



The UNCCD: Laying the groundwork for future security (2014-2015)



FOREWORD BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

As the new Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), allow me to congratulate the Parties to the Convention on recent achievements. From the outcomes of the Rio+20 conference, to the decisive progress made at the recent eleventh Session of the Conference of the Parties held in Windhoek, Namibia (September 2013), I have renewed hope in what our collective action can achieve.



As we move forward, I want to illustrate what I believe is the importance of the UNCCD's place in an interconnected world. The geo-political and security challenges we face are complex. But by better implementing good land management practices, we can simultaneously help populations adapt to climate change and build resilience to drought; reduce the risk of forced migration and conflict over dwindling natural resources and secure sustainable agricultural and energy production. Land truly is the glue that holds our societies together. Reversing the effects of land degradation and desertification through sustainable land management (SLM) is not only achievable; it is the logical, cost-effective next step for national and international development agendas. It is a clear goal for the UNCCD and an exciting challenge.

In 2014-2015, the UNCCD secretariat and Global Mechanism (GM) will be focusing on the most effective ways to achieve our common mission. We are committed to deliver faster and with real impact. We will continue to target key implementation challenges both internally and externally: from improving our own project management and operational performance, to establishing a strong case for terrestrial ecosystems as the practical foundation for climate change adaptation. We will enhance our support to countries to enable them to better translate scientific evidence into policy -- including documenting the economic case for increased investment in sustainable land management. We will prioritize building the capacity of key stakeholders to effectively finance and implement this Convention at national and regional levels.

Land and soil degradation undermine the security and development of all countries. I therefore take the liberty of calling on UNCCD Parties to reimagine the potential of this Convention and to invest strategically. You will find on the following pages a brief outline of investment and partnership opportunities with the UNCCD, expressed as projects that require additional voluntary funding.

I look forward to working with each of you.

Monique Barbut

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PRODUCTIVE LAND FOR A SECURE FUTURE

Land degradation is a major driver of insecurity, forced migration and conflicts worldwide. Our failure to act is turning issues that were once imagined to be domestic problems into matters of global instability. For example, the US National Security Strategy (2010) refers to climate change as a key global challenge that will lead to conflicts over refugees and resources, suffering from drought and famine, catastrophic natural disasters, and the degradation of land across the globe. These issues are intimately linked. By addressing land degradation as an underlying cause of instability and insecurity, UNCCD stakeholders can reduce the effects of climate change, prevent future conflict over scarce natural resources and strengthen the security, resilience and well-being of vulnerable populations.

The secretariat and the Global Mechanism will, in particular, work on:

Food Security

Globally we face increasing demand for food and a growing productivity yield gap. In economic terms, on-site productivity loss due to land degradation amounts to between 3 to 5 per cent of agricultural gross domestic product -- approximately US\$490 billion per year. While this affects growth and development in all countries, it disproportionately impacts the more than 1.2 billion of the world's rural poor who depend directly upon the land for their food and income. Sustainable intensification of food production, with fewer inputs, that avoids further deforestation and cropland expansion into vulnerable areas should be a priority for action for policy makers, investors and smallholder farmers. Via the restructured Rome office, UNCCD will work with FAO and IFAD on pragmatic approaches to putting sustainable land management (SLM) good practice at the heart of global and national responses to food insecurity. The GM will develop specific thematic projects that target mainstreaming SLM into these critical global priorities.

