

Strategy for implementing priority on Land Rights

The UNCCD CSO panel decided to include among its priorities for the present biennium the issue of Land Rights. Building upon the successful high level ministerial dialogue with the civil society organizations organized at the last session of the COP held in Ankara, the members of the panel felt the increasing need to address once and for all one of the main concern of the population living in areas affected by DLDD.

With the guidance of the Her Excellency Ms. Barbara Thomson, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs of South Africa the civil society and came up with a set of priorities that need to be considered in order to achieve the land degradation neutrality target.

- Securing of land rights as a prerequisite to achieving land degradation neutrality;
- Securing of land tenure systems for the drylands through locally appropriate, participatory and multi-stakeholder processes that take into account the dynamic nature of the dryland ecology as well as the dynamic nature of the multiple land uses in dryland communities;
- Provision of government recognition of the ownership and control of land by indigenous peoples and local communities;
- Recognition of the collective rights of land users, especially with regard to the livelihoods of pastoralists, indigenous peoples and women, as a first step to supporting community-based management systems to prevent degradation and restore land;
- Granting of equitable access and rights to land to women and men, especially vulnerable and indigenous peoples, in order to eradicate poverty;
- Tackling of the weak governance and the corruption endemic of the land governance system, which in many countries favour the status quo and harm the interests of poor people;
- Democratization and securing of land rights so as to ensure the continued sustainable management of natural resources and sustain the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities;
- Restoration of degraded lands that are used by land-insecure communities in ways that prevent land grabbing and instead improve tenure security, especially for indigenous peoples;
- Development of legal principles and guidelines for ensuring social protection, food security, security of indigenous peoples and local communities, land tenure, ecological integrity, and transparency and accountability in order to overcome social and historical inequities.

Taking into consideration the importance of the issue at stake, the panel has been looking into the possibility to submit for the consideration of the Parties a recommendation for a decision on land rights which will help implementing the strategic objectives of the strategy, mainly those related to the protection of the population and the ecosystems.

In order to do it the panel has elaborated the following strategy:

- Preparation of a publication to raise awareness on the relation between land degradation and limited land rights (April 2017)
- Implementation of 3 pilot projects to showcase how improving land rights results in a better sustainable land management. (from January 2017)
- Consultation with the civil society and vulnerable populations on the topic (indigenous peoples, women groups and youth) (from May to June 2017)
- Engaging into strong awareness campaign and advocate for land rights with media and public at large (May to June 2017)
- Finalization of a recommendation to be included in the report of the CSO panel to COP13 which could set up the basis for a strong decision on land rights (July 2017)
- Work with key governments to ensure that a decision is taken at COP13 on land rights (July to September 2017)

The publication could contain the following chapters:

- Foreword by the Deputy Minister of Environment Affairs of South Africa
- Foreword by the UNCCD Executive Secretary
- Relations between Land rights and Land degradation neutrality
- Land grabbing (case study)
- Land tenure (case study)
- Access to land by vulnerable communities (indigenous peoples, women, youth) (case study)
- Call to Parties for committing themselves to give access to land and protect ownership of vulnerable stakeholders

The proposed programme should finalize with a decision that will include the main points highlighted during the ministerial dialogue with the CSOs, particularly with the commitment from the countries to address the challenges identified by the civil society.