

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**  
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**MESSAGE ON WORLD DAY  
TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT**  
**17June 2022**

Droughts in all regions are getting more frequent and fierce.

The well-being of hundreds of millions of people is being compromised by increasing sandstorms, wildfires, crop failures, displacement and conflict.

By mid-century, three-quarters of people could be living with drought.

Climate change bears much responsibility, but so does how we manage our land.

Half the world's population is already coping with the consequences of land degradation, with women and girls paying the highest price.

We can and must reverse this downward spiral.

Ensuring the productivity of land and soils is an inexpensive, pro-poor way to combat climate change and improve the livelihoods and well-being of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

Empowering women as landowners is also a game-changer for land restoration.

We can restore land for a fraction of what is currently being spent on environmentally harmful subsidies.

Every dollar invested in restoring land can generate 30 times that much in benefits.

In Africa, the Great Green Wall of the Sahel has already restored millions of hectares of land and created thousands of jobs, from Dakar to Djibouti.

But much more needs to be done.

Taking care of our land and its biodiversity can help address the climate crisis and assist in reaching all our Sustainable Development Goals.

Let us act now to drought-proof our future.

Thank you.

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