**United Nations Coalition on Combatting Sand and Dust Storms**

**(SDS): Governance Operational Guidelines**

(25 June 2020)

**A. Background**

The General Assembly, through its resolution 72/225, invited the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (hereafter UNEP), to consider initiating an inter-agency process to prepare a global response to sand and dust storms. This initiative was intended to create a network of relevant entities of the UN system, within their respective mandates and existing resources, and take into account UN Environment Assembly resolution 2/21 of 27 May 2016 and other relevant resolutions and decisions. The General Assembly, in its 73rd session, welcomed the intention of UNEP's ED to establish such an inter-agency network as an inter-agency framework for medium- and long-term cooperation on SDS. In response, the 24th Meeting of the EMG Senior Officials in September 2018 agreed to form a "Coalition to Combat Sand and Dust Storms" (hereafter SDS).

**B. What is the SDS Coalition?**

The SDS Coalition includes UN agencies, non-UN organizations and research institutes (currently a group of 15 UN agencies, other IGOs and affiliated members) whose purpose is to promote global action on SDS and bring together expertise from different areas relevant to addressing SDS-related issues, and offer targeted cross-sectoral and cross-cutting technical support at global, regional and national levels. The Coalition is not a legal entity as such, but a voluntary association dedicated to combating SDS. Most of its members have nominated one or more focal points (see Annex I), and Initial meetings of the SDS Coalition in 2019 took place on 14 February (Geneva), 5 September (New Delhi), 30-31 October (Geneva) and 14 December (Hangzhou). These meetings agreed on the mandate, objectives, focus areas and an initial draft workplan for the SDS Coalition.

The SDS Coalition is **mandated** to:

- promote and coordinate a collaborative UN system response to the growing issue of

SDS on local, regional and global scales, ensuring unified and coherent actions.

- facilitate exchange of knowledge, data, and best practices among Coalition members to

promote effective and coherent actions on SDS across the UN system and beyond.

- encourage and promote collaboration on initiatives and actions among members of the

Coalition, including advocacy and funding initiatives.

- facilitate dialogue and collaboration amongst affected countries and the UN system to

address SDS issues collectively.

- facilitate the capacity building of Member States, raise their awareness and enhance

their preparedness and response to SDS in affected countries and regions.

**C. Purpose of this Governance concept note**

The purpose of this governance concept note for the SDS Coalition is to define, *inter alia*, the modalities of the Coalition's work; the structure of the Coalition; and other issues relevant to its functioning.

This Governance concept note also seeks to clarify what it means to be a member of the SDS Coalition; the roles of all members as well as practical aspects related to how the Coalition will conduct its business (frequency of meetings and related issues), et cetera.

**D. Guiding Principles for the SDS Coalition**

1. All members of the SDS Coalition will have an **equal voice** in discussions related to both the form and substance of the Coalition's work on sand and dust storms, as well as an **equal right to participate** in all plenary meetings and working groups they are part of.

2. All members of the SDS Coalition will **respect the expertise and inputs** of other members as regards their mandated realms, particularly as these are relevant to sand and dust storms, and in common or joint undertakings to combat SDS (activities, events, projects etc.)

3. All members of the SDS Coalition will manifest **openness and transparency** concerning their SDS-related activities, vis-a-vis other members of the SDS Coalition, to help assure confidence in the overall collaboration and obtain the best results in combating SDS.

4. All members will make their best efforts to **participate in annual plenary and other**, **"special-purpose" meetings**, as well as meetings of those **working groups** of which they

have become members, within their abilities and depending on related costs.

5. Certain additional responsibilities and privileges are hereby granted to "core" members of the SDS Coalition, as opposed to "affiliate" members (see section F below).

**E. Bases of and Modalities for the SDS Coalition's work *(including chairing/hosting)***

1. The **SDS Coalition will meet in plenary no less than once per year**, and **twice per year if required** for a second "special-purpose" meeting (e.g., to consider particular approaches to SDS, project activities or other priority topics which concern all/most members).

2. The **annual SDS Coalition Plenary meeting** will be announced no less than three months before the actual date, to give all members time to plan/prepare for and attend the meeting. The annual Plenary Meeting (and if held the special-purpose meeting) should always offer the possibility for members to participate via video-conferencing or similar distant means, so as to maximize the total number of members participating and reduce costs.

3. The **chairing/hosting** of the SDS Coalition will change every two years on a rotating basis. Any member of the SDS Coalition may be nominated by another member, or propose itself as a candidate for a two-year chairing period[[1]](#footnote-2). If there is more than one nomination for chair, an open vote will be held to decide the next chair; that is, in the previous year's Plenary meeting. If only a single member is nominated or proposes itself for chairing,

they may then be selected by general acclamation in the Plenary meeting.

