

Highlights Report
Synergies Day
13 September 2017
Ordos, China

‘Synergies Day’ at the Rio Conventions Pavilion was opened by Ms. Lulu Zhang from United Nations University’s Institute for Integrated Management of Material Fluxes and Resources (UNU-FLORES). Mr. Luca Montanarella, Scientific Action Leader from the Joint Research Center Institute for Environment and Sustainability European Commission, who moderated the event, highlighted the history of very successful cooperation between the European Union and China.

Next on the podium was Ms. Shuirong Wu from the Institute of Forestry Policy and Information of the Chinese Academy of Forestry. She presented China’s afforestation program, focusing on the relevant policies, their impacts and implications, saying that the major driving forces behind afforestation efforts are public direct investment, land tenure reform, private investment, technology development as well international and domestic trade. Ms. Wu emphasized that since 2005, more efforts have been directed towards forest quality improvement rather than area expansion. She said that the focus of the forestry program is to rehabilitate and protect forest ecosystems, combat desertification as well as protect and restore wetlands. Ms. Wu went on to say that the average cost of planting trees on one hectare of land is USD1 000, and stressed that forest development should concentrate more on balancing carbon sequestration, improved water conservation and soil protection.

Mr. Kai Schwarzel of UNU-FLORES discussed soil and land use management, as well as using multifunctional forests to ensure cross-sectoral benefits. He pointed out that forestation project sites should strive for balance between water and soil conservation. Mr. Schwarzel concluded that forest transformation is a way to enable multi-functionality. He said that cross-sectoral benefits can be achieved by establishing measures that minimize water consumption by vegetation, enhance infiltration and deep percolation, mitigate soil erosion and produce additional rural income.

Ms. Lang Li from the Food and Agriculture Organizations of the United Nations (FAO) followed, saying that FAO’s strategic objectives include contributing to the eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. She has also outlined the priority areas of the programme in China, which include fostering sustainable and climate resilient agriculture development, reducing rural poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition and promoting single approach to sustainable agriculture trade along with brokering regional and international agricultural cooperation. She pointed out that in 2002, FAO initiated the project of globally important agricultural heritage systems (GIAHS), which is distinct from, and more complex than conventional heritage sites or protected areas and landscapes. Since the inception of the GIAHS Partnership Initiative, there have been 38 systems in 17 countries designated as

GIAHS sites. Other presenters further discussed methods of reversing land degradation in drylands using China's Afforestation Programme as an example.



Mr. Luca Montanarella from the European Commission moderated the UNU-FLORES session launching the book *Multifunctional Land-use systems for managing the Nexus of Environmental resources*

After the UNU-FLORES early morning session, the organization held a reception to launch the book *Multifunctional Land-use systems for managing the Nexus of Environmental resources*. Several contributors spoke about their work on the book and answered questions from the audience. The book was well received and all the copies disappeared within minutes.

After the UNU-FLORES book launch, Ms. Magada Lovei, Practice Manager at the World Bank, opened the session on fighting land degradation in the drylands at the landscape level. She spoke about the field trip to Kubuqi desert, organized by the Chinese government for the COP13 participants, saying that the achievements of the land rehabilitation programme in Inner Mongolia are truly amazing. She also introduced the book *The African Experience Assessment of the Effects of Climate Change on Land Use and Land Cover Using Remote Sensing: A Case Study from Kenya*. The book presents success stories of building ecosystem resilience to land degradation, creating new sources of livelihood and fostering stability. The

session confirmed that land-based transformative projects need to be coordinated and expanded on the landscape scale, involving all stakeholders, engaging the private sector, scaling up financing, and promoting capacity building and knowledge exchange.



