

Highlights Report
IUCN Landscape Restoration Day
14 September 2017
Ordos, China

Mr. Jonathan Davies of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) opened ‘Landscape Restoration Day’ at the Rio Conventions Pavilion. Organized by IUCN, the day centered on large scale landscape restoration in drylands and examined the role of landscape restoration in achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN). ‘Landscape Restoration Day’ was an event to discuss the contribution of LDN initiatives in delivering on landscape restoration commitments. Mr. Davies said, “There is a risk that countries that don’t have a lot of forest cover, particularly those in the drylands, may not feel included in many current restoration challenges”. He went on to say, “Human well-being is closely linked to landscapes and through today’s events we hope to raise awareness of the value of improving land”. Ms. Cyriaque Sendashonga of IUCN spoke next saying some countries may not realize the link between landscape restoration and achieving LDN due to different interpretations of land restoration.



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Mr. Ulrich Apel of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) said the organization is a newcomer to the land agenda because it now understands that stopping deforestation is not enough, but that landscapes and forests must also be restored. He said, “We have already invested three million USD of GEF grants in landscape restoration”. Ms. Magda Lovei of the World

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Bank expressed, “We need to look at the root causes of degradation and reduce those pressures to make sure they are addressed. Global deforestation has been a monumental issue for many years due to road building, mining, agriculture, and many more manmade developments”. Ms. Catalina Santamaria of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) said the CBD works towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets 14 and 15. Target 14 concerns critical ecosystems that provide benefits associated with human well-being and SDG 15 directly focused on climate change adaptation, mitigation and combating desertification. Mr. Sasha Alexander of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) said, “We have a concrete pathway to take transformative projects out of the pipeline and bring them to implementation on the ground. One hundred twelve countries now have the tools to improve landscapes, biodiversity and mitigate climate change”. Mr. Eric Patrick of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) explained that the organization is a specialized development bank that focuses only on agriculture. He said IFAD rarely focuses on landscape restoration its projects, which is unfortunate. He added that IFAD should consciously move toward ecosystem restoration.



Ms. Bora Masumbuko from IUCN said her organization should protect biodiversity to protect ecosystems.

During the first session of ‘Landscape Restoration Day’ the Great Green Wall Initiative in Africa was discussed in terms of its ability to help achieve LDN, conserve biodiversity and mitigate climate change through landscape restoration. Ms. Bora Masumbuko from IUCN

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said her organization should protect biodiversity to protect ecosystems. She explained that land is multifunctional, as it concerns human culture, food security, disaster risk reduction, poverty reduction and much more. Ms. Masumbuko added that the Great Green Wall Initiative directly involves biodiversity, which itself can be conserved through sustainable land management (SLM) and also determines human wellbeing and development. Mr. Fredua Agyeman represented Ghana and said the CREMA land management programme in Ghana is a simple plan that ensures the realization of set goals and objectives. Ms. Paola Agostini from the World Bank said her organization uses different instruments and approaches for different regions, but biodiversity is one of the most important elements that should be supported.

In session two the panel discussed implementing the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Sub Regional Action Programme (SRAP) to Combat Desertification. The session brought forward inputs from key stakeholders on the development of an investment framework. Ms. Natalia Nakashona from the Ministry of Environment in Namibia said since the adoption of the SADC SRAP in 1997, the institutional and political context in the area of environmental issues and rural development has evolved in Southern Africa. With the formulation and/or adoption of new policies and programmes, South Africa can now offer opportunities to manage the priority areas of the SADC SRAP. It was explained that the SRAP provides a platform for member states to cooperate in realizing regional and national obligations to the UNCCD. Furthermore, Mr. Titus Dlamini, Environmental Consultant at IUCN, informed the audience that the purpose of the SRAP is to address actions that can best be dealt with at regional level and should not include actions that can be addressed at national level.

During the third session of IUCN's 'Landscape Restoration Day' new themes were explored such as: degradation, restoration, conflict, peace and sustainable provision of ecosystem services like biodiversity conservation. The session further discussed the conditions under which land restoration can achieve positive economic, social and ecosystemic outcomes, while charting pathways to catalyze policies and mobilize large-scale investment capital to do so. About a quarter of global land area is estimated to be degraded, which has led to global economic losses of about 40 billion USD annually. Degradation releases soil carbon, worsening global climate change. It reduces yields, creating food insecurity. Degradation erodes livelihoods, driving migration. As our world warms and is beset by increasingly acute erosion and soil degradation, especially in the drylands, livelihoods are becoming more precarious and the ability of youngsters to make a living is increasingly compromised.

Under the adverse conditions of degradation, instability takes hold, order breaks down, and non-state armed groups (NSAGs) can become established. NSAGs, leading to everything

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from rising poaching, enhanced deforestation and large-scale violence. Land restoration and trust building initiatives are hypothesized to minimise operational, social and environmental risks and offer opportunities to develop new markets. It was discussed that carbon sequestration in soils and biomass provides multiple benefits like mitigating climate change impacts and improving agricultural land productivity. More resilient landscapes are usually more biodiverse landscapes, providing more habitats to more species. Yet such initiatives fail to attract significant investments despite the abundance of capital in financial markets.

Deputy Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, Mr. Pradeep Monga, said during the session, “If we really want to address the climate change issue, now is the time that we shift our focus to land”. He continued, “When people move, conflicts and chaos come.” Mr. Monga explained that the UNCCD secretariat is working with more partners on LDN and will not only address land degradation, but also other SDGs like food security and climate change. He stressed that all stakeholders are needed on board, including governments, NGOs and the private sector. Mr. Monga said, “If we all work on this common challenge together, our problems will be solved” and “each country should have an LDN target and complete it by 2030”. Summing up, he commented that if everyone moves to sustainable land development, giving people land tenure rights, skills, and financing, then climate refugees would love to return to their motherland.



