



8 July 2021

Excellency,

I have the honour to share herewith the summary of the High-level Dialogue on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought convened on Monday, 14 June and Friday, 2 July 2021, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 75/218 of 21 December 2020, entitled “Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa”.

The summary highlights key messages and discussions from Member States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders. I sincerely hope the summary will benefit the global cause to build momentum and raise ambition for using land restoration as a key entry point within COVID-19 recovery strategies to build back better.

I once again take this opportunity to thank all Member States for your proactive engagement and building strong momentum to halt DLDD and translate our commitments and visions into concrete and accelerated actions.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Volkan BOZKIR

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York



High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought

14 June and 2 July 2021

Summary of the President of the General Assembly



I. Introduction

The High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought¹ (DLDD) was held on Monday, 14 June 2021 with a continuation on Friday, 2 July 2021. In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 74/220 and 75/218, the President of the General Assembly convened this High-level Dialogue to assess the progress made in the fight against DLDD and map the way forward in view of the end of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification and the beginning of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The objectives of the Dialogue were to:

- Bring attention to recovery opportunities during and after the COVID-19 pandemic that can be aligned with action to address DLDD through job-creating projects in land restoration, regenerative agriculture, renewable energy and energy efficiency, and investments in sustainable land management;
- Elevate the discourse on DLDD issues' global significance for the entire SDG agenda and for climate, biodiversity and disaster risk reduction;
- Build upon the commitments and initiatives from Member States and stakeholders made during the Summits on Biodiversity and Climate Change, along the path to the upcoming Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the 2021 Food Systems Summit;
- Encourage all UN Member States to adopt and implement Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets and National Drought Plans, in line with implementing the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and as part of their Nationally Determined Contributions and future commitments under the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework;
- Call for countries to support the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund and other funding mechanisms to scale up land restoration by all sectors of society; and
- Share experiences and best practices, cutting-edge technologies and innovative business models that advance green, resilient and inclusive recovery strategies.

In order to support results-oriented discussions centered on accelerating implementation efforts, the President of the General Assembly circulated a brief prepared by the UN Convention to Combat Desertification entitled "[Restored Land, Healthy People, Green Recovery: Build Forward Better with Land-Centered Solutions](#)".²

The Dialogue³ consisted of an opening segment, two panel discussions, a high-level plenary and a Call to Action. A spill over session to accommodate plenary statements was held on 2nd July 2021. The participating Heads of State and Government, Ministers, intergovernmental organizations, the UN system and stakeholder representatives engaged in the Dialogue via in-person presentations, pre-recorded statements or livestream. 65 Member States delivered statements during the plenary. The Dialogue highlighted the need for urgent action at the highest levels to halt DLDD. The interventions from the participants demonstrated strong commitment to this aim, and reaffirmed that addressing desertification, land degradation and drought, and achieving land degradation neutrality, are pathways to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The participants noted that 2021 is set to be a milestone year for global cooperation on environment and sustainable development, with the CBD and UNFCCC COPs, the Food Systems Summit, and

¹ <https://www.un.org/pga/75/event/high-level-dialogue-on-desertification-land-degradation-and-drought/>

² https://www.un.org/pga/75/wp-content/uploads/sites/100/2021/02/UNCCD_Solution-Brief.pdf

³ <https://www.un.org/pga/75/wp-content/uploads/sites/100/2021/06/Programme-PGA-v2h.pdf>

numerous other major conferences and events taking place. This presents a clear opportunity to leverage accelerated action on land-based solutions for climate and biodiversity action, and beyond.

The present summary was prepared by the President of the General Assembly to reflect the discussions of the dialogue.

II. Opening segment

During the opening segment, statements were made by [H.E. Mr. Volkan BOZKIR, President of the General Assembly](#)⁴; H.E. Mr. Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council; [H.E. Ms. Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations](#)⁵; H.E. Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India; [Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Undersecretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the UNCCD](#)⁶; and Ms. Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, Coordinator of the Association of Peul Women and Autochthonous Peoples of Chad.

The speakers during the opening session warned that healthy land which forms the foundation of our societies, has come under existential threat. Land degradation is estimated to undermine the well-being of more than one-third of the entire world population, driving species to extinction and intensifying the impact of climate change. Climate change further exacerbates, and is worsened by, unsustainable land use and land use changes, with many regions becoming drier and suffering more frequent and prolonged droughts, sometimes leading to destructive wildfires. Desertification and drought, made worse by climate change, are intersecting with conflict and the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to put 34 million people at risk of famine. Without a change in course, this will only get worse. By 2050, global crop yields are estimated to fall by 10%, with some suffering up to a 50% reduction. This will lead to a sharp 30% rise in world food prices, threatening progress on hunger and nutrition, as well as a myriad of associated development goals.

