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# HANDBOOK

## Role of Parliamentarians in the implementation process of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification

A guide to Parliamentary Action



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ISBN 978-92-95043-69-5

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## A. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is grateful to Prof. Uwe Holtz who authored this handbook. This document aims at providing information on how parliamentarians can better contribute to the activities of the UNCCD at a time there is a worldwide recognition of the potential of land to contribute to efforts to address today's global environmental challenges including combating desertification/land degradation and the effects of drought; climate change adaptation and mitigation as well as the loss of biodiversity.

## B. FOREWORD

Addressing desertification, land and degradation and drought (DLDD) contributes to human security and sustainable development. We shall not adapt to climate change without a sound stewardship of land and soil of this planet. We shall not protect and preserve the terrestrial biodiversity without addressing DLDD. Likewise the Millennium Development Goals will not be fully achieved, if we are not able to improve the livelihoods of one billion people living in the drylands and ecosystems affected by DLDD.

Decision and policy makers at government level do have the lead role in the implementation process of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and for achieving the objectives of the UNCCD Ten-Year Strategy (2008-2018). However, success often depends on the active role of many other national players including parliamentarians.

Since the inception of the UNCCD, Parliamentarians have played important role in the activities of the Convention nationally, regionally and at international levels. This publication aims at providing specific information on how Parliamentarians could enhance their actions to support the implementation of the UNCCD. The handbook provides important information on the role of parliamentarians and how they can better support, promote and stimulate adequate actions to implement the UNCCD.

The handbook underlines the close relationship between the responsibilities of Parties and those of parliamentarians in the context of the UNCCD. It also explores ways and means for a stronger partnership through the establishment of direct dialogue sessions on the occasion of the UNCCD Conference of the Parties.

While the handbook primarily addresses parliamentarians, it is expected that it will contribute to the vision of UNCCD Parties to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent DLDD to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

**Luc Gnacadja**  
**Executive Secretary UNCCD**



**Dr. Haroun Kabadi**  
**President of the Steering Committee**  
**and President of the Chad National**  
**Assembly**



## C. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Major global challenges such as desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD), climate change and the loss of biodiversity constitute challenges for people, democracies and all political systems worldwide. Global efforts to halt and reverse land degradation and to strive for zero net land degradation are prerequisites for freeing hundreds of millions of people from poverty, enabling food security, safeguarding water supplies, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The most important instrument for combating desertification/land degradation is the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

How do parliaments contribute to the implementation of the UNCCD? What are the challenges to be addressed by parliaments and parliamentarians to better fulfil their mission? How and in which areas can parliamentary support be better mobilized? This handbook provides a basis to find answers to these questions.

Pursuant to the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference, this handbook aims to raise desertification and land degradation to a higher political level of priority on national and global agendas and to draw attention of law- and decision-makers. It provides information on the role and functions of parliaments and their members, and how they can better support and promote the UNCCD process and its 10-year Strategy (2008-2018).

The core of the 'guide to parliamentary action' delivers proposals and orientations in line with the 'parliamentary hexagon', which identifies the following six main areas of intervention for parliaments and parliamentarians with the aim to mobilize stronger parliamentary support for the implementation of the UNCCD:

1. Law-making and setting standards (inter alia mainstream combating desertification/land degradation into the relevant national policy areas);
2. Budget allocation (i.a. provide adequate financial resources);
3. Oversight and control (i.a. monitor and evaluate whether the UNCCD objectives are met);

4. Public discourse and awareness raising (i.e. carry out “land-degradation neutrality” campaigns) and continuous advocacy on the UNCCD;
5. Election of competent personalities and bodies (i.e. establish national coordinating bodies with the involvement of parliamentarians);
6. International cooperation and better use of the Parliamentary Network on UNCCD (i.e. work towards making the UNCCD a global authority on land and soil).

The many options for parliamentary support in implementing the UNCCD are not intended to offer ‘one-size-fits-all’ solutions; instead, actions should be taken on a case-by-case basis, acknowledging that most of the implementation is happening on the ground.

It is of utmost importance that parliaments and members of parliaments (MPs) across the globe join forces in order to strengthen the momentum for UNCCD and the vision of a land-degradation neutral world. They should foster cooperation with like-minded partners and build alliances with all stakeholders involved with land and soil in particular and on sustainable, human development in general. They also need relevant documentation, technical assistance and advisory services.

The annex includes documents on UNCCD’s 10-year Strategy, outcomes of the Rio+20 as they relate to DLDD and the work of the UNCCD Parliamentary Round Tables.



## I. INTRODUCTION

On the occasion of the World Day to Combat Desertification (17 June 2012) and on the eve of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 Conference, 20-22 June 2012), UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sent the following message to call on decision-makers worldwide<sup>1</sup>:

*“Global efforts to halt and reverse land degradation are integral to creating the future we want. Sustainable land use is a prerequisite for lifting billions from poverty, enabling food and nutrition security, and safeguarding water supplies. It is a cornerstone of sustainable development. The people who live in the world’s arid lands, which occupy more than 40 per cent of our planet’s land area, are among the poorest and most vulnerable to hunger. We will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 without preserving the soils on which their subsistence depends. Nor will we be able to guarantee our freshwater resources, 70 per cent of which are already used for agriculture. By 2030 the demand for water is projected to rise by 35 per cent. Unless we change our land-use practices, we face the prospect of diminishing and inadequate water supplies, as well as more frequent and intense droughts. Further, by 2050, we will need sufficient productive land to feed an estimated 9 billion people with per capita consumption levels greater than those of today. This will be impossible if soil loss continues at its current pace – an annual loss of 75 billion tons. Important land-use decisions need to be made. (...) Without healthy soil, life on Earth is unsustainable.”*

Desertification, along with climate change and the loss of biodiversity, were identified as the greatest challenges to sustainable development during the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.<sup>2</sup>

In the 10-year Strategy of the UNCCD (2008-2018), Parties to the Convention agreed “to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in

<sup>1</sup> The complete text can be found at [www.un.org/en/events/desertificationday/2012/sgmessage.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/events/desertificationday/2012/sgmessage.shtml) (retrieved 26 November 2012, as all the following URLs).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. [www.unccd.int/en/about-the-convention/Pages/About-the-Convention.aspx](http://www.unccd.int/en/about-the-convention/Pages/About-the-Convention.aspx)

affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.”<sup>3</sup>

Partnership lies at the heart of the UNCCD, casting resource users and their communities as central to the solution rather than part of the problem. This approach recognizes the interdependence of drylands and other world eco-systems.

Country Parties to the UNCCD have the lead role in implementing the Convention and reaching the objectives of the 10-year Strategy. However, success often depends on, or is significantly supported by, the actions of specific stakeholder groups, among them parliaments and parliamentarians.<sup>4</sup>

During the past several years, parliaments have played a relevant role in the management of public affairs as a result of the drive towards democratization and good governance. The fact that out of the some 200 states in the world today, some 190 currently have a parliament indicates their growing importance.<sup>5</sup> Parliaments are increasingly recognized as playing a crucial role in the management of the affairs of society both nationally and internationally.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/10YearStrategy/Decision%20COP8%20adoption%20of%20The%20Strategy.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/10YearStrategy/Decision%20COP8%20adoption%20of%20The%20Strategy.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [www.unccd.int/en/Stakeholders/Pages/home.aspx](http://www.unccd.int/en/Stakeholders/Pages/home.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) / United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2012): Global Parliamentary Report. The changing nature of parliamentary representation (Lead author: Greg Power), Geneva and New York – also available at [www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gpr2012-full-e.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gpr2012-full-e.pdf), p. 4: “190 of 193 countries now have some form of functioning parliament, accounting for over 46,000 representatives. The existence of a parliament is not synonymous with democracy, but democracy cannot exist without a parliament. Although varying hugely in power, influence and function, almost every political system now has some form of representative assembly.”

### i. Content and aim of this guide

The handbook<sup>6</sup> has been prepared for use by parliaments and their members. It provides basic information on the role of parliaments, how they can be better engaged in supporting and promoting the UNCCD and its 10-year Strategy, and how they can stimulate adequate actions at national and international levels.

This guide also illustrates how parliamentarians can better interact with each other and how parliaments and the UNCCD secretariat can closely cooperate to better fulfil their respective missions.

The guide aims to give higher priority to land degradation and UNCCD issues on global and national agendas and to draw the attention of law- and decision-makers. Parliaments and their members are often looking for ways and instruments to move desertification, land degradation and soil erosion higher on the national agenda.

Although there are some encouraging examples where parliamentarians played a positive role in promoting the UNCCD implementation process, their role at international level has generally been rather limited so far.<sup>7</sup>

Parliaments must do their utmost to strengthen the political will that is essential for the successful implementation of the UNCCD and the 10-year Strategy. They can push the boundaries of what can be achieved politically, and also develop new ideas without the constraints of formal government negotiating positions: for example, they can create parliamentary oversight mechanisms vis-à-vis the Global Environment Facility or the Green Climate Fund. The specific commitments made by

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<sup>6</sup> The handbook follows the example of: IPU / United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) (2009): Mobilizing parliamentary support for the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, Geneva ([www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/LDC09\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/LDC09_en.pdf)). See also IPU (2006): Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century. A guide to good practice (written and edited by David Beetham), Geneva ([www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/democracy\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/democracy_en.pdf)).

