

**Strategy for the UN Inter-Agency Sand and Dust Storm (SDS) Coalition**

***(25 June 2020)***

**A. Background**

In January 2018, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in its resolution 72/225 invited the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to initiate an inter-agency process involving relevant entities of the UN system, to prepare a global response to sand and dust storms[[1]](#footnote-2) (hereafter SDS). The UNGA in its 73rd session welcomed the intention of UNEP's Executive Director to establish such an inter-agency network, having the potential to become a framework for medium- to long-term cooperation on SDS.

In September 2018, the 24th Meeting of the EMG Senior Officials agreed to form the "Coalition to Combat Sand and Dust Storms (SDS)", including UN agencies and other organizations and research institutes, to address this challenge. The SDS Coalition has since grown into a group of 15+ agencies, intergovernmental organisations 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 SDS Coalition was formally launched at a side event of the UNCCD's 14th Conference of Parties in New Delhi on 6 September 2019.

The **mandate** of the SDS Coalition as defined by the participating entities is as follows:

 - promote and coordinate a collaborative UN-system response to SDS, on local, regional and

 global scales, ensuring unified and coherent actions are taken;

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

 promote effective and coherent action on SDS across the UN system;

 - encourage and promote collaboration on initiatives and action within the Members of

 the Coalition on SDS, including advocacy and funding initiatives;

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

 addressing SDS issues collectively; and

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

 their preparedness and response to SDS in critical regions.

UN agencies nominated their focal points to the Coalition and its first meeting was held by videoconference on 14 February 2019. At that time, the focal points also agreed on areas of focus, modalities and a near-term (to end 2019) workplan for the Coalition.

**B. Basis for and Common Elements of an SDS Coalition Strategy**

Aside from the SDS Coalition mandate elaborated above, the Coalition has agreed that its joint work plan should support the following series of **objectives**:

 - Prepare a global response to sand and dust storms, including a strategy and an action plan,

 which could result in the development of a United Nations system-wide approach to

 addressing sand and dust storms;

 - Identify entry points to support affected countries and regions in the implementation of

 cross-sectoral and transboundary risk reduction and response measures for SDS;

 - Convene and enhance dialogue and collaboration among affected countries and the UN

 system agencies at global, regional and sub-regional levels; and

 - Provide a common platform for technical expertise and resources for strengthening pre-

 paredness measures and strategies for risk reduction, consolidated policy, innova-

 tive solutions, advocacy and capacity building efforts, and fund-raising initiatives[[2]](#footnote-3).

Both the **mandate** of the SDS Coalition and its **agreed objectives** serve as points of departure for the Strategy's conception. This Strategy also elaborates *how* the SDS Coalition can best collaborate and employ its limited human and financial resources to achieve maximal results, have the greatest impact within a reasonable time period and build momentum for SDS-related activities and projects globally and at the country level. In addition, while the SDS Coalition will strive to catalyse SDS-related activities and events at global to local levels, it is assumed that most work will be conducted and results felt at the national and (to a lesser extent) regional levels, in both SDS source and impact areas, where most logical and needed.

The key common elements found within the SDS Coalition mandate and objectives provide a clear focus for the Strategy. The essence of these can be reduced to **five key elements** the Strategy needs to address and explain, in terms of how the SDS Coalition can succeed in its mission to "prepare a global response to sand and dust storms" and provide support to the most affected countries (see page 4 below). Figure 1 (page 3) diagrams the relationship between the Strategy's elements, the SDS Coalition objectives, its five working groups and

the DRM Approach with work to be conducted at the country level (credit: FAO).



Figure 1. Relationship between Strategy's elements, SDS Coalition objectives and

 Working Groups, DRM Approach and work at country level (by FAO).

1. **UN inter-agency collaboration and dialogue on SDS** on a regular and ongoing basis.

2. **Advocacy and awareness-raising** on SDS, both within and beyond the UN system, to inform

 relevant entities and affected countries, and help to catalyse appropriate actions on SDS.

3. **Exchange of information**, knowledge/expertise and innovative solutions for SDS-related

 issues, with national partners and other entities, with related **capacity building/training**.

4. Development of a **forum/platform** to address SDS (this to build on points 1-3).

5. **Fund raising/resource mobilisation** for joint responses to SDS issues.

These five key elements as elaborated in further detail below highlight the ways and means for the SDS Coalition to achieve this "five-point plan" within a reasonable time period (2020-24), in order to have measurable qualitative and quantitative impacts on SDS issues at global, regional and national levels.

