

MIDDLE EAST GREEN INITIATIVE (MGI)

Ministers Communiqué

Recalling the announcement of the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) during the first Middle East Green Summit held on October 25th, 2021 in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we, the Ministers / officials from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Yemen with responsibility for portfolios encompassing environment, forestry, agriculture, climate, land degradation or associated responsibilities, met on October 26th, 2022 in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to collectively address the acute challenges caused by land degradation and develop approaches to help mitigate them on regional and national levels.

We recognize that land degradation is an urgent global challenge, contributing to deforestation, desertification, climate change vulnerability, declining biodiversity, and negative impacts on infrastructure, people and their livelihood and economic wellbeing. According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), biodiversity loss due to land degradation could reach 38%-46% of species globally by 2050 if left unaddressed, while the livelihoods of more than 3.2 billion people are already undermined by land degradation with direct effects on food security and social wellbeing. As an example, the economic impact of ecosystem services lost through land degradation is estimated by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) at approximately 6 trillion USD per year, equivalent to more than 10% of global gross product. We note that such environmental and socioeconomic impacts of land degradation can be especially felt in countries across West, Central and South Asia, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.

We came together in Riyadh on October 26th, 2022 to reassert our commitment to strengthen our collaboration through working together, under the umbrella provided by MGI, in order to address these regional challenges. As the first Afro-Asian environmental initiative of its kind, MGI will bring together member countries from West, Central and South Asia, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa and around the globe to work collaboratively to achieve the MGI objectives, which will be supported by international organizations and non-regional countries. The MGI will implement nature-based solutions to mitigate ecosystem and biodiversity loss through restoring degraded land, enhancing conservation and sustainable management of natural vegetation cover, terrestrial habitats and related natural resources. The initiative will be guided by the three Rio Conventions and the 2030 Agenda and aligned with the objectives of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the G20 Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Terrestrial Habitats.

We welcome MGI's ambition of planting 50 billion trees, equivalent to rehabilitating 200 million hectares of land in MGI regional member countries, and will work collaboratively to achieve this ambition. The initiative will deploy innovation and best practices, leverage regional collaboration and harness international support under the oversight of an inclusive and participatory regional governance structure.

We jointly agree that MGI will coordinate its projects and activities under the governance of a Ministerial Council in which all regional member countries will be represented. A dedicated MGI Secretariat shall be located in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. On national level, project execution in regional member countries will be driven in close coordination with MGI's governing bodies by cross-sectoral national focal points which will unite capabilities across relevant government entities within each member country. In order to achieve its ambitious targets, MGI will provide regional coordination and collaboration mechanisms, joint oversight, financial and technical support and drive the implementation of land restoration, ecosystem conservation and reforestation projects, capacity building programs and scientific research through the national focal points in member countries.

We, the founding member countries of MGI, endorse the MGI Charter annexed to this communique, outlining the initiative guiding principles, scope, governance, funding modalities, monitoring mechanisms, and membership of MGI, and hereby establish the Middle East Green Initiative in accordance with the provisions set forth in the annexed Charter. We agree to support the establishment of MGI Secretariat and MGI Fund, through the foundational steps described in the annexed charter.

We hereby voluntarily commit our full engagement to enable MGI to become a potent regional initiative that will drive significant impact and tangible results in reducing land degradation and enhancing restoration and conservation of vegetation cover in the region. We encourage regional countries in West, Central and South Asia, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as countries across the globe, to consider joining the initiative and provide their voluntary support for its projects and activities, to enhance conservation of environment and biodiversity, strengthen climate resilience and support the socio-economic wellbeing of regional communities and contribute to addressing global environmental challenges.

Annex: MGI Charter

Preamble	4
1. Initiative scope	6
2. Governance	7
3. Projects / activities financing	12
4. Monitoring, reporting & evaluation	13
5. Membership	13
6. MGI Charter amendment	16
7. MGI establishment & operationalization	16
8. Appendix	18
8.1. Appendix 1: MGI Governance Structure	18
8.2. Appendix 2: List of MGI Founding Member Countries	19

Preamble

- 1. The Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) was announced during the first Middle East Green Initiative Summit held on October 25th, 2021 in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to formulate a platform for regional collaboration to reduce land degradation, enhance conservation of vegetation cover and strengthen international support for regional efforts. This document represents the charter for MGI's land restoration and conservation efforts and outlines the governance framework for the regional decision-making and oversight of activities and projects sponsored or supported by MGI, as hereby agreed upon by participating regional countries.**
- 2. This charter is drafted in English as the reference document language. After approval of the MGI charter by the Ministerial Meeting on 26th October 2022, the English reference document may be translated into Arabic and French. Translations are for informational purposes only, not legally binding and subject to approval by the Ministerial Council, once established.**

