

UNCCD COP 12

The 12th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
(12-23 October 2015-Ankara-TURKEY)

ASSESSMENT REPORT



12th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

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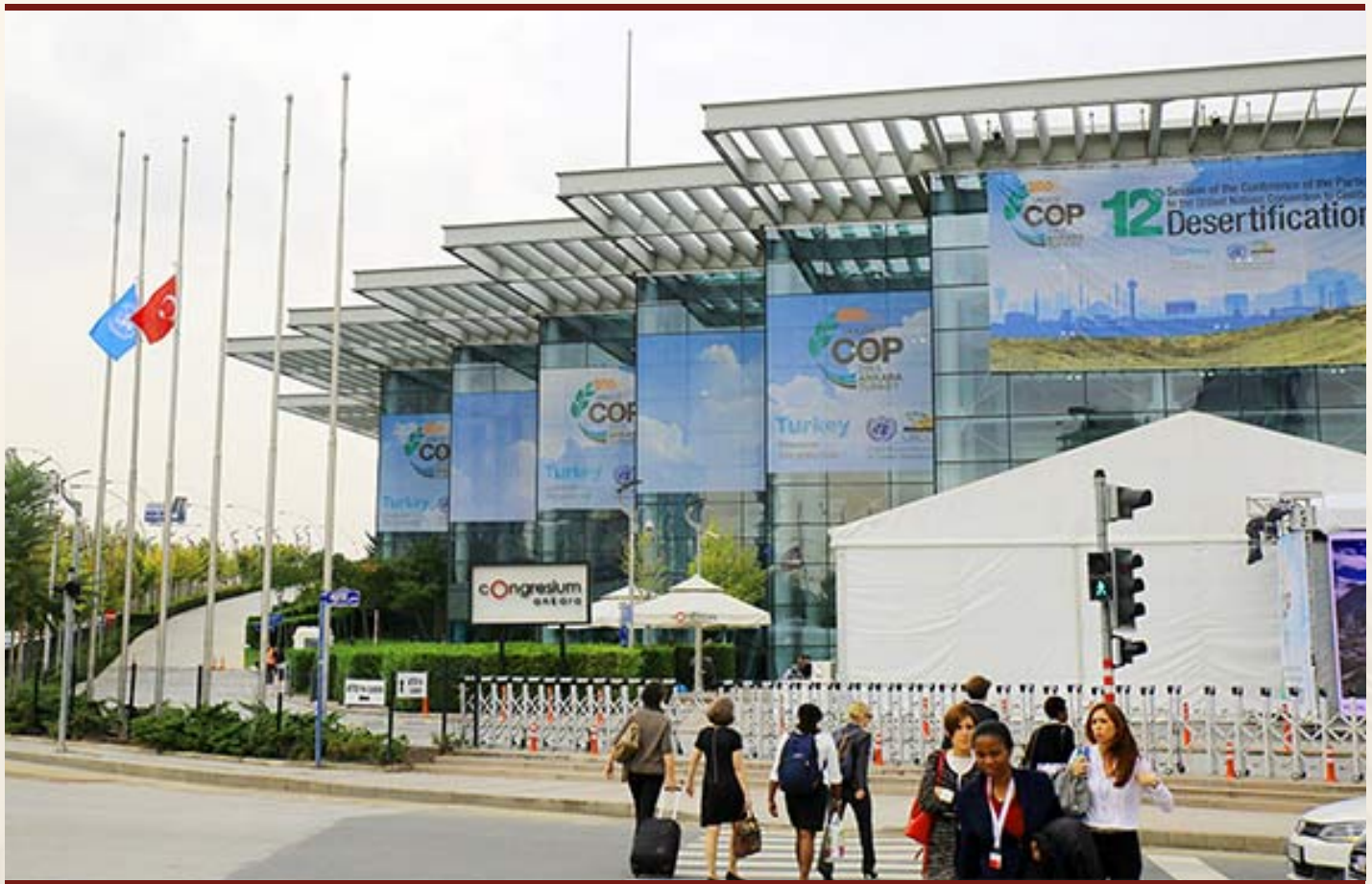
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**The 12th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations
Convention to Combat Desertification (COP 12) Was Held in
Ato Congressium in Ankara Between 12-23 October 2015
under Turkey's Presidency.**



The 12th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 12)

Conference Summary

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification encompasses desertification/land degradation/drought related issues. The Convention was signed on 17 June 1994, and Turkey became a party on 11 February 1998. Today the Convention has 195 country Parties as well as the European Union. The Conference of Parties is the Convention's main decision making body.

