

**25**  
YEARS



**United Nations**  
Convention to Combat  
Desertification



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**Check against delivery**

**Opening Remarks**

**Ibrahim Thiaw, UNCCD Executive Secretary**

**COP 14 Side Event**

**“Talking Capacity Building and You: A Chance to Share  
and to Receive”**

**New Delhi, 6 September 2019 at 18H00**

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Guests and participants,

I am extremely happy to welcome you all to this special side event.

It deals with, to my mind, one of the most important elements for the successful implementation of the Convention.

**Capacity creation, building and strengthening.**

Article 19 of the Convention calls for capacity building in all areas necessary for effective implementation. And, over the last 25 years, much has been done. Including:

- Awareness raising from primary schools to universities, and from local communities to the highest levels of policy making;
- Individual NFPs, STCs and other stakeholders have learnt about DLDD and the UNCCD process;
- We have consistently helped to equip Parties with the skills to undertake the reporting process;
- We have provided specialized trainings for journalists;
- And have created a highly respected and sought-after internship and mentorship programme - from which hundreds of young professionals have already benefitted;
- And finally, we are decisively moving from individualized to institutionalized capacity building. I can highlight the Soil Leadership Academy – where we are training policy makers, the Capacity Building

Marketplace, the UNCCD E-learning platform as leading examples of our work in this area.

Despite all of this – only at COP 13 did we get a clear stand-alone decision on capacity building – for the first time! As a result, the Secretariat along with several critical partners are turbo charging our work in this area. We are now working as a “coalition of the willing” to promote and facilitate capacity building.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of partnership in taking this forward. I therefore wanted to say a truly sincere thank you to those who have partnered with us thus far - some of whom are presenting today.

You will hear some inspiring stories. Please listen, learn and chat with colleagues after their presentations. Together our partners take what they need and offer what they can to this capacity building effort. A true exchange of knowledge, experiences, lessons learned, and wisdom gained is taking place.

I have an absolute belief though that this is just the tip of the iceberg.

With their continued commitment, engagement and enthusiasm, the future of capacity building in the context of this convention looks bright.

So, while we celebrate our partnership and the progress made at this event today, tomorrow we get up and recognize much more needs to be done. We can, in no way, sit on our laurels.

So, I would ask you to think about what you personally [and as a representative of a country, institution, organization, be they big or small, university or NGO, local or national] can also help. To achieve our ambitions for this Convention, everyone has a role to play. And maybe that is the critical point: **capacity building is about people.**

And everyone plays their part. If you believe in yourself and your own skills and experiences – you have something to share! If you believe you can help – you have something to learn and to do.

There is a wonderful quote from Mahatma Gandhi about this.

He once said:

*“Man often becomes what he believes himself to be. If I keep on saying to myself that I cannot do a certain thing, it is possible*

*that I may end by really becoming incapable of doing it. On the contrary, if I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning.”*

There is a world of people out there who want to help us – who would want to become good stewards of their land and water resources.

Together, we can help them acquire the capacity to do just that.

Thank you sincerely for coming.

Enjoy the event.

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