



**STATEMENT BY
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on the occasion of

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
“Rising from Drought Together”

Droughts have always been a part of the natural climate cycle. For centuries, nature and people have been adapting to dry and water-scarce climate conditions. However, in the last decades, human activities have altered 70 % of the earth, in particular through agricultural intensification, creating water stress worldwide.

The links between drought and human activities are strong and go both ways, each having an impact on the other. The desiccation of the Aral Sea is a tragic example where unsustainable water consumption has led to irreversible loss of the inland water ecosystem and its biodiversity, increased drought and dust storms. Addressing the socio-economic factors associated with drought, in particular its root causes, is a crucial element of any management plan. Droughts have become more frequent, severe, and prolonged, and are an alarming trend for biodiversity.

Long-lasting droughts hamper nature’s capacity to deliver important ecosystem services, including protection from hazardous and extreme events. Altered and degraded ecosystems also lose their capacity to capture carbon and instead become a source for climate-altering carbon.

Protecting biodiversity can drought-proof nature and societies. Nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches are cost-effective, long-lasting and bring multiple benefits for people and nature. Sustainable agriculture including a combination of ecosystem restoration, the use of a diverse variety of crops and livestock, agroforestry, soil conservation based on traditional knowledge, are examples of measures that increase the resilience of local communities. Choosing mixed native species over monoculture plantations for restoration programs contributes to more drought-resistant and productive landscapes. Preventing the spread of invasive plants in water catchment areas helps to secure water supply for nearby cities.

World governments are poised to take action.

Recent decisions from COP 15 of UNCCD COP 15 are encouraging. The calls to accelerate the restoration of degraded lands, set up a roadmap for the mainstreaming of drought adaptation and mitigation into national policies and enhance monitoring and review mechanisms at the national level. Many of the proposed targets under the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, expected to be adopted later this year, would contribute to preventing droughts.

This includes those related to reducing threats to biodiversity and sustainable use, and those to support implementation on the ground, mainstreaming and enabling conditions. The underlying common drivers of biodiversity loss, climate change and land degradation should be considered and addressed together.

This decade has been labeled a “decisive decade.” It is critical that we work together using integrated approaches, to align our vision, our agenda and our actions for the benefit of the people and of the planet. We can harness the momentum created by the Climate, Desertification and Biodiversity conferences to deliver jointly on these global goals, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals and the objectives of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

