

Decision 27/COP.14

Special segment

The Conference of the Parties,

Recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework,

Having heard the summary reports on the parallel ministerial/high-level round tables, submitted by:

H.E. Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – Chair of Round table 1: Land, climate and renewable energy,

H.E. Ms. Ana Cristina Quiros, Vice Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Costa Rica – Chair of Round table 2: Rural and urban communities – failing or flourishing together,

H.E. Mr. Nestor Bassiere, Minister of Environment, Green Economy and Climate Change of Burkina Faso – Chair of Round table 3: Fostering a global movement for ecosystem restoration,

Having heard the summary reports on the interactive dialogue sessions, submitted by:

H. E. Mr. Ezekiel Joseph, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries Physical Planning, Natural Resources and Cooperatives of St. Lucia, Moderator of the Interactive dialogue 1: A values-based approach to land stewardship,

H.E. Mr. Dennis Musuku Wanchinga, Minister of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection of Zambia, Moderator of the Interactive dialogue 2 on: Healthy land – healthy people,

H.E. Ms. Patricia Appiagyei, Deputy Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation of Ghana, Moderator of the Interactive dialogue: Boosting sustainable value chains for land-based business,

1. *Welcomes* the New Delhi Declaration with appreciation;
2. *Takes note* of the Chairpersons' and Moderators' summaries with appreciation and gratitude;
3. *Decides* to include the New Delhi Declaration as an annex to this decision.
4. *Also decides* to include the Chairpersons' and Moderators' summaries as an annex to this decision.

*14th plenary meeting
13 September 2019*

Annex I

The New Delhi Declaration: Investing in Land and Unlocking Opportunities

We, the Ministers and Representatives gathered for the high-level segment at the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), held on 9–10 September 2019 in New Delhi at the invitation of the Government of the Republic of India,

Expressing our sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of India for its hospitality and to the UNCCD secretariat for the organization of the high-level segment,

Recognizing that desertification/land degradation and drought undermines health, development and prosperity in all regions and *acknowledging* that dryland ecosystems are areas of special focus,

Deeply concerned that the impacts of desertification/land degradation and drought are felt most keenly by vulnerable people,

Recalling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework and *looking forward* to comprehensively reviewing and monitoring progress with the aim of accelerating the implementation of both,

Recalling also that striving to achieve land degradation neutrality has the potential to act as an accelerator for achieving a number of the Sustainable Development Goals and as a catalyst for attracting sustainable development financing to implement the Convention,

Acknowledging those practices which conserve and restore land and soil affected by desertification/land degradation, drought and floods, contribute towards achieving land degradation neutrality and can also have long-term multiple benefits for the health, well-being and socioeconomic development of the entire society, especially for the livelihoods of the rural poor,

Noting the link between the restoration and sustainable management of land and the creation of decent jobs, including green jobs initiatives and other employment-generating opportunities, for vulnerable communities in degraded areas,

Recalling that the Sharm El-Sheikh Declaration, recognized by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its fourteenth session, called for synergies in addressing environmental degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change,

Noting the findings of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment and its Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, as well as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems, which recognize the role of the land-use sector,

Recognizing the contribution of effective and responsible governance and stewardship of natural resources, especially land and water, for combating desertification/land degradation and drought and for the sustainable development of current and future generations,

Convinced that diverse multi-stakeholder participation, as appropriate, at local, subnational, national and regional levels and from all sectors of society, including civil society organizations, local government and the private sector, will be crucial to achieving the objectives of the UNCCD,

Renewing our commitment to concerted international cooperation for the effective implementation of the Convention,

