

SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, RANGE AND SOIL CONSERVATION

DURING THE COP12 SESSION IN ANKARA, TURKEY

**ROUND TABLE 1 : 'FROM GLOBAL TO LOCAL;
TRANSLATING LAND DEGRADATION
NEUTRALITY INTO ACTION'**

18-23/OCTOBER/2017

COP President,
Executive Secretary of the UNCCD,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Mr Chairman'

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate you for having been appointed chair of this august meeting and the outgoing chair, Namibia for steering this COP the right direction for the past two years as COP11 president.

Let me also express my appreciation of the opportunity that has been accorded me on behalf of my country to come and attend this conference in the beautiful city of Ankara.

My delegation would like to join other member states in conveying its condolences to the government and the people of Turkey for the tragic event that occurred recently and condemns these brutal acts of terrorism.

Chair,

The issues that have brought us here today are arguably all not new to us. They have been deliberated on in many sessions (Global, Regional and Subregional).

However, before we can reasonably discuss the translation of environmental issues into local strategies, crucial as they are to sustainable development, we need to understand the close relationship between absolute poverty and the socio-economic factors both globally and nationally. May I bring to your attention the World Conservation

Strategy document of 1980 which declared the combined destructive impacts of the poor majority struggling to stay alive and the affluent minority, consuming most of the world's resources as undermining the very means by which people can survive and flourish.

Mr Chairman,

I personally find this idea of addressing global challenges by employing local strategies very appealing to me. I have no doubt that we will all agree that it is not only a moral issue that confronts each and every one of us here today; it is also a question of practical common sense.

Mr Chairman,

Any nation, where the majority of its people live at unacceptable level of poverty will find great difficulty in effectively addressing global challenges by following global template.

We know that we can reverse the conditions of poverty and of land degradation, that we can feed ourselves, that we can also engage in sustainable programmes of action that are meaningful to everyone. However, our challenge is, 'Can we find, all of us the vision and the common sense to create together the changes that will be essential and are crucial if we really mean business.'

Chair,

My fear is, if there are some of us here today who do not see the urgency for observing this strategic approach we run a risk of getting entangled in the web of endless circles of hunger, diseases and unnecessary loss of lives.

Mr Chairman,

The 2007 Madrid COP8 recommended the call for concerned parties to align their National Action Plans (NAPs) and all relevant National actions in accordance with the 10 year Strategy of the UNCCD (2008 to 2018). Whilst I find the recommendation very strategic and crucial, the appeal which I am making through you Mr Chairman is that this time be extended beyond 2018. I am saying this because some member states have just recently completed their NAPs and we are left with roughly three years before 2018, that Mr Chairman is the first reason. The second and perhaps the most important one is that of the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is my humble understanding that these SDGs are global in nature and will require to be conceptualized, comprehended and translated into locally applicable programmes of action and that Mr Chairman requires time.

Chair

Let us remind ourselves that at the Rio earth summit in 1992 nations of the world agreed on the text of convention and proposed that combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought be part of Agenda 21. Subsequently, Lesotho drew its National Action Plan to implement the agenda and within it are strategies to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought (Agenda 21, Lesotho 1994).

Mr Chairman,

Lesotho's strategies to implement agenda 21 include among others:

- To prepare a comprehensive National Plan for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of droughts.
- To develop anti-desertification measures to be integrated within the plan.
- To develop early warning systems to enhance preparedness and to also promote public awareness of desertification control and management of effects of drought.

The above mentioned strategies are in line with the requirements of the UNCCD and the Rio+20 sentiment that says the time is ripe to agree on a Sustainable Development Goals at Rio+20 on Zero Net Land Degradation to serve the continuing availability of productive land for present and future generation **‘The future we want.’**

Yes Mr Chairman the philosophy of translating global initiatives into simple, applicable and cost effective programs of action is for now arguably the only strategy that may bring positive results **‘Common but differentiated responsibility’**

I THANK YOU