The 12th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification was organised in ATO Congressium in Ankara between 12 and 23 October 2015 under the Presidency of Turkey. The Conference received 57 ministers, vice-ministers, speaker of the national assembly, and UN high level officials, as well as 70 parliamentarians, included in the total 6700 participants.

COP 12 resulted in major decisions regarding combat against desertification. The timing of the Conference was significant as it preceded the Paris Climate Change Conference in December 2015, and predated the New York Sustainable Development Summit held in September 2015.

Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Prof Dr Veysel Eroğlu took over the Presidency of the UNCCD 12th Conference of Parties for the following two years.

The Conference published 6 declarations, and signed 37 decisions.

Turkey launched the "Ankara Initiative" for the 2016-2019 period in co-operation with the UN. Through this Initiative, Turkey will provide global contribution to "Land Degradation Neutrality" target 15.3 of UN Sustainable Development Goals by supporting the combat against desertification in less developed countries, particularly in Africa.

Main Outcomes of the Conference

- Turkey will assume the Presidencies of COP 12, the Forum of Parliamentarians, and the Business Forum for the next two years.
- The United Nations Strategy to Combat Desertification will be updated during Turkey's COP Presidency.
- COP 12 was the first Conference in Convention's history to sign significant decisions, and to set substantial targets regarding combat against desertification.
- The organisation of the Conference was a success, and the Conference's 7. decision thanked the Republic and the people of Turkey for the organisation.
- Decisions of this Conference will hereinafter be referred to as "Ankara Decisions" in all future conferences and documents.

Desertification refers to the land degradation in arid, semi-arid, and semi-humid areas caused by several factors (physical, chemical, biological, political, cultural, economic...) including climate change and human activities.

Arid regions constitute 41% of Earth, and provide a habitat and livelihood for two million people.

United Nations adopted three major conventions regarding this issue during the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, namely:

- Framework Convention on Climate Change
- Convention on Biological Diversity
- Convention to Combat Desertification



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Desertification directly threatens approximately 25% of land on Earth comprising 4 billion hectares of land, 164 countries, and a 1.2 billion population.

12 million hectares of agricultural land degrades each year, leading to an estimated 2% decrease in agricultural production in the following decade. Moreover, each year 5.2 million hectares of forestland is lost.

Desertification is second only to wars as a major cause for migrations reaching up to 10 million people over the course of last two decades. In addition, 25% of carbon emissions causing climate change is generated by land degradation.



1. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

1.1. Background information

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted on 17 June 1994, in Paris, and entered into force on 26 December 1996 with 115 signatory countries. Convention today has 195 country parties and the European Union as a signatory. Turkey became a party on 11 February 1998, following the Law No: 4340 published in the Official Gazette No: 23258. Comprising of 40 articles, the Convention prescribes joint action to globally define and resolve desertification related issues focusing on African countries, and groups country parties under 5 Annexes:

- African Countries (Annex - I)
- Asian Countries (Annex - II)
- Latin American and Caribbean Countries (Annex - III)
- Northern Mediterranean Countries (Annex - IV)
- Central and Eastern European Countries (Annex - V)

Turkey is a part of the "Northern Mediterranean Regional Implementation Annex IV" (Turkey, Albania, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain, and Slovenia), and has been taking active roles within since its participation.

