



REPUBLIC OF TURKEY  
MINISTRY OF FORESTRY AND WATER AFFAIRS  
GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF COMBATING DESERTIFICATION AND EROSION



# Ankara Initiative



*Forest and Water are Life.*



Turkey  
Discover  
the potential



# Ankara Initiative

## A. Background, Justification, Principles

The Ankara Initiative is launched to strengthen implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in the period 2016 to 2019. It will support the global sustainable development agenda and leverage the lessons learned from Turkey's past experience and approaches to land management.

Efforts to combat desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) require an approach that inspires action at local, regional and global level; that supports the mutually reinforcing objectives and commitments of the Rio Conventions and other global processes such as the Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs).





In the context of the SDGs and with a commitment to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030, the Convention will need to be able to rapidly expand its capacity to assist Parties with implementation on the ground. That is to provide practical support that helps slow those actions that drive land degradation and accelerate the rehabilitation of degraded land. Turkey contends that, in order to be successful, the Convention's efforts not only require technical solutions and an ability to plan at scale but an understanding of the underlying social, economic and environmental driving factors.

## **B. Turkish Expertise and Experience**

As a predominantly arid and semi-arid country, Turkey has become a leader in land management especially in areas vulnerable to drought. It has invested heavily to rehabilitate a wide variety of terrestrial ecosystems with national activities often planned at the watershed scale. Success can be attributed to an integrated, participatory approach that strengthens the



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engagement and capacity of local people. Land governance has evolved to create the necessary conditions and legal environment for the widespread implementation of Sustainable Land Management (SLM) practices. Turkey has also established itself as a leader in capacity building by investing in the training and skills development of civil society and local authorities, particularly in Africa. The Ankara Initiative will leverage the full range of these skills, expertise and experience to provide practical support for the achievement of Land Degradation Neutrality.

## C. The Aim of the Ankara Initiative

The aim of the Ankara Initiative is to help to achieve land degradation neutrality using UNCCD tools and practical resources.

## D. Objectives of the Ankara Initiative

Turkey has identified three areas in which its experience and expertise would have particular added value (socio-economic, institutional and policy).

- 1) **To address the key socio-economic factors affecting implementation and to put people at the centre of decision making.**
  - a. Understanding the linkages between DLDD and migration and social instability
  - b. Strengthening land and tenure rights
  - c. Capacity building to support greater stakeholder engagement



- 2) **To make the institutional arrangements more efficient.**
  - a. Addressing cross cutting issues and promoting integrated approaches
  - b. Encouraging regional level cooperation among Parties of the Convention.
- 3) **To strengthen policy making by supporting integrated land use planning in countries vulnerable to drought.**

## **E. Components of Ankara Initiative**

### **1. Socio-Economic Factors**

Efforts to combat desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) should be people-centred. Priority should be given to those activities that improve human well-being, that strengthen the rights of land-users and engage all stakeholders effectively.

**1.a Human well-being is undermined by DLDD.** Poverty reduction is the overarching objective of the Global Goals for Sustainable Development and DLDD is one of the key drivers of poverty. DLDD results in decreased agricultural production and decreased economic opportunity. Poverty, food insecurity and environmental crises are causing out-migration and social instability. The implementation of SLM practices can help mitigate the impacts of DLDD, reduce poverty and improve human well-being and livelihoods. This, in turn, would stabilize communities and reduce out-migration pressures.

- *Under the Ankara Initiative, Turkey will support work to understand the linkages between DLDD and social instability and migration;*
- *Turkey will pilot land-based activities to address the issue.*

**1.b A rights-based approach to SLM** is necessary to ensure good stewardship of land resources - soil, water and biodiversity - and the achievement of the LDN target. Roughly 1.2 billion people currently live without rights of access or formal land tenure. When local communities

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have secure access or tenure, they tend to invest in the land, use resources more efficiently and can more easily be encouraged to manage it in a sustainable way. Countries that are committed to achieving LDN can take measures to promote and protect the security of land rights and tenure, especially with respect to women, the poor and vulnerable, through appropriate legislation and institutions, including the right to inherit. These mechanisms can also serve to encourage private sector investment.

