DesertNet International Newsletter n. 1/2018

This quarterly electronic newsletter is intended to inform the scientific community about dryland-relevant research matters. The deadline for receipt of material for the next issue is 15.05.2018. Please send your contributions (1000 characters max, including spaces) to nrd@uniss.it

Contents:

1. Information relevant to DesertNet members
2. Researchers’ updates
3. Important upcoming events
4. Publications and Special Issues

1. Information relevant to DesertNet members

The Newly elected UNCCD CSO panel representatives for the biennium 2018-2019

In January 2018, CSOs accredited to the UNCCD, among which DesertNet International is included, elected the new representatives of the UNCCD CSO panel for the biennium 2018-2019. After receiving the results of the elections, the DNI Bureau is glad to announce that the new CSO panel constitutes:

Ms. Djatougbe Aziaka from Welfare Togo (Togo) representing Africa
Ms. Jiajia Luo from China Green Foundation (China) representing Asia
Mr. Octavio Perez Pardo from CIASE (Argentina) representing Latin America and the Caribbean
Mr. Valentin Ciubotaru from NGO Bios (Moldova) representing Eastern Europe, and
Ms. Nathalie van Haren from Both Ends (The Netherlands) representing Western Europe and Other

Information provided by the DNI Bureau
Report of the first UNCCD CSO Panel meeting in India, 14 -16 February

The newly elected members of the UNCCD CSO panel met for the first time in India from 14 to 16 February 2018. The new members are:

- Djatougbe Aziaka from Welfare Togo, Togo (African Group)
- Jiajia Luo from China Green Foundation, China (Asian Group)
- Octavio Perez Pardo from CIASE, Argentina (Latin America and the Caribbean Group)
- Valentin Ciubotaru from NGO Bios, Moldova (Eastern Europe Group)
- Nathalie van Haren from Both ENDS, The Netherlands (Western Europe and Others Group)

Together with Marcos Montoiro of the UNCCD secretariat we met in New Delhi, India.

Our first decision is to have 2 co-chairs: one permanent throughout the biennium: Jiajia Luo (Asia) and one on a 6-months-rotation basis, starting with Nathalie van Haren.

We developed a draft working plan for the coming biennium, which includes the following components:

- CSO networks: engaging with CSOs, sharing information
- Monitor and implement the COP decisions & Strategic Framework 2018-2030 (Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), Gender, Youth, Indigenous Peoples, and engaging with UNCCD bodies)
- Strategy for upcoming agenda: land tenure, LDN, other hot topics, engagement of CSOs in preparation of COP agenda
- Communication Strategy & Plan: how we will reach-out to, involve and maintain engagement of CSOs and linkages with UNCCD and UNCCD bodies
- CSO Panel Fund Raising & Financing: map and identify financiers for CSO involvement in the implementation of the UNCCD
- Budget for the CSO panel
- Operational matters

If you have suggestions for this working plan, please don’t hesitate to contact me at: n.vanharen@bothends.org

Bhawani, Marioldy, Sophiko and Hindou of the former CSO Panel also came to Delhi. Therefore, we had a good exchange of ideas and experiences. And together, we developed a Terms of Reference for the CSO panel.

Information provided by: Nathalie van Haren, Both ENDS and representative of the UNCCD CSO Panel for WEOG

Course: Environmental Security and Sustaining Peace

This free course is inspired by another course on Ecosystems and Disaster Risk Reduction. It is an 8-week massive open online course (MOOC) providing an in-depth introduction to the multiple roles that natural resources and the environment play in the onset, escalation, and resolution of, and recovery from, violent conflicts. It aims to enlist 10,000 participants to help make natural resources a reason for cooperation rather than conflict.

Time commitment: Approx. 2-4 hours per week. Students who successfully complete the course will receive a digital certificate of proficiency.

