D'a Désertif' actions

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Information

Nations Unies
Convention sur la lutte contre la désertification

Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel

General context

The world's drylands[1] account for 41% of the planet's land area and are home to almost 2 billion people. The ecosystems and agro-ecosystems found in these zones have pedoclimatic conditions[2] that make them particularly sensitive to climatic variability and extreme events such as drought[3] . Rural and pastoral populations, who are heavily dependent on healthy soils and the availability of natural resources, are the first to suffer the effects of drought and land degradation. Their livelihoods are affected and their living conditions deteriorate, leading to forced displacement, increased food insecurity and poverty.

Alarming figures

The increase in the frequency and duration of drought episodes is causing short- and long-term losses:

- More than 1.4 billion people were affected by droughts between 2000 and 2019. This makes drought the natural disaster that affects the greatest number of people, after floods .[4]
- In 2017, drought led to the worst humanitarian crisis since the World War II, when 20 million people across Africa and the Middle East were on the brink of starvation. [5]
- More than 2 billion people worldwide live in countries with high water stress.[6]
- By 2050, 75% of the world's population will be affected by drought and its consequences; it is estimated that 4.8 to 5.7 billion people will live in regions where water is scarce for at least one month each year, compared with 3.6 billion today.
- 700 million people are likely to be displaced by drought by 2030.[7]

The potential impacts of drought are assessed through the notion of **risk**, i.e. the possibility of the impact occurring. Risk is relative to what is being considered: it generally exists for a population but can also be considered on the scale of the farming system. Risk is a function of the hazard (uncertain and unpredictable character), exposure and vulnerability of systems[8] . In other words, risk depends on a series of factors, some of which are of natural origin (e.g., the hazard of drought depends solely on meteorological conditions), others of human origin (e.g., exposure depends on demographic and economic activities; vulnerability depends on the configuration of human and natural systems). The unpredictable nature of hazards makes them difficult to control. The challenge for development operators and public policy-makers lies in reducing **vulnerability,** particularly with regard to agricultural and food production systems that are highly **exposed** to the hazards of drought. Preventing and reducing the impact of drought on agricultural and food production systems therefore means reducing the risk of losing one of the major means of subsistence for rural and pastoral populations.

[1] Dry zones represent arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas with a moisture index, representing the ratio between average annual precipitation and potential evapotranspiration, between 0.05 and 0.65 (*UNCCD, 2017, World Territorial Outlook first edition, 335p.)*

[2] Low biodiversity in soils, low organic carbon resources, agriculture highly dependent on water resources etc. *(Bernoux M., Chevallier T., 2013, Le carbone dans les sols des zones sèches : des fonctions multiples indispensables, CSFD Les dossiers thématiques n°10, 40p.; UNCCD, 2017, Perspectives Territoriales Mondiales first edition, 335p.).*

[3] The term drought generally refers to a period during which abnormally below-average humidity or precipitation conditions are recorded over a given territory. This phenomenon causes a water imbalance that directly impacts the availability of water resources leading to significant environmental and human consequences *(UNCCD, 2019, Science-Policy Interface Report. Linking drought and land. Strengthening the role of land management-based interventions for drought mitigation and risk management, Bonn, 113p.)*

[4] https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022

[5] UN-OCHA

[6] UN-Water, 2019 - ONU, 2018

[7] UN, 2018, High Level Panel on Water.

[8] Risk = Hazard*Exposure*Vulnerability (*UNCCD, 2021, Good Practice Guidance for National Reporting on UNCCD Strategic Objective 3, Bonn, 80p.)*

A few examples of the current impact of drought on local areas

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 55 million people worldwide are directly affected by the effects of drought every year. Even today, this phenomenon represents the most serious threat to livestock and crops in almost every region of the globe[9] . Water deficits caused by drought have direct short- and long-term environmental, economic and social impacts.

