



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
26 July 2021

Original: English

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## Seventy-sixth session

Items 20 (d), (e) and (f) of the provisional agenda\*

### Sustainable development:

**Protection of global climate for present and future  
generations of humankind**

**Implementation of the United Nations Convention to  
Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing  
Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly  
in Africa**

**Convention on Biological Diversity**

## Implementation of United Nations environmental conventions

### Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the reports submitted by the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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\* [A/76/150](#).



## **I. Report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention**

### **A. Introduction**

1. The present report has been prepared in response to paragraph 24 of General Assembly resolution [75/217](#), in which the Assembly invited the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to report, through the Secretary-General, to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, and decided to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-sixth session, under the item entitled “Sustainable development”, the sub-item entitled “Protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind”.

### **B. Overview of activities under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process on climate action and support**

#### **1. Summary**

2. Following guidance on preventing the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the Bureau, at its meeting held on 1 April 2020, decided to postpone, from November 2020 to November 2021, the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties, the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement to be held in Glasgow. By the same decision, the fifty-second and fifty-third sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation, as well as the fifty-second and fifty-third sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice, were also postponed.

3. The changes to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change calendar of events in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 had significant implications for achieving the goals for the year. To mitigate the impact and maintain momentum under the Convention process, the secretariat deployed and enhanced virtual collaboration tools to facilitate the work of the parties and non-party stakeholders, as well as intensified the support provided to the presidency of the Conference at its twenty-fifth session, the incoming presidency for the twenty-sixth session, the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies and the Bureau to maximize progress in the intergovernmental process and minimize delays towards achieving the objectives of the Convention and the Paris Agreement in spite of the pandemic.

4. The secretariat provided substantive, legal and procedural support to the Bureau in order to assist the parties in advancing work under the Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. To facilitate interaction among the parties, between the parties and non-party stakeholders and across the United Nations system, the secretariat organized 473 virtual meetings and supported the work under the 13 constituted bodies and numerous work programmes, forums, panels and task forces under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process. It processed 171 official documents and submissions, maintained its data portals and launched a new online calendar of events.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/calendar/dashboard>.

5. In the absence of formal negotiations under the Convention process in 2020, there were no formal decisions taken by the parties.

6. The secretariat facilitated the entry into force of the Doha Amendment in 2020,<sup>2</sup> in which the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol was established in 2012. The Amendment sets out strengthened emission limitation and reduction commitments for developed countries, including those with economies in transition, towards an overall goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 18 per cent, compared with the 1990 levels, for the period of 2013–2020.

## 2. Maximizing progress and minimizing delays through virtual events

7. With the postponement of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties and restrictions on holding in-person meetings, the presidencies of the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth sessions of the Conference of the Parties and the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies organized informal virtual consultations with parties and negotiating groups to seek their views on how to informally advance work on various matters in a balanced, inclusive and transparent manner.

8. Some of the topics on which consultations were held included: outstanding elements of the Paris Agreement work programme (such as article 6 and the enhanced transparency framework for action and support); how to raise ambitions on mitigation, adaptation and climate finance, including on achieving the long-term global goal on finance of \$100 billion annually from 2020; and seeking guidance on how to organize events that were mandated to be held in 2020. Under the Convention process, events mandated to take place in 2020 were successfully held without delay using virtual tools.

9. Efforts were geared towards maintaining party and non-party stakeholder engagement in the intergovernmental process despite the postponement of the in-person sessions. This was achieved through the organization of two virtual event series, on the understanding that they would not be used for formal negotiations nor decision-making. The events were conducted under the guidance of the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies, in collaboration with the presidencies of the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth sessions of the Conference of the Parties and with the support of the secretariat. These included:

(a) June Momentum for Climate Change,<sup>3</sup> held from 1 to 10 June 2020, which featured 23 events for showcasing progress made with regard to climate action and provided a platform for information exchange and engagement among participants on a wide variety of topics under the Convention;

(b) The Climate Dialogues 2020,<sup>4</sup> held from 23 November to 4 December 2020, which became one of the largest virtual United Nations events in 2020, with 83 meetings and over 8,000 registered participants.

10. The secretariat designed and facilitated more specific, visible and impactful ways of engaging non-party stakeholders, including observer organizations, in the Convention process. Key initiatives included:

(a) The Race to Zero campaign,<sup>5</sup> launched by the high-level champions;

<sup>2</sup> See decision 1/CMP.8.

<sup>3</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/conferences/june-momentum-for-climate-change>.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/cd2020>.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/race-to-zero-campaign>.

