

**Sustainable Development Goals and the Synergy between  
Focal Areas of the GEF**

**Rio Pavilion**

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015 (16.40 – 1810)**

- By investing in combatting land degradation and delivering on SDG 15, GEF can and will get an even “bigger bang for its buck”. That is an overused phrase, of course. But in this case, it is entirely appropriate.
- For a long time, we have talked about synergies and not got very far. In a world of global goals for sustainable development and limited resources, we need to be seeing multiple benefits from each investment.
- 78 per cent of the world’s extreme poor still live in rural areas. Healthy and productive land is the basis of poverty reduction efforts.
- Poor land use seriously impair any plans to achieve the other SDGs. We won’t be able to ensure healthy lives (SDG 3), end hunger (SDG 2) and supply water (SDG 6) if we don’t get land use right.
- On top of this, the land sector has a huge impact on biodiversity and climate change.

- 80% of deforestation worldwide is the result of such agricultural expansion – often from poorly performing agricultural land. 75% of genetic diversity of agricultural crops has been lost since the beginning of the 20th Century. It is a vicious circle of degradation and biodiversity loss.
- The SDGs on the other hand reinforce and extend the shelf life of the Aichi Targets – beyond 2020. Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) could bring together some of the Aichi Targets, such as 5 (reduce habitat loss), 7 (SLM) and 14/15 (restoration, land/water services), the main pillars of the LDN.
- The same is true with climate change. We can choose a vicious or a virtuous circle....
- On the vicious side: the land use sector represents 25% of green-house gas emissions. Soils have lost between 50-70% of its original global stock of carbon.
- On the virtuous side: SLM and rehabilitation practices almost always deliver on adaptation. They also reduce emissions and bring carbon back to where it belongs. So land management and rehabilitation is increasingly being recognized as part of the mitigation discussion.

- Countries have included the land sector in their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) across the board.
- Yet very few have quantified the mitigation benefits.
- By December 2015, commitments accounted for in the INDCs would close the emissions gap by less than 50% of what is needed to stay under 2 degrees. There really is an urgent need to find the missing piece of the puzzle and close the remaining gap (7-10 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e).
- If 12 million hectares a year of degraded land was rehabilitated over 15 years (2016-2030); using a mix of land types, this land could sequester 0.33 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e a year. By 2030, on 180 million hectares of land we could sequester 5 GT a year in 2030 – up to 50% of the remaining climate change emissions gap.
- By doing sustainable land management in an intersectoral way, GEF can help deliver on multiple goals in a more far-sighted and effective manner.
- Especially if we think big.
- E.g. Since its launch in 2008, significant progress has already been made in restoring the fertility and productivity of Africa's Sahara-Sahel region

through the Great Green Wall Initiative. But the benefits of this pioneering initiative extend beyond the region or the African continent; it is estimated that up to 3 million tons of carbon will be sequestered annually through the many Great Green Wall projects and programmes, making this one of humanity's largest carbon sinks and an example of significant regional climate action. In fact, the Great Green Wall will help overcome a host of other global challenges, including food shortages, conflict resolution, and international migration.

- I would suggest, we need common indicators to establish a baseline. The SDG indicator framework will help in that regard.
- Then, I certainly think we should be measuring the benefits to [at least] biodiversity and climate change of land degradation projects (and vice versa).
- Done right, GEF projects can and should be pivotal to the delivery of all 3 Rio Conventions and...if planned well...GEF projects will also be pivotal to the delivery and success of the SDG process.
- Now that is a lot of bang for your buck!