

CSO Closing Statement

Distinguished delegates,

I am Anne Plaatsje from EMG, which is a CSO from South Africa, and I am honored to speak on behalf of 1200 representatives of civil society present here at COP15 in Abidjan

I would like to express our gratitude to the Secretariat of the UNCCD for its commitment to facilitate the collaborative interactions among Parties, international organizations and CSOs. We also want to thank the government of Cote d'Ivoire for hosting the 15th Conference of Parties of the UNCCD.

We are very concerned about the War in Ukraine and the human suffering, as well as its effects on the food security across the world. This matter is closely linked to the droughts in many countries.

We welcome the COP15 decision **on land tenure which** encourages Parties to partner with civil society organizations to strengthen their engagement with populations in situations of vulnerability, including Indigenous peoples and local communities, those living in rural areas, women, youth, and persons with disabilities, to support the implementation of COP14 decision on land tenure. We moreover recommend that :

- Efforts be made to raise awareness on the Technical Guide at national and subnational level, by working under an intersectoral approach and engaging non-state stakeholders in the process and by requesting FAO, UNCCD secretariat and the Global Mechanism to support capacity building and participatory workshops on the Technical Guide and the translation into local languages.
- That Parties Engage with local communities and especially those of women, youth, pastoralists, indigenous peoples and local communities so as to ensure that their rights and interests are secured in policy discussions relevant to the governance and use of land.
- We further welcome the adoption of the CST decisions on policy recommendations resulting from the work programme of the Science-Policy Interface for the biennium 2020–2021 and that these recommendations reiterate the importance of respecting land tenure in the development and implementation of land use planning approaches and tools.

We also welcome the COP decision about **the participation of CSOs** in UNCCD processes, which calls for a more balanced participation of CSOs in the sessions of the COP and its subsidiary bodies, through fund mobilization for CSO participation; and which also promises a strategy for youth engagement in the processes of the Convention. Furthermore we call for,

- Support to facilitate participation of civil society throughout the decision-making processes regarding LDN target and National Drought Plans
- Maintain the active participation of CSO observers in the SPI.
- Ensure effective engagements and strong partnership between national governments and government agencies, communities, local authorities and the CSOs, in preparation and organization of COP16, and allow the CSO panel to be an observer to the meetings of the Friends of the Chair.

On gender we request you

- To ensure that the Gender Action Plan and its road map are not stand-alone documents within the COP discussions, add gender experts to SPI and other subsidiary bodies.
- Ensure that the four priorities of the Gender Action Plan are to be implemented by the Parties of the COP16: 1) women participation in decision making processes, 2) women economic

empowerment, 3) Women equal land rights and access to resources, and 4) Women's access to knowledge and technologies.

- Invite the Gender Caucus and Youth caucus to reflect on the documents and to monitor policy impacts on populations in vulnerability conditions

On sustainable land management and land restoration: we are concerned that the SPI work program for the next triennium is not explicitly mentioning agroecological approaches and regenerative practices, and therefore we would like to highlight the importance of agroecological practices for millions of small scale farmers and indigenous communities, to feed the world. Therefore, we request you

- To promote and support agroecological approaches and regenerative practices as solutions to implement the UNCCD and reach LDN, while contributing to synergize the three Rio Conventions.
- Promote and develop funding mechanisms to support knowledge and practice development of land users (especially for women, youth, indigenous peoples and pastoralist) together with scientists and CSOs to improve and upscale agroecological approaches and regenerative practices.

On drought, We regret that the decision adopted in this COP is not up to the challenge faced by many countries, we therefore make the following recommendations;

- Humanize Drought ! give drought a human face and better understand the impacts of this disaster on the lives of children, women, men, farmers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, and local communities. Considering that these people are vulnerable because of the magnitude of the situation they are in, we therefore, strongly encourage that UNCCD further documents refer to them as "people in situation of vulnerability" and not as "vulnerable people".
- Ensure better coordination of information-sharing, policies and budget allocation regarding drought preparedness and response among ministries and government agencies and also between the different governance levels from national via local authorities to local communities.
- By acting on the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) in 2026 by the UN General Assembly in March 2022, promote mobile pastoralists strategies on mitigating, adapting to and living with climate variability and droughts, and recognize the role of sustainable pastoralism in reducing and responding to drought, restoring degraded rangelands and achieving land degradation neutrality."

The COVID Pandemic showed us that WE, as an international community, are able to work together and take urgent action. We encourage the parties to actively engage with CSOs that are working closely with the communities where the practical actions on sustainable land management and restoration are being taken.

Thank you