

Summary of the "Drought Preparedness Day"

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UNCCD COP 14, Rio Pavilion, New Delhi, India

Strategic objective 3 of the UNCCD's Decision 7/COP.13 highlights the resolve to "mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems."¹ The goal is to increase the resilience of communities and ecosystems to drought. To this end, the UNCCD and its partners recognise efficient planning as critical to achieving drought resilience. This commitment has not only been crystallised in the form of supporting countries participating in the "Drought Initiative" to develop national drought action plans, but also the design of a drought toolbox based on the three pillars of integrated drought management conceptualised as part of the [Integrated Drought Management Programme \(IDMP\)](#) and the Drought Resilience, Adaptation and Management Policy (DRAMP) framework.

Against this backdrop, a **drought preparedness day** was organized by UNCCD, FAO, GWP and WMO as part of the efforts of the Integrated Drought Management Programme and the Drought Preparedness Working Group of the Global Framework for Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG). It was held on September 11, 2019, on the margins of the UNCCD COP 14 held in New Delhi, 2 - 13 September 2019.

The day was primarily geared at sharing and extensively discussing the current tools, methodologies and policies that have evolved to support or enhance drought preparedness. The aim was, among other things, to:

- Emphasize the collective progress made within the context of the UNCCD-led Drought Initiative and to present/launch of the joint product of the drought toolbox
- Highlight products, strategic directions and the proactive drought management approach of countries supported by the WASAG Drought Preparedness Working Group, the WMO/GWP Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) and FAO
- Provide evidence and to bring to light experiences on national drought policies based on the principles of risk reduction.
- To highlight the gendered impacts of droughts and to deliver key messages to the UNCCD COP14 on reducing risks and enhancing drought resilience.

The day has also seen the launch of three new publications including (i) "Framework for the Assessment of Benefits of Action/Cost of Inaction (BACI) for Drought Preparedness" published by the World Bank, GWP and

¹ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2018-08/cop21add1_SF_EN.pdf, accessed 14.06.2019

WMO as part of the IDMP (ii) "Drought Impact and Vulnerability Assessment, A Rapid Review of Practices and Policy Recommendations" by UNCCD, FAO, WMO and GWP and (iii) "Proactive approaches to drought preparedness - Where are we now and where do we go from here?" by FAO and partners including WMO, GWP and UNCCD. The publications can be found at the [IDMP library](#) and the UNCCD page.

In acknowledging the potential of drought challenges hindering progress for achieving sustainable development goals, Parties and experts stressed the need to move faster in the fight against drought. This notwithstanding, drought disaster response by vulnerable countries has generally been reactive and mostly crisis driven. In this light, there is the urgent need for drought response to be more targeted at enhancing long-term resilience and for drought management to recognize the gendered differences of drought impact. To promote effective drought management and enhance resilience, several propositions and policy recommendations were made as part of the COP 14 drought day.

Policy Recommendations

In drawing on the deliberations and inputs made by Parties, key experts and participants, the following policy recommendations can be advanced.

- a) **Proactive Drought Management:** Policy on drought management should provide the necessary framework for a transition from a reactive approach to a more proactive one. Understanding the political economy for the opportunities to make this transition a reality and being able to make the economic case are critically important. The case for a proactive approach to drought management should not only be complemented with indigenous knowledge for drought preparedness, but that the framework should consider innovative risk financing mechanisms including insurance to unlock critical and timely financing opportunities to support more efficient responses to drought. With the African Risk Capacity (ARC) bringing relief to drought affected populations through the timely disbursement and payment of insurance claims in many African countries, national governments or humanitarian organizations could support vulnerable populations by subsidizing insurance premiums while also upscaling other innovative risk financing schemes to cover other critical sectors of the economy.
- b) **Integrated Drought Management and Institutional Partnership:** To enhance drought preparedness and resilience, an integrated approach to drought management is vital. This will entail intersectoral and ministerial coordination, and partnership amongst the different stakeholders and across scales. In this light, all the different actors and existing institutional frameworks, including local and international organizations as well as the private sector should be pooled together into forming partnerships and collaborations. As

exemplified by the relative success of interagency frameworks such as: the UNCCD Drought Initiative, the Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG), the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) and the UN-Water, the potential of partnerships in coming together as part of a unified approach, leading to joint strategies and synergetic use of resources will help in addressing overlaps while creating a more harmonized and coordinated drought management efforts for improving drought resilience.

- c) **Drought Monitoring and Early Warning Systems:** In promoting drought preparedness, the emphasis of national drought policy planning should aim at promoting effective drought monitoring and integrated early warning systems. Whilst integrated early warning systems may encompass famine and conflict warning, there is the need for governmental policy and budget planning to commit to investing in technology and the use of remote sensing tools. This will facilitate effective drought monitoring, forecasting and early warning systems at all levels. Alongside building the needed capacity to be able to utilize any available technology, drought mitigation should be complemented with a good vulnerability assessment. This would inform the appropriate actions to be taken in relation to the different sectors of the economy or across geographic areas.
- d) **Mainstreaming Gender in Drought Mitigation Policy and Measures:** Considering the gendered nature of drought impacts and vulnerabilities, it is important to incorporate gender sensitive responses or components into all policies or drought disaster planning. Mainstreaming gender-sensitive responses into development and drought disaster planning will potentially increase the effectiveness of all drought mitigation measures. This can further be strengthened by promoting equitable social relations and increasing the capacities of both men and women to be able to deal effectively with drought impact.
- e) **Establishment of Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG):** The drought preparedness day, as part of the COP had in part also informed the then ongoing negotiations on the future of drought preparedness by UNCCD country Parties. In advancing the various commitments to addressing drought under the auspices of the UNCCD, country Parties decided to establish an intergovernmental working group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought under the UNCCD (Decision 23 /COP 14 Para 10). By taking stock and reviewing existing drought policy framework and processes, it is envisaged that the IWG will address the issues from a much wider,

holistic and integrated approach to disaster risk reduction that would enhance the sustainable resilience of communities and ecosystems against drought.