



WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

PARTNERSHIPS FOR A RESILIENT PLANET

FEBRUARY 15–17, 2018
INDIA HABITAT CENTRE, LODHI ROAD, NEW DELHI

#Act4Earth

This special bulletin is published by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) to feature the activities undertaken by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) at the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) held from 15-17 February 2018. The full report of the WSDS2018 proceedings is available on: <http://wsds.teriin.org/index.php>



United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

The new UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework is the most comprehensive global commitment to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in order to restore the productivity of vast expanses of degraded land, improve the livelihoods of more than 1.3 billion people, and reduce the impacts of drought on vulnerable populations to build - a future that avoids, minimizes, and reverses desertification/land degradation and mitigates the effects of drought in affected areas at all levels. Another objective of UNCCD is to achieve a land degradation-neutral world consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Convention's 197 parties work together to improve the living conditions of people in drylands, to

maintain and restore land and soil productivity, and to mitigate the effects of drought.

At the second edition of the World Sustainable Development Summit hosted in New Delhi, India from February 15-17, 2018 under the broad rubric of 'Creating Partnerships for a Resilient Planet', the UNCCD participated in the proceedings as a Senior partner and hosted a series of discussions related to achieving a land degradation neutral world.

WSDS witnessed a Ministerial Dialogue highlighting countries' top level challenges and achievements in scaling-up sustainable land management and restoration to ensure equitable benefits, enhanced livelihoods and shared outcomes.

Break-away discussions on Governance Challenges and Policy Solutions for Combatting Land Degradation; The Business of Land and; and Civil Society Engagement in Land Degradation Neutrality were also held at the WSDS. 🌍



Ms Monique Barbut meets the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India at the Inaugural Ceremony of WSDS 2018

NOTE FROM MS MONIQUE BARBUT Under Secretary-General of the UN and Executive Secretary, UNCCD

WSDS 2018 convinced me that a solid and practical partnership among governments, the private sector and civil society in achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030 is emerging. At the Summit, we also reaffirmed the need to shift our focus from identifying problems to solving them. Actions to rehabilitate and restore land at scale must become transformational to achieve our targets. Fortunately, a growing choice of funding options and institutional mechanisms are available for that.

It is clear that India could have a leading role in this important endeavor. Two-thirds of Indians derive their livelihoods from climate sensitive sectors such as farming, fisheries and forestry. Building resilience through sustainable land management will not only boost the country's economy but also contribute to sustainable development for people everywhere. In partnership, let's use the momentum derived from WSDS 2018 to invest urgently in our land and our common future.



Special meeting with the Hon'ble Prime Minister

ENHANCING RESILIENCE AND ACHIEVING LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY IN MULTIFUNCTIONAL LANDSCAPES

Chair: Mr Nitin Desai, Former Under Secretary General of the United Nations and Distinguished Fellow, TERI

Keynote Address: Ms Monique Barbut, Under Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Panelists: Hon. Patricia Appiagyei, Deputy Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ghana; Mr Chencho Norbu, Secretary, National Environment Commission, Bhutan; HE Mr Aiyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications, Government of Republic of Fiji; Dr Sanjaasuren Oyun, Chair, Global Water Partnership (GWP)

Ms Monique Barbut initiated the discussion by talking about India and the ancient civilisation and expressed her view that the future wealth, which is the soil, was found to be at risk. She stressed that maintaining land degradation neutrality is the only option in maintaining the balance of nature. Almost two-thirds of the population in India sustain their livelihood by depending on farming, fishery, and forestry. But contrary to that, almost 30% of the land in India is found to be degraded, the key reason being abandoning of land due to low productivity. She suggested that good governance and policy is the key towards achieving neutrality. Mr Nitin Desai concluded the session by stressing the fact that land management

and livelihood issues need to be seen together. Land degradation neutrality can only be achieved when we join the dots of land, water, and biodiversity. Each factor is dependent on every other factor and should be considered holistically while considering the issue.

