



Highlights of the Rio Conventions Pavilion UNCCD COP 14



10 September 2019

DAY OF ACTION FOR LAND

Highlight 1: GEF/WRI/Global Commission on Adaptation: Launch of Follow the Sun report

The Global Commission on Adaptation launched its report during the UNCCD COP14 in New Delhi, India. The purpose of the event was to share the key findings from the report, raise awareness about climate adaptation and build on the momentum of UNCCD COP14 to amplify targeted messages. The launch event in New Delhi coincided with a series of global events, media outreach, and a social media campaign to build awareness of the urgency for climate adaptation.

The welcome address of the session was delivered by OP Agarwal, CEO World Resources Institute, India.

Naoko Ishii, CEO and Chairperson, GEF: "There is a close relation between land degradation and climate



change, and a need to address them simultaneously for better action. The key message of the *Follow the Sun* report is the huge challenge for us that is the large amount of uncertainty surrounding the issue of climate change. We must take action now or it will be too late. We need to include communities that are affected by land for better decisions."



Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD: "The combination of climate change, drought, land degradation and other factors are important issues for us to tackle. By 2050, we will need 50% more crops to feed the population. Land restoration is the cheapest solution and one of the best solutions right now. It will also improve economy, facilitate job creation and bring in other benefits as well.

Three billion people are affected by drought, desertification and climate change and one million plant and animal species are affected because their habitat is disturbed. Mr. Thiaw further addressed how climate change, land degradation and desertification largely impacts communities and economy.



Anand Patwardhan, Research Director of Global Commission on Adaptation: “There are 34 global



commissionaires in the world right now to combat the problem of land degradation, including Bill Gates.”

Mr. Patwardhan referred to the *Synthesis report* and called for leadership on climate resilience wherein 20 countries supporting the GCA.

The detailed report on land degradation mentions three phases:

- 1) Making the case
- 2) Showing a better way
- 3) Call for action

The fingerprints of climate change can be seen in the world such as raising temperatures, changing rainfalls, raising oceans, extreme costs to people

and effects on economy. However, if we adapt to climate change, then there is a great potential for many benefits. The total financial benefits can reach up to 7.1 trillion US dollars. Mr. Patwardhan added that when we take action now, we are avoiding future losses, thereby ensuring significant economic benefits, and last but not the least, social and environmental benefits. We need a more integrated response for achieving this, including the people impacted by such actions.



Sheela Patel, Founder Director, Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centre (SPARC): Catalysts and Connections to locally led action: “ We need to link the challenge of

climate change to cities, towns, with a special attention to the poor and the vulnerable. Efforts should be made to bring national and transnational communities together. According to Ms. Patel, we need to establish a new way to make decision by considering new data. The range of elements that need to come together is huge and we must consider every option to lead to better decisions.

Women living in poverty have a huge burden since they invest more on their families. New way of deciding how to make choices using new knowledge and new technology should be adopted. 30%-40% of houses that are built are destroyed every year because they are built illegally. Therefore, there is a need to involve networks of local people, living in urban and rural areas, to the center of planning.



Inger Anderson, Executive Director, UNEP, about the connections between land degradation and UNEP: "Everyone knows that there is an urgent need to decarbonize now. When we are under high pressure, we adapt naturally to find safety on this planet. Firstly, we need to understand the problem and then we need to take action together, which is nature-based and also economically feasible. No one is safe from climate change; our wealth may help us in short term but not in long term. While the Earth provides us what we need, we are attacking it. This leads to numerous consequences due to our actions. Early warning systems and investing in nature-based solutions should be considered seriously.. Then, nature will intensify its positive impact on us.



Lord Nichols Stern, Chair, Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment: India is enormously vulnerable to climate change as it is going to be the most populated country in the world by 2030. We need to recognize climate change and we need to adapt. There are many benefits of adapting like economic benefits, environmental, to name only those few. We need to think forests and other natural commodities as natural capital and infrastructures and then take necessary action to preserve them. We need to integrate adaptation, mitigation and development for better solutions. Restoring degraded land is essential, because it is affecting the world in a negative way.

Investment in nature-based solutions is becoming the need of the hour to reduce loss of production, fertility and increase value of the environment. Mitigation, adaptation and development must come together to create resilience. We must emphasize and build the coalition of the three to a maximum level. Also, we must focus more on investment in local infrastructure to emphasize development.

