



Working Together, Making Changes for the Sustainable Future

- Introduction of CSO panel members

In 2010, the CSO panel was established by the Conference of the Parties at COP11. Ever since, the panel has served as an extremely valuable network, effectively channeling the voice of local communities into the UNCCD process. One of the main goals of the panel is to ensure the effective participation of CSOs in the COP meetings and its subsidiary bodies. The panel plays a key role in supporting communication and coordination amongst the civil society organizations and it ensures that its inputs are duly taken into account in the normative documents discussed by Parties. In that respect, it also contributes to the negotiation process for the science-policy interface, the SDGs and the Intergovernmental Working Group (IWG) in the context of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN).

The five members elected by the CSO community are complementary and cover different areas of expertise which enable the panel to deliver its tasks successfully and are capable to ensure the advancement of the UNCCD and global agendas.

The main goals for the current biennium include target setting for LDN, tackling forced migration, implementing gender mainstreaming in all aspects of the conventions, developing a policy on land rights, and facilitating CSO engagement in setting up targets, indicators, monitoring and evaluation in relation to LDN over the next two years.

The new members of the panel are:



- **Ms. Hindou Ibrahim** Oumarou from the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC), who represents the African CSOs;
- **Mr. Bhawani Shanker Kusum** from Gram Bharati Samiti (India) who represents Asia CSOs;
- **Ms. Marioldy Sanchez Santivañez** from AIDER (Peru) who represents GRULAC CSOs;
- **Ms. Sophiko Akhobadze** from the Regional Environmental Centre (Georgia) who represents EEG CSOs;
- **Mr. Baris Karapinar** from TEMA Foundation (Turkey) who represents WEOG CSOs.

By Sophiko Akhobadze from REC

Land Degradation in Asia

- LDN could be a game changer

South Asia is one of the most populous regions in the world. Here, there is a significant amount of soil erosion, salinity and other types of land degradation which affects the lives of millions of people and the

environment. Land degradation varies across the region expanding into China, India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan.



Stabilizing sand dunes
through bench terraces and contour trenching

Land degradation adversely impacts water resources and deforestation, and lowers the productive capacity of the land. All forms of land degradation, i.e. water erosion, wind erosion, soil infertility, salinization, water logging, water table decline, deforestation and forest degradation are prevalent in the Asian region. Countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are severely threatened by the adverse impacts of land degradation and desertification.

The region has a land area of 636 million hectares and a population of 1,827 million. The agricultural population is 921 million, 51 percent of the total, covering 320 million hectares agricultural land. India has 46 percent of the land area of the region and 72 percent of the population. Iran is the next largest country in terms of land area, but Pakistan and

Bangladesh have the second and third largest populations.

The concept of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) can definitely open a window of opportunity for the dry-lands. A conjoined effort of Government, private sector and civil society actors could effectively respond to desertification and poverty in the dry-lands. The national governments could establish a LDN Fund and then invite the private sector to contribute to this innovative fund. A multifaceted approach including the following activities will not only provide employment to the local communities, but will also increase food security in the region:

- Watershed management
- Conservation and improvement of soils
- Salinity control and reclamation
- Forestation/reforestation
- Promotion of agro forestry
- Desertification control, including sand dune stabilization
- Animal husbandry

With these efforts, the LDN could be a game changer.

*By Bhawani Shanker Kusum, Gram Bharati Samiti,
India*

Collaboration and Promises

- The challenge of linking regional, national and local initiatives to address land degradation

The world recognize that multi-sectorial and multi-level collaboration and synergies are crucial for achieving environmental goals included in RIO Conventions and other global commitments.

The issue of land degradation has gained greater visibility in the last years. However, there are other initiatives announced before the adoption of the SDGs

that seek to address land degradation that are convening intergovernmental organizations, countries, researchers, CSO, private investors, among other stakeholders, which are moving from ambition to action.

For example, the Bonn Challenge is a global aspiration to restore 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded lands by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030. This aims to be a practical means of realizing many existing international commitments, including the CBD Aichi Target 15, the UNFCCC REDD+ goal, and the Rio+20 Land Degradation Neutrality goal, which now is included in the SDGs. It is overseen by the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration and is fulfilled through restoration commitments made by countries, companies, institutions and individuals. At the UN Climate Summit in 2014, an unprecedented alliance of governments, companies, and civil societies issued the New York Declaration on Forests, extending the Bonn Challenge.

In December 2014 during COP 20 in Lima, the Initiative 20x20 was launched as a country-led effort to restore 20 million hectares of land in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2020. And during COP 12 in Turkey, countries adopted the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target. A LDN fund is under development for mobilizing the resources needed to support restoration activities.

This year, several countries will start the formulation of voluntary targets to achieve LDN with the support of the UNCCD Secretariat and the Global Mechanism. The UNCCD Science-Policy Interface (SPI) will deliver a LDN conceptual framework and a LDN policy brief in order to help countries to undertake this challenge.

One key recommendation would be to bring people and organizations working on these initiatives together because in most cases, they still work in isolation, particularly at the national level. Global initiatives related to land restoration mostly do not have national focal points or counterparts in the same sector. Therefore, inter-sectorial coordination will be crucial, especially between environment, agriculture and forest sectors.



The actions that will be required for aligning all the ongoing initiatives are generally beyond the competences of governmental organizations. This is an opportunity for CSOs to play an important role by promoting inter-sectorial coordination and connecting different stakeholders around the common target of LDN. It seems that the decision-making processes around land restoration will be more dynamic inside the countries than before, and local CSOs must be prepared to face this challenge.

By Marioldy Sánchez Santivañez, AIDER Perú



Celebration of WDCD 2016

- Protect Earth. Restore Land. Engage People

There is probably no greater issue than land in the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals that touches everyone. From the food we eat, to the clothes we wear to the houses we live – it all stems from land resources. The challenge to “leave no one behind” cannot be solved exclusively by land management practices, nor any other single discipline. The issue needs to be viewed hand-in-hand with structural change in social, economic and environmental development embedded in other SDGs such as education, trade, employment and gender equality. With this interconnected structure, this year’s World Day to Combat Desertification advocates for the importance of inclusive cooperation to restore and rehabilitate degraded land and contribute towards achieving the overall Sustainable Development Goals.

Inclusive cooperation among all actors is key for making Land Degradation Neutrality a fundamental solution for achieving SDGs. The slogan, “**Protect Earth. Restore Land. Engage People.**” addresses the importance of comprehensive participation and cooperation in working towards achieving Land Degradation Neutrality. With the theme and slogan we are sending the following messages:

(1) “To combat desertification, and restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation neutral world” is one of the Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030;

(2) Land Degradation Neutrality cannot be achieved without inclusive cooperation among all the actors working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. And by involving all actors,

LDN provides additional benefits to achieving other SDGs.

(3) With the costs of land restoration being within the range of 150 dollars a hectare, achieving LDN is one of the most cost-effective ways not only to fight against hunger but also to cope with climate change, water security and energy resources and promote inclusive growth.

Global Observance and Participation

The global observance event on **17 June 2016** will be held in Beijing, China. Before 17 June, there will be a series of campaigns to promote the World Day to Combat Desertification around the world. Anyone who is celebrating the day is encouraged to inform the UNCCD secretariat via email (WDCD2016@unccd.int) so it can be shared and promoted through various media channels.



If you would like to contact the CSO panel or make a contribution to the next UNCCD CSO panel e-newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact us via email to csso.panel@unccd.int.



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