



Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate

Environmental Management Agency

Republic of Zimbabwe

Republic of Zimbabwe National Land Degradation Neutrality Targets

Harare, Zimbabwe

November 2017



**THE GLOBAL
MECHANISM**
United Nations Convention
to Combat Desertification



This document has been prepared with the support of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP), a partnership initiative implemented by the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD, with support of the following partners: France, Germany, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, European Space Agency, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Global Environment Facility, ISRIC – World Soil Information, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, Soil Leadership Academy, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, World Resources Institute.

The views and content expressed in this document are solely those of the authors of this document and do not necessarily represent the views of the LDN TSP or any of its partners.

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Dear Ms Barbut,

SUBMISSION OF ZIMBABWE'S NATIONAL LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY TARGETS

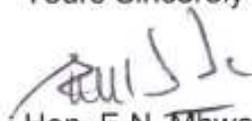
Zimbabwe, through the Ministry of Tourism, Hospitality Industry and Environment expressed its interest to set voluntary national targets and further committed to partner and become a beneficiary of the Global Mechanism land degradation neutrality target setting programme. As a beneficiary of this programme, I would like to thank you most sincerely for the financial and technical support provided to Zimbabwe during the land degradation neutrality target setting process.

As part of fulfilling our commitment and contribution towards the achievement of land degradation neutrality by 2030, I hereby officially submit Zimbabwe's national land degradation neutrality voluntary targets.

As a country affected by land degradation, we will continue to mobilize farmers and all land users towards the achievement of land degradation neutrality targets as outlined in the national document

It is our hope that Global Mechanism and other development partners will continue to provide technical and financial support to Zimbabwe as the country enters the implementation stage of the land degradation neutrality programme.

Yours Sincerely



Hon. E.N. Mbwembwe (MP)

MINISTER OF TOURISM, HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AND ENVIRONMENT

1. Introduction

Zimbabwe is located in Southern Africa and lies between the Zambezi river in the north and the Limpopo river in the south. It is a land locked country that lies between 15 and 22 degrees south and 24 and 33 degrees east. It has a total land area of 390 575km² which ranges in altitude from about 300m to 1200m above sea level. The main land use categories in Zimbabwe include agricultural land, rangelands, protected areas (mainly national parks, safari areas, sanctuaries and reserved forests), conservancies and settlements (including, rural, urban and mining areas. Protected areas cover about 15 % of the country's total land area whilst agricultural land covers more than 35% (Ministry of Environment 2008)

The country has witnessed a series of drastic changes in land use, technology, demographic, farming capabilities, economic demands on the resource base and allocation of land. All these have had an impact on the quality of the resource base resulting in increased environmental problems. The biggest environmental problem faced by the country is that of land degradation which is emanating from the excessive concentration of human and livestock populations in ecological marginal, dry and fragile soils mainly in communal areas. The government of Zimbabwe takes the land degradation problem seriously and has over the years been trying to find solutions to the problem. As part of addressing the land degradation problem locally and globally, Zimbabwe participated in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the United Nation Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNCCD). The country is part to the UNCCD which it ratified in 1997. The country went further to formulate its first National Action Programme (NAP) in line with the provision of article 9 of the convention. Zimbabwe's first NAP outlined programmes and strategies which the country implemented in order to avoid and reduce land degradation as well as to restore degraded land. The country has since developed its second draft NAP which awaits cabinet endorsement. The country's second NAP has been aligned to both the UNCCD ten year strategy and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Zimbabwe notes with satisfaction the special relationship between land degradation neutrality target setting process and the sustainable development goals and is making efforts to integrate the two programmes at implementation level. Zimbabwe's time frame to achieve LDN targets has been set at 2030 in order to align the programme to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal target 15.3. As we know, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development in September 2015 with 17 sustainable development goals. Sustainable Development Goal 15 urges countries to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. Target 15.3 seeks to promote sustainable use of land resources so as to achieve a land degradation neutral world by 2030

