

Thirteenth meeting of Task Force on Water and Climate of the Convention of the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention)

19 October 2022

**Item 5: Future work on climate change in transboundary basins under the Water Convention
(15.30 - 16.20)**

DRAFT SPEECH, Ms. Louise Baker

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, colleagues, and friends.

I am Louise Baker. I am the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

It is in an honour to address you today [at the Thirteenth meeting of the Task Force on Water and Climate of the Water Convention].

UNCCD is the sole legally binding instrument linking land management with sustainable development. It covers the issues of land degradation, desertification, and drought.

Friends,

The ground is drying up.

Fertile lands are turning to dust.

Drought increasingly prevails.

If we stay on our current course, more of us will live with extreme water shortages – including an estimated one in four children by 2040¹.

Yet there is good news.

Land restoration commitments covering almost one billion hectares are in place.

More than 106 Parties to the Convention have set their voluntary **Land Degradation Neutrality targets** to conserve, sustainably manage and restore the land.

With dozens more Parties set to complete the process, there is real momentum.

We continue to assist interested countries to refine their LDN targets and deploy effective measures to deliver on their ambitions.

LDN measures related to soil and water conservation, in particular, have a long-term effect on water security and constitute an essential part of drought and climate change mitigation².

So at the same time, 66 countries have taken part in the recently completed UNCCD's Drought Initiative to shift to a proactive and risk-based approach to drought.

¹ Drought in Numbers.

² LDN_Water_Security_drought_report

https://catalogue.unccd.int/1442_LDN_Water_Security_drought_report%20Web.pdf

However, to support countries in turning their LDN and drought commitments into action, UNCCD is facilitating and supporting **transformative initiatives**.

And in that sense, transboundary river basins provide an opportunity to implement LDN at scale facilitated through cooperation among countries.

We have partnered with the Zambezi Watercourse Commission, the African Development Bank and the Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility (CRIDF) in southern Africa to develop an investment programme in the Zambezi River Basin which is **shared by eight countries**. The objective of this **Programme for Integrated Development and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Zambezi Watercourse** is to build strong communities that are resilient to climatic and economic shocks in the Zambezi Watercourse, through promoting inclusive transformative investments, job-creation and ecosystem-based solutions. The Appraisal reports for the Banks' initial financing to the programme are being finalised and we are now also supporting the Commission to mobilise additional financial resources.

The UNCCD is working closely with the Pan African Agency among other partners to support the implementation of the **Great Green Wall in the Sahel**. The Great Green Wall Initiative promises to be a compelling solution to the many urgent threats not only facing the African Continent, but the global community as a whole – notably climate change, drought, famine, conflict and migration. Currently, we are in the process of initiating the development of a **transboundary water strategy for the Great Green Wall in the Sahel**.

Our ambition is to spread our wings, working with partners to support large-scale restoration programmes in other parts of the world in our efforts to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Decade on Ecosystems Restoration and greater drought resilience.

And with the creation of a new intergovernmental working group on drought at the UNCCD's Conference of the Parties in May, we now have a platform for mobilizing collective action.

The UNCCD Secretariat is grateful to the Water Convention which produced an excellent report³ to support the work of the previous Intergovernmental Working Group on drought. In that report, drought was already addressed in the transboundary context. The current global situation requires regarding drought means that we need to do more, faster and better.

Access to finance will be key.

The Global Mechanism of the UNCCD recently launched a **partnership for project preparation**. We are establishing new, strategic partnerships to accelerate and expand the preparation of investment-ready large-scale land-based solutions globally. In that context, we hope to work with the Water Convention to address and strengthen transboundary water cooperation.

Thank you very much.

³ <https://www.unccd.int/resources/reports/background-existing-policies-radars-drought-under-water-convention-unece>