



75 Years of Uniting Nations: Overcoming Conflict to Achieve Common Goals

20 to 22 November 2020

United Nations Convention to Combat
Desertification (UNCCD)

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Word of Welcome

Dear delegates,

We would like to warmly welcome all of you to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification at BiMUN 2020! This year's edition might be a little more special than the previous years, nonetheless this will certainly not make it less remarkable. We are eventually the digital generation and know how to manage our ways through the internet while connecting with one another.

As your chairs, we have written this study guide for you to get you started and guide you through a vast internet-scape full of information. It is important that you read this through, as it provides a framework and first introduction to all of the necessary building blocks for a fruitful debate. However, this is not all, we expect you to show up well prepared as this will make it more fun and productive for you and your fellow delegates. In this line we also encourage you to go through the rules of procedure when getting ready for the conference.

Our main goal is to create great debates while connecting with each other. So next to the professionalism and respect for your fellow delegates we also expect to have a lot of fun while creating great memories. Do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions and concerns. We are always happy to help, both before and during the conference.

With that said, we wish you all the luck preparing and are looking forward to seeing you in November!

Sofie & Emily

Committee Overview

History and Membership of the Committee

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was adopted in Paris on 17 June 1994 after several previous efforts by the international community, acknowledging that degradation and desertification was becoming an increasing global major economic, social and environmental problem.¹ A first step was taken in 1977, when the United Nations Conference on Desertification adopted a Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, yet the undertakings were not significant enough according to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). In 1991 UNEP stated that the overall problem of land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas had not decreased and, despite several local examples of success, even intensified. With the problem of land degradation and desertification (LDD) remaining, a next step was taken in 1992 when the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was organised. The conference stressed the importance of actions promoting sustainable development at the community level.²

It was during UNCED that the first steps to establish the UNCCD were taken, when an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) was established. The negotiations by the INC resulted in the adoption of the Convention. It first entered into force roughly two and a half years later, on 26 December 1996, 90 days after the 50th country ratified the convention. Another year later, in October 1997, the first session of the UNCCD's governing body convened.³ Currently, 196 countries and the European Union (EU) are parties to the convention. Five regions are specifically focussed on with an individual annex per region (Africa, Asia, Latin

¹ UNCCD (no date) *About the Convention*. Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/about-convention>.

² UNCCD (no date) *UNCCD History*. Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/about-convention/unccd-history>

³ *Ibidem*

America and the Caribbean (LAC), Northern Mediterranean, and Central and Eastern Europe)⁴

Mandate and Funding

The Conference of the Parties

The Conference of the Parties (COP) was established as the Convention's prime decision-making and governing body. It is the main committee of the Convention in which the different parties are represented through their country's delegates. The COP consisting of all 197 ratifying parties, as well as subsidiary bodies to assist the COP and meets biennially since 2001.⁵ Every first meeting of the COP, 10 members (one president, nine vice-presidents) are elected out of all party representatives to form the Bureau, while representing all geographical regions. The Bureau of COP has to follow up and supervise tasks and prepare the next COP and therefore has an important role within the UNCCD.⁶

The mandate of the COP mainly stretches to review party reports on how they are implementing the convention and, based on this, to make recommendations towards the parties.⁷ This happens with the help of the subsidiary body, The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC).⁸ Secondly, since the global contexts change, the COP has the power to adopt annexes or amendments to the Convention, or establishing additional subsidiary bodies if necessary. The COP also supervises the implementation and commitment by the parties of the Convention.⁹ In order to facilitate and direct this, strategic plans and frameworks to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality are established. Examples are the ten year 2008-2018 strategic plan and framework to enhance the

⁴ UNCCD Knowledge Hub (2016) *Overview of Countries per UNCCD Annex*. Available at: <https://knowledge.unccd.int/home/country-information/overview-countries-unccd-annex>.

⁵ UNCCD (no date) *Conference of the Parties (COP)*. Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/conference-parties-cop>.

⁶ UNCCD (no date) *The Bureau of the COP*. Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/conference-parties-cop>.

⁷ UNCCD, *Conference of the Parties (COP)*.

⁸ UNCCD (no date) *The Committee of the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)*. Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/committee-review-implementation-convention-cric>.

⁹ UNCCD, *The Bureau of the COP*.

implementation of the Convention, and currently the 2018-2030 Strategic Framework that aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹⁰.