**C.** **Elements of the SDS Coalition's Strategy**

1. Enhancing UN inter-agency collaboration

The SDS Coalition is first and foremost **a means to convene, communicate and raise awareness** about sand and dust storms' underlying causes, the mechanics of SDS and their potential and actual impacts, along with solutions for countries and regions to better cope with the same. The SDS Coalition is also a rich resource of cross-sectoral technical expertise that can provide countries with holistic and cross-cutting support in addressing SDS. In addition, the Coalition needs to **consider both the political and technical aspects of SDS** in becoming effective at promoting collaboration and cooperation. To succeed in all this, the Coalition should strive to become **the authoritative voice on SDS issues**, both at the global level and in the countries and regions that are most affected by SDS, and **make full use of the UN's convening power** to do so. Following are a ***series of actions*** that offer pathways to bring such a collaborative and convening role to fruition in the coming years:

1.1 - Continue to further develop the work of the SDS Coalition and expand its membership;

 consider enlarging the Coalition[[3]](#footnote-4) to include key actors from the public and private

 sector around the world (e.g. research institutes, disaster planning and emergency

 response bodies, insurance companies and other relevant bodies) which could bring

 additional substance to and resources for the Coalition's work(plan).

1.2 - Continue to hold regular online general meetings of the SDS Coalition, i.e. at least twice

 per year, and special-purpose ones when needed for planning purposes, coordinated

 by the current hosting/lead agency, and have occasional presentations by selected

 members allowing them to detail one or more of their activities linked to SDS issues.

1.3 - Consider a range of high-visibility, high-impact projects that could involve two or more

 Coalition members, partners and beneficiaries, including affected countries, and fast

 track these as outstanding examples of inter-agency/entity collaboration *(the*

 *success of such examples could, e.g., considerably aid in fund-raising activities)*.

1.4 - Assure that SDS-related activities and projects undertaken by any & all Coalition members

 dovetail with similar activities/projects already underway or planned by other members,

 in order to achieve greater synergies and efficient use of resources, and also to be able

 to highlight how the SDS Coalition is fulfilling its mandate efficiently (see also 5 below).

1.5 - Participate in numerous high-level international and regional events, through one or

 more Coalition member, in order to highlight the inter-agency collaboration on SDS

 for broad audiences and potentially bring more data/information and financial and

 human resources into play - globally and regionally - for SDS in the coming years.

2. Advocacy and Awareness-raising

Advocacy and awareness-raising are closely related but far from identical tasks. On the one hand, **advocacy** implies speaking out about SDS issues and on behalf of its stakeholders, leading to improved actions to cope with the same, whereas **awareness-raising** means educating a broad range of entities and individuals concerned by SDS to improve their understanding of the causes and impacts of such events/processes. However, both of these tasks should ultimately have the effect of bringing more resources (human, institutional and financial) to bear on SDS-related problems, and assuring a more receptive audience for relevant activities/projects.

Clearly both of these broad tasks would be best achieved in a fully-coordinated fashion; the SDS Coalition itself offers the ideal vehicle for such interaction. Following are a series of points to assure that advocacy and awareness-raising activities can be efficiently conducted:

2.1 - Develop a simple and straightforward **communications strategy** that helps to address

 key SDS stakeholders (affected countries, other UN agencies and IGOs, civil society

 and the private sector) using clear messages and easy-to-understand, well-

 illustrated case studies of SDS issues, and ideal channels for advocacy and

 awareness-raising, to be used by Coalition participants.

2.2 - Develop an easy-to-access and use **SDS 'app'** that offers information on SDS, including

 forecasts of SDS events, offering measures for undertaking mitigating actions, along

 with a health-related advisory element and a function to allow members of the

 public to report dust storms as they occur.

2.3 - Development of a **series of** (mostly online) **products** that can be used to better explain

 what are SDS and the potential and real impact of related events, as well as what

 entities/individuals can do to prepare and help mitigate such occurrences. Such

 products (e.g. brochures, instruction kits, newsletters etc.) can be cited and/or

 distributed when Coalition members take part in relevant meetings. As a few

 existing examples, see the WMO's periodic "Airborne Dust" bulletins and the

 UNCCD's "SDS Compendium: Information and Guidance on Assessing and

 Addressing the Risks Posed by Sand and Dust Storms" *(n.b. - in progress)*.