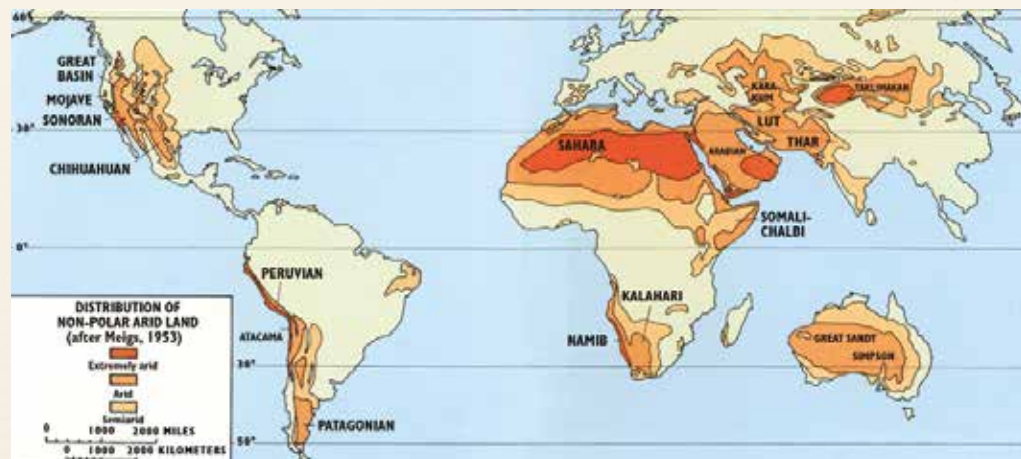
UN Regional Groups, on the other hand, are as below:

- African Group
- Asia-Pacific Group
- Eastern European Group
- Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC)
- Western European and Others Group (WEOG)

Member countries are classified not only based on the level of land degradation induced by desertification or other reasons, but also on their economic development levels; and their obligations as well as approvals to benefit from certain mechanism are assigned accordingly.

Turkey is included in both "developed" and "affected" country party categories, and is subject to the "Western European and Others Group" (WEOG).

World Desertification Map



1.2. Objectives of the Convention

- Combating desertification,
- Mitigating the effects of drought,
- Contributing to the establishment of sustainable development in affected countries,
- Strengthening international co-operations in combating desertification.

1.3. The Bodies of the Convention

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification comprises decision-making bodies and subsidiaries.

These are;

- Conference of Parties (COP)
- The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)
- The Committee on Science and Technology (CST)
- The Global Mechanism (GM)
- The Secretariat



UN Sustainable Development Goals

Target 15.3 adopted during the UN Sustainable Development Summit held in September 2015 submits to;

“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”.

1.3.1. Conference of Parties (COP)

The Conference of Parties is the supreme decision-making body of the Convention, and as such, gathers with the participation of all country Parties. The meetings of the Conference were held annually between the years 1997-2001 (COP 1 - COP 5) and are held biannually as of COP 6, and there have been so far eleven meetings. The 11. Conference of Parties was organised between 16-27 September 2013 in Namibia, whereas the previous meetings were held respectively in Korea, Argentina, Spain, Cuba, Switzerland, Germany, Senegal, Qatar, and Italy.

1.3.2. The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)

CRIC is responsible of reviewing the implementation of obligations the Convention imposes on country parties. The seventh CRIC meeting (CRIC 7) was hosted by Turkey in November 2008 in Istanbul.

CRIC performs within below objectives:

- Identification and mainstreaming of best practice examples in the implementation of the Convention,
- Review of the practice of the strategic plan for the implementation of the Convention,
- Assessment of contributions by country parties to the implementation of the Convention,
- Evaluation and monitoring of CRIC's success and efficiency.

1.3.3. The Committee on Science and Technology (CST)

The CST is a subsidiary body established to provide the COP with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. Meetings of COP and CST are held simultaneously, and they welcome all country parties. Nevertheless, a roster of international "Independent Experts" on COP decisions and related issues was established to participate in CST meetings. The CST Special Session was also hosted by Turkey in November 2008, in Istanbul, in line with the CRIC meeting.

