



Union for the Mediterranean  
Union pour la Méditerranée  
الإتحاد من أجل المتوسط



United Nations  
Convention to Combat  
Desertification

# United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Union for the Mediterranean Collaboration on Land Degradation, Drought, Desertification in the Mediterranean Region

## United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Established in 1994, UNCCD is the only legally binding international agreement on land issues. The convention promoted good land stewardship. Its 196 Parties aim, through partnerships, to implement the convention and achieve Sustainable Development Goals. The 13th UNCCD Conference of Parties (Decision 29/COP13) requested the secretariat and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies (including the Science-Policy Interface) within their respective mandates to implement a drought Initiative in the biennium 2018-19.

## Union for the Mediterranean

Created by the 43 Euro-Mediterranean Heads of State and Government meeting in Paris on 13th July 2008, the UfM is a multilateral partnership composed of 43 countries (28 EU Member States and 15 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries) with the mandate of enhancing regional cooperation and integration between both shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The Union for the Mediterranean is the first permanent structure dedicated to the intergovernmental Mediterranean partnership.

## UfM and UNCCD signed an Memorandum of Understanding in 2018

### Key areas of collaboration

- Fostering cooperation on drought, desertification and land rehabilitation in the Mediterranean region, within a wider circular economy approach
- Facilitating high-level policy debates and technical exchanges towards strengthening institutional partnerships through the respective technical working groups
- Define a more specific joint work programme of initiatives, activities and events of common interest, to be progressively enriched over time; in particular activities on drought, land management and environment-driven migration
- Supporting and disseminating as opportune each other's research, studies, projects and compilations of good practices, as well as conferences or events





## ■ Definitions

**Land degradation:** Land degradation is a process in which the value of the biophysical environment is affected by a combination of human-induced processes acting upon the land. It is viewed as any change or disturbance to the land perceived to be deleterious or undesirable.

**Drought:** it is a 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”.

**Desertification:** Desertification is not the natural expansion of existing deserts but the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas. It is a gradual process of soil productivity loss and the thinning out of the vegetative cover because of human activities and climatic variations such as prolonged droughts and floods. What is alarming is that though the land's topsoil, if mistreated, can be blown and washed away in a few seasons, it takes centuries to build up. Among human causal factors are over cultivation, overgrazing, deforestation, and poor irrigation practices. Such overexploitation is generally caused by economic and social pressure, ignorance, war, and drought.

Quote from UNCCD (<https://www.unccd.int/frequently-asked-questions-faq>)

## ■ The Mediterranean context

Analyses of long-term trends in the Mediterranean region show that annual mean conditions tend to be warmer and drier (UNEP/MAP-Plan Bleu 2009). Frequency and intensity of droughts have increased significantly in the Mediterranean since 1950 (Vicente-Serrano et al. 2014). The increase of the length of dry spell (days) is expected (Schleussner et al. 2016) and the decrease in precipitation, especially in summer and with important regional differences (IPCC 2013).

Quoted from MedEEC (<http://www.medecc.org/main-facts/>)



## Collaboration between UNCCD and UfM on the Drought Initiative in the Mediterranean region

### The Drought Initiative

Drought is considered one of the most far-reaching natural disasters, bringing short and long-term economic and social losses to millions of people worldwide. Many countries across the globe that soon may face the impacts of intense drought still lack a comprehensive plan of action at the first signs of drought. Drought and water scarcity – interconnected phenomena that often aggravate each other's effects – can trigger major setbacks for the most disadvantaged populations: from famine to migration and displacement. A single year of drought can undermine years of social development, in particular for vulnerable members of society. Water scarcity alone could cost some regions up to six percent of their GDP by 2050, in turn triggering mass migration and conflict over diminishing resources. In 2017, drought led to the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, when 20 million people across Africa and the Middle East came to the brink of starvation, according to UN-OCHA.

According to the 2018 United Nations/World Bank High Level Panel on Water, 40 per cent of the world's population is affected by water scarcity, with as many as 700 million people at risk of being displaced as a result of drought by 2030. A lack of water, which is often the outcome of drought, threatens people's livelihoods and fuels migration. The Panel called for evidence-based policies and innovative approaches at the global, national and local levels to make water management more disaster-resilient.

