

Message of Monique Barbut
Executive Secretary, UN Convention to Combat Desertification
World Soil Day, 5 December 2015

[Watch the video message](#)

I am delighted to join you – via this video message - on the 2014 World Soil Day, which marks *the* launch of the 2015 International Year of Soils.

Land – its soil, water and biodiversity - is the foundation for our societies. It allows our economies to grow and prosper. The soil alone provides more than 50% of the total value of all the ecosystem services we enjoy.

When the land and its soils are degraded, rates of poverty, hunger and instability soar. 40% of all degraded land is found in areas with the highest incidence of poverty. This directly impacts the health and livelihoods of an estimated 1 and a half billion people worldwide.

And with a global population of more than 9 billion expected by 2050, the pressures on land and soil to produce food, fuel and fiber will continue to mount. Land degradation will lead to higher rates of malnutrition; more water- and food-borne - diseases; respiratory illnesses and the spread of infectious diseases as whole communities are forced to migrate.

So the choice of “Healthy Soils for Healthy Lives” as the theme for the “International Year of Soils” is highly relevant - and compelling.

Unless we address land degradation, we will not meet our nutrition or water security goals. We will not achieve health, sustainability or stability in any meaningful way.

At UNCCD, we firmly believe that the fate of land goes hand in hand with a sustainable future. We must nurture it to improve livelihoods and reduce vulnerability to population pressures and climate change.

UNCCD looks forward to working with you to achieve land degradation neutrality, stop the loss of this vital natural capital, and return degraded land to a healthy and productive status.

We are committed to continue our collaboration with the Global Soil Partnership at all levels. Together - throughout 2015 and beyond - let us ensure that good stewardship and sustainable management of land are at the very heart of healthy, climate resilient development.

I wish you a successful World Soil Day celebration and many tangible achievements during the 2015 International Year of Soils.

Thank you.