

25
YEARS



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

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Tree planting ceremony – UNCCD 25th anniversary

24 June at 12:30

Speech by Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary

Her Excellency Ms. Jutta Schmitz, German Ambassador to the UN

His Excellency Mr. Ashok Sridharan, Mayor of Bonn

Mr. Stefan Schmitz, Deputy Director-General and Commissioner of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

Dear colleagues,

This year is one of celebrations.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted in 1994 and represents the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.

This year, we are celebrating 25 years of communities and indigenous empowerment in respect of the land;

25 years of data collection and scientific reports supporting genuine actions towards a land in balance;

25 years of trainings on sustainable land management given by inspirational change agents like Mathieu Ouédraogo or coordinators of the MERET Project, both winners of the 2019 Land for Life Award;



25 years of negotiations, agreements, dedication, and commitment of 197 parties to the Convention.

We are celebrating 25 years of international cooperation in restoring and protecting productive land.

In 2015, the international community agreed to achieve a land in balance by taking concrete actions to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation, generally referred to as achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN), and mitigate the effects of drought.

Mr. Luc Gnacadja, who is with us today, was the incumbent Executive Secretary of UNCCD at the time.

Since then, 122 countries have committed to take voluntary, measurable actions to arrest land degradation by 2030.

However, recent assessments show that one out of every four hectares of productive land has become unusable. Moreover, three out of every four hectares have been altered completely from their natural state.

It is everybody's business to put degraded lands back to life.

Our simple, everyday choices have a huge and enduring impact on the land, climate and biodiversity.



Yes, we are looking back and celebrating 25 years of progress made by countries on sustainable land management. But we also must look at the actual critical situation and the broad picture of the next 25 years where we plan to achieve land degradation neutrality.

Looking beyond the end of this century is important to mobilize action today.

This is why we gathered here to plant a tree, here in Bonn, on the ground of the UN Campus, in the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Jutta Schmitz, German Ambassador to the UN, the Mayor of Bonn, Mr. Ashok Sridharan and of Deputy Director-General and Commissioner Mr. Stefan Schmitz, from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, among other dignitaries.

Trees and soil play a key role in carbon sequestration. They also can be synonym of economic growth and independence and when their number increases, a forest is born, multiplying the benefits.

Don't forget the ground on which we walk and the land that feeds us.

Let's grow the future together!