



William Troost-Ekong Named Sport4Land Champion

UNCCD welcomes international football star and Nigeria's national team captain to its team of athletes united for land

Bonn – 25 May 2025 – On this World Football Day, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is proud to announce William Troost-Ekong, captain of Nigeria's national football team and professional player for the Saudi Pro League Al-Kholood FC, as the latest Sport4Land Champion. He joins a growing movement of high-profile athletes committed to using the power of sport to raise awareness and take action against desertification, land degradation and drought.

Troost-Ekong becomes the fifth Sport4Land Champion, joining Moroccan judo champion Asmaa Niang, Togo's Olympic hurdle jumper Naomi Akakpo, Dutch Paralympian and wheelchair basketball champion Jitske Visser, and Ivorian national football team captain Franck Kessié—a diverse group of sports leaders advocating for healthy land that sustains us all. Together, they form a united front for land restoration, climate resilience, and sustainable development.

As a Sport4Land Champion, Troost-Ekong will use his influence to promote land restoration initiatives across Africa and around the world. Through community outreach, youth engagement, and high-visibility initiatives, he aims to inspire urgent action to restore degraded land and protect the livelihoods of millions who depend on it.

“Every second, the world loses the equivalent of four football fields of healthy land,” said Troost-Ekong.

“I want to use my platform to build awareness of the impact desertification is having in Africa—and the solutions to reverse it. I'm especially motivated to strengthen collaboration between Saudi Arabia and Africa, including my home country Nigeria. My goal is to empower communities with the tools and knowledge they need to restore their land and secure a better future. It's time for a new generation of leaders to step forward and build a legacy of change.”

Through his Troost-Ekong Foundation, established in 2024, he will champion land restoration and environmental awareness by supporting grassroots initiatives, education, and local development projects. His work will directly support the Great Green Wall, a flagship Africa-led initiative aiming to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land, sequester 250 million tonnes of carbon, and create 10 million green jobs by 2030.

“William Troost-Ekong embodies the spirit of Sport4Land—determined, visionary, and rooted in his community,” said Ibrahim Thiaw, UNCCD Executive Secretary.

“His leadership on and off the pitch will help shine a light on the urgent need for land restoration—not only in Africa, but around the world. We are proud to welcome him to our team of Sport4Land Champions.”

“By connecting the universal language of football with the global challenge of land degradation, Sport4Land turns passion into action—scoring goals not only on the pitch, but for the future of our land and our communities,” Thiaw added



In his first engagement as Sport4LandChampion, Troost-Ekong will host a charity football match in Lagos on 22 June 2025 in conjunction with this year's Desertification and Drought Day with the theme of “Restore the Land. Unlock the Opportunities.”. The event will bring together athletes, fans and community members in a celebration of the power of sport to unite and drive meaningful change for the land.

For more information, please contact:

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<https://www.unccd.int/our-work/campaigns/sport4land>

About UNCCD

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the global vision and voice for land. We unite governments, scientists, policymakers, private sector and communities around a shared vision and global action to restore and manage the world's land for the sustainability of humanity and the planet. Much more than an international treaty signed by 197 parties, UNCCD is a multilateral commitment to mitigating today's impacts of land degradation and advancing tomorrow's land stewardship in order to provide food, water, shelter and economic opportunity to all people in an equitable and inclusive manner.

About Sport4Land

[Sport4Land](#) is a global campaign by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to unite the sports community in the fight against land degradation, desertification and drought. With climate change accelerating droughts, heatwaves, and land degradation, the impact is being felt not only on playing fields but also on the food we eat, the livelihoods we depend on, and the environment we share.

Launched at the Paris Olympics 2024, the campaign engages sportsmen and women and fans worldwide to take action for land restoration. As Sport4Land champions, high-profile athletes promote the critical connection between healthy land and thriving communities.