



THE PRESIDENT  
OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Friday, 23 September 2011

Excellency,

In pursuance of General Assembly resolution 65/160 adopted on the 20 December 2010, the General Assembly convened on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2010, a high –level Meeting on the theme “Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication”.

I have the pleasure to share with you the summary of the high level meeting, which I presented to member States during the closing plenary. In accordance with paragraph 11 (f) of the General Assembly resolution 65/160, this summary will be transmitted, under my authority, to the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on combating desertification, land degradation and Drought to be held in Changwon City, Gyeongnam Province, Republic of Korea, from 10 to 21 October 2011, and to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nassir'.

Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser

All Permanent Representative  
and Permanent Observers to the United Nations .  
New York

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
TO  
ADDRESS DESERTIFICATION, LAND DEGRADATION AND DROUGHT IN  
THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY  
ERADICATION**

**New York, 20 September 2011**

**PRESIDENT'S SUMMARY**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

Today, world leaders for the first time gathered in a High-level Meeting of the General Assembly to address desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. They acknowledged that unless desertification, land degradation and drought are addressed urgently wherever they occur, the three pillars of sustainable development would be corroded.

During their deliberations, world leaders discussed various ways and means to operate a paradigm shift needed to improve the living conditions of affected populations and affected ecosystems to achieve sustainable development and to eradicate poverty. I am very pleased to present to you a summary of today's meaningful discussions, which I will transmit to the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (COP10) to be held next month in Changwon Republic of Korea and to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio plus 20) to take place in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012.

Member States stressed that desertification and land degradation are now pervasive problems in all ecosystems which affect us all in various ways, but have a disproportionate impact on many of the world's poorest people, particularly in the drylands where reside more than one third of the world population and where one billion of them ranks the lowest in the Human development index.

Leaders emphasized that if drylands were to become areas of shared prosperity, the solution lay in making soil health an absolute priority, and mainstreaming sustainable land management techniques into policy and practice everywhere. They urged the protection of land through sustainable land management which would build resilience against the effects of desertification and drought, reverse land degradation, adapt to climate change and, in the process, preserve the livelihoods of the most vulnerable. They consistently called on the UNCCD to serve also as tool to achieve food security.

The assembled leaders also stressed that for viable lasting solutions to be found, four priority actions were needed to seal the gaps hindering progress as well as to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Firstly, they called for the strengthening of the scientific base to better comprehend desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD). Many leaders and one regional

group suggested to establish an advisory panel, to focus exclusively on DLDD issues, which could provide authoritative and consensual expert advice on the scientific aspects of DLDD considering that this would place cutting edge, state of the art, scientific advice at the disposal of world leaders for effective decision making on measures to be taken to reverse desertification and land degradation, effectively build resilience to drought and break the nexus between drought and famine.

Many leaders also emphasized that at a time when there is evidence of accelerating trends in land degradation in all ecosystems, the planet could ill afford, for world leaders, to limit their efforts to tackle these phenomenon only in the drylands. It was pointed out that if we waited till other ecosystems were degraded and desertified before taking action, other interrelated challenges such as food security, poverty, forced migration, adverse impact of climate change, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, political instability and conflict would be exacerbated and sustainable development and the MDGs could not be effectively realized. There was a call to to enhance and foster the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) as a global policy and monitoring framework to address the issues of soils and land degradation.

Many leaders also stressed that if the international community was serious in its commitment about reversing land degradation and desertification, the time had come to commit for building a land degradation neutral world, to set measurable sustainable development targets towards zero net land degradation (as a commitment to build a land degradation neutral world)

World leaders also urged the improvement of the financing framework for implementing the international strategy laid down to combat land degradation and poverty. They pointed out that reversing land degradation is a high-yielding investment and investing in sustainable land management is far more cost effective than fixing the consequences of neglect of land and land degradation. A number of delegations noted the importance of investing in sustainable land management which should be an integral part of shifting to a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Looking ahead to COP 10 and beyond, world leaders pledged that they would now begin to take urgent measures to ensure that the future of the humanity would not be mortgaged through our current unsustainable neglect of land.