

Australia National Statement

Excellencies, distinguished delegates and colleagues,

Australia welcomes the opportunity to deliver our National Statement here in Ulaanbaatar under the theme of '*Restoring Land. Restoring Hope*'.

We thank the Government of Mongolia for hosting UNCCD COP17 and for their warm hospitality.

COP17 is being held at a critical time. Global environmental challenges are intensifying. Billions of people globally are affected by desertification, land degradation and drought.

Collective action on land restoration, drought resilience and sustainable land management will be important in addressing these interlinked challenges.

However, the UNCCD cannot resolve these challenges alone. In this Rio Trio year, we support the focus on harnessing synergies and building momentum with the Rio Conventions.

This will enable us to respond more effectively to interlinked challenges and work towards solutions – such as Nature-based solutions, that can implement our shared land, biodiversity and climate priorities.

This integrative approach must be a focus in our national efforts to tackle these challenges simultaneously, while avoiding duplication and maximising impact.

In the multilateral space, Australia is proactively tackling some of the most significant challenges facing the global community. As the UNFCCC President of Negotiations for COP31, we, alongside our Turkish Presidency counterparts, are committed to working with countries to deliver outcomes that support implementation, accelerate progress, and advance tangible, practical climate action around the world.

Australia is a long-standing and committed partner of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). We appreciate the GEF's support in addressing land degradation. Australia welcomes the GEF's report to the UNCCD COP17, noting that drought resilience will have a greater focus of implementation under the GEF's Ninth Replenishment.

As the driest permanently inhabited continent on earth, drought is part of Australia's national identity. Building drought resilience is essential for our economy, communities, for healthy land and to maintain our rich and unique biodiversity. Collectively, we can learn and adapt to meet the challenge. We welcome strong attention at COP 17 on drought resilience.

Australia affirms our continued support for the participation of Indigenous Peoples and welcomes the progress towards establishing the UNCCD Indigenous Peoples Caucus. A standalone Caucus will strengthen the implementation of the Convention by enabling Indigenous Peoples to engage with their unique perspectives and stewardship of land. They can also contribute their science, knowledge and practices into the UNCCD's work.

We support the full, effective, meaningful and equal participation and leadership of women and girls in the UNCCD. Australia remains committed to gender equality and supporting gender-responsive approaches across the Rio Conventions.

Looking ahead, we must continue work on developing UNCCD's post-2030 Strategic Framework – one that builds on what the Convention has already achieved and focuses our collective actions for the critical decade ahead.

We look forward to engaging constructively with Parties at COP 17 to advance tangible outcomes for global land restoration and drought resilience.

Thank you.