IAEA STATEMENT

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

SDG 15 and interlinkages with other SDGs – Life on Land

United Nations Headquarters, New York

11 July 2022

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

SDG 15 and interlinkages with other SDGs –Life on Land
Monday, 11 July 2022 – 09.10–12.00 hrs

Mr Chairperson,

Land degradation affects more than 60% of global soil resources, due mostly to intensive agriculture and deforestation. Degraded land influences the lives of more than 1 billion people who rely on this land for food production. To protect and sustainably use the world's natural resources, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), works with countries across the world to protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and reduce biodiversity loss.

Experts use nuclear and isotopic techniques to assess soil quality and study how crops take up nutrients, as well as how the soil moves; this information helps to develop efficient soil management and crop production methods. Such methods can help people to continue to grow food while conserving soil resources, and in some cases, even reverse erosion and prevent soil from polluting water resources.

With the help of nuclear science, experts can also develop methods to track contaminants harming the environment and provide data that can help decision makers in Member States to develop policies to protect the environment.

The UNCCD's land degradation neutrality (LDN) goal can halt, and then reverse, the alarming land degradation rates. In this context the IAEA, via the Joint IAEA/FAO Centre, is helping more than 80 countries across the world to assess soil erosion using fallout radionuclides to determine the rates of erosion and the sources of the eroded soil. The use of such techniques is complementary to conventional land management and could be a game changer in the identification of soil conservation measures. Building such national capacity is therefore critical to guide the identification of priority targets for conservation and restoration and contribute to the achievement of SDG 15.

I thank you.