Ms. Magada Lovei, Practice Manager at the World Bank, opened the session on fighting land degradation in the drylands at the landscape level

The following panel discussion stressed the need for large-scale, integrated action that can bring impactful results while drawing on past experiences to identify key ingredients for success. The panelists identified opportunities and requirements for transformative change and highlighted the role of the World Bank Group and its partners in supporting countries' drive toward large-scale, transformative actions in landscape restoration. Mr. Mark Schauer from Die Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) began the panel discussion, saying that globally, USD160 per person per year are lost due to land degradation. He has also mentioned that recent GIZ reports on Africa and Asia provide useful information on combating land degradation.

Ms. Lovei described multiple land restoration measures implemented by Ghana. Mr. Fredua Agyeman, Representative of Ghana and Director of Environment at the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), said that since 2009, his country

has implemented a national blueprint for fighting land degradation, which has been very effective and now covers most districts in the country. Mr. Zheng Xinning from China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region presented desertification control program in the province. He said that Ningxia is one of the most affected areas in China, and in 2013, the World Bank together with the Chinese governments has provided substantial financial support for a anti-desertification project in the province. The funds were allocated for the development of new techniques and methods for land restoration, which has involved active participation of local herdsmen and farmers.



Panel organized by the World Bank prepares to discuss fighting land degradation at the landscape level in the drylands

Ms. Maria Angelica Fernandez Garcia from the Columbia Ministry of Environment described the effects of land degradation in Columbia and explained that in her country, shared interest and benefits between public and private sectors have lead to successful cooperation on afforestation projects. Mr. Gustavo Fonseca, Global Environment Facility (GEF) Programme Director presented his experiences in project management and outlined the lessons learned as the basis for future initiatives.

Mr. Bernard Crabbé, Team Leader of Environment and Mainstreaming of the European Union, talked about connection between migration and land management. He explained

that the European Union has developed a significant portfolio of land degradation initiatives with the focus on strengthening land governance. The European Union invested eight million euros to help six different partners to achieve sustainable agriculture and food security, and is also using its investments and funds to help countries avoid forced migration. Mr. Crabbé stressed that the modern resource-intensive agriculture is the main driver of land degradation.

Mr. Eduardo Mansur from FAO presented three FAO main goals: eradicating hunger, poverty and the management of rural resources. The organization has launched 36 projects in 26 countries and found that local involvement is key to success. Mr. Mansur focused on the example of China's Kubuqi desert in Inner Mongolia, saying that local leadership and innovation are at the center of this major project and that a bottom-up approach is crucial to scaling up land restoration efforts. Ms. Magda Lovei added that without the involvement of the private sector, the government would not be able to implement this initiative. Matthew Reddy, Director of Forest Solutions and Climate Smart Agriculture and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development presented the experience of Australia, where the corporate sector has recognized the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Paris Agreement as a call to action and an opportunity to work with the government to improve the situation. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Drylands Ambassador Mr. Dennis Garrity discussed the afforestation initiatives in Africa, the need to bring them to scale through institutional involvement and gave an update on the Great Green Wall project before concluding the session.

Directly thereafter, the UNCCD Global Mechanism organized a session on land-based transformative projects that focus on delivering land, climate and biodiversity benefits at scale. The session was co-hosted by the representatives of the three Rio Conventions: Ms. Catalina Santamaria of the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), Mr. Claudio Forner of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Mr. Markus Repnik of UNCCD.

The UNCCD Executive Secretary Ms. Monique Barbut opened the session saying that need to land degradation programs must be transformed into specific initiatives targeted at people who live in poverty. She went on to say that land degradation neutrality (LDN) is an integrator of other SDGs and stressed that it is important to find high-return projects that create jobs and allow ecosystems to adapt. Once the projects that fit this criteria are identified, it is essential to pool resources from both the public and private sectors to finance measures that relieve the problem of desertification. Ms. Barbut emphasized the

utmost importance of implementing initiatives that can fully utilize policy-making and financing synergies between LDN actors.



