



Communiqué

High-Level Luncheon on Land and Climate

On the margins of the UNCCD Fourteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP14)

9 September 2019

1. On the road to the Climate Action Summit, the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, Her Excellency Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, and the Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of India and President of COP14, His Excellency Mr. Prakash Javedkar, hosted a high-level luncheon on land and climate, on the margins of the UNCCD Fourteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP14). The event was co-facilitated by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
2. During the meeting, participants underscored that land resources are the basis for human health, livelihoods, food security, and for our economic, cultural and spiritual well-being. **Some 25 per cent of the world's land is degraded** (IPCC, 2019), affecting the lives of 3.2 billion people, particularly smallholder farmers, those in rural communities and the world's poorest populations (IPBES, 2018). Women in particular are on the daily frontline struggle to salvage the large area of agricultural land already affected by land degradation. And the stewardship of indigenous peoples is essential to safeguard the world's remaining biodiversity. All vulnerable groups who depend on sustainable land management and who can contribute to land restoration need our support.
3. Participants welcomed the **IPCC's special report on Climate Change and Land** constitutes the first comprehensive study of the entire land-climate system. As such, it is a fundamental contribution to global negotiations on climate change, biodiversity and sustainable land management, and calls for synergies between the Rio Conventions. The report provides a sound basis for **ambitious actions contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation as well as to combat land degradation and enhance food security**.
4. Participants stressed that restoring degraded lands and achieving **land degradation neutrality** (SDG 15.3) provide an integrated solution to increase ecosystems and populations resilience as well as to enhance the capacity of our land for carbon sequestration. Land use must therefore be an integral part of the climate solution, rather than a cause of GHG emissions. This will strengthen biodiversity conservation, increase livelihoods and human security. It will also curb emissions from degrading lands and help close **the projected emissions gap between Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the Paris Agreement objectives**. Most importantly, land degradation

neutrality will improve the living conditions of affected populations and the health and productivity of their ecosystems.

5. Participants agreed that land restoration will deliver **co-benefits to many Sustainable Development Goals** (UNEP International Resources Panel, 2019). The three Rio Conventions can actively work together to support restoration activities as an important contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
6. Participants agreed that the critical role of land restoration for climate mitigation and adaptation must be visible. The Climate Action Summit will send a strong political signal for **more public funding and private investments** to enable land restoration for impact at the scale needed, through gender-responsive, transformative projects and programmes that seek to generate and sustain fundamental and sustainable positive change. **Every 1 USD invested in land restoration is expected to generate up to 10 USD in returns for society** through more efficient agricultural practices, integrated water management, and vital ecosystem functions (GPFRLR, 2018).
7. Participants indicated that time had come to turn the vicious circle between land and climate into a virtuous one by reinforcing the positive elements of the relationship, helping to manage emissions on the one hand and adapting to climate impacts on the other. Participants therefore called for more concerted policy action, more investments, and more capacity to scale up land restoration to achieve land degradation neutrality. **They expect the Nature Based Coalition led by New Zealand and China to propose concrete and ambitious actions at the Summit.**
8. Meeting participants support the global effort to achieve land degradation neutrality through ambitious initiatives such as the **Bonn Challenge** target of having at least 350 million hectares of degraded land under active restoration by 2030 and the **Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative**.
9. Participants also welcomed the **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030** (UN General Assembly resolution 73/284) as a unique opportunity to galvanize political will, increased investments, and action on the ground for land restoration at massive scale across the world. Participants called for the UN Climate Action Summit to be the starting point for the establishment of a coalition of countries, to accelerate massive scaling up of land restoration activities worldwide, and to act as the building block of the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030). A coalition of active countries could federate and accelerate the achievement of existing ecosystem restoration goals of all into the UN Decade – a decade of action and impact on the ground for the planet, for the people and for prosperity.

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The event on the margins of UNCCD COP 14 was attended by high level delegates from Austria, Burkina Faso, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Fiji, France, Finland, Germany, Haiti, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Republic of Korea, Peru, Senegal, South Africa, Tajikistan, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Arab Emirates, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and African Union, European Union, CBD, FAO, GCF, GEF, IPBES, IPCC, UNDP, UNEP, UNFCCC, and World Bank.