



Press release

FOOD CRISIS AND LAND CRISIS? OPTIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO MOVE FORWARDS IN AN INTEGRATED MANNER

Bonn, Germany - The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Luc Gnacadja warns that the current food security crisis needs to be examined in line with the environmental change such as desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD). A new strategy to engage the international community and its collective action to combat DLDD must be implemented in this context, in order to prevent negative impacts, notably on the poorest countries, and to improve food security and access to water.

“We need to greatly intensify efforts on combating land degradation and drought impacts in areas affected by this emerging global crisis,” as Mr. Gnacadja says. “Global rise in food prices will continue if measures on sustainable land management and soil protection are not implemented and if the decreasing of arable land is not halted.”

Indeed, the global food system is under stress. The current food security crisis only aggravates the problem that is already dire today, when 800 million people do not have enough food to eat, and more than 25,000 people die every day from hunger or related illnesses. The best arable land for the agricultural use constitutes only 11% of the earth surface, which only ensures the food for 6.3 billion people today and 8.2 billion predicted in 2030. FAO forecasts that a 50% growth is required in food production by 2030, but arable land are shrinking due to DLDD.

The energy crisis is in part debated as a matter of food security versus energy security. While high oil prices seem to be major immediate causes of this alarming situation in the agricultural economy, one cannot ignore the looming trend of natural resources scarcity like water and arable land, worsened by the recent climatic impacts of increasing floods, prolonged droughts and chronic shortage of water resources. The growing demand for bio-fuels is now competing for land in a context of declining eco system services. Whether bio-fuels are threats or opportunities, the critical issue of land use and its productivity needs to be addressed within the inter-linkages of DLDD, adaptation to climate change and biodiversity loss and sustainable livelihood. Mr. Gnacadja adds, “a long-term strategy to address food crisis is to increase land ecosystems productivity and make agriculture a priority through pro-poor policies in view of adaptation to climate change”.

In the context of indisputable environmental changes, the 8th Conference of the Parties of the UNCCD expressed a positive resolve to stimulate UNCCD implementation last

September in Madrid.191 countries unanimously adopted the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018). The new strategic plan foster more integrative work to promote sustainable land management in a context of pro poor policies that is becoming increasingly urgent in the face of the ongoing food security crisis.

To assist countries in tackling the land and soil issues in the light of global emerging concerns, the UNCCD Secretariat is convening a High-level Policy Dialogue on UNCCD implementation, to be held in Bonn, Germany on 27 th May under the presidency of Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany,

(Standard clause)

Developed as a result of the Rio Summit, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is a unique instrument that has brought attention to land degradation to some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and people in the world. Twelve years after coming into force, the UNCCD benefits from the largest membership of the three Rio Conventions and is increasingly recognized as an instrument which can make an important contribution to the achievement of sustainable development and poverty reduction.