

# WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2014

## Global observance event in Washington D.C.



**Tuesday, 17 June 2014**

**9:00 – 18:00**

**World Bank, Washington DC, Preston Auditorium**

This year's World Day to Combat Desertification global observance event was held at the World Bank headquarters in Washington D.C., United States, on Tuesday, 17 June. The event was hosted by the World Bank in partnership with the Global Environment Facility, TerrAfrica, and Connect4Climate.

Over 250 representatives from government, intergovernmental and civil society organizations (CSOs) engaged with high-profile leaders and experts on the human factors fueling ecosystem degradation and share solutions. The event included an opening ceremony, panel discussions, a concert, film screening, a networking lunch and a cocktail reception. The event was webcast live.



With the rallying call, “Land belongs to the Future, let’s climate proof it,” the World Day to Combat Desertification was celebrated globally yesterday, 17 June, high-ranking officials called for urgent action to build the ability and capacity of all people to adapt and build resilience to climate change.

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At the event the winners of the prestigious Land for Life Award were announced, the UNCCD launched a webportal to enable people to access valuable knowledge on how to rehabilitate degraded land, World Bank/TerrAfrica and UNCCD announced a new partnership to strengthen adaptation and resilience building and governments announced the local heroes – Drylands Champions – that have enabled local people to achieve transformational change.

On the occasion, which also marked 20 years of the Convention's existence, the UNCCD also highlighted achievements Parties attributed to the existence of the Convention. The global observance, which was held at the World Bank headquarters in Washington DC, addressed by high-ranking government officials that included His Excellency Brigi Rafini, Prime Minister of Niger, His Excellency Mr. Uahekua Herunga, Minister of the Environment and Tourism, Namibia and Ms. Monique Barbut, Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, Mr. Mahmoud Mohieldin, Corporate Secretary and President's Special Envoy, World Bank, and Ms. Naoko Ishii, Chief Executive Officer of the Global Environment Facility.

Highlighting some communities in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, and Senegal that were once vulnerable to drought that are thriving despite the rise in average temperature in the Sahel, the speakers called for the rehabilitation of degraded land at large scale to make all people resilient.

The drivers of success observed from these success stories include:

- Having a committed government working together with the local populations in order to achieve change on a large scale
- Granting land users the rights to land that will motivate them to invest in it
- Enabling the information exchange among people living under similar conditions in different parts of the world facing and
- Managing people so that ecosystems can thrive

Participants called for actions to support:

- Transformational innovations that are coming from local communities
- Information exchange using both new and conventional media channels to empower communities
- Women, including grandmothers, to lead the change because they are motivated by the need to support their children, they often invest in their communities and do not migrate when environmental conditions deteriorate.

The global celebrations held in many parts of the world were marked with fanfare. In Washington DC, participants danced to the tunes of Senegalese singer Titi. In Nairobi, Kenya, UNDP's Equator Initiative announced the winner of the sub-Saharan Africa award, and from the United States, to Brazil and Switzerland, people watched a new film on the transformation rehabilitation of millions of hectares in Ethiopia.

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*Photo: Connect4climate*

For information on the observances in Washington DC, visit: <https://twitter.com/Connect4Climate>