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Sustainable development: combating sand and dust storms

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2023

[on the report of the Second Committee ([A/78/461/Add.9](#), para. 7)]

78/158. Combating sand and dust storms

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions [70/195](#) of 22 December 2015, [71/219](#) of 21 December 2016, [72/225](#) of 20 December 2017, [73/237](#) of 20 December 2018, [74/226](#) of 19 December 2019, [75/222](#) of 21 December 2020, [76/211](#) of 17 December 2021 and [77/171](#) of 14 December 2022 on combating sand and dust storms,

Reaffirming its resolution [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner, and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

Reaffirming also its resolution [69/313](#) of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supports and complements it, helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, and reaffirms the strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity,

Reaffirming further the Paris Agreement¹ and its early entry into force, and encouraging all its parties to fully implement the Agreement, and parties to the United

¹ Adopted under the UNFCCC in [FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1](#), decision 1/CP.21.



Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change² that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible,

Highlighting the synergies between the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement, noting with concern the findings contained in the special report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change entitled *Global Warming of 1.5°C*, noting with concern also the findings of the report of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific entitled *Sand and Dust Storms Risk Assessment in Asia and the Pacific* and the report of the United Nations Environment Programme entitled *Impacts of Sand and Dust Storms on Oceans: A Scientific Environmental Assessment for Policy Makers*, in addition to the World Health Organization global air quality guidelines and the World Meteorological Organization report entitled *2020 State of Climate Services: Risk Information and Early Warning Systems*, noting the holding of the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, hosted by the Government of Egypt in Sharm el-Sheikh from 6 to 20 November 2022, and looking forward to the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in the United Arab Emirates from 30 November to 12 December 2023,

Recalling United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions 1/7 of 27 June 2014 on strengthening the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in promoting air quality,³ 2/21 of 27 May 2016 on sand and dust storms⁴ and 4/10 of 15 March 2019 on innovation on biodiversity and land degradation,⁵

Acknowledging the work done by the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,⁶ towards mitigating sand and dust storm issues at source, and acknowledging also the continuing support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for countries affected by sand and dust storms through the promotion of sustainable land use management, agroforestry, shelter belts, afforestation/reforestation and land restoration programmes, which all contribute to sand and dust storm source mitigation,

Recalling its resolutions 71/229 of 21 December 2016, 72/220 of 20 December 2017, 73/233 of 20 December 2018, 74/220 of 19 December 2019, 75/218 of 21 December 2020, 76/206 of 17 December 2021 and 77/166 of 14 December 2022 on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

Welcoming the convening of the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 9 to 20 May 2022, noting the adoption of the Abidjan Call as well as the Abidjan Legacy Programme, to address drought and preserve and restore the terrestrial ecosystem, reverse land degradation and halt the loss of biodiversity, noting also decision 26/COP.15 of 20 May 2022,⁷ in which the Conference urged a proactive approach to enhance cooperation at all levels to address the causes and impacts of

² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

³ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 25 (A/69/25)*, annex.

⁴ *Ibid., Seventy-first Session, Supplement No. 25 (A/71/25)*, annex.

⁵ *UNEP/EA.4/Res.10*.

⁶ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

⁷ See *ICCD/COP(15)/23/Add.1*.

sand and dust storms and called for the organization, as appropriate, of a science-policy dialogue to contribute to the development of further guidance and policies to address sand and dust storms, and welcoming the offers made by the Government of Saudi Arabia and the Government of Mongolia to host the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions, in 2024 and 2026, respectively,

Welcoming also the first part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Kunming, China, from 11 to 15 October 2021, and the second part of the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in Montreal, Canada, from 7 to 19 December 2022, and its outcomes, including the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and urges their early, inclusive and effective implementation,

Recalling its resolution [66/288](#) of 27 July 2012, in which it endorsed the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled “The future we want”,

Noting the adoption, by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its seventy-second session, of resolution 72/7 of 19 May 2016 on regional cooperation to combat sand and dust storms in Asia and the Pacific, and taking note of the Regional Plan of Action on Sand and Dust Storms in Asia and the Pacific of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management of the Commission,⁸