<sup>7</sup> U. Holtz (2007): Implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification from a parliamentary point of view. Critical assessment and challenges ahead, Bonn, pp. 24–26 ([www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Parliament/2007/parliamentariansforum.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Parliament/2007/parliamentariansforum.pdf)).

the parliamentarians involved in the previous UNCCD Parliamentary Round Tables need to be followed up, particularly at national level.

ii. Rational for Co-operation between Parliaments and relevant International Organizations: Different roles but convergent objectives

The respective roles of parliaments and international organisations are clearly distinct.<sup>8</sup> International organisations are set up to help countries addressing issues of international concern. Often, parliaments are absent from global forums at which decisions are negotiated and adopted. When these decisions are brought to the national level, parliaments have limited leeway and usually are placed before a fait accompli. Therefore parliaments should be involved in the process of negotiating and adopting decisions at the global level, so as to bring in the voice of the people and facilitate the implementation of internationally negotiated decisions at the national level. Nothing refrains a country from having MPs as members of their national delegations at negotiation sessions, including for UNCCD negotiation processes. Parliaments are being called upon to play a role in the management of global challenges to provide legitimacy to the international decision-making process. In this connection, greater demands for transparency and accountability in the management of international affairs, including of those organisations that have been set up for this purpose, call for greater involvement of parliaments in international processes.

International organisations have a major interest in involving parliaments in their activities mainly because these organisations are usually funded from public resources which are allocated by and/or with the authorization of parliaments. It is the parliament that is responsible for laying down the legal framework within which society functions. It is in the interest of international organisations, therefore, to engage parliaments in a partnership which ensures that parliaments take budgetary and other legislative decisions that allow these organisations to carry out their programmes. On the other hand, parliaments have an interest in working with international organisations insofar as the latter can contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of the people they represent. The

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<sup>8</sup> For this sub-chapter, see IPU / UN-OHRLLS (2009), pp. 11-12.

mutual advantages of such an alliance are therefore both political and material.

In the case of the Parties to the UNCCD and its secretariat in particular, they have a close-up view of developments at the national level and want to assist countries in fulfilling their commitments. They regard parliaments as key partners in that effort and support the organization of the Parliamentary Round Tables meeting in parallel to the UNCCD Conference of the Parties. The interactions between the parliamentarians and the Parties can, however, be further improved through dialogue sessions to be held during the COP negotiations.

## II. CHALLENGES AND DEFINITIONS

### i. Major global challenges

Major global challenges for democracies and all political systems, include problems related inter alia to sustainable development, climate change, desertification, drought, poverty, energy, food security, water scarcity and quality, decreasing natural resources due to land degradation population dynamics, health, gender relations, financial and economic turbulences and crises, organized crime, war and peace, and last but not least human rights and democratization.<sup>9</sup>

International conferences and a variety of documents outlined some responses and orientations that are seeking to overcome – or at least to mitigate – the problems. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio, 2012), more popularly known as Rio+20, paved the way for further work on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Outcome Document, entitled “The Future We Want”, recognized that desertification, land degradation and drought are challenges of a global

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the Millennium Project, founded in 1996. It is an independent non-profit global participatory futures research think tank of futurists, scholars, business planners, and policy makers who work for international organisations, governments, corporations, NGOs, and universities. The work is distilled in its annual “State of the Future” where 15 challenges are identified – from sustainable development to global ethics. The challenges are transnational in nature and transinstitutional in solution; they are interdependent: an improvement in one makes it easier to address others; deterioration in one makes it harder to address others. Arguing whether one is more important than another is like arguing that the human nervous system is more important than the respiratory system. (see [www.millennium-project.org/millennium/challenges.html](http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/challenges.html)).

dimension and continue to pose serious challenges to the sustainable development of all countries, in particular developing countries. It stressed the particular challenges this poses to the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries, especially in Africa.<sup>10</sup>

## ii. UNCCD

In 1992, the Rio Conference called on the United Nations General Assembly to establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INCED) to prepare, by June 1994, a Convention to Combat Desertification, particularly in Africa. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was adopted in Paris on 17 June 1994 and entered into force on 26 December 1996, 90 days after the 50th ratification was received.<sup>11</sup> 194 countries and the European Union are Parties as at May 2012. The Conference of the Parties (COP), which is the Convention's supreme governing body, held its first session in October 1997 in Rome, Italy. So far, the COP has had ten ordinary and one extraordinary sessions, the latest of which (COP 10) took place in Changwon, the Republic of Korea, in October 2011.<sup>12</sup>

Since 1999, the secretariat of the Convention has been located in Bonn (Germany) on the Rhine River. In line with Article 23 of the UNCCD, the key function of the secretariat is to service the sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies. This includes a multitude of tasks, ranging from the preparation of substantive documentation to logistical arrangements for the sessions.

The UNCCD with its five regional implementation annexes – for Africa (Annex I), Asia (Annex II), Latin America and the Caribbean (Annex III), the Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV) and, since 2000, Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V) – has made a real difference in the legal international architecture, by making desertification/land degradation a full-fledged item on the global sustainable development agenda.

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<sup>10</sup> See paragraph 205 of the Outcome Document ([https://rio20.un.org/sites/rio20.un.org/files/a-conf.216l-1\\_english.pdf](https://rio20.un.org/sites/rio20.un.org/files/a-conf.216l-1_english.pdf)) – see also annex 2.

<sup>11</sup> The text of the Convention is available at [www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/conventionText/conv-eng.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/conventionText/conv-eng.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [www.unccd.int/en/about-the-convention/history/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.unccd.int/en/about-the-convention/history/Pages/default.aspx)

The UNCCD focuses primarily on the protection of natural resources and the fight against poverty in the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas of the world. It obliges affected developing countries to design strategies against land degradation in so-called “national action programmes” (NAPs).

For the purposes of the Convention, the terms were defined – among them ‘desertification’ and ‘combating desertification’ (see box 1).

**Box 1: ‘Desertification’ and ‘Combating Desertification’<sup>13</sup>**

*‘Desertification’ means land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities.*

*‘Combating desertification’ includes activities which are part of the integrated development of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas for sustainable development which are aimed at: (i) prevention and/or reduction of land degradation; (ii) rehabilitation of partly degraded land; and (iii) reclamation of desertified land.*

‘Drought’ means the naturally occurring phenomenon that exists when precipitation has been significantly below normal recorded levels, causing serious hydrological imbalances that adversely affect land resource production systems (UNCCD, article 1(c)).

‘Land degradation’ is the reduction or loss of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of rainfed cropland, irrigated cropland, or range, pasture, forest and woodlands resulting from land uses or from a process or combination of processes, including processes arising from human activities and habitation patterns, such as: (i) soil erosion caused by wind and/or water; (ii) deterioration of the physical, chemical and biological or economic properties of soil; and (iii) long-term loss of natural vegetation (UNCCD, article 1(f)).

<sup>13</sup> Source: UNCCD, article 1 (a) and (b) – [www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/conventionText/conv-eng.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/conventionText/conv-eng.pdf)

The relationships between desertification and sustainable land management (SLM) and between soil and climate change are very important. They have transboundary, global impacts and should be better reflected by decision-makers and policymakers.

One should not consider deserts and desertification as the same. Natural deserts make up an important part of the Earth's ecosystems, while desertification is a process occurring when once-healthy landscapes in dryland areas turn barren from human mismanagement and worsening drought.

Nowadays, it is recognized that desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) are global challenges occurring in all regions. At least 90 per cent of the inhabitants of drylands live in developing countries and they suffer from the poorest economic and social conditions.

In the initial stages, the UNCCD was alternatively described as the Convention for Africa or of the poor under the misguided belief that desertification was essentially an African problem of no relevance for the world at large. In contrast, climate change was considered a global problem calling for global solutions right from the outset. However, every year 12 million hectares of productive land are degraded through desertification and drought alone. This is an area that is half the size of the United Kingdom. In the same period, 75 billion tons of soil are lost forever. Globally, 1.5 billion people live off the degrading land.<sup>14</sup>

Drylands occupy 41.3% of Earth's land area and are home to more than 2.1 billion people. It has been estimated that globally 24% of the land is degrading, that nearly 20% of the degrading land is cropland and 20-25% rangeland, that desertification and degradation represents an income loss of US-Dollar 42 billion per year, that about 1.5 billion people worldwide directly depend on these degrading areas, and that a billion

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<sup>14</sup> [www.unccd.int/en/programmes/RioConventions/RioPlus20Pages/default.aspx?HighlightID=54](http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/RioConventions/RioPlus20Pages/default.aspx?HighlightID=54) and Ramesh Jaura: A world without land degradation is possible, in: IDN-InDepthNews, 5 July 2012 ([www.indepthnews.info/index.php/global-issues/1032-a-world-without-land-degradation-is-possible](http://www.indepthnews.info/index.php/global-issues/1032-a-world-without-land-degradation-is-possible)).



people of the poorest and most marginalized people, who live in the most vulnerable areas, may be the most severely affected by desertification.<sup>15</sup>

There is a multitude of reasons to advance the fight against desertification, as pointed out by the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, Luc Gnacadja: Drylands hold the key to future food security. Addressing DLDD contributes to human security and political stability. We cannot adapt to climate change or mitigate its effects without resorting to SLM. It will be impossible to protect the planet against the loss of terrestrial biodiversity without addressing DLDD. We cannot protect our forests without addressing the top driver of deforestation: DLDD. It will be impossible to achieve the MDGs without rescuing one billion people that are the inhabitants of drylands.<sup>16</sup>

At the Eighth Conference of the Parties in Madrid in September 2007, the UNCCD entered a new phase with the adoption of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) (the 10-year Strategy). This new development has taken the Convention to new ground. Most importantly, Parties have laid out a clear vision for a period of ten years in the Strategy, which is to forge global partnerships to reverse and prevent desertification and land degradation. These partnerships are also meant to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas. Coupled with the vision is a Strategy mission: to provide a global framework to support the development and implementation of national and regional policies that are to contribute to the reduction of poverty.

