

FAO statement

At the UNCCD COP17 Opening ceremony – 1st plenary meeting

Date: Monday 17 August 2026 [time tbc]

Location: Plenary Hall

Closed: No

Category: COP

Session: COP 17, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 2026

FAO Statement

1. Thank you, Chair!
2. FAO would like to extend its thanks to the Government and people of Mongolia for hosting this Seventeenth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD and the UNCCD Secretariat for excellent preparation of the Conference.
3. The COP17 theme, "Restoring Land. Restoring Hope" resonates strongly with FAO's mandate in achieving food security, sustainable management of natural resources and better lives of rural population.
4. By 2050, the world will need to produce 50 percent more food, feed, fibre and biofuel than in 2012. Yet available land is limited, and further expansion of agricultural land would come at the cost of environment.
5. 60 percent of human-induced degradation occurs on agricultural land. Avoiding further degradation and restoring degraded lands and soils must become the priority to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality and food security.
6. This calls for integrated land, soil and water management that restores ecosystems, boosts productivity, and strengthens livelihoods and resilience.
7. We welcome the reference to food security as an objective of sustainable land management in related documents for the *Future Strategic Framework of the Convention*. This proposed element is already embedded in UNCCD Decision 19/ COP.16.
8. We believe that agrifood system solutions are also the solutions to achieve the objectives of the Rio Conventions. The Memorandum of Understanding between FAO and UNCCD should guide our collaboration on this broad and complex objective following the mandate of FAO.
9. We stand ready to work with Parties, UNCCD Secretariat, the Global Mechanism, and partners to restore degraded agricultural lands and soils – in croplands, pastures and rangelands – as an environment, economic and development imperative.

10. At this COP, we are proud to launch the *FAO–UNCCD Guidance on Living Soils, Productive Lands, Resilient Landscapes* and its digital companion, during the Food Systems and Soil Health Day. To support implementation of this Guidance, FAO invites Parties and partners to join us in the restoration of agricultural lands and soils.
11. Healthy soils underpin productive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems. The Global Soil Partnership (GSP) - established by FAO, including over 150 countries and multiple partners- offers the platform for connecting with the UNCCD Science and Policy Interface and scaling UNCCD Parties' sustainable soil management efforts toward Land Degradation Neutrality.

Chair,

12. Droughts are becoming more frequent, more intensive and more widespread. Agriculture is the sector that is hit the most, bearing the heaviest burden with over 80 percent of all economic losses caused by drought.
13. We have supported more than 35 countries in developing their national drought management plans and applauds UNCCD efforts to promote proactive drought management also through the development of effective instrument to be negotiated at the next COP.
14. We invite Parties and partners to draw on FAO tools such as drought finance and action tracking, national drought plan monitoring, and crop impact assessment, as we advance the shift from reactive response to anticipatory, risk-based drought action.
15. We welcome the progress made in the implementation of the Gender Action Plan and look forward to collaborating with UNCCD in the development of gender specific indicators and indicators relevant to land governance and tenure security.
16. As a former chair and active member of the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms, FAO welcomes the development of the Global Implementation Initiative on Sand and Dust Storms and we stand ready to support the implementation by the Parties.
17. In closing, we remain committed to working with Parties and partners in improving land, soil and water management for efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agrifood systems for the people and the planet, contributing to the objectives of the Convention.
18. Thank you.

(615 words)