



United Nations
Convention to Combat Desertification

Press
Release

"Conserving land and water = Securing our common future"



Bonn, Germany, 18 June 2009 – “This year’s observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought highlights the growing threat to national and regional stability posed by desertification,” Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, said yesterday from New York.



Citing the 24 million environmentally induced migrants, the effects of climate change and the decline in productivity and subsequent abandonment of nearly one third of the world’s cropland over the last 40 years, among other issues, the Secretary-General said a recent United Nations meeting concluded “desertification and land degradation are global problems that require a global response,” adding that “in December [2009], world leaders can provide such a response when they meet in Copenhagen to seal a deal on climate change.” Ban said a comprehensive and equitable agreement “must also help developing countries to adapt to the impacts that are already under way.”

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Speaking yesterday evening from the Old City Hall of Bonn, in Germany, where the global event in observance of the Day took place, Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, cautioned that “we will not know human security until we are able to conserve our land and water in a manner that enables people everywhere to escape poverty in order to ensure sustainability.”

He drew attention to the high concentration of conflicts in the poorest drylands of the world, specifically the Sahel region and Central Asia, and said the adverse effects of longer and more intense droughts associated with climate change would exacerbate the situation.

Gnacadjia said “securing our common future demands that we pay greater attention to the proper management of our land and water” and “to the relationships between land and water and the global challenges we face today of climate change, food insecurity, forced migrations, poverty and conflict.”

Reza Adrakanian, Director of the UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development, speaking on this occasion on behalf of the Heads of United Nations Agencies in Germany, said coordinated approaches are important and necessary in providing efficient responses to global challenges such as desertification, land degradation and droughts.

The World Day to Combat Desertification is observed every year on June 17 with a view to draw international attention to the global effects of desertification, land degradation and drought. “Conserving Land and Water = Securing Our Common Future” is the theme for this year.

This year’s event also marked the 15th anniversary since the Convention was adopted in Paris in June 1994. Interest in the Convention has been growing with recognition of its centrality to addressing pressing global challenges such as the ongoing conflicts, food insecurity, poverty and excess atmospheric carbon. Dryland soils have significant untapped potential to store carbon.

In addition to the global observance event held in Bonn, Germany, observance events were reported in 23 other countries – Argentina, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Fiji, France, Germany, India, Italy, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, The Philippines, Portugal, Senegal, Spain, Sri Lanka, Togo and Uganda.



Developed as a result of the Rio Summit, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is a unique instrument that has brought attention to land degradation to some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and people in the world. Thirteen years after coming into force, the UNCCD benefits from the largest membership of the three Rio Conventions and is increasingly recognized as an instrument, which can make an important contribution to the achievement of sustainable development and poverty reduction.