

**Message of Monique Barbut  
Executive Secretary, UN Convention to Combat Desertification**

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***Land belongs to the future, let's climate proof it***

Climate change is changing the dynamic between water and the land. Our focus on the future impacts of climate change has blinded us to the crucial fact that status of the land is already changing. The end result may be quite different, and potentially worse, than the projections because measures to enable the land to adapt and become resilient remain in the margins on the climate change agenda.

Climate change is affecting the health and amount of the land available for our use today. Soil formation takes many years, but just one flood can sweep it all away. Erosion is costing each of us more than 3 tons of fertile soil per year - at least 24 billion tons of soil is eroded a year.

The land covers only 30% of the Earth, including mountains, deserts and glaciers that are uninhabitable. But sea-level rises are drowning the limited productive land we have. And droughts, along with receding glaciers and underground water sources, are reducing the ability of the land to produce food. Plants and animals are migrating.

Climate change is pushing our ecosystems to breaking point and the failure to act on land degradation is costing us our security. Way too many families and communities are losing their homes to extreme climate disasters. A billion people are hungry. Nations are losing territory, sources of employment and the means to secure their economies. The price it would cost to fix the degrading land on a large scale, to minimize these outcomes, is a fraction of the cost we are paying now through social and political unrest, conflict, forced migration or internal displacement.

We can change the course of history in four small steps. First, we can avoid degrading new areas because healthy ecosystems are nature's way of protecting us from natural disasters. Instead, let us prioritize the recovery and restoration of degrading land at large scale. It will minimize the negative effects on the land and enable it to regain the natural abilities it has lost. Second, let us act together on a global scale to make adaptation powered by the land part of the climate change adaptation and resilience agenda. This is achievable. All 169 countries that claim to be affected by land degradation and drought are also Parties to the Climate Change Convention. Third, let us set common measures of success with targets and indicators that can motivate us to turn this aspiration into a reality. Lastly, let us set up mechanisms to enable the most vulnerable populations to withstand the worst climate stresses that may happen.

Climate change is about the changing status of the land. Let us climate-proof it by 2015.