1. *Encourage* the development of community-driven transformative projects and programmes that are gender-responsive, at local, national and regional level, to drive the implementation of the Convention;
2. *Also encourage*, in the context of projects aimed at combating desertification/land degradation and drought and achieving land degradation neutrality and resilience-building, inter alia and as appropriate, the transition and increased access to energy in rural and urban communities, within the scope of the UNCCD;
3. *Further encourage* a proactive approach to reducing the risks and impacts of desertification/land degradation and drought through the implementation of drought preparedness plans and increased risk mitigation for drought and sand and dust storms;
4. *Invite* development partners, international financial mechanisms, the private sector and other stakeholders to boost investments and technical support for the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of land degradation neutrality, create green jobs and establish sustainable value chains for products sourced from the land;
5. *Promote* opportunities that support, as appropriate and applicable, the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement and the development of an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework, taking into consideration land-based solutions for climate action and biodiversity conservation and the mutually supportive implementation of the three Rio conventions;
6. *Welcome* the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030), *commit* to adopting an integrated, best-practice approach to land restoration based on scientific evidence and traditional knowledge that offers hope to vulnerable communities and *invite* Parties, observers and other relevant UNCCD stakeholders, including the private sector, to accelerate and scale up relevant initiatives at all levels;
7. *Take note* of the benefits brought to participating countries by the accelerated implementation of initiatives that support a transformative narrative in the Sahel through, inter alia, the Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative and the Initiative on Sustainability, Stability and Security;
8. *Also take note* of the launch of the Peace Forest Initiative and its potential contribution to increasing cooperation on land degradation neutrality, including land restoration and reforestation in transborder areas in participating countries, where appropriate;
9. *Reaffirm* the relevance of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security for better access, control and stewardship over land and equitable tenure security, in accordance with relevant national legislation, for the implementation of the Convention and the promotion of sustainable land management;
10. *Encourage* local governments to adopt integrated land use management and enhanced land governance to rehabilitate the natural resource base that makes cities sustainable, taking into consideration the New Urban Agenda, including by reducing rates of land consumption and soil sealing along with biodiversity and ecosystem loss;
11. *Welcome* the various initiatives targeting land degradation neutrality by India such as Har Khet Ko Pani, More Crop Per Drop, the National Afforestation Program, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojna, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and the Soil Health Card Scheme;
12. *Also welcome* the proposed adoption of a voluntary land degradation neutrality target by India that includes the restoration of degraded land and the legacy programme announced to support South–South cooperation following this Conference of Parties.

Annex II

Summary of the high-level segment of the Conference of the Parties at its fourteenth session

Ministerial round table 1: Land, climate and renewable energy

Chair	H.E. Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Co-Chair	H.E. Mr. Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson, Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, Iceland
Speaker	Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator, United Nations Development Programme

1. Approximately 200 people actively participated in Round table 1: Land, climate and renewable energy. The discussions featured 42 interventions in total from state Parties, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector.

2. The round table opened with welcoming remarks by H.E. Mr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, noting the impact of climate change and land degradation on communities everywhere and the challenges faced by small island developing States.

3. The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mr. Achim Steiner, gave an inspiring speech focused on the interlinkages between land, climate and renewable energy. He noted that land is fundamentally linked to both climate change mitigation and adaptation. It is also fundamental to the development of people and particularly critical if we plan to mitigate the energy requirements of the poorest communities across the world. Renewables are at the forefront of the energy transition, with solar and wind energy more compatible with sustainable land use. But renewable energy can also become a competitor for productive land if not managed carefully. Land is a precious resource, and though the specific tenure may vary, there is a need to recognize that land is “owned” by those who use it. The current ‘business as usual’ model is not enough. The UNDP Administrator asked several provocative questions: “Can we create the right kind of economies to deliver on the climate mitigation targets, land degradation targets and biodiversity targets at the same time? Can we construct the appropriate economic development model, policy instruments, and best practices that offer the right incentives to achieve the tangible benefits of sustainable land management?” Mr. Steiner suggested that options are indeed available, as well as scientifically doable and economically viable. However, we have reached a point where ambition and action are urgently needed to change the paradigm.

4. Mr. Steiner was followed by the Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Mr. Hoesung Lee, who reported on the findings of the recently approved special report on climate change and land. He emphasized that land as a mitigation tool has positive implications on all Sustainable Development Goals, but to achieve these multiple benefits, ambitious climate action on land is required now. It would lead to opportunities but requires full international cooperation and commitment with great emphasis on environmental and social needs, ranging from the protection of biodiversity to social justice and equity.

5. The Co-Chair, H.E. Mr. Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson, Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources, Iceland, then moderated the round table discussion with 42 interventions from ministers and heads of delegation. The panel also welcomed the private sector, intergovernmental organizations and a representative of accredited civil society organizations.