Initiative Drivers and Objectives

3. Land degradation and the associated loss of natural terrestrial habitats are a defining challenge of the 21st century. The livelihoods of more than 3.2 billion people are undermined by land degradation, 1.3 billion of whom are trapped on degrading agricultural land that undermines food security.¹ Loss of natural terrestrial habitats through transformation or degradation is a leading cause of biodiversity loss, which if left unaddressed could reach 38%-46% of species by 2050.² Land degradation contributes to climate change by increasing emissions of greenhouse gasses (GHGs) and reducing natural uptake of carbon, while climate change simultaneously exacerbates the challenge of land degradation by disrupting traditionally stable ecosystems.³ The annual cost of ecosystem services lost through land degradation is estimated at approximately 6 trillion USD per year: more than 10% of global gross product.⁴
4. The environmental and socioeconomic impacts of land degradation can be especially felt in countries across West, Central and South Asia, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, with the region predicted to be worst affected by land degradation. It is estimated that 29% of global degraded land is human-induced, with an estimated 500 million hectares in West, Central and South Asia, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa⁵. The Middle East Green Initiative intends to bring together countries and international organisations (IOs) from across the region and around the globe to strengthen collaboration in implementing nature-based solutions to reduce and reverse land degradation and enhance land conservation through utilising innovation, best practices, leveraging regional collaboration and harnessing international support under the oversight of an inclusive, transparent and participatory regional governance structure.
5. The initiative is guided by the three Rio Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification, and the 2030 Agenda, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals, UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, and the G20 Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats and will promote and support regional

¹ Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (2018), "Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration"; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2019), "Summary for Policymakers", in *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems*

² IPBES 2018, "Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration"

³ IPCC 2019, "Summary for Policymakers"

⁴ Economics of Land Degradation Initiative (2015), "The Value of Land"

⁵ FAO 2021, "The state of the world's land and water resources for food and agriculture"

activities / projects to mitigate terrestrial ecosystem loss; restore degraded land; and enhance conservation and sustainable management of natural vegetation cover and terrestrial habitats in the region to achieve the initiative target of planting or regenerating 50 billion trees, equivalent to restoring 200 million hectares of land, over the lifetime of the initiative.

Guiding principles for MGI setup

6. The scope of MGI and its regional governance will be guided by the following fundamental principles:

- **Shared vision of sustainable future**

The initiative will be built on a shared regional vision for green and sustainable land resources in a changing climate.

- **Collaborative and inclusive oversight**

The initiative will be built on collaborative regional oversight of activities / projects, strong national engagement, inclusive decision making, collaboration with the private sector, and close advisory involvement of relevant regional and international organizations.

- **Accountability and transparency**

MGI's transparent governance mechanisms will enable full visibility for all member countries and partners, its robust financial management mechanisms will follow best practices, and strong regional oversight and national engagement will ensure accountability for the implementation of sponsored activities / projects to achieve initiative objectives.

- **National, regional and international linkages**

The MGI will promote close alignment between national, regional, and global objectives / efforts pertaining to reducing land degradation and enhancing restoration and conservation of terrestrial vegetation cover and pursue productive collaboration with other related regional and global environmental initiatives.

- **Science-based decision making**

The initiative will pursue the greatest possible impact of its activities through rigorous scientifically-informed project selection and design, involvement of leading regional and international expertise, and fostering of knowledge sharing of best practices and technology transfer among member countries and relevant regional and international organizations.

- **Innovation-driven action**

The initiative will promote the deployment of innovative solutions at regional and national levels to work towards the goals of sustainable development related to the initiative scope by reducing negative environmental impact, increasing resilience, and using natural resources in an effective and responsible manner.

- **Collaborative cross-government approach at a national level**

The implementation of projects / activities supported by the initiative will rely on national coordinating structures that promote cross-sectoral and vertical collaboration within and across relevant government agencies to facilitate synergies and manage trade-offs to support the integrated nature of the initiative's economic, social, and environmental elements.

- **Maximized socio-economic benefits**

The activities / projects supported by the initiative will contribute to promoting a sustainable future for the population in the region and maximising social and economic wellbeing of regional inhabitants, while enabling cross-border collaborations.

