

# D'a Désertif' actions

2026



6<sup>ème</sup> édition

## Webinar Summary

**From Désertif'actions 2026 to COP17: Challenges and  
Priorities for Strengthening Regional Resilience to  
Droughts?**



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**Date:** June 17, 2026

**Participants:** 212 people attended the webinar, the majority of whom were representatives of civil society organizations, as well as international networks, research institutions, and international organizations.

**Speakers:**

**Moderator:** Mr. Jérôme Enjalbert (CARI)

**Panelists:**

- **Philippine Dutailly** – Editor for Desertification and Land Degradation at the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, National Focal Point for the UNCCD, and Chair of the CRIC (Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention)
- **Adeline Derkimba** – Program Director, CARI
- **Natasha Maru** – Global Coordinator for Pastures and Pastoralists, International Land Coalition
- **Ellen Otaru-Okoedion** – Africa Representative on the UNCCD Civil Society Organizations Panel
- **Nicolas Cimbaro** – Head of International Relations, Aude Departmental Council

**In brief:**

Organized as a follow-up to the Désertif'actions 2026 initiative, this webinar served to link the lessons learned from the preparatory work and the Djerba Summit with the challenges of UNCCD COP17. The discussions underscored that droughts now constitute a structural risk for regions, calling for proactive, coordinated responses grounded in local realities.

Speakers emphasized the importance of strengthening the role of civil society, local governments, pastoralists, and on-the-ground actors in international negotiations.

With COP17 approaching, the webinar helped identify several advocacy priorities: better equipping local communities, recognizing the role of local stakeholders, strengthening prevention efforts, and translating the recommendations of Désertif'actions into concrete messages to be presented in the Convention's dialogue forums.



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE WEBINAR:

Organized to mark the United Nations Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, this webinar was part of the ongoing Désertif'actions 2026 initiative. It aimed to bridge the gap between the lessons learned from the Desertif'actions Summit in Djerba (March 25–28, 2026), the preparatory work conducted beforehand, and the prospects for mobilization ahead of COP17 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), scheduled to take place in Mongolia.

Since 2006, Désertif'actions has served as a civil society-led forum for dialogue to strengthen exchanges among stakeholders committed to combating desertification, land degradation, and droughts. The 2026 edition brought together numerous stakeholders over the course of more than a year to address a central question: **how can we strengthen the resilience of territories in the face of droughts?**

The webinar had several objectives:

- to share the key lessons learned from the Désertif'actions 2026 initiative;
- to inform participants about the issues, processes, and discussion forums related to COP17;
- provide a progress update on the mobilization efforts already underway;
- clarify advocacy opportunities leading up to COP17;
- facilitate dialogue among civil society, local governments, thematic networks, and institutional representatives regarding the priorities to be advanced.

The central theme of the discussion was: How can we transform the lessons and recommendations of Désertif'actions 2026 into collective mobilization and concrete advocacy for COP17?

## FOCUS ON COP17: WHY IS THIS A STRATEGIC MOMENT?

The first segment of the webinar aimed to place the discussions within the broader context of the UNCCD's COP17. Ms. Philippine Dutailly noted that this conference will be a significant milestone for international governance in the fight against desertification, particularly given that issues related to drought, land degradation, and pastoral lands are taking on increasing importance in the discussions.

One of the key challenges of COP17 will be to reach a consensus on how to move forward collectively on the issue of drought. The discussions should, in particular, build on the debates that began at COP16, especially regarding the possibility of a global framework or a more binding instrument to better anticipate, manage, and reduce the impacts of droughts.

Ms. Dutailly also emphasized the importance of the Convention's future strategic framework, as well as the ongoing debates on the role of science in decision-making. Some countries would like decisions made under the UNCCD to be more firmly grounded in scientific knowledge, in order to improve their effectiveness and tangible impacts.

COP17 will also feature several specific elements: the organization of a high-level segment with the participation of heads of state and government; the Mongolian presidency's focus on



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rangelands and pastoralists; and the holding of a Mayors' Forum designed to give greater visibility to local governments and best local practices.

Alongside the official agenda, an action agenda will be structured around thematic days dedicated to issues such as water, finance, peoples and lands, food systems, and soil health. These forums, along with side events, will provide opportunities for civil society organizations and local stakeholders to convey their messages and contribute to the discussions.

## THEMATIC FOCUS: DROUGHT AND RESILIENCE

### Drought Resilience at the Heart of Désertif'actions 2026

Ms. Adeline Derkimba noted that Désertif'actions 2026 had chosen to place drought resilience at the heart of its work due to the growing scale of the phenomenon and its impacts on local areas. Droughts are becoming more frequent, longer-lasting, and more intense, with consequences that extend far beyond the agricultural sector alone.

