



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF ICELAND

HIGH-LEVEL SYMPOSIUM

A LAND-DEGRADATION NEUTRAL WORLD

– KEY TO A SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Existing commitments to a land-degradation neutral world

At the Rio+20 Conference, world leaders stressed that desertification, land degradation and drought were challenges of a global dimension which continues to pose serious challenges to the sustainable development of all countries, in particular developing countries. Recognizing the need for urgent action to reverse land degradation, they committed to strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development.

As world leaders meet in September to set the international sustainable development agenda for the next 15 years, they are poised to set a target for achieving land-degradation neutrality under the proposed sustainable development goal 15. The goal itself is to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss. In line with this agenda the Addis Accord encourages the mobilization of financial resources for the promotion of sustainable land management, combatting desertification and restoring degraded land and soil.

Restoring just 12% of degraded agricultural land could boost smallholder's incomes by USD 35-40 billion per year and feed 200 million people per year within 15 years. It can also increase resilience to water shocks and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 2GtCO_{2e} per year.



Given that over 40% of the world's poor depend on degraded lands for essential services, such as food, fuel, raw material, and water purification, restoring productive capacity of the land could lead to significant strides in decreasing economic vulnerability and promoting long-term development.

Extent of desertification, land degradation and drought

Currently, land degradation, including desertification, affects nearly 2 billion hectares of land. Human activities, including unsustainable agriculture and deforestation, exacerbated by climate change, are the main drivers of accelerated land degradation. Many regions experience more frequent, prolonged periods of drought or flooding, leading to the loss of fertile topsoil through erosion.

Land degradation affects the livelihoods of millions of people by contributing to the loss of ecosystem services and biodiversity. The impact is most felt among the poorest and most vulnerable populations. Land degradation pushes communities to seek other arable land, including forests and wetlands, thus compounding the problem. It can also undermine stability in fragile settings and give rise to forced migration.

Objective of the meeting

The objective of the event is to carry out a high-level advocacy for land degradation neutrality as a key for sustainable development in the context of the upcoming post-2015 development agenda. As output, the event will provide justification as to why the financing for development process should pay a special attention in supporting investments in addressing DLDD issues. Participants will also discuss options for funding the implementation of land degradation neutrality.

High-level symposium

Hotel Radisson BLU, Sholla 1
14 July 2015, 15:30-18:00



Over the past 50 years, poor land management, fueled by exploitation for short-term economic gains, led to a loss of nearly one-third of the world's arable land, a trend that is continuing at a rate of more than 10 million hectares per year. The global cost of land degradation amounts to nearly USD 66 billion per year.

Achieving land-degradation neutrality is essential

Restoring land can improve food security and nutrition in the affected countries and raise income among the poorest. Furthermore, it would contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation of greenhouse gasses, including through land use change and carbon sequestration in soil and biomass. Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought issues is thus essential to achieving other sustainable development goals such as those related to poverty, food security, empowering women and girls, energy and water security, climate change, and promoting peace and stability. It is against this backdrop that the world committed to strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development.

Action to be taken

Immediate action is required to implement the commitments already made. Research and advocacy will be crucial to inform policy-makers and mobilize funding from all sources, public and private. Investment in capacity building and technology for sustainable land management and land restoration will be essential to halting land degradation and achieving the goal of a land-degradation neutral world.

Participants

The event will bring together decision makers and experts in the field to exchange views on how land degradation neutrality will contribute to achieving sustainable development. Given that the event is hosted at Ministerial level, it is expected that it be attended by Ministers and high-level delegates and other stakeholders participating in the third International Conference on Financing for Development.