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UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Desertification and Drought Day

Restoring Degraded Land in the Arab Region

Thursday 17 June 2021 | 12:00 – 1:00 PM (Beirut Time)

Background

The 2021 Desertification and Drought Day (DDD) will be held on 17 June. The theme for this year, as announced by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), is “**Restoration. Land. Recovery. We build back better with healthy land,**” and aims to highlight the need to protect and restore natural ecosystems in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Land supports most human productive systems and consequently people’s livelihoods. Land also provides many other ecosystem services including clean air and water, cultural services such as recreation, and others, which greatly improve the quality of life. Nonetheless, the land continues to be overexploited and development activities to encroach on productive and fragile lands leading to their degradation and to biodiversity loss. Degraded lands provide less protection and resilience against extreme events such as droughts, floods, wind and rain erosion or sandstorms while also decreasing the buffer zone against zoonoses such as those that lead to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, there is an urgent need to reverse this negative trend with a starting point being to raise awareness on this issue notably among the youth. By targeting and encouraging youth lead initiatives, there is a greater likelihood that land degradation will become a multigenerational issue of concern and focus.

For the celebration of DDD 2021, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) and the United Nations Office of Information and Communication Technologies (UN-OICT), joined forces to launch a **Youth Challenge on Restoring Degraded Land in the Arab Region**. Young people, between 15 and 30 years old, were invited to produce a short video to raise awareness on the issue of land degradation. 17 videos were submitted of which 8 videos were selected as finalists.

On 17 June, representatives of member countries, regional organizations, academia, and key actors, institutions and civil society organizations working on land issues are invited to join the youth to further raise awareness on the alarming issue of land degradation. During the event, the winners of the video challenge will be announced, and provided an opportunity to highlight their ideas on land degradation.

Registration Link

The event will be held virtually from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. on Thursday 17 June 2021. Participants are invited to register prior to event at:

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_BG8JuuJpROck6YSuqoesiQ

Language of the session

The event will be conducted in Arabic and English with simultaneous interpretation provided.

Agenda

11:45 – 12:00	Join the Event! <i>Participants are kindly invited to join the event via the Zoom platform</i>
<i>Moderator</i>	<i>Ms. Reem Nejdawi, Chief, Food and Environment Policies Section, Climate Change and Natural Resource Sustainability Cluster, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)</i>
12:00 – 12:10	Welcoming remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.E. Dr. Ibrahim Dukheiri, Director General, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD)• Ms. Reem Nejdawi, Chief, Food and Environment Policies Section, ESCWA
12:10 – 12:50	Land Degradation in the Arab Region: Challenges and Prospects <i>Mr. Fidele Byiringiro, ESCWA</i> Panel Discussion on Land degradation in the Arab Region <i>Moderated by: Ms. Reem Nejdawi, ESCWA</i> <u>Panelists:</u> <i>Dr. Talal Darwish, National Council for Scientific Research</i> <i>Dr. Mubarak Abdelrahman Abdalla, University of Khartoum</i> <i>Dr. Nadim Farajalla, American University of Beirut</i> <i>Dr. Ahmed Salem, AOAD</i> Discussion with the Youth on their Role in Restoring Degraded Land in the Arab Region <i>Moderated by: Ms. Maya Atie, ESCWA</i>
12:50 – 1:00	Awards Ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presentation of Award in Category I• Presentation of Award in Category II
	Closing remarks

Correspondence

Approved and registered participants will be provided with a link and password to participate. All session-related correspondence should be sent to:

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