



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



UNCCD
COP17
ULAANBAATAR 2026



Land and People Day



26 AUG
2026



Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia



Land and People Day in Short

Land degradation already affects up to 40 per cent of the planet, affecting billions of people and costing the world up to USD 900 billion annually. This has profound implications for economies and societies. At the same time, land restoration is a cost-effective, nature-based solution to the interlinked challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation that reinforces synergies across the **three Rio Conventions** and contributes to the achievement of broader Sustainable Development Goals.

Rangelands cover 54 per cent of the Earth's terrestrial surface yet remain among the most undervalued ecosystems. Today, **nearly 500 million pastoralists are stewarding 45 per cent of these landscapes**, with another **two billion people** benefiting along the value chain. In conjunction with the **International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026**, the Land & People Day will focus on strengthening understanding of the links between ecosystems, cultural diversity, and sustainable pastoral systems in support of more inclusive, rights-based, and equitable approaches to land governance.

At the other end of the spectrum, the **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** are facing growing impacts from harsher droughts and the loss of fertile soils. **SIDS are home to nearly 74 million people**, for whom the loss of even tiny areas of productive land compromises their food, water and energy security; increases the transmission of infectious diseases; and undermines rural livelihoods, with women and girls being the hardest hit.

Similarly, many **Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)**, whose economies often depend heavily on land-based natural resources and climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and livestock, face **escalating challenges from land degradation, drought and desertification**. The thematic day will examine how restoration of ecosystems and land-based resources including land, soil, water and forests in fragile and conflict-affected settings can contribute to promoting stability and peacebuilding.

Land & People Day at COP17 will place the voices of land stewards at the heart of discussions, highlighting the invaluable perspectives and traditional knowledge of **Indigenous Peoples, pastoralists, youth, women, local communities and civil society organizations**.



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
**RANGELANDS AND
PASTORALISTS**
2026



Indigenous
Peoples
Caucus
SEIU 503



INTERNATIONAL
**LAND
COALITION**





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Land and People Day High Level Events

Ministerial Dialogue on restoration of rangelands and the well-being of pastoralist communities

10:00 – 13:00 [Plenary]

Rangelands Ministerial Dialogue will exchange views on how to achieve greater policy alignment and land use planning frameworks that prevent rangeland degradation, conversion, and fragmentation, recognising the critical role that pastoralist systems and community-based grazing rights, secure tenure, customary governance systems and mobility rights play in the stewardship of rangelands.

Seats at the Table: A High-Level Dialogue of Local Communities for Land and People Day

10:00 – 11:30 [Action Dome]

This event will bring together representatives of diverse local communities from across regions to strengthen political support for the establishment of the Caucus for Local Communities and to elevate the role of local communities in shaping and implementing UNCCD outcomes. Through community-led testimonies and dialogue, the event will highlight the contributions of pastoralist, peasant, agroecological, mountain, forest and coastal communities to sustainable land management, rangeland stewardship and ecosystem restoration. Attention will be given to advancing recognition of local communities as key implementation partners within the future UNCCD Strategic Framework, while showcasing community perspectives on land tenure, gender equality and drought resilience and promoting stronger inclusion of these priorities in COP17 decisions and related policy processes.

Indigenous Peoples High-Level Special Event: From Sacred Lands to Shepherding the Future

11:30 – 13:00 [Action Dome]

The event focuses on recognizing Indigenous Peoples as rights holders, knowledge holders and implementation partners in addressing desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD). It will highlight Indigenous knowledge systems, customary governance, sustainable pastoralism and land stewardship as key contributions to ecosystem restoration, biodiversity conservation, drought resilience and sustainable land management, while promoting stronger partnerships, institutional collaboration and direct access to funding for Indigenous-led action.

From Ambition to Action: Delivering Rio Convention Synergies

11:30 – 13:00 [MET22]

As the first Rio Convention COP of the 2026 Triple COP Year—and the first COP following the adoption of the Belém Joint Statement—UNCCD COP17 provides the first high-level opportunity to consider how the political momentum for Rio Convention synergies can be translated into practical, country-led implementation. The dialogue will also mark the launch of the COP31 Presidency Process, led by Türkiye, to engage interested Parties and partners on pathways for strengthening integrated implementation of the Rio Conventions towards COP31.

When Land Moves People

11:30 – 13:00 [MET 23]

The event places pastoralist mobility at the centre of discussions on drought resilience, land restoration and sustainable livelihoods. It spotlights mobility as essential for adapting to variable rainfall, accessing grazing and water, maintaining livelihoods and supporting healthy rangeland ecosystems. Discussions will focus on strengthening governance, cross-border cooperation and sustainable natural resource management to support safe, dignified and climate-resilient pastoral mobility. The event will highlight how well-governed pastoral mobility can contribute to peacebuilding, peaceful coexistence and resilience by reducing competition over natural resources, strengthening cooperation across borders and supporting sustainable livelihoods in rangeland and dryland area.

