactive dialogue sessions, three parallel ministerial/high-level round tables, and one formal statements session under this agenda item.

### 1.3 The parallel ministerial/high-level round tables addressed the following themes:

2. Round table 1: Rights, rewards and responsibilities: the future of land stewardship
3. Round table 2: Land restoration: A path to sustainable post-pandemic recovery
4. Round table 3: The Big Dry: From disaster to drought resilience

## 1.4 Interactive Dialogue Sessions were held:

Interactive dialogue 1: Land reGeneration: The role of youth in shaping a sustainable land agenda;

Interactive dialogue 2: Future-proofing land use: Shifting patterns in production and consumption.

## 1.5 Opening of the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the COP

On 11 May 2022, the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) was opened by the COP 14 President H.E. Mr. Bhupender Yadav. Pursuant to article 22 of the rules of procedure of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the President of COP 14 made a statement followed by election of the President. The COP elected, by acclamation, H.E. Mr. Alain-Richard Donwahi as President of COP 15. The incoming President made a statement. H.E. Mr Alassane Ouattara, President of the Republic of Côte

d'Ivoire, made a statement on behalf of the host country. At the same meeting, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, made a statement.

Statements were made by the representatives of Pakistan (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China), France (on behalf of the European Union and its Member States), Morocco (on behalf of the African Group), Pakistan (on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group), Nicaragua (on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group), Turkey (on behalf of the Regional Implementation Annex for the Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV)), Belarus (on behalf of Regional Implementation Annex for Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V)), the United States of America (on behalf of JUSCANZ) and Saudi Arabia (on behalf of the Arab Group). Statement were also made by the Russian Federation and by the Republic of Moldova.

Further statements were made by the World Meteorological Organization, the Economic Cooperation Organization, the United Nations Human Rights Office, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Global Green Growth Institute. Furthermore, a statement was also made by a representative of civil society.

## 1.6 Adoption of the agenda and organization of work, including the sessions of the subsidiary bodies

The Conference adopted its agenda and the organization of work

The Conference elected officers other than the President:

The following Vice-Presidents were elected;

1. Mr. Muwaya Albert Jonathan Stephen (Uganda)
2. Mr. Abdu Gasem Alsharif (Soudi Arabia)
3. Ms. Zhong Jing (China)
4. Ms. Reina Sotillo (Agentina)
5. Mr. Edgar Hunter (Dominica)
6. Ms. Narine Hakobyan (Armenia)
7. Ms. Nino Chikovani (Georgia)
8. Ms. Juliane Wiesenhutter (Germany)
9. Mr. Patrick Reilly (United States of America)

The Conference appointed Ms. Narine Hakobyan (Armenia) as the fifteenth session.

Rapporteur of

The Conference also elected the Chair of the forthcoming sixteenth session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

The Conference also elected the Chair of the forthcoming twenty-first and twenty-second sessions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)

## 1.7 Organisation of Work of the Conference

The Work of the Conference was organized under the following committees

1. The Committee of the whole (COW); The Conference designated Mr. Francisco Jose Avila (Guatemala) as Chair of the Committee of the Whole. The Committee held 10 meetings from 11 to 20 May 2022.
2. The Committee on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC); The twentieth session of the CRIC was convened under the chairmanship of Mr. Andrew Bishop (Guyana). The Committee held 8 meetings, from 12 to 18 May 2022.
3. The Committee on Science and Technology (CST). The Fifteenth Session of the CST convened under the chairmanship of Mr. Bongani Masuku (Eswatini). The Committee held four meetings, from 11 to 13 May 2022.

### 1.7.1 Negotiations and outcome decisions

During the Technical Segment, the following contact groups were established under each of the above mentioned Committees to negotiate key decision texts as below:

The Committee of the Whole (COW) designated two Contact Groups to negotiate decisions:

1. Contact Group on other matters The Committee appointed Mr. Ahmed Abdelati (Egypt) as the Facilitator of Contact Group on COW matters other than the programme and budget. The Group negotiated among others decisions on Declaration of civil society organizations attending the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties; Policy advocacy on drought; Abidjan Declaration on Gender and Report from the Gender Caucus; Land, Life and Legacy Declaration; Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Land tenure; Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Sand and dust storms; The positive role that measures taken under the Convention can play to address desertification/land

degradation and drought as one of the drivers that causes migration; Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Gender; Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies; Modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; and Date and venue of the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties

2. Program and Budget Contact Group The Committee of the Whole appointed Mr. Stéphane Paillet (France) as the Facilitator of Contact Group. The Group negotiated decisions on the Multi-year workplan for the Convention institutions (2022–2025); Programme of work for the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties; Programme and budget for the biennium 2022–2023

The CRIC Contact Group The CRIC appointed Mr. Julius Smith (Trinidad and Tobago) as Facilitator of the contact group. The Group negotiated among others decision Report of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention at its nineteenth session; Integration of Sustainable Development Goal 15 and related target 15.3 into the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and land degradation neutrality; Promotion of capacity-building to further the implementation of the Convention; Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties; Report by the Global Mechanism on progress made in the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention.