Way Forward: Recommendations

- The session led to the conclusion that the LDN framework encourages coherence among sectors to implement cost-effective national policies and actions.
- We need to transition from small-scale pilots to transformative projects at the landscape scale to enhance resilience for both people and the planet. 🌍





GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES AND POLICY SOLUTIONS FOR COMBATING LAND DEGRADATION

Chair: Mr B M S Rathore, Chief Policy Advisor, ICIMOD

Panelists: Mr Ajay Kumar Lal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India; Mr Yuri Afanasiev, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative; Dr Pradeep Monga, Deputy Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); Chenchu Norbu, Secretary, National Environment Commission of Bhutan; Dr Dirk Walther, Project Director, ProSoil (India), GIZ; Mr Jigmet Takpa, Joint Secretary International Cooperation and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India; Dr J V Sharma, Director, Forestry and Biodiversity Division, TERI

This session addressed the future challenges and opportunities for the management and restoration of land resources in the context of sustainable development and as a pathway to alleviate poverty and strengthen livelihoods. The session also looked at potential governance and policy reforms that can help to redirect efforts and leverage existing commitments to sustainably manage our landscapes. A policy brief titled, 'Minimum Support Price of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) and Its Sustainable Harvest: A Social Safety Measure for MFP Collectors in India' was released by all the eminent speakers.

Chairperson Mr B M S Rathore initiated the discussion and said that there are evidences of unsustainable management of land, water, and forests globally resulting



in decline of productivity, loss of ecosystem services, and environmental, social and economic implications. According to him, land needs to be center staged and SDG 17 should be looked as an institutional coherence. Dr Pradeep Monga discussed the status of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) globally and in India and also mentioned that the Government of India is one of the leading countries to adopt the SDGs. He emphasized on the fact that land should not be seen in isolation of food security, water, energy and ecosystem restoration, and partnerships and transformity programs. Mr Ajay Kumar Lal discussed the legal perspectives of land degradation. Continued and increasing level of pressure on land resources has catastrophic results in the form of severe land degradation. He mentioned that land under the constitution of India is a state subject, and land and ecosystem need to be kept intact. Mr Yuri Afanasiev discussed about the typology of land, incentive-based policy, and role of private sectors. He focussed on digitization of land registry and legally vetted system in terms of land ownership. Dr J V Sharma mentioned that forestry and biodiversity play a key role in combating land degradation. Land reforms have been initiated after independence and tenancy rights have been



DR PRADEEP MONGA

Deputy Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

“Land is the engine of economic growth and a source of livelihood for billions worldwide. We need to step back and transform the way we govern our land resources.”

given for agricultural land. He also highlighted that financial resources are very important to combat land degradation and UNFCCC has taken a major step for the same. He concluded by saying that land is a precious public resource and must contribute towards achieving land degradation neutrality to obtain ecosystem services and food security

Way Forward: Recommendations

The session concluded with a discussion on the way forward in tackling the issue. Combining governance and the private sector's role in the incorporation of circular economy, certain notable recommendations, enumerated herein, succinctly capture the approach:

- Bringing composting to rural areas;
- Payment to farmers for ecosystem services;
- Measuring the impact of companies;
- Inclusion of the development of eco-village or bio-living villages, such as Bhutan and Nepal, at the policy level;
- Protecting human rights of those who survive off minor forest produce 🌍

THE BUSINESS OF LAND

Chair: Mr Siddhanta Das, Director General, Forests and Special Secretary, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India

Panelists: Dr A K Bhattacharya, CEO, National Green Highways Mission; Mr Subhash Chandra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Mines; Mr Chandan Bhavnani, Executive Vice President, Yes Bank; Dr Pia Sethi, Fellow and Area Convenor, Centre for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, TERI; Ms Katherine Kennedy, Head of Climate Change, Commonwealth Secretariat; Mr Sun Jinan, Head of Sustainable Productivity China, Syngenta; Mr Aviram Rozin, Chairman, Sadhana Forest Kenya; Dr Paul Luu, Executive Secretary, "4 per 1000" Initiative; Mr F L Winterhalder, Professor of Environment and Sustainability at ESADE Business School

Land is an underperforming asset and its investment potential is often not fully recognized by the private sector; neither are the costs of land degradation fully appreciated. Both these realities impact producers and consumers alike, and can affect the stability and security of local communities. The reality is that land degradation adversely affects a wide range of products and services that land provides and results in the decline of economic returns from land. Consequently, land degradation imposes huge costs on society. Better stewardship of the land could have a much bigger role in fighting climate change than previously estimated. Forest landscape restoration has an invaluable carbon sequestration potential and offers a wide array of benefits, such as food security, soil conservation as well as rural development. It is for this very reason that India had pledged to restore an additional 18 million hectares of degraded forests at COP21 in Paris.