(b) The *Yearbook of Global Climate Action 2020*<sup>6</sup> and the revised Climate Action Pathways<sup>7</sup> under the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action;

(c) The Climate Neutral Now initiative;<sup>8</sup>

(d) The United Nations Global Climate Action Awards;<sup>9</sup>

(e) Action for Climate Empowerment.<sup>10</sup>

11. Throughout 2020, the secretariat continued to support countries in preparing their nationally determined contributions. As at 31 December 2020, 48 updated (38) or new (10) nationally determined contributions had been received from 75 parties.<sup>11</sup> Owing to delays in parties submitting their nationally determined contributions as a result of the impacts of the pandemic, the secretariat decided to publish two editions of the synthesis report on nationally determined contributions: an initial version in February 2021<sup>12</sup> and a final version before the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties. In addition, as at 31 December 2020, 28 parties had submitted long-term low-emission development strategies.<sup>13</sup>

12. The regional collaboration centres, operated by the secretariat with partner organizations, were instrumental in supporting parties' adaptation and mitigation efforts thanks to the organization of small region-specific virtual events. In the light of the pandemic, a regional virtual platform<sup>14</sup> was launched that provides information and resources relevant to such events. Meanwhile, the focus of the Nairobi Framework Partnership, in which the secretariat is a partner, was on enhancing the capacity of designated national authorities to become fully operational; building the capacity of project developers to implement clean development mechanism activities; promoting opportunities for project developers and donors to invest in clean development mechanism activities; improving information-sharing, outreach and training in relation to clean development mechanism stakeholders, including designated national authorities; and strengthening inter-agency coordination in carrying out these activities.

## C. Conclusions and recommendations

13. The General Assembly may wish:

(a) To take note of the report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, transmitted by the Secretary-General;

(b) To note the challenges in progressing intergovernmental negotiations owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in significant changes to the calendar of events, preventing negotiations and formal decision-making in the Convention process, and to urge parties to accelerate progress as soon as possible and,

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, *Yearbook of Global Climate Action 2020: Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action* (Bonn, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> See [https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership/reporting-and-tracking/climate\\_action\\_pathways](https://unfccc.int/climate-action/marrakech-partnership/reporting-and-tracking/climate_action_pathways).

<sup>8</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/climate-neutral-now>.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/GCA-awards-2021>.

<sup>10</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/topics/education-youth/the-big-picture/what-is-action-for-climate-empowerment>.

<sup>11</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs/NDC-submissions>.

<sup>12</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs/ndc-synthesis-report>.

<sup>13</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/process/the-paris-agreement/long-term-strategies>.

<sup>14</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/about-us/partnerships/current-calls-for-partnerships/regional-collaboration-centres/regional-virtual-platform>.

by the latest, during the rescheduled sessions to be held in Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in November 2021;

(c) To urge parties that have not yet done so to submit ambitious updated and new nationally determined contributions in time for them to be included in the final version of the synthesis report on nationally determined contributions to be published prior to the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties;

(d) To urge parties that have not yet submitted their long-term low-emission development strategies, national adaptation plans and adaptation communications to accelerate work on their preparation and submit them to the secretariat;

(e) To urge parties to the Convention that have not yet ratified the Paris Agreement to expedite their domestic procedures, and to promptly deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, in order to ensure its universality;

(f) To invite the Executive Secretary to continue to report on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

## **II. Report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa**

### **A. Introduction**

14. In its resolution [75/218](#) on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the resolution at its seventy-sixth session. The present report constitutes an update for the Assembly on the principal activities that have been undertaken in that respect.

### **B. Implementation of General Assembly resolution [75/218](#)**

#### **1. Nineteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention**

15. The nineteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention was held for the first time in an online format from 15 to 19 March 2021, with two hours of daily online meetings. Owing to the special format, parties agreed not to constitute a contact group to finalize the official report of the session. Instead, they entrusted the Rapporteur with the finalization of the report on the basis of recordings from the session. The session brought together 138 parties, 9 United Nations agencies, 15 intergovernmental organizations and 63 civil society organizations.

16. At its nineteenth session, the Committee considered the following agenda items:

(a) Update on the implementation of the voluntary land degradation neutrality targets and related implementation efforts;

(b) Update on the operationalization of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund;

(c) Update on the implementation of the Drought Initiative and related implementation efforts;

(d) Interim report of the intergovernmental working group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the Convention.

17. The final report of the session, which includes the summaries of discussions on each agenda item, will constitute the basis for drafting decision text to be discussed and agreed upon during the twentieth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, to be held in conjunction with the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.

## **2. Preparation of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa: date and venue**

18. Considering the ongoing worldwide effects of COVID-19 and the evolution of the pandemic, holding the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties in 2021 was deemed no longer possible and the Bureau of the fourteenth session, meeting virtually on 8 April 2021, decided to postpone the fifteenth session to 2022, to be held on a date (between May and October 2022) and at venue to be confirmed in due course. The Bureau further entrusted the Executive Secretary with the mandate to pursue consultations with all relevant stakeholders with a view to organizing the forthcoming fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties within the agreed time frame.

19. On 21 June, the secretariat informed the Bureau of the fourteenth session that, by a letter dated 14 June, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire had confirmed its willingness to host the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties in May 2022.

20. In line with the provisions of decision 33/COP.14 on the date and venue of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, the Executive Secretary will enter into consultations with the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for the organization of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties and report back to the Bureau on progress made in that respect.

21. During the same meeting, the Bureau of the fourteenth session further agreed to organize an extraordinary session of the Conference of the Parties in 2021, with a view to approving an interim budget for 2022. The modalities, timelines and procedures related to the organization of the extraordinary session are currently being addressed by the Bureau.

