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REQUEST FOR CONTRIBUTION

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Working Party on International Environment Issues (Desertification)
Subject:	WPIEI (Desertification): UNCCD COP 13 - High level segment Round Table 1 - call for comments by Wednesday, 30 August 2017 cob

Delegations will find enclosed draft lines to take for Round Table 1 : Land degradation: a challenge to development, prosperity and peace.

Delegations may send comments by Wednesday 30 August 2017 cob to **tuuli.sooaar-sade@envir.ee** (Presidency) with a copy to **Helge-Elisabeth.ZEITLER@ec.europa.eu** and **secretariat.devgen@consilium.europa.eu** .

Round table 1: Land degradation: a challenge to development, prosperity and peace

Monday, 11 September 2017 in Ordos, People's Republic of China

Background provided by the UNCCD Secretariat

9. The planet's limited resources are under pressure. By 2050 global demand for food, water and energy is expected to grow by approximately 70, 55 and 80 per cent, respectively. Yet up to 25 per cent of the Earth's land is already degraded due to unsustainable land use, global food production is expected to decrease by 12 per cent by 2040, and available cropland is expected to decrease by 8–20 per cent by 2050. These resource pressures are expected to increase in the future, particularly where the population is growing rapidly. Developing countries are likely to account for approximately 97 per cent of global population growth by 2050. These soaring populations and resource pressures could slow efforts to combat poverty, particularly in places where environmental disasters, land degradation and climate change damage livelihoods.

10. A land-based green growth and jobs strategy, for example, could constitute a response strategy to the negative effects of environmental degradation on employment while aiming to reduce the environmental impact of key economic sectors to sustainable levels. It would involve jobs that conserve or rehabilitate the environment. A global transformation to a greener economy could generate 15 to 60 million additional jobs globally over the next two decades and lift tens of millions of workers out of poverty, with significant improvements in productivity and income levels for rural communities.

11. Failure to act in this way will leave millions without the means to create stable and sustainable livelihoods. Resource depletion perpetuates a cycle of social and political inequality, especially in rural areas, providing fodder for future frustration and discontent.

12. It is often observed that a lack of viable livelihood opportunities, particularly for rural youth, can compound pre-existing grievances, particularly where there is high unemployment. In certain vulnerable situations or where employment options are limited, youth may be drawn to criminal activities. In desertification-plagued Nigeria, for example, survey respondents from the states of Borno and Kaduna identified the high incidence of unemployment and poverty as the second most important reason why youth engage in extremist violence.

13. In parallel, it is estimated that 135 million people will be at risk of being displaced by desertification over the coming decades. Large population movements are already recognized by the United Nations Security Council as constituting a potential threat to international peace and security, particularly if there are existing social and ethnic tensions. The line between economic, ecological and political refugees will be blurred. An additional downside of outmigration is that once productive areas, after they are abandoned by farmers, will become barren. In some cases, abandoned lands and natural resources become a base for the expansion of non-state actors. These regions tend to be in outlying areas and poorly controlled/managed territory.

14. Insecure land tenure and inadequate land administration systems are further factors fuelling tensions around the globe. Approximately 70 per cent of the global population do not have freehold and rely on customary and/or indigenous tenure, informal tenure types, or rental

arrangements. Tenure insecurity has been part of the cycle of poverty and insecurity in many places including Angola, Burundi, Colombia, Kyrgyzstan, Papua New Guinea, urban Peru, Rwanda, Tajikistan and Uganda.

Key question: Can better land management ensure development, prosperity and peace?

General points:

- *Land is the foundation for food security, economic growth and sustainable development. Reversing land degradation and achieving sustainable land management is essential for meeting rising demands for food, feed, wood, and other goods while addressing climate change and maintaining the range of services provided by healthy terrestrial ecosystems.*
- *The effective implementation of the Convention can play a significant role in addressing the root causes of forced displacement and conflict and achieving SDG 16 and in contributing to sustainable economic development.*
- *Sustainable land management is both a preventive measure and a restorative one. Systematic implementation of National Action Plans contributes to protecting and rehabilitating land as a source of livelihoods and revenues, improving access to land rights as well as a basis of resilience by reducing risks and impacts of disasters.*
- *The poor management of natural resources and related environmental stresses can be implicated in all phases of the conflict cycle, from contributing to the outbreak and perpetuation of violence to undermining prospects for peace and recovery. National and international efforts should support as a priority the early and sustained engagement in land issues as part of a broader conflict prevention strategy.*
- *We support that the importance of sustainable land management in contributing to peace and stability and to prioritize sustainable land management and land rehabilitation as a means to create jobs in fragile countries and unstable areas be reflected in the Convention's Strategic Framework.*

