

Great Green Wall e-Round Table Meeting on 7 September 2020

Intervention by

FAO Director-General, Dr QU Dongyu

Excellencies, Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. The Great Green Wall remains a beacon initiative that addresses the multiple, complex and interconnected environmental and socio-economic challenges facing Africa.
2. Challenges such as climate change, desertification, biodiversity loss, food insecurity and poverty.
3. Today, I would like to highlight **three relevant areas where FAO can leverage its knowledge and experience to support implementation of Africa's Great Green Wall:**
4. **First, FAO's technical support:**
5. The Organization brings valuable plant science to communities and is adapted to large-scale restoration in the Sahel;
6. In the last five years this approach has been applied in more than **400 communities** to restore over **50 000 hectares** of degraded barren lands, making them fertile again, increasing land productivity and resilience to climate change and **improving livelihoods for close to one million people**. The progress report highlights these and other results.
7. Every single hectare counts - and must be counted.
8. We have therefore already **trained national experts in each Great Green Wall country to use modern geospatial technology** through FAO's Open FORIS suite of tools that provide innovative ways to assess land use and land use changes.
9. The data collected are key to unlocking restoration, carbon stock and sequestration potentials and make the socio-economic impacts of land restoration visible.
10. FAO also actively supports countries to address water scarcity in agriculture, through assessment activities and the introduction of sustainable natural resources management practices.
11. WaPOR, our remote sensing platform, can assess water productivity across the whole of Africa, providing vital and timely information for policy-making and actions on the ground when addressing water scarcity and drought risks.
12. Best practices on water harvesting and sustainable soil management are crucial to improve agricultural productivity in the region.

13. FAO will continue to technically support the application of best practices in land restoration and the innovative data collection and monitoring of its implementation, thereby measuring progress and impact on the ground and at increased scale.
14. Large-scale restoration work, underpinned by innovative and cutting-edge data collection and monitoring, promotes environmental recovery, improves livelihoods and increases regional cooperation.
15. **Second, FAO's institutional support:**
16. Strong institutional backup supports the success of the implementation of the Great Green Wall.
17. To raise the current pace of land restoration needed to reach the 2030 target of 100 million hectares, we need renewed political will and commitment.
18. We will continue to involve more of our field offices in the Great Green Wall countries, supported by our regional office for Africa to engage more actively with Governments, local communities and partners.
19. And we will contribute to the strategic coordination of actions at international, regional and country level.
20. FAO strongly encourages better coordination and monitoring of the Great Green Wall, within UN agencies and partners, the African Union Commission and the Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall.
21. Let us build on opportunities to do so. Opportunities, such as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration by 2030.
22. The Decade, which is co-led by FAO and the UN Environment Programme, has endorsed the Great Green Wall as its flagship programme.
23. **Third, FAO's resource mobilisation support:**
24. The Report clearly shows that a major hurdle in achieving the ambitious goals of the Great Green Wall is lack of funding.
25. We need to use our collective experience and knowledge in scaling-up financing and reducing investment jitters (long term and comprehensive design).
26. Let's make investing in land restoration projects more attractive by demonstrating the benefits to societies, economies and the environment.
27. FAO, as a Green Climate Fund Accredited institution, is working in collaboration with Members and the Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall on a Multi-country funding proposal by the Green Climate Fund for ten years.

28. To create a coordinated funding stream for scaling up implementation of climate actions in support of the Great Green Wall, FAO has been supporting the Green Climate Fund and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification to set up a specific Great Green Wall programmatic approach.
29. Having recently become an executing agency of the Adaptation Fund also opens new opportunities for resources mobilization to support the Great Green Wall.

Colleagues, friends,

30. When we met in June, we agreed to **five principles of collaboration to move forward**:
 - a. putting people first;
 - b. empowering countries;
 - c. making the Great Green Wall a priority;
 - d. maximizing synergies; and
 - e. that there was no time to lose.
31. Let's hold on to these principles to make it reality!
32. FAO are ready to continue working with all of you to achieve the ambitious goals of this important project.
33. Unleashing the immense potential of the African continent and contributing to a world free of hunger!