The UNCCD Executive Secretary Ms. Monique Barbut opened the session organized by the UNCCD Global Mechanism

Following Ms. Barbut's speech, a panel moderated by Ms. Santamaria of the CBD discussed innovative land-based transformative projects. The presenters highlighted the transformative aspects of the projects in their countries, their contribution to LDN, and the benefits they provide for climate adaptation and biodiversity. The LDN Fund Project in Peru was presented by Mr. Etienne Desmarais, CEO of EcoTierra. Ms. Karma Dorji from Ministry of Agriculture and Forests in Bhutan and UNCCD National Focal Point for the country summarized the GEF-Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) project in Bhutan. She said that the objective of the project is to operationalize an integrated landscape approach through strengthening biological corridors, sustainable forests and agricultural systems, and build climate resilience of community livelihoods. A GEF/FAO project in Turkey was presented by Mustafa Abdullah from the Ministry of Forestry and Water, who thanked the GEF for donating three million dollars to the project.

The following panel facilitated by Mr. Claudio Forner of the UNFCCC discussed funding sources for land-based projects. Panelists included Ms. Chizuru Aoki from the GEF, Ms. Solange Yayi Allechi from Banque Ouest Africaine de Développement (BOAD), Mr. Gautier Queru from the LDN Fund, and Ms. Magda Lovei from the World Bank. Each panelist provided a short statement on the contribution of their organization to transformative projects and synergies between the Rio Conventions. The session highlighted the challenges in sourcing and developing transformative projects. During the panel discussion, Mr. Forner said that he was very impressed with the launch of the LDN Fund, while Ms. Aoki said that it takes courage to implement ambitious pilot projects necessary to enable transformation. Ms. Solange Yayi Allechi stated that the main challenge her organization faces in developing effective initiatives that help combat climate change is the lack of project ownership among local populations. She said that BOAD focuses on the capacity building of women and local people and is looking forward to cooperation with the Rio Conventions in this area.