Noting also the endorsement by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its seventy-fifth session of the recommendation by the Governing Council of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management to establish a subregional cooperation mechanism for slow-onset hazards with a focus on sand and dust storms in South-West and Central Asia, and noting the endorsement by the Commission at its seventy-eighth session of the Regional Plan of Action on Sand and Dust Storms in Asia and the Pacific, which provides a strategic framework and reference for countries in the region to take action at the national and regional levels, in the context of multi-hazard disaster risk reduction, to reduce the negative impact of sand and dust storms and identify anthropogenic measures that could contribute to or mitigate their formation and intensity,

Taking note of the Regional Programme to Combat Sand and Dust Storms of the United Nations Environment Programme, and of other initiatives, including the ministerial meeting on sand and dust storms held in Nairobi on 21 February 2013 on the margins of the twenty-seventh session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme,

Recalling the Sendai Declaration and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution [69/283](#) of 3 June 2015, and recognizing that one of the priorities for action of the Framework is an understanding of disaster risk for prevention and mitigation and for the development and implementation of appropriate preparedness and effective response to disasters, which continue to undermine efforts to achieve sustainable development, recalling also the convening of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, and its political declaration,⁹

Noting with great concern the severe negative impact on human health, safety and well-being caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as

⁸ ESCAP/78/12/Add.1.

⁹ Resolution [77/289](#), annex.

the severe disruption to societies and economies and the devastating impact on lives and livelihoods, and that the poorest and most vulnerable are the hardest hit by the pandemic, reaffirming the ambition to get back on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by designing and implementing sustainable and inclusive recovery strategies to accelerate progress towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to help to reduce the risk of and build resilience to future shocks, crises and pandemics, including by strengthening health systems and achieving universal health coverage, and recognizing that equitable and timely access for all to safe, quality, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics are an essential part of a global response based on unity, solidarity, renewed multilateral cooperation and the principle of leaving no one behind,

Stressing the need for cooperation at the global and regional levels with a view to managing and mitigating the effects of sand and dust storms through the enhancement of early warning systems and the sharing of climate and weather information to forecast sand and dust storms, and affirming that resilient action to combat and prevent sand and dust storms requires a better understanding of the severe multidimensional impacts of sand and dust storms, including the deterioration of the health, well-being and livelihood of people, increased desertification and land degradation, deforestation, loss of biodiversity and land productivity, and their impact on sustainable economic growth,

Recognizing that sand and dust storms are an issue of international concern, the costs of which are measured in economic, social and environmental terms, and that sand and dust storms continue to grow and negatively affect the achievement of 11 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their means of implementation, expressing deep concern about the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on human health and well-being, while taking into consideration that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges faced by people in vulnerable situations, noting with concern that sand and dust storms may exacerbate the symptoms of respiratory diseases such as COVID-19 and may complicate and prolong the recovery from the disease, in addition to the other negative impacts that can be associated with respiratory disorders such as asthma, tracheitis, pneumonia and silicosis, which may lead to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cardiovascular and heart disorders, in addition to eye and skin irritation, and can also spread other diseases, such as meningitis, and taking into account that a reduction in cardiovascular and respiratory disease, as comorbidities linked to COVID-19-related deaths, can produce significant health benefits, when mitigating measures are taken,

Emphasizing the relevance of the efforts and cooperation of Member States at the regional and international levels to control and reduce the negative impacts of sand and dust storms on human settlements in vulnerable regions, recalling its resolutions 72/225 and 77/171, in which it noted the first International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, held in Tehran from 3 to 5 July 2017, and the second International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, held in Tehran on 9 and 10 September 2023, welcoming the holding of other meetings with the active participation of all countries, and taking note with appreciation of other ongoing initiatives to combat sand and dust storms, at the national, regional and global levels,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;¹⁰
2. *Recognizes* that sand and dust storms and the unsustainable land management, soil, agricultural and livestock practices, among other factors, that can cause or exacerbate these phenomena, including climate change, pose a serious challenge to the sustainable development of affected countries and regions, also

¹⁰ A/78/237.