From Urban Sprawl to Smart Cities Roundtable

11:30 – 13:00 [MET 24]

The event examines how rapid urbanization and urban-rural flows, including land conversion, food systems, labor mobility, settlement expansion, and ecosystem-service dynamics, drive land degradation, drought vulnerability, and climate risks. Using a flow-based governance approach, the session highlights integrated territorial planning, peri-urban land protection, and inclusive decision-making to strengthen resilience across the urban-rural continuum. Drawing on experiences from Mongolia, Jordan, and other contexts, it seeks to position urban-rural linkages as a key implementation pathway for land degradation neutrality, restoration, and people-centered development.



Land and People Day High Level Events

Special High-Level Event on Rangelands and Pastoralists

13:00 – 15:00 [Action Dome]

The event centres on advancing a new paradigm for rangeland stewardship and sustainable pastoralism. It highlights the economic, ecological, and social importance of rangelands, while addressing challenges such as policy neglect, land degradation, climate change, and weakening traditional governance systems. Emphasis is placed on sustainable land management, regenerative practices, biodiversity conservation, and strengthening pastoralists' livelihoods. The event will feature the conclusion of the Silk Road Caravan initiative in support of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists and the launch of flagship publications.

Peace Forest Initiative (PFI) High-Level Partners' Roundtable

13:00 – 15:00 [MET 22]

The roundtable will explore how land restoration, environmental cooperation, and participatory governance of natural resources can contribute to resilience, conflict prevention and sustainable peace in the face of interconnected environmental, climate, development, and security challenges. The discussion will provide dedicated platform for advancing dialogue on land-peace-security nexus and exchanging experiences on transboundary cooperation, peace-responsive restoration, and practical approaches to de-risking, and scaling restoration in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Participants will also examine governance-sensitive implementation approaches, regional cooperation mechanisms, and partnership modalities that can help strengthen resilience and sustainable development across shared landscapes and ecosystems.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Roundtable

13:00 – 15:00 [MET 23]

SIDS offer unique opportunities for holistic whole-of-island approaches given the compact nature of their governance systems and the magnified urgency of their development and resilience needs. This Roundtable will explore how to strengthen SIDS' stewardship of highly threatened, interconnected ecosystems through LDN and SLM strategies and action tailored to SIDS' realities that build resilience, reduce environmental degradation, and promote economic benefits. It will include the launch of the Global Land Outlook SIDS Thematic Report produced by the UNCCD secretariat.

Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC) Roundtable

13:00 – 15:00 [MET 24]

This event will focus on addressing land, soil and water management challenges in Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), with particular attention to their implications for climate resilience, food security and sustainable development. Drawing on the latest evidence and the preliminary findings of The Status of Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture in the Landlocked Developing Countries of Asia, the discussion will highlight the current state of land degradation and resource management in LLDCs, while exploring innovative technologies, investment opportunities and effective strategies to combat desertification, soil erosion and land degradation. The event will also examine pathways for achieving international development objectives, including SDG 15, and advancing the transition towards more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems.

Gender Caucus

15:00 – 18:00 [Plenary]

The session will focus on recognizing and strengthening the role of women herders and pastoralists as key stewards of rangelands, biodiversity, and resilient rural livelihoods. Discussions will highlight women's contributions to sustainable pastoral systems, land restoration, ecological knowledge, and community resilience, while also addressing the barriers they face in access to land, resources, markets, and decision-making. Attention will be given to women's leadership, collective action, and innovative approaches within the context of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026.

Youth, Land and Livelihoods: Building the Next Generation of Land Stewards

15:00 – 16:30 [Action Dome]

This session focuses on elevating youth leadership in land restoration, sustainable livelihoods, and community resilience by showcasing youth-led solutions, presenting the priorities emerging from the COP17 Youth Forum, and fostering meaningful dialogue between young people, governments, donors, civil society, and international partners to strengthen youth participation, access to resources, and decision-making opportunities.



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Land and People Day High Level Events

From National Reporting to Shared Action: Strengthening Regional Cooperation across the Rio Conventions

15:00 – 16:30 [MET 22]

High-level launch event with partner interventions and technical presentations on regional cooperation and innovation focused on strengthening regional technical cooperation to support national reporting and advance integrated, science-based implementation across the Rio Conventions, with emphasis on data, geospatial tools, and capacity-building.

