



United Nations  
Convention to Combat Desertification

Press  
Release

# International Leaders Link Current Global Conflicts to Climate Change



**UNCCD, Bonn, Germany, 8 June 2009:** “Drylands are absolutely in the frontline of the most vulnerable position with regard to global anthropogenic climate change, not in the future, but now” said Jeffrey Sachs, Director of Earth Institute at Columbia University and Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.

6 June, 2009 Gustav Stresemann Institut, Bonn, Germany



Pointing to the 10,000 km stretch of drylands in the Sahel from Senegal to the Horn of Africa across the Red Sea into Yemen, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Sachs said military engagements in the region had failed due to the lack of “a coherent, consistent, persistent, scaled science-based response” to the harrowing effects of climate change associated with hunger, livestock survival, increasing stresses between sedentary populations and nomadic or semi-nomadic herders.

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Speaking by video-link from New York to participants attending a one-day event dubbed Land Day held on Saturday, June 6, in Bonn, Germany, said military means could not tackle these challenges effectively, but required an integrated strategy that is science-based, an understanding of the abilities or inabilities of these communities to adapt to climate change, and the measures in place for climate change risk strategies and preparedness for emergencies.

In its latest Assessment, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has stated that the increased warming of the earth from climate change will “very likely” decrease “the annual precipitation in European and African regions bordering the Mediterranean and in winter rainfall in south-western Australia.” The result will be more frequent and intense droughts that will also be experienced in areas previously not considered vulnerable.

Adolf Kloke-Lesch, Director-General, German Federal Ministry for Economic Development, said the unconstitutional transfer of power in Madagascar in March that was followed by “an escalation of illegal logging in and around protected areas shows clearly how inseparable the promotion of sustainable development and governance are.” While climate may be “the major global threat to sustainable development,” he said, “land management offers a cost-efficient contribution to climate protection” and is mandatory for poverty reduction and global food security.

Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and co-convenor of Land Day, said “climate change and DLDD are twin-threats to the sustainability of life on earth,” and called for “the right incentives and trade-offs that benefit all stakeholders in order to build a new and sound climate regime.”

In his address, Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, commended Land Day, and said this kind of event provided significant opportunity to promote dialogue and work towards gaining greater understanding and innovation.

Comparing negotiations for the Kyoto Protocol and proposals for the new agreement, he said science has caught up with national strategies on climate change mitigation, which will “allow us to push for a strong adaptation framework in the areas of REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation), and in other sectors.”

De Boer added that there is a “strong relationship between the extent of mitigation done in the present and the cost of adaptation in the future” and stressed the relationship between climate change and poverty as well as food insecurity.

The meeting discussed a wide range of issues on the contribution of land to green house gas (GHG) and the potential in land to store carbon dioxide emissions. Participants observed the high emissions from agriculture and deforestation, which were likely to increase with the projected population growth. They proposed measures to address the challenge such as the establishment of a separate agreement for agriculture, inclusion of measure to store carbon in soils through the restoration of degraded lands and the establishment of bottom-up community adaptive planning.

Land Day was convened by the Secretariat of the UNCCD in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany, the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD, the International Institute for Environment and Development, the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

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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. Twelve 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.