The thematic session on 'The Business of Land' brought together representatives from the corporate world, academia, and the public sector to explore the potential of innovative multifunctional approaches, such as agroforestry and climate-smart agriculture, to achieve multiple SDGs and increase the resilience of both people and planet.

Mr Siddhanta Das initiated the discussion by expressing his views about the increase of forest cover in India which shall result in increased carbon sequestration. He stressed on the targets of the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change to achieve India's NDC Goals of 2.5– 3 billion tonnes of CO₂ by improving the land use because denser the forest, more is the carbon sequestration. He suggested a way to achieve this was by treatment of catchment areas. He talked about bridging the gap between actual area under forest cover and NFP, 1988 goal of 33% land area under forest cover by growing trees outside forest area.

Dr A K Bhattacharya discussed the Green Highway Programme of the Ministry to achieve carbon sequestration. He mentioned that current CO₂ emissions by road transport are 391 million tonnes and by 2030 it is expected to reach 966 million tonnes. In order to address this issue, the Green Highway Programme has been launched by the MoEFCC. The GHP intends for carbon neutral green highways in the country. It intends to afforest around 0.4 million acres area along highways in next 10 years with a potential sequestration



MR SIDDHANTA DAS

Director General, Forests and Special Secretary, Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India

“We have about 24% of land under the forest cover, and the national forest policy talks of 33%. To bridge the gap, the only way is to opt for regrowth outside the forest area. We have a strategy of encouraging agro-forestry and farm forestry involving the people.”

of 2.13–2.46 million tonnes of carbon annually which is a way to achieve land degradation neutrality. Dr Pia Sethi emphasized on reducing dependence on land for forest resources and instead insisted on promoting agro forestry solutions. She discussed the work carried out by TERI and informed that 55% of the total cost of land degradation is from forests itself. She also made a point that the costs of land reclamation are less compared to the cost of land degradation and hence more restoration activities should be carried out.

Way Forward: Recommendations

- Livelihood of communities should be secured firstly in order to improve the condition of land;
- Linking carbon sequestration benefits with voluntary carbon offset markets and international climate funds is important for building credibility and enhancing scalability of green Highways Program;
- Rehabilitation of mines should be the priority if we want to restore the degraded land;
- Adaptations need to be included in ecosystem approaches to tackle land degradation;
- Scientific cooperation with innovation shall support in achieving land degradation neutrality. 🌍

CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY

Moderator: Ms Djatougbe Aziaka, President, Togo Welfare; Journalist, Director, Eco Conscience TV

Panelists: Mr S S Negi, VC, Uttarakhand Village Development and Migration Commission; Dr Alex Zvoleff, Data Science, Moore Centre for Science, Conservation International; Mr Bhavani Shankar Kusum, ED, Gram Bharti Samiti; Ms Nathalie Van Haren, Cluster Coordinator, Land Both Ends, The Netherlands; Mr Ritesh Kumar, Director, Wetlands International; Ms Hindou Ibrahim, Coordinator, Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad; Ms Marioldy Sanchez Santivafez, Project Coordinator, AIDER, Peru

Towards Sustainable Land Management

During the session it was discussed that sustainable land management depends on creating a rights-based approach where building synergies with key stakeholders is a critical component. Also, the problem of migration is closely linked to the problem of land degradation. Abandoned lands interspersed with farmlands is a problem disturbing the entire ecosystem. Low earnings from agriculture and low employment opportunities lead to abandoned wastelands and attacks by wild animals on productive lands. While this is a major issue in Uttarakhand, the advantage is that there is a strong civil society network across the state. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Uttarakhand work more with women and build capacity of government staff and communities.

“There is a need to document best practices, recognize the link between land degradation and rural migration as well as build greater collaboration between government and civil society,” said Mr S S Negi.

