

African Union Great Green Wall Initiative Strategy and Ten-Year Implementation Framework: *Ecosystem Restoration and Livelihoods Resilience (2024-2034)*

COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION BRIEF

BACKGROUND

The Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) is a flagship project of the African Union (AU), launched in 2007 to combat desertification and land degradation in the Sahel and Sahara regions. Initially, it was conceived as a narrow belt of trees stretching across Africa to halt the spread of the desert. However, the initiative has since evolved into a broader land restoration and sustainable development programme, aiming to revitalise degraded ecosystems, support agriculture, pastoralism, and forests, while improving livelihoods and resilience in affected communities.

Originally focused on 11 countries, the initiative has now expanded to include 25 additional nations from across Africa, with South Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda also expressing interest. Recognising the

need for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to land degradation, desertification and climate change, and cognisant of the need for its urgent revision, the African Union Commission (AUC) developed a revised strategy and ten-year implementation framework. This new GGWI Strategy encourages an integrated and holistic approach to land rehabilitation and climate-resilient development among its Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Agencies and partners. It emphasises ecosystem restoration, climate resilience, and economic opportunities for smallholder farmers, pastoralists, and local communities, positioning itself as a transformative continent-wide solution for achieving land restoration at scale.

The revised GGWI Strategy is a ten-year strategic planning document (2024-2034) that defines the vision, specific objectives, intervention and action areas required to scale up land restoration and resilience building activities associated with agricultural, grazing, and forest landscapes across the African continent. The new GGWI Strategy drew upon the findings and key recommendations

of the independent evaluations which have been conducted since its inception in 2012.¹

This brief summarises the proposed coordination and implementation approach of the new GGWI Strategy and provides the suggested actions.



COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Agreed arrangements among institutions, agencies, partners and stakeholders are critical to ensuring that implementation efforts associated with the GGWI Strategy are directed at and will meet the goals and objectives outlined. The achievement of the goals and objectives of the GGWI Strategy are dependent upon the clarity of roles and responsibilities, clear coordination mechanisms, and principles of engagement within and across scales, sectors, and stakeholders. Further, flows of information, communications and financial resources will enable effective coordination, implementation, and adaptive

management. This section reviews the existing roles of the different organisations, agencies, initiatives, and partners. The coordination arrangements are to be refined based on future discussions among the GGWI official bodies and other relevant stakeholders.

Setting more specific criteria for membership to the GGWI is also imperative. These criteria are typically designed to ensure that members or participants not only share the overarching goals of the Initiative but also actively contribute towards achieving them.

Great Green Wall Initiative bodies and support institutions across various scales

CONTINENTAL AND REGIONAL BODIES

Official bodies:

- African Union Commission (AUC)
- African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD)
- Pan-African Agency for the GGW (PAAGGW)
- RECs
- Southern African Development Community (SADC)
- AU Member States
- GGWI Steering Committee
- African Development Bank (AfDB)

Indicative supporting bodies:

- **African technical institutions** - Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA), Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), West and Central Africa Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF), AGRHYMET Regional Centre (food security), Central African Forestry Commission (COMIFAC), IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Centre (ICPAC), African Climate Policy Centre (ACPC), African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD), and National Agricultural Research Institutions (NARIs).

1. **UNCCD. 2020.** The Great Green Wall implementation status and way ahead to 2030. Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall and Government of Ireland.

UNCCD. 2023. Independent Evaluation of the GGW Accelerator. UNCCD.

Transparency International. 2023. Governance mapping and assessment of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative.

- **African technical and research agencies** – Africa Forest Forum (AFF), Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), and the African Climate and Development Initiative (University of Cape Town).
- **African-based civil society organisations (CSO) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)**- African Women's Leadership Network (AWLN), the AU Youth Assembly, SOS-Sahel, TREE AID, One Billion TREES FOR AFRICA, SOS SAHEL INTERNATIONAL, DRYNET, RESADs, ASSOCIATION CARI, DANAYA, SPONG Burkina Faso.
- **Regional farmer organisations** - Pan African Farmers' Organisation (PAFO) and the five regional farmer organisations: East African Farmers' Federation (EAFF), Network of Farmers' and Producers' Organisations in West Africa (ROPPA), Southern Africa Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), Regional Platform of Farmers' Organisations in Central Africa (PROPAC) and Maghrebian and North African Farmers Union (UMNAGRI).

INTERNATIONAL BODIES

- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Accelerator.