Since the end of 2020, the Greater Horn of Africa region (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan) has been experiencing a severe drought. The succession of 5 rainy seasons has led to the death of millions of head of livestock and the destruction of harvests; 22 million people are currently threatened by famine.[10]

In Morocco, the impact of droughts has significantly slowed the country's economy (the growth rate has fallen from 7.9% in 2021 to 1.3% in 2022), while between 1960 and 2020 available renewable water resources fell from 2,560m3 to around 620m3 per person per year, putting the country under severe water stress. [11]

Drought is everybody's business, including the countries of Europe. The effects of drought are already visible in France, Spain and Northern Italy, and are causing concern for water supplies, agriculture and energy production[12] . For example, Spain and France are experiencing significant water shortages. In Andalusia, water reservoirs are only reaching around 25% of capacity[13] and this summer 2023, on August 1st, 72% of groundwater tables in France were below monthly normal.[14]

Drought: a major political issue in international negotiations

Within the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

The UNCCD pays particular attention to reducing the vulnerability of the most fragile human and natural systems to the impacts of drought. Mitigating and preventing the negative impacts of drought in the most exposed and vulnerable territories is an explicit prerogative of the UNCCD. Indeed, it is an objective stipulated in the Convention's framework agreement[15] and its strategic framework 2018-2030.

The 5 strategic objectives of the UNCCD strategic framework 2018-2030:

Strategic objective 1: Improve the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification and land degradation, promote sustainable land management and foster land degradation neutrality.
Strategic objective 2: Improve living conditions for affected populations.
Strategic objective 3: Mitigate, adapt to and manage the effects of drought to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems.
Strategic goal 4: Ensure that effective implementation of the Convention delivers global environmental benefits.
Strategic objective 5: Mobilize significant additional financial and non-financial resources for the implementation of the Convention through effective global and national partnerships.

[9] OMS, (2021), Drought Overview, https://www.who.int/health-topics/drought#
[10] https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/04/27/le-rechauffement-climatique-accelere-la-secheresse-record-dans-la-corne-de-l-afrique_6171200_3212.html
[11] https://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/news/press-release/2022/07/20/moroccan-economy-slows-in-wake-of-drought-and-commodity-price-rises
[12] European Commission, 2023: https:
[13] European Commission, 2023:
[14] https://www.wwf.fr/vous-informer/actualites/le-wwf-alerte-sur-une-penurie-deau-en-europe
[15] *"Article 2/ Purpose*

1. The objective of this Convention is to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, through effective action at all levels, supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements, within the framework of an integrated approach consistent with Agenda 21, with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in affected areas."

Consequently, at international and national level, programs and policy instruments are being put in place to combat land degradation and the effects of drought in the most vulnerable and exposed countries. In addition, in order to reduce the vulnerability of local communities and increase the adaptive capacity of populations and countries in the face of drought risks, the UNCCD encourages governments to put in place **a national drought policy** focused on risk reduction and complemented by drought mitigation plans at different scales (national, regional in particular). To this end, the UNCCD created **the** "**Drought Initiative**" in 2018 (at COP13). This Initiative represents a concerted framework to support governments in drawing up and implementing their own national plans to combat drought, implement concerted actions at regional level to reduce vulnerability and the risks of drought, and provide resources to stakeholders to strengthen the resilience of populations and ecosystems to the effects of drought. At present, 70 countries are in the process of drawing up national drought action plans. 34 have been validated and can be consulted on the UNCCD website

These action plans show what states need to do to prevent the effects of drought, what actions need to be taken and by what means

- ***Monitoring the implementation of these strategic orientations by States***

Through the Convention's Performance Review and Assessment System (PRAIS), States Parties to the UNCCD provide data according to several indicators for each specific objective. In 2022, the data collected by PRAIS4[16] were centralized and analyzed. Subsequently, the UNCCD secretariat prepared summary reports for each of the 5 objectives for review by the CRIC21[17] . In all, 126 countries from the 5 annexes to the Convention (Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Mediterranean, Central and Eastern Europe) completed PRAIS4.

106 countries have contributed to reporting on strategic objective 3 on mitigating the effects of drought and strengthening the resilience of the most vulnerable populations and ecosystems. CRIC21's first preliminary analyses show that, overall, the **impacts of drought have not diminished**, and that there is a **lack of national statistics** capable of providing accurate information on the 3 drought indicators based on *(i)* changes in the surface area of land affected by drought, as a proportion of the land surface, based on intensity classes established by the SPI (Risk), *(ii)* the evolution of the share of the total population exposed to drought (Exposure), and *(iii)* the evolution of the degree of vulnerability to drought (Vulnerability). In addition, following preliminary analyses of the UNCCD's PRAIS4 results[18] , the Convention calls on States Parties to :

- ➔ Increase commitment to the implementation of proactive national drought policies based on integrated drought risk management, including 1/ monitoring and early warning, 2/ vulnerability and impact assessment, and 3/ mitigation, preparedness and response measures to strengthen the resilience of populations and ecosystems;
- ➔ Assess their vulnerability to drought with greater precision, so that the Drought Vulnerability Index (DVI) can better reflect their national situation and enable more effective national drought resilience plans to be drawn up.