The 10-year Strategy targets the use of effective and practical approaches to SLM with synergy as a systemic approach. It has four strategic objectives that should guide the actions of all UNCCD stakeholders and partners as well as of parliaments and their members. These actions include political will to: (i) improve the living conditions of affected populations; (ii)

<sup>15</sup> Cf. United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification (2010-2020): Why now ([www.un.org/en/events/desertification\\_decade/whynow.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/events/desertification_decade/whynow.shtml)); see also UNCCD / UNDP (2011): The Forgotten Billion. MDG Achievement in the Drylands, Bonn and New York ([www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Publications/Forgotten%20Billion.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Publications/Forgotten%20Billion.pdf)).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Luc Gnacadja on the Caux Forum for Human Security in Switzerland on 15 July 2011 ([www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/secretariat/2011/PPT\\_Caux%202011%20%20Restoring%20Earth%20Degraded%20Land.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/secretariat/2011/PPT_Caux%202011%20%20Restoring%20Earth%20Degraded%20Land.pdf)).

improve the condition of affected ecosystems; (iii) generate global benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD; (iv) mobilize resources to support implementation of the Convention through building effective partnerships between national and international actors. The 'expected impacts' are in the long-term intended by the strategic objectives.

The Strategy has five operational objectives to guide the actions of all UNCCD stakeholders and partners in the short and medium term:

(i) advocacy, awareness raising and education; (ii) policy framework to support the creation of enabling environments for promoting solutions; science, (iii) technology and knowledge; (iv) capacity-building; (v) financing and technology transfer (see annex 1).

With the Ten-Year Strategy, Parties to the Convention are committed to creating a new, revitalized common ground for all UNCCD stakeholders in order to enhance the implementation of the Convention.

Successful implementation of the UNCCD entails cooperation among various stakeholders. The reforms induced by the Strategy are radical, as they apply to all the Convention's bodies and institutions – the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), the Global Mechanism (GM), the secretariat and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) – as well as to the countries. Parties that are affected by DLDD and the non-affected countries are supposed to align their activities with the Strategy. Country Parties to the UNCCD play the lead role in implementing the Convention and achieving the objectives of the Ten-Year Strategy. However, success often depends on, or is significantly supported by, the actions of specific stakeholder groups<sup>17</sup>, including parliamentarians. They are already significant in the process, but should play a more prominent role.

The Strategy specifies the mandate of the UNCCD secretariat for the period 2008-2018. Successful implementation of this strategic plan requires a strengthening of the core servicing, advocacy and agenda-setting and representation functions of the UNCCD secretariat – with commensurate capacity and resources – in order to support Parties, the COP and the subsidiary bodies of the Convention in fulfilling their

<sup>17</sup> [www.unccd.int/en/Stakeholders/Pages/home.aspx](http://www.unccd.int/en/Stakeholders/Pages/home.aspx)

respective roles. By adopting the Strategy, Parties placed a demand to move towards a results-based management approach including indicators to assess what is achieved on the ground.<sup>18</sup>

### iii. Thematic priorities

Productive land is becoming scarce and the pressure on productive land resources is increasing. It has multiple and complex impacts on the global environment through a broad range of direct and indirect processes. Among its direct effects is the loss of fertile soils resulting from soil erosion ultimately leading to a decline in productivity and per capita income levels. The principal cause of land degradation and desertification is the unsustainable exploitation of land productivity. This is often exacerbated by misguided or non-existent policies. Overpopulation and livestock are often seen as the culprits of land degradation and desertification, but they are ultimately the consequence of poor decisions and mismanagement.<sup>19</sup>

Luc Gnacadja, UNCCD Executive Secretary, and others rightly underline that (top) soil has to be understood as part of the natural capital, which provides the basis for life and economic production of human society. That is why together with the UNCCD secretariat, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and other partners including the European Community have jointly launched the 'Economics of Land Degradation' (ELD) initiative on 21 September 2011, during a side-event at the United Nations General Assembly high-level meeting on desertification in New York.<sup>20</sup> ELD is a global initiative for sustainable land management aimed at showing the impact land degradation can have on the economy.

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<sup>18</sup> See UNCCD Update No. 1 (May, 2010): Ten-Year Strategy Shows Early Results.

<sup>19</sup> UNCCD Secretariat (2012): Zero Net Land Degradation - A sustainable development goal for Rio+20, a policy brief, Bonn [www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/UNCCD\\_PolicyBrief\\_ZeroNetLandDegradation.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/UNCCD_PolicyBrief_ZeroNetLandDegradation.pdf); see also the summary at [www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/secretariat/2012/ZNLD%20Summary%20final.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/secretariat/2012/ZNLD%20Summary%20final.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. <http://eld-initiative.org>. A policy paper was published in the lead-up to the global initiative and was presented by the international team of authors from the Center for Development Research (ZEF, Bonn) and the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI, Washington) at the side-event in New York (available at [www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp01086.pdf](http://www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp01086.pdf) and [www.zef.de/fileadmin/webfiles/downloads/zef\\_dp/zef\\_dp\\_150.pdf](http://www.zef.de/fileadmin/webfiles/downloads/zef_dp/zef_dp_150.pdf)).

The economics of land degradation must become an integral part of policy-making – locally, nationally and internationally. A transparent overview of the costs of action and inaction is likely to be a wake-up call for politicians and the business community, demonstrating how humankind will be much better off in the long term if they invest in healthy soils.<sup>21</sup>

As the global authority and normative reference on DLDD, the UNCCD promotes an environment that enables policy to respond to existing policy gaps and ever evolving global challenges.<sup>22</sup> Some of the policy barriers to addressing DLDD include the lack of information and data, and the need for reform and implementation of science-based policy frameworks.

DLDD issues are linked to many development and thematic priorities. The UNCCD cannot be viewed in isolation from other efforts to promote sustainable development. The integration of environmental activities into the broader development framework is at the heart of Millennium Development Goal seven. The text of the Convention frequently refers to sustainable development, climate change, biological diversity, water resources, energy sources, food security and socio-economic factors.

The Convention must be considered as a multilateral land and soil framework for adaptation, mitigation and resilience in combating the effects of climate change. Furthermore, the Convention should be better linked with efforts to accomplish relevant objectives under climate change processes, and efforts to promote human security, tackle forced migration and prevent conflict over scarce natural resources. At country level desertification and climate change must be addressed in a synergetic fashion, as part of an integrated approach to achieving sustainable development for all. Addressing DLDD requires good governance, gender mainstreaming and analysis, and the consideration of the roles and rights of indigenous peoples.

The linkages between land/soil and climate change are significant and should be better reflected in policymaking processes, including parliamentary activities. Land and soil can make a difference in the fight

<sup>21</sup> <http://newsbox.unccd.int/3.4> and <http://biodiversity-l.iisd.org/news/unccd-and-partners-launch-economics-of-land-degradation-initiative>

<sup>22</sup> See [www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Thematic-Priorities/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Thematic-Priorities/Pages/default.aspx)

against climate change. Increased attention to the link between land/soil and climate change would not only enrich the substantive debates on effective means for carbon sequestration, but also provide a new platform for developing countries to enter into the adaptation and mitigation agendas; after all, for many of them, soil is their most important asset.

Rio+20 took the bold step to strive for a future that is land degradation-neutral.<sup>23</sup> The Rio+20 outcome document on desertification, land degradation and drought is considered as one of the successes of the conference. The world governments underline the economic and social significance of good land management, including soil, in paragraphs 205–209 of the Outcome Document.<sup>24</sup> They reaffirm their resolve under the UNCCD to take coordinated action nationally, regionally and internationally, to monitor, globally, land degradation and restore degraded lands in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas (see annex 2). To achieve this sustainable development goal – in the UNCCD secretariat's previous documents: “zero net land degradation” – it is necessary to avoid the degradation of productive land and to restore the already degraded lands (see box 2).

**Box 2: ‘Land Degradation Neutrality’ and ‘Zero Net Land Degradation (ZNLD)’<sup>25</sup>**

*“Land degradation neutrality is achieved when globally or in a given landscape or terrestrial ecosystem the area of productive land (and therefore sustainable land use) remains stable or increases.”*

*“Zero net land degradation: the achievement of land degradation neutrality, whereby land degradation is either avoided or offset by land restoration. Promoting the ZNLD target would secure the currently available productive land for the use of present and future generations.”*

<sup>23</sup> [www.unccd.int/en/programmes/RioConventions/RioPlus20/Pages/default.aspx?HighlightID=54](http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/RioConventions/RioPlus20/Pages/default.aspx?HighlightID=54)

<sup>24</sup> [https://rio20.un.org/sites/rio20.un.org/files/a-conf.2161-1\\_english.pdf](https://rio20.un.org/sites/rio20.un.org/files/a-conf.2161-1_english.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Source: UNCCD Secretariat (2012): Zero Net Land Degradation - A sustainable development goal for Rio+20, Bonn – [www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/UNCCD\\_PolicyBrief\\_ZeroNetLandDegradation.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/UNCCD_PolicyBrief_ZeroNetLandDegradation.pdf), pp. 6-7.

