



Linking Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) through Sustainable Land Management (SLM)

Short documentation of the side event at the Land Restoration Day during UNCCD COP15

1. Summary of the event

Objective:

The target systems of all three Rio-Conventions show the strongest interlinkage in sustainable land management and land restoration. Progress in one target system has a direct positive impact on the other two target systems. The potential for synergies through better dovetailing between the three target systems is particularly high in this area.

Enhancing soil health and soil organic carbon (SOC) stocks through climate-sensitive sustainable land management (SLM), which protects biodiversity, and ecosystem restoration is an important, but often underestimated leverage for climate change mitigation and adaptation, food security and biodiversity conservation. **Consequently, a stronger reflection of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets within Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) may unlock significant resources** to achieve LDN targets, raise the ambition of NDCs in the land use sector and ensure the inclusion of soil health in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

To discuss how apparent synergies between the three Rio Conventions can be strengthened at a political level and how coherence between the Rio target systems can be achieved, speakers from different organisations (University of Bonn, Government of Rwanda, CGIAR) and a panel of political stakeholders convened at a side event during UNCCD COP 15, held in May 2022 in Abidjan. **The event was the first in a series of events supporting a better alignment of the target systems of the three Rio Conventions in the land sector and a follow up will take place during UNFCCC COP27 in November 2022.**

The outcome of this event:

The speakers and panellists agreed that **aligning land-based planning, monitoring and reporting processes across the three Rio Conventions is key to the success of all three Rio Conventions.** Current uncertainties in this regard may result in inefficient allocation of financial resources and implementation. Therefore, the scientific bodies of the Rio Conventions should reconcile technical aspects to create synergies. At the level of the conventions' secretariats, strong interest in supporting national focal points in aligning implementation efforts was demonstrated and ongoing activities in this field were pointed out.

2. Summary of Keynotes

(Dr. Alisher Mirzabaev, University of Bonn)

On behalf of the Economics of Land Degradation Initiative (ELD), the University of Bonn and the University of Rwanda are conducting a study on the potential economic and efficiency gains resulting from a better alignment of measures to achieve Rio-targets in Rwanda. Rwandan authorities show a **strong political will to engage in land restoration** and are **committed to specific** quantified **land restoration targets under the Rio Conventions.** Key challenges faced are financing gaps, and a lack of economically profitable and environmentally sustainable targeting. The ELD study will provide evidence-based policy

information for improving land restoration and SLM activities and will be used as the basis for further discussions among the Rio-Conventions and country parties on how to support target coherence at national level.

ELD case study in Rwanda – (Dr. Ildephonse Musafiri, Strategy and Policy Council Office of the president, Rwanda)

The Rwandan Agreement on Forestry Management and the Governmental Management Authority are aiming to generate synergies and harmonization between the Rio Conventions. However, the **environmental authorities tasked with this process have** many stakeholders at the national and sub-national levels. This fragmentation, **the lack of knowledge and understanding of sustainable land management** to link food systems to land degradation leads to **ad-hoc implementation instead of strategically planned interventions**. This results in an inefficient allocation of financial resources.

Ecosystem restoration and SLM practices are the key to the three Rio Conventions (Dr. Leigh Winowicki, Coalition for Soil Health)

Monitoring the effect of implementation efforts plays a central role in achieving SDGs and LDN. Here, **soil organic carbon** is a key indicator for soil health. It is necessary to scale interventions globally through collaboration and alignment of actions and to make sure that they are tailored to the local context. Bringing science into action facilitates decisions and implementation on the ground. Encouragement to adopt sustainable land management practices is critical for scaling local impact. Furthermore, **public-private sector engagement** is needed to bring equitable **financial incentives to farmers to overcome economic barriers**.

3. Summary of the Panel

Question – Round 1: *“How can secretariats support the parties to the convention to better harmonize and align existing and future land-based targets?”*

UNCCD Secretariat (Miriam Medel García)

Land is the operational link between human wellbeing, climate change mitigation and adaptation and biodiversity. Realizing synergies between Rio conventions is a party driven process. All three Convention Secretariats support the parties with a **Joint Liaison Group**, focusing on advocacy on synergies. **The UNCCD Secretariat supports the focal points of all three conventions with a new Capacity Development Program.** The UNCCD Secretariat is currently working on a renewed target setting process, considering synergies.