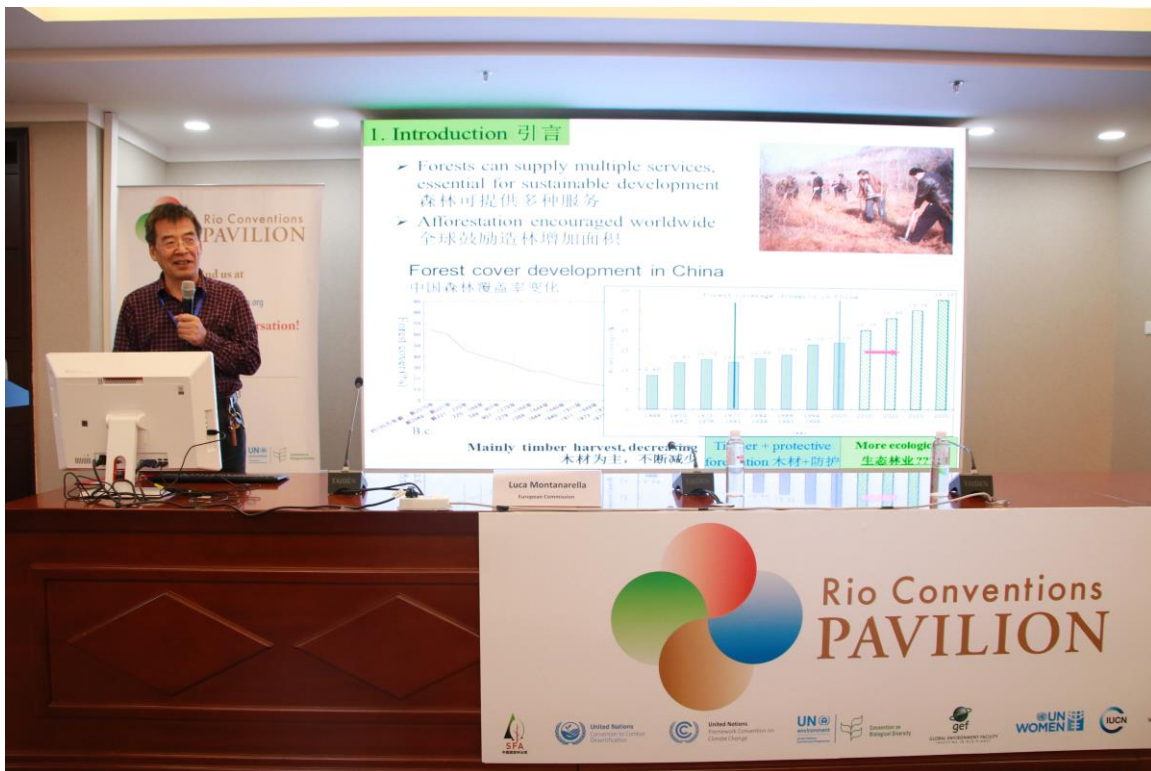
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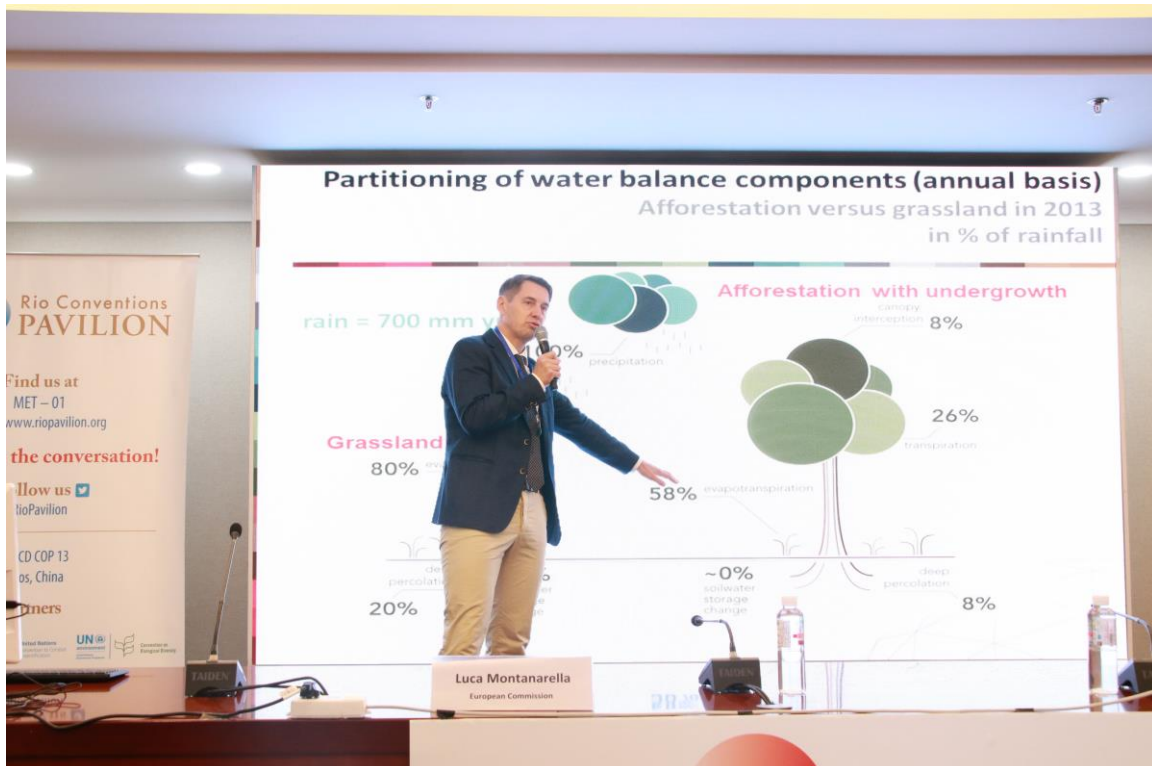
In conclusion, Mr. Markus Replik of the UNCCD moderated a question and answer discussion centered on the importance of land-based transformative projects that fulfill Rio conventions objectives. He outlined existing funding mechanisms available for land, climate and biodiversity initiatives, as well as the challenges and missing pieces in the project implementation and mobilization of funds. Ms. Magda Lovei of the World Bank said that her organization promotes international development by providing interest credits to support low-income countries and highlighted resources available for land management programs. Mr. Replik emphasized that land is all about food, about ecosystems, about environment and local residents, while Ms. Santamaria of the CBD stressed the importance of bringing all affected stake stakeholders to the table.

