



3rd Africa Dry lands Week

The Windhoek Declaration

1. **The 3rd African Drylands Conference was convened in Windhoek, Namibia from 8-12 August 2016.** *The conference was hosted by the Government of the Republic of Namibia and was organized by the African Union in collaboration with NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, FAO, the World Bank, UNDP, UNEP, CILSS, the UNCCD Secretariat and the Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall. It was attended by over 100 participants from global, regional, and national institutions involved in drought mitigation and drylands management in Africa.*
2. **The participants reviewed opportunities, successes as well as challenges** facing the development of the drylands, including the interface between science and policy making, resilience to drought, land restoration, sustainable land management and preservation of historical cultural endowments.
3. **The participants noted** the following elements:
 - a. Environmental degradation, hunger and poverty are persistent challenges in drylands and recognized the urgent need to assist dryland populations to produce more food, to generate income, and to restore, regenerate and sustain the natural resource base for future food production and environmental health.
 - b. **Land degradation in Africa is a very serious crisis**, but restoration efforts have taken roots and are spreading rapidly; enabling millions of smallholders to adopt effective land regeneration methods.
 - c. **Addressing the challenges of land degradation in the drylands** will require more political commitment, adequate allocation of national budget resources and external resources, inclusive involvement of local communities, including youth and women, and effective cross-sectoral coordination.
 - d. **There is a** clear link between peace, security, development agenda and access and control of land resources and need for more integration of environmental dimension in peace building and conflict resolution initiatives.
 - e. **There are** close links between disaster risk reduction and sustainable environmental management in the drylands and the urgent need for timely interventions and building strong synergies in order to enhance resilience of the local communities.
 - f. **The global target of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by 2030** is an important contributor to the attainment of Africa's vision 2063 and a strong vehicle for synergy between Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) and the Paris Agreement that includes support to ecosystem functions and services and enhanced food security.



- drylands initiatives monitoring (ii) develop policies briefs and knowledge products accessible to the end users and (iii) create platforms to promote synergies and South-South Cooperation. To that effect, AU, in collaboration with partners, is requested to create a committee in charge of overseeing the capitalization of tools, methodologies and knowledge related to monitoring Drylands Activities and development of policies briefs accessible to end-users.
- f. Sustainable natural resources management is key in addressing socio economic issues that will curb illegal migration and clip the wings of criminal networks in the Sahel and the Sahara regions. **It is thus recommended** that Policy makers and the international community realize and consider Sustainable Land Management as an integral part of peace building and conflict resolution mechanisms at national, regional and continental level. In particular, AUC and Member States are strongly requested to integrate the oases space where it exists into the national development plans as well as regional initiatives.
 - g. **Request** African Governments and private sector, as well as donors' community to support the development of small and medium enterprises and promote value addition in drylands as as means of women and youth empowerment and poverty alleviation.
 - h. **Further request** countries, international, regional and sub-regional organizations to consider Land Degradation Neutrality as a mean of achieving synergy in the implementation of the Africa Vision 2063, the MEAs and recommend LDN consideration in the implementation of the Paris Climate Change Agreement, biodiversity conservation activities, Sustainable Land Management and efforts to achieve food security among others.

Done in Windhoek, Namibia, this day of 11 August, 2016

The participants.