The impacts are primarily environmental: a decline in available water resources, water stress on vegetation, soil degradation, and the weakening of ecosystems. They are also economic, particularly for agricultural systems, which are highly vulnerable to productivity losses and health-related disruptions. According to data cited during the presentation, droughts severely affect the agricultural sector worldwide, with losses that can be considerable. Finally, they lead to major social impacts: poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, tensions over access to resources, migration, and health effects.

Ms. Derkimba emphasized that drought has long been a concern for the UNCCD, but that the policy response to it has evolved in recent years. The goal is now to gradually shift from reactive crisis management to a more proactive approach based on prevention, preparedness, and adaptation.

In this context, Désertif'actions 2026 sought to amplify the voice of civil society on this issue. This initiative generated widespread engagement: 100 responses to the preparatory questionnaire, 24 workshops in 20 countries, 4 thematic webinars bringing together 360 participants, as well as a political cartoon contest that attracted 272 cartoonists and 486 entries. The Djerba summit, for its part, brought together 375 participants from 48 countries, featuring 8 plenary sessions, 22 working groups, 7 side events, exhibitions, an entrepreneurs' space, and a public day.

A key message emerges from this mobilization: civil society must take a stand on the major issues addressed within the UNCCD so that international decisions better reflect the realities on the ground.

### Rangelands and pastoralists: Recognition, Mobility, and Resilience

Ms. Natasha Maru presented the role of the Global Alliance for Rangelands and pastoralists, which has been advocating for several years for the recognition of the rights of pastoralists—particularly land rights—and for greater consideration of rangelands in international policies.

She noted that rangelands cover a very large portion of the Earth's surface and that nearly half of them are now degraded, with significant impacts on the livelihoods of millions of pastoralists. Pastoral systems are highly vulnerable to climate crises, but they also embody time-tested and



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effective adaptation strategies, based on mobility, in-depth knowledge of ecosystems, and the adaptive use of resources.

The International Year of Rangelands and pastoralists represents a significant opportunity to raise the profile of these issues in international forums. Natasha Maru emphasized that the Alliance is working in particular with the Mongolian government—the host country of COP17—to bring issues related to Rangelands and pastoralists into the discussions of the UNCCD.

One of the objectives is to secure recognition of rangelands and pastoralists not only as vulnerable groups, but also as key contributors to solutions addressing climate crises, land degradation, and droughts.

## **Policy Focus: What Are the Positions of the UNCCD Regional Groups in Europe and Africa?**

The discussion then turned to the positions of the regional groups, particularly the Africa Group and the Europe Group. The goal was to understand how issues related to drought, resilience, pastoralism, and land degradation are currently being addressed in the negotiating forums.

Ms. Ellen Otaru-Okoedion noted that the African continent is particularly affected by desertification, land degradation, and droughts, which explains why these issues are central to the Africa Group's priorities. The impacts on livelihoods, food security, and local communities make it essential to adopt decisions that reflect local priorities and enable meaningful action on the ground.

Regarding drought, the Africa Group continues to call for a legally binding protocol. This call was reiterated during the group's preparatory consultations. Ellen Otaru-Okoedion also emphasized the importance of strengthening collaboration between civil society organizations and national focal points in order to better integrate CSO recommendations into national positions and delegations. Finally, she stressed the need for better information sharing regarding common African positions.

Philippine Dutailly then presented how the European group operates, noting that it also has mechanisms for coordination and the collective preparation of positions. She noted that the European Union coordinates the positions of its member states ahead of negotiations. European priorities include, in particular, the participation of civil society organizations, the integration of science into decision-making, and the consideration of gender issues.

An important development was also highlighted: several European countries, including France, now declare themselves to be affected by desertification. This recognition helps to shift perceptions of these issues—which no longer concern only regions traditionally associated with arid zones, but also affect European territories facing drought and land degradation—.

## **WHAT ROLE DO CSOs AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS PLAY IN THE NEGOTIATIONS?**

The following segment addressed a cross-cutting issue: how can the realities on the ground be conveyed to international decision-making forums? This question lies at the heart of the Désertif'actions initiative, which has sought from its inception to build a bridge between local stakeholders and international negotiations.



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## The Participation of Civil Society Organizations

Ms. Otaru-Okoedion presented the challenges related to the participation of civil society organizations in the UNCCD. She emphasized that it is not enough for CSOs to simply be present in negotiation forums: they must be genuinely heard by decision-makers, and their recommendations must be reflected in the decisions adopted by the COP.

The CSO Panel has established a structured process to prepare for COP17, combining webinars, consultations, and exchanges among organizations—including through digital tools such as WhatsApp. The goal is to facilitate the participation of as many people as possible in shaping the messages put forward by civil society.