1. Initiative scope

7. The initiative will facilitate collaboration and offer support to regional member countries in Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa to tackle land degradation, promote land restoration and vegetation cover conservation of forests, rangelands, croplands and other vegetation cover areas through utilizing nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches, ensuring regional alignment and providing a regional governance framework with oversight, technical support and financial support to MGI activities / projects throughout all activity / project phases.

A) Financial support for MGI projects / activities through provision of funds and / or facilitation of access to private capital and other funding mechanisms, which may include:

- Utilizing blended finance to mobilize private investments. This may include but is not limited to co-financing of projects that include additional funders, such as environmental funds, climate finance, grants from private philanthropists, concessional lending from development banks, private sector investment and / or other financing schemes accepted by MGI.
- Driving certification required to enable green financing solutions including sustainability bonds for potential projects.
- Facilitating access to potential investors to mobilize additional funding for high-impact green projects aligned with the initiative scope.
- Management of contributions and direct funding of selected projects through a trust fund for the initiative managed by a trustee overseen by a governing committee.

B) Provision of technical support to member countries for land restoration and conservation activities, which may include, but is not limited to:

- Knowledge-sharing via such activities as organizing scientific conferences and technical workshops and supporting scientific exchange visits and scientific research that contribute to the initiative objectives, as well as creating digital platforms for information and data sharing from activities / projects supported by the initiative.
- Support for capacity building activities on individual and institutional levels, including training courses and provision of advice for institutional development, regulatory framework development, technology transfer and other enabling elements related to land restoration and conservation.
- Monitoring and evaluation support of national restoration and conservation activities / projects supported by MGI and periodic reporting of member countries on the progress of project implementation.
- Facilitating coordination of national initiatives across regional member countries to promote alignment of environmental initiatives across the region.
- Provision or facilitation of technical expertise and advice on the selection, design and / or execution of initiative activities.

- C) Provision or facilitation of technical support for project selection**, scoping and design, roll-out, implementation, result-based monitoring, and reporting.
- D) Governance and oversight of MGI** by the initiative Ministerial Council, supported by the MGI Secretariat and initiative main governance structure described herein.

Specific activities within these four categories may evolve as member countries identify additional opportunities for impact.

2. Governance

- 8. MGI activities / projects will be overseen by a governance structure at two interrelated levels; a regional governance to facilitate regional-level decision making and a national governance to facilitate identification, coordination and oversight of activities / project implementation within MGI member countries.

The Ministerial Council

9. Role & functions

The Ministerial Council serves as the initiative's highest oversight authority and senior strategic decision-making body. In order to define the strategic direction of MGI and ensure alignment of all activities with the initiative's long-term goals, the Council reviews and approves proposed strategic plans, budgets, appoints the MGI Secretary General, approves the MGI Secretariat organization structure, internal bylaws and other similar high-level strategic decisions submitted to the Council by the Executive Committee.

10. Council Membership

All regional member countries are represented in the Ministerial Council by a single representative of each country. The Council shall consist of relevant Ministers who are assigned national responsibilities related to the scope of MGI.

Non-regional countries may participate in the Ministerial Council meetings as observers upon approval by the Ministerial Council.

The Council will be led by a Chairperson that is elected by Council members on a yearly rotational basis. The first Chairpersonship of the Ministerial Council upon establishment will be held by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for a duration of two years on an exceptional basis to ensure continuity throughout the establishment process of MGI.

11. Voting / decision making

Council decisions are to be made by consensus on matters related to MGI strategies and policies. For decisions on activities and projects that need to be submitted to the Ministerial Council, decisions will be taken by majority vote. In case of equal votes, the Chairperson's vote will break the tie.

12. Meeting frequency

The Ministerial Council shall hold at least one meeting per year and the Council Chairperson may call for additional meetings as deemed necessary. Council Meetings will be hosted by the country chairing the Council for a full year. Incoming host countries of the following year will make proposals for meeting formats (virtual / in person / hybrid) and timings, at the last meeting of the Ministerial Council under the previous Chairpersonship in consultation with the MGI Secretariat and Ministerial Council. If the country is not capable to host the Ministerial Council meeting, the meeting will be held at the MGI headquarter country.

Executive Committee

13. Role & functions

The Executive Committee serves as the initiative's operational decision-making body. It adopts operational plans in alignment with MGI strategies, policies and plans approved by the Ministerial Council, reviews and endorses projects and funding allocation for Ministerial Council approval and approves plans for technical support activities.