6. The key message emanating from the discussions was that there is no Planet B.
7. Lands is increasingly exposed to the impact of climate change, droughts and flash floods, and considerable damage can already be directly attributed to this. Vulnerability to climate change is a growing issue in many regions.
8. Many countries emphasized the cascade effect associated with the influence of both land degradation and climate change. For example, once land degradation starts a chain reaction of economic challenges, an incidence of drought may then trigger social unrest. Others emphasized the impact of land degradation on water availability, which can affect both energy and food supply and eventually a reduction in the availability of safe drinking water. The result is higher costs and outbreaks of waterborne diseases. Bioenergy and biofuels were mentioned by many countries as a major factor in the solution, but only if carefully managed to prevent unintended impacts on the food supply and environment. While several countries mentioned the risks associated with bioenergy, they also said that they were starting to use renewables as an entry point to both address climate change and create an enabling environment to pursue restoration and rehabilitation initiatives. While many spoke of solar and wind power, it was emphasized that current renewables are dominated by hydro-power, and several countries mentioned their progress with geothermal energy. Diversification of new energy sources to reduce reliance on conventional energy sources was viewed as essential.
9. Some highlighted the power of integrating clean energy and sustainable land management (SLM). Others pointed out that urbanization not focused on sustainability accelerates land degradation and reduces the resilience of both urban areas and surrounding rural land to climate change. All of the positive solutions begin with a combination of good policies and governance and full engagement of communities. A comment that resonated with many countries was that the path to solving land degradation, water quality and quantity issues, and food security starts with women.
10. Several countries made it clear that there needs to be a strategy for behavioural change based on resource reuse and greater exploitation of nature-based solutions which address both environmental and social challenges simultaneously. For example, we will need to transition our food systems away from industrialized agriculture and embrace agroecological solutions to keep food, energy and the environment in balance. A discussion on the importance of a circular economy broached sustainable consumption and better information about the land where food is grown.
11. States have developed action plans to address land degradation and climate change and set land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets and carbon dioxide emission reduction targets. There are considerable synergies in SLM, land restoration, climate mitigation and adaptation and social resilience. The solutions are nature-based with the ability to deliver on challenges faced by the earth and humanity.
12. LDN was viewed as a framework to deliver on potential synergies among the three Rio conventions, and there was a great deal of discussion about the importance of pursuing synergies in a meaningful and practical way. It is important to ensure more effective collaboration and commitments to working together at global and national level. Many countries then commented on how important integrated land use planning and integrated landscape management would be to the success of LDN and the achievement of multiple benefits. On the ground, smart design could ensure optimized co-location of food, energy and nature while indigenous and local knowledge could assist in the identification of locally effective nature-based solutions. Good governance and incentives for good land stewardship are essential to the successful navigation of difficult trade-offs.
13. The representative of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) pointed out that while land restoration is a powerful part of the solution to climate change, we must overcome the USD 300 billion SLM financing gap. GCF proposed several innovative finance options for deliberation, including an equity fund for small- and medium-sized enterprises pursuing commercially viable SLM practices.
14. Parties noted the latest findings of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services assessments and the Intergovernmental Panel on

Climate Change Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems, which recognized the role of the land-use sector as critical to getting land and climate right. The science on land and climate is improving steadily. However, knowledge management and capacity-building were mentioned numerous times. Several countries welcomed the enhancements to the UNCCD Knowledge Hub (e.g. the Drought Tool Box) and the value of practices databases for SLM (e.g. World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies). Some countries talked about cooperation and harnessing the growing influence of South–South cooperation to ensure that science was translated to policy and action.

15. The Co-Chair closed the meeting and summarized the key messages.

16. He noted that the discussion sends a strong message to the Nature-Based Solutions work stream of the upcoming United Nations Secretary General’s Climate Action Summit (23 September 2019) where Parties are being asked to be practical and ambitious. Land management and restoration can deliver many of the solutions the world is looking for in terms of mitigation and adaptation and resilience-building.

