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Analysis of the UNCCD COP 15 decisions by the CARI association

36 decisions were adopted during the 15th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Abidjan in May 2022.

These decisions alone are not sufficient to embark on a truly transformative and effective path to reverse the processes leading to land degradation and drought.

- On the one hand, feedback from the contact groups suggests that consensus is being reached on minimum commitments.
- On the other hand, the commitments made within the UNCCD are implemented on a voluntary basis. There are no binding commitments.
- Finally, the atmosphere and the discussions within the COPs allow everyone to congratulate each other on the work accomplished (which is good when results are achieved), but we hear little about the delays, the actions that lead to more desertification/drought, the inaction... (civil society does not contribute much to address these topics).

Country Implementation Reports

- For many affected countries, implementation of the UNCCD appears to remain linked to the availability of international development assistance funds, some of which are mobilized through the global mechanism.
- Implementation of UNCCD commitments remains highly sectorized within countries. There is little holistic or systemic view of the problem.
- The reporting system seems to be underperforming and does not allow to measure the progressive efforts made in the countries to combat desertification and drought. The last reports submitted through PRAIS were in 2018.
- What mechanism to monitor commitments made on land, gender equality?

Regarding the land tenure:

- The work done between COP14 and COP15 to promote the exchange of experience between countries and to produce a technical guide is to be recognized and praised.
- It is hoped that the call to mobilize funds to support the development and implementation of responsible land governance will be heard
- We must also welcome and support the mandate of the secretariat which is renewed for:
 - Continue sharing good practices and lessons learned, as well as supporting countries wishing to integrate good land governance into their policies and programs
 - Identify funding opportunities
 - Implementing awareness-raising actions
 - Continue to explore relevant indicators and data on land governance and consider the integration of indicators into the UNCCD reporting system
- ⇒ This accountability mechanism is necessary and should not wait if the landmark land decision is not to remain an empty shell.

What's missing:

- Stronger commitments against land grabbing
- A more complete reflection on the securing of land reserves for agriculture, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas.
- Scientific work on the impacts and costs of inaction in terms of responsible land governance in relation to sustainable land management issues (considering the diversity of situations)



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Regarding Land Degradation Neutrality:

The integration of target 3 of SDG 15 into the implementation of the UNCCD has redefined the conceptual and methodological framework of the fight against desertification and provided countries with inspiring and new directions that have been translated into national action plans.

However, implementation remains insufficient:

- The action plans integrating the LDN targets often remain sectorized in the ministries of the environment, and are not very well implemented in the field.
- Despite the support available at the secretariat level: still a low number of transformative projects set up or in the process of being set up
- There is a lack of firm commitments to avoid degradation, and to reduce unavoidable degradation, in particular by putting an end to certain practices that lead to pollution, soil artificialization... Whereas science shows that losses of degraded natural capital are never recovered in the same way and are therefore irremediable.

Items that will need to continue to be pushed for:

- Position the populations more clearly as actors and beneficiaries of the projects on neutrality - a real work of territorialization of the LDN
- Agroecology can be part of the solution to achieve NDT: *Agroecological practices are effective in preserving and restoring agricultural land by limiting degradation factors (preserve) and promoting ecological processes at work (restore).*

On drought:

The new direction taken at COP15 (compared to COP14) is to invite countries to invest more resources in the use of drought monitoring and early warning systems.

The COP15 also mandates the secretariat and the global mechanism to continue and increase data production, support to countries and other actors on drought.

The intergovernmental working group is renewed to try to find the best policy responses and mechanisms (including at the global level) to deal with droughts.

Regarding the recommendation for the implementation of approaches to improve the resilience of communities and ecosystems to drought:

- ⇒ Beyond the ongoing reflections on policies, etc., there is a need to enrich this concern with content, with actions implemented on the ground. It is regrettable that the proposal to allocate the remaining budget to pilot projects has not been retained.
- ⇒ Need to work at relevant scales, to give means to local actors.
- ⇒ Need to check for inconsistent policies and arrangements
- ⇒ Responses to crises will always remain necessary

Agroecology is one of the solutions to be promoted in the face of drought:

- Agroecology makes it possible to guarantee the conditions for agricultural and food production in areas where the availability of water is limited and the risks of drought are high, using adapted plant varieties, the diversification of production and the multiple techniques of soil maintenance, favoring their humidity.
- Agroecology allows to decrease the negative impact of agricultural and food production on natural resources, and on water resources, through responsible and adapted management of water resources which allows to decrease the withdrawals on available water resources.
- Agroecology allows for greater resilience of small farms and communities to shocks, using crop associations and complementarity between agriculture and livestock, allowing for less dependence on agricultural inputs and better coping with an unexpected event.

The COP14 decision on drought called on parties to use agroecological approaches (among others) to address droughts and improve ecosystem resilience.



Concerning food and agricultural systems

The recent GLO highlighted that current global food systems are among the main sources of land degradation. Globally they are responsible for 80% of deforestation, 70% of freshwater use, and are the largest cause of terrestrial biodiversity loss.

- More than 70% of the world's agricultural land is owned by 1% of the world's farms, mainly by large agribusiness firms
- But, in value, family farming produces 80% of the world population's food.

There is an urgent need to transform food production systems

This topic was discussed at COP15 during the high-level segment.

It is reflected in the Land, Life and Legacy declaration, which calls on all parties and actors to move towards more sustainable production systems.

- ⇒ From our point of view, this issue must be the subject of more detailed commitments at future meetings (CRIC, COP16...)

In its 2022-2024 action plan, SPI will need to provide scientific evidence on sustainable land use systems and their potential to address desertification, land degradation, and drought, while also contributing to the achievement of multiple SDGs.

- ⇒ In our view, the IPS should focus on agroecological systems, including data from the evaluation of the effects of these systems.

Agroecological solutions and approaches are part of the solution to transforming food production systems (key messages from the early phases of D'a):

- Agroecology allows for abundant and diversified harvests, and provides healthy, diversified, and local food (see Food Security)
- Agroecology allows the preservation of soil biodiversity and the care of water resources (see Ecosystem Restoration, Biodiversity and NDT sheets)
- Agroecology allows to limit the expansion of agricultural spaces