2.4 - Create a step-by-step **road map** ("infographic") that can also be used both to explain

 and to address SDS challenges for policy-level and locally-affected stakeholders.

2.5 - Create a **calendar** of SDS-related events that can be used to advocate for and raise aware-

 ness about SDS issues and the Coalition itself. Determine within the SDS Coalition

 which members are best-placed to attend and take key messages forward at such

 events, promoting the inclusion of SDS in global agendas, helping raise funds etc.

A **draft "action plan"** (see Annex I) identifies key opportunities at global and regional levels to develop and promulgate messages to the global SDS community at large.

3. Exchange of Information and Capacity Building:

This section deals with the collection and dissemination of relevant information, knowledge, expertise and innovative solutions and tools on SDS, among various participating entities and countries, end users et al. It also covers potential capacity building activities that would help

to mainstream relevant expertise/information/solutions at regional and national levels, for those regions and countries that are most affected by SDS events and issues.

There is a clear need to develop a repository of information and knowledge on the entire life cycle of sand and dust storms, from their genesis/enabling conditions to their post-event environmental and societal impacts, as well as on methods to mitigate such impacts. Such a repository or "virtual catalogue" will not only form a critical mass for affected countries and other stakeholders to consult, but will facilitate the exchange of vital information, knowledge and best practices relating to SDS. At the same time, the creation of such a catalogue will engage a wide range of stakeholders in its development and ongoing maintenance, and thus stimulate a dialogue among concerned entities/persons.

The following steps are proposed to this end:

3.1 - Develop a catalogue of all available models, practices and tools for SDS risk management

 before, during and after the occurrence of the hazard, including mitigation and

 adaptation, early warning and various assessment types, with an emphasis on

 documenting success stories from varied sources (entities/places);

3.2 - Document existing research findings (e.g. scientific papers) and principal databases that

 offer improved knowledge for better understanding of SDS events. These should

 include, but not be limited to: SDS forecasting and early warning, risk assessments,

 vulnerability assessments, economic impact assessments, GIS-based approaches (e.g.

 vulnerability mapping), methodology frameworks found in the WMO SDS-WAS Science

 and Implementation Plan and periodic reports, UNEP-WMO-UNCCD Global Assessment

 of SDS, the UNCCD Compendium and similar UN technical documents, including guidance to best practices to mitigate / adapt to SDS and with appropriate links to

 other relevant databases such as WOCAT[[4]](#footnote-5).

3.3 - Conduct a gap analysis to identify areas of the SDS lifecycle where information is lacking

 and hence further study is needed; then strive to have scientific research conducted

 that will ultimately help to fill the gaps identified.

3.4 - Identify reasons for lack of implementation of SDS source and impact mitigation practices

 by key stakeholders including local ones, and make available through the repository

 *(n.b. - this could be conducted in part through a survey of relevant literature)*. Develop Recommendations on the appropriate enabling environment to enhance the scaling out and implementation of mitigation/adaptation measures at national and regional level.

3.5 - Promote studies to examine SDS impacts from a gender perspective and on livelihoods,

 including related humanitarian aspects and political risks stemming from SDS, and also

 further risk assessments, vulnerability assessments and economic impact assessments.

Having such a comprehensive set of resources/tools in place will provide knowledge-based support for a series of **capacity building** activities, including all of the following:

3.6 - Identify the training needs of various countries/stakeholders to help in designing a

 training programme, then plan and organize trainings at national and regional levels,

 targeting different government sectors in line with SDS’s cross-sectoral nature and

 multi-disciplinary impacts. This may include capacity building for countries on

 implementing source-and-impact mitigation measures, strengthening governance

 and regional cooperation mechanisms, etc.

3.7 - Plan and organize multi-disciplinary training programmes, potentially building on and with

 the support of the WMO's SDS-WAS long-term experience in SDS training programs and

 specialized training courses[[5]](#footnote-6), the FAO's eLearning Academy, UNCCD's SDS training

 modules for National Focal Points and stakeholders, as well as similar materials that

 may be available from other Coalition members[[6]](#footnote-7).

3.8 - Plan and organize trainings for international aid and humanitarian groups, focusing on the

 advice given to local communities to help prepare for and cope with SDS events.