(The audience responded with information about the good effects of growing more mangroves in India. It is one of the key reasons to prevent the tsunami from creating havoc on mainland.)

Highlight 2: Désertif'Action 2019

A session moderated by **Patrice Burger, President of the Centre d'Actions et de Réalisations Internationales (CARI - France)** and **Omer Ouedraogo, Project Officer of the Permanent Secretariat of NGOs (SPONG - Burkina Faso)**, presented the recommendations of civil society, formulated during the Désertif'actions 2019 Summit (D'a19), organized last June in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, by CARI, SPONG and the UNCCD.



After the screening of images from D'a19, **the Minister of the Environment, Green Economy and Climate Change of Burkina Faso, Nestor Bationo Bassiere**, expressed his conviction of the essential contribution of civil society on environmental issues, in particular, on the fight against desertification. He recalled President Thomas Sankara's commitment more than 30 years ago to make the country self-sufficient through agro-ecology. This vision is still valid today, and there is an urgent need to implement it in the Sahel, as recalled by the actors gathered at D'a19. Finally, the Minister Bassiere, on behalf of the Government of Burkina Faso, reaffirmed his support for the civil society declaration, "We are the land that defends itself against desertification!", resulting from the work of D'a19, and requested its annexation to the official documents of COP 14.

The French Inter-Ministerial Ambassador for the Environment, Yann Werlhing, underlined France's support for civil society actions to prepare the COPs and provide insights about the Rio Conventions. He supported the organization of Désertif'actions and said he would continue to do so. Finally, Ambassador Werlhing sent a message to support the deployment of agro-ecology. He recalled France's commitment on the issue through the Green Initiative for the Sahel. He also recalled that France invites other countries and actors to join this initiative.

The session then shared the recommendations made at the Désertif'actions 2019 Summit, which were brought forward by CSOs throughout the COP.

Jijia Luo, from **China Green Foundation and representative for the Asia region on the UNCCD CSO panel**, opened the presentation by sharing her impressions of the Désertif'actions Summit in which she participated. Reflecting her experience in China, where there is a large number of civil society organizations, she commented that consultation is not organized to such an extent. She will draw on her experience in Désertif'actions to improve civil society dialogue in China.

Nabil Ben Khatra, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), first stressed his pride for the African continent and Burkina Faso in particular, for having hosted such an important Summit. During D'a19, the OSS organized thematic exchanges on the issue of multi-uses of water. Water is a precious resource used for a variety of activities. The pressure on this resource is increasing due to the growing need of the various sectors, and is exacerbated by climate change. Today, planning for the sustainable use and management of water resources, particularly in the Sahara and Sahel, remains difficult due to a lack of reliable data on the availability of the resource. This future management will also have to take into account traditional knowledge and practices of water use.

The participants in Désertif'actions recommended, in particular, to:

- Identify data for practical use and then put in place tools to collect and disseminate information about water in accessible formats. It is also necessary to strengthen or set up mechanisms for the exchange of information between the different actors involved in the production and use of data.
- Strengthen the capacities of local actors, including local authorities and management associations, to play a real project management role.
- Establish synergies between water sector actors, from the local to the national and international levels, to ensure scale-up of good soil and water conservation practices.

Finally, civil society called on States to implement the Paris Agreement on harmonization and coordination of projects and programs implemented regarding water.



The Great Green Wall in the Sahara and Sahel Initiative was also at the heart of the Désertif'actions 2019 discussions. Civil society has recognized for several years the relevance of this framework to address the multiple environmental and development challenges, and as a unifying framework for the implementation of the three Rio Conventions. However, civil society believes that more efforts must be made to operationalize this Initiative while making it more visible. The success of the Great Green Wall will rely on an increased collaboration with civil society.

Elvis Tangem, the GGW Initiative coordinator of African Union, presented the approaches formulated during Désertif'actions to improve the deployment of the Great Green Wall. In order for civil society organizations to better register and enhance their interventions as a contribution to the objectives of the Initiative, it is necessary to:

- Define and popularize a simple framework, reflecting the Great Green Wall strategy and integrating different criteria (support to grassroots organizations, reduction of rural exodus, improvement of local governance over natural resources, creation of green income and jobs, etc.)
- Improve communication between civil society and the Great Green Wall, using tools and methods, as well as organised civil society networks. The compilation and online publication, via a single interface, of all strategic and technical documentation related to the Great Green Wall is a prerequisite.
- To capitalize on the actions of CSOs, States and other actors contributing to the Initiative, online databases, combined with geographic information systems, are tools to be replicated within countries and at the regional level.

