



**VIEWS OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA REGION ON
DESERTIFICATION, LAND DEGRADATION AND DROUGHT**

PRESENTED AT THE

**AT THE 3RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SDGs**

23 MAY 2013

Check against delivery

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VIEWS OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA REGION ON DESERTIFICATION, LAND DEGRADATION AND DROUGHT.

The issues of desertification, land degradation and drought are very dear to the developing world and especially in Africa as they have borne the brunt of devastating droughts, environmental degradation and the effects of climate change. International action is therefore urgently required to address these challenges. In addressing these challenges we must not lose track of the provisions of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). It is clear that desertification, land degradation and drought corrode the three pillars of sustainable development. Therefore by addressing desertification, land degradation and drought, countries are able to deal with several global policy challenges such as food security, adaptation to climate change and forced migration. Desertification has contributed to much social disruption, leading to conflict in places, leading us to prioritize its diminution as a priority goal.

In Africa, the less privileged of their rural communities who depend on the productive natural resource base for survival are often forced to migrate or face starvation as the natural capital dissipates through desertification, land degradation and drought processes. Although African countries lack the capacity to deal effectively with these issues, they remain committed to the measures that seek to promote sustainable management and utilization of forest resources especially in fragile ecosystems and marginal lands. Many countries in Africa work in partnership with the UNCCD to mobilize stakeholder participation, partnerships, community development, local expertise and traditional knowledge in combating desertification through different mechanisms such as afforestation and reforestation. In addition, several African governments have put in place national action plans as roadmaps towards desertification control, land degradation mitigation and adaptation.

In formulating their national action plans, some countries have prioritized areas for intervention that include: alternative energy sources, water resources management education, public awareness and capacity building. Other measures implemented include provision of alternative livelihoods for poverty alleviation and policy, legal and institutional arrangements that

strengthen appropriate land use planning, soil conservation and land tenure systems.

Africa recognizes the interrelationship between climate change and desertification hence the need to intensify efforts to combat desertification and promote sustainable land management. We therefore call for enhanced cooperation and coordination between the UNCCD and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) while at the same time respecting their individual mandates. The region remain committed to achieve a land degradation intolerant world that embraces sustainable development. In this context we call upon the UN system, relevant regional and international organizations, multilateral agencies, major groups and other stakeholders to contribute towards the achievement of a land degradation intolerant world.

The region is happy that several countries participate in the subregional wildlife and natural resources conservation programmes which we call Transfrontier Conservation Programmes. Under the auspices of the African Union, the environmental monitoring systems in each country are tracking changes due to droughts and land degradation in their endeavor to restore degraded lands in arid, semi arid and dry sub-humid areas.

It is clear that as deserts encroach, episodes of famine and drought increase and land degradation continues unabated. This in turn reduces soil fertility, produces dust and sand storms and consequently poverty levels remain high and the means of sustenance in marginalized areas become severely constrained. Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought should therefore remain one of the corner stones of the envisaged SDGs.