

MEDIA ADVISORY

Press Briefing: World Day to Combat Desertification observed today worldwide

When: Monday, 17 June, 10:00-10:30hrs

Who: Louise Baker, Senior Adviser on Partnership Building and Resource Mobilization,
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Yukie Hori, Coordinator, Awareness Raising, Communication and Education Unit,
UNCCD

Where: Press Room in World Conference Center Bonn (WCCB), Platz der Vereinten Nationen
2, 53113 Bonn, Germany

The World Day to Combat Desertification, which is held every year on 17 June, is taking place worldwide today. The focus this year is drought and water scarcity.

Droughts are natural disasters, but unlike other disasters, they set in slowly, therefore, they are predictable and can be mitigated. And yet they affect more lives than any other disaster – more than earthquakes and hurricanes combined. With climate change, droughts are projected to increase in intensity, in frequency and in their spread. Only one country in the world has a comprehensive national drought policy.

This press briefing will speak to the need for global political and social mobilization to combat desertification and land degradation in the context of mitigating drought and addressing global water scarcity.

Ms Baker will address the constraints to progress in the implementation of the Convention, highlighting the policy dimension. Ms Hori will highlight community leadership and empowerment for drought resilience, and present the winners of the 2013 Land for Life Award and individuals receiving the title of Drylands Champion for their practical contribution to sustainable land management.

The World Day to Combat Desertification global observance will be held in Ghent, Belgium, in conjunction with the global observance of the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification. Events are also planned in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Hungary, Namibia, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Thailand and South Africa, among other countries.

For more information on the Day, visit: <http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Event-and-campaigns/WDCD/WDCD2013/Pages/default.aspx?HighlightID=168>

Contact:

For interviews and information on the briefing, contact Yukie Hori, +49 228 815 2829, yhori@unccd.int.

About the UNCCD

Desertification, along with climate change and the loss of biodiversity, were identified as the greatest challenges to sustainable development during the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Established in 1994, UNCCD is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment, development and the promotion of healthy soils. The Convention's 194 signatory Parties work to alleviate poverty in the drylands, maintain and restore the land's productivity, and mitigate the effects of drought.

About Land for Life Award

The Land for Life Award aims to recognize leadership in sustainable land management. The problems of land degradation are extensive. Every year 75 billion tons of fertile soils are lost, threatening global food supply, biodiversity and the livelihoods of millions of people. But solutions exist. The Land for Life Award is the only global award that recognizes the achievements of communities, scientists, policy makers and organizations working to restore degraded lands and improve soil's natural health and productive capacity.

About UNCCD Drylands Champions

The Dryland Champions Programme aims to generate increased engagement by individuals, organizations and businesses to promote grassroots action at local and national levels. By showcasing "best in class" examples of effective and creative approaches, the programme recognizes agents of change towards sustainable land management. The programme is implemented by the UNCCD national focal point ministries who receive applications and identify their own national champions. The UNCCD secretariat receives the list of Dryland Champions from these countries and recognizes them globally on 17 June. The programme started this year.

About UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification

With more lands around the world facing increasing deterioration and degradation, the United Nations General Assembly declared the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification, which runs from January 2010 to December 2020 to promote action that will protect the drylands. The Decade is an opportunity to make critical changes to secure the long-term ability of drylands to provide value for humanity's well being.