

## **Thirteenth Conference of the Parties (COP13)**

### *Opening Session*

Statement by the United Nations Development Programme

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Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen; a very good morning to you all!

The United Nations Development Programme would like to thank the UNCCD Secretariat and the Government of the People's Republic of China for organizing this Conference of the Parties with the explicit goal to adopt the future strategic framework of the Convention, in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 15 and its related Target 15.3 on "combating desertification, restoring degraded land and striving to achieve a land degradation neutral world".

UNDP recognizes that land degradation is a barrier to sustainable development. Current management practices in the land use sector are responsible for about 25 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, while around 1 billion people living in extreme poverty depend on degraded land for their livelihoods.

By 2030, the demand for food, energy, and water is expected to increase by at least 50, 45 and 30 percent respectively as a result of population growth, increase in the global middle class and urbanization. These needs will not be met sustainably unless we conserve and restore the productivity of our land.

According to the State of Food Insecurity Report<sup>1</sup>, about 800 million people lacked sufficient nutritious food between 2014 and 2016. If hunger and food insecurity are to be overcome, an estimated 60% increase in agricultural productivity will be necessary by 2050.

In this context, a concerted global effort is underway to halt and reverse land degradation. Drawing on over 40 years of experience and its global network of Country Offices, UNDP is supporting this effort at the global, national and local levels. UNDP is an active partner of the coalition, led by the UNCCD, to support countries' preparedness to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by 2030. UNDP is also a supporting partner of the Global Land Outlook, an ambitious initiative that presents a new and transformative vision for land management policy, planning and practice at global and national scales.

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<sup>1</sup> FAO, IFAD and WFP (2015). The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015

As an Implementing Agency for the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the financial mechanism for the UNCCD, UNDP is currently programming a large project portfolio to tackle land degradation in a variety of landscapes and ecosystems across the world. More recently, UNDP extended its support to help countries develop projects under the Green Climate Fund, particularly on climate change adaptation, that contribute to combating land degradation. At local level, this is complemented by our work through the UNDP-managed GEF Small Grants Programme, with community actors' efforts acknowledged through the Equator Prize.

UNDP's policy development and guidance on land degradation is led by the Global Policy Centre on Resilient Ecosystems and Desertification. This work is undertaken in partnership with a number of international institutions and aims at providing evidence on policies and good practices in sustainable land management and restoration that optimize livelihoods, jobs and food security.

UNDP believes that a reversal of current land degradation trends is indeed possible. We now have an improved understanding of the kinds of actions that can reverse a great deal of the damage done, including the implementation of an effective mix of measures to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation. Opportunities to manage land in a fundamentally new way are also emerging. In particular, land management options that sequester carbon can provide large benefits in the fight against climate change.

In conclusion, UNDP will pursue its three-pronged approach to supporting countries on sustainable land management and restoration:

- First, through capacity development, advocacy and policy advice;
- Second, through support to the adoption and demonstration of locally-appropriate technologies and approaches; and
- Third, through assisting countries to access blended finance packages to implement transformative projects to help them meet their LDN targets by 2030.

UNDP stands ready to support the drive towards Land Degradation Neutrality, a positive aspirational goal of profound importance to ensure that countries take action on the improvement of their stock of land. LDN is also an "SDG Accelerator" which provides options to simultaneously meet the goals on poverty eradication, food security, water and climate change in a cost-effective and ecologically sound manner.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a very successful COP.