Indicative supporting bodies:

- **United Nations (UN) agencies and IFIS** - United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Organisation on Migration (IOM), HABITAT, UN WOMEN, World Food Programme (WFP), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
- **International finance organisations** - World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), AfDB, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF).
- **International research and technical centres** - Alliance of CIAT and Bioversity; International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI); Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA), the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA); Centre for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), International Research for Development (IRD, France), the Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (FOLUR) Impact Programme.
- **International NGOs and CSOs** - International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Resources Institute (WRI), Stockholm Environmental Institute (SEI), Conservation International, World Vision (WV), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Oxfam, CARE, Tree Aid, the Global Evergreening Alliance, Sadar Development and Resilience Institute.

National, subnational and community levels

GGWI national-level implementation and coordination:

The organisational structures and institutional arrangements for the coordination and implementation of the GGW vary per Member State. These can take the form of a GGWI national agency, focal points, or national coalitions. Because the GGW takes an integrated approach to landscape restoration and resilience building, it links across different commitments and goals at continental, national and international levels. It is important that these entities are synergised with the focal points and coordination mechanisms of the Rio Conventions, as well as engaged in cross-ministerial and multistakeholder efforts linking public, private, and civil sectors.



Subnational and local authorities and leaders:

The GGWI Strategy highlights the critical importance of engaging local authorities and local leaders enhancing their capacities, financial resources, coordination, monitoring, Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) and adaptive management. The PAAGGW has outlined priorities in its Decennial Priority Investment Plan (DPIP) for 2021-2030. This serves to improve local ownership, in turn fostering collaboration and reducing social conflicts.

Communities, civil society organisations, local movements, and local champions:

The engagement and leadership of community members, women and youth leaders, civil society movements and champions provide impactful implementation and support. Farmers and herders are the main users and managers of land and natural resources and as such, they are key players in the realisation of the GGWI. Their organisations (unions, federations, umbrella organisations) are well structured at all levels, from local to regional, and are already present across the landscape. It is recommended that at all levels, the GGWI more directly supports producers' organisations, and integrates them into natural resource management strategies, and involves them in achieving the objectives of the GGWI. The national agencies can enter into performance contracts with civil society organisations for them to support GGWI implementation in a more cost-effective way.

PRIVATE SECTOR ACROSS SCALES

As key strategic and implementing partners, the GGWI Strategy will require concrete linkages with different private sector entities at different scales. Examples of organisations that are serving as private sector and entrepreneurial catalysers in support of building land health and restoration include the WRI Land Accelerator, Futures Agribusiness (FAGRIB), Aerobic Agroforestry, African Honey Products, NovFeed, Africorps International, Agribusiness Solutions Ltd, Ceriops, BioLife, Herou Alliance, Horizon Business Ventures, Sahara Sahel Foods, Meat Naturally, and IT.org.

Coordination arrangements

The coordination of the GGWI has proven to be complex and more work needs to focus on strengthening the existing relationships; building synergies with different projects, actors, and partners; and improving the communication channels. The GGWI Strategy offers an opportunity for these GGW related institutions, agencies, regions and countries to be harmonised and coherent going forward to ensure systems change for Africa.

Action area:

- Establish the harmonised policy making, coordination, technical and capacity support, implementation, monitoring and reporting arrangements, roles and responsibilities for the Africa-wide GGWI.

