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**STRENGTHENING AFRICAN LEADERSHIP OF THE PROCESS**  
**OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO**  
**COMBAT DESERTIFICATION**  
**(Item proposed by Burkina Faso)**

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**INTRODUCTION**

1. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was established in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, on the occasion of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It was Africa that caused this major instrument to be brought to the front burner and adopted sequel to a diplomatic onslaught undertaken by African leaders to ensure that issues of the desertification, land degradation and drought plaguing the continent were addressed with the required attention by the international community.

2. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification currently has 195 Parties. This is the most ratified UN treaty and the only one which bears the name of Africa in its title. It is also the only one that makes combating desertification and land degradation, a priority for the Continent.

**CURRENT STATUS**

3. Africa is currently the continent most affected by land degradation, desertification and drought. It is also the most affected by poverty, food insecurity and hunger. Climate change is likely to worsen the situation.

4. Africa has the greatest potential in terms of its arable land which, rationally managed, could feed its population and generate surplus for export and industrialization through agribusiness. The continent could, in a few decades, become the breadbasket of the world and play a key role in the sustainable development of our planet.

5. At the recent summit in Rio de Janeiro, thanks to African leadership, the Heads of State and Government pledged to stop land degradation globally, reclaim land already degraded and make them fertile again. Africa, more than the other continents, has more land to restore, and by so doing, could benefit from new opportunities offered by this pledge. Furthermore, world leaders have made the Convention to Combat Desertification the instrument for global control and monitoring of the status of land degradation, desertification and drought.

6. The recent successes of the Convention further revealed its political and scientific relevance in all regions of the world. This is evidenced by the efforts deployed by these regions to host the Conference of States Parties (of the 10 Conferences already held, Africa has hosted only two - one in Dakar in 1998 and the other in Nairobi in 2005). Latin America has hosted the Conference of the Parties on 3 occasions (Cuba, Brazil and Argentina).

7. At a time when the international community is engaged in the debate on the post-2015 development agenda, Africa should advocate for increased investment in sustainable management of its lands which constitute the basis of the activities of 70% of its population. In this regard, Africa should undertake advocacy to ensure that neutralization of land degradation becomes one of the goals of sustainable development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Africa should strengthen its leadership (1) by speeding up at national, sub regional and regional levels the implementation of the Convention and the cooperation it requires, (2) carrying the torch to the highest political level in its land degradation, desertification and drought advocacy activities, (3) seeing to it that African leadership is maintained in the Convention's implementation process and in the operation of its Executive Secretariat, (4) and lastly, by continuing to assume huge responsibilities in negotiation sessions and other diplomatic meetings, particularly by hosting more Conferences of States Parties and other important meetings. It is therefore desirable that the African Union adopt a decision along the following lines:

- i) Do its utmost to ensure that Africa maintains its leadership in this strategic instrument, i.e. the Convention and its Executive Secretariat;
- ii) Undertake all-out actions to ensure that issues of land degradation, desertification and drought feature on the list of priorities for sustainable development of African States;
- iii) Place the issue of desertification, land degradation and drought at the centre of the debate on the post-2015 development agenda and establish the neutralization of the land degradation (zero-net land degradation) as one of the goals of sustainable development.

2013-05-27

# Strengthening African Leadership of the Process of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (Item proposed by Burkina Faso)

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