



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

Telephone: + 49 (0) 228 815 2800
Fax: + 49 (0) 228 815 2898/99
Email: secretariat@unccd.int

Opening statement
At the SLM Business Forum

Monique Barbut, UNCCD Executive Secretary

Ordos, 11 September 2017 at 14.30 AM



Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to see you all here.

Allow me, at the outset, to thank the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and the ELION Group for the organization of this 4th SLM Business Forum.

In the last few years there has been a turnaround in the level of commitment by the international community on land issues. Actually - on the environment more generally. The momentum has been largely generated by pressing "climate" challenges. But it is also the recognition that we are now pushing up against planetary limits.

By August 2 this year, we had used more from nature than our planet can renew in the whole year – air, water, soil and so on. We are effectively living on planetary credit for the rest of 2017.

But with the Paris Climate Change Agreement, the adoption of the SDGs – and multiple initiatives to restore degraded ecosystems (the Bonn Challenge, the Great Green Wall initiative and now the Belt and Road) gathering pace the balancing of accounts may still be possible.

Land degradation neutrality in the context of the SDGs is particularly important because it is a very pragmatic and practical way to manage the trade-offs associated with land use.



It is about conservation to a certain extent. But is also about the management, production and consumption choices each of us makes.

And it includes an important element of rehabilitation. Bringing back once productive resources. There are literally hundreds of millions of hectares of potential in this regard.

It is a question of public policy and investment – and discussion is going on at this meeting of the Parties to UNCCD about what that might look like. But the private sector has an absolutely pivotal role to play in turning the ambitions of LDN – indeed all of the SDGs – into reality.

So far, I've been really impressed how the private sector has quickly grasped the positive implications for their triple bottom line.

Most businesses want to do well by their environment and recognize that a supply of terrestrial ecosystems is vital for their continued success. In LDN there is the chance to deliver for planet, people and profit.

For a relatively small upfront investment, the returns on adopting sustainable land management practices across your value chains can be significant. From securing reliable access to raw materials to lowering the cost of business operations. You are going to see reduced bills for inputs and energy. You are going to see green - rather than grey - infrastructure emerging. It will improve corporate reputations and relations with local communities.

So there are great reputational and financial returns.



But as we move into the implementation phase, the rubber will really hit the road.

Public and private sector stakeholders have to work closely together - so that the public and private returns are maximized.

The Global Mechanism of the UNCCD and Mirova have been working to establish a way for the public and private sector to collaborate in a strategic and meaningful way. I am very pleased that the LDN Fund – the result of their efforts - will be launched in Ordos tomorrow.

The LDN Fund is a first of a kind investment platform with a layered capital structure. It will use blended finance from both public and private sector investors to support profit generating sustainable land management projects. More than 80 potential investment cases have already been identified by the LDN Fund team, to date. I hope we can use this experience to stimulate further public-private partnerships to achieve LDN.

But this Forum will provide an excellent platform for exploring this and showcasing some of the most promising and forward-looking Land Degradation Neutral business models – in terms of investment and value or supply chains.

I hope your discussions will take this Forum will identify new, creative and concrete opportunities for scaling up our joint efforts. Please be as bold as you can when putting them forward to the Ministers in the interactive dialogue session tomorrow.

I wish you a successful session.



Thank you