Ellen Otaru-Okoedion emphasized the need for greater recognition of local communities, pastoralists, youth, women, and Indigenous peoples in the discussions. She also highlighted the importance of a follow-up mechanism after the COP, so that civil society can not only contribute to decisions but also monitor their implementation.

## The Role of Local Governments

Mr. Nicolas Cimbaro then presented the perspective of local and regional governments. He noted that these governments do not constitute a homogeneous bloc on a global scale: they vary greatly in terms of their responsibilities, resources, political influence, and institutional contexts. This heterogeneity partly explains their historically limited representation in UNCCD discussions.

Yet local governments are on the front lines when it comes to the impacts of drought, water scarcity, land degradation, and resource pressures. They are directly confronted with citizens' expectations and must find concrete solutions at the local level.

International networks, such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), help amplify the voices of local governments in international forums. Mr. Cimbaro noted that UCLG, headquartered in Barcelona, is organized into regional groups and works to strengthen the representation of local governments in international discussions.

To have greater influence in negotiations, however, local governments must be able to better demonstrate the impact of their actions on the ground. With this in mind, UCLG and ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives) are involved in organizing a mayors' conference during COP17. This key event is intended to highlight local issues, share solutions, promote decentralized cooperation, and contribute to a declaration that strengthens local governments' voice during the COP.

## Strengthening Dialogue Between States, Local Governments, and Civil Society

Ms. Philippine Dutailly was then invited to comment on the relationship between civil society, local governments, and national governments. She noted that the first step for CSOs is to identify the right points of contact and to engage with the national focal points of the UNCCD. This requires understanding the thematic priorities of national governments and knowing how to adapt advocacy language to that of government agencies.

She also emphasized the importance of networking. In France, for example, forums such as the Desertification Working Group (GTD) or the French Scientific Committee on Desertification



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(CSFD) enable civil society organizations and scientific stakeholders to develop joint messages that are clearer and more effective in reaching public authorities.

CSOs can also seek to participate in regional group meetings through their national or regional focal points. Forums such as the WPIEI for Europe or the side events at AMCEN for Africa can provide opportunities to amplify civil society's contributions ahead of the COP.

The presentation thus highlighted a central challenge: to be heard, civil society must be organized, coordinated, and capable of formulating messages consistent with political priorities, while retaining its ability to hold decision-makers accountable.

## TOWARD COP17: KEY MILESTONES, OBJECTIVES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

The final segment of the webinar looked ahead to COP17, identifying upcoming deadlines, opportunities for influence, key messages to convey, and the expectations of various stakeholders.

### Transforming the Results of Désertif'actions into Advocacy

Ms. Adeline Derkimba reviewed the main lessons learned from Désertif'actions and how these findings could be leveraged in the lead-up to COP17.

One key word stands out strongly from these discussions: prevention. Preventing the impacts of droughts represents a major benefit for people, as it means avoiding a situation where action is only taken after populations have already suffered. Prevention is also less costly than crisis management, and it offers significant environmental benefits, given that restoring degraded ecosystems is often a long and complex process.

Désertif'actions acknowledges the recent progress stemming from COP16, notably the emphasis on prevention, the recognition of the relevance of nature-based solutions, the role of territorial development, and the importance of sustainable rangeland management. However, the challenge for civil society is now to translate these guidelines into concrete actions on the ground.

The work carried out during Désertif'actions has identified several converging areas of action: sustainable production systems and natural resource management; the local economy and jobs for resilience; governance and cooperation mechanisms; capacity building and knowledge management; as well as rights and social inclusion.

A broad consensus has emerged regarding the local level. Regions are on the front lines when it comes to the impacts of droughts, but they are also at the heart of the solutions. However, while national mechanisms exist to better anticipate risks—such as early warning systems, national drought plans, risk management plans, and financial tools like insurance or natural disaster funds—the regional level remains inadequately equipped.

One of the key recommendations of Désertif'actions is therefore to equip local communities with the expertise, technical resources, and financial means to enable them to become more resilient. This involves supporting transitions toward biodiversity, soil health, recycling, co-creation of knowledge, responsible governance, economic diversification, and social inclusion.



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Several outputs from Désertif'actions are already available: recommendation papers, analysis papers, a summary report of the country workshops, a summary report of the online questionnaire, and a full report of the summit (see “*Useful Resources*” at the end of this report). Other outputs are also expected, notably a policy brief on regional resilience to drought and a declaration by local governments on combating desertification.

Ahead of COP17, the results of Désertif'actions will be highlighted in several forums: the COP opening address, the declaration on drought, an open dialogue session on drought resilience, media outreach, discussions during Land and People Day, and side events.

## Local Governments Preparing for COP17

Mr. Cimbaro outlined how the Aude Departmental Council and its partners are preparing for COP17. The Désertif'actions initiative has helped spark local discussion on resilience to drought. In particular, a workshop with local stakeholders enabled participants to reach a shared assessment and highlight the specific challenges facing the department.