17. As one Party eloquently put it, “It is up to the international community to rise up as one”.

18. The UNCCD should be proactively engaged in promoting and helping Parties deliver on the potential of land for climate action. Together, we can promote opportunities that support the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement and the development of an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework, taking into consideration the growing relevance of land-based solutions for climate action and biodiversity conservation and the mutually supportive implementation of the three Rio Conventions. Land restoration as a synergetic tool with multiple potential benefits should therefore be prioritized as a nature-based solution and receive higher levels of international financing. More emphasis is needed on synergies between the three Rio Conventions, but with the impact of climate change set to hit, it is important to remember the challenge of water scarcity and abundance and the need to develop a circular economy. In particular, the joint development of land and renewable energy for the benefit of rural communities would be a strategic business case. Gender issues are crucial to SLM and must be given continuous attention at all levels, including in conversations about land, climate and renewable energy where the resource access issue is critical.

19. Ending on a high note, the Co-Chair said that if we revive our spirits and get the work done, we can deliver on our ambitions and do much better because there is no Planet B.

Ministerial round table 2: Rural and urban communities – failing or flourishing together

Chair	H.E. Ms. Ana Cristina Quiros, Vice-Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of Costa Rica
Co-Chair	H.E. Mr. Almoustapha Garba, Minister of Environment, Urban Sanitation and Sustainable Development of Niger
Speaker	Ms. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission

20. Approximately 70 people attended and actively participated in Round table two: Rural and urban communities – failing or flourishing together.

21. H.E. Ms. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union Commission (AUC), opened the discussions by highlighting (a) the alignment of the round table with Africa’s Agenda 2063 strategy; and (b) the fact that there is a great need to address gender imbalances related to the insecurity of land tenure. The African Union has a youth engagement initiative to create 11 million jobs by 2021, while its Rural Africa Task Force focuses on developing rural areas.

22. The Co-Chair, H.E. Mr. Almoustapha Garba, Minister of Environment, Urban Sanitation and Sustainable Development of Niger, then moderated the round table discussion with 26 interventions from ministers and heads of delegation. The panel also welcomed the private sector, intergovernmental organizations, a Sustainable Development Goals advocate and a representative of accredited civil society organizations.

23. The key message emanating from the discussions was that rural and urban communities will stand or fall as one, so a joined-up approach is now critical. As one participant noted, “We all agree on what the problems are. They touch on the issues of land planning, land management, agriculture production, employment, capacity-building, rural identity and the preservation of natural resources.”

24. Ms. Naoko Ishii, CEO and Chair of the Global Environment Facility, observed though that the international community is still operating in silos. The way we think about land-use planning should be considered together with natural ecosystem conservation. She highlighted the need to increase the linkages with the market and promote collaboration between the public and private sectors to bring together sustainable supply and value chains.

25. Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, said via video message: “We need to transform the way we plan, build and manage our urban spaces, while ensuring that the rural areas are not left behind.” She proposed a joined-up approach towards the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and land degradation neutrality.

26. Mr. Ahmed Aziz Diallo, Mayor of Dori in Burkina Faso, emphasized that the degradation of soils in rural areas affects the whole of society, economy and lives, forcing communities to migrate in search of a means to survive.

27. Mr. Luc Gnacadja, Founder and President of Governance and Policies for Sustainable Development and former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), warned that Africa will experience the biggest growth in urbanization of any continent in the coming years. Cities are increasingly vulnerable to climate change effects such as floods and droughts. As an architect, he believes that no cities can be resilient by themselves. Instead, he said, “we should talk about sustainability in cities and rural areas together and ensure shared planning”, and make sure to involve the most vulnerable.

28. Mr. Emani Kumar, Deputy Secretary General of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and Executive Director of ICLEI South Asia, noted that urbanization has led

to increased energy demands, migration, economic loss and high levels of stress on resources such as productive land and water. With a positive approach, he highlighted that cities are not only part of the problem but can also be an important part of the solution, including with the promotion of green jobs and technologies.

29. The H.E. Mr. Almoustapha Garba concurred and noted that “green jobs and holistic planning and management are essential”.

30. Almost all of the participants referred to linkages between high rural/urban income, opportunity and infrastructure disparities and migration. Some highlighted the need to focus on the most vulnerable, including youth and women. The importance of strengthening land tenure was consistently reiterated. Zimbabwe warned that if not properly managed, rural and urban areas will fail together. Several Parties highlighted that the same challenges relating to national resources management can also be applied at the transboundary level. The increasing competition over access to productive and land resources was a matter of concern between urban and rural communities alike.

