

**Report**

**African Regional Preparatory Meeting: Pre-Cop 15 Meeting Marrakech, Morocco**

**Marrakech, 30 March - 01 April, 2022**

**Table of Contents**

1. Context of the regional preparatory meeting …...………………………………..........3
2. Official opening of the preparatory meeting ...………………………………………........4
3. Organization of work ………………..……………………………………………………4
4. Program and Budget for the 2022-2023 Biennium …………….…………………….….11
5. CRIC 20 Agenda Items …………………………..……………………………….……..11
6. Committee on Science and Technology ………………………………………….……..13
7. Election of Bureau and subsidiary bodies members …………………………………….13
8. The CILSS Meeting with UNCCD Focal Points of the CILSS/ECOWAS Space ….…14
9. Conclusion of the preparatory meeting ………………………………………………….15

**I. Context of the regional preparatory meeting**

1. As part of the preparations for the 15th Session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) which will take place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire from 09 to 20 May 2022, the Kingdom of Morocco in collaboration with the Executive Secretariat of the UNCCD, the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the African Forest Forum organized in Marrakech ( Morocco) the African regional preparatory meeting for COP 15 from March 30 to April 01, 2022. The delegates gathered here all express their deep gratitude to the Government of the Cherifian Kingdom for the warm welcome that prevailed throughout this preparatory meeting.
2. The main objective of this meeting is to enable African countries (Annex 1), to review the themes that will be examined during this COP and to ensure that the concerns of Africa are taken into account in the decisions of the COP, through: 1) the identification of the main priorities and concerns for the continent, 2) the formulation of the common African position, 3) the determination of negotiation strategies and alliances to be formed, 4) the election of the new Chair of the African Group as well as the members who will represent the continent in the COP 15 Bureau of and its subsidiary bodies (CRIC, CST).
3. As a reminder, desertification and drought remain major problems with natural and human dimensions, which threaten a third of global land area (more than 4 billion hectares), and could affect the means of livelihood of around 1.2 billion people (20% of the world's population), who depend on the land for most of their needs and who belong to the poorest and most vulnerable social classes in the world.
4. In addition, desertification is currently on an upward trend with almost 12 million hectares being lost annually worldwide (corresponding to 23 hectares every minute), and generates financial losses valued at USD 42 billion per year. In other words, in the coming decades almost 200 million people would be forced to migrate under the combined effects of land degradation and climate change that trigger rivalries for limited resources, with all the implications that could result from it, in particular conflicts and insecurity.
5. It is in this context that the debates that will take place during COP 15 will focus on **« Land, Life and Legacy: From Scarcity to Prosperity”, with a particular emphasis on combating drought and rehabilitation of degraded lands.**
6. [This meeting was attended by more than 100 participants, including 80 in person,](https://www.reverso.net/traduction-texte#sl=fra&tl=eng&text=Cette%20r%C3%A9union%20a%20connu%20la%20participation%20de%20plus%20de%20100%20participants,%20dont%2080%20en%20pr%C3%A9sentiel,%20repr%C3%A9sentant%20les%20pays%20de%20l%E2%80%99Annexe%201%20et%20les%20organisations%20r%C3%A9gionales%2)representing Annex 1 countries and the following international, regional and sub-regional organizations: the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the African Forest Forum, the United Nations Environment Program, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory, the Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel and the New Partnership for Africa's Development Agency.

**II. Official opening of the preparatory meeting**

* 1. **Official Opening Statement**

1. The opening of the meeting was marked by the statement made by His Excellency the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development and Water and Forests in the Kingdom of Morocco, who put the event into context and highlighted the need to be resolutely committed to the search for new land preservation and management paradigms that enable them to continue fulfilling their key functions in terms of: climate change mitigation and adaptation, water supplies regulating, biodiversity conservation, protection against natural disasters, food security and livelihoods maintenance of vulnerable populations. However, he noted that many challenges remain to sustainable land management in an environment with major constraints: climate change, water resources are becoming scarce, world population is growing, cities spread to the detriment of agricultural land, while land in limited and inextensible quantities continues to be degraded.
2. Then a statement was also made by His Excellency the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.
3. The Coordinator of Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development (SAFGRAD) belonging to the African Union Commission delivered his opening address.
4. The representatives of the African Forest Forum and the African Development Bank respectively delivered statements at the opening ceremony.
5. Another statement was made by the General Secretary of Water and Forests Department / Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Rural Development and Water and Forests;
6. Speakers put particular emphasis on the challenges facing Africa, its potential and disproportionate access to these resources by populations, especially women and the most vulnerable social classes. They stressed that much remains to be done to make full use of these potential, to restore lands and to protect biodiversity and people’s livelihoods.

