

## World Day to Combat Desertification

17 June 2014

### *Land belongs to the future, let's climate proof it!*

Global temperatures are rising. This is now well understood. But climate change is not only about the planet heating up. Global warming brings more extreme weather events such as prolonged droughts and floods. As a result, farmers produce less food, livestock herders have less grass to feed cattle, and communities become more vulnerable.

Building up resilience is particularly important in the drylands where people living in poverty depend heavily on the productivity of their land and the many benefits it provides. Desertification, defined as land degradation in drylands, is a major challenge being exacerbated by climate change.

**While we must continue to reduce our carbon footprint, we must also learn to adapt.** The good news is that with the right interventions, we can turn the vicious cycle of climate change and desertification into a virtuous cycle of productive land and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. By strengthening biodiversity and eco-system services through sustainable land management, we can help people adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. For ecosystem-based adaptation, land and soil play an important role. Healthy soil not only ensures steady food production, but increases resilience in the face of incremental changes in temperature and rainfall as well as disasters and extreme weather events. Healthy soil also stores more carbon which helps mitigate climate change impacts.

**Implementing ecosystem-based adaptation through sustainable land management practices does not have to be difficult or expensive.** For example, Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration is a low-cost, sustainable land restoration technique which promotes the regeneration of trees and shrubs and thus increasing productivity and resilience. Holistic Management is another example that facilitates the natural recovery of grasslands through livestock planning and monitoring. There are many success stories of land restoration and its sustainable management that support the effectiveness of ecosystem-based adaptation and even have other co-benefits like increasing food security. In many cases eco-system based adaptation strategies are potentially more cost-effective than other hard engineered adaptation options, yet they are often overlooked.

**The theme of 2014 World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD) is ecosystem-based adaptation. With the slogan 'Land Belongs to the Future, Let's Climate Proof It', the 2014 WDCD highlights the benefits of mainstreaming sustainable land management policies and practices into our collective response to climate change.** Sustainable land management increases both community and ecosystem resilience while improving the human condition particularly in the drylands.

**The objectives of the 2014 WDCD are to:**

1. Increase the attention given to land and soil within climate change adaptation
2. Mobilize support for sustainable land management
3. Call for the inclusion of land and soil and their significance in food security into national climate change adaptation policies.

Many claim that we have entered a new geological period in our planet's history, the anthropocene. For the first time, the major driver of change on Earth is human activity, specifically the unsustainable use of our natural resources. We still have time to reverse these trends, and for this to happen, sustainable land management is our pathway to change. We, as consumers and land users, have contributed to the acceleration of climate change. We now need to be part of the solution.

## Call to action

The 2014 WDCD campaign will kick-off on the African Environment Day/ Wangari Maathai Day on 3 March. The kick-off combines the observance of the UN Decade for Desert and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020).

The events planned for the global observance include: exhibitions of various kinds; the announcement of the 2014 [Land for Life Award winners](#) and the 2014 National Drylands Champions; the release of a cartoon animation of successful land rehabilitation activities; and infographics featuring innovative actions to climate-proof land as well as the observance events for 2014 planned by various actors in countries that are party to the Convention.

The place and venue for the global observance will be announced in early 2014.

WDCD is an occasion for countries to honour [National Dryland Champions](#). These are individuals or institutions that have made a worthy practical contribution to sustainable land management practices. Under the Dryland Champions motto "I am part of the solution," the initiative focuses first and foremost on people, their commitment and endeavors to improve the livelihoods of populations and the conditions of ecosystems affected by desertification and drought.

Join us in observing the 2014 World Day to Combat Desertification. If you plan to host an event, send us a short paragraph with information about the date, venue and planned activity. It will be posted on our website as part of the global country-by-country infographic.

Please join us in spreading the word about the Day.

For further information, contact:

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## About the World Day to Combat Desertification

In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly declared [\(A/RES/49/115\)](#) June 17 the "World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought" to promote public awareness of the issue, and the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. It is a unique occasion to remind everybody that desertification can be effectively tackled, that solutions are possible, and that key tools to this aim lay in strengthened community participation and co-operation at all levels.

## About the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification

With more lands around the world facing increasing deterioration and degradation, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2010-2020 the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification. There are two objectives for this period: to raise awareness about the causes of and solutions to desertification and land degradation; and to mobilize resources for special initiatives to achieve this objective.

## About the UNCCD

Desertification, along with climate change and the loss of biodiversity, were identified as the greatest challenges to sustainable development during the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Established in 1994, UNCCD is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment, development and the promotion of healthy soils. The Convention's 195 signatory Parties work to alleviate poverty in the drylands, maintain and restore the land's productivity, and mitigate the effects of drought.