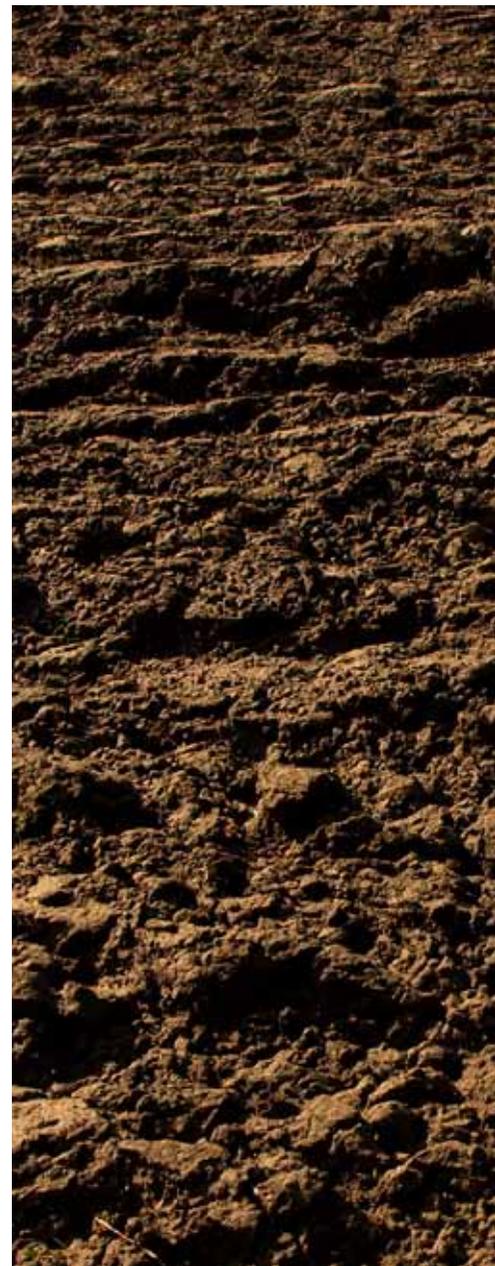
Water Security

By 2025, up to 2.4 billion people worldwide will be living in areas subject to periods of intense water scarcity. In follow-up to the High Level Meeting on National Drought Policy (<http://www.hmndp.org/>) held in March 2013, the UNCCD secretariat in collaboration with members of UN-Water will support the organization of five capacity-building workshops for the development of national drought management policies (NDMP) over the course of the next two years (2014-16). These policies will help Parties transition from a reactive response to drought disasters to proactive drought risk reduction based on early warning and preparedness – potentially saving millions of

lives and livelihoods. The GM will support Parties to integrate NDMP into SLM-related Integrated Investment Frameworks.

Migration

In the next ten years, fifty million people are estimated to be at risk of displacement, if land continues to be degraded at current rates. SLM could offer migrants a concrete choice beyond “fight or flight.” UNCCD will work with partners such as the International Organization for Migration to address the challenges arising from land degradation, large scale population movements and their consequences. At the same time, we aim to demonstrate how the international community could leverage the skills and capacities of migrants along with the remittances, sent home by migrants, to build resilience. A pilot project funded by the Italian Government will assess the inter-connection between land management and migration in West Africa and identify opportunities to capture remittances and other sources of finance for SLM. The GM will support Parties, in cooperation with sub-regional entities, to mobilize increased investments for SLM in drought stricken areas that are prone to migration.



SYNERGY

We will consistently promote a joint approach to environmental decision making globally and full implementation of the UNCCD to deliver the greatest impact and multiple benefits to stakeholders.

The Post-2015 Development Framework

To follow-up the Rio+20 outcomes and make the case for land as a crucial building block for the post-2015 development framework, an Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) will be formed. Consisting of up to five representatives of each implementing Annex of the UNCCD, the IWG will establish science-based definitions to support improved land productivity, particularly in the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. This is crucial as the choices we make in addressing desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) will have major geo-strategic implications.

The IWG is poised to take advantage of the unique opportunity to inform the Sustainable Development Goal discussions being held at the UN in New York and around the world over the next few years. The level of ambition that the IWG establishes for itself should match the significant resources, capacities and expertise being assembled. The IWG should be a clear voice to express the needs and aspirations of dryland communities.

We anticipate that the IWG will provide practical insight and options for Parties and other global stakeholders to consider in relation to strategy, programmes and resource requirements for implementation of the UNCCD in the post-2015 world. The reports, issue briefs, recommendations and proposals would be attributable to the working group of the UNCCD and not to individual members but will be an invaluable practical resource for the wider debate.

Synergies with Other Conventions

The UNCCD also wants to offer leadership in building synergy and efficiency within the global environmental system. In a major push for 2014-2015, UNCCD will work with colleagues focused on climate change and biodiversity to frame common indicators and other measures of success to be used in future reporting. Land management is crucial to the success of all of these processes. In practical terms, this means we aim to agree on how we can implement the land-related Aichi Targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and help

deliver the adaptation goals under the Nairobi Action Plan of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The GM will help to identify financially viable and practical investment opportunities that bring together implementation of the Rio Conventions at country level.

Climate Change Adaptation

In practical terms, for most of the world's rural population, real and effective climate change adaptation means better management of the land. It is the smart choice. When agriculture, livestock, forestry and other land uses are integrated into large-scale planning, the benefits of sustainable ecosystems management at a landscape level will be magnified -- at the same time reducing costs and increasing efficiencies. Ecosystem-based climate change adaptation at a landscape level has the potential to contribute to rural development (increased income, secure livelihoods, improved health, as well as food, water and energy security) and environmental benefits (biodiversity, water, soil) in addition to climate change adaptation.

We will explore implementation and investment options, particularly incentives and market-based mechanisms, which could drive land-based adaptation measures. In preparation for the 2014 Climate Change Summit and 2015 UNFCCC COP 21, the UNCCD will collaborate with other UN and multi-lateral bodies to demonstrate the multiple benefits of land restoration by profiling successful interventions that offer at least three main benefits, including climate change adaptation and poverty alleviation. We need to increasingly recognize and promote the good practices that are happening at the grassroots level, via our flagship Land for Life award, and strengthen our online and media presence for the World Day to Combat Desertification and other key events.



