

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2016

“Protect Earth. Restore Land. Engage People”

The 17th June 1995 is the day the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted after receiving the required number accessions and is therefore commemorated as the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. The United Nations General Assembly declared June 17 as the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. The day is commemorated to increase awareness about the status of deserts and drought and streamline efforts and resolve to join global fight against desertification. The theme of the World Desertification Day 2016 is “Protect Earth. Restore Land. Engage People”. This year’s World Day to Combat Desertification advocates for the importance of inclusive cooperation to restore and rehabilitate degraded land and contribute towards achieving the overall Sustainable Development Goals.



Baobab tree in a degraded, arid landscape in Kenya's Eastern province. Photo: Flore de Preneuf / World Bank

The global observance event on 17 June 2016 will be held in Beijing, China, hosted by the State Forestry Administration of China (SFA). In 2013, China embarked on the new development strategy, “The Belt and Road,” aiming to strengthen cooperation among countries primarily in Eurasia. Since then, it has been promoting green and low-carbon infrastructure construction in cooperation with the neighboring countries connected by the historic Silk Road. By organizing the global observance in China, the 2016 WDCD will demonstrate how Land Degradation Neutrality can be a critical element for achieving other sustainable development goals, especially for promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth. At the global observance, the host country will announce the “One Belt and One Road Joint Action to Combating Desertification Initiative” together with interested countries and stakeholders.

There is probably no greater issue than land in the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals that touches everyone. From the food we eat, to the clothes we wear and the houses we live – it all stems from land resources. In order to “leave no one behind” as proclaimed in the new Sustainable Development Goals, achieving land degradation neutrality needs to be in the forefront to meet our requirements and develop sustainability.

Almost all the South Asian countries have ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and are therefore party to UNCCD. A different type of desserts exists in South Asia in various ecological systems. The dry plains have got sandy desserts in India and Pakistan, whereas the upland cold desserts are commonly found in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan. Climate change has a direct impact of desertification in south Asia and increases the vulnerability of the dessert community to droughts and floods. Let us join hand and renew our commitment to continue our effort for the implementation of the UNCCD and support the dessert dwelling communities in South Asia in not only boosting their resilience but also helping them to overcome the problems associated with desertification and drought.

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