The overall goal “sustainable land use for all and by all (for agriculture, forestry, energy and urbanization)” is underlined by the following targets: zero net land degradation by 2030, zero net forest degradation by 2030 and drought preparedness policies implemented in all drought-prone countries by 2020. Indeed, this goal constitutes a paradigm shift in sustainable development<sup>26</sup> and could be considered as one of the most important “Sustainable Development Goals”.

Achieving a land-degradation neutral world by 2030 will require the commitment, support and active investment of all public and private sector actors, of all parts of the supply and value chain related to land use, including local and community stakeholders. There are reasons for hope in reaching the goal (see box 3). Current and future generations will benefit from the return on investment in terms of gains in efficiency, resilience, and social inclusiveness.<sup>27</sup>

### **Box 3: Reasons for hope**

*The good news is that we know how to reach a goal of Zero Net Land Degradation. More than two billion hectares of land worldwide is suitable for rehabilitation through forest and landscape restoration. Of that, 1.5 billion hectares would be best suited to mosaic restoration, in which forests and trees are combined with other land uses, including agroforestry and smallholder agriculture. In the last two decades, significant land recovery and improvement have occurred in drylands. In many cases, local communities have taken charge. For instance, farmer-managed natural regeneration and agroforestry techniques, such as planting of ‘fertilizer trees’ on farmlands and grazing lands, have already been adopted in many regions. Such techniques have contributed to improving millions of hectares across Africa.*<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> UNCCD Secretariat (2012): Zero Net Land Degradation - A sustainable development goal for Rio+20, Bonn – [www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/UNCCD\\_PolicyBrief\\_ZeroNetLandDegradation.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/UNCCD_PolicyBrief_ZeroNetLandDegradation.pdf); [www.indepthnews.info/index.php/global-issues/1032-a-world-without-land-degradation-is-possible](http://www.indepthnews.info/index.php/global-issues/1032-a-world-without-land-degradation-is-possible)

<sup>27</sup> The work of the winners of the UNCCD Land for Life Award (which was launched at COP 10 in 2011) shows that dryland degradation can be reversed, the livelihoods and the income of millions of people be improved and national environmental policy be influenced – by inter alia using land restoration techniques and reforestation, bringing sustainable land management to thousands of hectares of common property rangelands, forests and water resources, improving governance of nature and natural resources, capacity building of smallholder farmers for sustainable agriculture and forestry management. See [www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Event-and-campaigns/LandForLife/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Event-and-campaigns/LandForLife/Pages/default.aspx)

<sup>28</sup> Source: UNCCD Secretariat (2012): Zero Net Land Degradation - A sustainable development goal for Rio+20, Bonn – [www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/UNCCD\\_PolicyBrief\\_ZeroNetLandDegradation.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/UNCCD_PolicyBrief_ZeroNetLandDegradation.pdf), p. 10

#### iv. The Parliamentary Round tables and the network on the UNCCD

Since 1998, parliamentarians have met in parallel to the COP ordinary sessions. The Parliamentary Round Tables became an integral part of the COP sessions and a platform for exchange of views and interaction between MPs on sustainable development issues and, more specifically, desertification, land degradation and soil erosion. These took place in Dakar (1998), Recife (1999), Bonn (2000), Geneva (2001), Havana (2003), Nairobi (2005), Madrid (2007), Buenos Aires (2009) and Changwon (2011).

Each of the COPs took note of the declarations, adopted by the Round Tables, and decided to include them as annexes to the reports of the COP sessions. However, with respect to the implementation of the action programmes to combat DLDD, the outcomes of the Parliamentary Round Tables though sometimes quite innovative are rarely taken into consideration at country level.

As at 2011, some 402 MPs, 15 per cent of them women, from about 80 countries and five regional parliaments participated at the nine Round Tables.

The Round Tables are organized by the UNCCD secretariat with the support of the host country and its parliament as well as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The fifth Parliamentary Round Table which met in parallel to COP 6 in Havana, Cuba on 3 - 4 September 2003 turned out to be a breakthrough: a Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD (PNoUNCCD) was created, the establishment of a parliamentary Steering Committee was agreed upon, and a parliamentary action plan was adopted.

The PNoUNCCD was and is understood as a network of information, interaction and influence with the aim of increasing parliamentary involvement and efficiency in the fields of combating desertification, soil erosion and land degradation, and as a tool of pooling information and of ensuring greater parliamentary input into international negotiations and organizations.

In mid-September 2003, the Governing Council of the IPU endorsed the Round Table outcomes and welcomed the creation of a Steering Committee and of the Parliamentary Network.

In February 2004 the UNCCD secretariat established on its website <[www.unccd.int](http://www.unccd.int)> a section entitled “Parliamentarians” (within the menu “Stakeholders”). The secretariat maintains and keeps it up to date (it can be accessed directly at [www.unccd.int/en/Stakeholders/Parliamentarians/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.unccd.int/en/Stakeholders/Parliamentarians/Pages/default.aspx)).

During the meeting of the Steering Committee in Praia, Cape Verde on 1 December 2008, the participants deplored: too many self-commitments made by parliamentarians were not taken up at home. Parliaments and MPs could do more to realize the various good ideas put forward during the Parliamentary Round Tables and its action programmes. While the website with its section “Parliaments in action” has been quite helpful, the PNoUNCCD could be utilized more effectively. It is known that several parliaments or MPs undertook initiatives within their respective parliaments or at a (sub-) regional level, but these activities were not reported to the UNCCD secretariat and therefore not published on the website.

During the Parliamentary Round Tables in Buenos Aires (2009) and Changwon (2011), the Statute of the Forum of Parliamentarians and the Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee were widely discussed and finally adopted (see annex 3).

The 10-year Strategy as well as the declarations and commitments adopted by previous UNCCD Parliamentary Round Tables in Buenos Aires and Changwon already provide parliaments with some indications and proposals on how to better exercise their role at home and in the international arena as far as combating desertification/land degradation is concerned.



### III. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENTS AND THEIR MEMBERS

#### i. Democracy - A universal value and a model, essential for sustainable human development

Democracy understood as rule by the people and for the people is a universal value, as can be seen in several documents. Democracy, the political order of freedom, is based on free, fair and regular elections enabling the change of government; separation of powers; respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights; the rule of law for all without any privileges and discrimination; and a genuine partnership between men and women.

Democracy is realized through a complex set of institutions and practices, which have evolved over time and continue to do so. These include: a guaranteed framework of citizen rights; effective, accountable institutions of government; an active citizen body or civil society; and a number of mediating institutions between government and citizens, among which political parties and free media are very important.<sup>29</sup>

The Universal Declaration on Democracy, adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 1997, is a very important, too often ignored reference document.<sup>30</sup> This Declaration emphasizes: “Democracy is a universally recognised ideal as well as a goal ... It is thus a basic right of citizenship to be exercised under conditions of freedom, equality, transparency and responsibility, with due respect for the plurality of views, and in the interest of the polity. ... As an ideal, democracy aims essentially to preserve and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, to achieve social justice, foster the economic and social development of the community, strengthen the cohesion of society and enhance national tranquillity, as well as to create a climate that is favourable for international peace. As a form of government, democracy

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<sup>29</sup> cf. IPU (2006): Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century. A guide to good practice (written and edited by David Beetham), Geneva, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> The Declaration may be found at IPU (Hg.) : Democracy: It's Principles and Achievement, Geneva, 1998, pp. III-VIII (Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century. A guide to good practice ).

is the best way of achieving these objectives; it is also the only political system that has the capacity for self-correction.”<sup>31</sup>

Following the endeavours of the IPU in 2007 the United Nations General Assembly acknowledged the resilience and universality of the principles of democracy by declaring 15 September the International Day of Democracy.

Regarding the paradigm of sustainable human development, the outcome document “The Future We Want” of Rio+20 explicitly acknowledges that democracy, good governance and the rule of law, at both national and international level, as well as an enabling environment, are essential for sustainable development, including sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty and hunger.<sup>32</sup> It reaffirms that achieving sustainable development goals requires institutions at all levels that are effective, transparent, accountable and democratic.

Rio+20 emphasized the importance of freedom, peace and security, respect for all human rights, including the right to development and the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to food, the rule of law, gender equality, the empowerment of women and the overall commitment to democratic societies for development.

A democracy that delivers is necessary for sustainable human development and a land-degradation neutral world.

## ii. Functions and Roles of a Parliament

Traditionally, a state’s power is exercised by three separate institutions which exist largely independent of each other and which are supposed to monitor one another thus limiting the power of a state: the legislative, the executive, the judiciary. Legislative power is exercised by a (bi- or unicameral) parliament. Parliaments are the central institution, the ‘heart’ of democracy; democratic parliaments reflect democratic societies. Every parliament should be representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective.

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<sup>31</sup> Universal Declaration on Democracy, paragraph 1 and 3.