IUCN has joined forces with the organization of Désertif'actions 2019 to raise awareness of the importance of pastoralism. This type of livestock farming relies on the mobility of herds to use scarce water and grazing resources scattered over large areas. Emblematic of drylands, it contributes to economic and social development, as well as to the food security of populations. When properly managed, herd mobility in drylands helps to preserve biodiversity, ecosystems and carbon storage in the soil. **Bora Masumbuko of IUCN** reported on the need to take into account rangelands in combating desertification, and in achieving the LDN. To meet the challenge of sustainable pastoralism, it is imperative to renew a regional and global dialogue on the value of rangelands, for the definition of restoration investments and structuring projects by mobilizing:

- Decision-makers who need to make a strong commitment between countries and pay greater attention to resource governance and pastoralists' rights
- Scientists through the regular production of data on the health status of the rangelands, the validation of good practices and capacity building
- The private and public sectors with increased mobilization of funding for rangelands restoration.

Finally, pastoralists should not be considered as actors who degrade the land but as allies. Their knowledge of vast territories and their expertise in meteorology or botany, are real assets.

Although not the subject of a thematic workshop, agro-ecology was also at the heart of the discussions during the three days of D'a19. It is mentioned in the latest reports of the IPCC and HLPE as the way to address land, climate and biodiversity issues, while continuing to ensure food security for the world's population. **Sylvain Berton, from Agrisud association**, intervened to shed light on the levers to be used to improve the deployment of agro-ecology. At the COP14, much was heard about reforestation as a means of combating desertification, but it is necessary to consider the advantages of trees growing within family farms (fruit tree plantations, reconstitution of groves around cultivated fields) combined with agro-ecological practices that allow water conservation and soil fertility.

It is important that CSOs be able to capitalize and share their knowledge, Agrisud regularly publishes guides on good agro-ecological practices or on family farm management advice.

The scaling up of these techniques also raises the question of scale. For Agrisud, the scale of the territories is fundamental. To this end, multi-stakeholder consultation frameworks must be set up and supported, bringing together: family farmers, professional agricultural organisations, private sector actors (upstream/downstream of production), local elected officials and decentralised technical services, national and international research organisations and CSOs.

For these processes and consultation frameworks, it must always be kept in mind that the project owners at the local level are the local authorities, and that they are responsible to the populations for the planning and management of sustainable agricultural development in each territory.

One of the results from the work of Désertif'actions 2019 is the necessity for multi-stakeholder consultation. This concerted effort must be able to go beyond the sectorization of too many public policies and development interventions, while we can no longer ignore the interconnection of issues on land, water, biodiversity, climate... D'a19 was a privileged moment to bring together a diversified civil society, but also including scientists, institutions, communities, etc. As Mr. Ouedraogo put it, "this collective work is born first of the willingness of individuals to open up dialogue; at the level of civil society, we are winning the battle."

The Désertif'actions 2019 Summit produced a declaration "We are the land that defends itself against desertification". This was mentioned in several interventions by Parties and also in official civil society statements at the opening of the COP and in the COW meeting on 12 September 2019.

Find D'a19's statement online: <https://desertif-actions.org/>



Highlight 3: 2019 Land for Life Award winners' presentation

The session “Decades of impact” was moderated by Caroline Galipeau, coordinator of the Land for Life Programme. Ms. Galipeau reminded that the Land for Life Programme was launched at COP 10 in the Republic of Korea, as part of Changwon Initiative. Through awareness raising and knowledge support, it aims to demonstrate that Land Degradation Neutrality is compelling and achievable. Every two years, the programme offers the Land for Life Award, recognizing outstanding projects and individuals dedicated to land restoration and contributing to build a fair and sustainable future for all.

Since UNCCD is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, the 2019 Awards were attributed under the theme “Decades of Impact”. The winners have made outstanding contributions to Sustainable Land Management (SLM) for 25 years or longer. The Award ceremony was held during the Kubuqi International Desertification Forum, in Inner Mongolia, China, on 27 July.



