

PRESS RELEASE

2012 World Day to Combat Desertification Calls For Land Degradation Neutrality

20/02/2012 Bonn, Germany -- The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) announced the theme for the 2012 World Day to Combat Desertification, which will be celebrated on 17 June all over the world.

UNCCD Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja presented the slogan for the 2012 World Day to Combat Desertification - "Healthy soil sustains your life: LET'S GO LAND-DEGRADATION NEUTRAL".

"Fertile soil is a finite and irreplaceable resource, which feeds seven billion people today and is expected to feed nine billion in 2050. It is a common wealth that provides us not only with food, but also secures water and energy for present and future generations", Mr. Gnacadja said.

"But soil's caring capacity is often forgotten in global policies for sustainable development. Therefore, the international community should set a zero-net land degradation target. This target can be achieved by sustaining healthy soil and restoring degraded land. We should start with drylands, which support half of the world's food production systems and are highly vulnerable to desertification, and then adopt successful practices elsewhere."

At the UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on "Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication" in September 2011, many world leaders said that the commitment to build a land-degradation neutral world should become an important outcome of the Rio+20. During this meeting, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for sustainable land-use to become "a cornerstone of the green economy for poverty eradication and sustainable development".

The global observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification this year is planned in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the Sunday before the start of the Rio+20 Conference.

Notes to Editors:

About UNCCD

Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development issues to the land agenda. The UNCCD addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands. The Convention's 194 Parties are working to improve the living conditions in the drylands, to maintain and restore land and soil productivity, and to mitigate the effects of drought.

About World Day to Combat Desertification

In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly declared 17 June the "World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought" to promote public awareness and the implementation of the UNCCD in the desertification affected countries. Since 1995, Parties to the Convention, the United Nations

organizations, international and non-governmental organizations have celebrated 17 June with a series of outreach activities worldwide. The World Day to Combat Desertification is a unique occasion to remind global community that desertification can be effectively tackled, that solutions are possible, and that key tools to this aim lay in strengthened community participation and cooperation at all levels.

About Rio+20

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), also known as Rio+20, will take place in Brazil on 20-22 June 2012. It will mark the 20th anniversary of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, and the 10th anniversary of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. The Conference will result in a political document, which will renew political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress to date and address new and emerging challenges.

For more information, please see the [concept note on the 2012 World Day to Combat Desertification](#).

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