

**Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting**  
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**Desertification**

**Statement**  
**on behalf of the European Union**  
**by**

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Madam Chairperson / Mr Chairman, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Czech Republic has the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its twenty-seven Member States.

**Desertification and land degradation are global environmental and human-induced processes that pertain to everyone and can have far-reaching social and economic implications.** Therefore, desertification and land degradation rank among the greatest environmental challenges today and constitute a **significant risk to the achievement of sustainable development** and the internationally agreed development goals, especially the Millennium Development Goals.

The **Millennium Ecosystem Assessment** has confirmed that there is an **intrinsic relationship between poverty, desertification, land degradation and drought.** This vicious circle must be broken if sustainable food security is to be achieved. There are also strong interlinkages between desertification and climate change. Desertification contributes to climate change through soil and vegetation losses and the associated emission of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. Climate change in turn exacerbates desertification, for example by more frequent and prolonged droughts, intense downpours or decreases in mean precipitation.

The EU will work to give desertification and land degradation the recognition and its deserved **place on the international agenda and contribute to strengthen the synergies among the Rio Conventions,** highlighting the linkages between climate change, biodiversity, desertification/land degradation, drought and water scarcity. Soil conservation can be used as an instrument of both mitigation and adaptation to climate change and **the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and its 10-Year Strategy should play a key role in this respect:** UNCCD expertise should be recognized and used in adaptation discussions, at the global and national levels (e.g. experience with the elaboration of national strategies to combat desertification, often in National Action Plans for elaboration of National Adaptation Plans of Action).

**Therefore, the CSD should urge the enhancement of synergies among the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UNCCD.** When formulating and implementing the national strategies we need to take into account that combating desertification, coping with drought, mitigating and adapting to climate change and preserving biodiversity often translates into the same scope of measures at the local level.

The CSD should encourage affected countries to define or adapt national action programmes to tackle desertification, land degradation and drought issues and, in particular, should insist on **integrating action programmes into the National Sustainable Development Strategies, Poverty Reduction Strategies, UNFCCC national programmes for adaptation and mitigation, CBD national strategies and action plans, National Forests Plans as well as national investment priorities** and recall the challenges as pointed out in the 10-Year Strategy.

As a matter of priority, the **EU will continue to contribute its expertise and consistent support to the implementation of the UNCCD and its 10-Year Strategy.** Support should also be given to the special formats of the subsidiary bodies meetings ahead: such as the scientific conference style of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST). **The CST conference** should play a key role by mobilizing the international scientific community and

enhancing the visibility and the scientific basis of issues related to desertification, land degradation and drought as well as produce sound scientific outputs and policy-oriented recommendations that inform policy formulation and dialogue. Expected policy-oriented outcomes with strong messages on land degradation and adaptation will hopefully feed the discussions during the climate change conference in December of this year.

**Measures which have been developed within the framework of the UNCCD for the preservation and restoration of natural capital and which have a direct impact on agricultural production and on the incomes of affected populations should be promoted**, including the following:

- Development of farming practices for improving soil fertility, water retention and irrigation efficiency, and therefore guaranteeing crop returns and food availability, promoting the use of organic soil matter to retain soil moisture, maintaining soil carbon stocks, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing soil's carbon storage potential;
- Management of vegetal covers: agroforestry, management of dry forests, preservation of rangelands, and development and strengthening of the firewood energy sector;
- Capacity-building for local stakeholders (professional agricultural organizations, local authorities, local communities) to develop sustainable, low-carbon agriculture;
- Diversification of income sources: sustainable use of natural resources through appropriate channels, ecotourism, etc.
- Integration of sustainable land management into communal planning

These combined measures are at the same time crucial for adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change.

The EU considers that support should be given to **strengthening the scientific basis on desertification and drought**, improving knowledge and data collection as prevention tools. This includes developing early-warning and monitoring systems (drought & desertification), drought observatories and drought risk-management plans (national and regional); the development of national and international benchmarks and indicators; the promotion of research on soil carbon stocks monitoring.

**The transfer, dissemination and adaptation of appropriate technologies** to combat desertification and land degradation and to foster climate change mitigation and adaptation in affected countries should be encouraged. At the same time, it is important to support the promotion of local and regional approaches, combining traditional knowledge with new or emerging technologies.

In this regard, **clear communication and dissemination of policies and best practices** is important in order to properly tackle food insecurity, climate change and the degradation of natural resources (water, biodiversity, soil).

**Donors** should (financially and/or technically) support the **process of adaptation of national action programmes for combating desertification and land degradation** in affected countries and their **integration into national investment priorities** in the context of the 10-Year Strategy. In this regard, a **more effective mainstreaming of desertification, land degradation and drought into development and climate cooperation is essential**. Coherence and complementarity of financing and implementing desertification control and

sustainable land management with the principles agreed under the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness should be assured.

Finally, the EU believes that the CSD should call upon governments to consider **sustainable land management** as a high national priority in order to ensure the full commitment of the governments through their national financial mechanisms and through their national strategies for cooperation with the international donor community. In this regard, synergy among the Rio Conventions, especially channeling adaptation funding into UNCCD relevant activities, presents an opportunity to establish comprehensive policy instruments.

Thank you.