## **3. High-level dialogue on desertification, land degradation and drought**

22. In accordance with General Assembly resolutions [74/220](#) and [75/218](#), a high-level dialogue was convened under the auspices of the President of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly on 14 June 2021, to assess the progress made in the fight against desertification, land degradation and drought and to map the way forward, in the light of the end of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification.

23. The high-level dialogue was opened by the President of the General Assembly, Volkan Bozkir. The opening segment featured statements by the President of the Economic and Social Council, Munir Akram; the Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed; the President of the fourteenth session of the Conference of Parties to the Convention and Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi; the Executive Secretary of the Convention, Ibrahim Thiaw; and a civil society representative, Hindou Ibrahim. Eminent scientist Robert Watson gave a keynote presentation.

24. Two interactive panels on the themes “Achieving land degradation neutrality to accelerate COVID-19 recoveries and the Decade of Action” and “Urgent global cooperation on land to deliver the future we want” were organized and co-chaired by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the 2021 Food Systems Summit, Agnes Kalibata, and the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Bezos Earth Fund, Andrew Steer, respectively.

25. More than 65 Member States, including six Heads of State and Government, two Deputy Prime Ministers and 58 ministers, participated in three plenary sessions on 14 June and 2 July and underscored the fundamental importance of protecting and restoring land and the functions and services of ecosystems, as key to human survival and sustainable development. Many speakers also noted that land, as well as the concept of land degradation neutrality, is an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals, supporting multiple functions that are critical for progress worldwide. They called for better recognition of combating desertification, land degradation and drought as one of the priorities of the international agenda, noting its potential as a powerful accelerator towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and a crucial part of the action on climate change and biodiversity. The Executive Secretary of the Convention, Mr. Thiaw, summed up the deliberations in the closing remarks under the format of a call to action. He noted that there was a window of opportunity to champion a new restoration narrative that could reconnect people and nature through a high-level ambition on land stewardship. He further noted that investing in land-based solutions in the post-COVID-19 recovery efforts, especially in rural economies, was a potential win-win that could yield multiple benefits and accelerate the implementation of a range of Sustainable Development Goals, from addressing poverty, livelihoods and food and water security to building resilience to climate shocks.

#### **4. Global celebration of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought<sup>15</sup> and outreach activities**

26. Under the slogan, “Restoration. Land. Recovery”, on the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2021, a message was sent around the world that investing in activities that protect and restore land and ecosystems will boost the recovery from COVID-19 for communities, countries and economies worldwide.

27. The global observance on 17 June was hosted by Costa Rica and organized entirely online owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>16</sup> At a virtual high-level forum hosted by the President of Costa Rica, Carlos Alvarado Quesada, ministers from Algeria, Botswana, Iceland, Peru, Republic of Korea and Senegal reinforced the perspectives shared at the high-level dialogue on desertification, land degradation and drought, that had been convened by the President of the General Assembly three days earlier. The Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly addressed the forum, and the sessions were moderated by the Minister of Environment and Energy of Costa Rica, Andrea Meza Murillo, and the former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Christiana Figures.<sup>17</sup>

28. As part of the celebrations for the World Day, the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification announced the winners of the seventh Land for Life Award.<sup>18</sup> An eight-member international jury declared Familial Forestry from Rajasthan, India, the winner for 2021 because of its innovative land restoration

<sup>15</sup> General Assembly resolution 49/115.

<sup>16</sup> See [www.unccd.int/actions/17-june-desertification-and-drought-day/2021-desertification-and-drought-day](http://www.unccd.int/actions/17-june-desertification-and-drought-day/2021-desertification-and-drought-day).

<sup>17</sup> See [www.unccd.int/news-events/restore-land-help-deal-global-crises-leaders-urge-0](http://www.unccd.int/news-events/restore-land-help-deal-global-crises-leaders-urge-0).

<sup>18</sup> See [www.unccd.int/news-events/2021-land-life-award-winner-familial-forestry](http://www.unccd.int/news-events/2021-land-life-award-winner-familial-forestry).



and conservation method that promoted the well-being of communities and improved their relationship with nature. The Global Landscapes Forum received the Land for Life Special Mention from the Executive Secretary of the Convention for its exceptional work as the world's largest knowledge-led platform on sustainable and inclusive landscapes.

29. At the global observance, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction launched the *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction: Special Report on Drought 2021*. The observance programme was live-streamed on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, the Convention website and partially on United Nations Web TV.

30. A campaign associated with the World Day was conducted from February to 17 June 2021 to create opportunities to link land issues with other major international days, decades and events of the year, such as the launch of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the Food Systems Summit.

31. The campaign and the event on 17 June reached over 150 million people around the world through social media, with the direct engagement of 280,000 people. A large number of influencers and celebrities used the Day's hashtags to share their views and raise awareness. News articles were published in some of the world's largest media services, with a total readership/viewership of nearly 707 million people in more than 60 countries.