The UNCCD helps address these challenges through the Drought Initiative that works to enhance the resilience of communities and ecosystems to drought by developing national action plans. The goal is to promote a paradigm shift in approach to the way drought is managed – from a reactive and crisis-based towards a proactive and risk-based one. The convention supports over 70 countries in designing comprehensive national plans of action ready to be activated well before the drought strikes. A second call for interest was announced in March 2019 to support additional countries in developing their national drought plans.

**UfM member States Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia have already joined the Drought Initiative.**

## Milestones within UNCCD & UFM partnership on the Drought Initiative

### UfM

- UfM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change 2014  
<https://ufmsecretariat.org/union-for-the-mediterranean-ufm-ministerial-meeting-on-environment-and-climate-change/>
- UfM Ministerial Declaration on Water 2017  
[https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Ministerial-Declaration-on-Water\\_Union-for-the-Mediterranean.pdf](https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Ministerial-Declaration-on-Water_Union-for-the-Mediterranean.pdf)
- UfM has provided technical and financial support for the development of additional National Drought Plans.
- 43 UfM countries just agreed to move towards another UFM Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change in 2020.

### UNCCD

Decision 29/COP.13

- Drought Initiative for the biennium 2018–2019 proposes actions on:
  - Drought Preparedness Systems;
  - Regional efforts to reduce drought vulnerability and risk
- In 2018 UNCCD started developing National Drought Plans in over 40 countries
- UNCCD launched a second Call for other 30 countries to join the Drought Initiative in March 2019

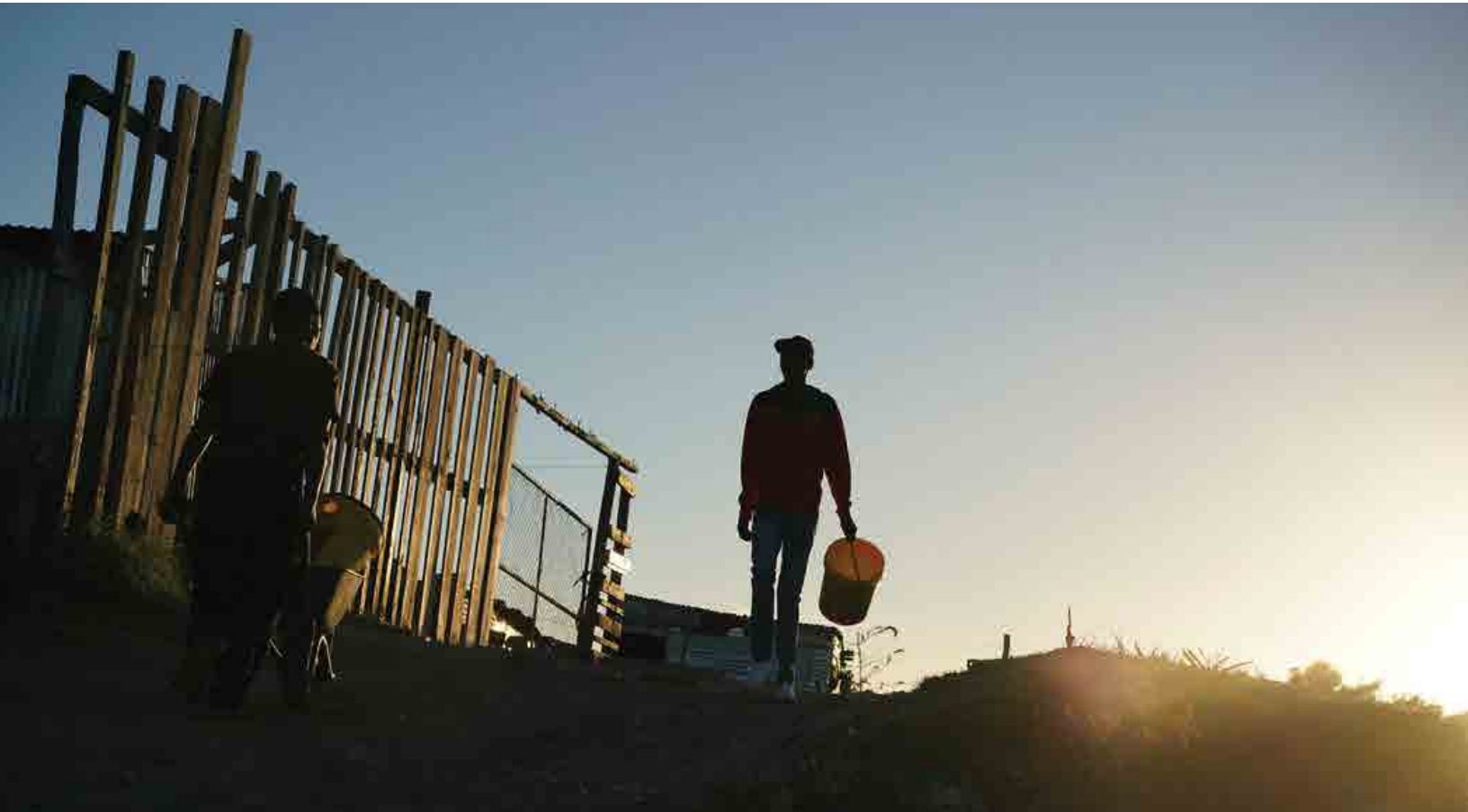
## National Drought Plans in the Mediterranean