**III. Organization of work**

**3.1 Adoption of the agenda and overview of COP15**

1. The organization of work started with the presentation the regional meeting agenda which was adopted without amendment.

**3.2 Organization of the work**

1. The work began with a series of presentations made by UNCCD Secretariat on: ***i)*** Overview of COP 15, ***ii)*** The Heads of State Summit, et ***iii)*** The Ministerial Segment.

**3.2.1 Overview of COP15**

1. Ms Miriam MEDEL, Chief of the External Relations, Policy and Advocacy Unit at the UNCCD Secretariat presented the logistical and organizational aspects of COP15.
2. A general overview of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties was also given on the organization of work, including the sessions of the subsidiary bodies, the organization of the Heads of State Summit and the Ministerial Segment, the Business Forum, the Youth Forum, the Rio Conventions Pavilion and other side events.
3. She also recalled that the interventions will focus exclusively on two essential pillars: 1) the problem of drought and 2) degraded lands rehabilitation.

**3.2.2 The Summit of Heads of State and Government,**

1. The Heads of State Summit will take place on 9 May 2022 and will provide a stronger political process to address drought and land degradation issues to help mitigate the risks of climate change. It will address in depth issues related to drought, large-scale land restoration and financial resource mobilization.
2. As such, participants wished to have much more details and information on this subject in order to properly prepare the participation of the Heads of State.

**3.2.3 The Ministerial Segment,**

1. The Ministerial Segment will be held on May 10, 2022. Parallel discussions will be held within three Ministerial/High Level Roundtables and will focus on the following topics:

**(a) Rights, rewards and responsibilities: the future of land stewardship;**

**(b) Land restoration: A path to sustainable post-pandemic recovery;**

**(c) The Big Dry: From disaster to drought resilience.**

1. Two interactive dialogue sessions will be held consecutively on the following topics: (a) Land reGeneration: The role of youth in shaping the sustainable land agenda; et (b) Future-proofing land use: Shifting patterns in production and consumption.
2. Delegates are required to inform ministers of their choice of one of the three roundtables as they will be held simultaneously. For further information, delegates are invited to consult the COP15 website.
3. In view of the fruitful exchanges, the participants at the regional meeting recommend the following:

* **African countries should actively participate in the high-level segment to take forward the concerns of the region;**
* [**Making the COP 15 briefing note available to countries for good**](https://www.reverso.net/traduction-texte#sl=fra&tl=eng&text=La%20mise%20%C3%A0%20la%20disposition%20des%20pays%20de%20la%20note%20d%E2%80%99information%20sur%20la%20COP%2015%20pour%20une%20bonne%20appropriation%20et%20pr%C3%A9paration%20;) **appropriation and preparation;**
* **The need to develop adequate arguments, resource mobilization strategies and to mobilize allies willing to accompany the region in setting up the appropriate solutions to address the drought and achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LND).**

**3.3 Risk management**

1. A presentation was made by the African Risk Capacity Group (ARC) on risk management, focusing on innovative mechanisms and appropriate levers to prevent, mitigate and manage the various risks, particularly those related to climate change and drought. In addition, the steps to be taken to join this organization and benefit from its support were presented, namely: ***1)*** Definition of country's risk profile, ***2)*** Development of the memorandum of understanding based on country's risk profile analysis, and ***3)*** Development of the capacity building plan.
2. In view of the fruitful exchanges, the participants at the regional meeting recommend the following:

* **Organizing a regional meeting (in person or virtual/hybrid) to share the vision of ARC and learn about the opportunities offered by this organization.**
* **Providing countries with the necessary documents to understand the vision and mission of the organization.**

**3.4 Follow-up of Action Frameworks and Thematic Issues**

**3.4.1 Gender**

1. The Secretariat was mandated in accordance with Decision 12/COP 14 to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the Gender Action Plan implementation building on existing good practices and guidelines.
2. For this COP15, it was noted that the First Lady expressed her willingness to participate in the high-level event to encourage women participation of and their strong involvement in political decision-making on drought-related issues that affect women much more and make them more vulnerable.
3. Based on the fruitful discussions, debates and exchanges, the participants of the regional meeting recommend:

* **The implementation of the gender action plan at the national level to facilitate its appropriation by stakeholders through the launch of an initiative within the framework of the UNCCD to provide technical assistance and support to countries that wish to do so;**
* **The need to increase the representation of women in the decision-making process at the international level (COP and other important events);**
* **The need to strengthen the economic and technical capacities of women at all levels for their participation in decision-making.**
* **The development of a Guide on land tenure with a strong gender perspective with the support of FAO.**

**3.4.2 Drought**

1. In accordance with Decision 23/COP14, the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) was established to reflect on effective policies and implementation measures to deal with drought under the Convention. Thus, the IWG report was presented by UNCCD Secretariat, emphasizing that its preparation was preceded by a series of meetings and surveys for countries to gather their actual needs.
2. After this presentation, participants expressed concern about the quality of IWG report, which will be the basis for specific discussions on drought during COP15, therefore the African group should give its views on the report with a view to reaching a consensus.
3. The participants (SAFGRAD, Eswatini, Ambassador BIAO, Angola, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia) stressed the need to discuss in depth this critical issue of drought that is undermining Africa and build a regional consensus to strengthen our position and to ensure that our arguments are sound for future interventions.
4. Given the importance of the subject under discussion and the interest that Africa attaches to drought due its impacts on ecosystems and people's livelihoods, participants placed particular emphasis on the need to adopt a roadmap on drought that will consider innovative approaches to prediction, prevention and preparedness, response and adaptation, including the strengthening of populations resilience and funding mobilization.
5. Drought, stressed the representative of the African Forest Forum (AFF), is a matter of urgency because it requires consistent actions and some Sahelian countries are already carrying out fruitful pilot actions that and should serve as examples. These good practices should be shared with other member states for their appropriation and scaling up. Therefore, it appears necessary to make drought a priority agenda for the African continent, reiterated the speaker.
6. The other point that attracted delegates attention was the matter of innovative financing knowing that many countries do not have the necessary information on financing sources and its related mechanisms. Besides, it was highlighted that focal points should have adequate capacities in terms of negotiation to be able to mobilize the necessary funds for the implementation of combating drought actions.
7. The representative of the Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), emphasized that CILSS is very honoured to participate in these discussions, knowing that CILSS has been working on drought issues for more than 50 years ago, and has developed innovative tools and approaches and has enough experience in decadal and monthly monitoring of drought with specific studies. It produces needed data for relevant decisions making. He also indicated that CILSS is willing to put its expertise at the service of the African continent.
8. It should be recalled that in view of many discussions and concerns expressed by delegates on the quality of IWG report, the floor was given to Mr. Stephen (Uganda), representative of the region within IWG, who made a brief presentation on methodological steps that led to the report preparation, he also presented the context and challenges faced by the group in preparing this report, which are summarized as follows:

* The total absence of face-to-face meetings, knowing that virtual meetings were not successful as the countries were faced with the problem of connection.
* Many delegates were affected by Covid-19, which has significantly biased the report’s content and negatively taint the process led to final report preparation.

