



The New Delhi Declaration: Investing in Land and Unlocking Opportunities

Press Release

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.

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