

Press Release

Arab region key to linking land and water, mobilizing finance and driving partnerships for food security

UNCCD Executive Secretary calls for greater cooperation on land restoration and drought resilience at the Arab Environment Ministers Meeting in Mauritania

Nouakchott, Mauritania - 30 October 2025: Arab environment ministers gathered this week in Nouakchott for the 36th session of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), the League of Arab States' highest forum for regional cooperation on environment and sustainable development. The Council serves as the Arab region's highest policy platform on environment, enabling ministers to align regional priorities, prepare joint positions for global negotiations, and advance cooperative projects. The meeting placed a strong focus on restoring land, building drought resilience and integrating land and water management as central pathways to food security and stability.

In her address, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Yasmine Fouad, called for renewed solidarity across the Arab region to scale up action on land and drought. She stressed that “water is the lifeline of the land. When its management falters, the soil loses its fertility, crops decline, and the impacts of drought and land degradation intensify. Integrating land and water management is not only an environmental imperative, it is an economic necessity.”

Across the Arab region, rising aridity and land degradation are amplifying drought risks and food insecurity. Globally, up to 40 per cent of land is already degraded, costing the world economy nearly USD 900 billion each year. Yet every dollar invested in land restoration can generate up to 27 dollars in returns, showing that solutions are not only urgent but also economically sound.

The Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, convened under the League of Arab States, has long been a platform to coordinate Arab positions in international fora and advance joint programmes to promote sustainable development and environmental protection.

Ms. Fouad welcomed the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, President of the 16th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD (COP16), for the outcomes achieved in Riyadh — including the launch of the Global Drought Resilience Partnership, which mobilised more than 12 billion US dollars in commitments through 2030, and the Business4Land Initiative that brings private companies into the heart of land restoration efforts.

Looking ahead to COP17 in Ulaanbaatar, she outlined priorities where Arab countries can lead: strengthening land–water integration, mobilising finance and private investment, deepening synergies between the Rio Conventions, and presenting bankable projects that deliver multiple benefits for people and ecosystems.

She also reaffirmed that the G20 Global Land Initiative, hosted by the Convention, will soon open associate membership for non-G20 countries, including Arab states, giving them access to technical support and knowledge-sharing networks.

On the sidelines of the Nouakchott meeting, bilateral discussions with ministers from Oman, Iraq, Qatar and Kuwait explored opportunities to expand cooperation on land restoration, drought resilience and integrated land and water planning, with a focus on private-sector engagement.

Ministers also underlined that meaningful participation of women, youth and local communities is essential to deliver lasting impact. Across the region, women and young people are not only vulnerable to land and water crises, they are also leaders of innovative solutions that must be scaled up. Globally, women produce half of the world's food but own less than one-fifth of land - a gap that highlights the urgency of empowering them as central actors in land restoration.

Concluding the session, Ms. Fouad stressed that land is a trust passed down through generations: "The choices we make today will shape the lives of our children and grandchildren. Restoring land means restoring hope - it means securing food, water and opportunity for the generations to come."

-END-

For media enquiries, please contact
press@unccd.int

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.