1. The presenter then briefed the audience on the four main pillars (Policy and Governance, Vulnerability Assessment, Early Warning and Monitoring of Drought, and Finance) for proper drought management. He also emphasized that the African continent is facing many challenges and impacts of drought to which the most effective commitments and solutions had to be made and maintained to reverse the trends. He also mentioned that despite the policy, institutional, capacity, and financial gaps identified by delegates in the report, recommendations for COP15 were made that would enable the UNCCD focal points and other stakeholders to take ownership of it.
2. Finally, He clarified that the content of this report is the responsibility of IWG members, and it is necessary to improve its content.
3. Speaking, the Ambassador (BIAO) who is the distinguished guest of this meeting thanked Stephen for his brilliant presentation which is very well structured and instructive. He then gave a brief reminder on the Convention history to bring a diplomatic clarification on a medal that has two faces: desertification and drought. He also stressed that drought is a political matter that requires a political support and a strong advocacy with more technical data to help each other understand Africa’s position. He ended his speech by putting a special emphasis on the establishment of a legal binding instrument whatever its qualification (Protocol, Agreement, etc.) and that we must appropriate the IWG’s recommendations on drought, which are part of the COP15 draft decisions.
4. In view of the various interventions mad, there were calls for a consensus to be built for the establishment of this legally binding instrument including reflection on the creation of a special fund on drought. With regard to financing, the Global Mechanism was asked to identify potential and innovative financing instruments to combat drought, based on a clearly identified added value.
5. For the Chair of the African Group, the establishment of a legally binding instrument is an imperative for the continent given the vulnerability of many African countries affected by this phenomenon, and there is a great need to develop options and scenarios to mark out the process that will lead to the development of this instrument. He went on to say that the negotiations will take place in multilateral spaces, and Africa’s wishes should be raised with development partners committed to supporting Africa at all levels. To this end, the focal points should inform Ministers of the challenges ahead at COP15. He suggested to establish a working group / reflection that will be responsible for preparing a roadmap (before, during and after the cop15) bringing together all ideas that will constitute the right course of action to enhance Africa’s ambitions.
6. Some delegates (SAFGRAD, Uganda, Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Eswatini) stressed that Africa is the most affected continent by drought. Political commitments should be more explicitly defined. There is a need to call on the African Union to adopt a decision to develop a legally binding instrument on drought. Emphasis was placed on creating partnership on drought in Africa. They stressed the need to support member states to make drought a national policy priority and that the UNCCD Secretariat should pursue making drought a priority agenda.
7. In the light of the discussions, exchanges and debates on the quality of IWG report presented by the UNCCD Secretariat, participants recommended that:

* **The absolute need to put in place a legally binding instrument (Protocol, Agreement, etc.) to raise drought issue at the international level, like the Paris Agreement and the Nagoya Protocol;**
* **The need to improve the quality of IWG report to reflect Africa’s and be neutral;**
* **The need to make drought a priority agenda for the African continent and to carry out advocacy actions at the political level;**
* **The UNCCD Secretariat should continue to build the capacity of the Focal Points to** **ensure that they have the necessary negotiating assets in support of drought combating;**
* **Setting up a small group to brief ambassadors, ministers and even Heads of State to ensure that discussions dealing with Drought issues be taken into account.**

**4.3 Sand and Dust Storms**

1. Decision 25/COP.14 requested the Secretariat, relevant institutions and bodies of the Convention to undertake a series of actions relating to (a) the development of a compendium on sand and dust storms in collaboration with other relevant United Nations entities and specialized organizations, and to promote its use; (b) the development of the global reference map of sand and dust storm sources at the global, regional and national levels in cooperation with other relevant bodies (c) Enhancing the capacity of Parties to address sand and dust storms by developing, in collaboration with relevant United Nations entities, agencies and partners, a set of decision-support tools.
2. The UNCCD Secretariat made a presentation showing the progress made in the implementation of this decision 25/COP.14. The presenter highlighted that the UNCCD Secretariat will publish in the coming days guidelines to address the issue of sand and dust storms, including a toolkit that could be used for capacity building of countries. This toolkit is being developed with the support of other partners and will probably be presented at COP15.
3. The global mapping of sand and dust storms was completed and presented during the meeting, knowing that the UNCCD Secretariat and the Global Mechanism will collaborate to develop an initiative in this area.
4. A program has been designed to build the capacity of countries and develop concept notes for financial resources mobilization to address sand and dust storms issues.
5. Participants expressed dismay at the content of the capacity building program, which is very technical. Countries have experienced serious difficulties in understanding and appropriating the content of this program.
6. In light of the discussions, exchanges and debates, participants recommended that:

**The UNCCD Secretariat and other partners are invited to support the countries affected by the sand and dust storms in carrying out detailed technical studies and developing operational action plans in this regard.**

**3.4.4 Land tenure**

1. In accordance with decision 26/COP.14, which requested the UNCCD Secretariat and strategic partners to (i) encourage innovative approaches to overcoming potential risks and obstacles, and (ii) identify opportunities to raise awareness of land tenure security among all stakeholders, especially vulnerable populations, a presentation was made by the UNCCD Secretariat on progress made in the land tenure framework.
2. Continuing his intervention, the presenter pointed out that there will be two major special events that will take place respectively at COP15 on May 10 and 11, 2022: 1) the first will take place on May 10 during the ministerial segment and will concern the issue of **Rights, Rewards and Responsibilities: the Future of Land Managemen**t, 2) the second will take place on May 11 and will concern the presentation of a technical guide on the integration of the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Land Governance for UNCCD’s provisions implementation.
3. Focal points are encouraged to review the related technical documents to get updated negotiations status in order to bring Africa's voice to the decision-making processes of the COP 15. The Gender Action Plan and its contribution to strengthening women's land rights and access to resources could also be consulted.

In light of the discussions, exchanges and debates, participants recommended that:

**The UNCCD Secretariat and other partners are invited to support** **countries, that wish to do so, to develop and implement land strategies in conjunction with land restoration programs**

**3.4.5 Migration**

1. Recalling decision 19/COP.13 and decision 22/COP.14, which requested the Secretariat to support Parties, upon request, in the implementation of appropriate actions to combat desertification, land degradation and drought as a driver of migration, and strengthen international cooperation to implement these measures.
2. A presentation was made by the Secretariat on the progress made in the implementation of COP14 recommendations as well as recommendations made for COP15.
3. Participants (Ambassador BIAO, Ghana, Eswatini, Morocco, Senegal) noted that land degradation and drought inevitably lead to displacement of affected populations (migration or transhumance) for seeking other economic opportunities, while stressing that emphasis should be placed on addressing the roots causes of migration flows.
4. The participants (CAR, Senegal, Chair, Benin) placed particular emphasis on the development of initiatives by the UNCCD Secretariat (3S, Peace and Forest, Drought) which need to be supported and strengthened in order to achieve their expected objectives. They expressed their wishes to the UNCCD Secretariat to re-launch the 3S Initiative and the Peace and Forest Initiative within a reasonable timeframe.
5. The representative of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) expressed the availability of OSS to provide the necessary support to countries to develop concept notes in order to mobilize the required financial resources.
6. In its response, the UNCCD Secretariat stated that the 3S Initiative is being transferred to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
7. In light of the discussions, exchanges and debates, participants recommended that:

**UNCCD Secretariat and other partners invited to relaunch and strengthen support for the “3S” initiative: Sustainability, Stability and Security in Africa.**

**IV. Program and Budget for the 2022-2023 Biennium**

1. A presentation was made by the UNCCD Secretariat on the program and budget for the 2022-2023 biennium.
2. Delegates expressed reservations about the allocations to the Science-Policy Interface, a subsidiary body of the Executive Secretariat that is supposed to produce scientific data as scientific evidence on drought, land degradation and desertification issues, and to the IWG. They also wanted the STC budget to be increased and a budget to be allocated to the IWG to initiate negotiations as part of the development legally binding instrument on drought, through, inter alia, the mobilization of unused resources due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

