



Contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

ECOSOC functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums, are invited to share relevant input and deliberations as to how they address goals and targets from the perspective of “*Ensuring that no one is left behind*”.

Inputs could follow the following template, inspired by the report of the Secretary-General on Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level (A/70/684).

Submissions will be publicly posted online at the United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, at sustainabledevelopment.un.org, as input to the 2016 meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Please send the completed form no later than **16 May 2016** to the Secretariat’s e-mail pietracci@un.org

Submission Form

1. An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at the global level:

To ensure that no one is left behind we must look to healthy and productive land. Human life depends on the land. Plant life provides 80% of our dietⁱ. About one billion people in developing countries live in extreme poverty; two-thirds of them live in rural areas. Three out of four poor people in developing countries live in rural areas and agriculture is a source of livelihoods for an estimated 86% of rural people. It provides jobs for 1.3 billion smallholders and landless workers.ⁱⁱ 795 million people are estimated to be chronically undernourished as of 2014, often as a direct consequence of land degradation, declining soil fertility, unsustainable water use, drought and loss of biodiversityⁱⁱⁱ. Over 1.7 billion people are currently living in river basins where water use exceeds recharge.^{iv} By 2050, at least one in four people is likely to live in a country affected by chronic or recurring shortages of fresh water.^v Degraded land cannot regulate water availability and flow. At the same time, forests - trees on the land - account for 30% of the Earth’s surface^{vi}, providing vital habitats for millions of people^{vii} and species and they are important sources of clean air and water.

The protection of our land [terrestrial ecosystem] resources must be a high priority if we are to make a transition to a more sustainable society. This is strongly reflected in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 which states: “*Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss*”.^{viii} At its heart is the concept of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN Target 15.3)^{ix}, which is about achieving a balance between three processes: degradation [caused by unsustainable use], rehabilitation/restoration and sustainable land management. Given that over 40% of the world’s poor depend on degraded lands for essential services, such as food, fuel, raw material, and water purification, restoring productive capacity of the land could lead to significant strides in decreasing economic vulnerability and promoting long-term development.

In order to “leave no one behind”, achieving LDN at scale is a precondition for the achievement of almost all 17 SGD’s.^x



2. The identification of gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges:

Today we are seeing unprecedented rates of land degradation and ecosystem loss. Arable land is being lost at 30 to 35 times the historical rate.^{xi} Drought and desertification is on the rise as a result of extreme weather events and unsustainable land use. While, of the 8.7 million species thought to have been living on Earth^{xii}, 8 %are extinct and 22 %are at risk of extinction^{xiii} as a result of habitat destruction.

Land degradation severely constrains agricultural productivity and threatens food security and land-based livelihoods, with especially serious consequences for the livelihoods of rural dwellers in the more marginal agricultural areas. It has been estimated that degradation caused by past soil erosion alone is responsible for reductions of between 2- 40% in African crop yields.^{xiv} In Sub-Saharan Africa, it is acknowledged that land degradation has contributed to decreases in food production and the region loses an estimated \$4.5 billion each year due to severe nutrient depletion. If accelerated erosion continues unabated, yield reductions by the year 2020 may be 16.5% for the continent and 14.5% for Sub-Saharan Africa.^{xv}

Human induced land use change has also caused devastating economic losses. Current estimates, for global land use change between 1997 and 2011, value the loss of ecosystem services at a range of USD 4.3 to 20.2 trillion per year.^{xvi} Furthermore, the direct cost of land degradation amounts to nearly USD 66 billion per year.^{xvii} Regionally, erosion-induced soil nutrient depletion across 42 African countries is estimated to cost 280 million tons of cereals per year under 'business as usual', equaling USD 127 billion annually or 12.3 per cent of their total combined GDP for 2010–2012.^{xviii}

All of these trends adversely impact the poorest and most vulnerable communities and represents a threat for the principle of *no one is left behind*. Land is often the only asset for the poorest in society and for those who live in rural areas. Yet sustainable land management tends to be considered only as an afterthought in discussions about food, water and energy security or indeed with regard to climate change [where well managed land is vital for both adaption and mitigation] or unplanned urbanization. Yet, it is fundamental to development for the poorest people. There is an urgent need to mainstream sustainable land management into other key policy sectors.