recognizes that, in the past few years, sand and dust storms have inflicted substantial economic, social and environmental damage on the inhabitants of the world's arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid areas, especially in Africa and Asia, and underscores the need to treat them and to promptly take measures to address those challenges;

3. *Recalls* the convening of a high-level interactive dialogue on sand and dust storms, held at Headquarters in New York on 16 July 2018, bringing together Member States, observer States and observers of the General Assembly, United Nations system entities, regional commissions and other stakeholders to discuss action-oriented recommendations and address the challenges faced by the affected countries, including ways to improve policy coordination at the global level to tackle those challenges in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals, during which the continuing need to confront the challenges presented by sand and dust storms was highlighted;

4. *Welcomes* the operationalization of the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, which is pursuing efforts, within its mandate and resources, to move to the implementation stage, and aims, *inter alia*, to promote and coordinate a collaborative United Nations system response to the growing issue of sand and dust storms on a local, regional and global scale, ensuring that unified and coherent action is taken, and to facilitate the capacity-building of Member States, raise their awareness and enhance their preparedness and response to sand and dust storms in critical regions;

5. *Once again invites* the Secretary-General to consider designating a relevant agency or entity with adequate capacity to act as a focal point on sand and dust storms in the United Nations system to follow up the decisions in the relevant resolutions and the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms;

6. *Recognizes* the importance of new and innovative technologies and best practices in combating sand and dust storms, as well as their sharing and transfer on mutually agreed terms;

7. *Encourages* regional, subregional and interregional organizations and processes to continue to share best practices, policies, experiences and technical expertise in combating and preventing sand and dust storms to address the root causes and mitigate the impacts of sand and dust storms, including through improved implementation of sustainable land management, soil, agricultural and livestock practices, and to promote regional cooperation in this matter to reduce the risks and impact of future sand and dust storms and to provide affected countries with capacity-building and technical support from the relevant United Nations organizations, such as the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization, within their respective mandates, to this end;

8. *Takes note* of the convening of the second International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, in Tehran on 9 and 10 September 2023;

9. *Requests* the President of the General Assembly to convene, at the seventy-ninth session of the Assembly, a high-level meeting on sand and dust storms, through voluntary contributions and without duplication of effort, in collaboration with the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, to be held in the General Assembly Hall, at United Nations Headquarters in New York, in the context of the International Day of Combating Sand and Dust Storms, and encourages the participation of countries at the highest level possible, to discuss the challenges faced by affected countries to further practical actions at the regional and global levels;

10. *Invites* all affected Member States as well as relevant entities of the United Nations development system, regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders to endeavour to meet the objectives set out in the present resolution;

11. *Takes note* of the establishment of a regional and global trust fund for the West Asia and African region to combat sand and dust storms, supported by voluntary contributions from interested countries, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, major groups and other donors, the private sector, civil society and regional development banks, to undertake the implementation of regional and subregional programmes and action plans without prejudice to the possibility that this fund may include other regions in the future, while respecting international frameworks and any relevant documents on combating sand and dust storms to ensure coordinated action at a global scale;

12. *Reaffirms* that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and, among other factors, is a serious challenge to the sustainable development of all countries, including those affected by sand and dust storms, and emphasizes that, among other factors, climate change is an important potential contributor to future wind erosion and the risk of sand and dust storms, especially the occurrence of more extreme wind events worsening drought conditions and the movement towards drier climates, although reverse effects are possible;

13. *Recognizes* that sand and dust storms cause numerous human health problems in different regions around the world, especially in arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid regions, and that there is a need to reinforce protective strategies to reduce the negative impacts of sand and dust storms on human health, invites the World Health Organization, with the cooperation of other relevant United Nations system entities, as appropriate, to support affected countries in combating health problems caused by sand and dust storms, within their respective mandates, recognizes the formation of a working group on sand and dust storms to discuss emerging issues and share information under the technical advisory group on global air pollution and health of the World Health Organization, and also recognizes the publication of a dedicated section on the health effects of sand and dust storms as part of the World Health Organization global air quality guidelines released in September 2021, and the development of standard operating procedures to assess and address the short-term health effects of desert dust by the World Health Organization, in collaboration with experts from the World Meteorological Organization;