A suitable approach to training design and delivery, such as the Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation (ADDIE) methodology, backed by a set of quality standards covering each step in the process, will need to be developed. At the country level, and when and where possible, competency-based learning/skills assessments should be conducted in target countries, by adapting an existing such framework to specific SDS issues and concerns. Also to be considered in the training programme design is a potential blend of traditional face-to-face (f2f) approach with distance-based/online instruction for foundational learning.

This proposed set of capacity building activities at national and regional levels will need to focus on key SDS issues offering a "high return" (in terms of results for investment), and also consider innovative approaches where possible, using pilot activities to test and improve the trainings prior to wider implementation. Also, given the cost of preparing and conducting such trainings, a prioritized list of capacity building requests should be developed and cost-estimated, and then matched with agency/donor funds or within projects as these become available.

All capacity building/training efforts should be linked to the proposed 'plat-forum' (see element 4 below), so that networks/communities of practice can be aligned and in part driven by the training effort, thus also encouraging more downstream activity as a result.

4. Development of a "Plat-forum" for SDS

This section, building on and deriving from (1) to (3), proposes an **online "plat-forum"** to facilitate awareness-raising and information exchange on SDS for a global audience, as well as

a clearinghouse on relevant capacity building activities, present and future. This plat-forum could, for example, take its inspiration from such existing fora as the WMO's SDS Warning Advisory and Assessment System (SDS-WAS), the Sendai Global Platform for DRR, and UNEP's "World Environment Situation Room" (https://environmentlive.unep.org/wesr/), while seeking to complement the same with more 'bespoke' SDS content. The following are proposed:

4.1 - Develop an online database including assessments/papers/studies/methods & tools

 relating to SDS, to be accessible to all SDS Coalition members, affected countries and

 the general public. The database could reference and draw upon, for example. the

 WMO SDS-WAS dust observation, modelling and forecasting data (see links from

 https://www.wmo.int/sdswas), the U.S. NASA's Land, Atmosphere Near-real-time

 Capability for EOS (LANCE), used to monitor and predict dust storms; UN Data (from

 WMO; see e.g: *http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=CLINO&f=ElementCode%3AAJ*);

 and/or the European Centre for Medium-range Weather Forecasting's Copernicus

 Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS; https://atmosphere.copernicus.eu/); the

 WMO's Sand and Dust Storm Warning Advisory and Assessment System (SDS-WAS,

 <http://www.wmo.int/sdswas>) ; The FAO Land Resources Planning Toolbox http://www.fao.org/land-water/land/land-governance/land-resources-planning-toolbox/en/ and other existing databases/networks.

4.2 - Allow for a "citizen science" bottom-up approach and real-time reporting as part of the

 plat-forum, including use of interactive maps and where, e.g., citizens could upload

 pictures (see e.g. NASA Globe Observer programme (https://www.globe.gov/web/s- cool/home/new-dust-observations) and map events and their severity in near-real

 time (impact assessment); this could be integrated with the proposed SDS forecasting

 app *(see (2) above)*.

4.3 - Include in the plat-forum the SDS products (e.g. brochures, instruction kits, newsletters

 etc.), calendar of events and roadmap to be developed as part of element 2 above,

 in order to provide access to the broadest set of SDS materials possible to all.

4.4 - Also include an up-to-date register of current and planned SDS-related capacity building

 activities/projects, and related materials, users uploading/sharing knowledge about their own examples of best practices to mitigate/adapt to SDS for users of the plat-forum to consult *(n.b. - such a "register" could be as simple as a regularly maintained Excel file)*.

The plat-forum website could be hosted by one of the key UN agencies within the SDS Coalition and overseen by a steering group that would consult on an agreed frequency, to discuss and make decisions about the evolving content and structure of the plat-forum.

5. Fund raising / Resource mobilisation

The set of activities proposed in elements (1) to (4) above is complex and far-reaching, and the achievement of many of these will require significant financial and human resources. While the latter may mostly be found within the members of the SDS Coalition itself and other partners, including private/public entities that are willing to invest staff time in SDS-related activities, funding will still be required for many of the proposed activities (information collection, product development, joint integrated databases, product development, facilities for observa-tion and prediction, online resources such as the plat-forum, training workshops etc.).

Therefore, this element (5) examines: where to begin the search for financial means necessary (funding pathways relevant to SDS issues); practical considerations in fund-raising; the role of the SDS Coalition as a broker between recipients and providers of financial support; the need for coordinated approaches to potential donor entities; as well as more global requirements (including *inter alia* those of the SDS Coalition itself).