The CST Contact Group Ms. Stella Funsani Gama (Malawi) was appointed Facilitator of the contact group. The group negotiated 6 decisions among others decisions on Policy recommendations resulting from the work programme of the Science-Policy Interface for the biennium 2020–2021: objective 1&2; Policy-oriented recommendations resulting from the cooperation with other intergovernmental scientific panels and bodies; The Science-Policy Interface, the dissemination and accessibility of best practices, and the UNCCD Knowledge Hub; Work programme of the Science-Policy Interface for the triennium 2022–2024; and Programme of work for the sixteenth session of the Committee on Science and Technology.

## 1.7.2 Key Recommendations from COP 15

### (a) Policy advocacy on Drought

A key outcome of the Decision on Policy Advocacy on Drought was the establishment of the Inter-Governmental Working Group on Drought Policy and its terms of reference as below

Building upon the work of the Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought conducted over the biennium 2020–2021, decides to establish a new Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought during the triennium 2022–2024, subject to the availability of resources, 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;

Also decides that the Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought will have the following terms of reference:

(a) Review and analyze all the reports which came out of the Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought, as well as other relevant documents and Conference of the Parties 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;

(c) Prepare justifications and outline possible elements, processes, institutional arrangements and mechanisms for establishment for each policy option;

Requests the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, in collaboration with partners and regional institutions, to continue to assist Parties in preparing and implementing gender-responsive national drought plans or other policy instruments related to drought and promoting regional collaboration on drought policies and strategies as a cost-effective means to support national action;

(b) Date and venue of the twenty-first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

The twenty-first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention shall be held in Uzbekistan in 2023;

(c) Dates and venues of future sessions of the Conference of the Parties Sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties

The COP 15 welcomed with gratitude the generous offer of the Government of Saudi Arabia to host the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties and to meet the additional costs;

It was decided that the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties shall be held in Saudi Arabia in 2024;

(d) Seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties

Welcomed with gratitude the generous offer of the Government of Mongolia to host the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties and to meet the additional costs;

Decided that the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties shall be held in Mongolia in 2026;

(e) The positive role that measures taken under the Convention can play to address desertification/land degradation and drought as one of the drivers that causes migration

Invited Parties to: Continue to strengthen cooperation with other United Nations agencies and programmes, regional and international organizations, and stakeholders to share information to foster a better understanding of urban-rural linkages, with a special focus on achieving land degradation neutrality and addressing the multiple drivers of forced migration and displacement;

Share and support the scaling up of good practices identified at the local and subnational levels, which pursue sustainable land management and land restoration in the urban-rural interface, such as peri-urban green belts, urban agriculture, urban forestry, and soil desalination, with a view to encouraging the adoption of similar practices, if necessary, and promote training and capacity-building;

**(f) Participation and involvement of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**

The COP encourages those countries with no or few civil society organizations accredited to the Conference of the Parties to promote the involvement of their organizations in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification process at the international level to ensure more balanced participation of civil society organizations in the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, particularly civil society organizations working with people in vulnerable situations, including Indigenous peoples and local communities, people living in rural areas, women, youth, and persons with disabilities;

Requested the secretariat to improve access to information on the accreditation process for civil society organizations;

Encourages developed country Parties, international and financial organizations, civil society organizations and private sector institutions, in a position to do so, to consider contributing substantially and promptly to the Supplementary Fund and Special Fund of the Convention with the aim of ensuring wider participation of civil society organizations in meetings and processes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification as well as in the work undertaken by the Civil Society Organization Panel;

**(g) Modalities, criteria and terms of reference for a midterm evaluation of the 2018 - 2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**

Decided to establish an intergovernmental working group to oversee the midterm evaluation process, in line with the terms of reference contained in annex II to this decision;

The intergovernmental working group to present its findings and recommendations to Parties for their consideration at the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.