14. *Emphasizes* that sand and dust storm issues will continue to constitute important components of the global coalition on health, environment and climate change launched in May 2018 by the World Health Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization to improve coordination and reduce deaths that are attributed to environmental risks, such as air pollution;

15. *Commends* the United Nations Environment Assembly on its commitment to addressing sand and dust storms, and in this regard notes Environment Assembly resolution 2/21 on sand and dust storms, adopted during its second session, and resolution 4/10 on innovation on biodiversity and land degradation, adopted during its fourth session;

16. *Takes note* of the convening of the regional ministerial meeting on environmental cooperation for a better future held in the Islamic Republic of Iran on 12 July 2022 to find solutions for regional environmental challenges, especially the issue of sand and dust storms;

17. *Recalls* the convening of the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi from 28 February to 2 March 2022, under the

theme “Strengthening actions for nature to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”, and also recalls its ministerial declaration;¹¹

18. *Commends* the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, on its efforts to develop both a global base map of sand and dust storm sources, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization, and the *Sand and Dust Storms Compendium: Information and Guidance on Assessing and Addressing the Risks*, in collaboration with the Science-Policy Interface of the Convention and other relevant United Nations system entities, as a comprehensive collation of material designed to provide information and guidance on how to assess and address the risks posed by sand and dust storms and plan actions to combat their recurrence and impacts;

19. *Also commends* the World Meteorological Organization for achieving several improvements to the observation and modelling systems that are part of its Sand and Dust Storm Warning Advisory and Assessment System, which provides sand and dust storm forecasts for early warning systems in various countries, and encourages the World Meteorological Organization and all relevant stakeholders to broaden the regional domains of this system to cover the highly affected regions and to continue making technical improvements to it;

20. *Welcomes* the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, held in Abidjan from 9 to 20 May 2022, takes note of the Abidjan Call and other relevant decisions adopted by the parties during the Conference, namely decision 26/COP.15, and reaffirms the importance of addressing sand and dust storms under the Convention;

21. *Encourages* the relevant entities of the United Nations, including the World Health Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, within their respective mandates and resources, and donors to continue to provide capacity-building and technical assistance for combating and preventing sand and dust storms and to continue to support the implementation of the national, regional and global action plans of the affected countries;

22. *Recalls* its resolution [77/294](#) of 8 June 2023, in which 12 July of each year was proclaimed as International Day of Combating Sand and Dust Storms, to further raise international awareness of sand and dust storms, and stresses the need for global and regional cooperation to manage and mitigate their effects;

23. *Decides* to consider during the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly the measures required to proclaim the International Decade for Combating Sand and Dust Storms, within existing structures and available resources;

24. *Acknowledges* the global assessment of sand and dust storms prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme in collaboration with other relevant United Nations system entities, including the World Meteorological Organization and the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which sets out proposals for consolidated and coordinated technical and policy options for responding to sand and dust storms;

25. *Takes note with appreciation* of the efforts made by the World Health Organization so far in conducting and its willingness to conduct further studies regarding the common effects of both COVID-19 and sand and dust storms on public

¹¹ [UNEP/EA.5/HLS.1](#).

health, and invites the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, within its existing mandate and resources, to continue its efforts to prepare recommendations on mitigating the common effects of both COVID-19 and sand and dust storms on the respiratory systems of infected people, to be included in the report of the Secretary-General to be submitted to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session;

26. *Requests* the Secretary-General to further encourage the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms to conduct its priority activities as identified by the Coalition's five working groups, which are knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, training, awareness-raising and support for the formulation of national, regional and interregional plans, to mitigate and prevent sand and dust storm hazards, to encourage the Coalition to enhance resource mobilization efforts so as to increase voluntary contributions to the Coalition and its member agencies, and invites the Coalition to consider the possibility of broadening the scope of the concept note to include other sectors affected by sand and dust storms, in order to align with the workplan of the Coalition;

27. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, while including best practices aimed at adapting, mitigating, controlling and combating sand and dust storms in collaboration with the affected nations and other countries, and decides to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-ninth session, under the item entitled "Sustainable development", the sub-item entitled "Combating sand and dust storms".

*49th plenary meeting
19 December 2023*
