

Committee of Permanent Representatives  
Subcommittee Meeting  
Nairobi, 20 February 2025  
09:00 – 12:00 and 13:00 – 16:00 (GMT+3)  
Hybrid meeting  
Conference Room 1 (in person)  
and Microsoft Teams (online)

### **Chair's Summary**

#### **Agenda item 1: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda.**

1. H. E. Ms. Nicol Adamcová, Vice Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Kenya and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), opened the meeting and chaired the morning session. H. E. Mr. Wael Nasreldin Attiya, Vice Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Ambassador of Egypt to Kenya and Permanent Representative to UNEP, chaired the afternoon session.
2. The [agenda](#) was adopted.

#### **Agenda item 2: Briefing on the outcomes of the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; and Agenda item 3: Briefing on UNEP's land degradation portfolio.**

##### *Joint consideration*

3. The UNCCD Secretariat provided a [briefing](#) on the outcomes of the [sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#) (UNCCD COP 16) which took place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from 2 to 13 December 2024.
4. The UNEP Secretariat provided an [overview](#) of UNEP's land degradation portfolio across its programme of work.
5. Delegations<sup>1</sup> that took the floor welcomed the presentations and provided the following comments in summary:
  - a. Commended the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for successfully hosting the UNCCD COP 16.
  - b. Requested information on UNEP's role in advancing integrated approaches to enhance synergies across the [Rio Conventions](#), with a focus on building resilience and scaling action against land degradation, drought and desertification.
  - c. Urged integration and expansion of UNEP's work on land degradation and drought, in the next Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) for the period 2026-2029, emphasizing i) support for formulating voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets formulation; ii) development of metrics to assess land restoration success; iii) strengthening integrated water resource management to address water scarcity; iv) enhancing resilience to drought and land degradation; v) incorporating social and economic dimensions into land degradation efforts; vi) alignment of climate adaptation strategies with land degradation initiatives; vii) improvement of national reporting and data collection mechanisms; and viii) facilitating best practices and cross-regional collaboration on land restoration.
  - d. Highlighted that existing financial resources are insufficient to address the complexity and

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<sup>1</sup> Algeria, United Kingdom, Colombia, Spain, Argentina, Egypt, Kenya, Germany, Portugal, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), France, Czechia, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Cameroon, Peru, Malawi, Uganda, European Union, Children and Youth Major Group, Women Major Group.

- growing demands for land management and underscored the importance of constructive dialogue and convergence among parties ahead of UNCCD COP 17.
- e. Enquired about the potential for expanding UNEP's Land Degradation portfolio in all regions, including specifically North Africa and South America.
  - f. Emphasized UNEP's need to enhance civil society engagement by increasing participation of indigenous peoples, local communities, and gender-responsive actions in land restoration.
  - g. Requested further information on:
    - i. Achievements and challenges of the [Great Green Wall initiative](#), with a focus on UNEP's role, regional engagement and national-level footprint.
    - ii. Implementation of the Freshwater Challenge initiative and its linkages to addressing land degradation, drought and desertification.
    - iii. Scope of UNEP's conservation and sustainable forest management portfolio, specifically in relation to addressing land degradation.
    - iv. UNEP's technical support for the preparation of the 2026 UNCCD National Reports, including planned activities, budget implications and beneficiary regions or countries.
    - v. Opportunities to enhance MTS reporting on the impact of land degradation on people.
    - vi. Plans to harness youth-led initiatives to promote sustainable land management.
  - h. Reflected on the absence of [One Health](#) in the agenda and discussions of UNCCD COP 16 and advocated for substantial focus on One Health in the new Programme of Work for the period of 2026-2027.
  - i. Inquired whether the UNCCD Secretariat would intervene during the intersessional period to bridge gaps between parties and facilitate consensus-building ahead of UNCCD COP 17 in Mongolia.
6. In response, the Secretariat thanked delegations for their comments and provided the following clarifications:
- a. Highlighted the coordinated efforts by the three Rio Conventions at the levels of the Secretariats through a Joint Liaison Group.
  - b. Described integrated approaches implemented by UNEP through i) the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration; ii) the G20 Global Land Restoration Initiative; iii) the development of evaluation metrics to measure impact; iv) ongoing efforts to synergize reporting processes across frameworks; v) technical support for national reports and its budgetary implications.
  - c. Narrated the efforts underway to improve the visibility of the land degradation portfolio in the next MTS and cautioned against further siloing programs by adding another vertical pillar.
  - d. Explained how country-specific projects being designed under the Freshwater Challenge, Global Climate Fund (GCF) and Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) supported projects, targeted freshwater initiatives under the UN Decade of Restoration and the Water Quality Hub contribute towards addressing water scarcity issues and land degradation.
  - e. Shared an overview of the robust forest conservation, restoration and nature for health portfolios and welcomed further discussions in future sessions.
  - f. Referenced that most work is supported through programme of work and limited unearmarked voluntary contributions for land degradation have been received.
  - g. Referred to the ongoing efforts to improve knowledge management systems for better tracking.
  - h. Elaborated on the Great Green Wall initiative, assessments undertaken that informed the programmes and investment strategies in each target country and UNEP's role.
  - i. Acknowledged One Health as an emerging issue and highlighted its ongoing expansion under the Nature for Health initiative to address broader environmental health.
  - j. Reaffirmed commitment to ongoing dialogue with Member States during the intersessional period and in preparation for UNCCD COP 17 in Mongolia, with a focus on drought-related issues.