National action programmes (NAPs) are the primary means for the implementation of the Convention, which are often supported by sub-regional and regional plans (SRAP and RAP). They are developed together with multiple stakeholders (national governments, scientific institutions and local communities) and through guidelines, that are aligned within the strategic frameworks and objectives of the Convention¹¹.

The Secretariat

Next to the COP, a permanent secretariat was created through article 23 of the Convention. This Secretariat has its offices in Bonn, Germany since January 1999 and mainly assists the COP sessions and COP subsidiary bodies with activities ranging from preparing substantive documentation to logistical arrangements needed to carry out the sessions successfully. The secretariat itself does not represent countries or take decisions. In essence, the secretariat thus aims to provide the COP and its subsidiary bodies with the best tools in order to take well-founded decisions and successful actions. This happens through active promotion of the Convention, improving access to information to facilitate national implementation, assisting in meeting global targets like the SDGs.¹²

For this, the secretariat of the UNCCD works closely together and strengthens partnerships with relevant conventions, programmes and institutions. Amongst those are the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), both Conventions that originate from the 1992 UNCED as well. Collaboration between the three conventions focusses on an integrated approach. However, the Convention to Combat Desertification is the only legally binding agreement connecting environment and development to sustainable land management.¹³

¹⁰ UNCCD, *UNCCD History*.

¹¹ UNCCD (no date) *Action Programmes*. Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/action-programmes>.

¹² UNCCD (no date) *The Secretariat*. Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/about-us/secretariat>.

¹³ UNCCD, *About the Convention*

The Global Mechanism

Article 21 of the UNCCD established a Global Mechanism (GM) as the primary operational arm to secure substantial funding for the implementation of the Convention. In order to do this, the GM also provides advisory services as well as cooperation with countries, the private sector and donors to mobilize as much resources as necessary and possible.¹⁴

¹⁴ UNCCD (no date) *The Global Mechanism*. Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/about-us/global-mechanism>.

Migration & desertification in West Africa: Fighting Drought for a Better Future

Introduction

On 21 June 2018, a new edition of the World Atlas of Desertification was published by the Joint Research Centre of the EU. It estimated that over 75% of land area in the world is degrading already at a rate of a total of about half the surface of the EU annually.¹⁵ The effects hereof pose enormous strains on the population of West Africa, where 80% of the people depend on natural resources as a fundamental source of living. Faced with increased poverty, inequality and vulnerability, migration is often the best solution to escape degrading soil and lack of water. Created with a specific focus on Africa, it is clear that the UNCCD cannot steer away from paying attention to human consequences of LDD causing the forced displacement of vulnerable people.

Background

West Africa – Geography

One of the five UN subregions of the Africa, West Africa consists of the sixteen most western countries of the continent with a population of about 401 861 in 2020.¹⁶ The countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.¹⁷ After the merging of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and the Special Envoy of the Sahel (OSES) in 2016 in the United Nations

¹⁵ EU Science Hub (2018) *New World Atlas of Desertification shows unprecedented pressure on the planet's natural resources*. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/news/new-world-atlas-desertification-shows-unprecedented-pressure-planets-natural-resources>.

¹⁶ United Nations (2019) *Population Division*. Available at: <https://population.un.org/wpp/Graphs/DemographicProfiles/Line/914>.

¹⁷ UNOWA (2020) *Map*. Available at: <https://unowa.unmissions.org/map>.

Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Chad is generally also taken into account when discussing the region.¹⁸

The region is a diverse one, with a great variety in countries, cultures and ecosystems. However, it can simultaneously be roughly divided in two general geographic regions: the Sahelian and Guinean countries. Although both experience similar vulnerable and fragile soils by an increase in dry periods, extreme rainfall and overall decrease in rain season length, hardly fertile, low nitrogen and phosphorous content and vulnerability to wind erosion, Guinean countries generally have a more humid, tropical climate with roughly two rain and two dry seasons each year, therefore offering a better possibility for green vegetation to grow.¹⁹

The semi-arid Sahelian countries on the other hand are faced with irregular rainfall and lasting dry periods, posing difficulties to agriculture. Generally speaking, there is an annual rainy season of three to five months with some north to south variation, in which the green vegetation of the region emerges.²⁰ The region houses the fertile delta of the Niger river and has a diverse ecosystem, including the drought – and fire - resistant baobab tree, deep rooted Acacia and cram-cram grass, essential for Sahelian livestock. However, declining rainfall and human induced land degradation has increased the desertification process and southward expansion of the Sahara into the Sahel region.²¹

Main regional actors

The sovereign governmental bodies of the West African States, the UNCCD and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the UN body that deals primary migration issues, are the main actors that come to mind when addressing land degradation influenced migration in West Africa. However, three other regional actors are important to take into account when discussing this topic.

