

ALL CORRESPONDENCE MUST BE ADDRESSED TO THE DIRECTOR

11 September 2026

BOTSWANA COUNTRY SUBMISSION ON DRYLANDS SUSTAINABLE LAND IMPACT PROGRAMME (DSL-IP)

Agenda Item: Item 4: State of the World's Forests 2026: Restoring forests and landscapes – the way forward for a sustainable future

- **Submitting Member:** Republic of Botswana
- **Date of Submission:** 11 September 2026

I. General Comments on State of the World's Forests 2026

The Republic of Botswana expresses its high appreciation to the Secretariat for the comprehensive documentation prepared for this session. We strongly endorse the emphasis placed on scaling up landscape-level restoration as a primary vehicle to address the interlocking global crises of desertification, climate change, and biodiversity loss.

We underscore that dryland forest ecosystems; particularly the Miombo–Mopane woodlands remain among the most structurally complex, ecologically fragile, and historically underfunded ecosystems globally. These woodlands serve as vital barriers against land degradation while directly supporting the livelihoods of over two billion people.

Furthermore, Botswana emphasizes that dryland forest preservation cannot be decoupled from rangeland integrity. Achieving lasting land degradation neutrality (LDN) requires moving beyond simplistic "green cover" targets toward optimizing integrated agrosilvopastoral systems. This approach ensures high-quality forage production, protects native vegetation, and balances the co-dependence of livestock and wild species.

II. Alignment with Global Frameworks and High-Level Decisions

This submission highlights direct structural alignment with key international conventions and high-level decisions:

- **UNCCD COP17 Decisions & The Rangelands Flagship Initiative:** In alignment with the decisions adopted at the 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (August 2026), which recognized rangelands as critical ecosystems and pastoralists as key stewards, Botswana actively supports the

newly launched **US\$1.2 billion Rangelands Flagship Initiative** to anchor LDN across global grasslands and savannahs.

- **United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF20/21) Alignment:** In accordance with the UNFF20/21 Omnibus Resolutions, this submission advances Global Forest Goals (GFGs) 1, 3, and 5, demonstrating how sustainable forest management (SFM), community-led seed security, and multi-sectoral governance operationalize the UN Forest Instrument in climate-vulnerable drylands.

III. Country Experience: The DSL-IP Framework in Botswana

The Botswana Sustainable Miombo–Mopane Landscape Management Project; delivered through the Global Environment Facility (GEF-7) Dryland Sustainable Landscapes Integrated Programme (DSL-IP); serves as a premier model for translating international dryland, forestry, and rangeland frameworks into coordinated ground-level action. Administered through the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the project is led nationally by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) through the Department of Forestry and Range Resources (DFRR), co-anchored with the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture (MoLA).

IV. Financial Framework and Co-Financing Architecture

The initiative highlights a highly scalable blended financing mechanism designed to leverage international grant capital against massive national public investments:

- **GEF-7 Grant Allocation:** US\$5,354,587 (approximately US\$6.0 million in core programmatic funds).
- **Total Confirmed Co-Financing:** US\$67,114,640 (leveraging up to US\$71.5 million in total aligned national capital).
- **Primary Co-Financing Mechanisms:** Parallel development budgets within the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) and the Ministry of Lands and Agriculture (MoLA), running alongside regional technical counterpart allocations.

V. Core Framework Structure and Targeted Components

The operational matrix is structured around three mutually reinforcing pillars:

- **Component 1: Strengthening the Enabling Environment:** Resolving institutional friction through a unified cross-sectoral "One Government Approach" to anchor Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) directly within national landscape development plans.
- **Component 2: Scaling Up SLM and SFM Best Practices:** Practical landscape field interventions deployed over **565,000 hectares** across the Chobe and Tutume–Mosetse sub-basins. Operational frameworks integrate sustainable rangeland systems with dryland forestry (SFM), protecting endemic tree cover while managing understory grazing. This is operationalized via 21 Farmer Field Schools (FFS) supporting over 500 farmers, backed by decentralized Community Seed Banks (CSBs)—including the newly completed facility in Tutume—safeguarding native, drought-resilient crop and forage germplasm.
- **Component 3: Knowledge Management, Monitoring, and Regional Linkages:** Institutionalizing advanced monitoring capabilities, specifically

embedding the *Earth Map* platform within DFRR for real-time tracking of land condition and wildfire dynamics, while collaborating on shared ecoregion frameworks with SADC neighbours sharing the Miombo–Mopane belt.

VI. High-Level Quantitative Impact Targets

The programmatic intervention delivers highly quantifiable environmental outcomes over its operational window:

- **Total Landscape Under Improved Management:** 565,000 hectares
- **Avoided, Reduced, or Reversed Land Degradation (LDN):** 140,660 hectares within grazing & cultivated zones
- **Direct Ecosystem / Cultivated Land Restoration:** 20,000 hectares under active rehabilitation
- **Climate Mitigation (Net Carbon Sequestration):** 637,745 tCO₂eq sequestered over a 20-year window

VII. Advocating for Scaling and Extra Funding Requirements

Addressing the Financing Gap: While the launch of the Rangelands Flagship Initiative at UNCCD COP17 successfully mobilized immediate pledges, an immense global financial deficit remains to translate these landscape ambitions into localized community realities. The Republic of Botswana calls on FAO and international financial partners to transition away from short-term, isolated project windows toward long-term, programmatic landscape funding architectures.

Additional, predictable resources must be systematically prioritized toward three major pillars:

1. **Blended Finance Instruments:** Spurring private capital inflows to back community-led dryland micro-enterprises, including non-timber forest products (NTFPs), indigenous tree nurseries, and sustainable apiculture value chains.
2. **Cross-Border Ecological Corridors:** Expanding Integrated Land Use Management Plans (ILUMPs) across transboundary landscapes (such as the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area - KAZA) to secure migratory corridors and protect vulnerable, contiguous rangelands.
3. **Technological Infrastructure:** Fully capacitating domestic institutions to operationalize Earth observation datasets for real-time landscape dynamics and environmental early-warning systems.

VIII. Points for Inclusion in the COFO 28 Report

The Committee is invited to consider this submission and may wish to:

- **Urge Member Nations** to scale up integrated agrosilvopastoral approaches in dryland landscapes, building directly upon the operational, financial, and multi-sectoral governance lessons of the DSL-IP framework.
- **Request FAO** to maximize its technical cooperation in aligning forestry management with the UNCCD Rangelands Flagship Initiative and the UN Forest Instrument, explicitly recognizing the deep ecological, socio-economic, and landscape-level linkages between dryland forests, grasslands, and pastoral livelihoods.

- **Recommend that FAO** actively collaborates with global financing institutions (including the Global Environment Facility, Green Climate Fund, and private sector investors) to secure additional, predictable, and long-term financing to scale up the programmatic DSL-IP model across climate-vulnerable dryland member states.

REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

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