- Monitoring and Assessment
- UNCCD Scientific Conferences
- International Scientific Advice
- Knowledge Management
- Fellowship Programme

2. COP 12 ANKARA

During the 11th Session of Conference of Parties in Namibia's capital, Windhoek, from 16-17 September 2013, Turkey's proposal to receive the 12th Conference of Parties (COP 12) in 2015 was approved along with the suggestion that Turkey could house the Regional Coordination Unit for Northern Mediterranean.

The 12th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification was organised in ATO Congressium in Ankara between 12 and 23 October 2015 under the Presidency of Turkey. The 12th Conference received 56 high-level participants including ministers, deputy ministers, the speaker of the Grand National Assembly, and high-level officials from the UN, and 70 participants among parliamentarians. The total number of participants reached 6700.

The Conference commenced on Monday, 12 October with the opening speech of the President of 11th Conference of Parties, the Minister of Environment and Tourism of Namibia, Uaheukua Herunga, and the welcoming speech of İ. Melih Gökçek, the Mayor of Ankara.

Turkish Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs, Prof. Dr. Veysel Eroğlu, then addressed the General Assembly as the President of the 12th Conference of Parties.



Next, in order, UNCCD Executive Secretary Monique Barbut, Special Advisor to the President of France Nicolas Hulot (as the President of UNFCCC COP 21), and representatives from UN and UN institutions, intergovernmental organisations, and the Regional Group took turns in addressing the General Assembly.

President of the Turkish Republic, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, initiates the high-level session of COP 12 on 20 October with opening remarks.

The President Erdoğan highlighted the importance of the meeting by reminding that “We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children. We are obliged to deliver this valuable loan to future generations unharmed at the least, not damaged and polluted. This meeting demonstrates to what extent we are aware of this responsibility we all carry”.



Erdoğan continued his speech stating: “Throughout last century, we sacrificed our humanity for the sake of acquiring control over natural resources, and overlooked the justice. We all must comprehend that we cannot sustain this merciless system in the 21st century. An understanding which does not value human for his humanity can never ensure global security and peace. In a world where human conscience is deserted, it is impossible to prevent the desertification of soil. First of all, we need to enrich our consciences with justice, respect to the other, peace and mercy, so that we can save lands too. This is how we view the issue of environment and desertification.”

- President Erdoğan’s statements, particularly the assertion that **“In a world where human conscience is deserted, it is impossible to prevent the desertification of soil”**, deeply influenced the delegates and the press members.

We have not inherited the Earth from our ancestors; we are borrowing it from our children.

The President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, participated in the opening ceremony of the high level session of UNCCD Conference of the Parties, hosted for the first time by Turkey. He underlined the significance of the meeting with the following statements: *"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children. We are obliged to deliver this valuable loan to future generations unharmed at the least, not damaged and polluted. This meeting demonstrates to what extent we are aware of this responsibility we all carry".*

The President stressed that we should all contribute with our best to save the Earth from desertification, and to provide future generations with forests, clean water, and productive soils. He explained that *"Desertification, land degradation, and drought have direct influences on more than a billion people in a variety of regions, with negative impacts on economy, society, environment, and culture. The poverty-stricken and the rural communities suffer the most from desertification and drought."*

Induced by the productive soil being washed away or rendered useless by erosion, desertification threatens human rights, and the right to food in particular, asserted Erdoğan, and included: *"The world loses 12 million hectares of land each year. Almost a billion people are suffering from poor nutrition, and a majority of this population live reduced soil productivity areas. Global food production is estimated to decrease by 12 per cent by 2035 due to misuse of soils. The malnutrition will only worsen unless necessary precautions are taken immediately."*

Full Text: <http://www.unccdcop12.gov.tr/tr/Home/Icerik/104>



The Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, Ahmet Davutoğlu: We will plant a sapling for every person on Earth.

Prime Minister Davutoğlu cited the significant environmental works carried out within the last 13 years, and underlined that they intend to maintain their efforts.