31. The Co-Chair closed the meeting and the Chair summarized the key messages as follows.

32. Rural and urban communities need to act as partners and not competitors. This can only be achieved if there are opportunities in rural areas, especially for youth and women. In addition, fostering a circular economy system and an integrated approach to land-use planning are a part of the solution, and these will work best with the greater involvement of the private sector and local governments.

33. The challenges are accelerating. With that in mind, Mr. Ahmed Aziz Diallo confirmed “we are compelled to act with vigour and a sense of urgency”.

34. The UNCCD and its Parties should actively encourage local governments to adopt integrated land-use management and enhanced land governance to rehabilitate the natural resource base that makes cities sustainable, taking into consideration the New Urban Agenda, including by reducing rates of land consumption and soil sealing along with biodiversity and ecosystem loss.

Ministerial round table 3: Fostering a global movement for ecosystem restoration

Chair	H.E. Mr. Nestor Bassiere, Minister of Environment, Green Economy and Climate Change of Burkina Faso
Co-Chair	H.E. Mr. Mahendra Reddy, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment of Fiji
Speaker	Ms. Inger Anderson, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme

35. Approximately 160 people actively participated in Round table 3: Fostering a global movement for ecosystem restoration. The discussions were enriched by a total of 33 interventions from Parties, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector.

36. The Chair, H. E. Mr. Nestor Bassiere, Minister of Environment, Green Economy and Climate Change of Burkina Faso, welcomed the distinguished representatives and opened the round table discussion. Nature is declining at an unprecedented rate with serious effects on human populations around the world. He noted the opportune timing of these discussions as the global community is moving towards the implementation of the land degradation neutrality targets, discussing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and designing the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) for maximum action and impact on the ground.

37. Ms. Inger Anderson, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, delivered an inspirational keynote speech and put forth the analogy: “We are like a man living in a house built on wooden stilts, chipping away at this wood to fuel his fire. Chip for long enough, and the house will collapse.” Ecosystem restoration makes sense at every possible level; this entails sweeping shifts in the way we use and manage our land. She stressed the need to break out of the environment and development sphere and into boardrooms and other ministries. This means working with the agriculture, infrastructure and other sectors to help them become biodiversity-positive, land-improving and nature-enhancing.

38. The Co-Chair, H. E. Mr. Mahendra Reddy, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development, Waterways and Environment of Fiji, set the stage by elaborating what effective ecosystem restoration means to the livelihoods of the South Pacific nations. The rich biodiversity of the Fiji Islands and the ecosystems supporting it are now at risk. These ecosystems provide a great source of revenues for Fijian people and its economy. Indeed, Fiji’s main tourism attraction is its natural environment and pristine marine waters. Thus, ecosystem restoration is essential to Fijian livelihoods, and Fiji stands with other Parties in fostering a global movement for ecosystem restoration.

39. The key message emanating from the discussions was that desertification and land degradation is a global responsibility, and that there is a need for partnerships and coordinated action at all levels, from local to national, and from regional to global.

40. We can no longer separate environmental problems from social problems. Land degradation is particularly acute in the drylands with serious impacts on the economies and well-being of the resident populations. Knowledge, science and technology should lead policy and action, followed by the sharing of experiences and lessons learned. A holistic and integrated approach is the most promising way of delivering livelihood benefits while at the same time ensuring the full range of the ecosystem services we need to survive.

41. The speakers highlighted a wide range of projects and programmes in their respective countries, such as sustainable land management, watershed management, and sand and dust storm source mitigation initiatives, as well as projects designed to create green jobs and avoid forced migration. Many speakers emphasized the role of forests and trees and the need to

establish a concrete action strategy linking the three Rio conventions to harness ecosystem restoration, green infrastructure and other nature-based solutions. Several speakers emphasized that gender equality and women's empowerment is a critical element in the success of restoration activities.

42. Food security is of paramount importance for most countries, and the loss of soil quality in some regions is alarming. Restoring the health and productivity of the land for food production is a top priority for many countries. Most reaffirmed their commitments to their land degradation neutrality targets and recognized that implementation of those targets on the ground has great potential for creating transformational change. Some acknowledged that some of the more successful restoration efforts are being led by local communities and municipalities, including indigenous peoples, and that community engagement cannot ignore property rights and tenure security. Continuing to build these capacities and scale up restoration efforts must come into sharper focus. The principles in the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security were referenced by several speakers as essential to our efforts to combat land degradation.