2. Achieving LDN as a national priority

As noted above, Zimbabwe takes the land degradation problem seriously and has been over the years trying to find solutions to the problem. Zimbabwe's participation in the negotiations that led to the adoption of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought was aimed at contributing to the development and implementation of programmes and strategies to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation at both national and global levels. At national level, implementation of the UNCCD has been done through implementation of programmes, projects and strategies outlined in the country's NAP. In addition Zimbabwe has put in place policies and legal frameworks focusing on finding solutions to the land degradation challenges. The policies adopted to improve sustainable land management include the Environmental Assessment Policy, National Environmental Policy which seeks to address issues relating to land degradation, biodiversity loss and management of forests ,Poverty Alleviation Policy frameworks and programmes, Population Policy and the Energy Policy.

On the legal framework front, government has enacted laws and regulations aimed at improving sustainable land management, chief among them is the Environmental Management Act. The act provides for a holistic approach to land resources management. It also makes provision for regulations to promote sustainable land resources through environmental impact assessment and penalties for misuse of land resources, forbids cultivation of steep slopes, wetlands and stream banks. Other legal frameworks include the Forest Act, Parks and Wildlife management Act, Communal Lands Forest Produce Act and the Agricultural Land Resettlement Act among others.

As part of Zimbabwe's efforts to find strategies for avoiding, minimizing and reversing land degradation, the country is participating in the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Target Setting Process. Overall, LDN in Zimbabwe seeks to achieve a balance between ongoing land degradation and future efforts to improve degraded lands. In other words, it aims at reaching at least neutral status (no net loss of healthy and productive land) by balancing potential gains and losses in terms of ecosystem services and functions that are provided by land resources. To date the country has finalised stakeholder engagement, developed an LDN Leverage Plan, defined baselines for the globally and nationally adopted LDN indicators, assessed land degradation trends and drivers as well as legal and institutional environment for achieving LDN as part of the LDN target setting process. Zimbabwe has also identified and adopted key policy-technical measures to achieve land degradation neutrality, as well as integrating LDN in the country's national and sectoral policies and development programmes. Efforts are also being made to ensure that LDN is integrated in the country's development planning systems at national, provincial, district and community levels. By joining the LDN programme, Zimbabwe demonstrated its commitment to the setting of voluntary targets the implementation of which will help the country to attain a land degradation neutral status by year 2030. In addition Zimbabwe is participating in the LDN TSP in order to benefit from the programme's processes. The country has noted that investing in LDN creates ecological, economic and social benefits which include job creation and poverty reduction. It has been further noted that LDN is an efficient way of halting the country's current biodiversity loss through adopting sustainable land management systems. Pursuing LDN creates opportunities for the country to foster policy coherence, prioritise land based climate action and creates opportunities for Zimbabwe to tap into new financing options for our NAP and other land degradation control initiatives.

3. National LDN baseline

Zimbabwe's National LDN baselines have been set using the three globally adopted indicators which are land cover, land productivity and soil organic carbon. Baselines were also set using four nationally adopted indicators namely, soil loss, illegal mining, invasive alien species and veldt fires

The area under natural moist and plantation forest is estimated at 11 477 ha and 155 297 ha in 1992 and at 12 100.74 ha and 169 665.56 ha in 2008 respectively. Both classes had net increase land cover. Forest (woodland) cover is estimated at 20790234 in 1992 and at 16268761.02 ha in 2008 representing a net decline of 4 521 472.98 ha. The percentage of forest (woodland) declined from 53.2% of total land area in 1992 to 41.6% in 2008 representing a percentage decline of 11.6% over the 16 year period. The areas under wooded grassland and grassland were estimated at 1 204 666 ha and 689 186 ha in 1992 and at 1 176 417.35 ha and 660 802.18 ha in 2008 respectively. Wooded grassland had a net decline of 28 248.65 ha while grassland experienced a net decline of 28 383.82 ha. The areas under cultivation and settlement were estimated at 1 038 945 ha and 139 341 ha in 1992 and at 14 412 913.35 ha and 189 953.62 ha in 2008 respectively. The area under cultivation had a net increase of 3 673 968.35 ha while settlements had a net increase of 50 612.62 ha during the 16 year period. As a percentage of the total land area the area under cultivation increased from 27.48% in 1992 to 36.88% in 2008. Area under bush land is given as 4 972 074 ha for 1992 and 5 658 395 ha for 2008 representing an increase of 686 321ha. The increase in areas under bush land can be explained as due to bush encroachment on woodland, wooded grassland and grassland.

