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CAUX KEYNOTE SPEECH – 4 July 2014

It is a pleasure to be here. I understand you have had a useful and productive week.

President Obama, in June last year, said about climate change “*sticking your head in the sand might make you feel safer, but it’s not going to protect you from the coming storm*”.

It is an astute comment.

At this point, in the face of climate change, behaving like an ostrich will not protect us. Our land, our lives, livelihoods and our future peace are intimately related. **We are all very much exposed.**

So today, I would like to talk to you briefly about:

1. What it will take to collectively – stop behaving like ostriches and – pull our heads out of the sand?
2. Can we get to grips with the scale and intensity of the [climate change and land degradation] “perfect storm”?

3. And can we establish a common front and take practical action to make our communities not just feel safer but be more resilient?

In an interconnected world - planning for 9 billion people under a 2 degrees – plus - climate change scenario, competition for access to finite natural resources is and will become ever more intense.

This is the law of supply and demand.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates, world food production, in terms of calories, will need to rise by at least 70 % from current levels by 2050. Population growth means the share of productive land available per person will continue to decrease. In 1960, there was about half a hectare of farmland for every human. Now, there is less than a third of that (about 0.2 hectares).

75% of the genetic diversity of agricultural crops has already been lost. At the same time, 10-30% of mammal, bird and amphibian species face extinction as a result of human activity. And, over a thousand hectares of forest are cleared every hour. The challenges are immense.

Competition will be most fierce for those resources that provide us with our basic needs - food, energy and water. Already, 40% of all intrastate conflicts in the past 60 years are linked to natural resources.

We tend to think in terms of resource conflict over high-value products like oil or diamonds. But, I would suggest, there is little of higher value than providing for your children.

Almost 1 billion people across the globe will go to bed hungry tonight. 200 million of these hungry people will be children.

1.5 billion of us are already directly affected by land degradation.

And by 2025 – at least 2.4 billion people will be living in areas suffering from intense water scarcity.

There has already been a 28% increase in water conflicts in the first decade of the 21st Century compared to the previous 25 years. And a senior US intelligence official has been quoted as saying that *“as water problems become more acute, the likelihood...is that states will use them as leverage.”*

I suppose you heard from NATO earlier in the week about a number of potential conflict **“hotspots”** that we should be concerned about.

- **Central Asia.** The Amu Darya River basin extends across Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The governments accuse each other of exceeding water extraction quotas. Mega dam projects, along with the retreating Aral Sea, are driving tension.

But you can also think about the volatile Middle East region.

Israel-Palestine, for example. Palestinian per capita fresh water consumption is four times lower than the Israeli average.

Or Egypt. Whatever type of political system eventually stabilizes in Egypt, its destiny is uniquely tied to the Nile. Ninety per cent of Egypt's population lives within a few miles of the Nile - with over 40 million living and farming in the wide Nile Delta. Successive Egyptian governments have made it clear to the upstream states that control the sources of the Nile that any serious interference with its flow would result in a crisis. Yet the demand for water from the Nile is increasing both for agricultural and energy generation along its length. Ethiopia, for example, intends to build a series of dams to tap the Nile for hydroelectric power.

At the same time, if sea levels rise in the Mediterranean, flooding of the Nile Basin would wreck crops and destroy the livelihoods and homes of millions of Egyptians.

Coastal and marine ecosystems, like the Nile Basin, are under particular threat of degradation. I think we need look at how our strategies for both dry and wet land management and rehabilitation can work seamlessly together.

But it is perhaps Small Island developing states that are likely to be hit hardest. Kiribati recently purchased 6,000 acres of land in Fiji in the face of food insecurity. The land purchases mean people have a home if full relocation of the entire state becomes necessary.

People will move – they have little choice.

In Bangladesh, if coping strategies like temporary migration to the cities are overwhelmed, then increased cross-border migration to India is more likely, even inevitable.

While, land degradation affecting **Mexico's** dryland regions leads 700,000 people to migrate annually.

To me, all this points to the fact that desperate people are forced to make very hard choices. Like each one of us, the hungry make their stand when they can stand no more.

With degrading soils as a major, destabilizing factor, **we are building towards a perfect storm.** But the crucial point is that climate change is aggravating land use and land management stress; while degrading land aggravates climate change. **When the two issues come together, the combination of stress multipliers puts the entire institutional structure at high risk.**

Like it or not, some of the most intense challenges over resources will be between the emerging economies, like Nigeria, where there are high levels of both complexity and uncertainty.

In Nigeria, 3,500 square kilometres of land are turning into desert every year. Farmers and herdsmen are forced to move, either squeezing onto a shrinking area of habitable land or forced into the already overcrowded cities. In the context of poor governance, poverty and easy access to small arms, situations can easily turn violent. Some analysts claim that Nigeria is facing infiltration from extremist groups from the ungoverned spaces in the Sahara and the Sahel. But many Nigerians point to degradation, climate variability; poverty and food insecurity among vulnerable populations. It is a breeding ground for Boko Haram and others. The work that the Imam and Pastor are doing together, to mediate and counter the stresses, is really vital.