ECOWAS

¹⁸ UNOWAS (2020) *Map*. Available at: <https://unowas.unmissions.org/map>.

¹⁹ SRAP/WA 2013

²⁰ *Ibidem*

²¹ National Geographic (2012) *Africa. Physical Geography (Sahel)*. Available at: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/africa-physical-geography//>

The most influential regional stakeholder, The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in 1975 and currently has fifteen members. These states are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo.²² The organisation is divided into an executive, legislative and judicial branch, the main body respectively being a commission, parliament and supreme court.²³

ECOWAS promotes an economic integration in all fields of activity in West Africa. This includes agriculture and natural resources, leading to the organisation to be actively involved in agriculture and food security issues which cause forced displacement. ECOWAS supports regional agricultural investment programmes (RAIPs) and the Regional Food and Agriculture Agency (RFAA) through financial management and technical assistance for investments plans.²⁴ Important to note also is the free movement of the population that ECOWAS promotes in its integrated region, facilitating regional migration.

CILSS

The Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) was established in 1972 and currently has 12 members. These are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo. The committee is coordinated on a political and technical level through the representatives of all twelve sovereign states, conferences of the heads of states of members, a council of ministers and through a board of directors. It consists of three bodies, an Executive Secretariat, Sahel Institute and an AGRHYMET regional centre.²⁵

The main activity of CILSS is to invest in research about food security and ways to combat the effects of land degradation and desertification (LDD). This happens through multiple actions including coordination and harmonization of the policies

²² ECOWAS (2016) *Member States*. Available at: <https://www.ecowas.int/member-states/>.

²³ ECOWAS (2016) *Governance Structure*. Available at: <https://www.ecowas.int/about-ecowas/governance-structure/>.

²⁴ ECOWAS (2016) *Agriculture & Environment*. Available at: <https://www.ecowas.int/ecowas-sectors/agriculture/>.

²⁵ CILSS (2020) *Présentation du CILSS*. Available at : <https://www.cilss.int/index.php/640-2/>.

of individual member states, strengthening regional cooperation, collection of information. All activity is divided into five areas: related to definition and implementation of policies, related to the basic and continuing education, related to information, related to research and capitalization and related to multi-country pilot projects.²⁶

G5S

The G5 Sahel alliance (G5S) was established in 2014 between five Sahelian countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The alliance constitutes an intergovernmental system of conferences of the five heads of states, a national coordination committee, a non-budgetary permanent secretariat and the defence and security committee.²⁷

The main focus of the G5S is to improve peace and security in the region, to better the living conditions and to generate an inclusive, sustainable development. The focus here is less on LDD and climate change as separate issues, but more generally on the broad security and development issues.²⁸ However, LDD and climate change constitute a great part of these issues, as water scarcity for example not only poses humanitarian threats but also often generates armed conflict. This means that, apart from promoting good governance and peace, the alliance also addresses strengthening the resilience capacities of the people for example in terms of food security, water and energy infrastructure.²⁹

A history of migration and climate

Brief history

Historically, migration in West Africa has always offered a temporary and seasonal solution to challenges posed by poor harvests, droughts or dry seasons. Additionally, land degradation in West Africa is no more a new occurrence than migration. The region proved excellent for investments in industrial crops, with cotton and ground nut for the Sahel and coffee, cocoa and pineapple for the coastal

²⁶ CILSS, presentation du CILSS.

²⁷ G5 Sahel (2020) *Présentation du G5 Sahel*. Available at : <https://www.g5sahel.org/presentation>.