3. Valuable lessons learned on ensuring that no one is left behind:

Sustainable development requires smarter integrated approaches than those we have used up until now. These approaches can be based on the use of traditional and indigenous knowledge. These can be refined for the 21st century. However, knowledge needs to be transferred more effectively and supported. It requires low-cost solutions to be replicated and applied at a much greater scale. As a globally agreed target, LDN can be used to galvanize action to address land degradation in all terrestrial ecosystems across entire landscapes. Two billion hectares of degraded land are available [including 500 million hectares of degraded and abandoned former agricultural land] to kick-start a real green economy creating enormous multiplier effects for employment, learning and poverty reduction. Achieving LDN will however require a paradigm shift in land stewardship: from 'degrade-abandon-migrate' to 'protect-sustain-restore'.^{xix} An enabling environment with a legal and tax/incentive structure to encourage the shift will be vital. This means among other things, securing land tenure and access to investment capital for those who work the land.

It also means cooperation among various sectors and national sustainable development plans with a view to:

- adopting sustainable land management (SLM) policies and practices in order to minimize current, and avoid future, land degradation; and
- rehabilitating degraded and abandoned lands as well as restoring degraded natural and semi-natural ecosystems that provide vital benefits to people and working landscapes.

This could:

- Create over 200 million full-time jobs across the food production system in 2050.^{xx}



- By reaching 95 % of potential maximum crop yields (by adopting SLM practices), deliver up to 2.3 billion tons of additional crop production per year, equivalent to USD 1.4 trillion. In Africa, every 10% increase in yields has been estimated to result in a 7% reduction in poverty, an equivalent effect is absent from growth in manufacturing and services. Aside from poverty-alleviation, it has also been shown that it is only in regions where agricultural growth has increased that hunger has been reduced.^{xxi}
- By restoring just 12 % of degraded agricultural land, boost smallholder's incomes by USD 35-40 billion per year and feed 200 million people per year within 15 years.^{xxii}
- By improved land use and management, such as low-emissions agriculture, agro-forestry and ecosystem conservation and restoration, close the remaining emissions gap by up to 25%, while simultaneously reducing the risks posed by climate change and enhancing the resilience of key sectors.^{xxiii}

Countries will need assistance in target setting (prioritizing areas for investment) based on national circumstances and an innovative approach to private sector

Towards LDN: The LDN target setting process^{xxiv} and the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund^{xxv}

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) together with the Global Mechanism will support interested countries in the national Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target setting process, including the definition of national baselines, measures and targets to rapidly scale up global efforts to achieve LDN by 2030. To address the multiple SDG's in a synergistic and cost effective manner, countries can now formulate voluntary targets to achieve LDN, according to their specific national context and development priorities. The programme builds on the successful experience of the LDN pilot project that ran between May 2014 and October 2015 with 14 LDN champion countries.^{xxvi}

Under the LDN Target Setting Programme, all participating country Parties will:

- Receive technical guidance on how to effectively assess and define national baselines related to the indicator frameworks of target 15.3 of the SDGs and the UNCCD, and how to establish relevant measures and targets to achieve LDN by 2030
- Have access to cutting-edge technical expertise on demand via an online LDN target setting help desk
- Have the opportunity to participate in international capacity building and knowledge exchange events.

Affected country Parties will also receive direct technical and financial support for their national LDN target setting processes, including:

- Specialized expertise
- Access to the best available data
- Support for conducting a multi-stakeholder consultation process, mainstreaming LDN into national SDG agendas
- Assistance in identifying LDN investment opportunities, in order to link LDN target setting with LDN implementation.

Given the key cross-sectoral influence of the land sector, the process of setting national LDN targets must be anchored in the national portfolio for implementing the SDGs. It must also leverage both on the national processes for the implementation of the other Rio Conventions (the Convention on Biodiversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), and on the interventions of multiple development partners at the country level. The LDN Target Setting Programme will become fully operational during the second quarter of 2016.

