

UN Kicks Off Global Campaign to Drought Mitigation

11 March 2013, Geneva -- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and World Meteorological Organization of the United Nations (WMO) have kicked-off the 2013 global campaign to drought preparedness and risk management. The event convened today during the High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy, which takes place on 11-15 March 2013 in Geneva.

“Droughts have devastating effects on people, on livelihoods, the economy. However, current response to drought is too little and too late. We are starting a global campaign on raising awareness by calling to set up policies, mechanisms and systems that will pre-empt future devastating impacts of drought. Our call is “Do not let our future dry up”, said UNCCD Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja.

“By 17 June, when we celebrate the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, we want every stakeholder and community in the world say “never again” to drought disasters. We want every individual and every private company with the power to act, join in to building a drought resilient society”.

“Drought has been considered a naturally occurring phenomenon in most parts of the world. However, the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states that the world has been more drought-prone during the past 25 years, WMO Secretary General Michel Jarraud said.

“With respect to droughts there is an urgent need to develop better management strategies based on scientific knowledge, and to ensure broader social and economic responses to manage the risks of droughts. This year's slogan for the World Day to Combat Desertification, calls on everyone to take action to promote drought preparedness and resilience to water scarcity and desertification. WMO wishes to be a part of the solution.”

The event under the title “Practical Steps to Drought Preparedness and Risk Management” kicked off the 2013 World Day to Combat Desertification, the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification and the UN Decade on Biodiversity.

During the event, moderated by Mohammed Bazza from the Food and Agriculture Organization, FUNCEME, UNDP Drylands Development Center, Convention on Biodiversity and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have presented the best practices of building resilience to desertification and drought.

One of the presented initiatives, IUCN's [“Plant a Pledge”](#) offers a concrete opportunity and practical step for the general public to learn about and support forest and landscape restoration. The initiative supports the Bonn Challenge, signed in September 2011 by an international assembly of high-level representatives from governments, international organizations, businesses and conservation groups to restore 150 million hectares of degraded lands by 2020.

Today, 168 countries claim to be affected by desertification, a process of land degradation in the drylands that affects food production and is exacerbated by drought. At the UN Sustainable Development Conference (Rio+20) held last June in Brazil, world leaders identified desertification, land degradation and drought as global challenges and committed “to strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world”, in which degradation of new areas is avoided and unavoidable

degradation is offset by restoring an equal amount of land preferably in the same ecosystem and landscape.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO), UNCCD and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and partners hold a High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policy on 11-15 March 2013 in Geneva to focus on drought preparedness and management policies. The meeting brings together world leaders, government decision-makers, development agencies, and leading scientists and researchers.

Notes to Editors:

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 UNCCD

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment, development and the promotion of healthy soils. The Convention's 196 signatory Parties work to alleviate poverty in the drylands, maintain and restore the land's productivity, and mitigate the effects of drought.

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