²⁸ *Ibidem*

²⁹ G5 Sahel (2020) *Nos activités*. Available at : <https://www.g5sahel.org/nos-activites>.

region. During the colonial era, the main focus was on obtaining a maximum amount of production and gains. The effects on the soil and climate coming from this extensive exploitation and exhaustion of the lands was hardly taken into account or researched.³⁰

After the decolonisation, droughts, flash floods (the rapid overflowing of lower lying areas) and human activity on the exploited and exhausted soils made traditional agricultural practices and local lifestyle less durable. Many rural inhabitants increasingly sought new opportunities in urban centres, changing the historical seasonal migration to a more permanent relocation.³¹ The direct link between drought and migration, as an example, manifested itself visibly in the mass migrations of the Sahara during major droughts in the 1970s and 1980s.³²

The migratory trend, fuelled by LDD still exists today and it is estimated that by 2050 between 50 and 700 million people will have to move as a result of degraded soil or lack of recourses.³³ Currently, West Africa acts as the region with the highest percentage of intra-regional migration and it is estimated that about 8.4 million people, or 2.8% of the total population in the region are migrants.³⁴

Push factors

The factors of LDD and decreasing liveable circumstances pushing a more permanent relocations arise through an interplay between human causes and climatic reasons.

Human Causes

The conditions in rural areas are increasingly threatened by multiple human factors, such as rapid urbanization and population growth, pollution and industrialisation and the insecurity brought by civil wars and conflicts. The expansion of agriculture furthermore lead to a clearing of natural plant covering that protects the soil from

³⁰ SRAP/WA 2013.

³¹ UNCCD (2016) *Land Restoration: A Solution to West Africa's Rural Exodus?* Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/news-events/land-restoration-solution-west-africas-rural-exodus>.

³² SRAP/WA 2013

³³ IPBES (2018) *Media Release: Worsening Worldwide Land Degradation Now 'Critical', Undermining Well-Being of 3.2 Billion People*. Available at: <https://ipbes.net/news/media-release-worsening-worldwide-land--now-%E2%80%98critical%E2%80%99-undermining-well-being-32>.

³⁴ IOM (2020) *West and Central Africa*. Available at: <https://www.iom.int/west-and-central-africa>.

drying out and overexposure to sunlight. Notwithstanding some recent progress, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) stated most recently in 2015 that Nigeria has the one of the worst deforestation rates in the world.³⁵ Furthermore, Gulf of Guinea countries increasingly overexploit the wood resources covering the land for fuel and timber. Simultaneously, agricultural practices are increasingly industrialised: commercial crops replace slow growing, traditional crops, pastures are overgrazed by bigger cattle groups and resources are used inappropriately to secure a maximum production and profit outcome.³⁶

Another problem lies in the practice of land grabbing by foreign developed countries. Handing over, or selling land – often for a smaller price than the overall potential of the land – provides for an outflow in profits, increasing foreign impact and influence in the country and importantly, a substantial decrease in arable land available for the native population. Land grabbing thus not only threatens the economic stability of the African states, it also brings socio-political insecurity, fuelling conflicts based on acquiring or controlling the access to the already scarce land resources.³⁷

Climatic Reasons

Starting in the 1970s, with the severe drought in the Sahara as its first climax, a downward trend in average annual rainfall, and therefore increasing times of drought, can be seen. This is another by-product of the overall global climate change. The overall warming temperatures cause extremes in the deserts and, combined with the lasting dry periods and abovementioned human causes, facilitate the degradation of the plant cover worsening the desertification in already vulnerable arid zones. Another consequence of the longer dry, sunny and warm periods, is the increasing risk and amount of devastating bushfires.³⁸ The dry vegetation not only catches fire more easily, lack of water often also prohibits a quick extinguishing, destroying the land and livestock many families depend on to

³⁵ Sandker M. (2019) *Latest FREL submission shows Nigeria's progress on monitoring forest resources*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/redd/news/detail/en/c/1183510/>.

³⁶ SRAP/WA 2013

³⁷ *Ibidem*

³⁸ *Ibidem*

survive. The fire and uncovered land, lastly, also act as a catalysator for more climate change, creating – if not dealt with – a vicious circle.

Consequences

The increasing food insecurity, destroyed livelihoods and the threat of conflict, lead to a growing pauperization of the population and general degeneration of the overall living conditions. As a consequence, driven by endemic poverty, recourse fuelled conflicts and famine, many families who strongly depend on the degrading or inaccessible natural recourses, increasingly seek refuge elsewhere. The percentage of intra and interstate migration towards protected and profitable regions, mainly forested zones, has been growing. However, this often is only a temporary relief. Massive migration to more arable wetlands generates pressure on the natural recourses there, once again causing soil and environmental degradation and increasing the risk of recourse based conflict.³⁹ Simultaneously, the degrading lands left behind now naturally become untended to. This makes them even more vulnerable towards climatic and natural changes such as erosion. In many cases, a return of displaced people becomes impossible.

