United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification

Land is life, keep drylands working

Quick Pocket Facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People Facts</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>Drylands</th>
<th>Proportion %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global Population</td>
<td>6.5 billion³</td>
<td>2.1 billion</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual water needs</td>
<td>2000 cubic meters</td>
<td>1350 cubic meters</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Infant Mortality</td>
<td>49 per 1000²</td>
<td>54 per 1000</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Facts</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>Drylands</th>
<th>Proportion %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land Mass</td>
<td>1476 m sq km</td>
<td>60.9 m sq km</td>
<td>41.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivated systems</td>
<td>39.6 m sq km</td>
<td>16.23 m sq km</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon Reserves</td>
<td>3.104 gigatones</td>
<td>1.430 gigatones</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information, contact:
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UNCCD Secretariat
Hermann-Ehlers-Straße 10
53113 Bonn, Germany
Email: arce@unccd.int

¹ Data from 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

Photos: Cover: Mervet Osman
Inside left; Sean Gallanger
Inside right: Abhijit Dey
Purpose
With more lands around the world facing increasing deterioration and degradation, the United Nations General Assembly declared the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification, which will run from January 2010 to December 2020 to promote action that will protect the drylands. The Decade is an opportunity to make critical changes to secure the long-term ability of drylands to provide value for humanity’s well-being.

Global Value
Drylands are home to 2.1 billion people; for every three people, one calls drylands home. Drylands meet the basic needs of a significant proportion of the world, but are under threat. They harbor some of the world’s most valuable and rarest biodiversity. They are major food vaults because the wild ancestors and relatives of these plants still grow there. Drylands support 50% of the world’s livestock, are wildlife habitats and account for nearly half of all cultivated systems.

Key terms
Drylands refer to arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, and excludes deserts, when used in the context of sustainable development. Desertification refers to the land degradation in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities. When land degradation happens in the world’s drylands, it often creates desert-like conditions.

Origins of the Decade
Building on the successful celebration of the International Year of Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification (IYDDL) in 2006, the United Nations General Assembly, by its resolution A/RES/60/245 of 2007, declared 2010 to 2020 the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification (UNDDD). The Assembly acknowledged the persistence of desertification, despite past and on-going global efforts, and a slow response to poverty eradication among drylands populations, and declared the Decade a period for concerted global action. During the Decade, all actors are called upon to raise awareness about desertification, land degradation and drought and their solutions. The Decade campaign is intended to reinforce the implementation of the ten-year strategy for 2008-2018, on the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. At the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General will report on progress made to implement the resolution.

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