On land productivity, information available shows that a very insignificant part of the country's total land area has declining land productivity, 5% shows early signs of decline, 58% is stable but stressed, 35% is stable and not stressed, while 2% of the country's total land area has increasing land productivity.

Soil organic carbon during the year 2000 was highest in wetlands with 52.2 tons/ha, followed by forests with 42.3 tons/ha with artificial areas coming third with 41.8 tons/ha. Soil organic carbon for croplands was estimated at 38.9 tons/ha while that for shrubs, grasslands and sparsely vegetated areas was estimated at 38.6 tons/ha. Bare land had the lowest soil organic carbon of 33.7 tons per/ha.

Soil and gully erosion have been identified as serious environmental problems in Zimbabwe which have far reaching implication in the socio-economic development of the country. Erosion rates vary depending on soil type, slope, plant cover and land use. Zimbabwe Environment Outlook estimates that soil loss in rangelands ranges from 3 to 75 tons per hectare per year, with generally high rates in communal lands. Soil loss from arable lands ranges from 15 to 50 tons per hectare per year. Same report estimates national soil loss average at 3.3 tons per hectare per year in communal lands and 0,6 tons per hectare per year in commercial farms. Recent studies by the Institute of Agricultural Engineering (IAE) estimates soil loss at 8 metric tons per hectare per year representing an increase in previous national average estimates. The various soil loss studies are however not strictly comparable due to differences in time, methods and assessment scales, but they all point to a general increase in soil and gully erosion in the country. The current soil loss estimates as presented by IAE has been presented as the official rate for planning purposes and for the LDN given the importance of soil loss as a land degradation indicator, a baseline of 8 metric tons per hectare per year has been adopted. The estimated area affected by gully erosion in the country is 13 390.15 hectares.

Veldt fires are a common phenomenon in Zimbabwe. An estimated 1000 000 hectares of land are affected by veldt fires annually. Veldt fires destroy vegetation leaving the land bare and susceptible to soil erosion. It has large impact on land as it often causes substantial transformation of land cover and topography.

Zimbabwe has more than 1000 mines producing about 35 different minerals. Unlike legal mines, illegal mines have no environmental management plans. Mining has a big impact on land resources as it often causes substantial transformation of land cover and topography. An estimated 9 496.49 hectares of the country's land is affected by illegal mines.

Invasion of land by alien species is a common environmental problem in Zimbabwe. The problem has been witnessed mainly in degraded rangelands. Alien species in some instances have invaded land as secondary succession. Lantana Camara is the most widespread alien species. The total area invaded by alien species is estimated at 14 673.2 hectares

Zimbabwe's economy is agro-based and as a result a greater proportion of the country's land degradation problems are related to agricultural practices with high rates of soil loss in croplands and rangelands. Land degradation is also pronounced in mineral rich districts and along the country's rivers where illegal mining and gold panning activities take place. In addition, land degradation is a result of concentration of human and livestock populations in ecologically marginal dry and fragile soils mainly in communal areas. Forested lands and protected areas tend to be stable with minimum land degradation while forests land that has been converted to other land use types tends to have high land degradation.

The major drivers of land degradation in Zimbabwe are clearing forest for agricultural expansion, road construction and settlements, over dependence of rural communities on fuel wood to meet their energy requirements. Trees are also utilized for curing tobacco, construction and fencing purposes, brick burning and wood carvings. Other drivers include population pressure particularly in communal areas where 67% of the population resides (2012 population census), droughts, floods and climate change, expansion of small and large mines, high level of poverty among rural communities, poor agricultural practices, inappropriate land management practices and limited

investment in land, inappropriate land use resulting from non-adherence to land classification and land use plans, veldt fires which deprive the land of forest and grass cover resulting in soil and gully erosion and electricity shortage which force people to turn to biomass fuel to meet their energy requirements in both urban and rural areas. The government of Zimbabwe is strengthening policy institutional and legal frameworks aimed at controlling the identified drivers of land degradation.