**V. CRIC 20 Agenda Items**

**5.1 Resources mobilization progress for the implementation of the Convention**

1. A presentation was made by the UNCCD Secretariat. Delegates were briefed on the progress made in mobilizing resources for the implementation of the Convention. Overall, delegates thanked the Secretariat for the quality of the provided information and expressed satisfaction with the content of the presentation except that the results to date are very mixed in terms of overall resource mobilization as the procedures for accessing funds are very complicated and make difficult for focal points to mobilize the necessary funds to address drought and land degradation.
2. The participants (Malawi, Senegal, Benin, Burundi, Niger, Mauritius, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon) stressed the need for the GCF, GEF, LDN Fund and other mechanisms to make existing procedures more flexible for accessing funding. The lack of financial resources dedicated to countries for the implementation of programs to combat drought and land degradation will not allow us to achieve the objectives we have set. They placed particular emphasis on the need to share and capitalize some countries experiences and capacities in terms of resources mobilization. A small working group should be set up to deal with these issues, reiterated the Chairman of the African Group.
3. Another point that caught the attention of the delegates was the issue of LDN fund, which is dedicated to the private sector and does not represent an added value for the least developed countries.
4. The Chairman of the African Group invites the Global Mechanism to develop a clear roadmap for required financial resources mobilization for Annex I countries to enable them to implement programs built under the UNCCD and achieve land degradation neutrality.
5. After exchanging on financing issue, delegates recommended the following:

* **Further strengthen collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to enhance land restoration financial allocation;**
* **Strengthen and formalize collaboration with the Green Climate Fund;**
* **Clarify procedures for mobilizing funding from the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund (LDN Fund);**
* **Develop and implement a strategy to increase fund mobilization, including the adoption of a financial target with a specific timetable e;**
* **Promote a strong involvement of private sector for large-scale investment on lands restoration.** 
  1. **The reporting process**

1. Regarding the reporting process, delegates were briefed by the international consultant (Dr. ElMostafa DARFAOUI) recruited for this purpose on a number of points, namely: 1) Presentation of PRAIS 4 platform, 2) Access to assistance tools and resources and 3) Reporting indicators.
2. The discussions on this topic were interactive and strongly supported by the UNCCD Secretariat, and then by the international consultant whose main mission is to assist countries to use PRAIS4 and to produce quality reports. Many clarification questions on the use of PRAIS 4 were asked by the focal points (concerning access to the platform, given the difficulties experienced by some focal points in accessing it).
3. The UNCCD Secretariat reiterated its commitment and willingness to provide the necessary support to countries in this reporting process for the production of quality reports.
4. In addition, many answers and clarifications were provided by the UNCCD Secretariat and UNEP respectively.

**VI. Committee on Science and Technology**

1. For the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), a subsidiary body of the Convention, the participants were briefed on the main documents discussed by the group. After the rapporteur’s brief presentation of these various documents and recommendations, he stressed the importance of good ownership by the Focal Points in order to prepare the African expectations on these issues: drought, LDN.

**VII. Elections of Bureau and subsidiary bodies members**

**7.1 Presentation of the African Group Action Plan**

1. The participants were briefed by the Chairman of the Group on the Action Plan 2021-2023 of the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) on combating desertification which serves as an advocacy tool and negotiating lever.
2. It should be recalled that the AGN had developed its action plan 2021-2023 with the vision " Raising the positioning of the AGN for a strengthened implementation of combating desertification in Africa", and which is built on four axes: 1) Group empowerment, 2) Outreach and Advocacy, 3) Support for statutory activities and 4) Strengthening combating desertification.
3. A progress report was presented focusing on the main achievements recorded so far that could be summarized as follows:

* The mobilization of several technical and financial actors to support the GAN, namely:
* The secretariat welcomes the proposal to organize a high-level conference on financing combating desertification in Africa
* The Global Mechanism is in the process of finalizing with the AfDB a capacity building program for the benefit of the GAN (Negotiations, etc.);
* UNEP could mobilize some funding under the regional project on reporting 2021-2022 for language capacity building (English).
* The AfDB and the IFDD are willing to support the GAN for the preparation of the following documents: Guide for negotiators, guide on the function of the focal point and the structuring of the GAN.
* The SOA is willing to support the GAN in the monitoring and evaluation systems of the desertification.
* Coordination with other regional groups on drought-related issues;
* Coordination with the African groups of negotiators within the framework of the UNFCCC and the CBD

**7.2 Election of Bureau and subsidiary bodies members**

1. With regard to the appointment of representatives to the subsidiary bodies (CST and CRIC) and the Bureau, a matrix was presented by the Chairman listing all the countries that have previously held, on a rotating basis, positions in the CST, CRIC and COP Bureau. In view of the performance of the outgoing Chair (Morocco) and the successful conduct of the first term, the participants unanimously re-elected him as Chair of the said Group for a second term in order to continue the implementation of the action plan and strengthen the positioning of the programs to combat desertification in Africa on the international agenda.