- ***Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought***

In September 2019 on the occasion of the UNCCD COP14[19] , an intergovernmental working group on drought was set up with the task of taking stock of existing policies, institutional arrangements and partnerships related to drought prevention, monitoring and management. Its objective is to provide recommendations on measures that can be taken by States to effectively manage drought-related issues within the framework of the Convention,

[16] Reporting system used for the 2022 cycle.
[17] https://www.unccd.int/convention/official-documents/cric-21-samarkand-uzbekistan-2023

[18] See the full summary report on Strategic Objective 3 here: https:

[19] Decision 23/COP14: https:

adopting an integrated approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR) and increasing the resilience of populations, economies and ecosystems.

Following its assessment at UNCCD COP15 (May 2022, Abidjan), the Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought made several recommendations:

- ➔ The relevance of sustainable land management techniques in mitigating the risks and impacts of droughts;
- ➔ The need to provide financial and technological resources to countries particularly affected by drought, such as those in Africa ;
- ➔ The need to set up early warning and drought monitoring systems in all countries;
- ➔ The introduction of a drought target within the framework of the Convention to encourage political commitment at national level and concrete action at local level.

The working group also pointed out that the introduction of national drought plans has not yet led to stronger coordination between the various sectors and actors working to combat drought. However, these national plans are still seen as a good start to proactive action, and are supported by the UNCCD Secretariat and the Global Mechanism.

Towards the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) taking drought issues into account

Recently, some attention seems to be being paid to drought within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). In November 2022, at the 27th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27), an international alliance for drought resilience[20] was launched by Senegalese President Macky Sall and Spanish government leader Pedro Sànchez. The initiative aims to create a platform for global collaboration to establish new political commitments to drought resilience, and to mobilize more dedicated financial resources. It also aims to further support stakeholder engagement, particularly that of the private sector, in drought resilience work. It also aims to collaborate closely with other international organizations such as the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The operationalization of this international initiative has also been supported by the UNCCD.

This initiative is in line with the UNCCD's observation that too many countries currently lack operational drought monitoring, early warning and response systems. The Alliance should thus help improve resilience to drought in countries by setting up effective, coordinated drought early warning systems for the most exposed countries. An initiative to be followed closely.

A cross-cutting issue for the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is a framework for international negotiations that calls for the protection and preservation of biodiversity to ensure the proper functioning of ecosystem functions and services. While issues directly linked to drought are not among its topics of discussion, the reduction and prevention of natural disasters based on the preservation and restoration of ecosystem services, and the sustainable use of land and natural resources are, on the other hand, among its objectives.

[20] International Drought Resilience Alliance (IDRA): https://idralliance.global/

Adopted in December 2022 at the CBD COP15, the Global Biodiversity Framework[21] set clear targets up to 2030 for preserving and restoring ecosystems and halting biodiversity loss. It calls for "*restoring, conserving and enhancing nature's contributions to people, including ecosystem functions and services, such as air, water and climate regulation, soil health, pollination and disease risk reduction, as well as* ***protection against natural hazards and disasters****, through nature-based solutions and/or ecosystem approaches for the benefit of all people and nature.*" (Target 11). A framework that remains relevant to follow in order to identify possible synergies with other Conventions.

A 6th[th] edition of Désertif'actions, the international civil society summit

At international meetings, civil society can take part in dialogue, make recommendations and challenge decision-makers, with the aim of influencing international decision-making on climate change, sustainable land and natural resource management, and human development. It is on this occasion that CSOs bring to the attention of decision-makers the realities on the ground, in order to better connect action strategies with the real needs of populations and ecosystems.

Initiated in 2006 by the Centre d'Actions et des Réalisations Internationales (CARI - France) and its partners, the international multi-stakeholder **Désertif'actions** summit aims to be a space for inclusive dialogue focused on the issue of land and development in drylands. It has successively met in Montpellier (2006/2015/2022), Strasbourg (2017), and Ouagadougou (2019). Above all, Désertif'actions aims to encourage and maintain a synergy among the families of actors involved in the multilateral framework for implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Through consultation and sharing, the aim is to better clarify global and current issues, prepare positions and bring the message to the heart of ongoing international negotiations. This dynamic includes a high point, the "desertif-actions summit", co-organized with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and a third partner co-opted according to circumstances, prior to the forthcoming Conference of the Parties. The originality of the concept lies not only in the initiative taken by civil society, but also in the process comprising (i) a preparatory phase consisting of country workshops and remote consultations, (ii) a multi-stakeholder summit comprising three days of plenary sessions and thematic workshops, an opening day for participation by the general public, cultural events such as a public concert, an international press cartoon competition, (iii) a dynamic of contribution and participation in the Conferences of the Parties (COP), post-COP meetings to share results, etc. After its first 5 editions, the Désertif'actions summit has become a not-to-be-missed event.

