PRESS RELEASE
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Private sector urged to step up investment in healthy lands

- *Largest private sector participation at a UNCCD COP to date builds momentum for sustainable land management*

- *UNCCD's Business4Land (B4L) Initiative releases a guide to help the private sector assess land degradation risks and report on mitigation actions*

5 December (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia) — On Wednesday 4th December, hundreds of private sector representatives from finance, fashion, agri-food to pharmaceuticals, convened in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to discuss their role in ensuring sustainable land, soil and water management. They responded to a call to action launched by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) at the 16th Conference of the Parties.

The Business 4 Land Forum brought together high-level decision makers and CEOs from companies that are particularly land-and-water-dependent, including firms in the agrifood, pharma, energy, textiles, ICT, and finance and insurance sectors. Land degradation and drought pose serious risks for businesses and investors, meaning it is in their best interest to mitigate them by contributing to global efforts for healthy lands and drought resilience.

The event was part of Business 4 Land (B4L), an initiative launched by UNCCD earlier this year in Davos with InTent - a platform that can quickly mobilize an influential and diverse group of decision-makers for change - to engage and support private actors in sustainable land management. It is supported by the COP16 Presidency, the World Economic Forum, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, ChangeNOW, the Sustainable Fibre Alliance, the International Chamber of Commerce, the UN Global Compact, and the Saudi Environment Fund.

"COP16 has attracted the largest-ever participation of the private sector to a UNCCD COP to date, providing a critical momentum to make sustainable land management a core part of corporate and financial strategies," said the Executive Secretary of UNCCD Ibrahim Thiaw. "Shifting towards nature-positive operations, supply chains, and investments, is not only about environmental sustainability, but about the long-term profitability and resilience of businesses."

The B4L Forum brought together 60 high-level speakers and 400 guests; among them, more than 40 corporations that recognize the urgent need to address land degradation and drought, and acknowledge their responsibility in ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources as a business and social imperative.

B4L’s call to action urges companies to contribute to one or more of the Business 4 Land (B4L) initiative's pillars: promoting sustainable practices across business operations; supporting finance solutions; and advocating for better land and water management policies.

“$44 trillion, over half of global GDP, is at risk from nature loss. It is imperative for business to explore innovations that can halt and reverse land degradation while unlocking opportunities for business growth,” said Gim Huay Neo, Managing Director at 1T.org, World Economic Forum. “Through collaboration with governments and other stakeholders, business can accelerate progress on land restoration for a more resilient future for all.”

André Hoffmann, member of the high-level advisory committee of COP16 and founder of InTent and Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors said: "The private sector, which can play vital role in the sustainable transition we urgently need, must see nature not as a resource to exploit but as our life-support system. The B4L Forum was an opportunity to forge new coalitions to restore land and build resilience. By shifting from extraction to collaboration, we can drive investments in nature-based solutions that secure human prosperity and planetary health."

The forum highlighted the need to align business, policies, and finance to protect land as a critical asset. Participants discussed how to account for the corporate impacts on land, how to mitigate the risks of land degradation - for example, by setting measurable targets both in direct operations and across supply chains - and by reporting on progress.

New guidance for the private sector

The Business 4 Land initiative launched a *guide* to help corporate actors navigate land-related disclosures and target-setting and align their strategies with national policies and global goals for a fair land transition.

"Corporate disclosures are essential for land-positive businesses. Today, many companies still lack a clear understanding of their land-related impacts and dependencies, leaving them vulnerable to significant risks”, said Razan Al Mubarak, Co-Chair of the Taskforce for Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) and President of IUCN.

The report, ‘*Corporate Disclosures and Target-Setting on Land Guide’,* was developed together with the (TNFD) and the Science Based Targets Network (SBTN), in consultation with actors like the WEF and the COP16 Presidency.

The costs of land degradation and drought are steep. For example, U.S. farmers may face short-term costs of up to USD 40 per acre for regenerative agriculture practices, but long-term profits can increase by up to 120%. B4L's guide supports companies in harnessing these opportunities.

“In a context of rising nature risks, businesses have a key role to plan in taking action for land and reversing the trend of degradation, water scarcity and biodiversity loss impacting our societies and economies, across value chains and industries," concluded a member of the Executive Committee of the World Economic Forum Nicole Schwab.

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COMMENTS

Philippe Zaouati, CEO of the MIROVA sustainable investment fund, said: "Companies stand to gain significantly by transforming their value chains to incorporate sustainable practices, not only to reduce their impact on nature but also to seize the economic opportunities that arise. Mobilizing funding for land restoration requires a concerted effort by the public and private sectors. By working together, we can create an enabling environment for restoration, which is essential to achieve greenhouse gas neutrality by 2050 and a sustainable future."

Henri Bruxelles, CSO of Danone, said: "The livelihoods of more than 2.5 billion people, many of them smallholder farmers, depend on agriculture, which is both a significant contributor to climate change and one of the most impacted by its impacts. Collaborating across sectors of society is vital to address the intertwined climate and water challenges; guarantee food security and nutrition; and secure the livelihoods of the communities that feed the world; and build a sustainable food system."

Erin Billman, Co-lead of SBTN's Land Hub & Executive Director of the Science Based Targets Network: "Connecting corporate actions and their science-based targets to party commitments under the UN conventions is an important lever in delivering the promise of global targets."

Maryanne Gichanga, CEO of AgriTech Analytics Ltd, who won a USD 50,000 grant provided by InTent as part of the Land of Opportunities Pitch Competition on 4 December at COP16: "Having our start up, AgriTech Analytics being spotlighted in such a global stage during Land Day has been such an incredible opportunity, spearheading collaborations and partnerships. Receiving the generous prize of 50k USD the Land of Opportunities Pitch competition will enable us to scale and help more farmers in the farming communities in Kenya. We are very grateful for UNCCD for inviting us to join COP16 and for the pitch competition partners for their contributions."

NOTES
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About UNCCD

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the only legally binding international agreement on good land stewardship. It supports communities and countries in creating wealth and securing nutritious food, clean water and energy through sustainable land management. Through partnerships, the Convention’s 197 parties also set up robust systems to proactively manage drought risks. Good land stewardship based on sound policy and science helps integrate and accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, builds resilience to climate change, and prevents biodiversity loss.

About Business 4 Land (B4L)

B4L is the UNCCD’s main initiative to engage the private sector in sustainable land and water management. It helps companies and financial institutions manage risks and seize opportunities tied to land degradation and drought. B4L aims to restore 1.5 billion hectares of land by 2030, contributing to Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), a global commitment to achieve net zero land degradation by 2030, as well as enhancing drought resilience.

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