At the same time, productive land is the cornerstone to global food security, healthy ecosystems, employment, and stability; it is a precondition for the success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and for progress in implementing the Rio Conventions on biodiversity and climate change, and tackling pollution on land and a sea. Land restoration and land-based actions are also at the heart of building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic, offering opportunities that are accessible also to the most vulnerable groups such as women and youth, while improving long-term resilience.

The speakers to the opening segment identified many potential ways for elevating the importance of land issues at national level and in the international cooperation. Rethinking agriculture - benefiting from indigenous knowledge, using smart new technologies, and revising value chains - could increase yields while protecting soil. Developing governance and cooperation concerning land at all levels, from supporting land rights, ending illegal deforestation, women's empowerment and local decision-making to enhancing cross-sectoral and south-south cooperation, could effectively advance sustainable land management, add value to the land-based production, and promote integrated land use planning.

Currently, forests and agriculture are estimated to receive less than 3 percent of climate finance, while they can be calculated to represent more than 30 percent of the solution to the climate crisis. For all stakeholders to raise ambition on land, the financial flows and spending priorities need to be redirected accordingly. Addressing the COVID-19 induced debt-crisis, and upholding commitments to make

⁴ <https://www.un.org/pga/75/2021/06/14/high-level-dialogue-on-desertification-land-degradation-and-drought-6/>

⁵ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/dsg/statement/2021-06-14/deputy-secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-event-desertification-delivered>

⁶ <https://www.unccd.int/news-events/high-level-dialogue-desertification-land-degradation-and-drought-1>

available 100 billion dollars of climate financing annually, are necessary to enable urgent land action. Commendable contributions to restore land, include the recent pledges to the Great Green Wall amounting to over 14 billion USD. More financing options may also include debt swaps, green bonds, incentives, risk management services or various other financial tools that promote land restoration and encourage further investments. Integrating land into the post-COVID recovery plans and financing could, alone, shift the world's economies to a sustainability trajectory. By annual investments of 2,7 trillion USD, representing roughly one-fifth of the current COVID-19 recovery spending of the world's largest economies, close to 400 million new green jobs could be created in the next decade, generating over 10 trillion USD in annual business value. To better perceive land as an economic asset, the UN Statistical Commission has recently adopted a new System of Environmental-Economic Accounting that assesses the value of natural capital - land, forests, wetlands, and other ecosystems – to ensure that nature is treated as a measurable and quantifiable economic commodity⁷.

In the keynote address following the opening statements, Sir Robert Watson set the scene for the panel and plenary exchanges by presenting latest scientific findings around land, the livelihoods of people living on land, and the complex challenges that they face in the changing world. He underlined that the major international assessments used for his presentation, representing the work of thousands of scientists, prove the strong (negative) impact of DLDD on the achievement of almost all SDGs. DLDD, climate change and the loss of biodiversity should be seen as serious intertwined environmental emergencies with long-standing economic, developmental, security, social and ethical consequences, which must be addressed together.

Among the findings presented by Dr. Watson were the following:

- Land degradation is occurring in virtually every ecosystem type and country in the world. Between 1998-2013, 20-30 per cent of Earth's vegetated land surface showed persistent declining trends in productivity; land degradation has been estimated to result in a loss of about 10% of annual GDP. The severity and consequences depend on the social and ecological context.
- Climate change exacerbates land degradation, and land degradation is a driver of climate change through emissions of GHGs and reduced uptake of carbon. Emissions from agriculture, forestry and other land uses make up one-third of total global emissions. Agriculture accounts for 61 per cent of anthropogenic methane emissions.
- One million animal and plant species are threatened by extinction in part because of current and projected changes in the land surface. The conversion of land for agriculture is the leading driver of land-use change to meet the ever-increasing demand for food, feed, fiber and bioenergy production. Forests, wetlands and grasslands and savannas are being transformed.