The difficult access to land, among others caused by land grabbing, and the growing influx of migration in several countries pose another challenge pertaining to land: Who has the right to access land and who owns the land. This is important as ownership and access bring with them the question of responsibility to upkeep and protect the land from LDD. The guaranteed rights over land, whether it is an individual or communal matter and land tenure, as well as whether or not this constitutes a push (land degradation, unsustainable circumstances and lack of own land) or a pull (the promise of social welfare states better economic and agricultural opportunities) factor has recently become a growing debate amongst UNCCD parties. Often the division between developed and less developed nations is visible, with the former arguing it is not a matter to be discussed on a UNCCD level.⁴⁰

³⁹ SRAP/WA 2013

⁴⁰ Gupta J. (2019) 'UN desertification conference divided on land ownership and migration' *China Dialogue*. Available at: <https://chinadialogue.net/en/climate/11518-un-desertification-conference-divided-on-land-ownership-and-migration-2/>.

Recent Developments

Improving living conditions

For the UNCCD, the first and most important step to address migration related to degrading lands is to counter the LDD factors and improve the living conditions of the West African people, decreasing the overall need to seek refuge elsewhere. These improvements concentrate on restoring land, educating the population in sustainable land management and generally create better circumstances and opportunities for them to live.

UNCCD Action Plan

In 2013, a Sub Regional Action Plan for West Africa (SRAP/WA) was created to align with the UNCCD ten year strategy and to update the older 1999 SRAP. The former plan proved to have several constraints, amongst others difficulties in mobilizing financial recourses and inappropriate operation of the coordination and steering mechanisms, which the SRAP/WA aimed to solve. At the same time, the environmental, rural and political context had evolved over the years, and the new plan provided an adaptation to these new circumstances.⁴¹ However, the ten year strategy itself was revised, leading to the 2018-2030 strategic framework to achieve the SDGs, and recently there has been a growing attention to (African) migration illustrated by the 2015 migration crisis in Europe and a partnership between the UNCCD and International Organisation for Migration (IOM).⁴²

Overall, the plan mentions migration as a pressure factor and a consequence of drought, but no real measures to prevent or adapt are suggested and a general, explicit focus lacks. The SRAPWA focuses more on recourse management, the development of early warning systems and cooperation of information and communications. Furthermore it encourages an improvement of the general living conditions and food security, as well as fostering new, effective partnerships.⁴³

⁴¹ SRAP/WA 2013.

⁴² Ionesco D. (2014) *IOM and UNCCD Launch Partnership to Jointly Address Negative Cycle of Land Degradation, Forced Migration* (press release). Available at: <https://www.iom.int/news/iom-and-unccd-launch-partnership-jointly-address-negative-cycle-land-degradation-forced>.

⁴³ SRAP.WA 2013

The Great Green Wall Initiative (2007)

The Great Green Wall Initiative involves more than 20 African countries, surpassing geographical and cultural borders as well as the West African region itself. Ten of the sixteen UN defined West African countries, as well as Chad are partners of the project.⁴⁴ Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo are not directly involved, which can be explained by the generally more humid and wet climate and greener vegetation of the Guinean countries as mentioned earlier. The initiative is supported by the UNCCD, together with several other regional and international partners like CILSS, EU and France.⁴⁵

The Great Green Wall Initiative aims to increase the plant coverage of more than 8000km of land connecting the west and east coast of Africa as a counter measure to global threats.⁴⁶ A reduction of plant coverage, as seen before, makes the soil more vulnerable to elements and decreasing the potential of retaining water. Erosion and desertification in their turn, increase the risk of famine and recourse based conflict, driving migration. Apart from a reverse in LDD, the increased plant coverage also improves food security and generates more green jobs. Overall, the initiative thus contributes to the SDG agenda, as it touches upon all goals but 11 and 14.⁴⁷

So far, a lot has been achieved, yet according to many, the greening moves too slow compared to the rapid population growth, and thus a growing need for food security and jobs, in the region. In 2019, only 15% of the proposed area is restored, which would mean only roughly 30% will be restored in 2030, when the initiative aimed to be completed.⁴⁸ The slow rate is driven firstly by the overall climate change. The delay and decrease in rainfall makes it harder to grow and sustain the trees. Secondly, deforestation rates caused by logging, agriculture and general urban construction often remain higher than the reforestation rates. Lastly, the problem of

⁴⁴ Great Green Wall (no date) *Partner Countries*. Available at: <https://www.greatgreenwall.org/partners>.