32. At the time when the present report was prepared, over 100 governmental, intergovernmental and civil society organizations sent their observance event reports to the secretariat, sharing a variety of celebration activities, such as project and book launches, film screenings, exhibitions, art competitions and tree plantings.<sup>19</sup>

## 5. Role of land restoration in building forward better after the pandemic

33. To support Member States and other stakeholders in their efforts to build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic, in May 2021, the secretariat produced a Solution Brief<sup>20</sup> highlighting the linkages between land restoration and a green recovery. It provides practical, verifiable information on the economic case for land restoration and its role in addressing several of the challenges exacerbated by the pandemic (job creation, food security, recovery of livelihoods, among others). Several Member States and other stakeholders referred to the Brief during their interventions at the high-level dialogue of the General Assembly referred to above and during the global observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.

## 6. Collaboration with the Global Environment Facility

34. The ongoing collaboration between the Convention and the Global Environment Facility was further enhanced in the period under consideration. In addition to consultations between the Executive Secretary of the Convention and the Global Environment Facility, staff from the secretariat of the Convention took part in and provided input to the Global Environment Facility Technical Advisory Group meetings in preparation for the next replenishment cycle.

35. Cases were made for the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of investing in land degradation programmes, including on land restoration. A similar programme to the Global Environment Facility land degradation umbrella programme for the Sahel is being developed for Caribbean small island developing States. Other programmes

<sup>19</sup> See [www.unccd.int/actions/17-june-desertification-and-drought-day2021-desertification-and-drought-day/2021-events](http://www.unccd.int/actions/17-june-desertification-and-drought-day2021-desertification-and-drought-day/2021-events).

<sup>20</sup> United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, "Restored Land, Healthy People, Green Recovery: Build Forward Better with Land-Centered Solutions", Solution Brief, May 2021. Available at [www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/UNCCD\\_Solution%20Brief.pdf](http://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/UNCCD_Solution%20Brief.pdf).



are being considered to cover more regions. The Global Environment Facility enabling activities are being implemented by the Global Mechanism, in cooperation with the implementing agencies. Transformative projects and programmes on land degradation neutrality under the Convention have also been an effective way of collaborating with the Facility.

36. The secretariat of the Convention participated in the sixtieth meeting of the Council of the Global Environment Facility, which met from 14 to 18 June 2021. The Executive Secretary addressed the Council along with other heads of the treaties for which the Facility is serving as financial mechanism. He noted that while rates of land degradation have not slowed, there is greater recognition of the potential of land to contribute to building back better after the pandemic. He pointed out that land is increasingly an integrator across the Facility focal areas, given the capacity of restored lands to serve as carbon sinks, prevent biodiversity loss and enhance agricultural productivity, and thereby generate additional benefits such as boosting food security, job creation, empowering women and advancing rural development. Land degradation therefore merits more direct investment, in the wider context of a comprehensive integrated approach in Facility programmes. He also called for investment by the Facility in early warning systems, vulnerability and risk assessment and drought risk mitigation. He supported the inclusion of a focal area on drought as a prerequisite for the development of an operational programme. In the ensuing interactive dialogue between Council members and the Executive Secretaries, there was a strong case for integrated approaches as the secretariat of the Facility was preparing programming activities. The Executive Secretary of the Convention underlined the importance of the land sector in bringing Facility focal points together and in delivering global results.

## **7. Promotion of collaboration and partnerships for land**

37. The secretariat of the Convention and the Global Mechanism have continued their active outreach to Member States, United Nations system organizations and processes, scientific and technical expert organizations working on land and civil society, with the aim of promoting collaboration and partnerships for addressing desertification, land degradation and drought. The statements made at the high-level dialogue and during the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought indicate that this outreach has been successful in improving awareness of the land agenda and increasing the commitment of countries and major organizations to advancing that agenda, with particular attention paid to the poorest and most marginalized rural communities. Such commitment is increasingly reflected in concrete action and initiatives: it was demonstrated, for example, at the One Planet Summit in January 2021, at which participating countries and other stakeholders pledged more than \$14 billion to accelerate the implementation of the African Great Green Wall initiative; and the Group of 20 ministerial meeting in November 2020 at which a global initiative on reducing land degradation and enhancing conservation of terrestrial ecosystems was launched. The secretariat of the Convention continues to offer backstopping and information on, as well as to follow up on progress in, these and other relevant partnership initiatives.

38. The secretariat of the Convention has continued to strengthen its collaboration with the secretariats of the other two Rio conventions by launching a joint work programme that includes joint advocacy for the sustainable development agenda, including the preparation of a communications campaign to highlight the synergies between the three intergovernmental processes at the global and local levels.

39. With regard to the preparations for the Food Systems Summit, the secretariat of the Convention serves as the anchor agency for action track 3 (boost nature-positive production), working to bring the land restoration agenda to the centre of the

preparations for the summit and liaising with other United Nations entities, as well as Member States, to promote their participation in efforts related to the Summit. The secretariat produced a publication that highlights the linkages between land degradation neutrality and nature-positive food production<sup>21</sup> to support Member States in formulating their participation in activities related to the Summit.