The 6[(th)]) edition of Désertifi'actions will aim to :

- Raise the alarm about the acceleration of land degradation and the proximity of tipping points;
- Build a plea, in view of the 17th Conference of the Parties of the UNCCD in 2026, based on concrete and relevant solutions to meet the environmental and socio-economic challenges linked to the fight against drought, and more particularly those that better anticipate and prevent the risks of drought on ecosystems and populations;
- Share experience and scientific knowledge on drought risk prevention and mitigation issues;
- Raising public awareness of the challenges of combating desertification and sustainable land management.

CARI will be joining forces with **the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)** and **the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS)** to organize this event, in partnership with **the Association de Citoyenneté et de Développement Durable (ACDD)** and **WWF North Africa**.

[21] Global Biodiversity Framework from Kunming to Montreal: https:

Désertif'Actions 2026: a collaborative advocacy initiative

This sixth edition of Désertif'actions will take place over the whole of 2025 and the first half of 2026, following a three-phase process, culminating in participation in COP17 in Mongolia. The aim of this formula is to gather the views and contributions of as many stakeholders as possible, and to create a legitimate participatory basis for influencing public decision-making on drought management.

Phase 1: January - December 2025 in as many countries as possible on a voluntary basis

⇨ Preparation of a joint plea by international civil society on the resilience of territories to drought

- A preliminary online questionnaire widely distributed to gather initial general arguments, enabling an initial framing of the advocacy dynamic thanks to the participation of a wide range of stakeholders.
- Preparatory national workshops organized by volunteer CSOs to detail the specific concerns of the different countries involved in the D'a26 approach and enable collaborative national productions.
- An international webinar organized by CARI to pool and consolidate the work carried out in different countries, in order to identify priority issues and the main arguments to be put forward at international level.
- The production by CARI of decoding notes to better understand the decisions negotiated at COP16 in Saudi Arabia on the subject of "droughts".

➔ ***Expected outcome**: to* identify the levers of resilience of territories in the face of drought problems, by characterizing the impacts of droughts and the strategies deployed to deal with them, but also by analyzing certain key issues concerning agricultural and food systems and resource management in territories. The information gathered, combined with a detailed understanding of what was at stake at COP16, should help lay the foundations for the arguments to be put forward at the summit.

Phase 2: Désertif'actions 2026 summit, March 25 to 28, 2026, Djerba (Tunisia)

⇨ A multi-stakeholder event open to the world, enabling international civil society to meet and deepen its advocacy.

- Holding of the international summit Désertif'actions 2026, bringing together some 350 people over 4 days to prepare the contribution of civil society and other stakeholders to the decisions to be negotiated at COP17. The aim will be to build on the arguments produced in the preparatory phase (on the avenues to be explored to improve the resilience of territories), in order to identify the obstacles to be overcome and the levers to be activated, at the level of public policies and donors, to facilitate change.

➔ ***Expected result:*** following the advocacy work carried out in phase 1, set in motion an international civil society movement to place the resilience of territories to drought at the heart of policy implementation, by identifying common language to influence the direction of these policies.

Phase 3: 2026 in Mongolia during UNCCD COP17

⇨ Joint advocacy by civil society representatives at UNCCD COP17 in Mongolia to influence decision-making in favor of greater regional resilience to drought.

- Production of decoding notes on the subjects to be negotiated at COP17, in order to identify the room for maneuver available in the work of influence.
- Structured civil society participation at COP17, around common messages, in close collaboration with existing networks and the UNCCD CSO panel, to invest all COP17 dialogue and negotiation spaces (open dialogue sessions, plenaries, high-level debates, thematic days and side events).

➔ ***Expected result: to*** encourage States, through the UNCCD, to adopt and support measures to help territories become more resilient to the risk of drought.

Co-organizers

Partners

www.desertif-actions.org

Désertif'actions 2026

The main theme of Désertif'actions 2026

The central question to which the dynamic of the Désertif'Actions 2026 summit seeks to contribute is:

How can we reduce the vulnerability of territories to drought?

