

# THE UNCCD DELHI DECLARATION FROM BUSINESS

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business recognizes that the world needs to build a future that avoids, minimizes, and reverses desertification and land degradation and mitigates the effects of drought. This is essential for the resilience and success of our societies, and for the businesses that operate within them.

To do this, we need unprecedented collaboration between all stakeholders, including business, governments and society, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At the UNCCD COP14, businesses have come together with key stakeholders to emphasize their critical role, and to commit to action towards a land-degradation neutral world, prioritizing:

- The widespread and rapid adoption of sustainable land management solutions for agriculture, food, forestry, shelter and energy.
- Scaling solutions through value chain and landscape-based approaches, including the conservation and restoration of ecosystems services such as soil, forests and water, and addressing deforestation-risk commodities.
- Strengthening the resilience of communities through improved livelihood opportunities, addressing food loss and food security.
- The adoption of climate-smart approaches to agriculture for productivity, mitigation of carbon emissions and measures to adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- Addressing biodiversity, including crop and dietary diversity, and land restoration and conservation.
- Ensuring robust business decision-making and progress through science-based targets, risk management, reporting, and environmental, social and governance processes.

To realize these priorities, business calls on governments to adopt a new deal for nature and people through a wide range of policy shifts:

- Harmonize decisions coherently within the UN framework.
- Regulate in support of innovation for the purpose of sustainable land management.
- Support incentive mechanisms that reward the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of nature.
- Enable public and private sector dialogue, collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- Develop clear policies and targets, ensuring synergies across wider environmental and society.
- Harness the role of market-based mechanisms, including carbon markets.
- Increase emphasis public-private financing mechanisms.
- Support resilient rural livelihoods through entrepreneurship and climate adaptation measures.
- Strengthen local land tenure and rights with a recognition of women and youth.

To achieve change at scale, we call on all businesses and wider organizations to support these priorities, and on governments to act to create an enabling environment in which business can make its maximum contribution.

## 1. The purpose of this declaration and background

Supported by the outcomes of the Business Day of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Delhi Declaration from Business has the key purpose of emphasizing the importance, priorities, commitments and policy requests of the private sector regarding the UNCCD.

This statement is issued from a variety of key actors working towards meeting the UN SDGs, including businesses, business representative organizations and key stakeholders working with the private sector, with the purpose of galvanizing action and directing private sector action relating to the UNCCD.

Tackling the land degradation challenge requires unprecedented collaboration between all stakeholders – business, governments and society. This declaration builds upon the 2013 Windhoek Declaration, 2015 Ankara Declaration and 2017 Ordos Declaration from the respective UNCCD COPs' Sustainable Land Management Business Fora. It presents the next step towards implementing Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and needs to be supported by real action on the ground by all parties.

In the light of the points outlined in this document, we call on all companies to join us in our collaborative effort to implement sustainable land management practices and land restoration. Our next steps will be critical in materializing the transition to a sustainable global economy in support of halting and reversing land degradation and restoring degraded ecosystems, while managing land resources sustainably in service of prospering communities.

## 2. Preamble and context

### A. About the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

- i. UNCCD aims to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought through national action programs that incorporate long-term strategies supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements.
- ii. LDN is a critical objective in order to restore the productivity of the vast expanses of degraded land, reflected in SDG 15.3: "By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world".
- iii. The livelihoods of more than 1.3 billion vulnerable people are at risk due to the impacts of drought.
- iv. We need to build a future that avoids, minimizes, and reverses desertification, land degradation and mitigates the effects of drought in the affected areas at all levels to achieve a land degradation-neutral world.

#### B. The role of business in supporting UNCCD's strategic objectives

- i. Land degradation threatens the important goods and services that healthy ecosystems provide to society. As a result, livelihoods, food security, and economic development are increasingly compromised. Climate change can exacerbate stress on degraded ecosystems, further reducing land productivity for crops and livestock, increasing water shortages, and releasing more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
- ii. Business has a critical role to play in sustainable land management and drought resilience, collaborating with multiple stakeholders and actively engaging across global, regional and national processes for positive social and environmental outcomes.
- iii. In collaborating with stakeholders and engaging in multi-level processes, business seeks to identify market-driven solutions that enable business continuity, compliance with legislation, and embrace ethical, social and environmental values and responsibilities.
- iv. As a major user and manager of land and natural resources, the role of business as stewards can be enhanced through the deployment of innovative technologies, establishment of private-private and public-private partnerships and engagement with civil society.