Possible questions to consider and bullet points reacting to questions:

(a) To what extent are land degradation and drought drivers of reverse development?

- *There is growing evidence of links between environmental degradation and climate change, and poverty, instability, insecurity, conflict, migration, loss of livelihoods, forced displacement. Environmental factors are rarely the sole cause of violent conflict or migration, but combine with other long term pressures and short term shocks such as population growth, governance failures, and price fluctuations. Climate change often reinforces the links further.*

(b) Will society be able to manage future pressures on land – especially as climate change accelerates – or will land degradation trigger frustration, migration, radicalization or violent conflict?

- *The trends are not encouraging, with increasing population growth, competition for resources, and climate change all creating greater scarcity, unpredictability, and*

tensions. Despite the growing awareness and evidence, further research and better data analysis, including taking advantage of earth observation systems and other scientific assessments, are still needed for improving our understanding of the links. And further efforts are needed to promote preventive/early action and to systematically include environmental and climate information (including on land degradation and drought) in conflict prevention and risk assessment systems.

(c) Would green growth and the subsequent creation of decent land-based green jobs be a suitable strategy to mitigate youth unemployment? If yes, can land rehabilitation be a viable option for combating migration outflows and helping returning migrants?

- Sustainable land management and land restoration can provide significant economic opportunities for sustainable growth and employment and should therefore also be a focus of national and international efforts and investment facilitation, in particular for conflict areas.*
- The EU and its MS welcome the 3S Initiative. We encourage parties to engage in more and similar activities across affected areas.*

(d) Would improving administrative systems and ensuring better land tenure rights head off conflicts over basic resources?

- Land issues should be addressed systematically as part of sustainable development programs. Sustainable land management, land restoration and improved land governance and access to land rights and tenure, are indeed the foundation for improved peace, prosperity and development opportunities.*
- Land issues should also where relevant, be included in peace negotiations and agreements, conflict prevention strategies and activities, post-conflict recovery programmes, and U.N. peace missions as important elements for long-lasting solutions that ensure sustainable livelihoods. In that regard, enhanced cooperation between the different communities (humanitarian, military, conservation) and engagement of the Convention with the relevant parts of the UN system (DPKO, Rule of Law Group etc) are important.*

(e) Faced with climate change, states may need to conserve water and land, redistribute resources and develop disaster warning and response systems. How can growing needs be met in a cost-effective and self-sustaining manner?

- Effective, fair and transparent land governance systems are essential to address growing and often competing demands on finite land and natural resources. The specific challenges and needs of smallholder farmers and local communities need to be at the heart of our efforts.*
- Water and soil conservation, efficient management of soil organic matter, afforestation, reforestation and agroforestry are essential and cost effective measures to allow land to meet growing demands in a sustainable manner.*
- We need effective monitoring and early warning systems to be able to identify where resources are coming under pressure or where resources are being degraded. These*

should be priority areas for sustainable land management. Therefore, better integration of environmental information (including on climate) and population resilience capacity into early warning systems is essential.

- *Seeking opportunities to actively promote ongoing coordination between the various organisations active in this field and work through new partnerships and pathways can also bring benefits and help scale up efforts e.g. by linking up with other conventions and integration of SLM into climate action, or action on biodiversity (e.g. eco-system based approaches to disaster risk reduction). More focus on the synergy work between the Rio Conventions, including in their implementation, and the links with other processes like the Sendai framework and the Global Soil Partnership is therefore very important.*
- *There is also need to promote information sharing, fill in data gaps and promote better use of existing data in policy-making for increased resilience and tackling the root causes of insecurity and forced displacement.*