



Convention to Combat Desertification

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Special segment: boosting stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Note on the special segment of the Conference of the Parties at its twelfth session

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At the high-level segment of the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties, ministers and other heads of delegation will hold plenary discussions in the form of three ministerial round tables and three interactive dialogue sessions, as follows:

- (a) Round table 1: From global to local: translating land degradation neutrality into action;
- (b) Round table 2: Drought adaptation: mainstreaming drought management policy in national agendas and mitigating the effects of drought;
- (c) Round table 3: Land-based approach to climate change: resilience through sustainable land management;
- (d) Special segment I: Interactive dialogue session with civil society organizations: land rights;
- (e) Special segment II: Interactive dialogue session with the private sector: incentives for investment in sustainable land management;
- (f) Special segment III: Interactive dialogue session with members of parliament: framing of legislation to protect and rehabilitate land.

It is anticipated that the high-level segment will bring political momentum to the deliberations of country Parties and boost the engagement of stakeholders in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.



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I. Background

1. By its decision 39/COP.11 on the programme of work for the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 12), the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided to organize an interactive dialogue sessions with relevant stakeholders, including ministers, civil society organizations, the business community, the scientific community and members of parliament during COP 12. The high-level segment of COP 12 will be held on 20–21 October 2015 in Ankara, Turkey.
2. The high-level segment will be organized by the host country (Turkey) in consultation with the Bureau of the COP and the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Ministers and heads of delegation from the 195 Parties to the UNCCD, along with the above-mentioned relevant stakeholders, will bring political momentum to the deliberations of Parties and guide negotiators as appropriate.
3. In order to assist delegations in preparing for the high-level segment, the secretariat, in consultation with host country, has prepared this information note addressing some of the questions that ministers and other heads of delegation will be invited to consider during their deliberations.

II. Organization of the high-level segment

4. The opening ceremony of the high-level segment (Tuesday, 20 October) will start with a welcoming statement by the President of COP 12, followed by a message from the United Nations Secretary-General and a statement by the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD.
5. This special segment of COP 12 will focus on boosting stakeholders' engagement in the UNCCD implementation processes. During the high-level segment, there will be three parallel ministerial round table discussions followed by three interactive dialogue sessions with members of parliament, civil society and the private sector.
6. Each round table discussion will be co-chaired by a minister from the UNCCD country Parties. The substantive deliberations will be opened by the moderator and enriched by invited keynote speakers, one for each round table. The subsequent panel discussions and audience interactions will form the core of the high-level segment's deliberations.
7. The topics for consideration at the round table discussions and the interactive dialogue sessions will include the following:
 - (a) Round table 1: From global to local: translating land degradation neutrality into action;
 - (b) Round table 2: Drought adaptation: mainstreaming drought management policy in national agendas and mitigating the effects of drought;
 - (c) Round table 3: Land-based approach to climate change: resilience through sustainable land management;
 - (d) Special Segment I: Interactive dialogue session with civil society organizations: land rights;
 - (e) Special Segment II: Interactive dialogue session with the private sector: incentives for investment in sustainable land management;

(f) Special Segment III: Interactive dialogue session with members of parliament: framing of legislation to protect and rehabilitate land.

III. Round table 1: From global to local: translating land degradation neutrality into action

8. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) Member States recognized “the need for urgent action to reverse land degradation. In view of this, we will strive to achieve a land degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development”.¹ At COP 11, the Parties to the UNCCD established an intergovernmental working group (IWG) to develop a science-based definition and concrete options for achieving a land degradation neutrality (LDN) target on halting and reversing land degradation. With the support of the Government of the Republic of Korea through the Changwon Initiative, the UNCCD secretariat carried out a project to assist countries in assessing the LDN approach and understanding how it might work with the aligned national action programmes by helping identify bottlenecks and frame an effective plan for implementation.