Mr. Betru Nedessa Beyene (National Coordinator, MERET Project of Ministry of Agriculture, Ethiopia)

Ethiopia is large country and degradation is one of the major factors undermining productivity and food security causing vulnerability. The Ethiopian government launched a massive Land Restoration program in the 1970s to tackle this issue. The project is based on innovative approaches and partnerships. Accordingly, various Water Harvesting (WH) and Soil and Water Conservation (SWC) structure such as

Contour Trenches, micro basins, and ponds have been implemented in the past decades. Through the MERET project, many degraded lands which were barren, devoid of any vegetation, rocky and gullied lands were converted in to productive lands and green environment. Degraded farmlands became very productive in Amhara region, South Wollo and Sahara region. The massive LRI, particularly the WH and

SWC, restored hydrological balance, increased ground and surface water yields and availed access to water for domestic use. As a result, over 2.5 million hectares of degraded lands were rehabilitated and became productive lands. The impact study by the consulting firm TANGO in 2012 confirmed that 66% of MERET beneficiary farmers successfully escaped poverty thanks to the project.



Mr. Mathieu Ouédraogo (Founder and President of Réseau MARP, Burkina Faso)

The Agroforestry Project (PAF) was established in 1978 in Yatagna. The PAF has carried out action research with farmers on the different management techniques in their own fields. They tested different techniques: the contour stone bunds and the zaï planting. The North was strongly affected and degraded, leading many people to leave, reaching southern and western regions, where they could

find food. Water and Soil Conservation became an integral component in all rural development projects (Project GTZ/PATECORE and Project FIDA-CES/AGF) and still is today.

Land for Life... Years later

Former Land for Life winners were invited to take part to a discussion about the impact of the recognition on their respective projects, the progress of their actions and their aims for the next decade.



Dr. Marcella D Souza- Director of the WOTR Centre for Resilience Studies (W-CReS) and former Executive Director of Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR) – 2017 winner: Now is the time for thinking land degradation as well as water availability at the same time. Indeed, land degradation is not the only concern, water availability is also a major issue. We need to use water in a way that we also

spare water for nature. We need to look at the people and their needs, as well as considering the land as a whole to address the problem. We must look at the local agrobiodiversity and consult local communities for better policy making and to build better infrastructures. The agriculture production system which helps in soil fertility management should also be taken into account. Applied research is required and we have to learn from each other as we cannot do it alone. It means that governments, industrialists and communities should collaborate.

Regarding her views on the economics of land degradation, biodiversity, SLM and water management, she said that there is a need to look for a holistic approach and ways to enhance the knowledge of skills, methodology and applied skills. She further added that it is not the work of a single sector. It requires both the contribution of the public and private sector for its success.

Mr. Awadalla Hamid Mohamed Osman (Environmental Conservation Manager and Deputy Area Coordinator, Practical Action Sudan) – 2017 winner: We need to provide LPG to rural communities, to prevent cutting trees for sole cooking purposes. We need a bottom up approach so that we can work with most of the communities. And it also aims to combat land degradation, develop rainwater harvesting and overcome desertification by using different techniques.

On Practical Action Sudan, Mr. Hamid, explained that the organization was strengthened with the help of the communities from the very beginning. It has now reached the remote areas and monitoring and survey activities have been implemented. Practical Action Sudan grows bigger and stronger.

Jagdeesh Rao (Executive Director, Foundation for Ecological Security) – 2013 winner: Village people are not provided any alternative to cope with floods or other natural threats destroying their homes and challenging their livelihood. It is time, more than ever, to act on a large scale. Whatever has been done until now should be scaled up. We need to discuss and implement a new policy, focusing on the importance of sustainable management. Thus, there should be a recognition for the villages and their technologies, and help provided to introduce a new and better ways to transform the degraded environment with various techniques.

SPECIAL EVENT: High Profile Presentation on The Wadi EL-Ku Catchment Management Project: Phase-2 by Practical Action Sudan



Muna Eltahir, Country Director

Ms. Eltahir invited the audience to watch the presentation video titled 'Ingenuity can beat poverty'. She introduced the session and invited the speakers to present an overview of The Wadi EL-Ku Report.