**7.3 COP and subsidiary bodies Bureau:**

* Cameroon has been nominated to represent Africa on the CRIC Bureau;
* Egypt has been designated to represent Africa in the Bureau of the CST
* Regarding the COP 15 Bureau, Africa will be represented by Côte d'Ivoire as President and Uganda as Vice President.

**VIII. The CILSS Meeting with UNCCD Focal Points of the CILSS/ECOWAS Space**

1. Following the virtual meeting held on March 25, 2022 between CILSS and the CNULCD focal points of the CILSS/ECOWAS region, another meeting was organized on March 29, 22 in conjunction with the regional preparatory meeting. At the end of this meeting, the CNULCD focal points of the CILSS/ECOWAS space made the following recommendations:

* Maintaining and strengthening the role of CILSS as UNCCD relay in the CILSS/ECOWAS space through:
  + Strengthening the strategic partnership between CILSS and multilateral partners for the benefit of Member States in the implementation of regional structuring projects for combating desertification, land degradation and drought;
  + Coordination of the Global Land Outlook (GLO) process in West Africa and the Sahel;
  + The establishment of a labeling mechanism for the incentive recognition of the scaling up of SLM good practices in Africa to be validated at COP16.
* The creation of national and regional digital platforms on sustainable land management and climate change mitigation and adaptation for good governance of food and nutritional security under the regional coordination of CILSS, with the support of the African Union Development Agency/NEPAD, the ECOWAS and WAEMU Commissions, the Pan African Agency for the Great Green Wall (PAGGW), the Sahel and Sahara Observatory (OSS), the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF) and the African Forest Forum (AFF).

1. The UNCCD National Focal Points of the CILSS/ECOWAS Space suggest that these recommendations be taken up by the Summit of Heads of State at COP15 through the intervention of the President of the Republic of Chad, current President of CILSS.

**IX. Taking into account the activities of non-governmental organizations in decisions**

1. Some participants representing civil society (Tunisia, Senegal) expressed their dissatisfaction with the low representation of civil society in political decision-making on issues of drought, land degradation and desertification. They wished for their strong involvement in strategic priorities definition for combating land degradation and drought.
2. Taking the floor again, the Chair stressed that civil society has always been involved in meetings and other activities related to the UNCCD, including the private sector for the development of a companies’ mobilization strategy;

**X. Conclusion of the preparatory meeting**

**10.1 Adoption of the final communiqué of the COP15 preparatory meeting**

1. After reading the final communiqués by the rapporteurs (Anglophone and Francophone), the participants adopted the draft final communiqués without amendment.

**10 .2 Closure of the session.**

1. The closing of the regional preparatory meeting for COP15 was punctuated by targeted interventions pronounced respectively by representatives of the AUC, ADB, FFA and the UNCCD Secretariat, who welcomed the legendary hospitality of the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco for the for the warm welcome that prevailed throughout this COP 15 regional preparatory meeting.
2. The closing remarks were made by the Chairman of the African Group who placed special emphasis on the synergy of the group. He urged focal points to prepare themselves resolutely for COP15, to examine the documents that are posted online to develop solid arguments that can convince policy makers.
3. Finally, he thanked the participation of the partners (AUC, ADB, FFA, OSS, UNEP, FAO, NEPAD, CILSS, Civil Society) who responded favorably to the invitations addressed to them.
4. The backdrop is set through this meeting, reiterated the Chair, Africa is ready to make its voice heard at the upcoming COP 15 to reach strategic decisions on issues affecting Africa in order push its agenda forward.

Done at Marrakech, April 1, 2022

The Rapporteur The Chair of the African Group

**Professor James Gambiza** **Mr. Khalid CHERKI**