

## UN Launches Decade-Long Effort to Boost Prospects for the World's Drylands

**Seoul, Republic of Korea, 12 October** — Human security and prosperity are increasingly threatened by desertification, land degradation and drought in the drylands. In Asia, these threats affect more people and land than in any other region of the world. To highlight this, the United Nations today launched the Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification for the Asian region in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

“The devastating effects of drought in Russia and floods in Pakistan and China on rich agricultural lands this year show that we must take urgent measures to protect and preserve our land in order to avert future crises that imperil our food security,” said Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), who represented the UN at the Regional Launch in Korea.

“This is exactly the challenge of land degradation and the point of the Decade we are launching” Gnacadja said. “Drylands are home to one in three people in the world. They support half the world’s livestock and make up 44 per cent of the world’s cultivated systems. Most of us take these breadbaskets for granted, but they now face serious threats due to the increase and intensity of the cycles of drought and floods encountered in the drylands. While it takes only seconds for floodwaters to erode fertile soil, it can take 500 years to recover an inch of that soil,” he emphasized.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in his message to mark the start of the Decade, called on the global community to intensify efforts to “nurture the land we need for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and guaranteeing human well-being.”

“Continued land degradation – whether from climate change, unsustainable agriculture or poor management of water resources – is a threat to food security, leading to starvation among the most acutely affected communities and robbing the world of productive land,” Secretary-General Ban said.

During the 11-year campaign, from 2010-2020, the five UN agencies leading the initiative - the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Department of Public Information of the United Nations (DPI) - intend to reach every household with the simple message that “*land is life, keep the drylands working.*”





## United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification

The statement delivered by Luc Gnacadja at the Asia-Pacific regional launch today is available [here](#).

### Notes to Editors:

#### Decade's History and Purpose

In 2007, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2010-2020 the UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification to heighten public awareness about the threat of desertification and land degradation as well as educate affected populations on ways to combat it by practicing sustainable land management to eradicate poverty, one of its key drivers. Additional information is available on the UNDDD Webpage: [unddd.unccd.int](http://unddd.unccd.int)

The complete press kit on the event is available at:

<http://unddd.unccd.int/docs/media.zip>

Pictures for use with appropriate credits are available at:

<http://www.unccd.int/publicinfo/photo/2009/awards/photobank.php> and

<http://www.unccd.int/publicinfo/photo/menu.php>

Credits style: © [name of photographer] & UNCCD [year of contest] Photo Contest

Example: © Kushal Gangopadhyay & UNCCD 2005 Photo Contest

Footage on desertification and drought for use by television stations can be downloaded from the following two addresses:

[http://downloads2.unmultimedia.org.s3.amazonaws.com/public/tv/Fortaleza ICID.mov](http://downloads2.unmultimedia.org.s3.amazonaws.com/public/tv/Fortaleza%20ICID.mov)

A description of this footage is contained in this press kit in the file "Transcript of launch in Fortaleza"

<http://downloads2.unmultimedia.org.s3.amazonaws.com/public/tv/desertificationAfrica.mov>

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