⁴⁵ Great Green Wall (no date) *International Partners*. Available at: <https://www.greatgreenwall.org/partners>.

⁴⁶ Great Green Wall (no date) *Growing a World Wonder*. Available at: <https://www.greatgreenwall.org/about-great-green-wall>

⁴⁷ Great Green Wall (no date) *2030 Ambition*. Available at: <https://www.greatgreenwall.org/2030ambition>

⁴⁸ Baker A. and Mbar T. (2019) 'Can a 4,815-Mile Wall of Trees Help Curb Climate Change in Africa?' *The Time*. Available at: <https://time.com/5669033/great-green-wall-africa/>.

funding also poses challenges. Poorer nations in the region often lack the possibility to fund the project adequately, increasing the dependency on foreign investments. However, due to climate emergencies elsewhere in the world, only half of the initial 8 billion dollars has so far been generated.⁴⁹

3S Initiative (2016)

The Sustainability, Stability, Security Initiative (3S Initiative) was launched in 2016 by Morocco and Senegal. Currently, 14 states are involved, but like the Great Green Wall Initiative, it spans a broader region than West Africa only. The Maghreb region and Central African States are also involved, while only half of the West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and the Gambia), as well as Chad are member states.⁵⁰

The 3s Initiative functions as a link as it aims to improve both the living conditions to prevent migration as well as providing opportunities and safety for displaced people. By restoring ten million hectares of degraded lands, the initiative seeks to avoid further degradation and create two million jobs as well as improve productivity by transforming the lands into zones for inclusive employment and income generating opportunities.⁵¹

Increased attention for migration

Although recent developments have focussed on addressing the underlying problem of living conditions that drives migration, many still look for better opportunities and safety elsewhere. Therefore, another important aspect for the UNCCD is, through partnerships and international cooperation, to also take into account and assist the current migrants and migratory flows.

Cooperation with IOM

In 2014, in the context of increased global attention to the international migration crisis, the UNCCD and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) ushered a Memorandum of Understanding. The document recognises the mutual influence and

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*

⁵⁰ Sustainability Stability Security Initiative (2020) *The Members*. Available at: <https://3s-initiative.org/en/the-members/>.

⁵¹ UNCCD (2018) *Sustainability, Stability, Security (3S Initiative)*. Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/actions/sustainability-stability-security-3s-initiative>

relationship of land degradation and human mobility and aims to further increase understanding in that regard. They identified three areas of collaboration: climate change adaptation, rights and security and sustainable development.⁵²

Along this line, some joint projects were set up to work on the topic in specific regions. In 2016 a project was started in cooperation with ECOWAS and Burkina Faso's government to host a regional workshop "Land Degradation, Climate Change and Migration in West Africa: Policy Implications for Building Resilience and Preventing Security Challenges". It is aimed at developing strategies to address challenges of land degradation and climate related migration and how it connects to the region. The workshop also focused on increasing and exchanging knowledge and good practices regarding land rehabilitation and adaptation, as well as helping fostering regional and international cooperation. However, only three countries of the West African region, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Niger were represented in the project.⁵³

A second example of a joint project are the trainings in sustainable agriculture given to migrants at the IOM transit centre in Agadez, Niger. Besides food, water and shelter the centre also provides technical and practical sessions on agriculture as well as plots of land allocated by UNCCD. With this project, both UN bodies seek to give the migrants more resilience to the many push factors as outlined above, as well as facilitating the adaptation to the new region.⁵⁴

A third example of such joint projects is *West Africa: Promoting Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in migration prone areas through innovative financing mechanisms*, a three year (2014-2016) collaboration between the GM of the UNCCD and IOM. Aimed at supporting West African countries, mainly Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal, the project also included ECOWAS, CILSS, the government of the three countries and their diaspora networks. The goal was to better integrate sustainable

⁵² Ionesco, *IOM and UNCCD Launch Partnership*.