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Mr. Patrick Worms of ICRAF gave a riveting presentation on agroforestry. He started out by saying “knowledge is more important than financing”. He said, “We have a tendency today to think that everything must be new. Actually, old things like trees benefit humans in a scale that no one can imagine”. Mr. Worms also explained, “Agroforestry benefits humans in terms of nutrient recycling, water cycling, and drought protection of trees”. He shared his opinion that the business and marketing of those pushing the land restoration model is lousy. He summed up by saying, “What you need is a piece of land, a pair of hands and knowledge” to restore degraded land, but the current business model focuses too much on the conventional farming model.

South Africa is a country with mixed races and cultures, which makes our work more complicated than others”, said Mr. Noel Oettle from DRYNET. He shared with the audience the Human Scale Development Theory and discussed that in SLM the trick is to find a synergistic satisfier. Mr. Oettle continued, “If we don’t satisfy people’s basic needs, poverty comes, and poverty has dire consequences like violent behavior, gangsterism, theft etc”. He said it should be kept in mind that relationships between people in land-using communities and the land itself are complex and multidimensional. He concluded that land interventions to support SLM should be informed by appropriate methodologies so as to address this complexity in a holistic manner and avoid unanticipated outcomes and conflicts.



Mr. Patrick Worms of ICRAF gives presentation on agroforestry

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The Chief Science Adviser from Elion Resources, Mr. Cai Man Tang, talked about his company's work in the Kubuqi desert, saying, "We focus on the model of Eco-restoration. We do ecological restoration first then we see if there are potential business models lying dormant in this restored ecological system". He advocated that land restoration is absolutely profitable, and that Elion employs a total of 10,000 staff, with total assets of 100 billion USD. Mr. Ermias Betemariam from the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) introduced land restoration for the sustainable provision of ecosystem services with a specific focus on the CGIAR research program on restoration of degraded land. He said, "Land degradation caused losses in multiple ecosystem services, but land restoration is an opportunity to mitigate these losses". Mr. Betemariam discussed the risk factors of and solutions for land degradation, as well as the bundle of ecosystem services, incentives and enabling environments of how local business can be generated. He said, "I hope more young people can join our effort". He added that the current method is focusing on land degradation hot spots, which might need to change in the following years, and said, "We need to be more careful of the indicators we are using when doing projects".



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Ms. Elizabeth Kucinich explained that she worked in the environment of western politics due to her husband's position as a United States congressman. She said that she talked about SLM in the United States as "regenerative, organic agriculture", because the meaning of regeneration invites life to the context. She stressed that the scary consequences of climate change are repelling to constituents, so a better message that is more appealing to the people is needed. Ms. Kucinich said, "If you have the right language, you can ignite a fire". She explained that it is currently necessary for one million Americans to transition from whatever they are doing into agriculture, and that this is an amazing opportunity to encourage veterans to go into agriculture to heal the land and in turn heal themselves, a transition supported by the United States farm bill. In summation, Ms. Kucinich said, "We need storytelling that fuels a movement, a creative story, creative nuances that allow people get involved with agriculture and love agriculture! Let's call it a mission to keep life flourishing on planet earth."

Session four focused on guardians of rangelands and how desertification can be combatted in the rangeland through sustainable pastoralism. Mr. Thomas Hammond from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) moderated the session. Ms. Nahid Naghizadeh from the Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment (CENESTA) said, "The policies in the last century of Iran caused massive land grabbing by both private and public sectors". Mr. Kirk Olsen from the Wildlife Conservation Society said Mongolia has an enormous potential to realize pastoralism. Mr. Jonathan Davies from IUCN drew attention to the fact that rangeland is a very social and ecological thing. He also suggested rangelands should be positioned more strongly in global restoration initiatives and resources should be mobilized to make the case globally. It was highlighted by the speakers that drylands, rangelands and grasslands are neither fragile nor are they wastelands that should be converted into forests.

Mr. Eric Patrick from IFAD moderated session five of 'Landscape Restoration Day' and led a discussion on opportunities and recommendations of landscape restoration and land degradation neutrality. Panelists discussed how countries explored landscape restoration practices and frameworks addressing LDN. Mr. Titus Dlamini of IUCN, said "LDN is a suitable way to address land degradation. It is giving us the opportunities to look at the indicators as we move together as stakeholders." He noted that in setting LDN targets, countries must rely on data and by achieving LDN by 2030, we are also achieving other SDGs. Further discussed were the roles of partnership and regional and international initiatives such as the Bonn Challenge and its support of landscape restoration. Ms. Paola Agostini from the World Bank said that for a very long period of

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time, the World Bank did not see the value of partnership, but over the last two years, things started to change. The organization now thinks partnership is an important pillar of the organization. Additional resources that would help parties explore LDN and the frameworks surrounding it were also discussed. It was agreed that country-level partnerships, rather than only international-level partnerships would be helpful. It was also suggested that an LDN process would help achieve the synergy between land restoration objectives and the LDN targets.

Panelists agreed that high-level leadership should drive progress and local knowledge bases should be set up. Other suggestions included having a good model of cooperation and a discussion on how funds need to be allocated: to the most degraded area or the least degraded area? Mr. Jonathan Davies added that solutions are holistic now and that if the leadership is there, they can achieve the targets. He also suggested that prevention is key, saying we need to identify the places that are not degraded too badly and make them stay that way. Mr. Titus Dlamini contributed that progress has been made, saying, “We need guidelines to implement LDN, and there are some guidelines now.” Overall, the IUCN’s Landscape Restoration Day was a success with moderately high attendance for all sessions.

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IUCN Landscape Restoration Day Pictures



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