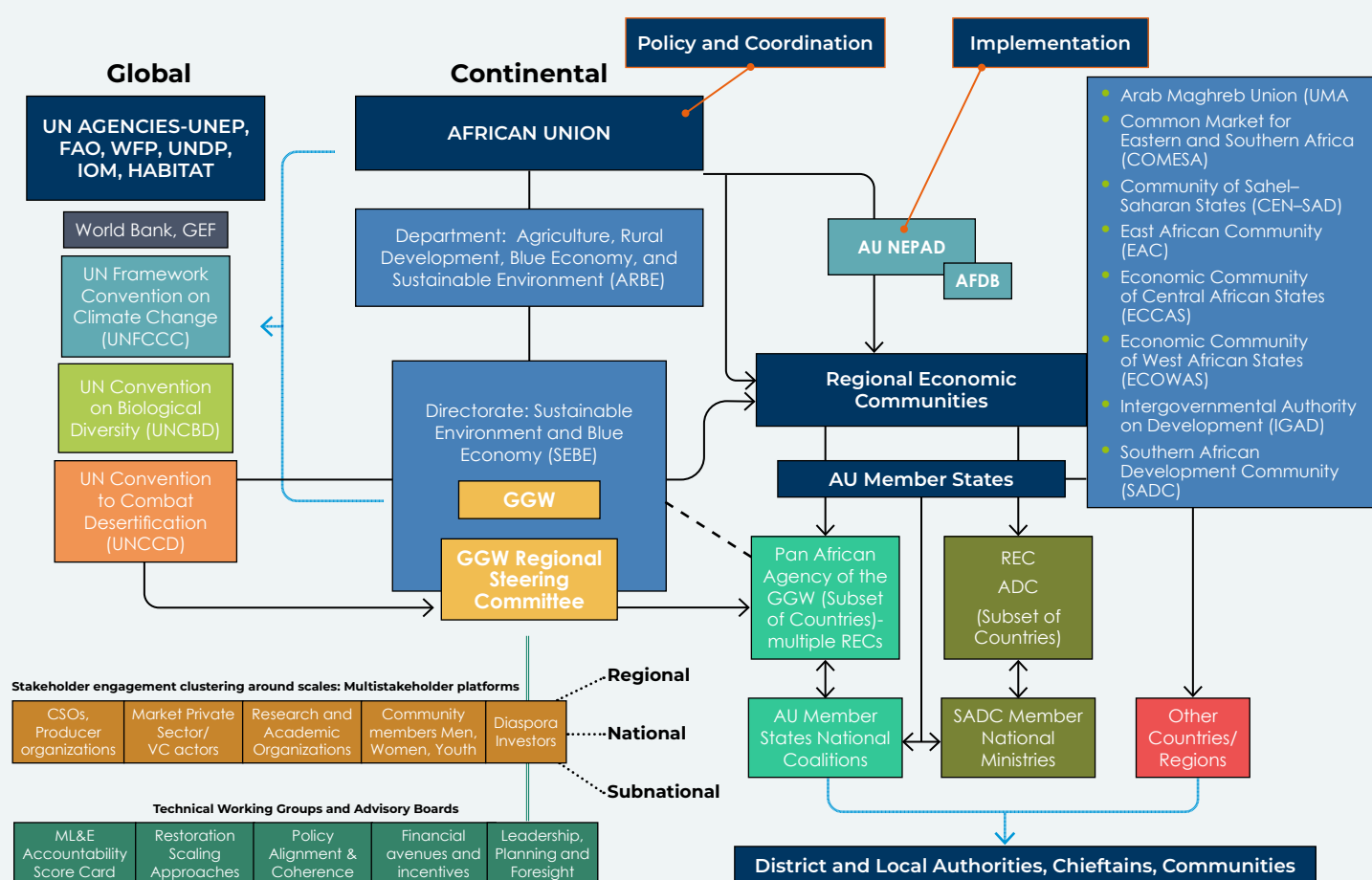


Figure 1: Indicative relationships among institutions and stakeholders of the Great Green Wall.

Criteria to obtain membership to the Great Green Wall Initiative

The criteria for joining the GGWI requires that each Member State aligns with the key objectives and values outlined in the GGWI. The PAAGGWI has set out clear criteria for Member States to follow to be part of the Agency. However, Member States wishing to become part of the AU's GGWI only submit an official request and there are no specific membership criteria that need to be adhered to. The purpose of criteria setting is aimed at making conditions for adherence very clear, inclusive and straightforward from the onset. It is important that the principal stakeholders leading the implementation of the GGWI, agree to criteria and categorisation.

Proposed criteria:

Countries

- Only Member States of the AU are eligible.
- The country should have a significant landscape that is considered as arid, semi-arid or highly degraded and have significant challenges related to land degradation and desertification (current or future).
- The country must demonstrate commitment to sustainable land management, restoration activities, and combating land degradation, desertification, drought, biodiversity loss and climate change.
- The country should agree to the development of an action plan related to landscape restoration and demonstrate the interconnectedness across current climate, biodiversity, agriculture and development plans in line with regional GGWI's objectives.
- The country should have a resource mobilisation plan to support its interlinked policy frameworks.
- The country should have ratified or endorsed the key GGWI documents and frameworks.
- The country should demonstrate, innovation and impact and progress on resilience.
- The country should demonstrate a commitment to cross-sectoral, multistakeholder and multi-scale approaches, imbedding consultation processes in decision-making.

International organisations

- The organisation should have a proven track record or mandate aligned with the objectives of the GGWI.
- Preference will be given to organisations that have prior collaborations with Member States, the AU, PAAGGWI, or similar entities.