⁵³ Regional Workshop (2016) *Draft Agenda*. Available at <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/default/files/Agenda%20ENG%206.04.16.pdf>; Regional Workshop (2016) *Summary*. Available at: https://www.kas.de/documents/252038/253252/7_dokument_dok_pdf_45735_1.pdf/7b411a22-c943-a303-b625-798b150ebab8?version=1.0&t=1539650557300.

⁵⁴ Chiriac M. and Veger M. (2019) 'Returning migrants receive agricultural training in Agadez, Niger' *UNCCD News*. Available at: <https://www.unccd.int/news-events/returning-migrants-receive-agricultural-training-agadez-niger>

land management in national policies, increase economic opportunities and research the best SLM practices.⁵⁵

Migration Dialogue For West Africa (MIDWA)

MIDWA is an international meeting led by ECOWAS that took place in August 2016. Several West-African States as well as international partners such as the EU and IOM came together to discuss and reflect upon migratory issues. During the meeting, climate change, LDD and environmental issues were identified as one of seven important themes linked to migration. Furthermore a panel meeting on the reactions of populations to land degradation was moderated by the UNCCD's migration programme officer and included representatives of Burkina Faso, ECOWAS, Mali, Niger and Senegal as speakers. The group made several recommendations regarding issues such as early warning systems, research promotion, strengthening hydro agricultural infrastructures, strengthening rules and procedures on land security, trans-boundary natural resource management and resilience through adaptation of seed diversity.⁵⁶

Global Compact for Migration

The Global Compact for Migration (GCM) is an international agreement, agreed upon by all but one (the USA) UN Members and adopted by 164. The document is the first global agreement for a common approach to international migration.⁵⁷ Among the 23 objectives a milestone was achieved regarding environmental migration and issues were addressed regarding forced migration caused by desertification, land degradation and drought.⁵⁸

The importance of GCM for UNCCD efforts to promote land restoration and sustainable land management has been stressed multiple times, yet the document is nonetheless highly controversial in a context of raising anti-migration sentiments.

⁵⁵ Bendandi B. and Walter S. (2014) *Flyer SLM project*. Available at: <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/default/files/Flyer-SLM-Migration%20project.pdf>

⁵⁶ Migration Dialogue For West Africa (MIDWA) (2016) *Final Report*. Available at: https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our_work/ICP/RCP/2016/MIDWA-2016-Experts-Meeting-Final-Report.pdf.

⁵⁷ UN (2020) *Global Compact for Migration*. Available at: <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact>.

⁵⁸ Traore Chazalnoël M. (no date) *Governments agree on measures to help migrants fleeing degrading lands*. Available at: <https://knowledge.unccd.int/knowledge-products-and-pillars/unccd-science-policy-weblog/governments-agree-measures-help-migrants>.

The document is non-binding and does not contain specific regulations, deadlines and actions, increasing the risk of the pact being ignored altogether.⁵⁹ Furthermore, concerns were voiced that the document impeded with a country's sovereign right to regulate migration as well as it encouraging more (illegal) migration. In general the Global Compact for Migration has clearly raised questions on the usefulness of a global strategy rather than regional, local or specific approaches.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁰ Rieffel L. (2018) 'The Global Compact on Migration: Dead on Arrival?' *Brookings*. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2018/12/12/the-global-compact-on-migration-dead-on-arrival/>.

Questions an Outcome Document should answer

How should the current 2013 SRAP/WA be adapted, and if necessary improve, to achieve alignment with the 2018-2030 SDG strategic Framework and MUO in terms of addressing forced displacement?

What can be done by the UNCCD to review previous and current UNCCD (backed) measures and initiatives to decrease push factors of migration?

Are the long term objectives of achieving LDD neutrality, frameworks and multiyear plans comprehensive enough or should more attention go to short term measures? If so, what should those be and in what way can the UNCCD contribute?

Should the UNCCD play a more central leading role in centralising and integrating various regional actors? If so, in what way can this be achieved?

How could more developed, resilient and less climate change threatened countries increase their involvement in the region and how can the UNCCD coordinate and assist?

What role can the UNCCD play in the (encouragement of the) implementation of the Global Compact for Migration in West Africa?

Further reading

For a more detailed and comprehensive outline of the active actors and initiatives in the region: https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/PSI_Report_A_Test_of_Endurance.pdf

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