

## **UNCCD management response: Evaluation of the Changwon Initiative (2016-2020)**

### **Overview**

The second independent evaluation of the Changwon Initiative provides an overall assessment of the 2016-2020 results achieved with support of the Republic of Korea, and the contribution of these results to the priorities of the UNCCD. The UNCCD secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) welcome the evaluation as valuable guidance for the next steps under this Initiative. Many findings of the evaluation have also broader relevance to the development of the UNCCD activities and collaboration with partners.

The secretariat and the GM appreciate the generally positive evaluation findings and outlook concerning the Changwon Initiative. Indeed, this Initiative has had a major role in advancing many key achievements in the UNCCD process, most notably those on land degradation neutrality, and the evaluation duly recognizes its high relevance to, and coherence with, the UNCCD process and the implementation of the work programme of the Convention secretariat and the GM.

The secretariat and the GM appreciate the evaluation findings that confirm that the implementation of the Changwon Initiative has been broadly effective, and that the basic conditions for the sustainability of its results have been established. The secretariat and the GM agree with the emphasis given by the evaluation report on establishing and maintaining partnerships at all levels, from local to national to regional and global, as a critical factor for achieving the objectives of the Changwon Initiative and ensuring the sustainability of the achievements. Consideration will be given to better linking and measuring progress from activities and outputs toward the identified outcomes and impact.

The evaluation report assesses that the Initiative has advanced substantial areas of achievement with relatively modest funding (by international standards) and thereby concludes that overall the processes have been efficient. However, the evaluation finds challenges in timely utilization of the funds under the Initiative and in the adequacy of the UNCCD staffing vis-à-vis its workload, which negatively affect efficiency and longer-term prospects of sustainability. The secretariat and the GM agree with these findings and will address them, including through responding to the recommendations of the evaluation.

The recommendations of the evaluation report offer practical ways forward in planning and organizing the implementation of the Changwon Initiative and the secretariat and the GM welcome them as valuable guidance for the next steps.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation 1:**

**It is recommended that the Changwon Initiative should be continued beyond the current five year agreement, which expires in 2023; in keeping with the Memorandum of Understanding, which supports cooperation until 2030. This support should remain focussed on activities, which can have maximum effects at country and regional level and on the underlying processes of knowledge generation and dissemination and capacity building, which will be essential to enable and promote the success of these activities.**

Management response: Accepted. The support provided through the Changwon Initiative has proven to be critically important for testing and implementing approaches and practices that can effectively advance the objectives of the UNCCD at the country and regional levels. It has enabled the achievement

of many aims, particularly in the field of land degradation neutrality, that have made a major difference in the UNCCD implementation and that would not have been possible without it. The secretariat and the GM remain committed to collaboration with KFS on the Changwon Initiative, for using the contribution to deliver continuous progress in the Convention.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)
Preparation of annual/biennium plans for activities to be carried out under the Changwon Initiative	continuous	ERPA
Update of the KFS-UNCCD agreement to cover the period 2024-2030	By end 2023	ERPA

### Recommendation 2:

**It is recommended that the planning process between KFS and UNCCD for future CI funding contributions should be based on prior resolution of human resource gaps.**

Management response: Partially accepted. The secretariat and the GM will consider more thoroughly the availability of human resources when planning their activities. In terms of increasing these resources, they have filled or are in the process of filling all of their posts under the regular budget, and recognize that getting resources for the establishment of new posts is likely to be very challenging under the current pandemic situation. Therefore, the secretariat and the GM will further develop their partnerships, so that skilled partners, whose capacities and knowledge complement those of the UNCCD staff, participate in carrying out the activities under the Changwon Initiative. This will improve the efficiency of the UNCCD to deliver activities. The secretariat and the GM will continue to also engage consultants for tasks that require specific expertise, and seek secondments and funding for additional staff from voluntary contributions.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)
Detailed identification of human resource needs, including consultancy in the planning of new activities.	Continuous	ERPA, STI, GM
Identification of partners for Changwon Initiative activities, particularly those that involve field implementation and advocacy.	Next CI cost plan	ERPA, STI, GM