Territorial planning and management, carried out in an inclusive and participatory way, is proving to be a crucial lever for strengthening the resilience of territories in the face of drought. By integrating the need to preserve ecosystems, food security and economic development, this approach makes it possible to restore ecological functions, manage conflicts and secure land and water resources. All these actions are part of a holistic vision that links environmental, social and economic issues, overcoming obstacles to the adoption of resilient practices. As a result, CARI and its partners have identified 4 possible areas of work, around 4 key questions, to help answer the central question:

1/ Transformation of sedentary farming and/or livestock systems

Agricultural and livestock farming systems bear the full brunt of droughts, which compromise production, jeopardize food security and weaken local economies. These phenomena, exacerbated by climate change, accentuate disparities between regions, particularly in areas where infrastructures are inadequate and adaptive capacities are limited. In the face of these challenges, certain strategies based on the principles of agroecology have demonstrated their effectiveness in strengthening farm resilience. These solutions include integrated and diversified approaches that enable farms to better anticipate, adapt and respond sustainably to the challenges posed by drought. However, the transition to the adoption of these practices (technical, organizational, etc.) remains hampered by numerous structural and cyclical obstacles. Facilitating change is therefore a prerequisite for removing these barriers and fostering the transition of farming and livestock systems towards greater resilience.

How can we support farms and livestock farms in their transition to greater resilience in the face of drought?

2/ Support for mobile production systems (focus on pastoralism)

Why pastoralism? The year 2026 has been designated by the United Nations as the Year of Pastoralism, in recognition of its key role in reconciling the preservation of fragile ecosystems, economic development and social cohesion in arid and semi-arid zones. Its **resilience** and ability to maintain biodiversity make it one of the models to be considered for drought-resilient systems.

According to the UNCCD, pastoral and grazing lands account for 54% of the planet's total land area. These mobile modes of production play an essential role in the management of natural resources and the preservation of ecosystems. Pastoralism is considered to be a system intrinsically based on the principles of agroecology. When it respects herd mobility and sustainable rangeland management, it helps preserve soils, regulate water resources and maintain biodiversity, while reducing conflicts of use. Mobility is the key feature of pastoral systems, enabling them to adapt to climatic crises such as drought. But today, as interstate borders become increasingly regulated and subject to insecurity, and as agricultural fronts gradually move upwards, reducing available grazing areas, constraints on this mobility are intensifying.

How can we preserve and facilitate the development of drought-relevant systems based on mobility strategies, in an increasingly constrained context?

3/ Regional management of water resources

Water resources, essential to the survival of agricultural and pastoral systems and local communities, are put to the test during droughts: the multiple uses of water even make it a resource under stress. It is therefore essential to rethink water management practices on a territorial scale. Technically, the natural conservation of water in soils, beyond improving humus content, can be strengthened by appropriate measures to slow runoff and encourage infiltration. However, the organizational challenge is crucial for groundwater management and coordination between public services and local stakeholders. Given the diversity of uses (drinking water - sanitation / agricultural water / environmental water) and increased constraints, participative governance, based on dialogue between stakeholders, plays a decisive role in harmonizing user needs and promoting sustainable resource management on a regional scale.

How can we reconcile the different uses of water resources in order to anticipate and manage drought situations while limiting the risk of conflict?

4/ Territory management

Recurrent droughts exacerbate tensions over natural resources (water, land), impacting agriculture, livestock farming, local populations and energy uses. Health, education and road development are also indirectly impacted, with possible longer-term effects. Faced with these challenges, territorial management, including planning, implementation of actions and management of resources and infrastructures, is a crucial element in ensuring the resilience of a territory in a drought situation. Similarly, the reception and integration of internally displaced persons is a challenge to be overcome. In this context, local authorities, whether traditional (traditional and/or religious chieftaincies, etc.) or administrative (local authorities and associated services, etc.), have a major role to play in anticipating the effects of such crises and the measures to be considered to reduce the sensitivity of their territory and improve its resilience. However, the transfer of competencies has not always been accompanied by a reinforcement of capacities and financial resources to implement the targeted ambitions.

How can we facilitate the role of local authorities so that they can anticipate and sustainably manage their territory in anticipation of drought crises?

Questions are also being asked about the operational implementation of commitments made by decision-makers, which are not always translated into strong, transformative policies at local level. This will be a cross-cutting concern in all the work planned.

Désertif'actions 2026

For drought-resilient territories: act now!

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