

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Intervention of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) on the Second International Conference on Nutrition (Rome, 19 – 21 November 2014)

Date: Thursday 20 November 2014

Time: Afternoon Plenary Session between 17:15 and 18:15.

Delivered by Mr. Sven Walter, Head of the Liaison Office of the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD hosted by FAO, on behalf of Ms. Monique Barbut, Executive Secretary of the UNCCD

**Mr/Madam Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,
Dear colleagues,**

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification **congratulates** the FAO and the WHO for the organization of the 2nd International Conference on Nutrition and **welcomes** the adoption of the “Rome Declaration on Nutrition”.

The draft Declaration recognizes that “**environmental changes** can have an impact on dietary and physical activity patterns” and highlights that “droughts, floods and desertification ... hinder food security and nutrition”.

With a global population set to rise to **nine billion** by 2050, demand for agricultural products is expected to double. This already considerable challenge is compounded by the fact that some 12 million hectares of cropland are lost every year due to desertification. This will increasingly deprive us of vital services, in particular water regulation, which is crucial for periods of drought and floods. By 2025, some 2,4 billion people could be living in areas subject to

severe periods of water scarcity, which may contribute to increased conflicts as well as environmentally induced migration. By 2030, as many as 700 million people may be displaced due to the scarcity of water resources.

To ensure access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, we need food systems that are **resilient** to the threats posed by environmental degradation and the increased competition for natural resources, which are becoming scarce, including land, water and forests. Therefore, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification proposes two complementary pathways for action to increase the resilience of food systems:

Firstly, **sustainable land management practices** need to be up-scaled, in order to maintain and improve the productivity of land resources in a sound way. SLM practices are well known and documented, also thanks to the important work of organizations such as the FAO. However, the enabling environment or appropriate decision making tools are often **not** in place to up-scale these practices, despite the considerable efforts of Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector.

Secondly, ecosystems need to be **rehabilitated** and **restored** in order to maintain or to increase the provision of environmental services, which are key for the production of food sources, including crops, livestock, forestry and fisheries. This is crucial, in particular, for the two billion people living in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones, who are directly exposed to the effects of droughts and desertification.

Therefore, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification supports the proposal of the Open Ended Working Group on the SDGs to adopt a target which would implicitly support the Rome declaration and the implementation of

its framework for action, and which aims to “combat desertification, and restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve” land-degradation neutrality.

Only food systems, which can cope with the threats of desertification and land degradation, will be able to provide the necessary source of nutrition for people, supporting their livelihoods and helping them to adapt to the effects of climate change.

The Secretariat and the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification stand ready to assist country Parties, in cooperation with other Partners, to make food systems more resilient to external environmental shocks by promoting sustainable land management practices and by reintegrating previously abandoned and degraded lands into vital food production systems.

Thank you.