40. The Convention has broadened its outreach to non-traditional partners and funding sources to find ways to support countries in combating land degradation, desertification and drought. This has included engaging with partners such as the World Economic Forum and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization to promote entrepreneurship and technology intake or transfer; with other entities on topics related to financing instruments and mechanisms (blended finance, global fund structuring and sustainable bonds), as well as with African Risk Capacity on drought risk finance and insurance. The Convention is collaborating with the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund in identifying project opportunities that can meet the investment criteria of the Fund. The Convention is also partnering with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development on soil asset classification.

## **8. Land degradation neutrality target-setting programme and land restoration targets**

41. Many Member States are committed to advancing land degradation neutrality as a practical framework for planning, implementing and monitoring their activities to meet Sustainable Development Goal 15 and the objectives of the strategic framework of the Convention for 2018–2030. The secretariat of the Convention and the Global Mechanism, in collaboration with numerous partners, are supporting these efforts through a land degradation neutrality target-setting programme, assistance for the development of bankable transformative land degradation neutrality projects and the facilitation of scientific and technical collaboration.

42. To date, 105 out of the 127 countries participating in the land degradation neutrality target-setting programme<sup>22</sup> have successfully set voluntary land degradation neutrality targets, committing to restore over 450 million hectares of degraded land globally<sup>23</sup> as a major contribution to the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and to operational implementation synergies at the national level with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Bonn Challenge. More than 70 countries are developing transformative land-degradation neutrality projects, and several of these projects have already passed the first stages of accessing funding.

43. In order to support Member States in their voluntary efforts to achieve or exceed land degradation neutrality, the secretariat, the Global Mechanism and key partner organizations are building upon the results of a scientific assessment conducted by the Science-Policy Interface, in order to support their efforts to take into account land tenure and land-use planning conditions, as appropriate, for the creation of an

<sup>21</sup> United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, “Land degradation neutrality for sustainable agriculture and food security”. Available at [www.unccd.int/publications/land-degradation-neutrality-sustainable-agriculture-and-food-security](http://www.unccd.int/publications/land-degradation-neutrality-sustainable-agriculture-and-food-security).

<sup>22</sup> See [www.unccd.int/actions/ldn-target-setting-programme](http://www.unccd.int/actions/ldn-target-setting-programme).

<sup>23</sup> Annelies Sewell, Stefan van der Esch and Hannah Löwenhardt, “Goals and Commitments for the Restoration Decade”, Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency, Policy Brief (The Hague, 2020). Available at [www.pbl.nl/sites/default/files/downloads/pbl-2020-goals-and-commitments-for-the-restoration-decade-3906.pdf](http://www.pbl.nl/sites/default/files/downloads/pbl-2020-goals-and-commitments-for-the-restoration-decade-3906.pdf).

enabling policy and regulatory environment for land degradation neutrality.<sup>24</sup> The secretariat and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other relevant partners are collaborating to produce a technical guide on how to integrate the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security into the implementation of the Convention and land degradation neutrality, taking into account national contexts. In addition, the Science-Policy Interface is currently working on a new scientific assessment designed to provide science-based evidence on the potential contribution of integrated land-use planning and integrated landscape management to positive transformative change, achieving land degradation neutrality and addressing desertification, land degradation and drought issues.

44. The secretariat and the Science-Policy Interface, working in the intergovernmental and interorganizational context of the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality Initiative,<sup>25</sup> organized a technology innovation competition for the development of a tool to support land-use planning in the context of land degradation neutrality, with the aim of inspiring innovation as well as collective and coordinated action.<sup>26</sup> The winning prototype, Land-Use Planning for Land Degradation Neutrality, allows users to evaluate land-use and land management transition scenarios, providing visual and quantitative representations of land degradation gains and losses. The transition from the prototype to the full version of Land-Use Planning for Land Degradation Neutrality is expected by December 2021.

### C. Observations and recommendations

45. Despite the challenges posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic, the meetings, events and collaboration on desertification, land degradation and drought have succeeded in maintaining and even increasing the attention paid by and the commitment of the international community to the implementation of the Convention. The success of the World Day outreach – with more than twice as many people reached as in 2020 – indicates that the messages regarding the importance of land resonate with the public. There is clearly momentum to advance the land restoration narrative, which reconnects people and nature through a high-level ambition on land stewardship.

46. Investing in land-based solutions in the post-COVID-19 recovery efforts has particularly high potential to yield multiple benefits and accelerate the implementation of a range of Sustainable Development Goals, from addressing poverty, livelihoods and food and water security to building resilience to climatic shocks. Such land-based investments could benefit the poorest rural areas in particular, triggering a long-lasting transformative process whereby environmental restoration generates jobs, well-being and stability.

47. Healthy, productive land is a precondition for many global industries, including the production of food, fodder and fibre. High-level participants of the recent events and meetings on desertification, land degradation and drought repeatedly underlined the importance of integrating land restoration and the aim of land degradation neutrality into the global agenda for sustainable consumption and production, to be reflected from business operations to consumer behaviour. Also in this context,

<sup>24</sup> P.H. Verburg and others, *Creating an Enabling Environment for Land Degradation Neutrality and its Potential Contribution to Enhancing Well-being, Livelihoods and the Environment: A Report of the Science-Policy Interface* (Bonn, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> See [https://earthobservations.org/geo\\_ldn.php](https://earthobservations.org/geo_ldn.php).

