"Improved security of tenure for land and property can make a critical contribution to ensuring social and economic progress in rural and urban settings, supporting poverty reduction and furthering gender equality and peace and security."

The United Nations Declaration on Land, Property and Environment

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I have been honored to be selected as the only Tunisian to participate in the UNCCD COP 13 Conference, organized by the UNCCD Secretariat and the Chinese Academy of Forestry. One of the main functions of the COP is to review reports submitted by the Parties detailing how they are carrying out their commitments; the COP makes recommendations on the basis of these reports. It also has the power to make amendments to the Convention or to adopt new annexes, such as additional regional implementation annexes. In this way, the COP can guide the Convention as global circumstances and national needs change. The first day of the conference was very enriching to me personally, because I got to meet inspiring leaders and change makers from all over the world, hear success stories from my fellow representatives and share the knowledge about Sustainable Land Management. I even participated in the discussion by providing some useful solutions for the youth inclusion in decision making and the role of Youth in combating desertification and land degradation.

On the next day, we got to attend the CSO dialogue, where all international delegates were present to share their visions and perspectives related to the desertification matter. I have seen so much efforts and work invested by the delegates, the organizers and the UNCCD secretariat. The third day, we got to go on an exceptional field trip study with all youth representatives and delegates. We have visited three different locations in the beautiful Ordos, The Kubiqi Desert, the Hoboq Desert and the Yinketala Desert. The aim
behind these visits was to discover the outstanding position that the Chinese government is taking to combat desertification, to whiteness the comprehensive measures such as reforestation and the integrated management mode of ecological tools. As a young activist and citizen of the world I have always believed that the numbers of young people in many developing countries today are at unprecedented highs, in both absolute and proportionate terms. This potentially gives rise to a demographic dividend, an opportunity for rapid growth and development brought about by a bulge in a nation’s working-age population. It also brings new challenges for countries in providing decent work and education for these young people, with serious risks in terms of political and social instability if the potential of these youthful cohorts is not captured. So therefore I have suggested few solutions to set the light on the importance of engaging youth to participate in such activities on all aspects beginning with:

- Expanding the productive and income-generating potential of young rural people
- Making relevant education and training opportunities available for rural youth
- Creating decent jobs for young rural women and men.
- Integrating the SLM notion in curriculums and school activities

A part from the professional side, I was very impressed with the Chinese culture, the habits and the manners; I have been so amazed by how humble and unique Chinese people are, I couldn’t even stop thinking of how much modesty and respect the people have shown me. Not only the staff, organizers, but it went from the professional delegates and envos to the bus driver who can stay out in the rain to ensure our safety. The UNCCD Conference of the parties has changed my perspective on so many levels especially to raise awareness about this cause in my home country Tunisia and to fight desertification in order to ensure a sustained future not only for me but for the future generations. As well, it made me meet incredible brilliant minds from around the globe, gathering for the sake of one unique cause. For that, I am more than grateful, for the selection, the honoring opportunity and for China itself as a country.

-Khouloud Baghouri