**Several members of the subcommittee submitted the following recommendations for consideration at the 169<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CPR scheduled for 20 March 2025, as follows:**

- a. *Invites* Member States to join the Riyadh Global Drought Resilience Partnership.
- b. *Invites* Member States to renew their commitments to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and actively participate in the implementation of the Rio declaration.
- c. *Recommends* that extra effort be made to allow cross-border initiatives, especially on issues regarding land degradation, to be given attention in accessing the financial commitments.
- d. *Recommends* considering options and ways on how UNEP could add another portfolio that can address the issues of drought and desertification, and to open discussion, or reflection, on how these issues can also be better reflected and better focused on the next medium-term strategy for 2026-2029.
- e. *Invites* Member States to invest in innovative solutions and technologies that enhance land restoration efforts.
- f. *Invites* Member States to foster collaboration among governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to create a united front against desertification.

**Agenda item 4: Overview of the audit of the 2023 Financial Statement by the Board of Auditors.**

9. The Secretariat provided a [presentation](#) on the overview of the report of the UN Board of Auditors for the year ending 31 December 2023, a status update on the implementation of outstanding recommendations, and the corresponding Secretariat implementation plans.
10. Delegations<sup>2</sup> that took the floor welcomed the presentation and provided the following comments in summary:
  - a. Expressed support for UNEP's updated tracking and implementation practices by the UNEP Evaluation Office.
  - b. Emphasized the need for strengthened oversight and due diligence in UNEP's collaborative engagements, particularly regarding external and private partnerships.
  - c. Requested further information on:
    - i. The number of active centres collaborating with UNEP and the mechanisms available for Member States to monitor their activities.
    - ii. Status of implementation of outstanding commitments, particularly those scheduled for review in the third quarter of 2024.
    - iii. Timeline for implementing UNEA resolutions [5/4](#), [5/5](#), [5/7](#) and [5/8](#), as well as other key resolutions.
    - iv. Status of the in-house inventory of activities across the UNEP programme of work related to the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#), which UNEP committed to completing by the end of 2024.
    - v. Project fund balances and outstanding financial commitments.
    - vi. Approaches to address the withdrawal of financial contributions from key partners and the mitigation measures in place to manage the impacts.
    - vii. The criteria used to prioritize the implementation of recommendations by the UN Board of Auditors.
  - d. Encouraged UNEP to strengthen financial management efforts by ensuring the timely closure of projects and adequate staffing to support these processes.
  - e. Reiterated the importance of allocating sufficient resources to divisions responsible for institutional partnerships and oversight functions.
11. In response, the Secretariat thanked delegations for their comments and provided the following clarifications:
  - a. Informed that UNEP's Law Division has engaged a consultant to support the management and oversight of collaborating centers.
  - b. Further informed of ongoing efforts to enhance financial management, including projects pending financial closure, with dedicated personnel being recruited and strengthened internal review procedures introduced.

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<sup>2</sup> Brazil, Portugal, France, Czechia, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), United Kingdom, Egypt, European Union.

- c. Confirmed that the mapping exercise for Sendai Framework-related projects and activities has been completed.
- d. Acknowledged financial sustainability concerns and outlined ongoing efforts to assess risks, adjust financial projections, and engage relevant stakeholders to ensure operational continuity.
- e. Highlighted UNEP's commitment to audit implementation, demonstrated by a reduction in outstanding recommendations, with biannual reviews ensuring progress through established reporting cycles.
- f. Explained that UNEP's engagement with external partners is guided by the due diligence procedures outlined in the 2024 Partnership Policy and Procedures.
- g. Clarified that the UN Board of Auditors is responsible for identifying prioritization, while the Secretariat ensures the implementation of all recommendations within the set target dates.

**Agenda item 6: Other matters.**

- 12. The Secretariat reminded delegations to complete a [survey](#) by 13 March 2025 on UNEP's performance in implementing the Programme of Work for the period 2024-2025. This information will inform the 2024 Programme Performance Report, which will be considered at the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Subcommittee meeting of the CPR scheduled for 1 to 5 September 2025.

**Agenda item 7: Closing of the meeting.**

- 13. The meeting closed at 15:30 (GMT+3).