The Executive Committee will review and endorse policy proposals to be submitted to the Ministerial Council on issues under the latter's responsibility. The Committee may establish sub-committees to assist the Executive Committee in performing its duties.

14. Membership

The Executive Committee is composed of Deputy Ministers or representatives of equivalent national decision-making authorities from all regional member countries, whose portfolios encompass responsibility for environment, forestry, agriculture, climate, land degradation or associated responsibilities.

The Committee may invite representatives of non-regional contributors, international organizations, multilateral development banks and private sector organizations to participate in its meetings as observers in an advisory role.

The Committee will be led by a Chairperson. Chairpersonship of the Executive Committee will be held by the same country member that chairs the Ministerial Council.

15. Voting / decision making

Committee decisions are to be made by consensus on matters related to MGI strategies and policies. For decisions on activities and projects, decisions will be taken by majority vote. In case of equal votes, the Chairperson's vote will break the tie.

16. Meeting frequency

The Executive Committee will meet at least twice per year and may hold additional meetings as needed. The Chairperson of the Executive Committee should notify members at least 6 weeks ahead of the meeting and provide necessary documentation to members in coordination with the MGI Secretary General. Meetings should be synchronized with Ministerial Council meetings and will be hosted by the country providing the Chairpersonship for a full year. If the country holding Chairpersonship is not capable to host the Executive Committee meetings, the meetings will be held at the MGI headquarter country.

MGI Secretariat

17. Role & functions

The MGI Secretariat will support and facilitate meetings of the Ministerial Council, Executive Committee, and Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and support all activities of the initiative. It will also support sub-committees established by the Executive Committee. The MGI Secretariat will prepare proposals for operational and strategic policies and guidelines for its functions that are submitted to the Executive Committee and / or the Ministerial Council for approval, as appropriate.

The MGI Secretariat shall perform the following functions, including but not limited to:

- Organize / facilitate knowledge-sharing activities such as scientific conferences, technical workshops, scientific exchange visits and scientific research, creating digital platforms for information and data sharing for projects sponsored by the initiative.
- Support capacity building activities on individual and institutional level including training courses and provision / facilitation of advice for institutional development, regulatory framework development, technology transfer and other enabling elements related to land restoration and conservation.

- Monitoring and evaluation support of national restoration and conservation activities / projects supported by MGI and periodic reporting on projects' implementation and the overall progress of the MGI.
- Facilitating coordination of national initiatives across regional member countries to promote alignment of environmental initiatives across the region.
- Provision or facilitation of technical expertise and advice on the selection, design and / or execution of initiative related activities.
- Provision or facilitation of technical support for project selection, scoping and design, roll-out, implementation, result-based monitoring, and reporting.
- Follow-up on the implementation of the Ministerial Council and Executive Committee decisions.
- Act as the primary driver of action for partnerships with the private sector, playing a leading role in activities such as obtaining green certifications, supporting program design, and negotiating with potential investors.
- Engage non-regional countries to maximize their support to MGI.

18. Staffing & Human Resources

The MGI Secretariat shall be run by a dedicated full-time staff in various specialties and disciplines in line with its mandate. The Secretariat may also hire part-time staff and external support as deemed necessary.

The Secretariat shall be led by a Secretary General to be nominated by the Executive Committee and appointed by the Ministerial Council. The Secretary General will serve a term of 3 years with the option of re-nomination for a second term by the Executive Committee and approval by the Ministerial Council.

The Secretary General and key senior Secretariat staff shall receive diplomatic status. Staff to receive diplomatic status will be nominated by the Secretary General and receive approval by the Executive Committee.

19. Secretariat Headquarter and Budget

The Secretariat Headquarter shall be permanently located in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Secretariat may propose establishing MGI regional offices as deemed operationally appropriate by the Executive Committee, subject to approval by the Ministerial Council. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will provide the building to house the Secretariat and will cover its operational budget for 10 years starting from fiscal year 2023.

20. Working language

The Secretariat shall conduct its operations in Arabic and English as the official working languages of MGI. Documents may be translated to French as needed.

MGI Fund

21. MGI shall establish a fund to contribute in providing financial support to MGI activities and projects organized or implemented in member countries. The MGI Fund can receive financial contributions on a voluntary basis from MGI regional member countries, non-regional countries, regional and international financial institutions and organizations, regional and international private sector organizations, donations from individuals, philanthropic organizations, return on investment of MGI fund assets and any other source of funds approved by the Ministerial Council.