Rangelands Rising: Accelerating Investment for Rangeland Restoration

15:00 – 16:30 [MET 23]

This session will present Rangelands Rising, a new global report by the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative and partners, coordinated by ILRI. Drawing on examples from Mongolia, China, Jordan, Brazil, Ethiopia, and the Sahel, the report shows how enabling policies and blended finance can unlock scalable investment in the dual livestock–nature economy. It recognizes pastoralists as primary stewards and co-investors and emphasizes secure rights, strong local institutions, gender-responsive approaches, free, prior, and informed consent, and fair benefit-sharing. The discussion will link these findings to the implementation of the UNCCD Rangeland Flagship Initiative and the Land and People Day agenda.

Restoring Land, Recognizing Rights: An Ecocentric Path to Land Degradation Neutrality

15:00 – 16:30 [MET 24]

Land degradation is sustained by legal systems that treat land and ecosystems as property, making degradation lawful and restoration voluntary. Recognizing Nature as a subject of rights reverses that starting point: regeneration becomes a legal duty rather than a target, defensible before the courts and with a legal basis to prevent re-degradation. The session tests this approach against the lived experience of the Pacific, where salinization, drought and land loss threaten communities inseparable from their land and ocean, and connects it to Panama's Law 287 of 2022 and its initiative toward a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature at the United Nations General Assembly.

From the Summits to the Floodplains: Connecting Ecosystems and Livelihoods

16:30 – 18:00 [MET 22]

Pastoralism and Knowledge Systems

16:30 – 18:00 [MET23]

The event aims to open a dialogue between development cooperation actors, scientific institutions, international organizations, and African stakeholders to explore how Earth Observation (EO) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can support pastoral resilience in a way that is inclusive, gender-responsive, and aligned with local priorities. Discussions will focus on drought monitoring, rangeland management, data governance, access, and responsible use, as well as promoting gender-responsive climate information services for pastoral communities.

People-centered Land Tenure and Governance

16:30 – 18:00 [MET24]

This event will focus on advancing secure and equitable land tenure as a critical enabler of Land Degradation Neutrality and sustainable food systems, placing people-centred and rights-based land governance at the core of implementation efforts. The discussion will take stock of opportunities within the Future Strategic Framework to strengthen the integration of tenure issues, including through policy development, indicators, future revisions of the Gender Action Plan, and potential intergovernmental processes. It will highlight both formal and voluntary mechanisms for promoting tenure security, including emerging commitments under the International Land Tenure Coalition (ILTC), and examine the national institutional, coordination, and stakeholder engagement conditions required to translate commitments into action. By fostering dialogue among governments, UNCCD National Focal Points, civil society, and other stakeholders, the event will contribute to broader efforts to strengthen synergies across the Rio Conventions and mobilise support for inclusive, community-driven approaches to land governance.



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Land and People Day High Level Events

Gala of Hope: UN Decade Ecosystem Restoration Special Event

18:00 – 20:00 [Action Dome]

The event highlights ecosystem restoration as a transformative solution for strengthening resilience, restoring drylands and rangelands, improving food systems, and advancing sustainable development. Through inspiring examples and diverse perspectives, it showcases scalable restoration initiatives that generate environmental, social, and economic benefits while reinforcing global commitment to land restoration.



Time	Plenary/Main Committee	Action Dome	MET22 (U-shape – 120 pax)	MET23 (Classroom 100 pax)	MET24 (U-shape – 120 pax)	MET21 (180 pax)
8-9						
9-9:30						
9:30-10						
10-10:30	Ministerial Dialogue on restoration of rangelands and the well-being of pastoralist communities	Seats at the Table: A High-Level Dialogue of Local Communities for Land and People Day				
10:30-11						
11-11:30						
11:30-12		Indigenous Peoples High-Level Special Event: From Sacred Lands to Shepherding the Future	From Ambition to Action: Delivering Rio Convention Synergies	When Land Moves People	From Urban Sprawl to Smart Cities Roundtable	
12-12:30						
12:30-13						
13-13:30		Special High-Level Event on Rangelands and Pastoralists	Peace Forest Initiative High-Level Roundtable	Small Island Developing States Roundtable	Landlocked Developing Countries Roundtable	
13:30-14						
14-14:30						
14:30-15						
15-15:30	Gender Caucus	Youth, Land and Livelihoods: Building the Next Generation of Land Stewards	From National Reporting to Shared Action: Strengthening Regional Cooperation across the Rio Conventions	Rangelands Rising: Accelerating investment for rangeland restoration	Restoring Land, Recognizing Rights	
15:30-16						
16-16:30						
16:30-17			From the summits to the Floodplains: connecting ecosystems and livelihoods	Pastoralism and Knowledge Systems	People-centered land tenure and governance	
17-17:30						
17:30-18						
18-18:30		UN decade Special Event on Ecosystem Restoration	NOT AVAILABLE			
18:30-19						
19-19:30						
19:30-20						