<sup>26</sup> See [www.geo-ldn.org/competition-overview](http://www.geo-ldn.org/competition-overview).

careful targeting of the COVID-19 recovery investments to include land restoration could combine economic opportunities with environmental sustainability.

48. In the light of the above, the General Assembly may wish to recognize the continued and growing attention paid by the international community to addressing desertification, land degradation and drought, and to underline the importance of related actions. The Assembly may also wish to promote the integration of land restoration into post-COVID-19 recovery efforts, with particular attention paid to improving the livelihoods of the poorest rural communities. Furthermore, the Assembly may wish to recognize the critical role that healthy land has in the global economy, and to call for measures to explore and promote consumption and production patterns that protect land and advance land degradation neutrality.

### **III. Report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity**

#### **A. Introduction**

49. In its resolution [75/219](#) on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its contribution to sustainable development, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session a report on the implementation of the resolution, including on the potential link between COVID-19 and biodiversity and the implications and recommendations for building back better. The present report is submitted in response to that request.

#### **B. Preparations for the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meetings of the Parties to the Protocols to the Convention: meetings of subsidiary bodies**

50. Currently, the secretariat of the Convention is preparing for the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of the Benefits Arising from their Utilization. All these meetings are scheduled to be held in Kunming, China, from 11 to 24 October 2021. To undertake these preparations in the extraordinary circumstances arising from the pandemic situation, the secretariat consulted extensively with parties, as well as all other stakeholders, and developed a modality whereby the process could advance virtually, on an exceptional basis, without creating a precedent.

##### **1. Twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice**

51. The twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice met virtually from 3 May to 9 June 2021 and was one of the most highly attended meetings ever held by the Subsidiary Body, with over 1,400 registered participants. They included 127 parties and over 200 civil society organizations and other stakeholders. There were nine plenary sessions, interspersed with meetings of contact groups. At the meeting, the Subsidiary Body built on its work at the virtual meetings held in February 2021, at which most of the agenda items had already gone through a first-round exchange of views. Priority was given to issues

directly related to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, since these inputs were necessary to develop the first draft of the global biodiversity framework for consideration by the third open-ended working group. The major outcomes included recommendations for consideration and incorporation into the global biodiversity framework and on synthetic biology, agricultural biodiversity and risk assessment of living modified organisms. These recommendations will be further discussed and adopted at a future in-person meeting. At the next meeting, the Subsidiary Body will also take up the draft recommendations with bracketed text and three outstanding issues: marine and coastal biodiversity; invasive alien species; and health and biodiversity.

## **2. Third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation**

52. The first part of the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation was held online from 16 May to 13 June 2021. This was preceded by a special virtual session on the theme “Biodiversity, One Health and the response to COVID-19”, held on 15 and 16 December 2020, as well as a virtual informal session on 8–12 and 14 March 2021. Participation in the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation was high, with over 1,004 registered participants, including 115 parties and over 158 civil society organizations and other stakeholders. Twelve agenda items were taken up through plenary sessions and 17 draft recommendations were developed, including advice on key elements for the first draft of the global biodiversity framework related to the means to support and review implementation, including implementation support mechanisms, enabling conditions, responsibility and transparency, and outreach and awareness. Some were approved and others will be taken up at the resumed third meeting, to be held in person. Delegates also reviewed progress in the implementation of the Protocols to the Convention and in the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Inter-sessional Working Group on Article 8 (j) and Related Provisions related to traditional knowledge.

53. The approved recommendations will be formally adopted at an in-person meeting, to be organized back-to-back with an in-person meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

## **C. Preparations for meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meetings of the Parties to the Protocols to the Convention**

### **1. Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity**

54. As at 25 June 2021, 131 countries had deposited instruments of ratification, accession, approval or acceptance for the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Following the entry into force of the Protocol in October 2014, efforts have been focused on further advancing the implementation of the Protocol.

55. Preparations leading up to fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol are well under way. At the third meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, parties exchanged views on key topics, including consideration of specialized international access and benefit-sharing instruments in the context of article 4 (4) of the Nagoya Protocol, a global multilateral benefit-sharing mechanism (article 10 of the Nagoya Protocol) and implementation of the Nagoya Protocol after 2020. At its forthcoming meeting, the Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework will

also consider issues relevant to the Protocol, including digital sequence information on genetic resources, and the outcomes of the work of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Digital Sequence Information on Genetic Resources, the series of informal information-sharing webinars and the online discussion forum on digital sequence information on genetic resources.

## **2. Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity**

56. Since the submission of the previous report (A/75/256), one additional country has deposited its instrument of ratification, accession, approval or acceptance for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. As a result, as at 22 June 2021, the overall number of ratifications of the Cartagena Protocol had risen to 173.

57. Several issues relevant to the Cartagena Protocol were discussed during the twenty-fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, including synthetic biology and risk assessment and risk management of living modified organisms, while at its third meeting, the Subsidiary Body on Implementation addressed the assessment and review of the effectiveness of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, as well as the post-2020 implementation plan and the capacity-building action plan for the Cartagena Protocol.