For more information, the course trailer is here: https://youtu.be/pqsUzjz9I28
The SDG Academy enrollment page is here: http://bit.ly/envt-peace

Information provided by: María José Marqués. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain
Report of the World Sustainable Development Summit 15-16 February

The UNCCD was a partner in the World Sustainable Development Summit organised by TERI. The UNCCD prepared a panel discussion with the title: Civil Society Engagement in Land Degradation Neutrality, which was moderated by Djatougbe Aziaka (Togo Welfare/ CSO panel member Africa):

- Nathalie van Haren was the first speaker and spoke about the recognition of community based initiatives supported by CSOs in the implementation of LDN and SDGs and about the need for tailor-made financial support for community based LDN initiatives for knowledge development, for secure land (user) rights and for engaging with policy makers.
- S S Negi (Uttarakhand Village Development and Migration Commission) talked about CSOs working with women and rural communities on climate change, land degradation neutrality and about capacity development on value chains and natural hazards.
- Bhawani Shankar Kusum (Gram Bharti Samiti, former CSO panel member Asia) spoke about the Gandhivan project which engages communities in land restoration activities.
- Alex Zvoleff (Conservation International) argued that the collection, sharing and disclosure of information on ecosystems is vital for sustainable land management practices and policy decisions.
- Ritesh Kumar (Wetlands International) focused on the interlinkages between water and land and that policies and practices on land and water should not be used in isolation.
- Hindou Ibrahim (Association for Indigenous Women and Peoples of Chad, former CSO panel member Africa) talked about the importance of responsible governance of tenure of land when making policies regarding LDN and climate change.
- Marioldy Sanchez Santivañez (AIDER, former CSO panel member Latin America and Caribbean) presented a project in Tambopata which connects all the actors in the landscape to counter LDN and rural migration and to jointly seek solutions.

On Saturday, the last day of the conference, Conservation International launched a tool for monitoring LDN, namely TRENDS.EARTH. This platform that is based upon open-source geospatial data can support land management and investment decisions and reporting on implementation of SDG15.3. The tool is available in English, French, Spanish and Swahili and can be downloaded at: http://trends.earth

Information provided by: Nathalie van Haren, Both ENDS and representative of the UNCCD CSO Panel for WEOG

“Agriculture and Climate change, Challenges and Opportunities” Conference

The conference “Agriculture and Climate change, Challenges and Opportunities” (www.agriclimchange.com), organized by the Italian partnership of MACSUR (https://macsur.eu/), funded by the Italian Ministry for Agriculture (https://www.politicheagricole.it/) took place in Rome on December 12-13, 2017. It was attended by 90 people including researchers (67%), executives and officials of government institutions (17%), representatives of farmers’ associations (8%) and journalists (9%). The conference generated a debate among multiple stakeholders on the expected impacts of climate change on Italian agriculture and the options for adaptation at different scales.

In the first conference session, three working groups identified a range of adaptation options for i) forage systems, ii) cereals and industrial crops and iii) perennial crops (including trees). Each group chose two cropping systems in relation to their economic relevance for Italian agriculture and the available
scientific evidence. Farmers’ participation was enabled through the projection, in the second session of the conference, of a 15-min video (in Italian) containing the perspectives on climate change adaptation of farmers and entrepreneurs of the agri-food and agri-industrial sectors in three Italian regions (Piedmont, Tuscany and Sardinia). The working group reports and the farmers’ interviews provided a solid basis for two roundtables, intended as a space for dialogue around technical and policy adaptation issues.

A converging outcome from the roundtables is that the challenges associated with climate change require the integration of top-down, research/assessment-driven approaches (e.g. breeding, technological innovation), and bottom-up, context-driven approaches based on long-term interactions with stakeholders, along with technology transfer and training. The EIP-AGRI programme can be relevant for such integrations. In this context, new communication paradigms should focus on probability distributions of indicators capturing the perception and the needs of different types of farmers far better than abstractions like the annual mean temperature rise. Farmers’ associations and Agricultural Ministry representatives highlighted the need for investing in improved risk management tools (e.g. insurances) through the careful application of dedicated measures within rural development programmes. It is crucial, for supporting policymaking, to engage specific competences (e.g. agro-climatic and economic research, environmental and rural development policies) and invest in the availability of high-resolution datasets (e.g. climate, soil, crop management) in support of well-contextualized strategic choices, investments in infrastructures, risk management and biodiversity conservation.