Otherwise, in many parts of the world, the combination of stress multipliers will lead to the creation of ungovernable spaces and overwhelm local resilience.

From Mali to Darfur via the food price rises that were the precursor to the Arab Spring, **the case for practical land based adaptation – that addresses both land productivity and climate change - to ease tension and prevent conflict is strong and growing stronger.**

We need to turn the negative “ostrich-type” narrative into something constructive and positive. **A positive agenda in a complex world. We need to establish a united, common front.**

It is perhaps a measure of Martin Frick’s persuasive power that we are at Caux having this conversation. My feeling is that diverse organizations are now coming together to address both issues [land degradation and climate change] in tandem.

NATO, IUCN, IOM, the private sector and many of you here today...are not, it is fair to say, natural bed fellows. To make progress in the face of critical challenges and situations of often baffling complexity, **we need each other.**

And as Sir Winston S. Churchill once put it: *“in critical and baffling situations, it is always best to return to first principle and simple action”.*

That principle is: we need a climate resilient, secure future.

Ban-ki Moon to mark World Day to Combat Desertification 2 weeks ago, said by widely adopting sustainable land management *“We can avert the worst effects of climate change, produce more food and ease competition over resources. We can preserve vital ecosystem services, such as water retention,*

which protects us from floods or droughts. And a comprehensive and large-scale approach to land recovery can create new jobs, business opportunities and livelihoods, allowing populations to not only survive, but thrive”.

To get there, requires ambition and opportunity.

Fortunately, in the next 18 months, political and ecological timelines are aligning if we are prepared to grab them.

In terms of simple action:

In 2015, targets aimed at reducing land degradation, scaling up sustainable land management practices, rehabilitating degraded land and restoring natural ecosystems must be embedded within the upcoming **Sustainable Development Goal framework** of targets and indicators. In fact the 1st draft of the document prominently includes the protection and promotion of sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems – including the idea of land degradation neutrality [I’d like to acknowledge Luc Gnacadja for framing the LDN approach]. It is feasible, doable and necessary.

Essentially, we aim to progressively reduce the population adversely affected by land degradation and its impacts. And progressively increase the area under sustainable land management. Land-related targets would directly support the achievement of a number of the envisaged SDGs¹, such as poverty eradication, food security, access to water and sustainable natural resource management.

Civil society can play an important role in ensuring the targets, which are there in the first draft of the SDGs, stay there and get fleshed out.

Delivery, in particular, would mean **developing governance systems and economic incentives** that promote sustainable practices and the rehabilitation of degraded land and ecosystems.

Weak or unprotected **resource and land rights** must be strengthened. Giving women the same access as men to agricultural resources in developing countries, for example, would raise farm production by 20-30% and increase total agricultural production by up to 4% in some countries.

¹ The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network's *Action Agenda for Sustainable Development*

With proper governance systems - there are huge opportunities too. There are nearly 500 million of hectares of degraded and abandoned agricultural land that could be brought back into production. With a finite stock of land available, that must be a viable opportunity for farmers and governments. And there is up to 1.5 billion hectares of land worldwide that could be rehabilitated or restored.

At the same time, for **future climate agreements** – I am thinking about Paris next year, mitigation targets alone will be an insufficient response.

Interestingly land and soil could sequester 3 billion tonnes of carbon (between 10-30% of Co2 emissions - 11 billion tonnes). But **a successful, comprehensive approach to climate change will also need to include adaptation measures** that allow vulnerable populations to increase their resilience and reduce insecurity.

Land management could form the basis of a technologically easy and low cost climate change strategy encompassing mitigation and adaptation. By reducing the climate-induced pressure on natural resources, a resilient future -

where the threat of conflict is reduced - can be envisaged. If successfully implemented a virtuous circle can be created, ultimately reducing pressure on aid, development and even peacekeeping resources.

As I am sure you have heard over the last few days, to scale up Sustainable Land Management for land degradation neutrality and Climate Change Adaptation powered by nature, we will need the right enabling environment.

In the next 18 months, we want to work with you to and other stakeholders to:

- Improve access to information and technology/knowledge transfer - on good practice and on the status and trends of land management resources that builds the capacity of land users. WOCAT is now operating as the primary database for UNCCD and we will also launch an online search portal bringing land management knowledge together in the next few months;
- Strengthen the policy and legal frameworks for land tenure and rights – particularly for women, indigenous and small scale farmers;

- Encourage better land use planning and building the capacity of decision-makers in the public and private sector;
- Secure a greater commitment to land, soil and ecosystem restoration;
- Promote a greater understanding of the economics of land and more incentives for improved land and soil stewardship - eliminating the perverse subsidies for the drivers of land degradation and capturing new opportunities for collaboration such as with the diaspora.

These are practical measures – the simple actions - that will help us adapt. Like the ostrich before us...we cannot pretend any longer.

As H.G. Wells, perhaps most famous as the writer of War of the Worlds, put it...*“Adapt or perish, now as ever, is nature's [inexorable] imperative”*.

It is nature's imperative. It is our choice.