4. The **venue** for each annual Plenary Meeting will be proposed by the current chairing/ hosting member and validated by the SDS Coalition membership as a whole.

5. The **five SDS Working Groups[[2]](#footnote-3)** established in the terms of reference of the Coalitionwill develop their own meeting plans and schedules based on their needs and preferences, to be proposed by their (co-)leads, but will be subject to the same principles as those for the SDS Coalition as a whole.

6. An **annual workplan** of the SDS Coalition shall be developed based on the final, approved Strategy and Action Plan for the Coalition. Priority activities as identified by consensus, and *stemming from the Action Plan*, shall form the basis of the annual workplan of the Coalition. This shall then be renewed ("rolled over") every year, with completed activities being taken out and newly proposed ones inserted, after a full discussion and approval of individual activities proposed in the SDS Coalition's annual plenary meeting.

The annual workplan should clearly demonstrate that "the whole is greater than the sum of the parts"; that is, the many SDS-related activities, events and projects therein may in fact be executed by only one - or jointly by two or more members - of the SDS Coalition, but the workplan in its entirety should serve to highlight the collective efforts of all. For example, the annual workplan of each of the five Working Groups will be derived from the overall annual workplan of the SDS Coalition.

7. Reporting and Review:

a. The chair/host agency will be responsible for the organisation of and the reporting on the annual plenary meeting, as well as any "special purpose" meeting (see E1 above), the latter with support from any of the agencies that may choose to co-sponsor such a meeting.

b. The chair/host agency will also be responsible for producing and disseminating the final version of the annual workplan and leading an annual review of its implementation (i.e., a general evaluation of activities/events/projects' progress and level of success).

c. If agreed by a majority of SDS Coalition members, after the first two years of operation, an overall review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the SDS Coalition's joint work may be conducted by an external, neutral party, based on criteria to be determined prior to the actual review. The purpose of such a review would be to identify strengths and weaknesses related to the SDS Coalition's joint activities and operations; to improve overall performance; as well as delivery of the activities/events/projects covered by the workplan.

8. Cost-related Issues:

a. The costs of chairing/hosting of the SDS Coalition (as noted above, for a two-year period) will be borne by the chair/host agency during their two-year chairing/hosting role. This includes the cost of the reporting and workplan review obligations of the chair/host.

b. The costs associated with preparing for and participating in the annual plenary and any special-purpose meeting, as well as preparing for and participating in working group meetings, shall be the responsibility of individual members of the SDS Coalition.

c. The costs of an eventual overall review of the SDS Coalition and its activities should be funded voluntarily by multiple members of the Coalition, not the chair/host alone.

d. The costs of individual activities/events/projects in the annual workplan will be borne by those identified as the lead / co-lead agency(-ies) and the members of the working group for their implementation, based either on agency funds or resources raised from external donors. The SDS Coalition, as a voluntary body, shall not be responsible for funding such activities/events/projects, except where the required funds may stem from a proposal of two or more Coalition members with the express purpose of underwriting (a) given activity(-ies)/event(s)/project(s).

**F. Membership/Structure of the SDS Coalition**

The SDS Coalition is a voluntary body composed of UN agency members[[3]](#footnote-4), other inter-governmental bodies and programmes[[4]](#footnote-5), and other interested relevant entities from academia, the research community, civil society organizations and the private sector. Membership in the Coalition is composed of institutions as opposed to individuals, meaning that a formal institutional commitment is needed to join, but at the same time allowing different persons from each entity to participate in various aspects of the Coalition's work through time.

The collective existing membership of the SDS Coalition is open to and will jointly approve (or not) any new member that is proposed or requests to join, by vote in a Plenary meeting.

The founding members of the SDS Coalition have signalled their interest and willingness to participate in the Coalition and its activities in writing. The same will apply to future interested parties; that is, they should signal their interest to join the SDS Coalition by writing a letter of intent to the current chairing member. The latter will make known

each such request for the collective existing membership to approve or disapprove.

Any member entity that wishes for whatsoever reason to no longer participate in the

SDS Coalition and its activities, should formally withdraw by writing a letter indicating

their departure from the Coalition to the current chairing member.

The SDS Coalition shall distinguish between "core" members and "affiliate" members. The term "core members" shall refer to UN system institutions, namely the UN Secretariat and specialised agencies, programmes, regional commissions and the secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) that are Coalition members. The term "affiliate member" shall refer to all other Coalition members, including non-UN intergovernmental organisations, academic and research entities and, if included, private sector members.

The rights and privileges of "core" as opposed to "affiliate" members of the SDS Coalition are defined as follows:

- core members only will have voting privileges, whereas affiliate members will not.

- core members only will have the right to chair/host the SDS Coalition for two years.