- Organisations should have relevant operational experience in Africa, including experience with projects or initiatives within the Sahel or in drylands regions.
- Formal endorsement of GGWI's principles and objectives.

National and subnational organisations

- Demonstrated history of positive impact at the local level, consistent with GGWI objectives.
- Transparent operations, governance, and financial management.
- Evidence of genuine engagement and partnerships with local communities.
- Official recognition or certification from respective country governments.

Networks

- Clear mission and objectives that resonate and align with GGWI goals.
- Represent a diverse group of stakeholders, from grassroots to policy levels.
- Demonstrated track records, impacts or actions taken in line with GGWI objectives.
- Formal endorsement or collaboration with the AU or the PAAGGWI.

Private sector actors and business entities

- Formal endorsement or collaboration with the AU or the PAAGGWI.
- Demonstrated environmental and social governance criteria. Business entities and Investors should show how they are applying these non-financial factors as part of their analysis process to identify material risks and growth opportunities.
- Demonstrate corporate social responsibility in line with GGWI's objectives.
- Adherence to ethical business practices, especially in environmentally sensitive sectors.
- Demonstrate financial commitment and willingness to invest in GGWI projects or provide other forms of support.
- A clear statement of support for the principles and objectives of GGWI.

Reference considerations

- Policies and frameworks set by the AU and the PAAGGWI will form the core guidelines.
- For international organisations, adherence to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), especially Goal 15 (Life on Land), can be a benchmark.
- For business entities, alignment with global standards like the United Nations Global Compact or the Equator Principles can be considered.

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The Strategy weaves together the threads of community engagement, scientific research, practical application, and policy development into a coherent tapestry that supports resilient food systems, sustainable land management, value chains and entrepreneurship.

Great Green Wall Initiative endorsement principle

Endorsement is a significant step that demonstrates an entity's commitment, alignment, and readiness to engage in the goals and mission of the GGWI. This refers to the formalised act of expressing support, approval, and alignment with the core objectives and principles of the GGWI. These proposed set of criteria are designed to ensure that stakeholders, potential members or participants not only share the overarching goals of the GGWI but also actively contribute towards achieving them.

Proposed criteria:

- **Nature of endorsement** - Endorsement can come in various forms, including official declarations, signed letters of offer and acceptance, memoranda of understanding, resolutions, public statements, or other forms of official documentation.
- **Reflecting commitment and alignment with GGWI vision and mission** - By endorsing GGWI's principles, entities signify their deep-seated commitment to combat desertification, land degradation, and the resulting socio-economic challenges in the Sahel and other

dryland regions, ensure that their strategies, actions, and values align with GGWI's vision of creating a mosaic of green, resilient, and productive landscapes.

- **Accountability mechanism** - Once endorsed, entities will be obliged to act in line with the endorsed principles. This provides a layer of accountability to stakeholders and affected communities.
- **Credibility and reputation** - Formal endorsement lends credibility to entities in the eyes of their stakeholders, the public, and potential donors or partners. It shows proactive involvement in a cause of continental significance.
- **Shared platform and resources** - Endorsement can lead to entities sharing platforms, resources, best practices, and knowledge to synergise efforts and make the collective fight against desertification more effective.

- **Review and renewal** - Endorsement is not a one-time event. As GGWI activities evolve, its principles will be updated or expanded. Periodic review and renewal of endorsement will be necessary to reflect the current objectives and ensure continued alignment.
- **Broader implications** - Endorsement has broader implications beyond GGWI. It signifies a commitment to broader continental global goals, such as Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs, especially those related to life on land, climate action, and reduced inequalities.
- **Endorsement as a starting point** - Endorsing GGWI principles is a pledge to actively engage, collaborate, and contribute towards building a more resilient and sustainable future for Africa's drylands.

Criteria for new projects contributing to the Great Green Wall Initiative

This GGWI Strategy offers an opportunity to ensure that new projects and programmes are contributing to the priorities and objectives of the GGWI. The AU GGWI coordinating body or steering committee can develop a check list for proposal and project development that spells out how the project or programme, depending on its focus of the effort, contributes to: cross-learning, capacity development and local level scaling of land

restoration and resilience building in the countries; monitoring, evaluation, learning, accountability and adaptive management in alignment with GGWI; the harmonised approaches; the integration of nature-based practices and approaches; the support to lives and livelihoods of women and youth; the integration of practice, policy and science in support of landscape restoration.



For additional information about the meeting and how you could get involved, please contact:

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