22. The Founding Task Force will define guidelines for the acceptance of financial contributions to MGI from non-country contributors.

23. Role & functions

The MGI fund is responsible for overseeing financial assets, receiving funds from donors, disbursing funds to projects/activities upon authorization and reporting on initiative finances.

24. Fund management

The MGI fund will be managed under a trustee arrangement by a specialized international organization / multilateral development bank that will act as an independent 3rd party trustee for the MGI fund to ensure implementation of robust financial mechanisms aligned with international best practices.

The ad-hoc Founding Task Force shall develop the role of the MGI Fund 3rd party trustee and submit it to the Executive Committee and Ministerial Council for endorsement and approval, respectively.

25. Fund Steering Committee

A dedicated Fund Steering Committee (FSC) will determine the total yearly volume of funds from the MGI Fund that will be made available for disbursement to projects by consensus vote. The Ministerial Council will develop procedures for adopting decisions in the FSC in the event that all efforts at reaching consensus have been exhausted.

Fund disbursements to individual projects will require approval of the Executive Committee. The trustee will not be involved in decisions pertaining to fund allocation at a project level – it will act in a fiduciary function flagging any inappropriate use of funds.

26. FSC membership

The FSC shall consist of representatives from regional and non-regional countries with commitments of financial contributions. The ad-hoc Founding Task Force shall propose a minimum contribution for eligibility to membership in the FSC, terms of reference for country and non-country contributors and submit it to the Executive Committee and Ministerial Council for endorsement and approval, respectively.

Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC)

27. Role & functions

The SAC will provide non-binding advice upon request by the Ministerial Council, Executive Committee or the MGI Secretariat, support knowledge-sharing activities, strategies / policies development / review, project reviews, other matters referred to SAC by MGI regional governing bodies, and publish technical reports or papers as requested by the above mentioned governing bodies.

28. Membership

The SAC will consist of subject matter experts from relevant international organizations, regional organizations and renowned international / regional experts in technical and policy matters related to MGI scope. SAC members may be nominated by member countries or regional / international organizations, subject to the approval of the Executive Committee. The SAC may establish sub-committees and propose ad-hoc members to the sub-committees based on the tasks assigned to the SAC by the MGI governing bodies.

SAC membership shall be for a three years period, subject to renewal by the Executive Committee. Any proposed change in the SAC membership is subject to majority approval by the Executive Committee. The SAC shall nominate three candidates for Chairpersonship and submit them to the Executive Committee for approval by majority vote for a three years period. The SAC shall develop the modalities for its functions and submit it to the Executive Committee for approval.

National Focal Points (NFP)

29. Role & functions

In addition to the five core bodies that govern MGI activities at a regional level, each member country will designate a National Focal Point to liaise with the MGI Secretariat. The NFP will act as the interface between national governments and MGI regional governance bodies, facilitating a two-way exchange of information on activities supported by the initiative. NFPs will be responsible for identifying domestic projects / activities to be submitted to MGI for financial or / and technical support, establishing and managing relationships with implementing partner organizations, supporting project execution and preparing and submitting progress reports to the MGI Secretariat.

30. National Coordination

Member countries are encouraged to establish an internal mechanism to facilitate national coordination within each country, such as creating dedicated national committees to provide national oversight and coordinate national efforts related to MGI supported projects / activities hosted by the respective member country. The national coordination mechanism can be composed of representatives of relevant national entities to ensure a collaborative, interdisciplinary integration to select and implement MGI-supported projects / activities at a national level.

Upon the request of member countries, MGI Secretariat may provide or facilitate advice on setting up a national coordination mechanism within the country according to best practices.

Initial activation of MGI regional governing bodies

31. After approval of the MGI Charter by the Ministerial Meeting on 26th October 2022, and endorsement by leaders at the 2nd MGI Summit in November 2022, founding countries are called to ratify the MGI governance framework and nominate their representatives to the MGI Ministerial Council and Executive Committee, preferably prior to the end of January 2023, to enable activating MGI regional governance and provide strategic guidance and oversight for MGI roll-out and operations. Founding countries are those regional countries that participate in

the Ministerial Meeting on 26th October 2022 and approve the MGI Charter. Other regional countries as defined in paragraph 6 will be called upon and encouraged to join MGI.