UNFCCC Secretariat (Motsomi Maletjane, Leads LDC Expert Group and NAPs unit)

Increasing risk and system-based approaches, as highlighted in the latest IPCC report, lead to integrated programmes and initiatives. All three Conventions recently discussed on **high political level** how to promote synergies. Funding provided by the Conventions (e.g. through GEF) promotes **multifocal area programmes**. **The development of multifocal programming needs to be steered by party countries.**

UNCBD Secretariat (Dr. Jamal Annagylyjova, Forest Restoration Officer)

Land and ecosystem restoration is the common denominator of the Rio-Conventions. A joint mobilisation of national focal points of all three Conventions is recommended. Dialogues on how to address synergies at country level are needed, during the development process of new monitoring and reporting mechanisms for CBD. **The development of a joint guide for the Conventions’ national focal points on how to make use of synergies is recommended.** The secretariats may support their parties by sharing spatial planning tools, using GEF expanded constituency workshops to discuss joint programming and by increasing the dialogue between secretariats and UN country teams. **The Conventions need a mandate from countries to work on the proposed measures.**

WWF International (Martina Fleckenstein, Global Policy Manager, Food Practice)

Question: *“What are the most effective entry points for development cooperation agencies to create synergies when they are working with land-based target setting?”*

Development agencies can support vertical and horizontal cooperation between national and local level institutions and organizations. LDN target commitments of parties are often challenging and currently lack financial support. **Synergies need to be addressed already during planning phases to avoid sectoral silo approaches.** The exchange between focal points on target setting is essential.

Question - Round 2:

UNFCCC Secretariat (Motsomi Maletjane, Leads LDC Expert Group and NAPs unit)

Question: *“How can existing LDN and biodiversity targets for sustainable land management and soil organic carbon be linked to revised NDCs? What support would be required or available to support this connection and what would this connection look like?”*

There are a lot of connections between biodiversity, land degradation, and climate change targets. The NDCs are a party-proven process where countries can include relevant objectives to achieve their specific climate change objectives. Therefore, it is essential to harmonize existing targets across the different instruments. They often refer to common indicators that, when implementing activities in the climate change perspective, also achieve LDN targets. The potential for harmonizing synergies between the Rio Conventions depends on technicalities that still need to be determined.

Office of the President Rwanda – (Dr. Ildephonse Musafiri, Strategy and Policy Council)

Question: *“Having heard the perspectives from the three Convention Secretariats, where do you see bottle necks that are experienced at the institutional level in Rwanda when it comes to the alignment of the Convention’s land-based targets?”*

The bottle necks in Rwanda are not different from what other countries face in integrating the Conventions. Particular bottlenecks identified are institutional, financial, organisational, and communicational. In addition, overlapping institutional responsibility leads to a misunderstanding of their respective roles in implementation. A clear roadmap, examination of existing structures, and identification of areas of implementation are needed to not duplicate actions and facilitate reporting efforts.

UNCBD Secretariat (Dr. Jamal Annagyjova, Forest Restoration Officer)

Question: *“How can existing NDC and LDN targets for sustainable land management and soil organic carbon be linked to the new or updated biodiversity targets? What could this connection look like? I.e., can existing targets simply be referred to, or do they need to be specifically stipulated as biodiversity targets?”*

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF), currently under negotiation, is to be adopted at the CBD CoP15 later this year. The implementation of the GBF will be based on an inclusive whole-of-government approach, which will require inter-sectoral approach at country level.

More specifically, the draft Target 1 calling for integrated biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning, the draft Target 2 aiming at the restoration of degraded ecosystems, as well as the draft Target 10 on sustainable agriculture through conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity will offer entry points for coherent analysis of baseline for degradation of terrestrial ecosystems, identification of priority areas for restoration, target setting and monitoring.

To connect the dots, the upcoming GEF early action project for the developing countries should engage the national focal points of Rio-Conventions in the development process of the national biodiversity strategic action plans (NBSAPs) to present existing targets, plan for trade-offs and set up coherent targets. These could be existing targets under the LDN or NDCs or new targets if biodiversity considerations are not taken into the account in the commitments of the UNCCD and the UNFCCC, like priority areas for biodiversity and connectivity.