9. LDN is therefore understood as a state where the amount of healthy and productive land is stable or increases; this refers to both biological and economic productivity. This can be achieved by avoided degradation and the rehabilitation of already degraded lands within specified timeframes and ecosystems. It was this vision that guided the formulation of the sustainable development goal (SDG) relating to LDN (SDG 15 and target 15.3) as part of the post-2015 development agenda. With a global consensus on the importance of halting and reversing land degradation and with a target of LDN, there are now new opportunities and a practical way forward for the implementation of the Convention.

Problem statement

10. Around 24 per cent of the usable land on Earth is degraded. By 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity. LDN is designed to be a long-term political commitment to get land use in balance. It requires countries to assess the current extent and degree of land degradation. While no single indicator can be used to monitor and evaluate trends in land degradation, a flexible framework could be developed. This would then enable countries to prioritize investments and incentives for sustainable land management (SLM), restoration and integrated land rehabilitation. Countries are likely to set specific targets according to their national circumstances in order to monitor progress towards halting and reversing the current negative trends.

Key question: ***How can countries and communities transform their land management, governance and implementation systems to foster better stewardship in order to achieve the LDN target?***

Questions for the debate

11. Some questions that can be considered during the deliberations include:

(a) What are the lessons learned from the work of the IWG and the LDN pilot project? How will you be translating LDN in your country and integrating it into sustainable development priorities? How will it impact implementation at local and national level?

¹ <[www.unccd2012.org/content/documents/727The Future We Want 19 June 1230pm.pdf](http://www.unccd2012.org/content/documents/727The_Future_We_Want_19_June_1230pm.pdf)>.

(b) LDN can only be achieved through a consistent effort across all the economic sectors that use land resources. This may entail eliminating perverse incentives and promoting better land management practices, green technologies, inclusive business models and innovation, among other things. How can countries begin to foster this level of cooperation among various sectors and ministries?

(c) How do we communicate the ambition, means to achieve and end result of LDN to the general public? What can we do to make this communication more compelling?

(d) What are the immediate needs in terms of capacity-building, including tools and technologies, technical training and extension services? How can these needs be met in a cost-effective and self-sustaining manner?

(e) What finances are currently available for scaling up successful restoration activities? What about climate change financing? How can other funding sources be accessed for multisectoral programmes focused on land management and planning that reduce poverty and food insecurity? What is the potential for public-private partnerships and how can these be mainstreamed into regulatory and institutional frameworks to empower local communities and provide access to information and credit?

(f) How can countries strengthen their institutional capacities in order to achieve LDN targets?

(g) How would the LDN mechanism be organized under the umbrella of UNCCD?

(h) How can we monitor the LDN targets at global level? Who would monitor this? Who would finance this?

(i) How can countries manage to reduce the negative effects of natural hazards such as forest fires and floods to achieve the LDN targets?

IV. Round table 2: Drought adaptation: mainstreaming drought management policy in national agendas and mitigating the effects of drought

12. While drought is a natural phenomenon, it is being exacerbated by climate change and land management choices. Climate change is likely to shift the patterns of droughts and increase the frequency and severity of extreme drought (and flooding) events. Droughts bring significant water shortages, economic losses, environmental degradation and adverse social consequences, including migration, poverty and instability. Droughts amplify tensions and competition between different water uses, particularly when governance of available water resources is weak. Up to 135 million people may move as a result of desertification and drought processes by 2050. The most common approach countries use in dealing with drought is the post-impact relief intervention by governments or relief and aid agencies.

13. This approach needs to be complemented by pre-impact government programmes to reduce vulnerability. These are commonly referred to as mitigation measures. These measures include establishing comprehensive early warning systems; improving seasonal forecasts; increasing emphasis on water conservation (demand reduction); increasing water supplies (constructing reservoirs/water harvesting, interconnecting water supplies between neighbouring communities); drought planning; awareness-building; and education. Insurance programmes, which are currently available in many countries, are also a part of the vulnerability reduction strategy. These measures should be part of national drought management policies that combine post-impact and pre-impact programmes and are

strongly grounded in a national water policy such as integrated watershed management and in regional water initiatives (e.g. for transboundary management).

