



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



WSDS 2018 Thematic Track

Governance challenges and policy solutions for combatting land degradation

Date: 15 February, 2018 | **Time:** 16:00 -18:00
Venue: Silver Oak, IHC Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi

ABSTRACT

An integrated approach to land management and planning is a global imperative. Overgrazing by livestock, forest degradation, water stress and land use change including widespread conversion of forests and rangelands, all significantly impact ecosystem productivity and exacerbate poverty. Reducing land degradation and restoring ecosystems requires an integrated approach based on the principles of rights, rewards and responsibilities along with the adoption of sustainable land management (SLM) practices that ensure productivity of land resources, food, water and livelihood security for present and future generations. Recognizing the need to understand the pathways to sustainable land management for all, this session will feature a moderated interactive dialogue with senior government representatives, executive leaders from policy think tanks, UN agencies, and other multilateral and development organizations. It will showcase issues, such as gender, tenure, migration, land use and food security as well as institutional and multi-sector collaboration, which are critical to improving the long-term health and productivity of our land resources for both people and the planet.

BACKGROUND

Over the last two decades alone, 20 to 30 per cent of the Earth's vegetated surface has experienced persistent declining trends in productivity. This is mainly due to unsustainable land, forest and water use and management practices and leads to significant economic and social costs for society. The impacts of land degradation are felt the most by the poorest people who directly subsist on the land. Consequently, declining productivity often forces people deeper into poverty resulting in a continuing cycle of environmental degradation, migration and conflicts.

Yet effective solutions exist that can simultaneously accelerate progress towards multiple SDGs such as poverty reduction, food and water security, biodiversity conservation and climate action. Conservation, sustainable management and the restoration of our land resources – soil, water and biodiversity – are the three key pillars to anchor policy solutions that translate into action on the ground. At the policy level the governance of land and soils needs to be addressed in order to create an enabling environment and ensure restoration outcomes that are sustainable and pro-poor.

Under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15, the international community has formulated an ambitious vision for the landscapes of the future. SDG target 15.3 specifically calls on all countries to “*By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification,*

drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world". Combating land degradation requires a massive scaling-up of both, the sustainable management of land and soils to reduce ongoing degradation and the restoration of land that has been degraded in the past. LDN targets are currently being set at the national level – with 114 countries already committed. In fact more than 70 have set their baselines using UNCCD's land-based indicators and have begun implementing restorative measures.

The vision is to protect, conserve, restore, and promote ecosystems, water, natural habitats, and biodiversity, minimize the environmental impact of land use, and change to sustainable consumption and production patterns that are less land-intensive. To advance to this goal increased security of tenure, gender equity, and appropriate incentives and rewards are essential enabling factors to help producers adopt and scale up more responsible land management practices.

It is clear that the next few decades will be the most critical in shaping and implementing a transformative global land agenda. In much of the developing world, achieving more secure rights in terms of tenure, gender equity, and social justice, will be an essential step to improving the long-term stewardship of land resources. Ultimately, how can we ignore the moral and ethical obligation to safeguard and preserve the land for future generations while simultaneously working to alleviate poverty?

Movement towards ensuring land and food security for the future requires a multi-pronged approach that maximizes the benefits while minimizing adverse impacts particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society. These include technical interventions and community-centred processes to both restore land and to prevent its further decline. At the same time, combating land degradation requires a focus on social justice and rights based approach to alleviate poverty and enhance resilient livelihoods. The following aspects are particularly crucial.

- Land tenure and resource rights allow smallholders to plan for the future and pass down their hard-won livelihoods to the next generation. Overall, in Africa, only about 10 per cent of rural land is registered, leaving 90 per cent vulnerable while India has the largest population of landless people on the planet. Without secure access to land resources the uptake of SLM practices and restoration will not accelerate as fast or spread as widely as we need.
- At the same time, gender inequality – whether in terms of land tenure, access to credit and technology, legal rights or inheritance – discourages the participation of women in land management activities. Closing the gender gap in the use of inputs and technologies could increase yields for women farmers by 20 to 30 per cent and raise total agricultural output in developing countries by up to 4 per cent.
- The stewards of the land need to be compensated for safeguarding the good functioning of the land. Collective food security and economic growth depends on this natural capital. Incentives, in the form of payments for services, insurance schemes or the creation of stronger value chains would help shift the market towards more sustainable production and delivery of a full suite of ecosystem services.
- Land use planning is about doing the right thing in the right place at the right scale and in a way that preserves the diverse functions of land. This requires long-term thinking and planning for the future – it means cooperation and working together to optimize mutual outcomes. It is the collective responsibility of consumers, producers and everyone in between. Governments at all scales have a role

to play.

HIGH LEVEL DIALOGUE

Recognising the need for better coordination and integration, this session will address 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. This session will feature a moderated interactive dialogue with executive leaders from the government, policy think tanks, UN agencies and other multilateral and development organizations. It will showcase issues, such as gender, tenure, sustainable land use, migration, and security as well as institutional and multi-sector collaboration, which are critical to improving the long-term health and productivity of our land resources. This session will look at potential governance and policy reforms that can help to redirect efforts and leverage existing commitments to sustainably manage our landscapes.