- core members only will have the right to (co-)lead one of the five working groups[[5]](#footnote-6).

- core members only will have the right to (dis-)approve new members joining.

- all members will have the right to participate and speak equally in all meetings of the

SDS Coalition, including plenary, "special-purpose" and working group meetings.

- all members will have the right to suggest activities/events/projects to include in the SDS

Coalition's workplan, and prepare/participate in funding proposals for the same,

but only core members will decide on the final content of the annual workplan.

**G. SDS Coalition Working Groups roles and relationship to the Coalition**

The five Working Groups of the SDS Coalition (see p. 3, footnote 2) are subsidiary bodies of the Coalition; they are thus dependent on and take their identity from the Coalition itself. The main role of the five Working Groups is to focus on advancing the five elements of the SDS Coalition's Strategy in a coherent, efficient and cross-cutting manner, within their respective thematic areas. Each Working Group will be led (or co-led) by one or two core member(s), typically those with the most experience and knowledge of that subject area. Each of the Working Group's (co-)leads will assure regular communication and flow of information with the SDS Coalition's chair/host agency and the other working groups, in the context of the Coalition’s overall Strategy (see final version of the SDS Coalition terms of reference of May 2019 for further details on the Working Groups' activities).

Membership in a Working Group will be open to all Coalition members. Coalition members interested in joining a Working Group may do so by writing to the lead/co-leads, with a copy to the current Coalition chair/host agency.

The five Working Group leads/co-leads will report annually on their activities and progress to the SDS Coalition plenary meeting, while also disseminating reports of their occasional or regular Working Group meetings to other Working Group chairs and all SDS Coalition members, in order to assure normal communication and flow of information.

It can also be foreseen that the (co-)leads of the five Working Groups would themselves meet at least once annually, possibly on the side of the SDS Coalition plenary meeting, to share further information about each Group's work and advance on common/shared activities/events planning/projects (a "Working Group" day ahead of the plenary).

The leads/co-leads of the five Working Groups, once formally selected, would serve in such a capacity for a two-year period, or until such time as they might choose to step down if no other candidate(s) made known their interest. At each transition, the current chairing/ hosting agency of the SDS Coalition would solicit nominations for a replacement agency, ultimately to be confirmed by a vote online or in the next plenary meeting.

**H. *Resolution of disputes (?)***

**ANNEX I: LIST of UN AGENCY-APPOINTED FOCAL POINTS, ALTERNATES and**

**OTHER MEMBERS for the SDS COALITION**

***(in alphabetical order according to name of agency/entity)***

**Name** **Agency**

Nandhini Krishna CBD

Sanjay Srivastava (and Letizia Rossano) ESCAP (-APDIM)

Carol Chouchani Cherfane, Roula ESCWA

Majdalani and Tarek Sadek ESCWA

Feras Ziadat , Stephan Baas, AbdelHamied Hamid, FAO

Sophie VonLoeben, Vera Boerger, FAO

Daniel Dale and Conor Elliot FAO

Natalia Chalaeva, Lorenzo Gavilli ICAO

and Jane Hupe ICAO

Vanessa Gray and Cosmas Zavazava ITU

Jonathan Davies IUCN

Utchang Kang and Melchiade Bukuru UNCCD

Mohammad Reza Salamat UNDESA

Anne Juepner and Timothy Scott UNDP

Gary Lewis, Abdelkader Bensada, Tessa UNEP

Goverse, Mijke Hertoghs, Maarten UNEP

Kappelle, Levis Kavagi, Nicholas UNEP

Middleton, Hassan Partow, Pascal UNEP

Peduzzi and Jinhua Zhang UNEP

Batyr Hajiyev UNECE

Maryam Navi UNFCCC

Siamak Moghaddam UN-Habitat

Angus MacKay UNITAR

Marco Toscano-Rivalta & R. Diaz-Agero Roman UNISDR

Sophie Gumy, Mazen Malkawi, Pier Paolo WHO

Mudu and Werner Obermeyer WHO

Alexander Baklanov, Paul D. Egerton, Pavel WMO

Kabat and Robert Stefanski WMO

Craig M. Meisner World Bank

*(To date: 18 agencies/entities and at least 45 persons named)*

1. - The first SDS Coalition chair can be decided by a secure online ballot procedure such as ezVote. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. - The five Working Groups are: 1) Adaptation and Mitigation; 2) Forecasting and Early Warning;

   3) Health and Safety; 4) Policy and Governance; and 5) Mediation and Regional Collaboration. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. - From the UN Secretariat, specialized agencies and regional commissions. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. - For example, multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. - If exceptionally an affiliate member wishes to (co-)lead a working group, such an arrangement

   would need to be approved by consensus within the working group itself. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)