Problem statement

14. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that droughts will intensify throughout the 21st century due to reduced precipitation and/or increased evapotranspiration. Most countries do not have a comprehensive strategy for drought management or drought risk reduction. Regions thought to be especially vulnerable include southern Europe and the Mediterranean region, central Europe, central North America, Central America and Mexico, northeast Brazil, southern Asia and southern Africa.

Key question: *What needs to be done by Parties to the Convention to enhance drought adaptation?*

Questions for the debate

15. Some questions that can be considered during the deliberations include:

- (a) What are effective measures to address drought and water scarcity, including their disruptive effects?
- (b) What is the role of land and soil management in terms of drought management? For example, should we change the types of crops we grow? Should we rehabilitate land at watershed level?
- (c) What kind of early-warning systems will be needed?
- (d) How can countries streamline drought policies into the national development and cross-sectoral strategies?
- (e) Is more drought insurance a solution?
- (f) Can we move from a reactive to a comprehensive approach to mitigate the effects of drought?
- (g) Could integrated watershed management be a solution for water scarcity and drought control?
- (h) Which economic activities accelerate drought stress and/or increase the risk of water scarcity?

V. Round table 3: Land-based approach to climate change: resilience through sustainable land management

16. Land and soil have been missing, in any meaningful sense, from climate change agreements so far. But this is changing. Given the fact that land degradation accelerates climate change and vice versa, land rehabilitation and sustainable management, if widely adopted, could be a workable solution for both the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change.

17. A land-based approach is the prime solution that will work for the very poorest, who are hit the hardest by climate change. Land is their primary, and often only, tangible asset. By managing land better, we can build resilience. The diffusion of cost-effective and simple SLM techniques to farmers around the world, especially to the 500 million small-scale farms, would be vital for the resilience of the global food supply in particular. It is clear that most of the land-based adaptation techniques that are needed are low-cost practices and skills, which are often based on traditional knowledge. They can be employment-generating

and empower rural communities. At the same time, land is playing a major role in sequestering carbon and should be therefore counted as a mitigation effort. Two billion hectares of degraded ecosystems are available worldwide for rehabilitation. Nearly 500 million hectares of that is abandoned agricultural land. By rehabilitating this degraded land, the international community would increase food security, mitigate up to 30 per cent of carbon emissions and secure vital ecosystem services.

Problem statement

18. Climate change is having a very heavy impact on the poorest people. It is an often forgotten truth that 75 per cent of the poorest people in the world live on the land in rural areas. For people whose entire lives and livelihoods depend on the health and productivity of their land, less rainfall and more land degradation because of climate change is a nightmare scenario. The IPCC is warning us to expect a further two percent drop in agricultural output per decade – as a result of climate change. Migration, competition and eventually conflict over scarce and vital natural resources will accelerate. Several vulnerable ‘hotspots’ are already emerging. However, it is a global problem and no region is immune.

Key question: *How to better recognize the land sector in the fight against climate change?*

Question for the debate

19. Some questions that can be considered during the deliberations include:

(a) Is the world experiencing the consequences of land degradation and climate change in tandem? Or are they separate concerns?

(b) How do we harness the potential of land and soil to help communities adapt to climate change or sequester carbon?

(c) How can the UNCCD help Parties combat climate change by rehabilitating degraded land?

(d) Are common indicators between the Rio conventions (to measure progress and resilience) a good idea?

(e) How to constitute policies regulating the use of inputs while attributing an important place to the increase of agricultural production in the light of climate change and in accordance with food safety by evaluating SLM and environmental aspects?