5.1 - Begin by defining the set of potential funding entities/mechanisms that can be targeted

 in resource mobilization efforts. These can include, *inter alia*, the Global Climate Fund

 (GCF), the Global Environment Fund (GEF), the UN Fund for South-South Cooperation,

 the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund *(see - http://mptf.undp.org/)*, and the WMO's SDS-

 WAS Trust Fund et al. There would be much potential in targeting groups of countries

 for funding and multi-stakeholder consultation/capacity building, which would also involve technical cooperation including South-South cooperation.

5.2 - Prepare a series of proposals, ranging from source mitigation to early warning and fore-

 casting and educational/outreach activities, for potential donor funding, and that

 reflect the highest priority needs of SDS regional partners and affected countries.

 Include proposals that would support the global activities of the SDS Coalition.

 Ideally, proposal writing should pair at least one of the Coalition members with

 a national or regional institution that would be the beneficiary of the support.

5.3 - Organize a "donor - recipient workshop" for the SDS Coalition and affected countries to

 call on potential donor entities for their support, and for participating donors to

 make pledges, either of a general nature or toward specific funding requests.

5.4 - When and where countries (national entities) and regional bodies take the lead in

 preparing funding proposals, identify which of the SDS Coalition members will

 assist them in making contact and following through with prospective donors.

5.5 - Support countries (national entities) and regional bodies throughout the process of pre-

 paring and submitting funding proposals, particularly those focusing on targeted

 capacity building activities at the national and regional levels, including helping

 them to match available/potential resources with their defined needs.

5.6 - Where possible, add value to funding proposals by involving private partners such as weather services, e.g. through creation of SDS private-public partnerships (PPPs).

5.7 - Maintain an active register of funding proposals and their status *(e.g. an Excel file)*.

**D. Linkages with the five proposed SDS Working Groups**

As part of the terms of reference (ToRs) for the SDS Coalition, and to meet the Coalition's four objectives, it was decided to establish five working groups. The five working groups are: 1) Adaptation and mitigation (ESCWA, FAO, UNCCD and UNDP); 2) Forecasting and early warning (UNEP and WMO); 3) Health and safety (WHO and WMO); 4) Policy and governance (UNCCD and UNEP); and 5) Mediation and regional collaboration (ESCAP, ESCWA, UNECE and other regional commissions). Several agencies have already offered to co-lead working groups, as tentatively indicated in brackets.[[7]](#footnote-8) Depending on current activities and potential contributions to the working groups, leads, co-leads and members of working groups will be officially established and Terms of Reference and work plans identified.[[8]](#footnote-9)

As they begin operating, the working groups will each have a role to play in the SDS Strategy's implementation; some potential linkages need to be agreed to assure their involvement. To offer just one example, the Health & Safety working group will need to focus on health/safety information and capacity building exercises that provide access to state-of-the-science case studies and knowledge online, and in related training exercises for affected countries et cetera. The workplan activities undertaken or supported by the Working Groups will need to be aligned to ensure that all elements of the overall Coalition action plan are covered.

In line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, disaster risk management consists of interrelated stages for: 1) prevention; 2) mitigation; 3) preparedness; 4) response and 5) recovery. An integrated approach to understanding SDS occurrences, and planning for and responding to the same, allows the global community to prepare interventions to limit occurrence or impacts and cope most effectively with SDS across the many regions and countries affected.

The current SDS Coalition Strategy is in fact a ***fully normative*** one, and as such it can be considered both cross-cutting and integrated in the sense that all five elements of the Strategy apply equally to inform SDS interventions. In other words, an integrated DRM approach mirroring the interrelated actions for DRM offers a neutral lens through which working groups will deal with SDS issues.