In this context, land degradation neutrality (LDN) offers an approach to avoid or reduce degradation of land, combined with measures to reverse past degradation. It seeks to maintain natural capital and the ecosystem services that flow from it, offering multiple entry points for synergies among the Rio Conventions.⁸ Achieving LDN requires:

- coordinating policy agendas that simultaneously encourage more sustainable production and consumption practices of land-based commodities
- eliminating perverse incentives that promote degradation and devising positive incentives that reward the adoption of sustainable land management practices

⁷ <https://seea.un.org/ecosystem-accounting>

⁸ As at June 2021, over 100 countries have established national voluntary LDN targets, and some twenty more are in the process of doing so. These targets offer a science-based conceptual and practical framework for effective action to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation, which can also integrate/support nationally determined contributions to climate change and national biodiversity targets.

- integrating landscape-wide approaches to development of agricultural, forest, energy, water and infrastructure agendas

Investing in land restoration makes economic sense, where the gains of restoration exceed the costs by an average margin of 10:1, with further benefits received often through increased employment, better gender equity and more stability.

III. Panel 1: Achieving land degradation neutrality to accelerate COVID- 19 recoveries and the UN Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs

The first panel discussion of the High-Level Dialogue focused on achieving LDN to accelerate COVID-19 recoveries and the Decade of Action. The panel members shared their views on a number of related questions, including on the contribution of LDN to accelerating the 2030 Agenda, ecosystem restoration and COVID-19 recovery; securing the financing needed for DLDD; and facilitating universal adoption and implementation of the LDN targets. The panel was moderated by Ms. Agnes Kalibata, UNSG Special Envoy to the 2021 Food Systems Summit, and the members were Ms. Inger Andersen, UNEP Executive Director, Ms. Mami Mizutori, UNDRR Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, UN Special Coordinator for the Sahel, Ms. Maria Helena Semedo, FAO Deputy Director General, Nichole Schwab, Co-Head, Nature-based Solutions of the World Economic Forum, and Dr. Roger S. Pulwarty, Senior Scientist at NOAA Physical Sciences Laboratory.

The main messages, suggestions and issues raised by the first panel included the following:

Healthy land plays an important part in accelerating the achievement of multiple SDGs. Maintaining and restoring land resources has a vital role in food production, tackling climate change, securing biodiversity, and maintaining crucial ecosystem services, while ensuring shared prosperity and improved well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected livelihoods and food security all over the world, disrupting supply chains and influencing food prices. Building back better and bringing the SDGs back on track requires immediate action toward LDN, as a proven and cost-effective strategy that can improve land productivity and jumpstart a green recovery and nature positive economy. The national voluntary LDN targets that close to 130 countries have either already set and/or committed to, or are in the process of preparing, are key tools toward this aim and their implementation should be a priority nationally, and for international assistance. However, there is a need for all countries to engage in setting LDN targets and striving to achieve LDN through the appropriate measures.

While many countries are engaged in the LDN target setting, national plans, budgets, and development frameworks tend to be “LDN blind”, and that limits scaling up. Integration of LDN into relevant sectoral policies, such as those on water and energy, would entail further awareness raising. LDN should be also linked with national strategies concerning droughts and disaster risk reduction, as land-use planning and land restoration are critically important factors in mitigating the effects of drought and improving the resilience of affected people. LDN should be put at the heart of government and the planning. Furthermore, LDN should be integrated into the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, for which the UNCCD LDN economic country profiles⁹ will be very useful tool to guide policies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the interconnectedness of global challenges – land degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss, food security, employment and trade are all linked. Addressing such complex systemic challenges requires systemic solutions that bring together different stakeholders across the sectors, including youth, and take an integrated, coordinated approach that creates trust on many levels. Recent developments among the world’s most powerful countries, the G7

⁹ <https://www.unccd.int/actions/ldn-programme/ldn-country-profiles>

“[2030 Nature Compact](#)”¹⁰ and [the G20 initiative to reduce land degradation](#)¹¹, have set high ambitions to address the global challenges, which could be complemented by reviewing policy guardrails, trade regimes and subsidies to further advance the systemic shift toward healthier nature.

Integrating nature-based solutions and LDN into COVID-19 recovery packages could significantly trigger nature positive economics, with investments into regenerative agriculture and sustainable food chains. Scaling up land action requires training new cadre of professionals, in the public and private sectors, with deep knowledge of their own contexts and the ability to expand their networks. Many leading companies are already setting voluntary commitments to participating in a green recovery, and the private sector engagement could be further promoted by incentives and regulations favoring businesses that strive for land degradation neutrality.

