COP17 Closing Statement

Delivered by India on behalf of the Annex II – the Asia-Pacific Group

Closing session of the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD | Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia | 28 August 2026

Madam President,
Executive Secretary,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of Annex II, the Asia-Pacific Group, India has the honour to address the closing session of the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

Let me begin by extending our deepest condolences to the Governments of Nepal, China and India and all the families affected by the devastating flashfloods. Our thoughts are with the communities grieving the tragic loss of lives, and we stand in steadfast solidarity with the nations as rescue and recovery efforts continue.

Madam President,

We commend you and your team, for your leadership and the tireless efforts to facilitate consensus. We thank the Government and people of Mongolia for their generous hospitality. We also thank the Executive Secretary, the UNCCD Secretariat, the Global Mechanism, the Chairs and Bureaux of the subsidiary bodies, the facilitators of contact groups, interpreters, conference services, security personnel and all partners who supported our work. We acknowledge the continued contribution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the COP16 Presidency and thank all Parties for the constructive spirit demonstrated throughout these negotiations.

Madam President, Distinguished delegates,

The Asia-Pacific Group recognizes the considerable work undertaken throughout COP17. For our region, key priorities have included the future strategic direction of the Convention; drought resilience; sand and dust storms; effective reporting and implementation through CRIC; capacity building; a robust and realistic budget; resource mobilization and strong scientific and technical support through the CST and SPI. Across these areas, adequate means of implementation, capacity-building and strengthened regional and international cooperation remain essential. We welcome that the Secretariat will continue to support the convening of all UNCCD caucuses.

The Asia Pacific Group reiterates the global and transboundary nature of drought and sand and dust storms, different nature and drivers of land degradation due to diverse

geographical contexts, and the need to have cooperation with national, regional, interregional, and international organizations to address these challenges, enhance financial resources and transfer of technology.

Our region also reflects unique and diverse circumstances, home to most of the world's population and spanning high mountains and forests, agricultural plains, drylands and deserts, low lying atolls, rangelands, deltas, coasts and Small Island Developing States. Across these landscapes, our ecosystems are deeply interconnected—from land and forests to freshwater and oceans. For many countries, particularly SIDS, what happens on land directly affects surrounding ecosystems, communities and livelihoods. Recognizing these connections will be essential to effective implementation of the Convention.

Madam President,

COP17 has demonstrated that cross-cutting and procedural matters can have significant implications for progress across the Convention. Issues including gender, synergies among the Rio Conventions, SIDS, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as well as stakeholder participation, have arisen across multiple agenda items. Going forward, we should consider more effective ways to address these recurring matters.

Similarly, procedural clarity, inclusive participation and equitable regional representation are fundamental to effective negotiations. The experience of this COP highlights the need to strengthen our approaches so that procedural challenges can be addressed early and constructively, allowing Parties to focus their time and energy on substantive outcomes and implementation.

Our region welcomes the commitments and initiatives launched during COP17, including the Steppe action agenda, the Interregional Initiative to Combat Sand and Dust Storms in Western Asia, as well as the willingness of many Parties to establish an "International Day of Rangelands and Pastoralists".

As we leave Ulaanbaatar, the true measure of COP17 will be how effectively we translate our decisions into action that restores and conserve land, strengthens resilience and improves the lives and livelihoods of our people.

The Asia-Pacific Group remains committed to constructive engagement and cooperation with all Parties. Restoring land must restore opportunity, strengthen resilience and, ultimately, restore hope.

Thank you, Madam President and we wish all delegates a safe journey home.