

## **Terms of Reference (TOR)**

**Call for Consultancy Services:** Lead Author and Assessment Expert for Non-State Actors in Combating Land Degradation Report

**Closing date:** 30 April 2026, Bangkok COB

### **1. About IUCN**

IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organisations. It provides public, private and non-governmental organisations with the knowledge and tools that enable human progress, economic development and nature conservation to take place together.

Created in 1948, IUCN is now the world's largest and most diverse environmental network, harnessing the knowledge, resources and reach of 1,400 Member organisations and some 15,000 experts. It is a leading provider of conservation data, assessments and analysis. Its broad membership enables IUCN to fill the role of incubator and trusted repository of best practices, tools and international standards.

IUCN provides a neutral space in which diverse stakeholders including governments, NGOs, scientists, businesses, local communities, indigenous peoples' organisations and others can work together to forge and implement solutions to environmental challenges and achieve sustainable development.

### **2. Background**

Land degradation and desertification pose a severe threat to ecosystems and livelihoods across Northeast and Central Asia. While national governments are the primary signatories to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), effective sustainable land management practices increasingly rely on innovative approaches and grassroots actions. However, the contributions of non-state actors (NSAs) in combating these challenges are under-documented and undervalued.

The UNCCD COP17 in Mongolia offers a strategic platform to elevate the role of NSAs in combating land degradation and advancing Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN). Recent COP decisions explicitly encourage integrating non-state contributions into national reporting and implementation. Supported by funding from the Alipay/Ant Forest Foundation, IUCN, in partnership with the UNCCD Secretariat, is producing a high-quality, evidence-based synthesis report to document and validate these NSA-led innovations.

### **3. Overview and Objective of the Consultancy**

The primary objective of this consultancy is to systematically identify, assess, and compile a series of exemplary case studies (8-10) of NSA-led land restoration initiatives from Northeast and Central Asia into a concise, policy-relevant synthesis report.

The consultant will utilize the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions (NbS) and/or other IUCN standards/frameworks as the overarching analytical framework to evaluate the ecological, social, and economic outcomes of each case. The outputs will amplify the visibility of non-state action, bridge the knowledge gap, and provide actionable evidence to inform inclusive land restoration strategies and policy recommendations ahead of the launch at UNCCD COP17.

#### 4. Description of Tasks

The consultant will be responsible for the following tasks (estimated at 25 working days):

- **Methodology & Scoping:** Finalise the assessment framework based on the IUCN Global Standard for NbS and/or other standards/methodology and develop a detailed work plan upon contract signing.
- **Desk Review & Identification:** Conduct a desk review tapping into databases such as WOCAT and networks like Landscape Partnership Asia to collect and propose a "Long List" of potential case studies.
- **Case Study Assessment:** Conduct virtual interviews with key informants from the selected NSAs (8-10 cases). Gather and analyze ecological, social, and economic data to align with the LDN paradigm.
- **Drafting:** Serve as the lead author in drafting the comprehensive synthesis report, collaborating with relevant IUCN staff who will provide regional data and serve as co-authors.
- **Peer Review Integration:** Address and integrate feedback from the IUCN management and UNCCD expert peer review process into the final manuscript.
- **Strategic Dissemination:** Travel to Mongolia to present findings and launch the report at a Major Side Event during UNCCD COP17 (August 2026).
- **Post-COP Engagement:** Participate in 2-3 strategic post-COP webinars (e.g., via Landscape Partnership Asia) to share policy recommendations.

#### 5. Key Deliverables, Timeline and Budget

The project duration spans 9 months (April 2026 – December 2026). The total fee for this consultancy is **USD 14,000**, all-inclusive of professional fees.

This is primarily a home-based assignment. **Travel costs and per diem for the consultant to attend UNCCD COP17 in Mongolia will be covered separately** by IUCN and do not need to be drawn from the consultancy fee.

| Deliverables                                                                                                                                                                                      | Timeline             | Payment                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Inception Report &amp; "Short List"</b> Detailed work plan, finalized NbS assessment framework (or another relevant one), and a curated short list of case studies for IUCN review.            | End of May 2026      | 30% of the total payment (\$4,200) |
| <b>First Draft of Synthesis Report</b> Completion of informant interviews and submission of the fully drafted report featuring the final 8-10 selected case studies.                              | Early July 2026      | 30% of the total payment (\$4,200) |
| <b>Final Report</b> Final draft incorporating peer-review feedback                                                                                                                                | End of July 2026     | 30% of the total payment (\$4,200) |
| <b>COP 17 Presentation and Post-COP Dissemination</b> Successful presentation of findings at the COP17 Side Event; Participation in regional webinars and submission of final handover materials. | End of November 2026 | 10% of the total payment (\$1,400) |

## 6. Required Experience and Qualifications

- Advanced degree (PhD highly preferred) in Forestry, Agroforestry, Environmental Science, Natural Resource Management, or a related field.
- Demonstrated, extensive experience in sustainable land management, desertification control, and the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) paradigm.
- Deep familiarity with applying the IUCN Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions (NbS)

or other frameworks to field assessments.

- Proven track record of authoring high-impact grey literature, policy briefs, or technical reports for international environmental organizations (e.g., IUCN, UNCCD, FAO).
- Strong understanding of the ecological and socio-economic context of land degradation in Northeast and Central Asia.
- Active engagement or familiarity with regional networks such as *Landscape Partnership Asia* and global databases like WOCAT is highly desirable.
- Excellent proficiency in written and spoken English.

## **7. Application**

Interested candidates are invited to submit the following in one document by email to [nattanpong.kasemsanta@iucn.org](mailto:nattanpong.kasemsanta@iucn.org).

with the subject "Application: Lead Author for NSA Land Restoration Report".

1. A detailed curriculum vitae highlighting specific experience relevant to this consultancy and a list of relevant publications/reports authored.
2. A cover letter detailing your suitability for the role, a brief proposed methodology for undertaking the assessments, and confirming your availability for the proposed timeline and budget.

## **8. Evaluation of Applications**

Applications will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria: (i) profile and experience in relation to the subject of the consultancy, specifically regarding LDN, the role of the NSA, and relevant frameworks, and (ii) the methodology and understanding of the tasks proposed in the cover letter.