- *Under the Ankara Initiative, Turkey will support activities that help countries address the issue of weak or insecure tenure and resource rights, particularly for women and the most vulnerable, to stimulate the uptake of SLM activities and to make progress towards LDN.*
- *Turkey will also support a small group of countries with the integration of land tenure and resource rights issues into their plans for LDN implementation.*



**The active participation of all stakeholders [from local people, communities and private sector organizations] is needed to achieve LDN and the full implementation of the Convention.**

**1.c** **The active participation of all stakeholders** [from local people, communities and private sector organizations] is needed to achieve LDN and the full implementation of the Convention. The participation of key and diverse sectors and civil society organizations, local authorities and the private sector is currently limited by a lack of awareness and a lack of capacity.

- *Under the Ankara Initiative, Turkey will support capacity building for local level stakeholders and organizations;*
- *Turkey will promote the participation of farmer-led, civil society and private sector organizations in local, national and global level processes;*
- *Turkey will help convene a Forum of Local Government administrations in support of future COP discussions;*
- *Turkey will support work on engagement of the private sector so that business can have a net positive impact along their value chains.*



## 2. Institutional

Collaboration across sectors, processes, disciplines and borders would streamline and accelerate the implementation of the UNCCD and the achievement of LDN targets.

**2.a** Several global priority cross-cutting agendas would benefit from healthy and productive land. Integrated approaches and products that also take into account biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation should be feasible and encouraged. SLM and LDN can be planned in a way to serve the overlapping objectives of the other Rio conventions.

- *Under the Ankara Initiative, Turkey will support work to develop joint products and approaches with other Convention processes to promote greater synergy.*

**2.b** At the same time, natural ecosystems do not stop at national boundaries. There is an opportunity to strengthen regional and sub-regional level implementation of the Convention, sharing best practice among countries with similar experiences. We should aim to turn land use change into regional opportunity.

- *Under the Ankara Initiative, Turkey will encourage increasing cooperation and information exchange to the extent possible to understand land use change and land use dynamics at the regional and sub-regional scale;*
- *Turkey will develop pilot projects at the regional and sub-regional level that support cross-border learning;*
- *Turkey will then support the dissemination of best practice, adapted to different country conditions.*



### 3. Integrated Policy and Planning for Drought Resilience

As a result of land degradation and climate change, drought is becoming a more frequent and more intense phenomenon. Land degradation is reducing the water storage capacity of soil and this reduces the resilience of communities in the face of disasters such as drought or flooding and landslides after heavy rains. Land and water resource management should be coordinated at an appropriate scale.

The combination of early warning and planning land use and its trade-offs at the landscape or watershed level can help contribute to achieving LDN and mitigate the effects of drought in a practical way.

- *Under the Ankara Initiative, Turkey will support work (through training etc) to support drought early warning systems in the most vulnerable countries.*
- *Turkey will help leverage the early warning system to identify future drought hotspots/vulnerability where better land management might help build resilience.*
- *Turkey will then support efforts to plan land use and land use change (including urbanization) at the watershed level (capacity building) where applicable and roll out SLM techniques that improve water availability during a drought (water harvesting etc.)*



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## F. Turkey's support to the UNCCD process

Turkey will pledge USD 5 million for the 4 year period. 50% of this funding will be made available to the secretariat to support the policy related activities outlined in this document. The balance of the funding will be made available to the GM for support to national level implementation work. Accounted for within this package of support, Turkey will second two staff members, one each to the UNCCD secretariat and the GM, for a period of 4 years. These staff will be based in Bonn, Germany.



## G. Reporting

Turkey will submit a report on the implementation of the activities mentioned above at COP14 in 2019.





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