### Recommendation 3:

**In response to the Executive Secretary's reporting that "our Parties are asking us to do more with less," it is recommended that UNCCD in consultation with KFS should undertake a detailed review of the outstanding balances of unspent CI funds and prepare a joint plan to use these in a practicable time frame to further address their priorities.**

Management response: Accepted. The UNCCD secretariat and the GM have prepared a plan and schedule for utilizing the remaining balances, which has been discussed with KFS. This plan will be monitored in detail, particularly considering the unpredictable challenges posed by the COVID context with the aim to ensure that the implementation advances smoothly and adjustments are made as required.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)
Regular monitoring of the plan to utilize the remaining balances	continuous	ERPA
Progress reports to KFS	yearly	ERPA

#### Recommendation 4:

**Changwon Initiative should continue to support the development of and help pilot innovative approaches, such as SDS, Greening Drylands Partnership and the Peace Forest Initiative, which may later become substantive work areas for UNCCD.**

Management response: Partially accepted. In the 2021 cost plan that was recently approved by KFS, SDS and Greening Drylands Partnership are well represented, and further funding is allocated to them in the cost plan for the remaining balances (ref. to recommendation 3). However, large part of the support under the Changwon Initiative will continue to be allocated to the long-term UNCCD priorities, notably land degradation neutrality and facilitation of project preparation on relevant topics including SDS and drought at country and (sub)regional levels, that are most frequently called for by the UNCCD parties. Lessons learnt to date are informing the design of a Project Preparation Partnership which is aiming to forge strategic partnerships, increase efficiency and accelerate project preparation among others.

As recommended, as new topics and innovations that have high potential to support UNCCD implementation emerge, the UNCCD secretariat and the GM will continue discussing with KFS on how to include such topics and innovations into the Changwon Initiative plan, so as to continue the spearheading role of the Changwon Initiative funding in advising the UNCCD process.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)
Identification of emerging topics and innovations that could be included in the CI funding	2022 cost plan	ERPA
Exchanges with KFS on potential new topics for the CI	continuous	ERPA

#### Recommendation 5:

**It is recommended that UNCCD in consultation with KFS review the CI support for such core areas as science-policy interlinkages, Knowledge Hub, Global Land Outlook and capacity building, with a view to enabling an increased level of support to these activities, which are essential to underpin expanded country-level outreach. This review should take note of potential funds, which could be made available from re-allocation of existing CI unspent balances.**

Management response: Partially accepted. The mentioned areas continue to be an important part of the Changwon Initiative, and they are included in the 2021 cost plan and in the allocation of the remaining balances. However, possible increase of the level of support to these activities will depend on whether there is need for additional funding, availability of alternative resources, and adequate human resources to carry out further activities. It may be also noted that those activities that the UNCCD parties most

frequently call for tend to be on land degradation neutrality and facilitation of project preparation at country level, and the secretariat and the GM will consider their funding priorities on that basis.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)
Inclusion of activities concerning science-policy interlinkages, knowledge sharing and capacity building into upcoming cost plans for the CI	2022 cost plan	ERPA

**Recommendation 6:**

**UNCCD in consultation with KFS should consider how the Changwon Initiative can enhance its support to the development and use of gender-focussed approaches across its own activities and those of UNCCD and its partners.**

Management response: Partially accepted. The secretariat and the GM's activities concerning the UNCCD Gender Action Plan are currently well-funded by donors other than KFS, and targeting CI funding to gender equality in the next costs plans is likely to be challenged by other urgent priorities. However, in follow-up to their recent gender audit findings and as part of their overall approach to gender matters, the secretariat and the GM will improve the systematic integration of gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW) into all activities under the CI. GEEW will be also included in the reporting to KFS as a cross-cutting topic.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)
Active integration of GEEW into all CI activities	By 2022 cost plan	ERPA, GM
Inclusion of a specific section on GEEW in the yearly report to KFS	Next KFS report	ERPA