

**FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE (ERC)****Thirty-first Session****Voronezh, Russian Federation, 16-18 May 2018****Central Asian Desert Initiative (CADI)****Side Event 4****Thursday, 17 May 2018****17.30 – 19.00 hours****SAPPHIRE Meeting room****Background/objective**

The Eurasian cold winter deserts, also referred to as temperate, spread from Northern Iran across Central Asia to Mongolia and are globally outstanding natural regions. The enormous land masses deliver a broad range of ecosystem services. The vegetation provides important pasture grounds in the region's arid and semi-arid drylands, and it fixes sediments, thus mitigating desertification processes and sequestering carbon. Furthermore, temperate deserts are an important migration area for birds and the last wild herds of ungulates, such as the saiga antelope.

Yet, temperate deserts are threatened by not applying good agriculture practices. Examples could be degradation processes due to unsustainable grazing practices, overexploitation of limited natural resources, and infrastructure development. Due to overgrazing, signs of irreversible losses of habitats and native species are becoming apparent. This detracts from a solid and healthy natural basis for human welfare in the whole region, and it endangers food security.

Ninety-five percent of the temperate deserts are located in Central Asia, and therefore this region carries a high responsibility for the preservation of this biome.

Against this background, the Central Asian Desert Initiative (CADI) aims at preserving biodiversity and at conserving and sustainably using temperate deserts in Central Asia. Main CADI target countries are Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, with single components in China, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mongolia.

The overall project framework of CADI consists of four components leading to the following outputs:

- 1) Obtaining evidence-based knowledge on ecosystem services and biodiversity of the desert biome for its application in land use management.
- 2) Introducing multistakeholder-based sustainable land management for desert biomes in the target countries.
- 3) Creating conditions for improved management and establishment of protected areas, including active promotion of respective conservation measures.
- 4) Developing a joint vision for conservation and sustainable use of temperate deserts in Central Asia through network establishment.

New approaches in sustainable land management and the conservation of deserts can help rehabilitate the ecosystem of the temperate deserts and reduce use pressure (Sustainable Development Goal [SDG] 15). Sustainable management and valorization of natural resources secures the livelihoods of local people and is a building block for poverty reduction (SDG 1), from which both sexes, but especially women, benefit in the rural areas of the project region. Improved pasture management and a

better understanding of it reduce the insufficient availability of energy (SDG 7) and contribute to ecosystem conservation. Implemented concepts for income diversification can reduce exposure to risks from climate change, prevent rural migration to cities, and increase the rural population's quality of life. The consideration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT)<sup>1</sup> is of importance in the implementation of the project.

Furthermore, CADI contributes to the attainment of Aichi Biodiversity Targets (targets 11 and 15), and it falls under FAO's global strategic objective to provide and improve ecosystem services and environmental goods in sustainable agriculture and forestry systems.

CADI is jointly implemented by the University of Greifswald (Germany), the Michael Succow Foundation (Greifswald, Germany) and the FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia (FAOSEC, Ankara, Turkey), in close cooperation with partners in the target countries.

The project is financed by the International Climate Initiative of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. The duration of the project is three and a half years (2016–2019).

Further information about CADI is available at: <http://cadi.uni-greifswald.de/en/home/>

The purpose of this side event is to exchange and disseminate experiences and information about ongoing activities within CADI for the benefit of participants attending the Thirty-first Session of the ERC and other interested stakeholders. The side event strengthens the capacities of the implementing partners, the Michael Succow Foundation, University of Greifswald and FAO, to better respond to the related needs and requests of member countries, explore opportunities for new or expanded work on integrated natural resource management based on country needs, and facilitate effective collaboration among offices at regional, subregional and country levels and across related areas of technical expertise.

The conclusions of the side event will be reported to the CADI partners.

In particular, the side event aims to:

- exchange and disseminate experiences and information about ongoing CADI activities, particularly in the main target countries Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan;
- present and seek support on some implementation arrangements, including endorsement for the establishment of a regional CADI secretariat among the participating countries;
- explore partnerships and linkages to similar initiatives in arid lands in Central Asia; and
- share similar experience from other projects and initiatives implemented by FAO and other organizations.

#### **Key messages / expected outcomes**

- Temperate deserts of Central Asia provide ecosystem services and harbour unique biodiversity. Central Asia countries such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan carry global responsibility for their preservation and sustainable use. However, current measures are insufficient to prevent degradation through overgrazing, firewood collection and infrastructure development. Moreover, integration of ecosystem services and biodiversity into land management practices and national policies is insufficient. This leads to ongoing losses of ecosystem services and species diversity, thus endangering the livelihoods and food security of local populations.
- The CADI project will address these shortcomings with an ecosystem-approach: conservation, sustainable use, and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of the natural resources of temperate deserts. This will be enhanced by developing, establishing and mainstreaming integrated natural resource management best practices in the target countries,

<sup>1</sup> The VGGTs were adopted by the Committee on World Food Security in 2012.  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2801e/i2801e.pdf>

using a participatory, multi-stakeholder approach. Improved conservation and ecosystem-based management practices will positively affect the targeted desert landscapes and restore their role as carbon sinks.

- A strong support for the CADI approach is sought from membership for dissemination of regional best practices and for strengthening regional cooperation and synergies. Support from participating and neighbouring countries will be appreciated through the establishment of a regional CADI secretariat.

**Language:** The Side Event will be interpreted in English and Russian language.