4. LDN Targets and associated measures

Measures to be taken to control land degradation will focus on the drivers of land degradation outlined above. Summarized below are the voluntary targets and measures Zimbabwe has set itself to accomplish in order to achieve LDN by year 2030:

1. Reforestation with local and exotic species on 6 455 250 ha of forest converted to shrubs and on 215 050 hectares of forest converted to cropland
2. Avoid further decline of forest through economic incentives (rehabilitation) of 2 820 hectares of land showing early signs of decline and having a declining productivity
3. Improve sustainable land management practices to avoid soil and gully erosion, encourage and enforce appropriate stoking rates on 175 250 hectares of shrubs, grasslands and sparsely vegetated areas showing early signs of decline
4. Use conservation farming and agro-forestry practices to improve cropland productivity on 361 250 hectares of cropland showing stable but stressed productivity and early signs of decline
5. Embark on land/catchment reclamation/restoration of 5 580 hectares of grazing and cropland affected by gully erosion
6. Enforce laws and regulations, embark on awareness programmes targeting illegal miners (rehabilitation) of 3 798.60 hectares affected by illegal mining
7. Reduce the 8 857.92 hectares of land affected by alien species through chemical and mechanical control
8. Maintain and improve land productivity on 137 545 hectares of forests that are currently stable but stressed
9. Provide alternatives such as rural electrification, renewable energy sources, expand energy for tobacco programme, provide sustainable fencing materials for fencing arable lands and community gardens and for brick burning , enforce regulations on tree cutting for fuel wood sale and reduce deforestation to protect 297 000 hectares of forest land
10. Enforce construction of conservation works, encourage conservation agriculture and build capacity for farmers to improve 1 083 825 hectares of degraded arable lands
11. Improve sustainable land management systems in order to maintain the current soil organic carbon level beyond 2045, forest at 42.3 tons/ha, shrubs, grasslands and sparsely vegetated areas at 38.6 tons/ha, cropland at 38.9 tons/ha and wetlands at 52,2 tons/ha
12. Improved wetland management and restoration of 270 080 hectares of the country's severely degraded wetlands

5. Leveraging LDN targets through the national sustainable development agenda

The Government of Zimbabwe has put in place a number of policy initiatives in order to address the country's development and land resources management problems. The National Conservation Strategy is one such policy initiative. It attempted to draw linkages on land, water, energy, forest and biodiversity, poverty and population issues in designing programmes for land degradation control. The LDN will benefit from the holistic approach adopted by this policy framework. Other policy

initiatives undertaken that have a bearing on LDN include Fast track land reform policy, Poverty alleviation policy, Environmental management policy, Energy policy of 2012, National population policy, Renewable energy policy, Forest policy and Environmental Impact Assessment Policy. All the sectors are being encouraged to integrate LDN in their policies particularly those policies that relate to land, forest and biodiversity, agriculture, energy and mining. As a starting point all these sectors are represented in the LDN national working group. This has helped the different sectors to appreciate the important role played by land in the development of the country and in poverty reduction.

The LDN programmes require a conducive legal-institutional environment for their successful implementation. They require the enforcement of the provisions of the Environmental Management Act, the Energy Development Act, the Agricultural Land Resettlement Act, Forest Act, the Communal Lands Forest Produce Act that promote the sustainable use of land, energy and forest resources. Government is facilitating Capacity development of farmers on appropriate agricultural practices and sound land use systems in order to contribute to the attainment of the objectives of LDN. In addition government plans to increase extension workers for the Environmental Management Agency, Agritex, the Department of Energy and Forestry Commission to enable these sectors to conduct extensive advocacy and awareness campaigns on the importance of LDN and on the importance of taking measures to promote the sustainable management of the country's land, energy and forest resources. In this regard the LDN stands to benefit from the country's sound land resources conservation, advocacy and awareness campaign programme which is being mounted by the Environmental Management Agency (EMA), Agritex, Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, Department of Energy and Forest Commission (FC). This is being conducted through workshops, road shows, field days and demonstrations, electronic and print Media, commemoration of environmental days, exhibitions at agricultural shows and competitions for schools and communities.