IV. Panel 2: Urgent global cooperation on land to deliver the future we want

The second panel discussion of the High-Level Dialogue focused on promoting global cooperation on land to deliver the future we want. The panel members considered enhancing the interlinkages between land degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change; upscaling technology and capacity building cooperation for greater drought mitigation efforts; and securing tenure rights. The panel was moderated by Mr. Andrew Steer, President and CEO, The Bezos Earth Fund, and the members were Mr. Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator, Ms. Patricia Espinosa, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, CBD Executive Secretary, Mr. Juergen Voegelé, WB Vice President, Sustainable Development, Mr. Tony Simons, ICRAF Director General, Ms. Tarcila Rivera Zea, CHIRAPAQ President, Ms. Thato Mokgadi, Tomato Agripreneur, founder of Tsoo 13, Prof. José Manuel Moreno, Department of Environmental Sciences of the University of Castilla - La Mancha.

The main messages, suggestions and issues raised by the second panel included the following:

The three Rio Conventions are intrinsically interlinked at different levels, which can be demonstrated from two perspectives: synergies as a cause and effect, and as an action and effect. The first perspective focuses on how climate change, biodiversity loss and DLDD interact and influence each other, and how progress in one depends on progress in the others. This interlinkage is not evident only at the biophysical level, but also on how people are affected – “resilience” and “vulnerability” are shared under all three Conventions. The second perspective reflects synergies in the action taken by the Conventions: adoption of policies, development of legal and regulatory frameworks and promotion of technical and financial measures that support countries to implement the Convention. While these actions are specific to the focus of each Convention, they often share common features and response options.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the international community together and necessitated a more comprehensive, systemic approach to guide the recovery process. Also the three Rio Conventions are increasingly looked at as interlinked processes, calling for collective action. Through detailed considerations of land use, climate smart agriculture and soil biodiversity, land issues have entered the climate change and biodiversity debates, but the critical importance of addressing land is yet to be fully recognized. The Executive Secretaries of the three Conventions meet regularly to discuss synergies and strategies. The three Conventions would benefit from a more united agenda, better integration of their national targets and commitments, as well as more examples of programmes and practices that respond to all three Conventions, such as agroforestry, and joint advocacy against the relaxation of environmental laws and increases in deforestation which affect all three agendas.

¹⁰ <https://www.g7uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/G7-2030-Nature-Compact-PDF-120KB-4-pages.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.unccd.int/news-events/g-20-announces-new-initiative-save-degrading-land>

The land users - local communities and indigenous peoples, and particularly women - need to be brought to the forefront of addressing land degradation. They need to become part of decision-making on how land will be used and managed, with the understanding that land tenure rights is not necessarily about private ownership, but also about recognizing the communities that manage land and natural resources in public or communal lands.

A third of all workers – over 1 billion people, work in the agricultural sector. However, most do not have rights over the land they toil – currently more than 70% of the world’s farmland is controlled by 1% of farms, primarily large agribusinesses. Investing directly in land workers is an investment in our land and our planet’s future. When we enable workers to invest in their land, we support agricultural productivity. Environmental stewardship, wealth generation, civic participation, and the rule of law benefit, especially indigenous and small-scale producers, including female farmers.

Indigenous peoples of the world live in areas where 80% of biodiversity continues to thrive. These communities retain knowledge and resources that are tested and proven to fit to their environment, and that can effectively conserve and restore land and biodiversity. There is evidence of successful combination of local ecological knowledge with modern technology, leading to solutions for improved productivity while restoring land, capturing carbon and protecting biodiversity.

The displacement of traditional practices such as grazing, exacerbates DLDD particularly in drylands, leading to vicious cycles of more severe droughts, rising temperatures, and longer wildfires, risking large swathes of countries falling into ‘fire traps’. Minimizing drought and wildfire risks requires conducting integrated fire assessment plans, and quantifying the dangers that could be caused by the fire trap, including releasing vast carbon emissions and killing billions of animals. Integrating indigenous practices with modern science and using controlled low-level fires is critical to manage dryland and minimize wildfire risks.

Empowering people to manage and care for land calls for three types of incentives:

- 1) Policy frameworks that secure tenure and encourage land protection and restoration, and thereby motivate to care for land;
- 2) Access to investment capital that makes it possible to transform subsistence farming into income generation; and
- 3) Modern technology that combines indigenous and traditional knowledge to understand and monitor land degradation and/or restore land more effectively.

