

To promote public awareness of land degradation and to draw attention to the implementation of the UNCCD in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, the United Nations General Assembly declared 17<sup>th</sup> June to be "**World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought**" (WDCD) in 1994. Since this decision, WDCD is celebrated on 17<sup>th</sup> June each year. Many invested organizations celebrate and observe WDCD by organizing a large variety of outreach activities and awareness raising events.

The WDCD 2018 global observance will be hosted by the Government of Ecuador. The Day will convene under the slogan, "**Land has true Value. Invest in it,**" to remind the world that land is a tangible asset with measurable values beyond just cash. The country promotes sustainable land management as one of the pillars of bio-economy – the knowledge-based production and utilization of biological resources, innovative biological processes and principles to sustainably provide goods and services across all economic sectors. Ecuador will use the WDCD as an occasion to showcase its nation-wide efforts in making sustainable land management the principal tool for the development of bio-economy.

### **Land and Drought**

By 2050, the demand for water is expected to increase by 50 per cent. As the population increase, especially in dry land areas, more and more people are becoming dependent on fresh water supplies in land that are becoming degraded. Water scarcity is one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century. The Global Risks report published by World Economic Forum ranks 'water crisis' the top risk in the coming decade and it has a place in the Sustainable Development Goals where a specific goal has been dedicated to water.



Drought and water scarcity are considered to be the most far-reaching of all natural disasters, causing short and long-term economic and ecological losses as well as significant secondary and tertiary impacts. To mitigate these impacts, drought preparedness that responds to human needs, while preserving environmental quality and ecosystems, requires involvement of all stakeholders including water users and water providers to achieve solutions for drought. Action on mitigating the effects of drought should be implemented considering comprehensive drought early warning and monitoring systems, vulnerability and risk assessment, upstream-downstream water uses, the link between water and land use; livelihood diversification strategies

for drought affected people, etc. For example, addressing land degradation upstream improves access to water on site and downstream.

**The UNCCD supports countries by advocating for three important pillars.**

- **Early Warning Systems:** Declaring a drought too late can have a devastating impact on lives and livelihoods. Yet when you declare a drought it can often be very subjective and highly political. Early Warning System (EWS) would guide affected countries by providing timely information that they can use to reduce risks and to better prepare for an effective response.

- **Vulnerability and risk assessment:** No amount of early warning will work without action to protect the most vulnerable. Some people and some systems are more vulnerable to drought as a result of social, economic, and environmental factors. It is important to combine better forecasts with detailed knowledge on how landscapes and societies respond to a lack of rain, and turn that knowledge into early intervention.

- **Drought risk mitigation measures:** Proactive drought risk management could save lives and the livelihoods of millions of people. For example, the development of sustainable irrigation schemes for crops and livestock or water harvesting schemes could boost the recycling and reuse of water, explore the cultivation of more drought tolerant crops, expand crop insurance schemes and establish of alternative livelihoods that can provide income in drought-prone areas.

In this occasion, all are invited to organize events to celebrate the World Day to Combat Desertification as an opportunity to increase awareness rising and community participation in this programme, to improving yields and land productivity to increase the food security and incomes of land users and the poorest farmers.

Director

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