Guidelines for the preparation of national drought plans were provided to the countries in the form of the Model National Drought plan<sup>4</sup>, which offered 10 steps and a draft outline for the preparation of the drought plan. The first most important step was the establishment of a National Drought Plan Taskforce, which guided the preparation process. Furthermore, National Drought Plans were developed in conformity with national legislations, policies, and strategies and also to relevant international protocols and agreements. It is aligned with all countries statutes governing or supporting disaster risk management and recovery, and all sector and thematic legislations, policies and strategies with which drought management and recovery is associated. In a few words, National Drought Plans are bringing together all country drought policy in one document which is accessible to all stakeholders. Internationally, National Drought Plans are linked to a number of instruments including the following: sustainable Development Goals (SDG); United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA): 2005-2015.



## Migration and desertification, land degradation and drought: a complex nexus

*This study results from the decision of States parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to produce a study on “The role that measures taken to implement the Convention can play to address desertification, land degradation and drought as one of the drivers that causes migration” (UNCCD 2017). The study was commissioned to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), who worked in partnership with the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and benefited from case studies identified through the technical assistance provided by the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and other stakeholders.*



### The Content

Land is the central component upon which the livelihoods of humanity rely. Our food, energy, and employments are associated with, and dependent on, its quality and well-being. Land remains the most fundamental asset for the majority of vulnerable populations living in developing countries, as their livelihoods are directly linked to agriculture. In the absence of decisive action to protect and restore vital land resources, there is a risk that desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) disproportionately contribute to increased poverty, unemployment and inequality; and lead to the forced migration of those already most marginalized and vulnerable.



- The first part of the report provides a review of existing evidence on the complex interrelationships between migration and DLDD. The review shows the complexities that underpin population movements in the context of DLDD, by highlighting that the specific impacts of DLDD on migration depend not only on people's geographical exposure to risk, but crucially also on their pre-existing vulnerabilities.
- The second part of the report compiles evidence from around the world on good practices and lessons learned to combat DLDD as a driver of migration; and enhance migration's adaptive potential to DLDD.
- The third part of the report focuses on policy recommendations to avert, minimize and address the adverse consequences of DLDD on migration. These recommendations target UNCCD Parties and other relevant stakeholders. At the global level, enhanced cooperation between key international intergovernmental organizations dealing with migration, labor, environmental protection, climate change, development and agriculture will be key.

Finally, in terms of research and evidence, there is a need to strengthen the collection and dissemination of knowledge on the links between migration and DLDD, including by encouraging longitudinal and comparative research, promoting and facilitating multi-stakeholders' co-production of knowledge approaches, involving local researchers in all phases of research and promoting further knowledge sharing on good practices.

## ■ References

- 1- <https://www.unccd.int/frequently-asked-questions-faq>
- 2- <https://www.unccd.int/actions/drought-initiative>
- 3- <http://www.medecc.org/main-facts/>
- 4- <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2018-04/Model%20National%20Drought%20plan.pdf>
- 5- <https://knowledge.unccd.int/publication/addressing-land-degradation-migration-nexus-role-unccd>





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25  
YEARS



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