#### C. Mobilizing business in support of LDN and nature

- i. As the dynamics of land, climate and biodiversity are intimately connected, business solutions related to sustainable land management and drought resilience should also seek to be aligned with and meet the objectives as set out by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- ii. With the critical CBD and UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) scheduled for 2020, *The Business for Nature* community calls on governments to embrace the opportunity to adopt a new deal for nature and people that would provide the needed policy signal to the business community.
- iii. On the occasion of the 14<sup>th</sup> UNCCD COP, hosted by Indian Government, 2-13 September 2019, business leaders have come together to demonstrate their support and commitment to the scaling and delivery of solutions that address these priorities, as highlighted on the UNCCD Business Day on 7 September 2019.

### 3. Within this context we, the participants of the 2019 UNCCD Business Day recognize the following priorities:

- A. The widespread and rapid adoption of sustainable land management approaches that contribute to LDN.
- B. Supporting the improvement of living conditions of affected populations through food security and improved livelihoods.
- C. Supporting the mitigation of and adaptation to the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems.

#### 4. In recognizing these priorities, we, the participants of the 2019 UNCCD Business Day, commit to:

- A. Sustainable land management through value chains engagement
  - i. Adopting improved soil health practices for all scales and types of farming.
  - ii. Addressing deforestation-risk commodities and supply chains.
  - iii. Taking landscape-based approaches to managing, conserving and restoring natural resources, including forests and watersheds, including rural and urban linkages and needs.
  
- B. Improved livelihoods and food security and healthy communities
  - i. Ensuring prosperity through livelihood opportunities, including farmers, in rural and urban communities, and the linkages between them.
  - ii. Addressing the importance of healthy communities who have access to safe, sustainable, nutritious food and healthy diets.
  - iii. Reducing food and agricultural commodity losses and waste along the supply chain.
  
- C. Climate change mitigation and adaptation
  - i. Adopting climate-smart forms of agriculture that increase agricultural productivity, build resilience to the adverse effects of climate change and extreme weather, while mitigating agricultural Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, as well as water efficiency solutions for agriculture, industry and urban development.
  
- D. Biodiversity and ecosystem conservation and restoration
  - i. Adopting forms of agriculture that restore and conserve global biodiversity and ecosystems through Nature-Based Solutions.
  - ii. Landscape connectivity conservation to help rehabilitate degraded land and nurture the biological flows and structures needed to increase our resilience in the face of drought and other climate impacts.
  - iii. Mainstream agrobiodiversity in the food system.
  - iv. Food diversification to diversify crops we produce and consume for healthy and sustainable diets.
  - v. Restoring degraded and abandoned production lands and degraded natural and semi-natural ecosystems that provide vital, albeit indirect, benefits to business, people and working landscapes.

#### 5. In undertaking these commitments, our approach will include:

- A. The adoption of agreed, ambitious science-based targets for key “planetary boundaries”, including climate, land, water and biodiversity.
- B. Monitoring and managing risks in the business, including consideration of externalities through true value accounting of food production and consumption.
- C. Transparent communication of relevant progress through corporate reporting and disclosure.
- D. Full engagement in global and regional climate and biodiversity processes, specifically the 2019 UNFCCC COP 25 and the 2020 COP 26 and the 2020 COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

## 6. To enable business action, we call on governments to:

- A. Integrate and harmonize decisions coherently under key UN conventions (CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC) and the SDGs by recognizing the interrelations and dependencies of the development, climate and nature agendas.
- B. Innovation with a purpose to drive action for LDN at the speed required, governments will need to regulate in favor of innovation with a purpose to usher in inclusive and sustainable soil management and use.
- C. Adopting coherent incentive mechanisms and regulations to promote decisions that reward the development of projects for the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of nature, including establishment of public-private partnerships and blended financing solutions.
- D. Enable effective, early public and private sector dialogue and collaboration in the development and delivery of sustainable land management policies and priorities at landscape, regional and global levels.
- E. Develop clear and predictable policies and legal requirements ensuring synergies across wider environmental and social priorities – so that businesses operate on a level playing field when implementing solutions. Support with robust regulatory monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- F. Harness the role of market-based sustainability solutions including new innovations and technologies to accelerate progress – with clear commercial benefits to increase business participation and uptake.
- G. Increase emphasis on value-chain and market-orientated global financing mechanisms, such as green commodity-, landscape- and food systems-based funds, to support the piloting and scaling of solutions, alongside carbon financing and payments for ecosystem services.
- H. Support crop insurance programs that encourage investment in sustainable soil management and use technologies that improve yields and resiliency, reduce post-harvest losses and/or reduce net GHG emissions.
- I. Provide better legal recognition and protection of local and customary land rights, to enable them to be recognized and accounted for by financial institutions in their lending policies. Work to amend land tenure laws to include explicit guarantees for women to own land in their own right.