32. Upon establishment of the MGI Ministerial Council and Executive Committee, an ad-hoc **Founding Task Force** will be established. This Founding Task Force will facilitate the nomination of the MGI Secretary General and the set-up of the MGI Secretariat under the oversight of the Executive Committee.
33. The ad-hoc Founding Task Force shall be composed of representatives of founding regional member countries which may decide to participate in the Task Force on a voluntary basis and have responsibilities / expertise related to the MGI establishment process. Any non-founding countries joining MGI as a member during the existence of the Founding Task Force will be able to designate representatives for it. The Task Force may use the support of specialized advisory organizations while conducting its functions.
34. The target-state governance framework set forth above will be detailed further by the Founding Task Force and MGI Secretariat following its establishment. Detailed activities to be conducted during the implementation are set forth in Section 7 of this document.
35. The Founding Task Force will operate until the MGI Secretariat is established. Once the Secretariat is established, the Founding Task Force will be dissolved by the Executive Committee.

3. Projects / activities financing

36. Conditional on the availability of the required funds, the MGI, within its scope, aims to: provide support to MGI eligible projects / activities hosted by member countries; seek strong international support for the initiative; facilitate regional participation and collaboration; and support effective implementation to mitigate ecosystem loss, restore degraded land, and / or enhance conservation and sustainable management of natural terrestrial resources.
37. For the initiative to provide the greatest possible support to land restoration and conservation efforts, it will combine resources from its own MGI Fund with other funding sources through blended financing mechanisms, including national funding, contributions from international organisations and the private sector.

The ad-hoc Task Force shall develop a proposed criteria and methodology for project classification, selection, funding and progress tracking and submit it to the Executive Committee for approval.

Member countries will submit project proposals to the MGI Secretariat through their NFP as per the approved above mentioned criteria, which in turn submits the project proposal to the Executive Committee for review and endorsement prior to the approval by the Ministerial Council. Multiple national focal points may collaborate on regional projects that are jointly developed and submitted to MGI for support. The ad-hoc Task Force will develop the modalities of submitting regional projects, subject to Executive Committee approval.

38. The annual budget allocated to MGI supported projects / activities shall be determined by consensus by the Fund Steering Committee.

4. Monitoring, reporting & evaluation

39. To maintain the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of MGI activities and ensure alignment with MGI objectives, a monitoring and evaluation unit housed within the MGI Secretariat will develop and support implementation of monitoring, reporting and evaluation guidelines and methodologies for activities / projects supported by MGI. The unit will oversee and coordinate the reporting of member countries and 3rd party agencies in accordance with its guidelines. The MGI Secretariat may choose to use the services of competent 3rd party agencies for monitoring and evaluation, if needed.
40. The Task Force shall develop modalities for the use of 3rd party agencies for monitoring, reporting and evaluation of MGI projects / activities, subject to Executive Committee approval.
41. On a national level, individual MGI supported projects are required to fulfil standard initiative reporting guidelines and, if applicable, additional project-specific reporting agreed upon during the project approval process. To complete fulfilment of requirements, National Focal Points will be responsible for collecting data from relevant national entities, preparing and submitting periodic project progress reports to the MGI Secretariat.
42. On a regional level, the MGI Secretariat will be responsible for periodically consolidating reports received from member countries into comprehensive progress updates on MGI projects, activities and financial performance. Such reports will be subject to review and approval by the Executive Committee and will be published in regular intervals as determined by the Executive Committee. Following Executive Committee approval, the MGI Secretariat will also prepare a periodic briefing of the progress report to be presented to the Ministerial Council at its periodic meetings.
43. All monitoring and evaluation activities conducted at a national and regional level could be subject to 3rd party verification, to be conducted by relevant international organizations or other relevant entities, proposed by the MGI Secretariat and approved by the Executive Committee to ensure a transparent and robust process.

5. Membership

Founding member countries

44. Countries listed in Annex 2 who are approving the Initiative Charter during the Ministerial Meeting on 26th October 2022 are considered founding members of the MGI.

Eligibility of additional country members

45. Eligible countries for MGI membership fall into one of two following categories:
- **Regional members:** countries located within the initiative's geographic focus area in Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.
 - **Non-regional contributors:** countries outside the initiative's geographic focus area.
46. The MGI will seek additional membership by regional and non-regional countries to join as either members or observers after adoption of the MGI Charter. These countries could join the MGI as members through ratification or accession of the MGI Charter.
47. The entry of new (non-founding) members will be subject to agreement by consensus of the MGI Ministerial Council.