## **3. Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety**

58. Since the submission of the previous report, one additional country has deposited its instrument of ratification, accession, approval or acceptance for the Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. As a result, as at 22 June 2021, the overall number of ratifications of the Supplementary Protocol had risen to 49.

59. The Supplementary Protocol entered into force on 5 March 2018. Pursuant to article 14 (1) of the Supplementary Protocol, issues relating to the implementation of the Supplementary Protocol will be considered at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, at which only parties to the Supplementary Protocol will be involved in the decision-taking process. One of the major issues that will be taken up is a study on financial security mechanisms under the Supplementary Protocol.

## **D. Preparations for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and update on progress made in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets**

60. The open-ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework has met twice since its inception, in August 2019 and February 2020, while informal consultations with different stakeholders have continued to date. The third meeting is now scheduled to take place in August 2021, and on that occasion the Working Group will consider the first formal draft of the global biodiversity framework. The draft was developed on the basis of advice from the subsidiary bodies and extensive consultations with stakeholders on the zero draft and its updated version, which was released in August 2020.

61. The global biodiversity framework will build upon the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In September 2020, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity released the fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*, in which it was indicated that virtually all countries are taking steps to protect biodiversity. However, despite encouraging progress in several

areas, the world's collective efforts towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets had fallen short, with only 6 of the 20 goals being "partially achieved" by the 2020 deadline.

62. Parties to the Convention assessed the lessons learned from the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and agreed to take bolder action with a more inclusive approach. They also called for swift implementation, as significant national-level infrastructure, such as national biodiversity strategies and action plans, are already in place. The new post-2020 framework will therefore seek to guide biodiversity action from the global to the local level over the next three decades, to transform society's relationship with biodiversity and to ensure that, by 2050, the shared vision of living in harmony with nature is fulfilled.

## **E. International Day for Biological Diversity**

63. The International Day for Biological Diversity was commemorated on 22 May 2021 under the slogan "We're part of the solution #ForNature" to communicate the importance of the global biodiversity framework in delivering transformative change. As part of a comprehensive communication strategy, several days were dedicated to themes such as climate change and green recovery. Several commemorative events were organized at the national and global levels by 157 parties, 19 United Nations entities and 17 other organizations. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity also collaborated with China, the host of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties, in the organization of the well-attended virtual thematic webinar on the theme "COP 15: Road to Kunming", held in New York on 21 May 2021. The event was addressed by the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and Huang Runqiu, Minister of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China, among others.

64. The Convention on Biological Diversity social media accounts shared a total of 502 posts, resulting in 4.1 million impressions. As expected during the annual observance, content reach far exceeded average figures, while engagement rates were equal to or better than long-term averages. Compared to the week in which the International Day for Biological Diversity was commemorated in 2020, impressions more than doubled, largely owing to a sharp increase in awareness of the importance of biodiversity to human well-being and the planet.

65. The communications assets created for the occasion were a hit with social media users. Posts sharing the logo customization tool and the downloadable posters and virtual meeting backgrounds performed well in terms of both reach and engagement, across several platforms. A Trello board was created to share these and other materials and messaging with the biodiversity communications flotilla group and other partners, helping to amplify the campaign beyond what was shared on Convention on Biological Diversity platforms. According to Meltwater analysis, the hashtag #BiodiversityDay appeared 57,600 times on social media between 17 and 23 May 2021. Nearly 53,000 of those mentions were on Twitter. One tweet from the main United Nations account, accompanied by the animated logo, had a potential reach of 13.9 million people. When adding in related keywords, such as the #ForNature hashtag and "CBD", and including retweets and shares, the volume increased to 93,800 mentions across social media, with a potential reach of 3.5 billion.



## **F. High-level political forum on sustainable development 2021**

66. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity has been collaborating with relevant United Nations entities on substantive preparations for the high-level political forum 2021, including documentation and reports, as well as panels. Specifically, the secretariat contributed to the panel on the theme “Looking at the 2020 targets: implementation and review”, at which the Executive Secretary of the secretariat, Elizabeth Mrema, spoke, among others. The secretariat also collaborated with partners on several side events.

## **G. Summit on biodiversity**

67. The summit on biodiversity was convened by the President of the General Assembly on 30 September 2020, in accordance with the General Assembly resolution 74/269 and decision 74/562. The theme of the summit was “Urgent action on biodiversity for sustainable development”. The summit was also guided by the theme of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations “The future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism”. The summit consisted of an opening segment, a plenary segment, two leaders’ dialogues on the themes of “Addressing biodiversity loss and mainstreaming biodiversity for sustainable development” and “Harnessing science, technology and innovation, capacity-building, access and benefit-sharing, financing and partnerships for biodiversity”, and a brief closing segment. The summit also provided an online platform entitled “Voices for nature”, which featured statements, messages and commitments from a wider range of stakeholders. The summit demonstrated the strong commitment of more than 72 world leaders and more than 150 high-level governmental speakers to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The summit also highlighted the need for urgent action at the highest levels in support of a post-2020 global biodiversity framework that contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and places the global community on a path towards achieving the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity, “Living in harmony with nature”.