VI. Special Segment I: Interactive dialogue session with civil society organizations: land rights

20. Roughly 1.2 billion people currently live without access to formal property rights.² A rights-based approach to SLM is necessary to ensure the good land stewardship of productive land. When a local population has confidence in their rights, they invest in the land and can be encouraged to manage it in a sustainable way. Farmers and herders, in particular, need firm rights to the soils, grazing, woodlands and water sources on which their livelihoods depend. Land grabbing threatens this rights-based approach. Land grabbing is where land is ‘bought’ from the government without community engagement, and at prices well below the land’s worth. Furthermore, lands subject to land grabs are often

² <www.fao.org/partnerships/news-article/en/c/223370/>.

the most productive in the area, sometimes having the only access to scarce water. A recent analysis showed that substantial areas of land have been traded through these land deals, totalling in 2012 between 32.7 and 82.2 million hectares. This corresponds to 0.75–1.75 per cent of the Earth’s agricultural land.³

21. Governments can establish mechanisms to promote and protect the security of land tenure and improve efficient and equitable access to land, especially with respect to women and poor and disadvantaged segments of society, through legislation that protects the full and equal right to own land and other property, including the right to inherit. These mechanisms should also promote conservation and sustainable land use to restore degrading land to productivity for the future. For the best results in terms of land productivity and the consequent food security and decreased conflict, access to land should be accompanied by access to other necessary inputs. These include water, credit, transport, extension services and other infrastructure.

Problem statement

22. Up to 1 billion people depend directly on natural resources for their daily survival. These are the poorest members of the global community. Land degradation has an immediate impact on their lives and their fundamental human rights to food, water, health and even life itself. Land-dependent communities often have tenuous land ownership and can be excluded from participating in crucial decision-making that directly impact their lives. These are significant driving factors of unsustainable, degrading land-use practices and must be directly addressed.

Key question: *How do secure land tenure and other land rights contribute to addressing the issue of land degradation? How should we be implementing the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations guidelines on land tenure in the context of the UNCCD?*

Questions for the debate

23. Some questions that can be considered during the deliberations include:

(a) What are the mechanisms that have been successfully established at the local and national level to facilitate farmers’ access to productive land? Are there any specific, successful programmes targeting female empowerment and granting women access to land and credit? What about the rights of indigenous peoples to traditional and common lands?

(b) How do countries envisage protecting productive agricultural land against those persons and institutions that are grabbing the most fertile land? What are the measures that governments could take to avoid land grabbing? What has worked in the past?

(c) How can civil society organizations work jointly with governments in the development and implementation of legal and policy mechanisms to guarantee food security and access to water security for people living in areas affected by DLDD?

³ <http://iopscience.iop.org/1748-9326/9/11/114006/pdf/1748-9326_9_11_114006.pdf,%20con%20el%20texto>.

VII. Special segment II: Interactive dialogue session with the private sector: incentives for investment in sustainable land management

24. Eighty per cent of the global population is anticipated to become global ‘consumers’ by 2030.⁴ This is an additional 2 billion people demanding products and services. Providing for this growing population of consumers in a sustainable manner is an exciting and challenging mission for the private sector. The business opportunities in creating a sustainable world in which 9 billion people can live could be worth USD 3–10 trillion a year by 2050.⁵

25. Degraded land is an underperforming asset for the business sector, often with significant productivity yield gaps.⁶ By adopting SLM, business can positively influence environmental and social trends while strengthening their own resilience to issues like climate change, demographic dynamics and skills shortages. Policy and economic incentives and market-based funding mechanisms can encourage the rehabilitation of degraded land. Innovative investment vehicles, fiscal instruments or market-based mechanisms can directly generate or influence the flows of funds by attracting or redirecting them towards SLM.

Problem statement

26. Practices that reduce ecosystems services such as the provision of nutrients in the earth, limit carbon sequestration, degrade topsoil and ultimately reduce the productivity and water retention of the land have long-term economic impacts for business and society. Other ecosystem services that would be relevant to businesses include timber and wood fibre production, flood prevention, waste purification, genetic resources, medicinal plants and organisms, freshwater availability, power, biomass production and recreation. Their loss is undermining human security and business potential.

