

PRESS RELEASE 2013

World day to combat desertification marked globally with calls for action on policy and grassroots

17/07/2013, Ghent, Belgium. Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary, UN Convention to Combat Desertification this morning called for action at the policy and grassroots levels in order to mitigate the effects of drought, and to combat desertification and land degradation effectively.

“On the ground, we must help local communities adopt and scale up sustainable land management practices,” he stressed.

On the policy front, he said, one side of the equation is to turn the global aspiration of a land-degradation neutral world into a reality by giving it a concrete target under the Sustainable Development Goals under consideration. The other side is to mitigate drought by implementing the outcomes of the recent high level meeting on national drought policy held in Geneva in order to better prepare for and manage the risks associated with drought. Gnacadja was speaking at the global Conference on Desertification and Land Degradation taking place in Ghent, Belgium, in observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification, marked worldwide on 17 June every year.

To mark the celebration, Gnacadja announced the three winners of the Land for Life Award with a total prize fund of USD100, 000 drawn from 137 applications received from 62 countries.

Foundation for Ecological Security from India was declared overall winner with Consejo Civil Mexicano para la Silvicultura Sostenible from Mexico and World Vision Australia for its work in West Africa tied for second position, “These three winners exemplify the type of leadership and initiatives that make a difference at the grassroots level. They have succeeded in improving livelihoods while fostering good land stewardship. Much of what they do is simple, but transformational.

Gnacadja stressed that “the most affected communities are not standing by, but are leading the way to drought resilience, food and water security.” To read the full statement of Luc Gnacadja [click here](#).

Guido Van Huylenbroeck, Dean, Faculty of BioScience and Engineering, University of Ghent, stressed the need to join forces to act on land degradation using holistic approaches.

He said only an integrated approach which involves not only scientists, but also biologists, agronomists and economists, among others, can offer solutions for land resources and protect them from land degradation and desertification worldwide “Not science and for science, but scientific analysis that results in concrete action,” he said. Donald Gabriels, Chairman, UNESCO

Chair on Eremology at the University of Ghent outlined the achievements over two decades in the nine member countries of working together under the Sustainable Management of Marginal Drylands partnership.

The World Day is observed all over the world to draw global attention to strengthen action to combat desertification and land degradation, and mitigate the effects of drought. This year, the event was marked in many countries all over the world, including, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Ghana, Georgia, Hungary, Iran, Kenya, Mexico, Namibia, Portugal, South Africa, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

For more information on the Day, visit: <http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Event-and-campaigns/WDCD/WDCD2013/Pages/default.aspx>