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| **Strategy Element:** | UN Inter-agency collaboration | Advocacy & Awareness-raising | Exchange of Information and Capacity Building | Develop-ment of a "Plat-forum" | Fund raising / Resource Mobilisation |
| **WGs’ generic contribution to the UN Coalition**  | Chair of each working group participates in all SDS Coalition meetings; reports on working group activities and results; offers to represent Coalition at int'l events | Each group contributes to a communications strategy and SDS 'app'; offers to develop and provide info products in 'their' realm; and offers events for the SDS calendar. | Each group contributes to nat'l./reg'l. SDS training workshops in 'their' realm; adds training materials; documents research incl. models/tools and relevant studies; and inputs to the gap analysis. | Each group contributes 'its' products to the online SDS data-base; chair of each group sits on steering group of plat-forum; and adds to register of cap. bldg events. | Each group provides its expertise and inputs to relevant fund raising proposals to help assure their scientific validity; and offers contacts with likely donor entities. |
| **Example of WG-specific contributions** |
| Working Group Adaptation & Mitigation  | *Understanding the source, dynamics, impact of SDS and best practices; participate in relevant events, such as of UNCCD, UNFCCC UNDRR etc.*  | *Raise awareness on best practices for adaptation/ mitigation, quantification of damage and loss of SDS on different sectors* | *Exchange information with group 2 and 5; share compendium of high-impact context-specific SDS adaptation and mitigation good practices; Together with experts from the other working groups, plan and organize trainings at national and regional levels, targeting different government sectors in line with SDS’s cross-sectoral nature and multi-disciplinary impacts;*  | *Share information on source and impact, cost of action/ inaction, links to existing database on best practices and enabling environment;*  | *Cost / benefit analysis of action vs inaction, global environmental benefits, linkages to global commitments and SDG ; Prepare proposals on adaptation and mitigation for potential donor funding, that reflect the highest priority needs of SDS regional partners and affected countries.* |
| Working Group Forecasting & Early Warning  | *Participate in relevant events, such as of UNCCD, UNFCCC UNDRR etc* *Attend WMO's SDS Workshop and SDS-WAS Global Steering Committee meetings* | *SDS 'app' development, approval and dissemination to users; Develop a series of quarterly regional newsletters on major activities and events, including trainings etc., for Africa/s'ern Europe, China/S'ern Asia, the Middle East and the Americas* | *Together with experts from the other working groups, plan and organize trainings at national and regional levels, targeting different government sectors in line with SDS’s cross-sectoral nature and multi-disciplinary impacts;*  | *Share SDS forecasting and early warning information on the plat-forum*  | *Prepare proposals on early warning and forecasting, for potential donor funding, that reflect the highest priority needs of SDS regional partners and affected countries.* |
| Working Group Health & Safety | *Participate in relevant events, such as of UNCCD, UNFCCC UNDRR etc.**Participate in international events related to health and raise awareness of SDS as a threat to health and safety* | *Raise awareness on the negative impacts of SDS on health and safety*  | *Document existing research on SDS impacts on health and safety and potential response options ; Together with experts from the other working groups, plan and organize trainings at national and regional levels, targeting different government sectors in line with SDS’s cross-sectoral nature and multi-disciplinary impacts;* | *Share health-related research on SDS on the plat-forum* | *Use the research findings on the negative impacts of SDS on health as advocacy for fundraising*  |
| Working Group Policy and Governance | *participate in relevant events, such as of UNCCD, UNFCCC UNDRR etc.**Establish linkages with global commitments and relevant actors* | *Create a step-by-step road map ("infographic") that can also be used both to explain and to address SDS challenges for policy-level and locally affected stakeholders; Create a calendar of SDS-related events that can be used to advocate for and raise awareness about SDS issues and the Coalition itself.* | *Together with the adaptation and mitigation working group, identify reasons for lack of implementation of SDS source and impact mitigation practices and develop policy recommendations; Together with experts from the other working groups, plan and organize trainings at national and regional levels, targeting different government sectors in line with SDS’s cross-sectoral nature and multi-disciplinary impacts;* | *Stock-taking of SDS-related policies and plans and share on the plat-forum; identify options for advancing SDS policy and planning*  | *Prepare proposals on SDS governance, for potential donor funding, that reflect the highest priority needs of SDS regional partners and affected countries.* |
| Working Group Mediation & Regional collaboration  | *Attend relevant regional platforms and meetings to improve regional collaboration on SDS;* *Develop SDS projects for implementation in the SDS-affected countries*  | *Raise awareness at regional and country level* | *facilitate the implementation of capacity building workshops at regional levels.* | *Identify regional research institutes and experts on SDS that can contribute to the plat-forum;*  | *Identify potential donors and funding partners at regional level, including international organizations, as well as countries in the regions; Assist regional entities and countries throughout the process of preparing and submitting funding proposals, matchinms available/potential resources with their defined needs, in terms of SDS capacity building at the national and regional levels.* |

The working groups will focus on advancing the strategy of the SDS Coalition in a coherent, efficient and cross-cutting manner, within their respective thematic areas. This can be seen, for example, in a diagram showing examples how the five working groups could support the Strategy's implementation via attribution of relevant tasks to all of the working groups, as in the matrix shown above.