Investments in technology can contribute to the development of sophisticated data to measure and understand the extent of land degradation. Integrating such national data into globally relevant knowledge through an intergovernmental process has the potential for enabling broader, more targeted priority setting and action, although there are yet many challenges to overcome. In addition to the country level capacity and technology needs, collection and compilation of national data into global knowledge is hindered by the variety of data standards and definitions, which prevents comparability. Nevertheless, addressing land degradation cannot afford to wait for the availability for better data and knowledge, but rather needs to mobilize collective action and global cooperation with the data that is available, while continuing to develop innovative solutions for meaningful and inclusive data for further action.

More investments and support are needed for the implementation of all three Rio conventions, and the effectiveness of financing could be improved by targeting projects and programmes that offer simultaneously higher land productivity, carbon capture and biodiversity protection. In longer-term, meeting the financial needs of the implementation of the Conventions entails changing the business as usual and integrating the sustainable care of land and natural resources into the mainstream policies, incentive frameworks and business operations.

V. High-Level Plenary

The plenary segment included statements by Heads of States/Governments and Ministers, respectively. Many member States outlined their national and regional challenges, policy responses and commitments, and announced initiatives and partnerships for future action.

Many speakers noted the fundamental importance of protecting and restoring land and the functions and services of ecosystems, as key to human survival and sustainable development. The need for a sound environment and healthy soil was considered a common denominator for all people, accompanied by the duty to eliminate barriers and practices that hinder the protection of the environment and the combat against DLDD. Failure to act means risking decrease in food production, dwindling water resources and an upsurge in migration and asylum seekers. Several countries described how soil and land degradation, deforestation, biodiversity loss, droughts, torrential or erratic rainfall and floods have already affected the livelihoods of people and resulted in poverty and instability.

DLDD poses a great threat globally that is particularly acute for Africa, the least developed countries, and the landlocked developing countries. Estimates show that Africa has already lost more than 60% of its agricultural land since 1950 coupled with population growth of more than 440% during the same period. Land degradation exacerbates extreme poverty and costs an estimated US\$ 127 billion per year. Some African countries have seen up to 95% of their land affected by desertification. In sub-Saharan Africa, it has displaced up to 50 million people by 2020. Dependency on rain-fed agriculture exposes poor populations to the vagaries of climate change. Soil erosion is more rampant following excessive flooding due to occurrence of more cyclones. Years of droughts and cyclones generally correspond to years of economic downturn, more misery and food insecurity. It is estimated that two thirds of Africa's arable land may be lost by 2025 and hence increasing poverty levels and food insecurity.

LDCs in Africa and the Pacific region are the most vulnerable and are likely to suffer the brunt of desertification, land degradation and droughts. 40 out of the 46 LDCs are leading the way by setting land degradation neutrality targets on 220 million hectares. Land restoration should anchor post-COVID recovery efforts. However, this requires more financing for mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Efforts are required to scale up adaptation finance in the developing world. Currently, annual adaptation costs in developing countries are estimated at US\$70 billion by 50%

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development puts a strong emphasis on the integrated approach to achieving SDGs that can harness synergies and minimize potential trade-offs. Many speakers noted that land, as well as the concept of LDN, is an integral part of the SDGs, supporting multiple functions that are critical for progress worldwide. They called for better recognition to combating DLDD as one of priorities of the international agenda, noting its potential as a powerful accelerator of SDGs and crucial part of the action on climate change and biodiversity.

Echoing the statements made at the opening session and during the panels, countries highlighted the interlinkages between climate change, biodiversity and land degradation, and the need for collective action across the three Rio Conventions to achieve sustainable development. It was noted that soil stores twice as much GHG as the atmosphere, and thereby nature based or land-based solutions have great potential to reduce emissions and sequester carbon. Furthermore, nature-based solutions offer multiple other benefits, from boosting resilience of ecosystems and people affected by desertification, to major contribution to biodiversity conservation. Several countries described how their actions on DLDD are contributing to carbon removal, as efficient and cost-effective means for addressing climate change. They called for a transition toward carbon free economy that could keep the world on track with the commitments concerning climate change.

Many speakers underlined that international cooperation and multilateral efforts are necessary for tackling global challenges like climate change, environmental degradation, and pandemics. This High-level Dialogue was said to reflect the strong political will of the international community to address DLDD, while reminding that the wellbeing of people, animals and land is interconnected. Some countries called for a new way of thinking that exceeds the usual scope of protecting and restoring soil and paves way for new investments and broader collaboration, including also civil society, private sector and academia, for achieving transformational change in the way we manage land. New models of governance to foster biodiversity, incorporate climate action and combat DLDD, from local to global levels, were also called for. Many countries underlined the importance of respecting land rights and secure tenure, and empowering women to become active agents of change for LDN. Some countries reported the establishment of national gender programmes that promoted the participation of women in sustainable land management, and of specific programmes for indigenous communities to manage their country and protect environment and cultural values for future generations.