Key question: ***How can business contribute to solving the issue of land degradation?***

Questions for debate

27. Some questions that can be considered during the deliberations include:

- (a) What will it take for business to adopt SLM and contribute to efforts to restore degraded land?
- (b) Can business also go land degradation neutral? How can this target be measured and reported upon?
- (c) How can influential business corporations drive the transition to LDN across their value chain, and gradually drive the transition of entire industries and sectors?
- (d) What are the policy/legislative gaps that need to be filled?
- (e) Can product certification help achieve the objective?

⁴ <<http://global-mechanism.org/about-us/the-importance-of-sustainable-land-management>>.

⁵ <www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/sustainability-case-studies-world-business-council>.

⁶ Deforestation and land degradation are major global issues resulting in economic losses equalling 3.3–7.5 per cent of the global gross domestic product. For example: the salinization of the Aral Sea surroundings and the decision to introduce large-scale cotton production in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. A legacy decision has led to diminishing agriculture production in the area and is limiting future growth (see <http://eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/pdf/ELD_Business_Brief.pdf>).

- (f) What economic incentives or market-based mechanisms are required?
- (g) How can the public and private sector collaborate?

VIII. Special Segment III: Interactive dialogue session with members of parliament: framing of legislation to protect and rehabilitate land

28. Some of the main factors contributing to land degradation include unclear land tenure regulations, competing priorities, fragmented policy structure and the overall lack of a sound legal framework to uphold land rights and ensure sustainable development. Gender disparities related to the ownership of land and its resources further exacerbate the trend. As such, land degradation issues can create a ripple effect both within and between borders. Framing appropriate legislation to protect and rehabilitate land can be a crucial step in unlocking the potential of a country to shift onto a sustainable development path.

29. In this context, governments play a key role in establishing mechanisms that can incentivize proper land management, disincentivize land degradation practices in both the private and public sectors, and execute a range of other actions against land degradation on the political, legal and social level. Parliamentarians provide access to national perspectives at a global scale; they can define the political agenda, co-determine the priority of issues and influence policy guidelines. They can also ensure policy continuity between outgoing and incoming governments, thereby keeping issues related to land degradation on the political agenda. Taken as a whole, parliamentarians can guide the political agenda and help transform societal, economic and environmental challenges into positive action.

Problem statement

30. Appropriate land and soil policies are not implemented through a participatory, integrated and iterative process. Nor are they continually enforced. For example, the land sector is highly fragmented. In the agriculture sector alone, there are approximately 1 billion smallholder farmers that are directly dependent on land and its natural resources for their daily survival. Environmental protection policies and land-specific regulations may face additional resistance if they affect people's livelihoods. A sound national land-use policy must reflect on and cover all uses of land and implicate all relevant stakeholders.

Key question: *What are the critical elements for successful legislation aimed at protecting and rehabilitating land?*

Questions for the debate

31. Some questions that can be considered during the deliberations include:

(a) How can the existing (often competing) demands for land among different sectors of the economy be balanced, especially those including food production, export crops, tourism, forestry, renewable energy, wildlife conservation, housing and public amenities, roads and industry, etc.? What are the parameters to be considered?

(b) What successful mechanisms, practices and legislation currently exist to mainstream actions addressing desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) and promoting SLM in your national development strategy and other relevant policy arenas? Can specific components of successful legislation on land use be cited from your country's experience?

(c) How can ministers and members of parliament work together to develop successful legislation on land use with a view to environmental sustainability, economic

viability, sustainable development and maximum stakeholder engagement (based on the consideration of the above-mentioned components)?

IX. Expected result

32. A summary of the outcomes of the ministerial round table discussions and the interactive dialogue sessions will be presented by the President of the COP. The summary from the President will be transmitted to the COP for further consideration at COP 12.