<sup>32</sup> Paragraph 9 and 10 of the Outcome Document ([https://rio20.un.org/sites/rio20.un.org/files/a-conf.216l-1\\_english.pdf](https://rio20.un.org/sites/rio20.un.org/files/a-conf.216l-1_english.pdf))

The six main roles, functions and powers of parliaments and their members (the “parliamentary hexagon”) are ideally:<sup>33</sup>

1. making laws, including constitutional changes (legislative power);
2. allocating financial resources and deciding on budget and taxation (power of the purse);
3. holding governments accountable and exercising control of executive actions, policy and personnel (power of oversight);
4. debating issues of national and international interest and democratic representation of the people (power of discourse);
5. electing the parliamentary officers and – in the case of parliamentary democracies – the executive (elective power);
6. influencing foreign policy as well as international relations and institutions by ratification of treaties, decisions on peace and war, allocation of financial resources to organizations and funds, parliamentary diplomacy, mediation between the public and international organizations and institutions, etc. (international power).

These functions and roles are also at stake when it comes to the parliamentary role in the implementation process of the UNCCD.

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<sup>33</sup> One may differ on the precise list of such functions, but there seems to be broad agreement that at least some should be included in the tasks undertaken by and expected by all parliaments. See IPU / UNDP (2012): Global Parliamentary Report 2012 (Lead author: Greg Power), Geneva – New York 2012 ([www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gpr2012-full-e.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gpr2012-full-e.pdf)); World Summit of Legislators (17 June 2012): The GLOBE Rio+20 Legislators’ Protocol, Rio de Janeiro ([www.globeinternational.org/index.php/world-summit/56-legislators-protocol](http://www.globeinternational.org/index.php/world-summit/56-legislators-protocol)); IPU (2006): Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century. A guide to good practice (written and edited by David Beetham), Geneva; U. Holtz (2003): The Parliamentary Hexagon, in: U. Holtz: The previous four Round Tables of Members of Parliament on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Bonn, pp. 18-19 ([www.uni-bonn.de/~uholtz/virt\\_apparat/UNCCD\\_Cuba.pdf](http://www.uni-bonn.de/~uholtz/virt_apparat/UNCCD_Cuba.pdf)).

#### IV. AREAS IN WHICH PARLIAMENTS AND PARLIAMENTARIANS CAN ACTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNCCD AND THE 10-YEAR STRATEGY

In general terms, parliaments and parliamentarians should commit to:<sup>34</sup>

1. renew the political commitment of countries to sustainable human development, taking into consideration four main dimensions (economic growth, environmental protection, social justice as well as the political dimension: democracy, good governance and the rule of law);
2. strengthen governance and institutions for sustainable development at the international, regional, national and local levels;
3. strengthen the legislative response in the respective parliaments to deliver the objectives of the Rio Earth Summit (1992), the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) and Rio+20 (2012);
4. increase the engagement on public policy on sustainable development issues, particularly the implementation of the three Rio Conventions (desertification, climate change, biodiversity);
5. push for and support poverty eradication and the achievement of MDGs in conjunction with arising sustainable development goals;
6. do the utmost to attach higher political priority to desertification, land degradation and soil erosion on national and global agendas, and to work towards “a land-degradation neutral world” (Rio+20);

More specifically, the ‘parliamentary hexagon’ (see above) offers a good framework of action to parliaments and their members with a view to mobilizing stronger parliamentary commitment to the successful implementation of the Convention and the 10-year Strategy. Several proposals for action rely on former commitments and UNCCD Parliamentary Round Table declarations.

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<sup>34</sup> For some of these commitments see World Summit of Legislators (17 June 2012): The GLOBE Rio+20 Legislators’ Protocol, Rio de Janeiro ([www.globeinternational.org/index.php/world-summit/56-legislators-protocol](http://www.globeinternational.org/index.php/world-summit/56-legislators-protocol)).

### i. Law-making

In many countries, much of the legislative initiative lies with the government. Especially in the emerging democracies where the parliament does not have sufficient resources in terms of legislative drafting services, the bulk of draft legislation comes from the executive. The role of parliament is to scrutinize this draft legislation and to make sure it is consistent with international standards and requirements for the well-being of the people. Most constitutions give the parliament the right to reject and/or amend draft legislation that does not meet these requirements. It is therefore said that in the legislative sphere, the executive proposes and the parliament disposes.<sup>35</sup>

### What can parliaments and parliamentarians do?

- Enact an enabling legislation and standards and align them with the provisions of the UNCCD and the 10-year Strategy; to make the UNCCD and the Strategy more effective, it has to be ‘domesticated’ by national law.<sup>36</sup>
- Adopt laws or appropriate actions that encourage the mainstreaming of action programmes to combat desertification and pursue land-degradation neutrality (zero net land degradation) in the relevant national policy areas.
- Mainstream actions to address desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) and promote sustainable land management (SLM) practices on the political agenda and adopt corresponding ordinances, laws and rules on land use.
- Change detrimental land-use practices, promote appropriate land tenure regimes and work for laws and international land investment regulations with a view to ensuring that land deals maximize the public interest, the contribution of investments to sustainable development and the benefits for the rural poor.
- Build up a culture of coordination to harmonize National Action Programmes (NAPs) with other national development priorities.

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<sup>35</sup> This passage is taken from IPU / UN-OHRLS (2009): Mobilizing parliamentary support for the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, Geneva, p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> International commitments generally become binding domestic law through a complex process of “domestication” or transformation.

- Give higher priority to land issues (also when it comes to development cooperation) to overcome the political marginalization of dryland communities, re-evaluate agriculture and investment in rural areas in the political arena, and stop the destructive agricultural protection of developed countries and subsidized agricultural exports.
- Strengthen food-security systems, including storage and marketing facilities, particularly in rural areas of the drylands.

## ii. Budget allocation

The power of the purse is the practical method by which the legislative branch influences the executive and even judicial branches of government. Normally, the national budget must be approved by the parliament which thus has a dominant say in how state resources are allocated.

### What can parliaments and parliamentarians do?

- Push governments for a coherent country-wide response to land challenges and provide the adequate financial means including Official Development Assistance (ODA) and new financial resources. The parliaments of the developed countries must work towards improving development cooperation and increasing ODA, particularly in those countries that did not reach the 0.7 per cent target so far; which must be reached by 2015.
- Provide substantial, adequate, timely and predictable financial resources to support domestic initiatives to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Taking into account the advancement of the natural capital approach. This approach takes into consideration the contributions and/or the destruction of agricultural land, wetlands and forest, for example. The challenge is how to value and integrate the natural capital within national economic frameworks to enable legislators to better monitor the use of natural capital. Studies say that Niger alone loses about eight percent of its gross domestic product due to overgrazing, salinity in irrigated rice and soil nutrient depletion by sorghum and millet. (see [www.ipsnews.net/2012/06/land-is-our-ally-but-its-patience-is-not-eternal](http://www.ipsnews.net/2012/06/land-is-our-ally-but-its-patience-is-not-eternal)). See also article 25 of European Parliament resolution from 20 September 2011 on developing a common EU position ahead of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in which the European Parliament “underlines the importance of valuing resources, natural capital and ecosystem services at their real value, including the different cultural livelihood and landscape values assigned to them, while not commodifying natural systems; (and) calls for the establishment of natural capital accounting processes and their integration into economic accounting structures and political decision-making processes.” ([www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2011-0430&language=EN&ring=B7-2011-0522](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2011-0430&language=EN&ring=B7-2011-0522)).

- Create specific budget lines for combating land degradation and investing in healthy soils.
- Observe consistent budget strategies that appropriately integrate foreign assistance into NAPs and national development plans.
- Support NGO activities and create incentives for specific forms of private investment.
- Ask for the development of integrated investment frameworks – for leveraging national, bilateral and multilateral resources with a view to increasing the effectiveness, quality and impact of interventions.

### iii. Oversight

Parliaments have the responsibility of holding the executive to account by overseeing its work and making sure that it does not infringe on the rights of citizens or waste state resources and that is consistent with the public interest. Parliaments perform this oversight role in a number of ways.<sup>38</sup>

#### What can parliaments and parliamentarians do?

- Request regular reports from the executive on its activities.
- Evaluate measures taken by governments to implement the Convention and the 10-year Strategy, in particular its strategic and operational objectives (see annex 1).
- Monitor executive actions and enquire whether anti-desertification issues are included in overall government agendas (by means of oral and written questions to the executive, motions, establishment of special commissions or ad hoc committees, hearings, field visits and so on).
- Ask for better coordination of Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and, NAPs (supported by bilateral and multilateral development agencies and organizations).
- Ensure that article 10, paragraph 2 (f) of the Convention is respected: NAPs should, inter alia, “provide for effective participation at the local, national and regional levels of NGOs and local populations, both women and men, particularly resource users, including

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. IPU / UN-OHRLLS (2009): Mobilizing parliamentary support for the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, Geneva, p. 16.

farmers and pastoralists and their representative organizations, in policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of national action programmes". Parliaments and parliamentarians should be actively involved in this participatory process starting from the local level, and should require regular review of and progress reports on the implementation of NAPs.

- Ask for the submission of regular 'green accounting' reports on the state of combating poverty, on land and natural resource degradation and on the progress achieved.
- Develop legislators' plans more effectively to monitor the actions taken by governments towards their Rio commitments and how they engage with the international processes and UN agencies on sustainable development, including initiating debates in parliaments, at least annually, to assess progress towards delivering the Rio objectives.