## **H. Biodiversity and health**

68. In recognition of the complex interlinkages between biodiversity and health, a special virtual session of the subsidiary bodies was convened virtually in December 2020. The special session highlighted the importance of a biodiversity-inclusive One Health approach that would address the common drivers of biodiversity loss, climate change and increased pandemic risk, and discussed the integration of biodiversity considerations into COVID-19 stimulus and recovery measures. In addition, at the 24th meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, the Subsidiary Body considered an agenda item on biodiversity and health, and a draft global action plan for biodiversity and health, which was aimed at supporting parties in implementing a biodiversity-inclusive One Health approach and a sustainable and inclusive recovery from COVID-19, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The draft global action plan will be forwarded to the participants of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties for adoption.

69. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity also contributed to leading reports investigating the link between biodiversity and zoonotic diseases, including the report of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Livestock Research Institute on the theme “Preventing the next pandemic: zoonotic diseases and how to break the chain of transmission” published

in July 2020. The secretariat also collaborates with the World Health Organization through an inter-agency liaison group on biodiversity and health. The secretariat contributed to the workshop on biodiversity and pandemics convened by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and called for a biodiversity-inclusive One Health transition to achieve a living in harmony with nature by 2050 in the fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*.

## **I. Sharm El-Sheikh to Kunming Action Agenda for Nature and People**

70. The Sharm El-Sheikh to Kunming Action Agenda for Nature and People was developed in follow-up to decision XIV/34, as a mechanism to catalyse non-State actors' actions to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, while generating a measurable impact and shift in the management of their own activities. The Action Agenda pillars focus on leadership and guidance, broader stakeholder engagement, advocacy and outreach, and analyses of commitments for profiling.

71. During the course of the year, the secretariat has created promotional materials, including high-level webinars, videos, media outreach, newsletters and press releases, which have helped to generate quality commitments. Specifically, 11 action categories have been identified under the Action Agenda to promote the transition pathways recommended in the fifth edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook*. The action categories explain how sectors and stakeholders are taking steps to shift away from business as usual while assessing benefits and managing risks, setting targets and improving their practices accordingly. As of June 2021, a total of 201 commitments had been showcased on the Action Agenda, with over 44 submissions by alliances and coalitions accounting for over 300 partners and at least 34 submissions indicating more than one commitment pledged.

72. Collaboration with numerous partner organizations, including UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre, the United Nations Development Programme, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, the Global Partnership on Business and Biodiversity, the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature/World Wildlife Fund), the World Economic Forum, Science-Based Targets for Nature and the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, has also been enhanced. A friends of action group and an action agenda information technology network were also created to develop a common vision and narrative, build campaigns and outreach, promote sectoral actions and champions, and develop tools for science-based targets and platform interoperability. The Secretariat is also exploring opportunities to recognize and use non-State actor commitments in future reports to support the implementation of its goals and targets.

## **J. Cooperation with other conventions and across the United Nations system**

73. The secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity continued to participate actively in the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions and the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions to foster cooperation and complementarity. The Executive Secretary participated regularly in the Joint Liaison Group to exchange information and experiences on the use of online modalities to advance the substantive preparations for the Conference of Parties and to explore thematic linkages between the forthcoming meetings of the three Conference of Parties and the thirtieth anniversary of the Rio conventions. Substantive cooperation has also been advanced through joint communications, a joint capacity-building initiative and for

the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit<sup>27</sup> and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030.<sup>28</sup>

74. The secretariat has also participated actively in the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions to provide updates on its work and to consult and elicit inputs for the global biodiversity framework, including through an online workshop of biodiversity-related conventions and parties on the global biodiversity framework, held from 18 January to 2 February 2021.<sup>29</sup>

75. The secretariat has also participated actively in the United Nations Environment Management Group and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to promote United Nations system-wide attention to biodiversity and facilitating the preparation of the United Nations Environment Management Group report entitled “Supporting the global biodiversity agenda: a United Nations system commitment for action to assist Member States delivering on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework”. The report was launched on 25 May 2021, at a high-level virtual dialogue on the United Nations system’s contribution to the post-2020 global biodiversity agenda, which served to focus attention on the common approach to integrating biodiversity and nature-based solutions for sustainable development into the United Nations policy and programme planning and delivery that was prepared by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination.

## K. Recommendations

76. The General Assembly, at its seventy-sixth session, may wish:

(a) To take note of the progress made in the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and preparations for the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meetings of the Parties to the Protocols to the Convention;

(b) To call on all parties to the Convention, United Nations agencies and all other stakeholders to effectively and proactively engage in the negotiations for the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;

(c) To call on all Member States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(d) To call on all parties to the Convention that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol;

(e) To call on all parties to the Convention that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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<sup>27</sup> See <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>. See also General Assembly resolution 75/235, para. 2.

<sup>28</sup> See General Assembly resolution 73/284.

<sup>29</sup> See United Nations Environment Programme, document UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/14/30, decision 14/30.