



Green Climate Fund (GCF) update of its Strategic Plan

Comments from the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Secretariat and its Global Mechanism

We would like to congratulate the GCF on the successful implementation of its initial Strategic Plan and thank its Board members and Secretariat for the opportunity to provide comments as the Fund embarks in the updating of its Strategic Plan.

The GCF has been extremely successful in becoming an essential pillar of the global climate finance architecture in a very short time. Therefore, we would like to provide some comments which may contribute to further enhance the effectiveness of the Fund in some of the areas of climate change that are directly linked to the UNCCD's mandate.

Following the language of the GCF Secretariat "Report on the implementation of the initial Strategic Plan of the GCF: 2015-2018", we would like to provide the following comments for your consideration:

1. Maximizing impact and expanding the concept of "complementarity and coherence" to "achieving synergies of the Three Rio Conventions for higher climate impact". The aims of the three Rio Conventions, Climate Change (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC), Biodiversity (Convention on Biological Diversity, CBD) and Desertification (UNCCD) are closely inter-linked: land degradation ultimately leads to the loss of capacity of the soil to sequester greenhouse gases and to sustain biodiversity and as climate change increases, degraded land limits the resilience of communities and biosystems to adapt to new weather patterns. As a financial mechanism of the UNFCCC, the GCF may also want to consider the efforts that the UNFCCC and the two other Rio Conventions are taking to achieve synergies, particularly with respect to the implementation of projects in the ground. Achieving these synergies are important for three reasons:

- i. Increasing the *effectiveness* of interventions by leveraging the mutually reinforcing objectives of the three Conventions particularly using land-focused actions to increase both climate change mitigation and adaptation results and increased ecosystem services, including biodiversity;
- ii. Increasing the *efficiency* in the use of resources by maximizing the impact of each dollar spent by contributing to the objectives that the global community has established across the Rio Conventions; and
- iii. *Reducing transaction costs* to developing countries, particularly Less Developed Countries, that may benefit from integrated approaches that avoid stretching country capacity too thinly to develop and implement separate projects in support of each one of the three Conventions.

Therefore, the GCF may want to expand the work that it has done to ensure coherence and complementarity with respect to other climate finance bodies to also consider synergies with the countries' biodiversity and land degradation objectives. This is something that could be done both at the level of the Conventions (for example, through periodic meetings with the Secretariats) but also by bringing together at the country level the national focal points for the three Conventions and the GCF's National Designated Authorities. We would like to emphasize that our suggestion is made with the clear understanding that the GCF objective is to address climate change and that it operates under the guidance of the UNFCCC, however, we believe that the GCF's climate change interventions could be further enhanced by also taking advantages of the synergies with biodiversity and land degradation.



2. The sustainable land use and forest management impact area of the GCF, adaptation benefits from the land sector and readiness support. Given the importance that land plays in green house gases sequestration, the GCF early on adopted “sustainable land use and forest management” as one of its eight results areas. Until now, this area comes under “mitigation” and this clearly reflects some of the innovative work that the GCF has done, including its recent REDD+ results-based payments. However, going forward the GCF may consider more explicitly linking sustainable land use, including restoration of degraded land, to its adaptation work. More than 100 of the country parties to the UNCCD are in the process of establishing voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets not only as part of their commitments to achieving the SDGs (LDN is one of the indicators of SDG 15) but also as part of their strategies to climate change adaptation, with particular emphasis on addressing climate-induced land degradation to safeguard food security of vulnerable populations. We stand ready to share our experience in assisting countries in establishing these targets and the process of in-country consultations that took place across many stakeholders. We believe that the broad range of stakeholders in the land sector (e.g., climate change, agriculture, land use, meteorological, rural affairs, and indigenous community’s stakeholders, among others) can provide important lessons on how to approach integrated projects that could cut across most of the GCF results areas.

Finally, we would like to highlight the work that the UNCCD, through its implementation arm, the Global Mechanism, is undertaking to assist some of our country parties in the initial development of projects related to the land sector, including proposals for the GCF. We are responding to country requests to assist them in the first stage of project design, going from strategic planning documents to early concept notes. We have found that it is at this very early stage, when countries may not have identified yet a GCF Accredited Entity (AE), when substantial support is needed to ensure strong country ownership of the project that eventually will be taken forward by the AE. As the GCF seeks to continue strengthening its readiness support program, we suggest reviewing mechanisms to support countries in this early stage of project development and we look forward to sharing with you the process we have undertaken in support of GCF proposals in several countries.

###