On the evening of Synergies Day, a film called *Planet Sands* took Rio Pavilion participants on a spectacular voyage of discovery through the deserts in the world. The film was co-produced by Mona Lisa Production, ARTE France and Heilongjian. *Planet Sands* creates awareness of the alarming desertification spread around the world. The film took viewers to some of the most inhospitable but fascinating areas: drylands. The efforts of researchers, scientists and nature enthusiasts working together to combat desertification were presented in five episodes: *Sahara, Reconquering Lost Lands; Atacama, The Quest for Water; Aralkum, The World's Youngest Desert; Australia, The Desert Continent; and China, At War Against Deserts.*

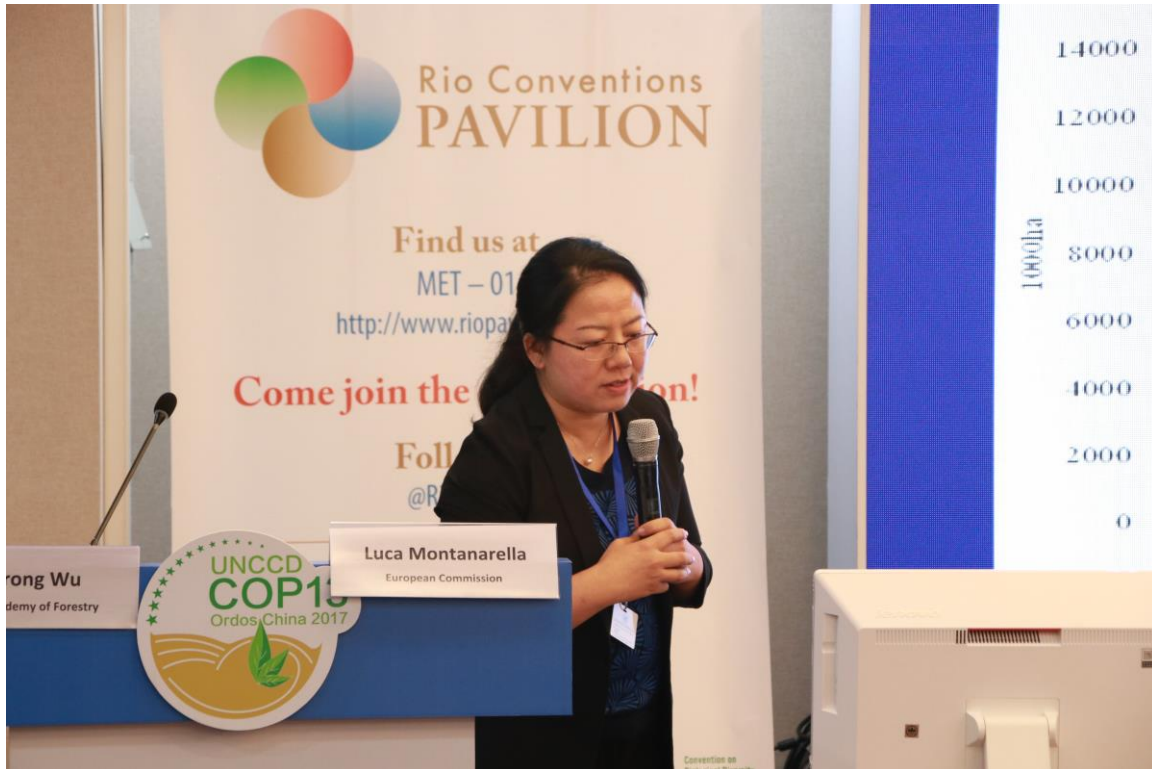
Pictures from Synergies Day













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