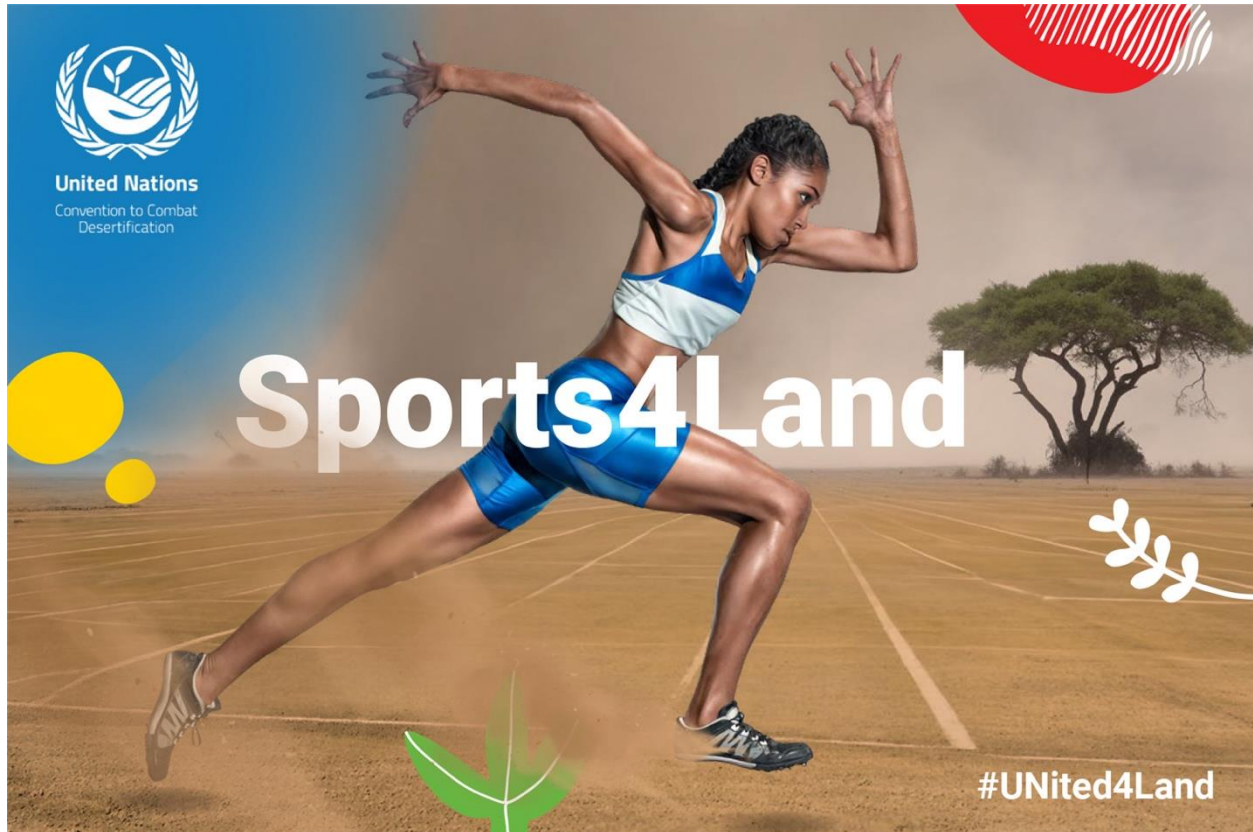




“Sports4Land”



Sporting community mobilizes for land: Paris 2024 in action against desertification

Paris, 26 July 2024 - Desertification and land degradation represent a major challenge for the global sporting community. Sports pitches are directly affected by these phenomena. Drought and extreme temperatures make playing surfaces harder and more brittle, increasing the risk of injury for athletes. In addition, frequent heatwaves mean sporting events must be rescheduled, disrupting athletes' preparation and performance.

According to a recent survey, 75% of athletes perceive a negative impact on their health and performance because of climate change. In addition to the direct effects on athletes, global warming reduces opportunities for community and youth activities, particularly affecting marginalized groups.

Healthy land not only provides us with almost 95% of our food but so much more: it clothes and shelters us, provides us with jobs and livelihoods and protects us from worsening droughts, floods and forest fires. At the same time, population growth and unsustainable production and



consumption patterns fuel demand for natural resources. By 2050, 10 billion people will share our planet and depend on healthy land for their livelihoods.

To address these issues, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is organizing a ‘Desertification Day’ on 31 July 2024 at the Africa Station of the Olympic Games on Ile-Saint-Denis. The aim of the event is to raise awareness and get the sporting community involved in land issues ahead of COP16, the UN's biggest conference on land issues, in December 2024 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

In partnership with the Mairie de l'île-Saint-Denis and the Association d'Esprit d'Ebène, the UNCCD is offering exciting activities such as a desertification fresco, an oasis of solutions, a desertification quiz with prizes to be won, and a screening of the film ‘The Great Green Wall’ by Inna Modja, the UNCCD's Goodwill Ambassador.

To mark the 30th anniversary of the UNCCD, a debate will be organized with athletes and personalities from the world of sport to demonstrate the links between desertification and sport.

Among the participants are:

- Merem Tahar, Special Envoy on Youth of the President of UNCCDCOP15, Chad/France
- Naomi Akakpo, Olympic Athlete (hurdler), Togo/France
- Mustapha Berraf, First Vice-President of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa, Algeria
- Vladyslava Kravchenko, Para Swimming Athlete and member of the International Paralympic Committee's Athletes' Council, Malta

The day will also see the launch of the UNCCD's ‘Sports4Land’ campaign, which aims to get sports personalities involved in protecting the land: #United4Land for a prosperous future.

Restoring land is an effective method of promoting a better quality of life, ensuring food security and sustainable growth.

A healthy playground starts with a healthy planet. Let's commit to preserving our land in the same way we commit to our favorite sport!

For media enquiries, please contact press@unccd.int.