3.5 billion saplings in 13 years

Prime Minister stated that 4 million hectares were afforested with approximately 3.5 billion saplings, and continued:

"3.5 billion saplings in 13 years is not a minor achievement. We maintain afforestation works at city entrances and exits as well as on surrounding hills. We hope to reach 7 billion saplings, thus a sapling for each person on Earth, in the shortest time possible."



A Major Step by Turkey in Combat Against Desertification

The Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs of the Republic of Turkey and the President of UNCCD COP 12, Prof. Dr. Veysel Eroğlu addressed the participants at the opening ceremony, and underlined that desertification, land degradation, and drought are currently amongst the major threats against our planet and humanity.

Eroğlu referred to the two causes of desertification, land degradation, and drought as climate change and inappropriate land use, and called for unity: *“Once the world population exceeds 9 billion by 2050, the increased food demand will significantly aggravate the food insecurity prompted by desertification. The only way to overcome this threat against humanity, is for all countries to act as one to accomplish significant steps in this combat.”*

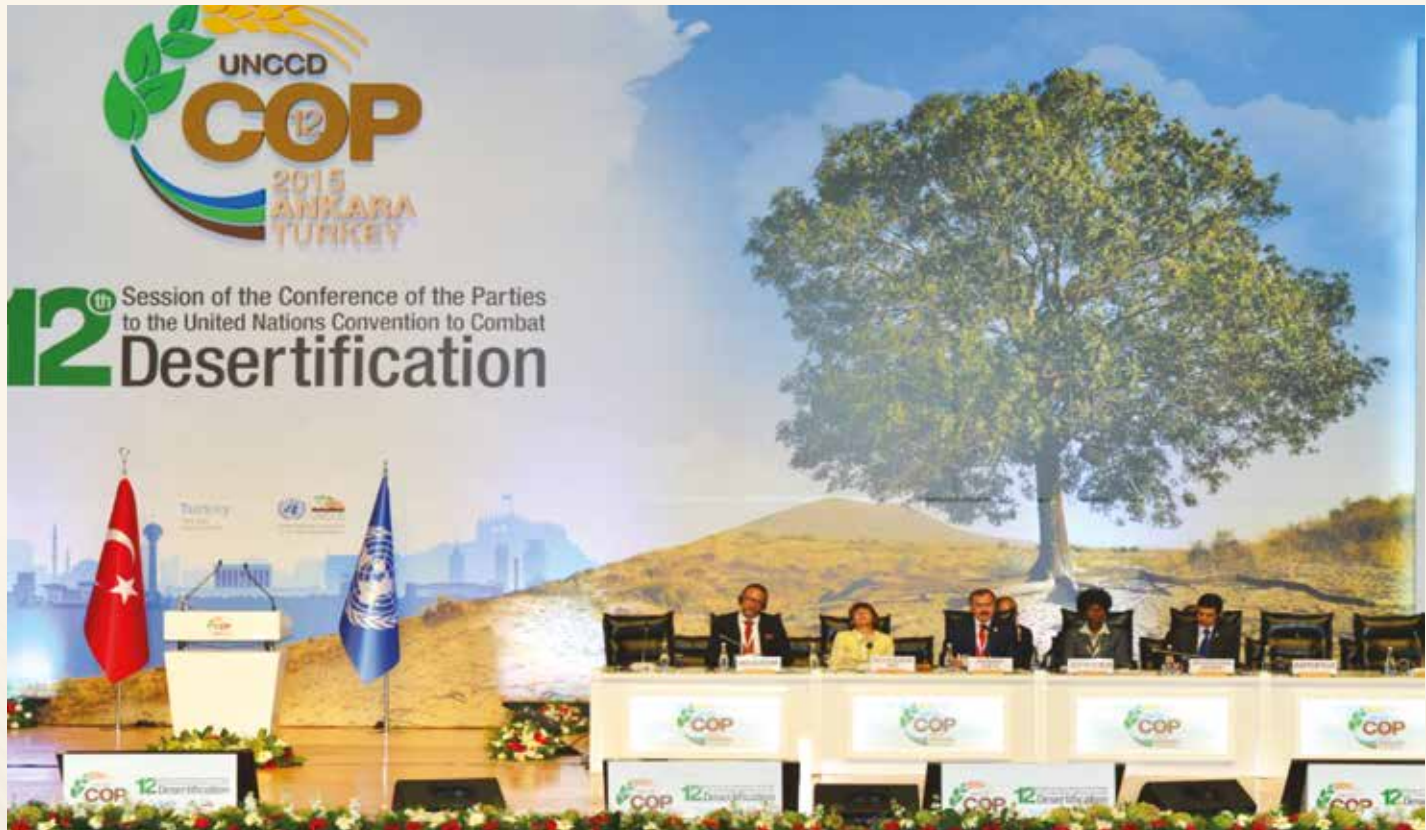
Pointing out numerous forest protection works and natural protection and improvement sites in Turkey as well as around the globe carried out by the Ministry, Prof. Dr. Eroğlu indicated that *“over the last 12 years, we have carried out operations on an area of 4 million hectares, introducing 3 billion 250 million saplings with soil, and thus expanded Turkey’s forest area by 900.000 hectares”*. Eroğlu reminded that the amount of soil carried by erosion was 500 million tonnes in 1970s, and he stated further:

“We managed to reduce this amount to 168 tonnes by 2014. Our Ministry’s erosion control activities proved highly successful. In order to reduce this number even further, we have prepared and put the Erosion Control Action Plan, Dam Basins Green Belt Afforestation Action Plan, and Upper Catchment Flood Control Action Plan into practice.

We intend to reduce this figure even further in the near future. We set new targets for the end of 2019. We, as Turkey, are ready to share our knowledge and experience. We are currently providing support to particularly African countries on sapling production, afforestation, and water supply, and we will maintain this contribution. I would like to underline that we supplied clean water to 1.600.000 people in cooperation with the Turkish Coordination and Cooperation Agency (TIKA) and the State Hydraulic Services (DSİ).”

Full Text: <http://www.unccdcop12.gov.tr/tr/Home/Icerik/104>





The Sessions of the Conference of Parties (COP)

- The Committee for the Whole (COW)
- The Committee on Science and Technology (CST)
- The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)
- Ministerial Meetings
- The Forum of Parliamentarians
- Business Forum
- UNCCD Regional Annexes
- UN Regional Groups
- CSO Meetings
- The Joint Meeting of the Rio Conventions
- Parallel Meetings
- Sustainable Land Management Expo
- Side Events

The Conference Yielded 6 Declarations and 37 Decisions in addition to the Introduction of Ankara Initiative.

Declarations Published during UNCCD COP 12

- Ankara Ministerial Declaration
- Declaration of Parliamentarians
- The Declaration of the SLM Business Forum
- The Declaration of CSOs attending COP 12
- The Declaration of the Trade Union Forum
- The Declaration of the Youth Forum



Ankara Ministerial Declaration

The Ankara Ministerial Declaration published following the Ministerial Meeting session of the Conference cited, inter alia;

- Should land degradation, drought and desertification sustain at their current intensities, humanity across world will suffer from:
 - Water scarcity,
 - Poverty,
 - Hunger,
 - Security threats, and
 - Migrations.
- All countries were invited to set and to work towards their national voluntary “Land Degradation Neutrality” targets in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030.

Declaration of Parliamentarians

The Declaration of Parliamentarians published following The Forum of Parliamentarians of the Conference, with a view to combat land degradation/desertification, invited national parliaments to;

- Take responsibilities in the combat against desertification,
- Provide financial support and incentives,
- Regulate legislations to secure land ownerships.

The Declaration of the Sustainable Land Management Business Forum

The Forum aimed to unite the private and public sectors in the combat against desertification, and foreign delegations as well as significant names from business world came together to discuss common issues and to come up with solutions.

- Forum was organised in cooperation with the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and World Business Council for Sustainable Development.
- Business world will take more active roles in the efforts to combat desertification.
- TOBB will take over the Presidency of Business Forum for a two-year period.