This local initiative, spurred by an international movement, represents a significant first achievement. It enables the formulation of advocacy points at the national level and helps gain recognition for the unique characteristics of rural areas facing the impacts of climate change, drought, and land degradation.

The Aude Departmental Council thus seeks to showcase its experience and promote recognition of the role of local governments in implementing concrete solutions. The goal is, in particular, to secure greater recognition, resources, and funding for rural areas facing these challenges.

## The IYRP Global Alliance on the Road to COP17

Ms. Natasha Maru presented the work of the Global Alliance for Rangelands and Pastoralists in preparation for COP17. The Alliance has made it possible to pool and compile the results of numerous consultations organized at various levels—national and regional—involving pastoralists, their organizations, and their partners.

These consultations are intended to help develop strong recommendations for COP17. The key demands include securing land rights, protecting rangelands from encroachment by other land uses, integrating pastoral realities into data systems, and recognizing pastoralists as decision-makers and rights holders.

The Alliance is also working to enhance the political visibility of rangelands and pastoralists, particularly through campaigns, events, and global statements. Désertif'actions has helped reinforce these messages by providing a space for dialogue and collaboration with other actors committed to building territorial resilience in the face of droughts.

## Civil Society's Expectations for a Successful COP

At the conclusion of the roundtable, Ellen Otaru-Okoedion presented several criteria that, from civil society's perspective, would allow COP17 to be considered a success.

The first expectation concerns improving early warning and drought preparedness systems by further integrating traditional knowledge. The second relates to ensuring that pastoralists are given a voice and are heard during COP17. The third concerns the establishment of financing



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mechanisms that are more accessible to local communities. Finally, greater accountability is expected on issues of gender and youth inclusion.

More broadly, the success of COP17 will depend on the Parties' ability to recognize the multidimensional nature of land degradation, strengthen support for local restoration efforts, shift from an emergency response to a preparedness approach, and improve mechanisms that enable local communities, pastoralists, women, and youth to participate in decisions that affect them.



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## Q&A SESSION

The question-and-answer session provided an opportunity to explore several practical issues related to the preparation for COP17 and civil society participation.

### **Are the preparatory reports from the Africa and Europe groups available?**

Regarding the European Union, it was clarified that there is no single document compiling all of the EU's priorities and positions. These positions will be shared, in particular, during the plenary sessions of COP17.

As for the Africa Group, a document is currently being prepared. Ellen Otaru-Okoedion, the Africa Group's representative on the CSO Panel, will keep organizations informed of its availability.

### **How can funding be mobilized in practice on the ground?**

Several funding avenues were discussed. The Global Environment Facility's Small Grants Program (SGP) can provide CSOs with access to funding targeted at global environmental objectives. The Riyadh Partnership was also mentioned as a mechanism focused on capacity building in countries of the Global South.

### **How can we speak with one voice at COP17?**

Discussions highlighted the importance of developing common messages and strengthening coordination among organizations. When dialogue with national focal points is difficult, the media can be mobilized to raise visibility, engage decision-makers, and publicize project outcomes as well as the needs of local communities.

It was also recommended to establish contacts with national focal points during international meetings, particularly COPs. CSOs gain credibility and legitimacy when they demonstrate their ability to engage in international forums and convey well-structured messages.

### **How can progress on civil society engagement be tracked?**

Decisions, reports from the Parties, and contributions from civil society organizations can be tracked on the website of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

One participant also noted that CSOs must be better equipped to participate in negotiations and influence decisions. They should not rely solely on governments but must assert their role on the front lines to report on progress and challenges encountered on the ground.

**Useful resources:**

- Book: "Drought and Agroecology: Let's Try to Make Sense of It": [Link](#)
- Desertif'actions 2026 Recommendation Notes:
  - o Agroecology to Strengthen Agricultural Systems Against Droughts: [Link](#)
  - o No Pastoralism Without Mobility: [Link](#)
  - o Collectively Building Water Security: [Link](#)
  - o Strengthening the Role of Local Authorities: [Link](#)
- UNCCD Analysis Notes:
  - o The UNCCD negotiation process and decision-making at COPs: [Link](#)
  - o UNCCD regional groups and advocacy coalitions: [Link](#)
  - o Incorporating Droughts into UNCCD Negotiations: [Link](#)
- Tree Aid Report "From Margins to Momentum: Closing Critical Funding Gaps in IPLC Tenure and Governance Systems to Scale Land and Forest Restoration in Africa's Drylands": [Link](#)
- Dynamique Desertif'actions website: [Link](#)
- CARI Resource Centers: [Link](#)

Watch [the recording of the Zoom webinar](#)