Siham Osman, Agriculture and DRR Programme Manager

Sudan is the 3rd largest country in Africa, with an estimated population of 40 million. The people are generally sedentary farmer pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and urbanites. The complex problems faced in Sudan are climate change impacts, poverty and land tenure conflicts. Around 46% of Sudan is in poverty due to inefficient development plans and strategies, reducing public expenditure on public services. The erosion of land and natural resources as a result of climate change also accounted for the poverty in Sudan. The main reasons for degradation of natural resources are scarcity of resources due to climate impacts, internally displaced population which increased the demand on land and water, periodic drought and cultural resource-based conflict. The increased in the demand on land and water has decreased the fertility of land and hence the livelihood of people is weakened and threatened.

Awadallah Hamid, Environmental Conservation Manager & Deputy Area Coordinator

Wadi El-Ku is the most important watercourse in North Darfur, with a catchment area of about 25,000 km sq. Innovative ideas have been implemented such as NRM (Natural Resources Management) and DAMs construction which are the sources of irrigation. The food production is transformed by adopting FFS (Farmer Field Schools) which disseminate to share knowledge to the communities and increase crops diversification.

The land is limited, and population is increasing, so the land is under pressure and it also affects the climate at a large extent. So, the climate change adaptation has also been taken up. Desertification impact is fought by implementing community forests. So far, 25 community forests have been implemented thanks to the involvement and dedication of women. Another way is to provide alternatives like providing access to LPG through micro-finance credit system to improve the cooking stoves.

Highlight 4: UNCCD-ILO Cocktail

The opening remark preceding the UNCCD-ILO Cocktail was delivered by Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary of UNCCD. Mr. Thiaw summarized the day's session and reasserted that Land Restoration is the best option right now to combat Land Degradation and achieve climate change resilience.



Michelle Leighton, ILO Chief of Labour Migration Branch: One of the key challenges facing the world right now are drought, land degradation, climate change and desertification. These are drivers for inequality, not only within a country but also between countries. We need to work diligently to combat social injustice and related issues. It is time to join forces for joint economic growth.

Nesto Batio Bassiere, Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Green Economy also took part to the event.

Patricia Appiagyei, Deputy Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ghana : The livelihoods of a large majority of the population, especially the rural population of Ghana, are tied to the land through agriculture, forestry and fishing.

The Government of Ghana (GoG) therefore considers land degradation as a developmental issue that requires a decisive action and a resolute political will. Understanding the problem is the first step, however taking steps towards actual implementation always outweighs oration. This is what our President is trying to do with the forward-looking campaign “Planting for food and jobs”. It is a clarion call on every single Ghanaian to take farming as a full-time or part-time activity. It is also an avenue to modernize agriculture and make it a source of employment for the teeming youths.

To promote the creation of jobs, the Government of Ghana is also participating in the Sustainability, Stability and Security (3S) Initiative. The implementation of the 3S Initiative will also help to address issues such as food security, income equality, migration, poverty and resource availability.

At just 3.7 percent, the average annual pace of employment growth is inadequate for the creation of sufficient job opportunities, especially for the youth forming about 57% of the population. As a country, we strive for economic growth, but understand that growth can be jobless, therefore a sustainable development framework for employment must include a job creation strategy. In this spirit, we have developed Ghana’s National Employment Plan (NEP) with the aim to adopt an inter-sectoral approach towards achieving full, decent, productive and freely chosen employment for all Ghanaians who are able and willing to work in order to improve living conditions and promote equity, security, and dignity.

The National Employment Plan focuses on promoting entrepreneurial development, private sector competitiveness, developing linkages between agriculture and other economic sectors, research and

innovation, vocational and technical skills development, productivity improvements, and harnessing opportunities in labour migration. The Plan has a component on the promotion of green jobs.

Ghana is already implementing land restoration programmes that are geared towards lowering deforestation, supporting adoption of clean cooking, and pursuing low carbon electricity supply, but we need extra efforts to link these activities to the job creation.

Investing in these actions have direct development benefits including creation of green jobs, as well as strong climate and land restoration goals.

Appiagyei is convinced that if work continues with partners like UNCCD and ILO, actions can be pursued that will provide green and decent jobs to current and future generations

The government of Ghana resolves to support the 3S Initiative to address the problem of instability related to land degradation, migration towards achieving a better world for our people.

Mohamed Doubi Kadmiri, Diplomatic Advisor of the Head of Government of Morocco also took part in the event.