An Impact Investment Fund for Land Degradation Neutrality is being established. The Fund brings together several institutions committed to addressing the global challenge of land degradation and is being designed to support large-scale rehabilitation of degraded land, for sustainable and productive use, with long-term private



sector financing. The Fund will provide a structured portfolio in which private and public actors can engage in achieving Land Degradation Neutrality.

4. Emerging issues likely to affect the realization of this principle:

The global trend remains towards increasing land degradation that contradicts the principle of *no one is left behind*.

Climate change accelerates land degradation/desertification and vice versa. Productive, healthy land is also lost in situations of drought and wind (incl. dust and sand storms) and flooding (water erosion). As the climate becomes more unpredictable, the phenomena are likely to increase. The poorest and most vulnerable communities are on the frontline of climate change and land degradation and will be disproportionately affected.

Communities living on degraded land are likely to migrate in the event that land is no longer productive. Land abandonment is likely to drive further unplanned urbanization (as rural people move to the cities) or resource competition and conflict (as individuals or communities move to land already occupied).

Efforts to restore and manage our land resources more sustainably will require investment, enabling policies and incentives, and multi-sectoral land use planning. The current level of investment both from National Governments and international community including the private sector and donors have been limited in scale and scope compared to the severity and extent of land degradation.^{xxvii}

The multi-dimensional scale and aspects of land management call for more coordination and cooperation in planning and decision making among different government agencies, especially those responsible for agriculture, livestock, forestry, land and water resources, environment, science and technology, finance, planning, legislation and tourism. Therefore coordination and harmonization of SLM objectives and initiatives through better mainstreaming within national budgets, poverty reduction and rural development strategies and development plans is essential.^{xxviii}

5. Areas where political guidance by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is required:

- Engagement of developed country Member States in setting voluntary national targets for LDN [and the other SDGs].
- Sustainable land management would make an enormous contribution to the achievement of the full range of SDGs. However, the full benefits will only be delivered if synergies are achieved. How can mainstreaming of land issues into other policy areas be better delivered [agriculture, water, energy, urbanization, climate change, employment etc.]?
- Private sector (decision making) is a driver of land degradation but with adequate incentives, the private sector could quickly deliver land degradation neutrality. Can the private sector be better engaged to deliver on the SDGs?
- The link between land abandonment/land degradation processes and migration and conflict that could undermine the delivery of other SDGs.

6. Policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress for those at risk of being left behind:

While the SDG agenda is global, practical solutions will be needed at the local and landscape-scale. It is at this scale that natural resources and ecosystem services are best managed and that people live their daily lives. Sustainable land management, rehabilitation and restoration can provide immediate, cost-effective benefits across the board. With forward-looking policies, adequate tailored finance and incentives, and strong political will and ambition, the potential of the land use sector can be unleashed. We already have proven technologies and good practices that contribute to a more stable and resilient world. Now it is just a matter of scaling them up and scaling them out to accelerate implementation of the SDGs.

- Formulate and/or mainstream and implement proper policy interventions/incentives for the private sector in line with the principle of Land Degradation Neutrality.
- Enforcement of the existing rules and regulations in the areas of land use planning and land tenure.
- Support the scaling up of best technologies and human /institutional capacities for effective SLM.
- Strengthen partnership and synergy by building a common action-based SLM framework with governments, donors, NGOs and UN agencies. Many land-based practices can help communities and countries adapt to the impacts of climate change and halt biodiversity loss. Creating and strengthen synergy among the three Rio-Conventions would lower the transaction cost while simultaneously supports results-based land management practices on the ground. For instance by using common indicators or monitoring and evaluation frameworks, the Rio Conventions and their finance mechanism, such as the Global Environmental Facility, would be in a position to better assess and compare the effectiveness of land management policies and practices in meeting their common goals. This would greatly contribute to the enabling environment by:
 - creating opportunities for collaboration among diverse sectors and stakeholders;
 - enriching reporting processes and serving the long-term goals of the Rio Conventions; and
 - supporting a more harmonized approach to sustainable development^{xxix}

ⁱ UNEP(n.d.)Goal 15Life on land, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgoverview/post-2015-development-agenda/goal-15.html>

ⁱⁱ Action Aid (2012): Fed up: Now's time to invest in Agroecology, p. 13.

