

The concept of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN): genesis and definition

At the Rio+20 Summit in 2012, the member countries of the United Nations made a global commitment to strive for a land degradation neutral world. Three years later, this commitment is translated into Sustainable Development Goal 15 - target 15.3 of the 2030 Agenda.

SDG 15 - Target 15.3: By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation neutral world.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) embraces this concept of land degradation neutrality (LDN) and endorses the definition of LDN as "a state in which the quantity and quality of land resources, necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security, remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems.

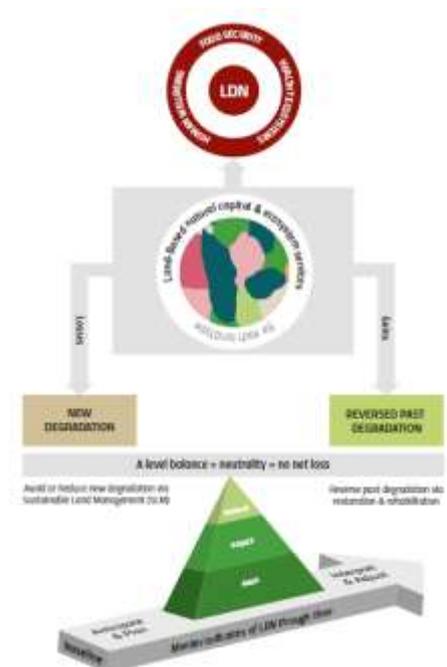
Scientific framework of the LDN

The UNCCD Science-Policy Interface (SPI) is working to propose a conceptual framing of LDN, and proposes three prioritized responses to achieve neutrality:

First: Avoid - Land degradation can be avoided by addressing the drivers of degradation and by proactive measures to prevent adverse changes in the quality of undegraded land and to build resilience through appropriate regulation, planning and management practices.

Second: Reduce - Land degradation can be reduced or mitigated on agricultural and forest lands through the application of sustainable land, water and forest management practices.

Third: Reverse - Wherever possible, some (but rarely all) of the productive potential and ecological services of degraded lands can be restored or rehabilitated by actively contributing to the restoration of ecosystem functions.



Finally, the SPI proposes to consider **3 land condition characterization indicators** to monitor and evaluate the achievement of neutrality:

- Land use
- Land productivity
- Rate of carbon stored in the soil

Political consideration within the UNCCD

Development of LDN action plans

The UNCCD supports countries in formulating national voluntary targets and action plans to achieve the NDT in accordance with their national circumstances.

- **127 countries** have developed their action plans for achieving the LDN, including voluntary national targets
- These national voluntary targets translate into cumulative commitments to restore **450 million hectares** of degraded land.

These national action plans, [available on the UNCCD website](#), are generally under the responsibility of the ministries in charge of the environment. They include:

- A mapping of the areas that have been degraded according to the 3 indicators - land use, land productivity, carbon stock. These maps highlight *hotspots of degradation* where the situation is most critical and the urgency to act to reverse degradation is strongly felt.
- An identification of the degradation factors at work in the country.
- Finally, these action plans set numerical targets for achieving neutrality and a list of measures to be implemented to avoid, reduce and reverse.

Development of transformative projects

After defining their voluntary LDN targets, countries must identify and develop transformative projects and programs to implement their commitments. The UNCCD offers countries support in the early stages of project development to prepare good quality concept notes that can be submitted to institutions such as the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility.

- **52 countries** participated and presented **55 national projects**: 14 concept notes are developed, 11 notes are under development, 30 notes are in draft.
- **38 countries** have proposed **6 regional projects**: 5 concept notes are developed and 1 note is under development.

Perspectives on the discussions at the UNCCD COP15 in May 2022

UNCCD COP15 will discuss progress on the Convention's support programs for countries setting national targets to achieve neutrality, and for countries working on transformative project design to implement their action plans.

In addition, a number of actors working on LDN (scientists, CSOs, institutions, countries, LDN Fund) will be present at COP15 and will present their work at side events.

Working on Land Degradation Neutrality at a national workshop Désertif'actions 2022

Question to be addressed: to what extent can agroecology provide relevant solutions to be integrated in projects to achieve neutrality by avoiding, reducing or reversing land degradation?

Tips for workshop organizers:

- Read LDN National Action Plan (Action Plans are available on the UNCCD website: <https://knowledge.unccd.int/home/country-information/countries-with-voluntary-ldn-targets>)
- Contact and invite the national focal point on desertification (their contact information is available on the UNCCD website: https://knowledge.unccd.int/search?f%5B0%5D=type%3Afocal_points)

Learn more about Land Degradation Neutrality :

- [On the UNCCD website](#)
- [On the GTD website](#)