Costa Rica, the host of the 2021 Desertification and Drought Day global event, announced its intention to launch an Alliance for the Stewardship of Land, as part of a coordinated response to land degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss worldwide. This initiative seeks to demonstrate that combating desertification, land degradation and drought and achieving land degradation neutrality will contribute to safeguarding livelihood and building back better in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several countries had prepared their voluntary national LDN targets, and many speakers also informed of their other policies and plans that contribute to land issues, including national food security and biodiversity plans, set-up of protected areas, rangeland management programmes and reforestation campaigns. Multi-stakeholder partnerships and resource mobilization were called for to support the implementation of transformative projects for LDN and drought. Some speakers noted the need to better access climate finance. The LDN Fund was welcomed as an opportunity for investments to land-based actions. Many countries brought up the promotion of private sector involvement in addressing DLDD and strengthening sustainable agriculture. Public-private partnerships were considered to facilitate access to technological solutions and innovation, in addition to bringing well-needed investments.

Numerous national, regional and global programmes and initiatives had been launched to support aspirations to voluntarily reduce land degradation, restore degraded lands, strengthen resilience to climate change and implement sustainable land management efforts. The Great Green Wall of Africa Initiative was mentioned by several speakers as an example of successful joint action to improve food security, climate resilience and job creation while restoring land and mitigating the effects of drought. Some countries called for the expansion of the Initiative to other African countries, and other regions of the world.

The establishment of a special international mechanism to protect productive landscapes globally similarly to those mechanism existing in UNFCCC and CBD, was proposed.

Many countries in all regions are affected by recurrent droughts that are said to have prolonged and intensified due to climate change. A number of countries highlighted their measures to mitigate the impact of drought, most notably the establishment of cross-sector, coordinated drought preparedness plans. As noted also in the exchanges of the first panel, there is need for more information and better understanding of droughts, as well as on their impacts on affected people. Some countries informed also of their water management policies, set-up of drought early warning systems and national drought funds. The UNCCD secretariat and Global Mechanism support to the development of national drought plans was appreciated. Some countries proposed that a protocol on drought be established for the UNCCD.

There was a broad recognition of the potential of land restoration for post-COVID-19 recovery, for ensuring a more resilient food production systems, creating new green jobs and preventing future

pandemics. The pandemic was noted to demonstrate that environment and health are cross-cutting issues and any failure in one affects the other.

At the dawn of the UN Decade of Restoration (2021-2030) and numerous international summits and conferences, the speakers emphasized the importance of placing land and soil as global policy priorities. Enhancing coherence and synergies among the many actors involved was considered essential for an effective, holistic policy response to crosscutting challenges that the global community currently faces.

VI. Call to Action

In closing of the Dialogue, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Undersecretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Convention to Combat Desertification, captured the key points expressed to a brief Call to Action:

*This High-Level Dialogue, supporting multiple regional large-scale restoration programmes and welcoming the G20 Global Initiative to reduce degraded land by 50 percent by 2040, calls for **building ambition on land stewardship among different stakeholders** as we move into the UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration.*

*Land restoration is low tech, democratic, accessible to all. Land restoration is one of the cheapest solutions to the climate crisis and is a foundation for a steady post-COVID economic recovery. We call for **investments in land-based solutions to sustain COVID-19 recovery efforts**, especially in rural economies, to generate win-wins for stimulus investment.*

*Investing in land restoration secures food production; combats poverty; reduces risks of unwanted migration and insecurity. Investing in ecosystem restoration is securing sustainable economic recovery, as at least 40% of global GDP depends on nature. We call for setting the **financing right to scale up land restoration and translate those commitments into concrete, immediate action.***

Land restoration is not divisive. It can unite us. Rich and poor. North and South. Governments and Civil Society. Public and Private Sector. Our youth and women are at the front lines of action.

Let us resolve to work together: reconnecting people and nature through a high-level ambition on land stewardship.

Let us use this window of opportunity to champion a new restoration narrative and bring back nature into balance for all – both now and for the generations to come. Let us make peace with nature.