(h) Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies

Parties, as appropriate, to engage at the national level to explore complementarities in the implementation of and reporting on the three Rio conventions;

invites Parties to explore complementarities between land degradation neutrality targets, Nationally Determined Contributions, and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans, as well as national targets under the Sendai Framework, and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification related planning, programming, reporting and monitoring in order to achieve the Convention's objectives;

Invites developed country Parties, other Parties in a position to do so, international financial organizations, civil society organizations and private sector institutions to contribute, financially or in-kind, to global partnerships, alliances and coalitions on Earth observations, particularly, the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality Initiative, and engage in regional and bilateral cooperation to address desertification/land degradation and drought;

(i) Promotion of capacity-building to further the implementation of the Convention

Further strengthening of capacity-building on drought, notably through the promotion of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Drought Toolbox and organization of training sessions on its use, as well as the development of additional tools in this field;

Supports the efforts of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism aimed at developing partnerships, including at the subregional and regional levels, to better facilitate capacity development and further advance a more participatory approach to the same, especially in the areas of:

- (a) Drought preparedness and mitigation;
- (b) Measures to achieve land degradation neutrality;
- (c) Gender-responsive and transformative implementation;
- (d) Measures to address sand and dust storms;

(e) Development of on-the-ground training activities for journalists;  
Invites developed country Parties and those in a position to do so, as well as technical and financial institutions, to continue to provide technical and financial support for targeted capacity development in support of the implementation of the Convention;

#### (j) Collaboration with the Global Environment Facility

Welcomes a (i) strong eighth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility; (ii) a robust increase to land degradation focal area resources; and calls for (iii) a continuous focus on land-based actions through Global Environment Facility Impact/Integrated Programs; and (iv) opportunities to enhance synergies among all focal areas bearing in mind the importance of the land degradation focal area as integral to those areas; (v) consideration of individuals and communities in situations of vulnerability across all sectors;

Invites the Global Environment Facility, within its mandate, to assess the feasibility of establishing a focal area for drought in order to increase the visibility and financial resources allocated to drought;

## 2 Conclusion

The COP 15 was a post COVID 19 event hosted by an African Country. It was well organized and provided a good environment that facilitated outcome of many valuable decisions. It is up to state parties to implement and use every available opportunity and partnerships to implement the convention. The African Group will continue to advocate for a Global Policy instrument on addressing Drought and will continue to urge parties to prioritize Drought Preparedness and mitigation.

### **2. Side Event on Development and insecurity in Sahel region: from local community transboundary partnership to international solidarity**

This side event was organized in collaboration with C3Sahel a civil society organization covering three border regions( Dori Tombouctou, and Tera) of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger along with the ONG “La route de l’Espoir” involved in land restoration projects in Africa.

Indeed while conflicts linked to terrorist groups are the subject of a military response by the countries concerned, the situation of insecurity in the Sahel has generated or brought to light other forms of conflicts that are just as serious for the future of societies: conflicts related to access to increasingly scarce natural resources due in particular to land degradation/Drought and climate change, or even inter-community, inter-ethnic or inter-religious conflicts, which have led to tragedies, further aggravating the situation of insecurity and further weakening social cohesion in these countries.

### **Main findings and recommendations**

The fight against insecurity requires development activities capable of generating income for the benefit of young people and also coordination of local actions by local authorities.

Humanitarian actions do not always facilitate the conduct of structuring development actions. It is important for humanitarian organizations to integrate their activities into the local development programmes and projects

### **Land tenure and land restoration**

Land recovery actions generate indirect income by rebuilding the natural capital that drives pastoral activities. These activities retain young people and keep them away from recruitment by terrorist organizations

Land is at the heart of the violence and mobilization strategies of terrorist groups. Land recovery actions give value to the land which becomes an issue of power.

Despite the insecurity, development actions are currently being carried out in the three-border area based on local actors, including local entrepreneurs, and traditional conflict management mechanisms. Local authorities therefore plead for the continuation of development actions because this is possible despite the context. PTFs and some structures are leaving the area, but life goes on and must go on

### **Capitalization of experiences**

Many initiatives are carried out by NGOs in the field, without consultation with the local authorities concerned. This situation means that these actions are not integrated into regional development plans and are not monitored by the local authority. It is not possible to capitalize on experiences in the field.

### **Promotion of South-South Cooperation**

The experience of cross-border cooperation should serve as an example for the promotion of South-South cooperation with the countries of North Africa and coastal Africa. It is recommended to scale up these types of partnerships by multiplying cross-border partnerships between local authorities of neighboring countries in the region.

The financing mechanisms for regional cooperation existing at the level of bilateral and multilateral agencies are an obstacle to the development of South-South cooperation between the countries of North and West Africa, because they consider Africa of the north as belonging to the North Africa-Middle East group. This division of Africa is an objective brake on African integration.

African countries could also rely on certain regional organizations (CENSAD, OSS, RECs) to initiate South-South cooperation actions capable of influencing the positions of TFPs on North Africa – Sub-Saharan Africa cooperation.