BOOSTING CAPACITY AND GETTING RESULTS

Limited capacity and access to appropriate knowledge and technology remains a key challenge to promoting UNCCD implementation. We want to explore innovative ways to help build the capacity of decision makers to develop, finance and implement SLM. Parties should be able to monitor and report, in a greatly simplified way, on their progress.

Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and Reporting are crucial to our understanding of DLDD phenomena. They should drive operational improvement and support decision making at global, national and sub-national level. The secretariat and GM will provide updated analyses on key performance and progress indicators as well as on financial flows, in order for Parties to take informed decisions on measures to advance UNCCD implementation at all levels. Our improved monitoring and reporting system will be dramatically simplified with cleaner, leaner templates that will allow Parties to draw on existing global data sets to baseline and measure progress. Reporting will be done via a more user-friendly online portal -- PRAIS 2.0. We aim to provide Parties with increased practical guidance and support. By CRIC 13, we should be implementing a roadmap that is clear, accessible, relevant and practical for all Parties. Reporting will be a check on our performance and help frame future work. We count on your 100 per cent support.

Strengthening National Action and Capacity

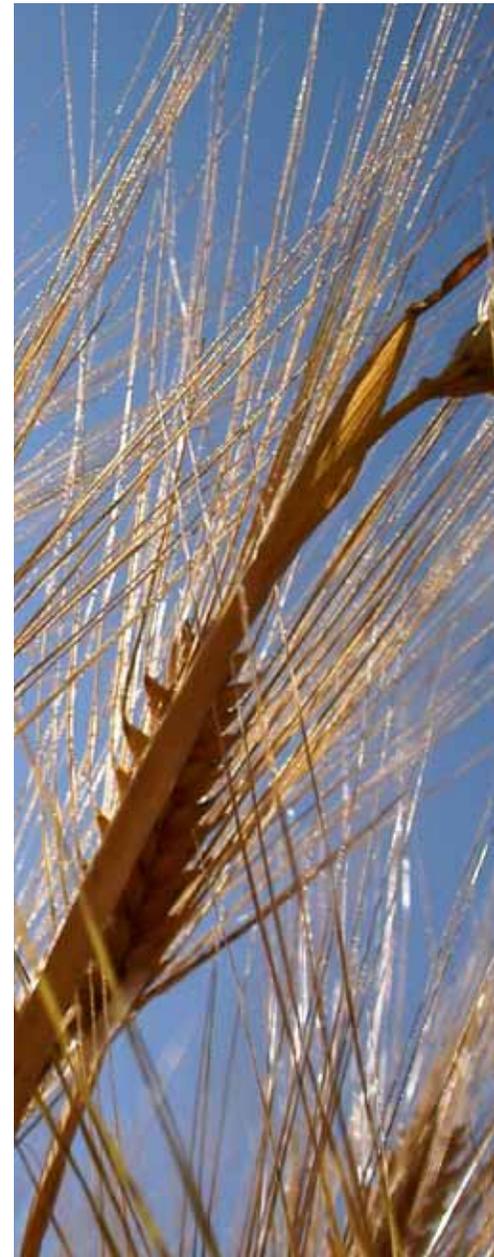
Internally, we are stressing the provision of joint support to Parties at national and regional levels. With your support, National Action Programme (NAP) alignment and Integrated Investment Framework (IIF) development will continue at an accelerated pace with a series of workshops and trainings throughout 2014. The results should be better mainstreamed into national policy and plans. Working at country and sub-regional level, the GM will operationalize more IIF and help develop viable projects with Parties that support implementation of the Convention. We will help develop capacity-building tools for financing and resource mobilization for key stakeholders. In addition to direct support for country level planning activities, the UNCCD Fellowship Programme and a public-private partnership known as the Soil Leadership Academy will be rolled out.

South-South Cooperation for Technology Transfer.

Measures to promote technology transfer will be identified or developed, and relevant facilitation channels will be explored, among others through triangular, North–South and South–South partnerships.

3rd Scientific Conference

Working with a leading consortium of scientists, it is anticipated that the 3rd UNCCD Scientific Conference will be held in May 2015. Scientists will recommend how existing knowledge and new technology related to desertification, land degradation and drought can contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development. Key questions include: How does cutting edge technology and industrial research blend with traditional knowledge? Are there ways to share traditional knowledge among land users in the global south or across countries adapting to climatic change? What is the contribution of local knowledge to overcoming the barriers to sustainable land management?



USING EVIDENCE TO DRIVE ACTION

There is a huge amount of valuable knowledge available on DLDD issues and SLM opportunities -- but it is not yet easily accessible.