Information provided by: Pier Paolo Roggero, Desertification Research Centre - University of Sassari, Italy

International Climate-related resource conservation Fellowship for young experts from developing countries

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation enables the implementation of a research-based proposal in the field of climate protection or climate-related resource conservation during a one-year stay in Germany. Candidates draw up their own research-based proposal which they then implement in collaboration with a host in Germany. Candidates for this programme must have background in the natural and engineering sciences, although legal, economic, health-related and societal issues relating to climate change are encouraged to apply. They have to be working in the field of climate protection or climate-related resource conservation.

Fellowship specifications: The monthly fellowship amount – depending on career stage –is €2,150 or €2,450 for fellows without a doctorate and €2,650 for postdoctoral researchers. This includes a mobility lump sum and a contribution towards health and liability insurance.

More information at: https://www.humboldt-foundation.de/web/icf.html

Information provided by: María José Marqués. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

Research and Cooperation Funding opportunities

European Commission launches the Horizon 2020 - Work Programme 2018-2020 Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research and the bioeconomy.

An investment of €1.3 billion is available for the Societal Challenge 2 (SC2) Work Programme for 2018-2020 that focuses on the sustainable management of land and waters to secure healthy food as well as on the delivery of public
goods such as biodiversity and clean water. This Societal Challenge 2 responds to some of the key challenges: adapting to and mitigating climate change; ensuring food security; safeguarding the natural resource base among others.

Different Calls on “Sustainable Food Security”, “Blue Growth”, or “Rural Renaissance” include a number of topics focused on “Low Carbon”, “Circular Economy” and “Digitisation”.

Some of the topics will follow a multi-actor approach to ensure genuine and sufficient involvement of various actors such as farmers/farmer’s groups, foresters/forester’s groups, fishers/fisher’s groups, advisors, businesses, etc.

As an example of topics included in these calls, please see the list below:

- LC-SFS-20-2019: European Joint Programme on agricultural soil management
- LC-SFS-22-2020 - Forest soils Research and Innovation Action
- SFS-23-2019: IntegraSFS-33-2018: Support to the implementation of the EU-Africa Research and Innovation Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security & Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA)
- LC-SFS-34-2019: Food Systems Africa
- CE-SFS-36-2020 - Diversifying farmers’ income through small bio-based concepts
- EU-China FAB Flagship initiative
- SFS-37-2019: Integrated approaches to food safety controls across the food chain
- SFS-38-2018: Highly efficient management of soil quality and land resources
- SFS-23-2019: Integrated water management in small agricultural catchments


*Information provided by: María José Marqués. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain*

2. Researchers’ updates

**Soil mesofauna in combating soil degradation in Sudano-Guinean Savannah of Cameroon**

ReviTec sites were established in Ngaoundéré (Adamaoua) and Maroua (Far North) to demonstrate and investigate the approach for combating soil degradation (see NL Feb 2013). Our studies document unexpected high abundance and diversity of soil mesofauna in savanna and particularly in the ReviTec structures even in dry season. Diversity is studied on group and species level (Gamasina, Oribatida, Collembola). The comparisons of the climatically different sites reveal comparable abundances and diversities. The expectation that ReviTec accelerates ecological succession and promotes recolonization was confirmed. Soil mesofauna has to be considered as an important, underestimated component in the rehabilitation of ecosystem services of degraded soil even under conditions of long dry season.