### **State support for decentralization**

Local authorities are often forced to work on the basis of allocations of conditional budget tranches which correspond to only a small percentage of the planned annual budget. Local authorities, relying on local communities, have the capacity to act if they are given the means.

### **Culture and local development**

Culture must be considered as an integral part of sustainable development, like the actions carried out in Timbuktu to preserve intangible heritage.

## **3. Side event on Galvanizing Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Solutions: Land Restoration and Drought Resilience towards Agriculture and Food Security**

This side event was jointly organized with African Development Bank along with two African youth focused organizations, Arab-African Council for Sustainable Development, Tunisia and HIREC Consult, Ghana. The session drew stakeholders from civil society organizations and international organizations; Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), Young Volunteers for the Environment of Niger (YVE-Niger), Green Africa Youth Organization (GAYO), GACSA under FAO and West African Biodiversity Conservation Network. The panel of discussion and interactive session was focused on the meaningful role that young people are playing in

providing and implementing solutions for land degradation. The event identified the ways that youth can advocate to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals that addresses the thematic areas of land management.

Some of the Highlights and recommendations are as follow:

### **Highlights**

- Youth play a crucial role in the development agenda of the African continent,
- Youth must be involved in the policy making process and program implementation in terms of organization, policies and actions
- The African Union Youth Charter launched by the African Union in 2006 in Banjul, was set specially to mainstream the youth issues in all the policy formulation and programs, especially through its two articles:

### **Recommendations**

Despite all barriers, young people can become effectively engaged in environmental activities, both through their own initiative and with official support. Possible Strategies include:

- ✓ Inadequate education and capacity building of relevant skills, including in digital communication,
- ✓ Strong partnerships with both public and private stakeholders,
- ✓ Developing models for green businesses to incentivize and sustain the interest of youth in restoration,
- ✓ Easing access to and improved security of land tenure, Reorienting socio-cultural norms to include all of society.

## **4. Outreach Programme**

The UNCCD COP 15 offered a good opportunity for SAFGRAD to undertake visibility action by an exhibition of the different publications related to Land

degradation that the office published in the recent years. These publication includes:

No	TITLE	No. of copy
1	BIOLOGICAL CONTROL PROGRAM FOR THE MANGO MEALY BUG RASTROCOCCUS INVADENS Williams (HOMOPTERA: PSEUDOCOCCIDEA) IN WEST AFRICA	3
2	Strengthening the role of science and technology in combating desertification in Africa	5
3	PLAN STRATEGIQUE ET OPERATIONNEL 2019 - 2023	3
4	STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PLAN 2019 - 2023	3
5	CHANGEMENT CLIMATIQUE ET INTRANTS AGRICOLES EN AFRIQUE	2
6	AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGIES IN BURKINA FASO	2
7	OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF MAIZE VALUE CHAIN	3
8	CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRATEGIC AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY VALUE CHAIN	3
9	Climate Change and Agricultural Input Use in East Africa with Special Emphasis on Drought Tolerant Varieties: Case Study of Ethiopia and Uganda	5
10	Etude comparative des méthodes de vulgarisation A GRANDE ECHELLE au Burkina Faso	5
11	Report on a comparative study on large scale extension methods used in Ghana	5
12	IMPROVING RURAL LIVELIHOODS IN SEMI-ARID AREAS OF AFRICA	4
13	ENHANCING FOOD SECURITY THROUGH CONTROL OF PARASITIC WEEDS IN THE CROP PRODUCTION	3
14	SUSTAINABLE RURAL LIVELIHOODS SEMI-ARID AREAS OF AFRICA	6
15	Changement climatique et intrants agricoles en Afrique avec un accent particulier sur les	5

	variétés tolérantes à la sécheresse, Cas de la zone semi-aride de l'Afrique de l'Ouest	
16	Opportunities and Challenges of Sorghum Value Chain Development in the Sahelo-Saharan Zone of Africa: A Cross-Country Analysis	3

Those publications have distributed during the side events to the interested visitors beside that an email list has been established in order to send a pdf version of the mentioned books to those who are interested and registered their e-mail address. Also, a brief introduction about AU-SAFGRAD is provided to those who asked about the office.

### **Conclusion and Way forward**

AU-SAFGRAD achieved its intended objectives of the participation to the UNCCD COP15 through its support to the negotiation for drought related instrument as well as Side Events by identifying challenges that encounter land degradation neutrality, highlighting the role of youth in shaping a sustainable land agenda, and solutions for restoring agricultural lands in order to increase crop yields and productivity which could halt the conversion of forests and grasslands into farmland and reverse biodiversity loss. AU-SAFGRAD looks forward to engaging all partners and stakeholders in the aftermath for land degradation and desertification