Using Land and Ecosystem Valuation to Promote SLM Investments

The integrated economic valuation of land and ecosystem services was identified at the 2nd UNCCD Scientific Conference as one of the primary vehicles to unlock the investment potential for SLM. The secretariat and the GM will also actively participate and promote the Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) Initiative with a view to producing a global assessment of the costs and benefits of SLM and global tools and policy recommendations. The GM is also actively engaged in economic valuation projects that directly inform the policy instruments and fiscal reform strategies of country governments. Through a consortium called OSLO (Offering Sustainable Land-use Options), we promote responsible land use at a country level through valuation projects that demonstrate the financial, socio-economic and environmental benefits of responsible SLM investments.

Science-Policy Interface

The secretariat will work quickly to establish a 23 member Science-Policy Interface (SPI) to facilitate a two-way science-policy dialogue; ensuring timely delivery of policy-relevant advice. The Science-Policy Interface will analyse, synthesize and translate scientific information, knowledge and findings and interact with mechanisms such as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and Intergovernmental Technical Panel on Soil. The SPI will begin work in early 2014 on an ambitious science-policy agenda.

Effective Knowledge Management

The Scientific Knowledge Brokering Portal (SKBP) will function as a "portal of portals" to deliver major impact for a large number of beneficiaries. SKBP will simplify and consolidate the information retrieval process for DLDD knowledge (such as case studies, best practices, analytical papers, comparative experiences, studies on lessons learned, how-to guides, policy briefs etc.) and help DLDD-knowledge producing experts to collaborate more easily. It will help UNCCD stakeholders search for and find better content; improve the visibility of participating DLDD initiatives by providing a UNCCD umbrella; allow partners to focus on developing high-quality knowledge rather than using limited resources for dissemination and web presence; and enable UNCCD to track and eventually fill DLDD knowledge gaps.

Better knowledge management empowers national stakeholders and local communities who implement UNCCD related projects on the ground. The GM will also work with global, regional and sub-regional knowledge management platforms such as the Great Green Wall for the Sahel and the Sahara Initiative and establish concrete synergies with the UNCCD Portal.



ENGAGING ALL STAKEHOLDERS

All stakeholders need to play their part

- Inclusive governance and meaningful participation of national focal points and science and technology correspondents is a pre-requisite for effective decision making in the Convention process. As we plan for core events including COP 12 in Turkey in 2015, at least €2million is needed in additional voluntary contributions to fund participation of eligible representatives.
- In 2014-2015, the secretariat also aims to support the establishment of a network of civil society organizations. The network will act as a sounding board for new ideas and an inter-sessional interlocutor to ensure the voice of civil society is heard when and where it matters. The GM will continue to facilitate the active participation of civil society organizations in IIF processes at all levels.
- The UNCCD will work with Parliamentarians to give land degradation and water scarcity issues a higher political priority and to overcome the marginalization of dryland communities. Together, we aim to promote the mainstreaming of DLDD issues into the domestic and the international development agendas by establishing a network of Members of Parliament at a national and regional level.
- Finally, by building on existing good practice and adopting SLM along value chains, we aim to help business become a change agent for good with direct benefits for the triple bottom line (financial, social and environmental performance). Working through the SLM Business Forum and with leading business networks, our objective for 2014-2015 is to encourage investment in sustainable land management; to develop vibrant partnerships for SLM implementation and to help business evolve their corporate practices regarding land management.

FINANCING OUR AMBITIONS

The UNCCD needs to engage a broad spectrum of partners, including the private sector and investors, in order to increase financial and investment opportunities for SLM.

To date, the resources available for sustainable land management have been inadequate and often confined to individual sectors or silos. By maximizing instrumental resources (strategic frameworks and policy instruments), human resources (stakeholders, organizations and institutions) and knowledge and information resources (capacity-building), the GM will accelerate its work mainstreaming land across multiple development agendas, at the same time developing practical investment projects that help to implement the Convention at all levels.

The GM will further develop emerging funding streams particularly expanding its work with the private sector. In particular, we will increase our efforts to attract private sector investments in SLM through the identification of compelling economic arguments, incentives, new financial instruments, market-based mechanisms, public-private partnerships and triangular cooperation partnerships. Through this, we expect to mobilize resources from innovative sources, such as foundations, businesses, the financial industry and international non-governmental organizations.

Together, the secretariat and the GM will work to create a political and policy environment that is conducive to increased financing. We call on Parties to the Convention and stakeholders in multilateral fora such as the UN, the GEF, the Green Climate Fund, the OECD and G8/G20 to take note. It is time to reimagine the potential of this Convention and to invest strategically in sustainable land management. The time for action is now.

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