Dieudonné Danra Djackba, Lea-Rosine Djoussi Ndé (Ngaoundéré); Hartmut Koehler (Bremen).
For more information contact: hartmut.koehler@uni-bremen.de

*Information provided by Hartmut Koehler (retired professor for ecology), Centre for Environmental Research and Sustainable Technology (UFT), University of Bremen*
Desertification vs deserts, the illustrative case of Algerian steppe lands.

Desertification should not be confused with the advance of deserts. This depends exclusively on the increment of aridity, while the former arises from the combination of climatic variations and inadequate human activities. The heralded Green Barrier that stretches east to west across Algeria, is the icon of ineffective strategies to combat desertification. The purpose was to stop the sand, as if sand were the cause of the land decline, and not a symptom of a more complex syndrome as desertification is. Indeed, degradation has a strong anthropogenic component.

The South Oranesse region epitomizes North African steppe degradation. Here immense areas were covered by Alfa grass. The intensification of sheep farming, driven by subsidies and supported by an unbalanced diet based on grain, has erased the presence of this tussock and exposed bare soil to wind storms. The enemy is at home, inside the protective Green Wall. Desertification is not a matter of bad luck, but of bad planning.

See the complete work in:

Information provided by Jaime Martínez-Valderrama - Estación Experimental Zonas Áridas, CSIC. Spain.

3. Important upcoming events

List of links to next meetings regarding desertification, water conservation and land degradation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018</th>
<th></th>
<th>Montpellier, France</th>
<th>New Delhi, India</th>
<th>Dubai, United Arab Emirates</th>
<th>Bonn, Germany</th>
<th>Sousse, Tunisia</th>
<th>Naples, Italy</th>
<th>Rome, Italy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12-13 Sep</td>
<td>6th International Conference on Sustainable Development 2018</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ecsdev.org/">http://www.ecsdev.org/</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information provided by the DNI Bureau
Upcoming events interesting for CSOs working on inclusive sustainable land governance

- Presentation of the Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment Report and Summary for Policy Makers for approval by the sixth session of the IPBES Plenary: 18-24 March in Medellin, Colombia. The Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment Report will be publicly accessible after approval end of March 2018.
- FAO International Symposium on Agroecology - Scaling Up agroecology to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 3-5 April 2018, Rome, Italy. Deadline registration 26 February 2018
- World Desertification Day: 17 June 2018
- UNCCD CRIC: January 2019, Guyana

Information provided by: Nathalie van Haren, Both ENDS and representative of the UNCCD CSO Panel for WEOG

4. Publications and Special Issues


Information provided by the DNI Bureau

**DESSERT Journal - University of Teheran**

The journal of Desert as an international and interdisciplinary journal is publishing by International Desert Research Center (IDRC), University of Tehran and concerned with the original scientific and technical research articles on physical, biological and anthropological aspects of arid, semi-arid and desert environments. As an interdisciplinary dialogue it addresses researches on all aspects of arid environments. These can be applied to a wide spectrum of issues ranging from basic to socio-ecological systems of arid, semi-arid and desert ecosystems. The journal welcomes research articles, short communications, review articles, and other communications.

Desert has mostly published articles with titles focusing on soil erosion especially wind erosion, ecological modeling, desertification, climate change, and spatio-temporal modeling using RS and GIS during last five years.

Journal Policy: Desert is committed to real and immediate open access for academic work. All of Desert’s articles and reviews are free to access immediately from the date of publication. Desert has no charges for article processing or submission.

Papers submitted to Desert will be screened for plagiarism using CrossCheck/iThenticate plagiarism detection tools. Desert will immediately reject papers leading to plagiarism or self-plagiarism.