Investments in Small Farming and Improving Access to Information

Today, the livelihoods of 2 billion people are at stake due to land degradation and drought. One of the key solutions lies in improving access to information by distilling information and making it broadly available to the government, CSOs, and smaller projects for effective planning and formulation of policies. In addition, working with small holders, using right tools to support planning and implementation of LDN, and community-based initiatives are crucial. Groups or movements need to be supported through connections, support from government and national bodies, creating enabling policy environments, taking away the drivers and factors responsible and enabling systems for these initiatives.

“Access to information, investments in farmers, and working with CSOs—all have a unique role in land degradation neutrality and partnerships are key to achieve this,” said Dr Alex Zvoleff.



MS NATHALIE VAN HAREN

Cluster Coordinator, Land Both Ends, Netherlands

Empowerment of indigenous communities and recognizing the work of CSOs who work on policy processes and local communities is crucial.

Close Links Between Land and Water/ Wetlands is Crucial to the Discourse

Drawing the panel’s attention to wetlands, Mr Ritesh Kumar said “We have to connect the dots and look at wetland conservation as a key issue. Just as water for WASH will come from wetlands, waste from land will land in wetlands, so wetlands and water are synonymous with land degradation.”

According to Mr Kumar, civil society can heighten understanding and play a meaningful role by linking developmental agenda with restoration solutions. A governance approach is also critical, and CSOs would be the harbinger of change as a major part of hope for wetlands in future.

Way Forward: Recommendations

- Deforestation, unregulated commercial development, overgrazing of cattle, depletion of soil nutrients due to poor farming practices, and natural disasters are key reasons for land degradation;
- Plugging of gullies and ravines, harvesting rainwater, restoring and renovating step wells, are key activities to counter land erosion;
- The major outcomes included planting of trees, solving the problem of fuel and water, rainwater harvesting, training of youths on environmental issues, and empowering women and involving them in the process of local activities.



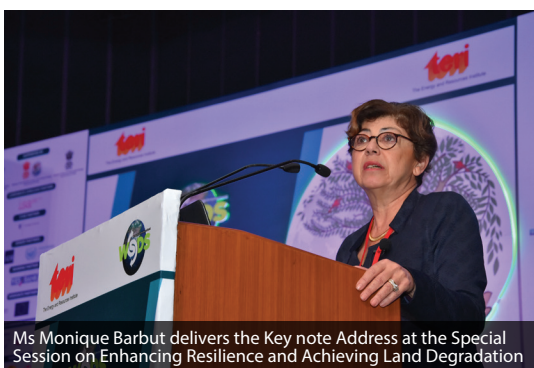
UNCCD'S GLOBAL LAND OUTLOOK

The 1st edition of the Global Land Outlook (GLO) was published in September 2017. Over 300 copies were distributed at the UNCCD’s Exhibit Booth during WSDS 2018. The GLO responds to the mandate of the UNCCD secretariat to continually seek innovative approaches and products that increase awareness of desertification, land degradation and drought issues in the context of sustainable development. As a powerful strategic communications product, it demonstrates the central importance of land resources to human well-being, provides scenarios for future challenges and opportunities, and presents a new and transformative vision for land management policy, planning and practice at global and national scales. The overall aim of the GLO is to leverage scientific, legal and political triggers for action in an attempt to catalyze a shift from a signaling phase to a policy-making phase. The GLO, working papers and other related materials can be found on a dedicated web platform (www.unccd.int/glo).

PICTURE GALLERY



Mr Nitin Desai chairs the Special Session on Enhancing Resilience and Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality in Multifunction Landscapes



Ms Monique Barbut delivers the Key note Address at the Special Session on Enhancing Resilience and Achieving Land Degradation



Ms Monique Barbut during discussions with the journalists at the media colloquium

Editor’s note: The World Sustainable Development Summit is the annual flagship event of TERI. In its 17th edition now, the WSDS has hosted more than 1800 speakers, 47 Heads of States, 13 Nobel Laureates and over 12,000 delegates. The WSDS Series remains committed to sharing knowledge and experiences which will help the global community combat sustainability challenges in the most apt way.