Withdrawal of country members

48. Any member country is entitled to withdraw from the MGI by submitting an official notification of withdrawal to the MGI Secretary-General no later than twelve months before the date of withdrawal. Such a notification shall be communicated to all member countries by the MGI Secretariat.
49. If a member country chooses to withdraw from the MGI, any ongoing MGI projects / activities in this member country shall be finalized as per the original project agreement.

Contributions of regional members

50. All contributions of MGI member countries to the initiative are voluntary. Regional members can contribute in one or multiple of the following ways:

A) Policy alignment with MGI objectives

All MGI member countries are encouraged to follow the following policy provisions in order to build a foundation for successful MGI implementation at scale:

- Publicly announce participation and support of MGI initiative
- Announce national environmental targets to combat land degradation and restore / increase vegetation cover
- Promote national policies aiming towards minimizing land degradation, maximizing conservation of terrestrial ecosystems and increase local communities' involvement in ecosystem conservation

B) Promote project implementation

Regional member countries are encouraged to:

- Submit project proposals to the MGI Secretariat and host MGI sponsored projects under national stewardship and drive their implementation
- Initiate national projects aligned with MGI scope and objectives

C) Financial contributions

- Provide financial contributions to MGI fund on a voluntary basis
- Encourage their national financial institutions and private sector players to contribute to the MGI Fund and participate in co-financing MGI projects

D) Capacity building & knowledge sharing

- Propose and host capacity building activities supported by MGI, pursue capacity building programs utilizing national resources and actively participate in capacity building activities hosted by other MGI member countries
- Propose and host knowledge sharing activities supported by MGI and actively participate in knowledge sharing activities hosted by other MGI member countries

E) Supporting implementation in other member countries

- Support monitoring of projects in MGI countries
- Provide technical expertise and assist in project execution in partnership with National Focal Points in other MGI member countries
- Encourage their national institutions and private sector players to support projects hosted by other MGI member countries

F) Promote public awareness and participation

- Organize activities to promote public awareness about the importance of maximizing land conservation and minimizing land degradation and participation in conservation / restoration activities
- Encourage civil society organizations and the private sector in raising public awareness through corporate social responsibility (CSR) and other voluntary activities in alignment with MGI objectives

Support by non-regional contributors

51. Non-regional contributors can contribute in one or multiple of the following ways, on a voluntary basis:

A) Financial contributions

- Provide financial contributions to the MGI fund on a voluntary basis and / or encourage their national financial institutions and private sector players to contribute to the MGI Fund and participate in co-financing MGI projects

B) Capacity building & knowledge sharing

- Support capacity building and knowledge sharing activities in MGI regional member countries

C) Supporting project implementation in regional member countries

- Provide technical expertise and assist in project execution in partnership with National Focal Points in MGI regional member countries
- Encourage their national institutions and private sector players to support projects hosted by MGI regional member countries
- Support monitoring of projects in MGI countries

Role of International & Regional Organizations in supporting MGI

52. International & regional organizations may contribute to MGI on regional or national level in the following ways:

- **Technical expertise & advisory:** provide subject-specific expertise that inform overall goal-setting and design of individual projects, facilitate access to data frameworks and existing research and / or contribute technical resources (e.g. scientific personnel) that can support MGI activities
- **Capacity building & knowledge sharing:** provide resources (e.g. personnel, know-how) to support capability building and knowledge sharing efforts on a regional and national level
- **Financial contributions:** provide financial contributions to the MGI fund or directly to specific projects in MGI regional member countries, and / or assist in the set-up of financing mechanisms
- **Implementation support:** support the design, execution and / or monitoring of individual projects in MGI regional member countries

MGI charter depositary

53. The MGI Secretariat, once established, shall be the depositary of this charter and countries' membership documents. Until the establishment of the MGI Secretariat, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia shall be the temporary depositary of the charter after its approval by the Ministerial Meeting on 26th October 2022.

6. MGI Charter amendment

54. The MGI Charter may be amended through a request by one or more regional member countries or the Secretary General and is subject to consensus endorsement by the Executive Committee and consensus approval by the MGI Ministerial Council. Requests for amendments shall be accepted only after 36 months from the initial charter approval at the Ministerial Meeting on 26th October 2022.

7. MGI establishment & operationalization

55. Remaining foundational steps to enable implementing MGI will be carried out in two phases as detailed below:

- Phase 1 will focus on establishing the MGI Secretariat and will be initiated by the Founding Task Force.
- Phase 2 will focus on further developing the governing bodies, terms of reference, and scaling up the operations of the initiative.

