

World Day to Combat Desertification Global Observance

Ministerial Round-table Meeting Summary

Making land degradation neutrality a solid basis of the country's sustainable development

Ankara, 17 June 2019

High-level government officials including eight including 8 Ministers and Vice Ministers from 12 countries met in Ankara on the 17 June 2019, at the invitation of the Government of Turkey, the host country of the World Day to Combat Desertification global observance. They discussed the policies and practices that support national efforts to achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN) and its significance for national development.

Participants acknowledged that since the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted in Paris in 1994, significant efforts have been made to halt and reverse desertification and land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought. However, they are aware that much more needs to be done.

Encouraged by the fact that as of today 122 countries have committed to take voluntary, measurable actions to arrest land degradation by 2030 and that 44 of the 70 drought-prone countries have set up national plans to manage drought more effectively in the future, participants reconfirming that achieving land degradation neutrality is possible.

The contribution of Turkey to international cooperation on effective implementation of the Convention was acknowledged with appreciation. The Ankara Initiative, launched at the 12th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD, has been supporting countries affected by desertification by leveraging the lessons learned from Turkey's experience and approaches to land management in areas such as drought and sand and dust storms.

The stories by participants from Africa on Sustainability, Stability and Security (3S) Initiative were welcomed as concrete actions being taken to address the root causes of threats on human security by increasing the productivity of 10 million hectares, creating two million green jobs for vulnerable groups and preventing further displacement of rural population by improving land rights and planning for natural disasters. Participants also applauded the significant progress of the Great Green Wall in the Sahel since its launch in 2007 which is tuning the region as lands of opportunity.

Several participants addressed in sustaining conventional agricultural practices due to increasing land use, severe aridity and change in weather patterns including severe floods and prolonged droughts. They reiterated the importance of conservation and sustainable agriculture. The importance of Technology transfer on conservation effort was also mentioned.

Participants highlight the need to raise the ambition and scale up land restoration and rehabilitation to accelerate eradication of poverty and provide income generation opportunities, especially for young people, while addressing food crises, hunger, health, water scarcity and energy challenges, as well as climate change, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, environmental migration, and to achieve peace and security. Gender equality and women's empowerment must be an integral part of these efforts.

In this regard, participants recognized that the forthcoming 14th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP14) to the UNCCD will be an unparalleled opportunity to spur global actions to tackle new and emerging issues that may impede or can accelerate progress in achieving the SDG15.3, which include: sustainable value chains for land-based businesses; land-based solutions to fight climate change and deliver access to energy; a global movement of ecosystem restoration and urbanization. The UNCCD Executive Secretary invited all participants to attend COP14, which will take place from 2-13 September in New Delhi. The progress of sustainable land management in the last 25 years is acknowledged, but it is our actions of today that would change the course of our life on Earth in the next 25 years. Participants affirmed the importance of our actions to switch from destroying the Earth to making it productive enough to grow a better future for everyone.

The round table was concluded with all participants expressing their appreciation to the Government of Turkey for creating a unique opportunity for an open exchange on the imperative of achieving land degradation neutrality as a solid basis for sustainable development in all countries.