Such an approach to implementing the SDS Strategy with support from the Coalition's working groups should be periodically revisited and adjusted as work progresses, and to recognize clear strengths and preferences of certain working groups under the various elements.

**E. Pilot activities for the SDS Coalition**: a jump start to "quick wins"

As an initial boost to the Strategy, it is proposed that the SDS Coalition consider undertaking a few pilot activities or projects that would assure concrete, high-visibility results during the first year of implementation, and which would offer a powerful message to both affected countries and potential donors. Such an activity or project could focus on a trans-boundary SDS issue affecting several countries within the SDS belt (a universal issue, such as improved early warning and forecasting of SDS events[[9]](#footnote-10)), or a more local SDS-related phenomenon (such as reforestation exercises[[10]](#footnote-11) or more sustainable agricultural practices at the village level), and could involve two or more Coalition members/partners, including the affected countries.

The high-impact results of such a project could be provided to multiple countries as quickly as possible. If a single effective project were "fast-tracked" and provided clearly useful results, it could not only serve as an outstanding example of inter-agency collaboration, including with affected countries, but its success could also considerably aid in fund-raising activities.

The members of the SDS Coalition would need to agree on what SDS issue to address with such an effort and decide how to take it forward by the end of the current year, including source(s) for funding the selected activity or project. A consensus could be sought in online exchanges and accepted/endorsed by the next Senior Officials' Meeting later in September 2020.

**F. Conclusions/Summary**

This *draft* Strategy proposes a "five-point plan" and a related series of activities and outputs under each of the five points for achieving the objectives of the SDS Coalition. The Coalition begins with the great advantages of the UN's convening power and its system-wide capability to spread key messages on sand and dust storms globally, regionally and at the national level.

In addition, given the broad mandate of the SDS Coalition, it is ideally placed to become the authoritative voice on sand and dust storms in a global context, and to bring together other IGOs, civil society, the academic/research community and the private sector in addressing SDS issues in a coherent way, and in facilitating contacts between donors and affected countries.

If the current SDS Coalition works together in an effective and steadfast manner to achieve the elaborated set of activities and outputs, it should make major progress towards its self-defined objectives, raise the profile of SDS-related issues on the international agenda, and also provide effective support to countries and regions in preparing for, coping with and reducing the impacts of sand and dust storms world-wide.

**ANNEX I:**  draft "Action Plan" for implementing the Strategy *(see separate document)*

**Selected References**

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1. - "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". [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. - The final Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the SDS Coalition also identify four major cross-cutting **work areas**: 1) facilitation of information exchange among stakeholders; 2) capacity building and training; 3) mobilizing resources and fund-raising initiatives; and 4) advocacy and awareness-raising. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. - It should not be forgotten or overlooked, e.g., that there is also a need for improved/increased collaboration of UN agencies in regard to other topics that are relevant for SDS, as well as linkages with the Rio Conventions, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and other global and regional entities dealing with relevant topics, such as agriculture and rangeland management at the country level (including FAO, IFAD, UNDP et al.), land degradation and desertification, disaster risk reduction and climate change, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. ###  - The World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies is a global network on

###  Sustainable Land Management (SLM) that promotes the documentation, sharing and

###  use of knowledge to support adaptation, innovation and decision-making in SLM.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. - WMO SDS-WAS and its Regional Nodes and Centres have, for more than ten years, periodically organized a number of different actions aiming to strengthen the capacity of countries to use the observational and forecast products distributed in the framework of the WMO SDS-WAS programme; see examples of SDS training events and materials at: https://sds-was.aemet.es/materials/training. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. - UNCCD's SDS training modules focus on how to assess a country’s vulnerability to SDS and mitigate the negative impacts, including methodological frameworks for economic impact, risk and vulnerability assessments (*inter alia* transboundary origins and impacts), GIS-based mapping, source and impact mitigation and preparedness strategies, national/regional planning and policies and early warning. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. - Based on discussions at the first meeting of SDS Coalition focal points on 24 Feb. 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. - Once established and endorsed, working groups will further detail their contributions to the Coalition. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. - Perhaps along the lines of early warning/forecasting work being done by SDS-WAS regional centres. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. - Perhaps along the lines of the current "Great Green Wall" projects in Africa and China. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)