

# Her Land. Her Rights.

17 JUNE 2023

DESERTIFICATION &  
DROUGHT DAY



The high-level event “Her Land. Her Rights: Advancing Gender Equality and Land Restoration Goals” will be held from 10:00-13:00 on 16 June 2023 in the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Organized jointly by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), UN Women, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the United Nations Development Programme, the high-level event will bring together leaders and gender equality champions to discuss policies and actions needed to advance women’s land rights and promote stronger female leadership and decision-making power in sustainable land management.

Officially declared by the General Assembly as “World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought” (ARES/49/115).

Since 2019, it has been known simply as Desertification & Drought Day and is observed on 17 June to promote public awareness of international efforts to combat desertification and promote drought resilience.

The focus of Desertification & Drought Day 2023 is on women’s land rights— essential for achieving the intertwined global goals on gender equality and land degradation neutrality by 2030 and contributing to the advancement of several other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



United Nations  
Convention to Combat  
Desertification



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



UNITED NATIONS  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER





## Galvanizing an ambitious women's land rights agenda

Women hold a vital stake in the health and stewardship of the land, yet they often lack access to and control over it. Land is the most critical resource for most rural poor, dependent on agriculture and terrestrial ecosystems for their livelihoods. Women are less likely to own, use and/or control land than men and often have less voice, agency and decision-making power regarding land, leaving them more susceptible to poverty, hunger, gender-based violence and displacement, and limiting their ability to thrive and prosper. And when land becomes degraded and land-based resources like water are scarce, women are often the worst affected.

Land degradation affects nearly half the world's population, in particular rural communities and smallholder farmers, many of whom are women. Many of the countries most affected by climate-related hazards, such as increased droughts, are also disproportionately fragile and have persistent gender inequality.

Today, gender equality in land ownership and rights remains unfinished business in every part of the world and is only worsening due to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.

- Nearly **half** of the global agricultural workforce is **female** – yet less than **one-in-five** landholders worldwide are women.
- The percentage of men who have ownership or secure tenure rights over agricultural land is **twice** that of women in more than **40 per cent** of the countries that have reported on women's land ownership.
- Globally, **53** out of **191** countries and areas, home to **1.5 billion** women and girls, or **37.2 per cent** of the world's female population, face a high or very high exposure to droughts.
- Women's rights to **inherit** their husband's property continue to **be denied in over 100** countries under customary, religious, or traditional laws and practices.

Investing in women's equal access to, use of and control over land and associated assets is a direct investment in their future and the future of humanity and the planet. Women are instrumental in providing security and stability in rural communities with great potential to contribute to land restoration activities.

Examples from around the world demonstrate how the recognition of land rights has sparked significant investments in long-term land and soil conservation.<sup>1</sup>

- If women had equal rights to land, it is estimated that agricultural production in the poorest regions would increase by up to **4 per cent**. As a result, there would be up to **150 million fewer** hungry people in the world.
- Children whose mothers own land up to **33 per cent less** likely to be severely underweight.
- Women with strong property and inheritance rights earn up to **3.8 times more** income.
- Women who own land are up to **8 times less** likely to experience domestic violence.

<sup>1</sup>The data below are from a forthcoming publication on SDG6 by UN Women.



# Event Programme: 16 June 2023

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- 10:00**    **Opening performance** by UNCCD Goodwill Ambassadors  
Mr. Baaba Maal, Ms. Inna Modja and Mr. Ricky Kej
- 10:05**    **Opening address** by Mr. Csaba Kőrösi, President of the 77th session of the General Assembly  
**Message** from Mr. António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General
- 10:10**    **High-level statements**  
H.E. Ms. Tarja Halonen, Former President of Finland and UNCCD Land Ambassador  
H.E. Ms. Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Prime Minister of Iceland  
H.E. Ms. Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Prime Minister of Namibia  
H.E. Ms. Teresa Ribera Rodríguez, Vice-President of the Government of Spain and Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge  
Ms. Jennifer Littlejohn, Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, USA  
Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, President, Association des Femmes Peuples Autochtones du Tchad (AFPAT)
- 10:25**    **Her Land call to action**
- 10:30**    **Interactive dialogue:** Policies to advance women's land rights  
**Keynote address** by Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General  
**Panel discussion:**  
H.E. Ms. Sonia Guajajara, Minister of Indigenous Peoples, Brazil  
Ms. Annalise Blum, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Department of Interior, USA  
Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General, FAO  
Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director, UN Women  
Dr. Solange Bandyaki-Badji, President, Rights and Resources Group  
**Moderator:** Ms. Lukwesa Burak, BBC News Presenter
- 11:15**    **Statements from the floor** moderated by Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD
- 11:35**    **Interactive dialogue:** Action to advance women's land rights  
**Keynote address** by Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator, UNDP  
**Panel discussion:**  
Mr. Alain-Richard Donwahi, UNCCD COP15 President, Côte d'Ivoire  
Ms. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, UNFPA  
Ms. Rex Molapo, Co-founder, Conservation Music, Lesotho  
Ms. Kehkashan Basu, Founder-President, Green Hope Foundation, UNCCD Land Hero  
**Moderator:** Ms. Lukwesa Burak, BBC News Presenter
- 12:20**    **Statements from the floor** moderated by Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD
- 12:40**    **Closing segment**  
Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Executive Director, UN Women  
Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD

## More information:

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The event will be livestreamed to audiences around the world via UN Web TV.

## UNCCD POLICY BRIEF

# Her Land. Her Rights.

Advancing gender equality to restore land and build resilience

**Women's land rights are intrinsically linked to gender equality.** They are key enablers of women's economic autonomy and decision-making and play a central role in rebalancing unequal power relations within households, communities, governments, and institutions. This positions women's land rights as a central issue for the achievement of many Sustainable Development Goals.

**Breaking down barriers to women's rights to land is an imperative.** This facilitates leadership opportunities, access to markets and finance, and technology-enabled solutions. When their rights are respected, women are quick to seize the opportunity to adapt, build, and strengthen their roles in regenerative land management that makes their families and communities more resilient.

**Gender equality is a first step to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality and better cope with the impacts of drought and climate change.** Women are instrumental in providing security and stability in rural communities with great potential to contribute to land restoration activities. This policy brief provides recommendations for governments and other stakeholders to ensure their obligations and commitments to gender equality are fulfilled.

**The UNCCD's Gender Action Plan demonstrates the renewed commitment of countries to improve the quality of life on land for women by:**

- ensuring women's full participation in decision-making and implementation efforts;
- boosting women's economic empowerment and eradicating poverty and malnutrition;
- strengthening women's land rights, including access to resources and services; and
- enhancing women's access to innovation, knowledge, and appropriate technologies.

The objective of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is to support countries and communities with the rehabilitation, conservation and sustainable management of land and water resources, leading to improved living conditions. With 197 Parties, the UNCCD unites decision makers, scientists, civil society and the private sector around a shared vision and framework for action to transform how land resources are used and managed to ensure healthy lives and sustainable livelihoods. It is critical that these efforts continue to promote gender equality and gender-responsive approaches to the control and access to land.



**United Nations**  
Convention to Combat  
Desertification

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