ⁱⁱⁱ UNDP (n.d.): End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgoverview/post-2015-development-agenda/goal-2.html>

^{iv} UN(2015): Goal 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/water-and-sanitation/>

^v UNDP (2015): Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgoverview/post-2015-development-agenda/goal-6.html>

^{vi} UNEP(n.d.)Goal 15Life on land, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgoverview/post-2015-development-agenda/goal-15.html>, FAO (2010): Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010, Key findings, p. 3 <http://foris.fao.org/static/data/fra2010/KeyFindings-en.pdf>

^{vii} Forests are home to 350 million people around the world, while 60 million indigenous peoples almost wholly depend on them for their livelihoods. Eliasch Review (2008): Climate Change: Financing Global Forests, p.9.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228833/9780108507632.pdf

^{viii} GA (2015): Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Goal 15, A/RES/70/1

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

^{ix} The concept of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) has been adopted as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is enshrined in Target 15.3: "by 2030, combat desertification, and restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world"

^x See e.g. UNCCD (2016): A natural fix.A Joined-up Approach to delivering the global goals for sustainable development,

http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Publications/4_2016_Land_the_SDGs.pdf

^{xi} UNEP(n.d.): Goal 15Life on land, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgoverview/post-2015-development-agenda/goal-15.html>

^{xii} Tittensor, Mora C, et al.(2011) How Many Species Are There on Earth and in the Ocean? PLoS Biol 9(8): e1001127. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.1001127

^{xiii} UNEP(n.d.)Goal 15 Life on land, <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sdgoverview/post-2015-development-agenda/goal-15.html>

^{xiv} Pretty, Jules et al (2014): Foresight and African agriculture: innovations and policy opportunities, p. 14 with further references.

^{xv} Pretty, Jules et al (2014): Foresight and African agriculture: innovations and policy opportunities, p. 14 with further references.

^{xvi} Costanza et al. (2014): Changes in the global value of ecosystem services, Global Environmental Change, Elsevier Issue 26, p 152.

^{xvii} Nkonya, Ephraim et.al.(2011): Economics of Land Degradation. The Costs of Action versus Inaction, IFPRI Issue Brief 68, p. 4.

^{xviii} ELD(2015): Report for policy makers Reaping economic and environmental benefits from sustainable land management, Key facts and figures, p.3, http://eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/pdf/Key_facts_and_figures_-_Report_for_policy_and_decision_makers2015.pdf

^{xix} UNCCD (2014): Land Degradation Neutrality. Resilience at local, national and regional levels, p. 14.



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^{xx} Cf. ILO (2012): Working towards sustainable development. Opportunities for decent work and social inclusion in a green economy, footnote 6, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_181836.pdf

^{xxi} Pretty, Jules et al (2014): Foresight and African agriculture: innovations and policy opportunities, p. 8 with further references.

^{xxii} The global commission on the economy and climate (2015): Better growth better climate, the new climate economy report, the global report, p. 116.

^{xxiii} UNCCD (2015): Land matters for climate. Reducing the gap and approaching the target, <http://www.unccd.int/en/resources/publication/Pages/default.aspx>

^{xxiv} For detailed information see: UNCCD/GM (2016): Land degradation neutrality: The target setting programme,

http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Publications/4_2016_LDN_TS%20_ENG.pdf

^{xxv} For detailed information see: GM/Mirova (2015): Land degradation neutrality fund. An innovative investment fund project,

http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Publications/2015_ldn_fund_brochure_eng.pdf

^{xxvi} See GM (2015): Country Engagement in the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme, <http://www.global-mechanism.org/content/supporting-countries-set-land-degradation-neutrality-targets>

^{xxvii} FAO (2008): Challenges for sustainable land management (SLM) for food security in Africa, ARC/08/INF/5, p. 9.

^{xxviii} FAO (2008): Challenges for sustainable land management (SLM) for food security in Africa, ARC/08/INF/5, p. 9.

^{xxix} UNCCD (2015): Land degradation neutrality. Resilience at local, national and regional levels, p. 21.