#### iv. Debating issues of national and international interest - Awareness Raising

Parliamentarians are, above all, representatives of the people who have elected them and in their various activities, they always seek to represent their interests. They are opinion leaders who wield considerable influence as parliamentarians or as members of political parties. In many countries, especially in the developing world, apart from the purely parliamentary functions of the MPs, they are often called upon to play diverse roles: community leaders, development agents, etc. They are also very good disseminators of information within society.<sup>39</sup>

Parliaments and MPs can promote public discourse and serve as channels for conveying the vision of the UNCCD and the 10-year Strategy to the public and grassroots communities.

They should ensure that their political parties include the implementation of UNCCD, the Strategy and the sustainable development goal of land

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<sup>39</sup> This passage is taken from IPU / UN-OHRLS (2009): Mobilizing parliamentary support for the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, Geneva, p. 17.



degradation neutrality in their manifestos and other policy documents as a matter of priority.<sup>40</sup>

Parliaments and MPs can step up their efforts to raise awareness on DLDD and its synergies with climate change and biodiversity as well as on communication and educational issues, in order to increase the level of understanding, and consequently of support, needed to effectively implement the UNCCD.

### What can parliaments and parliamentarians do?

- Advocate environmental awareness raising and sensitize the public about desertification – act as agents of change.
- In order to achieve zero net land degradation by 2030, foster the commitment, support and active investment of all public and private sector actors, and all parts of the supply and value chain related to land use, as well as local community stakeholders.
- Promote and support annual events such as special parliamentary debates and the World Day to Combat Desertification on June 17 (with appropriate activities in the constituencies), commemorative postal stamps, environmental education as well as the involvement of schools, academics, artists and mass media.
- Raise the visibility of the Convention through practical means such as parliamentary websites.
- Foster the participation of all stakeholders, in particular civil society, NGOs, youth and women's associations, the private sector, and build partnerships between policymakers, the academic community, the business sector, NGOs and community-based organizations.

<sup>40</sup> UNCCD Secretariat (2010): Comprehensive Communication Strategy. Drylands: Global Assets, Bonn, ([www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/convention/css.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/convention/css.pdf)), pp. 18–19: Regarding awareness-raising, specific target groups to be addressed including ministers, high-ranking government officials and parliamentarians. Objectives are (i) to raise awareness among political decision makers and key civil servants about the potential returns on SLM as well as of the disproportionate cost of business as usual compared to the cost of appropriate action in addressing land degradation and drought, (ii) to promote recognition among political decision-making circles of the whole range of global benefits brought about by land/soils restoration and SLM in the drylands; (iii) to deepen understanding among political decision makers and leaders of how soil restoration and SLM in the drylands can contribute to addressing major global challenges. The further target groups are: Civil servants in ministries concerned with desertification/land degradation and drought/sustainable land management; the media; the scientific community, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations; the public at large; the private sector.

- Establish national, regional and/or local awards, which include five possible levels: political leadership, civil servants, civil society, private sector, and the media.<sup>41</sup>

#### v. Election of competent personalities and bodies

Parliaments must be autonomous regarding their own organizational structures.

#### What can parliaments and parliamentarians do?

- Elect competent and committed personalities for parliamentary leadership, relevant committees and rapporteur roles and ensure continuous advocacy on the UNCCD.
- Establish a national network of MPs and a parliamentary focal point on UNCCD issues.
- Encourage women's parliamentary UNCCD caucuses.
- Appoint a Parliamentary Commissioner for Present and Future Generations who should submit regular reports on the state of combating land degradation, soil loss and desertification and the progresses on the road to zero net land degradation.

#### vi. International Cooperation and networking

In the age of globalization, the national state in all its branches has been losing power to global forces and institutions. Parliaments are victims of this development, too. This gap between the national level where democratic institutions have historically been located, and the global or regional levels where so many decisions are now taken, is a major source of what is termed the international 'democracy deficit'.<sup>42</sup> For some observers and politicians, the world must make visionary steps towards a world government and a world parliament.

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<sup>41</sup> The UNCCD Land for Life award recognizes innovation and excellence in sustainable land management (SLM), particularly efforts that enhance soils' natural health and yield. Individuals, teams, communities, institutions, businesses, research and academic institutes, public offices, local governments, decision-makers, journalists, media, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations are all eligible for the award. (See also [www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Event-and-campaigns/LandForLife/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Event-and-campaigns/LandForLife/Pages/default.aspx) ).

<sup>42</sup> See IPU (2006): Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century (2006). A guide to good practice (written and edited by David Beetham), Geneva, pp. 156-157.

Today, the distinction between foreign or international and national or domestic levels has become increasingly blurred. Parliaments must therefore step beyond the traditional executive prerogative in international affairs.

What this might involve was outlined in the Declaration of the First Conference of Presiding Officers of Parliaments<sup>43</sup> organised by the IPU in cooperation with the United Nations in 2000.

The parliamentary dimension must be provided by parliaments themselves first of all at the national level in four distinct but interconnected ways: (i) influencing their respective countries' policy on matters dealt with in the United Nations and other international negotiating forums; (ii) keeping themselves informed of the progress and outcome of these negotiations; (iii) deciding on ratification, where the Constitution so foresees, of texts and treaties signed by governments; and (iv) contributing actively to the subsequent implementation process.

#### What can parliaments and parliamentarians do?

- Beyond the national level, engage in global and regional parliamentary cooperation and strengthen this cooperation – inspired by certain fundamental values essential to international relations in the twenty-first century<sup>44</sup> including freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility.
- Due to the high political relevance of desertification/land degradation, promote higher political will and stronger parliamentarian involvement in the implementation of the UNCCD and its 10-year Strategy at the national, (sub-) regional and international levels.
- Seek to strengthen the parliamentary impact on the COPs as a whole through mechanisms for better interactions with the Parties: at home, by influencing the national position; during the COPs, through dialogue sessions.

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<sup>43</sup> Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments (2000): The parliamentary vision for international cooperation at the dawn of the third millennium, New York ([www.ipu.org/splz-e/sp-dclr.htm](http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/sp-dclr.htm))

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Millennium Declaration (2000), paragraph 6 ([www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm](http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm)).

- Be more active in transnational collaboration, so as to provide more effective parliamentary inputs in regional and international organizations.
- Parliaments are encouraged to coordinate more with relevant (sub) regional or continental organizations in an effort to promote the alignment of regional and sub regional action programmes with the objectives of the 10-year Strategy.
- Parliaments and MPs should advocate for the launch of special initiatives to combat desertification at regional levels.
- Send committed MPs to the UNCCD Parliamentary Round Table, organized every two years in parallel with the sessions of COP, where the parliamentary influence must be enhanced.
- Better utilize the Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD (PNoUNCCD), which needs adequate funding, and its Steering Committee, which should show more guidance in strengthening the PNoUNCCD and ensuring follow-up actions of the declarations adopted by the Round Tables of Parliamentarians.<sup>45</sup>
- Discuss and agree on contributions by MPs towards making the UNCCD a global authority on land and soil.
- Help establish an Intergovernmental Panel on Land and Soil and promote an Agreement of a new legal instrument to the UNCCD (such as a Protocol on Zero Net Land Degradation) as a global policy and monitoring framework to focus efforts and empower the international community to act with the speed and scale required to address this issue.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Eighth Session of the UNCCD Round Table for Parliamentarians: Commitments and future actions of Parliamentarians, adopted by parliamentarians in Buenos Aires on 24–25 September 2009) ([www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Parliament/2009/Buenos\\_A\\_-\\_Declaration\\_2009-09-25%20final%20version.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Parliament/2009/Buenos_A_-_Declaration_2009-09-25%20final%20version.pdf)). The Statute, adopted by the Forum of Parliamentarians/Round Table in 2011, stipulates: “The Steering Committee’s mandate shall be to: a) Contribute to meeting commitments undertaken under the UNCCD in the countries affected by desertification, land degradation, and drought; b) Evaluate the role and encourage the responsibility of governments and relevant multilateral organizations; c) Contribute to strengthening the capacities of parliamentarians; d) Produce and disseminate updated information for parliamentarians on specific subjects concerning the UNCCD; e) Facilitate contact with other networks of parliamentarians, civil-society organizations, multilateral organizations, the private sector and the press; f) Identify the appropriate actions in support of the UNCCD; g) Monitor the UNCCD implementation process and give independent opinions to the Conference of the Parties.” (see annex 3, article 9)

<sup>46</sup> See UNCCD Secretariat (2012): Zero Net Land Degradation - A sustainable development goal for Rio+20, Bonn – [www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/UNCCD\\_PolicyBrief\\_ZeroNetLandDegradation.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/UNCCD_PolicyBrief_ZeroNetLandDegradation.pdf)

- Create parliamentary oversight mechanisms (e.g. vis-à-vis the Global Environment Facility, regional development banks, the Green Climate Fund).
- A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) could strengthen the effectiveness, transparency, representativeness, plurality and legitimacy of the work of the institutions that compose the United Nations system. The establishment of a UNPA could also be a centrepiece for parliamentary supervision of the renewed system of international financial, economic and environmental governance. The Round Table of the Parliamentarians under the UNCCD could play a leadership role in this context

## V. OUTLOOK

The many proposals for mobilizing parliamentary efforts in the context of the implementation of the UNCCD are not intended to offer 'one-size-fits-all' solutions; instead, actions should be undertaken considering the unique DLLD situation in each country.