Terms and Conditions

Desert publishes open access articles under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) License which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Information provided by Seyed Kazem Alavipanah. Department of Remote Sensing and GIS, Faculty of Geography, University of Tehran

**A New Edition of World Atlas of Desertification (WAD3) is Reaching Publication Stage**

Twenty years after the last World Atlas of Desertification (WAD2), a new edition is reaching publication stage. WAD3 builds on scientific progress and the upsurge of collection of global data that occurred during the last two decades. WAD3 represents a significant departure from the first two editions. In WAD3, land degradation is considered to be a global problem of human dominance involving complex interactions between social, economic and environmental systems. WAD3 maps the coincidence of such on-going global issues as accumulated evidence that pathways to land degradation currently exist at certain locations. Users can learn from these dynamic global convergence patterns for a variety of thematic interests and can add local information for broader understanding and planning of solutions. The WAD3 compilation has been coordinated by the Joint Research Centre of the EU. WAD3 will be available in hardcopy and digital version during the next quarter –a launch event will be announced soon.

Information provided by Michael Cherlet, WAD3 coordinator, European Commission – DG Joint Research Centre
The 1st WOCATpedia contest on "SLM for climate resilience and biodiversity"

In 2017 WOCAT launched its new Community Platform WOCATpedia. WOCATpedia is a knowledge management platform on Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Agricultural Water Management. WOCATpedia stands for easy and free access to knowledge and invites you to share your own knowledge and experience by contributing articles and documents. WOCATpedia now launches its first WOCATpedia call for articles.

Call for articles: Share your experience and insights of a field-tested successful example of sustainable land management (SLM) in a landscape with protected areas as part of ecosystems, which has positive impacts on climate resilience (including flood and drought regulation) and on biodiversity, helping to sustain both ecosystems and human well-being.

Geographic focus: Worldwide and particularly in developing countries

Guidelines for abstract:
- Submit an article of no more than 4000 characters,
- for now only English articles are accepted,
- structured by: title, name and contact details of author(s), name and contact details of implementer(s) of SLM practice, name of SLM practice, country / location, description of SLM practice, impacts of SLM practice, success factors, potential for replication and scaling-up, references,
- label the abstract with "SLM for climate resilience and biodiversity " and feel free to add labels of other relevant topics (e.g. climate change adaptation),
- for further information on the guidelines of how to write an article please visit the WOCATpedia "Help section".

Selection procedure:
1. The quality and relevance of the content will be evaluated, as well as whether the guidelines have been respected. The evaluation will be done by the WOCAT Secretariat.
2. The five best articles will be shared via Facebook the last days before the winner announcement. The article with the most likes will be taken into account during the final review.
3. The final evaluation will be selected by the project group launching the call.

Best article promotion: The winning article will be shared and promoted in the global WOCAT Network and among its partners, as well as through the WOCAT social media channels and the WOCAT website.

How to submit your article:
1. Go to the contest website.
2. Login or register with WOCATpedia
3. Create a new article.
4. Categorise it labelling it with "SLM for climate resilience and biodiversity".
5. Check out other articles submitted for this contest.

Deadline for submission is the 12th of March 2018
The contest winner will be announced at the beginning of April 2018.
Login: WOCATpedia is not yet linked to the new WOCAT website and Global SLM Database. Please register here to participate in the contest: Register with WOCATpedia.
You have to be logged in to submit an article and access the help section.
Go to the contest: https://wocatpedia.net/wiki/Portal:SLM_for_climate_resilience_and_biodiversity

Information Provided by: WOCAT Secretariat, Centre for Development and Environment, University of Berne, Switzerland
--- Editorial Board ---

Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, Hamburg University, Germany; Gérard Begni, Environment & Sustainable Development, CNES, France; María José Marqués Perez, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain; Lindsay Stringer, University of Leeds, UK; Pietro Arras and Chiara Zanolla, NRD - Sassari University, Italy.

Secretariat DesertNet International
University of Hamburg
Ohnhorststr. 18
22609 Hamburg, Germany

Operational Secretariat DesertNet International
NRD-UNISS University of Sassari
Viale Italia, 39
07100, Sassari, Italy

Contact: office@desertnet-international.org – nrd@uniss.it

More information at: www.desertnet-international.org