

## Background Note on the UN Sand and Dust Storm (SDS) Coalition

2 August

### Summary:

This background note has been prepared by the Environment Management Group (EMG) Secretariat as an information document in advance of the planned "SDS Day", including the meeting of the SDS Coalition on 6 September in the margins of the UNCCD's 14th Conference of Parties (CoP) in New Delhi, India, from 2 to 13 September 2019.

## Background

UNEP's Environmental Management Group (EMG; see [www.unemg.org](http://www.unemg.org)) was requested in September 2018, by the initiative of the Executive Director of UNEP and the agreement of the EMG Senior Officials, to help to establish, and provide preparatory support for, the SDS Coalition and its emerging agenda.

### 1. Establishment of the SDS Coalition and its activities to date.

The origins of the current SDS Coalition lie in the UN General Assembly resolution 72/225 of September 2017, that invited the Executive Director of UNEP to "consider initiating an inter-agency process involving relevant entities of the UN system<sup>1</sup>...to prepare a global response to sand and dust storms, including a situation analysis, a strategy and an action plan, which could result in a UN system-wide approach to addressing sand and dust storms, and which can be used as an inter-agency framework for medium- or long-term cooperation and division of labour".<sup>2</sup>

The Second Session of the UN Environment Assembly held in 2016 had also requested UNEP's Executive Director (in resolution 2/212 May 2016) to engage with all relevant United Nations entities to promote a coordinated approach to combating sand and dust storms globally. Finally, the UN General Assembly in its 73<sup>rd</sup> session (September 2018) welcomed the intention of UNEP's ED to establish such an inter-agency network.

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<sup>1</sup> - "within their respective mandates and existing resources, and taking into account UN Environment Assembly resolution 2/21 of 27 May 2016 and other relevant resolutions and decisions".

<sup>2</sup> - UNGA Resolution 72/225 of December 2017.

Also in September 2018, at the 24<sup>th</sup> EMG Senior Officials' meeting, it was agreed to form an inter-agency "Coalition to Combat Sand and Dust Storms (SDS)", including UN agencies and other organizations and research institutes, to address this challenge.

## 2. Activities of the SDS Coalition to date

To initiate the inter-agency discussion on SDS, UNEP's EMG prepared a detailed concept note including plans to catalyse efforts of the UN system on sand and dust storms to help countries address relevant SDS issues more sustainably. This concept paper was circulated to the SDS Coalition members and was later discussed at the first SDS Coalition meeting, and finalized in March 2019. In the meantime, 14 UN agencies (see Annex I to this note) had nominated their focal points to the Coalition after receiving an invitation from the UNEP Executive Director.

[The first meeting of the Coalition](#) was held by videoconference on 14 February 2019 and agreed on areas of focus, modalities, and plan of work for formation of the Coalition. Further consultations of the Coalition took place by email exchange on its Terms of Reference including its 2019-2020 workplan. In the [TOR](#), four main cross cutting work areas of collaboration has been identified including:

1. Facilitation of information exchange among stakeholders (e.g. data collection, knowledge sharing and innovative solutions)
2. Capacity building and training
3. Mobilizing resources and fund-raising initiatives
4. Advocacy and awareness raising

To take forward the above work areas in a coherent and efficient matter, agencies have expressed their interest to lead or participate in 5 working groups based on a disaster risk management and SDS lifecycle approach. Each working group will cover a specific part of the disaster risk management and SDS Lifecycle.

In June, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD Ibrahim Thiaw suggested in a letter to the Executive Director of UNEP Inger Andersen the organization of an "**SDS Day**" (on 6 Sept.) as an awareness-raising event on the side of the UNCCD CoP-14 in New Delhi. The SDS Day will also include an event to **launch the Coalition**, followed up by a presentation by the Executive Director of UNEP, as Chair of the EMG, on the Coalition to the high-level segment of the UNCCD CoP on 9-10 September.



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## Plans for the Second Coalition Meeting (5-6 Sept.)

The Second Meeting of the Coalition will be composed of two segments:

- An informal technical segment (5 September)
- A formal segment to launch the Coalition (6 September)

The **objectives** of the technical segment will be to address:

1. formal approval of/signoff to the SDS Coalition terms of reference;
2. consideration of a draft SDS Strategy paper;
3. consideration of a draft ToRs for preparation of an SDS 'app';
4. other issues before the SDS Coalition.

The **objectives** of the official launching segment of the Coalition will be to:

1. present the Coalition and its objective to the wide audience of UN entities and other stakeholders;
2. allow participating agency members of the Coalition to present their agency's work and contribution to the SDS Coalition;
3. allow other stakeholders to share their views on challenges and opportunities for collaboration in addressing the sand and dust storm issues;
4. identify new partners and commitments in support of the Coalition objectives.

The participants will be invited to have an interactive discussion addressing the following questions:

1. What measures have UN entities, member states and other stakeholders have taken in addressing the SDS in the context of the implementation of the SDGs?
2. How can the international community enhance and further promote multi-stakeholder cooperation and partnerships at all levels to addressing SDS?

### Expected participants:

1. Technical and informal segment
  - UN entity members of the Coalition
2. High-level segment
  - UN agencies and multilateral environmental agreements (MEA);
  - Member States;
  - key academic/research, civil society and private sector representatives.



Figure 1- Members of the SDS Coalition