It is of utmost importance that parliaments and their members throughout the globe join forces in order to strengthen political momentum for the actions against DLLD including the vision for a land-degradation neutral world. They should seek cooperation with like-minded partners and build up alliances with all stakeholders in land and soil in particular, and also in sustainable, human development in general. They also need relevant documentation, technical assistance, advisory services and, last but not least, the high quality services of the UNCCD secretariat.

Regarding UNCCD issues, a valuable source of information is the bi-monthly update on the work of UNCCD, published by the secretariat since July-August 2009 (<http://newsbox.unccd.int>). The UNCCD secretariat is encouraged to review the good practices on SLM technologies and land-neutrality projects and programmes, with a view to considering additional information, which would facilitate identification and replication of good practices.

Where and how to reach parliaments and parliamentarians? Apart from the local directories, it is possible to find information for each parliament from the PARLINE database on the website of the Inter-Parliamentary Union ([www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)). This database provides detailed information including the names of the Presiding Officer, Clerk/Secretary General of the Parliament, their telephone and fax numbers, and their internet address. In addition, most national, regional and continental parliaments now maintain a website.

#### D. ANNEX

- Annex 1: UNCCD's 10-year Strategy (2008-2018) – Its strategic and operational objectives
- Annex 2: Outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference as they relate to desertification, land degradation and drought
- Annex 3: Statute of the Forum of Parliamentarians in the Context of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee

## ANNEX 1: UNCCD'S 10-year Strategy (2008-2018) - its strategic and operational objectives<sup>47</sup>

### Strategic objectives

**Objective 1:** To improve the living conditions of affected populations

**Objective 2:** To improve the condition of affected ecosystems

**Objective 3:** To generate global benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD

**Objective 4:** To mobilize resources to support implementation of the Convention through building effective partnerships between national and international actors

### The Five Operational Objectives of The Strategy

#### ***Operational objective 1: Advocacy, awareness raising and education***

To actively influence relevant international, national and local processes and actors in adequately addressing desertification/land degradation and drought-related issues.

#### ***Operational objective 2: Policy framework***

To support the creation of enabling environments for promoting solutions to combat desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought.

#### ***Operational objective 3: Science, technology and knowledge***

To become a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought.

#### ***Operational objective 4: Capacity-building***

To identify and address capacity-building needs to prevent and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought.

#### ***Operational objective 5: Financing and technology transfer***

To mobilize and improve the targeting and coordination of national, bilateral and multilateral financial and technological resources in order to increase their impact and effectiveness.

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<sup>47</sup> Source: Decision 3/COP.8.



## ANNEX 2: Outcomes of the Rio+20 conference on Desertification Land Degradation and Drought

The United Nation's Conference on Sustainable Development (Brazil on 20-22 June 2012, known as Rio+20) outcome on desertification, land degradation and drought is considered as one of the successes of the Conference. Contained in five paragraphs of the Outcome Document ('The future we want'), the world governments underline the economic and social significance of good land management, including soil. They thus agree to strive for a land-degradation neutral world. They reaffirm their resolve under the UNCCD to take coordinated action nationally, regionally and internationally, to monitor, globally, land degradation and restore degraded lands in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.

### ***Desertification, land degradation and drought***<sup>48</sup>

205. We recognize the economic and social significance of good land management, including soil, particularly its contribution to economic growth, biodiversity, sustainable agriculture and food security, eradicating poverty, the empowerment of women, addressing climate change and improving water availability. We stress that desertification, land degradation and drought are challenges of a global dimension and continue to pose serious challenges to the sustainable development of all countries, in particular developing countries. We also stress the particular challenges this poses for Africa, the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries. In this regard, we express deep concern for the devastating consequences of cyclical drought and famine in Africa, in particular in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region, and call for urgent action through short-, medium- and long-term measures at all levels.

206. We recognize the need for urgent action to reverse land degradation. In view of this, we will strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development. This should act to catalyse financial resources from a range of public and private sources.

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<sup>48</sup> Extracted from Document A/CONF.216/L.1 dated 19 June 2012 ([https://rio20.un.org/sites/rio20.un.org/files/a-conf.216l-1\\_english.pdf](https://rio20.un.org/sites/rio20.un.org/files/a-conf.216l-1_english.pdf) and [www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/TheFutureWeWantRIOplus20.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/TheFutureWeWantRIOplus20.pdf)).

207. We reaffirm our resolve in accordance with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to take coordinated action nationally, regionally and internationally, to monitor, globally, land degradation and restore degraded lands in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. We resolve to support and strengthen the implementation of the Convention and the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance its implementation (2008-2018), including through mobilizing adequate, predictable and timely financial resources. We note the importance of mitigating the effects of desertification, land degradation and drought, including by preserving and developing oases, restoring degraded lands, improving soil quality and improving water management, in order to contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication. In this regard, we encourage and recognize the importance of partnerships and initiatives for the safeguarding of land resources. We also encourage capacity-building, extension training programmes and scientific studies and initiatives aimed at deepening understanding and raising awareness of the economic, social and environmental benefits of sustainable land management policies and practices.

208. We stress the importance of the further development and implementation of scientifically based, sound and socially inclusive methods and indicators for monitoring and assessing the extent of desertification, land degradation and drought, as well as the importance of efforts under way to promote scientific research and strengthen the scientific base of activities to address desertification and drought in accordance with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. In this respect, we take note of the decision of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, at its tenth meeting, to establish an ad hoc working group, taking into account regional balance, to discuss specific options for the provision of scientific advice to its parties.

209. We reiterate the need for cooperation through the sharing of climate and weather information and forecasting and early warning systems related to desertification, land degradation and drought, as well as to dust storms and sandstorms, at the global, regional and sub regional levels. In this regard, we invite States and relevant organizations to cooperate in the sharing of related information, forecasting and early warning systems.

ANNEX 3: Statute of the forum of parliamentarians in the context of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)<sup>49</sup> and the rules of procedure of the steering committee<sup>50</sup>

A. Statute

*The Statute was unanimously adopted in Changwon, Republic of Korea, on the occasion of the ninth Forum of Parliamentarians / Round Table of Members of Parliament, on October 13, 2011.*

Aware of the challenges facing humanity with regard to environmental preservation and sustainable development;

Given the commitments of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD);

Considering the previous declarations adopted by the parliamentarians on the occasion of the Conferences of the Parties to the UNCCD;

Taking into account the role of parliamentarians in national governing systems;

Lastly, given the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in international relations;

The parliamentarians, meeting in Changwon, Republic of Korea, on the occasion of the ninth Forum of Parliamentarians held in conjunction with the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD hereby approve the following statutes:

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<sup>49</sup> [www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Parliament/Statute%20of%20the%20Parliamentarians-EN-rev1-14-10-ggl.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Parliament/Statute%20of%20the%20Parliamentarians-EN-rev1-14-10-ggl.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> [www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Parliament/2009/Rules%20of%20procedures\\_ENG-adopted%20version\\_25.09.09.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Parliament/2009/Rules%20of%20procedures_ENG-adopted%20version_25.09.09.pdf)

## Chapter 1

### General Provisions

#### Article 1

##### **(Constitution)**

The Forum of Parliamentarians of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, referred to below as the Forum of Parliamentarians of the UNCCD, is hereby constituted.

The present statute shall apply to any session of the Forum of Parliamentarians.

#### Article 2

##### **(Nature)**

1. The Forum of Parliamentarians of the UNCCD is a body which brings together parliamentarians of the Parties to the Convention and serves as a platform for exchanging viewpoints and for interaction among parliamentarians on subjects regarding implementation of the Convention.
2. The Forum of Parliamentarians of the UNCCD provides opinions to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

#### Article 3

##### **(Objectives)**

The objectives of the Forum of Parliamentarians of the UNCCD are as follows:

- a. contributing to the sharing of knowledge and experience in the fight against desertification and land degradation;
- b. contributing to greater involvement by parliamentarians in fulfilling national commitments in the fight against desertification and land degradation;
- c. promoting participation by parliamentarians in defining and controlling environmental policies, especially with regard to the fight against desertification and land degradation;

- d. encouraging the reinforcement of national legislation regarding the fight against desertification and harmonizing it with the UNCCD provisions and the relevant decisions made by the Conference of the Parties;
- e. making sure that matters regarding land degradation and desertification are taken into account by major national policies such as poverty-reduction strategies;
- f. strengthening the capacities of national parliaments for evaluating the impacts of policies to fight desertification and land degradation;
- g. promoting international, regional, and sub-regional cooperation with parliamentary networks for protecting the environment and combating desertification and land degradation;
- h. contributing to mobilizing and allocating resources to combat desertification and land degradation at the national level;
- i. encouraging the creation of coalitions and partnerships among parliamentarians, politicians, academics, journalists, and representatives from the private sector and civil society in order to protect the environment and fight desertification and land degradation;

#### Article 4

##### ***(Composition)***

The Forum of Parliamentarians of the UNCCD is composed of the Representatives and Senators appointed by the National Parliaments of the Parties to the UNCCD.

## Chapter II

### Organization and Functioning

#### Article 5

##### ***(Bodies)***

The Forum of Parliamentarians of the UNCCD contains the following bodies:

- a. the Forum President;
- b. the Steering Committee;
- c. the Forum Assembly.

## Article 6

### ***(Forum President)***

1. The Forum President shall be elected by the Forum Assembly, from the members of the Steering Committee, nominated by one or more regional groups;
2. The President's term shall be two years, renewable once. The President may not serve more than two consecutive terms.