56. Upon establishment of the Ministerial Council and Executive Committee during the first quarter of 2023, the Founding Task Force will be established. Founding member countries may choose to appoint representatives to the Task Force on a voluntary basis and send their names as soon as possible after the endorsement of MGI governance by leaders at the 2nd MGI Summit in November 2022. The Task Force will meet as frequently as possible, either physically in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or through virtual meeting formats, to complete the tasks assigned to it in a timely manner.

Phase 1

57. The Founding Task Force will conduct the following tasks, focused on operationalizing the MGI Secretariat and providing the base for the establishment of the MGI Fund, under the oversight and approval of the Executive Committee and in line with the initiative charter and governance outline detailed in section 2:

- Develop criteria for selecting candidates for the Secretary General and shortlist candidates to serve as Secretary General. The list of candidates will be presented to the Executive Committee during its first meeting after establishment
- Detail the initial organizational structure of the MGI Secretariat
- Define the necessary processes, bylaws, and guidelines to operationalize the MGI Secretariat
- Detail internal governance and decision-making policies of the MGI Secretariat
- Develop a competitive salary structure to attract regional and international talent to fill initial Secretariat full-time positions
- Develop an initial proposal for the MGI trust fund and trustee

58. The first Executive Committee meeting after establishment will preferably convene during the first quarter of 2023 to nominate a candidate for Secretary General and submit the proposal to the Ministerial Council for approval.

59. The Secretary General will play a key role in the establishment and operationalization of the MGI Secretariat. The Secretary General and his / her leadership team will work alongside the Founding Task Force to shape the detailed design of the target organization and take the lead in developing the initial organizational design, processes, salary structure and other components for the MGI Secretariat, subject to approval of the Executive Committee.
60. The Founding Task Force will operate until the MGI Secretariat is established as part of phase 1. Once the Secretariat is established, the Founding Task Force will be dissolved by the Executive Committee.

Phase 2

61. The established MGI Secretariat will commence operations as per its mandate, preferably prior to the end of the third quarter of 2023.
62. The Secretariat, under the guidance of the Ministerial Council and Executive Committee, will conduct the following tasks focused on finalizing the institutional and legal identity of the initiative:
- Hire the necessary staff to scale up the operations of the Secretariat
 - Establish the MGI trust fund and appoint a trustee
 - Finalize the initiative operating model, processes, bylaws and guidelines to operationalize all governing bodies
 - Finalize internal governance and decision-making policies of the initiative governing bodies
 - Finalize the organizational structure and processes of the initiative governing bodies, including collaboration mechanisms and processes across entities and between member countries' NFPs
 - Develop financial plans and budgets to ensure the initiative's financial continuity and sustainability
 - Finalize the set-up of all governing bodies, including the Scientific Advisory Committee and Fund Steering Committee, under guidance of the Ministerial Council and Executive Committee
 - Kick-off a series of pilot projects and activities
63. Phase 2 will carry on until the initiative is fully operational within its set scope and mandate.

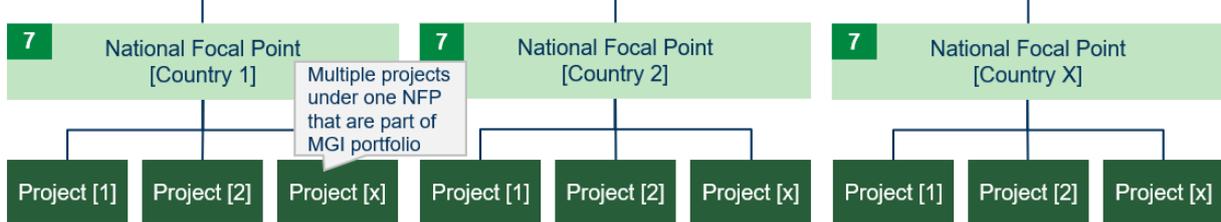
8. Appendix

8.1. Appendix 1: MGI Governance Structure

Regional level



National level



8.2. Appendix 2: List of MGI Founding Member Countries

- Kingdom of Bahrain
- Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
- Republic of Djibouti
- Arab Republic of Egypt
- Republic of Iraq
- Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- State of Kuwait
- Islamic Republic of Mauritania
- Kingdom of Morocco
- Sultanate of Oman
- Islamic Republic of Pakistan
- State of Palestine
- State of Qatar
- Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- Federal Republic of Somalia
- Republic of Sudan
- Republic of Tunisia
- United Arab Emirates
- Republic of Uzbekistan
- Republic of Yemen