On the energy front, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Development will provide and promote the use of sustainable renewable energy sources such as solar energy, gas, wind, bio-gas and electricity in order to reduce the rural population's over dependence on fuel wood for their energy needs. They will also speed up the rural electrification initiative so that rural communities have access to electricity. The adoption of fuel efficient technologies such as wood saving stoves, research and technology development will be encouraged. These initiatives will go a long way in curbing deforestation and land degradation contributing to the attainment of LDN. Plans are also underway to develop capacity for EMA and Forest Commission officers and other law enforcement agencies on enforcement of legal instruments aimed at promoting sustainable management and utilization of land, energy and forest resources. The courts will be educated on the need to give stiffer penalties to deter potential offenders from conducting activities that contribute to deforestation and land degradation. Efforts and strategies will be put in place to educate parliamentarians to appreciate the value of having a land gradation neutral Zimbabwe in order to promote the country's economic development by enacting appropriate legal frameworks with appropriate penalties.

LDN will also be integrated in other ongoing programs such as the Poverty Alleviation Action Programme (PAAP), National Climate Change Response Strategy (NCCRS), National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), National Action Plan under UNCCD and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The actions plans for the three Rio conventions in particular have common ground that can benefit LDN. Many land based practices such as sustainable land management, forest and integrated water management can help Zimbabwe to reduce the impact of climate change and halt biodiversity loss. Thus efforts aimed at improving the condition and productivity of land will result at the same time providing significant mitigation or carbon sequestration co-benefits. As a result of this common ground the Rio conventions are uniquely posed to work together to support result based land management on the ground that will richly benefit LDN. In addition all the three plans share common enablers for their successful implementation which include capacity building, education,

communication and public awareness, research and development and technology transfer. These action plans enablers will contribute to the achievement of LDN.

6. Joint bold action to achieve LDN

This document outlines the baselines based on the globally adopted indicators of land cover, land productivity and soil organic carbon. It is also based on nationally adopted indicators of soil loss, illegal mining, invasive alien species and veldt fires. The established baselines will enable Zimbabwe to monitor progress towards achievement of LDN. The document also highlights the current trends and drivers of land degradation in Zimbabwe, legal –institutional and policy frameworks necessary for achieving LDN, national and sub-national targets as well as control measures necessary to improve land management practices in the country. It also highlights policies and programmes in which the LDN can be integrated to ensure that a holistic approach is adopted in the country's efforts to attain a land degradation neutral Zimbabwe by year 2030.

The LDN target setting process proposes the development of transformative programmes and projects that require transformative funding for their successful implementation. The transformative projects will promote the adoption of sustainable land management systems, reduce land degradation, restore land that has already been degraded and reduce poverty among participating communities through employment creation. This is a big task which requires the participation of both government and the private sector. The government of Zimbabwe is calling upon the private sector to help in resource mobilization for the LDN programme. Companies can also fund LDN programmes and projects as part of their social responsibility, particularly those being implemented in the areas where the companies are operating. Civil Society Organizations are called upon to enter into partnership with government and communities in the identification, funding and implementation of LDN programmes and projects. Civil society organization can also play a pivotal role in raising awareness on LDN issues as well as on capacity building to empower communities to undertake LDN initiatives. Extension workers are encouraged to play their role in capacity building of land and forest resources users, while farmers and communities are called upon to play their part in ensuring the successful implementation of LDN projects. Research and academic institutions are called upon to generate adequate data through research to guide our land planning systems and help policy makers to make informed decisions on LDN issues. International development partners are requested to build partnerships with the government of Zimbabwe in resource mobilization and funding of LDN programmes and projects.