## Article 7

### ***(President's Mandate)***

The President's mandate shall be to:

- a. represent the Forum internally and externally;
- b. define, in conjunction with the members of the Steering Committee and UNCCD secretariat, the projects on the Steering Committee and Forum Assembly agenda;
- c. announce the opening and closure of the Forum of Parliamentarians and preside over its sessions;
- d. ensure the application of the present Statute;
- e. hand over the floor, submit deliberations to a vote and announce decisions;
- f. rule on procedural questions.

## Article 8

### ***(Steering Committee)***

1. The Steering Committee shall be composed of a President and four Vice Presidents, in addition to a member of the Standing Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) on Sustainable Development, Finance, and Trade, so that the Steering Committee has a representative for each region.
2. The members of the Steering Committee, with the exception of the member appointed by the IPU, shall be elected from the parliamentarians present at the Forum Assembly held during the Conference of the Parties.
3. The Committee shall have a term of two years and may not serve more than two consecutive terms.

**Article 9**  
**(Mandate)**

The Steering Committee's mandate shall be to:

- a. contribute to meeting commitments undertaken under the UNCCD in the countries affected by desertification, land degradation, and drought;
- b. evaluate the role and encourage the responsibility of governments and relevant multilateral organizations;
- c. contribute to strengthening the capacities of parliamentarians;
- d. produce and disseminate updated information for parliamentarians on specific subjects concerning the UNCCD;
- e. facilitate contact with other networks of parliamentarians, civil-society organizations, multilateral organizations, the private sector and the press;
- f. identify the appropriate actions in support of the UNCCD;
- g. monitor the UNCCD implementation process and give independent opinions to the Conference of the Parties.

**Article 10**  
**(Assembly Sessions)**

The Assembly of the Forum of Parliamentarians of the UNCCD shall meet in ordinary sessions every two years in the countries hosting the ordinary session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

**Article 11**  
**(Agenda)**

1. The President of the Forum of Parliamentarians of the UNCCD shall submit to the members attending the Forum Assembly the draft session agenda for final approval.
2. The agenda shall be approved by the majority of parliamentarians attending the session.

Article 12  
***(Deliberations)***

1. The Deliberations of the Forum Assembly are adopted by consensus. If efforts to reach consensus have been exhausted and no agreement has been reached, the decision shall be taken by simple majority of the members present and voting.
2. The Forum Assembly can only deliberate on subjects on the agenda approved by the plenary session.

Chapter III

Functioning and Institutional Support

Article 13  
***(Funding)***

Each Parliament contributes to the expenses related to its representation.

Article 14  
***(Institutional Support)***

In the aim of properly fulfilling its functions, the Forum of Parliamentarians shall be supported by the UNCCD secretariat, which shall act in close collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union Secretariat.

Article 15  
***(Interpretation)***

It shall be under the mandate of the Forum President to interpret the present statute, without prejudice to the right to consult the Forum Assembly.

Chapter IV

Final Provisions

Article 16  
***(Modifying the Statute)***

1. Proposed modifications to the present statute may be submitted to the Steering Committee.
2. The Steering Committee shall issue a motivated opinion on all proposals submitted to it, and after disclosing them, submit them for consideration by the Forum Assembly at its next meeting.



3. The present statute may be modified by consensus by the Forum Assembly. If efforts to reach consensus have been exhausted and no agreement has been reached, the decision shall be taken by two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting.

#### Article 17

##### *(Entry into Force)*

The present statute shall be confirmed by the Forum Assembly and enter into force once it is adopted.

### B. Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee

The rules have been prepared by the Steering Committee of the Parliamentarians Networks of the UNCCD. This document was adopted by Parliamentarians on the occasion of their Eighth Session held on 24-25 September 2009, in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

#### I. THE SCOPE

##### ***RULE 1***

The present rules of procedure shall apply to any session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary network of the UNCCD.

#### II. THE ROLE

##### ***RULE 2***

1. The Steering Committee of the UNCCD is to provide better inputs and monitor the work of parliamentarians in the context of the UNCCD implementation process.
2. In conjunction with the Parliamentary Network, the Steering Committee is to:
  - a. provide the members of the network with a platform for knowledge sharing, interaction and coordinated proactive measures;
  - b. help increase parliamentary involvement in monitoring national, sub regional, regional and international activities to combat desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD);

- c. promote awareness-raising, timely consultative processes and the exchange of information, experience and good practices; support resource mobilization; foster operations on the ground;
- d. encourage coalition-building and partnerships between parliamentarians and policymakers, the academic community, the business sector, NGOs, and the relevant community based organizations (CBOs);
- e. promote forms of international, regional and sub regional cooperation, favourable to improving relations between the relevant intergovernmental organizations, and;
- f. supervise the follow up activities of recommendations made on the occasion of the UNCCD parliamentary round tables.

### III. OBJECTIVES

#### ***RULE 3***

The Steering Committee was established with the main objectives of:

- a. helping to translate commitments into real actions in respect of the implementation of the Convention in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification and land degradation.
- b. assessing the role and increasing the accountability of governments and relevant multilateral organizations.

#### ***RULE 4***

The Steering Committee main tasks are to:

- a. produce and disseminate regular updates for parliamentarians on specific topics as they relate to DLDD;
- b. connect parliamentarians with other parliamentary networks, civil society organizations, multilateral organizations, the private sector and the media;
- c. identify appropriate parliamentary actions to support the UNCCD;
- d. build parliamentarians' capacities;
- e. follow up as appropriate with the UNCCD implementation processes.

#### IV. COMPOSITION

##### **RULE 5**

1. The Steering Committee shall be composed by a President and four Vice-presidents plus one member of the Bureau of the IPU Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade, in a manner that the Steering Committee will have one representative per the different geopolitical regions: Africa, Arab region, Asia and Pacific, Europe (Twelve +), Latin America and Caribbean.
2. Among the members of the Steering Committee, designated on a regional basis, there will be at least two members of each gender.

##### **RULE 6**

The President of the Steering Committee, if temporarily unable to attend a session or any part thereof, shall be replaced by a Vice-President, who will be appointed by the present Steering Committee members.

##### **RULE 7**

If a member of the Steering Committee resigns, or is otherwise unable to complete the assigned term of office or to perform the functions of that office, a substitute representative of the same region shall be designated by the Parliament of the concerned member to serve for the remainder of the mandate.

#### V. APPOINTMENT AND TERMS

##### **RULE 8**

1. The Steering Committee members shall be elected from among the parliamentarians present at the session of the Parliamentarians Round Table organized in parallel to the UNCCD COP sessions held every two years.
2. The President shall be elected from among the Steering Committee members, for one term renewable once.
3. The Steering Committee shall be elected for a two-year term.
4. The presidency should rotate among the different geopolitical regions.

## VI. SESSIONS

### ***RULE 9***

1. Meetings of the Steering Committee are chaired by the President – if temporarily unable to attend the session, rule 6 applies.
2. The Steering Committee shall meet in ordinary session at least once a year after convocation by the President and in close consultation with the UNCCD Secretariat.
3. The venue and timing of ordinary sessions shall be decided by the President in agreement, whenever possible, with the rest of members of the Committee and the UNCCD Secretariat.
4. The Steering Committee shall be convened in extraordinary session if the President deems it necessary or if three of its members so request.
5. The President of the Steering Committee shall declare the opening, suspension and closing of the session, preside at the meetings of the session, ensure the observance of the present rules, accord the right to speak, put questions for decision on the basis of consensus.
6. In case of lack of consensus, the Steering Committee will rule by majority vote.
7. In case of tie, the President's vote will prevail.
8. All decision taken by the Steering Committee shall, as appropriated, be circulated in writing and approved before the end of each meeting.
9. The President shall make a decision in all cases not covered by these Rules, if necessary after having the advice of members of the Steering Committee.

## VII. AGENDA

### ***RULE 10***

1. The provisional agenda of each session shall be prepared by the UNCCD Secretariat in agreement with the President.
2. For each ordinary session, the provisional agenda shall be distributed by the UNCCD Secretariat to the members of the Committee at least one month before the opening of the session.
3. The Secretariat shall, in agreement with the President, include in the provisional agenda any supplementary item, which is proposed by a member of the Steering Committee.

4. The provisional agenda of each session shall be fixed by the Steering Committee at the opening of each session.

## VIII. DELIBERATIONS - QUORUM - VOTE

### ***RULE 11***

The presence of the President and at least three members of the steering Committee shall be required for any deliberations to be held and decision to be taken by the Committee.

## IX. THE STRUCTURE

### ***RULE 12***

The Steering Committee is assisted in its activities by the UNCCD Secretariat and the IPU.

### ***RULE 13***

1. The UNCCD Secretariat shall receive or prepare relevant documents necessary to the deliberations of the Steering Committee and shall distribute them to its members as far as possible in English, French and Spanish.
2. The Secretariat shall prepare provisional summary records of the sessions, which shall be sent to the President of the Steering Committee within 40 days of the close of each session and submitted for the approval of the Committee at the opening of the next session.

## X. ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF THE RULES

### ***RULE 14***

1. The present rules of procedure shall be adopted and may be amended by The Steering Committee by an absolute majority of the members present at the time of adoption.
2. Proposals to amend the rules of the Steering Committee must be formulated in writing and sent to the UNCCD Secretariat at least three months before the next meeting of the Committee. The Secretariat shall immediately communicate such proposals, as well as any proposals for sub-amendments, to the members of the Committee for further consideration.

