

**Opening remarks by Mr. Luc Gnacadja,
UNCCD Executive Secretary
on the occasion of the UNCCD side event organized during COP13 of UNFCCC
Bali, Indonesia, 13 December 2007**

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the participants here present at this side event organized in the framework of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC entitled “UNCCD: Sustainable land management for adaptation to climate change”

On the podium, I am accompanying the President of the Eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD, H.E. Ms. Cristina Narbona, Minister of Environment of Spain, and H.E. Ms. Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development ,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

In 2004, the Island of Hispaniola was severely hit by Hurricane Jeanne. As you know, Hispaniola is the Spanish name of the Island, which hosts Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Hurricane Jeanne caused a lot of devastation on this Island. Haiti lost more than 3000 people and suffered scores of injuries due to floods and mudslides. The Dominican Republic deplored the loss of 18 people. Every death is of course regrettable. But, this dramatic comparison illustrates a fact: countries with a strong sustainable land management policy are more resilient to climate change impacts. And the lesson to draw from this illustration is that investing in sustainable land management constitutes an effective way for adaptation to climate change in most of the developing countries. It strengthens their resilience.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

As Parties meet to launch a dialogue on the key issues which the new post 2012 climate agreement should cover, through actions such as mitigation, adaptation, technology and financing, I believe that the UNCCD’s newly adopted 10-year strategic plan offers ample chance for innovative thinking that furthers and enriches this dialogue as well as promoting action through partnerships.

Synergy between the 3 Rio Convention National Action Plans, which are bridges between development and environment policies, presents an opportunity to establish comprehensive policy instruments. Such an integrated approach to tackling desertification, biodiversity and climate change will have multiple benefits, especially for those in the world’s drylands who are suffering the most from the double blow of desertification and climate change.

Investment in sustainable land management must therefore be an integral part of strategies for adaptation to climate change. This applies, in particular, to countries that are economically highly dependent on natural resources.

I am eager to know what the technology being presented at this side event furthers these efforts. However, I would like to state at the outset that the UNCCD will spare no effort in pursuing any innovative endeavour that proves to be a building block for the post 2012 climate regime that takes due cognisance of related critical biophysical phenomena, and helps the UNCCD achieve its mandate as well as the 10-year strategic plan.

This means that best practice experience from desertification control and from UNCCD national action programmes can serve as a basis for defining visions for adaptation programmes in arid regions. There is therefore a need for action with a view to creating synergies between action programmes for adaptation to climate change, desertification control, and biodiversity conservation.

Mitigation financing must also take greater account of land use issues. Making the instruments for investment in sustainable land management efficient and giving Parties access to the CDM are issues that must be placed on the development agenda.

Thank you