43. All speakers noted that the conservation and sustainable management of land resources is less expensive than restoration and that we need national legal frameworks and regional and global cooperation to address the human-induced drivers of land degradation. There needs to be systemic change in the way we think about and manage our lands along with public-private partnerships to ensure sustained investments. This will require smart restoration targets that are implementable and measurable.

44. The Parties should welcome and embrace the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) and commit to adopting an integrated, best-practice approach to land restoration based on scientific evidence and traditional knowledge that offers hope to vulnerable communities.

45. There was a strong feeling in the round table that we all need to act together and engage together with the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration; this is the only way we will succeed and scale up restoration activities to the level that is demanded of us. The Chair and Co-Chair thanked the participants and closed the round table with their final remarks of hope: where there is sincere commitment and political will, there is a way to safeguard our ecosystems for future generations.

Interactive dialogue 1: A values-based approach to land stewardship

Chair	H.E. Mr. Ezechiel Joseph, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Physical Planning Natural Resources and Co-operatives of Saint Lucia
Speakers	Sadhguru (Isha Foundation), Mr. Baaba Maal, Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Father Joshtroum Isaac Kureethadam (Holy See)

46. With a range of different backgrounds and experience, the panel explored, in dialogue with Ministers, what drives people to become good stewards of the land.

47. With a rapidly growing population expected to reach more than 9.7 billion by 2050, societies must urgently grapple with the central moral question of how to protect our increasingly finite natural capital in the face of the limitless human desire to expand and consume. Our behaviours and patterns of consumption are putting immense pressure on global land resources. Parties agreed that humanity has a responsibility to find equitable solutions for the poorest in our societies while adopting a values-based approach to land stewardship, rooted in the respect for our precious natural capital.

48. The discussions paid particular attention to the role of indigenous communities. It was felt that they need to be recognized as the guardians of our global land resources, protecting 80 per cent of biodiversity on Earth. If we are to stand a chance of arresting the degradation of our natural world, the implementation of the Convention can help the global community recognize, promote and harness indigenous communities' invaluable knowledge and intuitive connection with nature.

49. The moral imperative of championing a global restoration movement is not limited to governments, business or civil society organizations alone. Culture itself can be a key vector in inspiring action and delivering a transformative message that resonates with people across the globe. Senegalese musician Baaba Maal urged us all to use our respective platforms as global citizens to raise our voices to tackle the planetary emergency we are facing, recounting his own journey as a musician driven by a sense of deep personal responsibility. In order to inspire a revolution in the way we manage our global land resources, we can explore deep-rooted cultural norms to trigger behavioural change.

50. Finally, all world religions remind us in their sacred texts that land is 'holy'. The discussions explored how to build a broader dialogue between people of all faiths and creeds to inspire collective action in protecting our global lands. Religions of the world are working hand-in-hand with the scientific community to impact change, and this will be ever more crucial to create a harmonious future built on the strong foundation of healthy land for all.

51. Delegates noted that this dialogue was a departure from previous sessions, but the approach of engaging a wider group of motivated stakeholders, with a range of different backgrounds and experience, was positive and could evolve further in future.

Interactive dialogue 2: Healthy land – healthy people

Chair	H.E. Mr. Dennis Musuku Wanchinga, Minister of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection of Zambia
Speakers	H.E. Ms. Lorena Aguilar Revelo, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica; Ambassador Howard Bamsey, Chair of the Steering Committee of the Global Water Partnership

52. With a range of different backgrounds and experience, Interactive dialogue 2 explored, in dialogue with Ministers, a variety of perspectives on how land and human health can be integrated. There were more than 200 participants, including Ministers of countries from various regions, heads of United Nations agencies, and representatives of civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations.

53. Participants discussed how healthy land is an essential part of our life support system. If the health and productivity of land decreases, human health will suffer. The negative impacts on health are disproportionately experienced by certain groups, especially those living in vulnerable conditions. Environmental risk factors associated with desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) include lack of food and water security, air and soil pollution, lack of sanitation and hygiene, exposure to hazardous chemicals, change in vector distribution, and climate-related disasters. These result in communicable and noncommunicable diseases, malnutrition, disability and mortality.

54. In the discussions, H.E. Ms. Lorena Aguilar Revelo, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Costa Rica, highlighted the importance of gender in addressing health issues. Gender equality and the collection of disaggregated data on the differentiated health impacts of land degradation and water scarcity should guide policy discussions and implementation.

55. Ambassador Howard Bamsey, Chair of the Steering Committee of the Global Water Partnership, said “We can’t have healthy land and healthy life without healthy water.” He stressed that the vulnerability of water systems is also affecting the health of land. He shared his concern that the world is not on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6 because of long-term water scarcity for humans and ecosystems. Collaboration will be key, and the Global Water Partnership’s 3,000 partners across the world could be instrumental in this. The representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations highlighted soil pollution: without clean soils there can be no health. Soil pollution impacts food quality, security and human and ecosystem health.

56. The need for behavioural change was emphasized by many who noted the successful reduction in tobacco consumption as a good example of the role that raising awareness among consumers could play in bringing back the health of the land.

57. The key message is that humans should be at the centre of efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought, as highlighted in the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. Certainly, populations are not equally vulnerable and gender inequality is an important factor. Ill health and sickness caused by land degradation and drought are the human face of the implementation of the Convention. Strategies that reduce DLDD would provide for better overall human health. At the same time, public health systems will need to adapt to a changing world. Many speakers agreed that women’s empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development as well as for the ‘healthy land, healthy people’ agenda. The vulnerability of our water supply and demand systems resulting from poor governance affect the health of land. Participants recommended strengthening broader water and soil partnership at all levels.

58. This interactive dialogue session provided critical insights and policy guidance on how to effectively proceed on land-related human health issues in the context of the Convention. The session demonstrated that Parties to the Convention are united in a common goal to guarantee healthy and productive land to promote human health. Now is the time to plan for the future.

Interactive dialogue 3: Boosting sustainable value chains for land-based business

Chair	H.E. Ms. Patricia Appiagyei, Deputy Minister of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation of Ghana
Speakers	Mr. Bernard Giraud (Livelihoods Venture), Mr. Nick Salter (Aduna), Mr. Francesco La Camera (International Renewable Energy Agency), Mr. Anil Jain (Jain Irrigation Systems), Mr. Cai Mantang (Elion Resources Group), Mr. Tony Siantonas (World Business Council for Sustainable Development)

59. With a range of different backgrounds and experience, Interactive dialogue 3 explored, in dialogue with Ministers, a variety of perspectives on ways to promote and strengthen sustainable value chains for land-based businesses.

60. The fruitful discussion stressed the need for global and local business leaders to play a transformational role in linking smallholder producers in dryland areas to lucrative local and international markets. Speakers highlighted the numerous challenges smallholder producers are facing and underscored the need to create an enabling environment fitting the national context to strengthen technical capacities and mobilize incentive mechanisms for sustainable land management. To meet local and global market demand smallholder farmers will need to guarantee a reliable, high-quality supply. Such supply is often hindered by the lack of access to resources, including equipment and energy, as Mr. La Camera of the International Renewable Energy Agency highlighted.

61. The need for creating coalitions of stakeholders, including businesses, governments, research institutions and civil society organizations, was underlined by many as the key to creating shared value for all by encouraging businesses to build solutions and create the financial instruments that will bring the necessary resources to farmers.

62. Achieving sustainable development at scale is a major challenge that will require all stakeholders to focus on the long-term economic sustainability of value chains and on the engagement of major businesses. In the discussions, Mr. Salter from Aduna stressed the importance of not only working on the supply side, but also of engaging with consumers to build awareness and increase demand. This will help create new markets and transform existing value chains.

63. While participants pointed out the importance of technology to promote the development of value chains, Mr. Giraud from Livelihoods Venture also emphasized the need to invest in human capital, in particular in women and youth who represent the majority as well as the future in the production and transformation of farming and wild collection in the dryland areas.

64. This dialogue session provided critical insights as to how coalitions, flexibility and agility will be crucial to accelerate the sustainable transformation of supply chains and the creation of new markets that will provide economic opportunities for smallholder farmers while ensuring the restoration of severely degraded land. The session demonstrated that Parties are already making progress in promoting sustainable value chains, and that private sector engagement should continue in the future to create the tangible coalitions needed to achieve transformation in land-based sustainable value chains.