The Declaration of CSOs attending COP 12

The Conference received 322 representatives of various CSOs in Turkey as well as from all over the world, and they organised numerous meetings and side events.

Several CSOs from Turkey were accredited to UNCCD during the Conference, thus qualifying to actively participate in meetings of the 12th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, publishing as a result the Final Report of CSOs. They demanded more effective participation in the UNCCD decision-making bodies.



The Declaration of the Trade Union Forum

The trade union representatives gathered for the meeting titled **“Trade unions and CSOs’ function in Combating Desertification”**, and published the **“Final Declaration of the Trade Unions”**. On behalf of the Republic of Turkey, the Öz Orman-İş Trade Union organised the functions of trade unions and civil society organisations in combating desertification.

This organisation was the first of its kind within the scope of the Convention, and aimed to ensure active participation by trade unions to the implementation of UNCCD, to assure their access to international funds and public resources so as to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities, to materialise social support in combat against desertification, and to re-establish the relation between environment and man through a new social system and economy.

The Declaration of the Youth Forum

A meeting on Youth Initiative in Combating Desertification was organised within the scope of the Conference.

The youth set out their demands and expectations in this final declaration. The first-ever Declaration of the Youth Forum was published in the general assembly meeting room, and was included in the official decisions. It was decided that in order to strengthen youth’s role in the combat against desertification, youth will participate in future UNCCD process as Youth Platform, and will organise further Youth Forums.

Ankara Initiative

- During the 12th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Turkey and UN launched Ankara Initiative for the period of 2016-2019.
- Turkey will contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals target 15.3, "Land Degradation Neutrality", at a global level.
- The initiative provides for a contribution of 5 million USD by Turkey during the four year period.
- Turkey will support the combat against desertification in less developed countries, particularly in Africa.





Major Decisions of COP 12

Major decisions taken during COP 12 meetings included, inter alia:

- To expand the scope of Convention to cover land degradation in areas besides arid, semi-arid, and sub-humid regions as well;
- Countries to define and strive to achieve their national "Land Degradation Neutrality" targets;
- UNCCD Secretariat to engage in establishing an ad hoc "Land Degradation Neutrality" fund;
- Global Environment Facility (GEF) to allocate further funding to combat against desertification;
- To provide technical and financial support in combatting desertification to less developed and developing countries;
- To create a synergy between all three Rio Conventions, and to identify common monitoring indicators;
- Business world to take more active roles in the combat against desertification;
- To establish an "Intergovernmental Working Group" that will formulate the new strategy of the Convention during the COP 12 Presidency of Turkey;
- To develop desertification and drought early warning systems; and
- To support the "Science-Policy Interface" that communicates scientific results to decision-makers.

Ankara Ministerial Declaration

- Turkey will run the Ankara Initiative for the next four years, and will take over for two years the Presidencies of
 - COP 12,
 - The Forum of Parliamentarians, and
 - The Business Forum.
- Turkey, in its capacity as the President of COP 12, presented the COP 12 Decisions during the Paris Climate Change Conference, held between 30 November and 11 December 2015.
- The United Nations Strategy to Combat Desertification will be updated during Turkey's COP Presidency.
- The importance of land use in decreasing greenhouse emissions, adapting to climate change, and ensuring food security was highlighted.
- The Convention was requested to achieve "Land Degradation Neutrality", target 15.3 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- A Host Country Agreement was signed to establish the Regional Coordination Unit for the Northern Mediterranean in Istanbul.
- The organisation of the Conference was a success, and the Conference's 7. decision thanked the Republic and the people of Turkey for the organisation.
- Decisions of this Conference will hereinafter be referred to as "Ankara Decisions" in all future conferences and documents.



COP 12 Pavilion of Turkey

In addition to UNCCD's side events, Turkey organised numerous events in accordance with the country priorities at the "Pavilion of Turkey" reserved for the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs of the Turkish Republic.



Side Event Titles

- Actions to Combat Desertification
- Sustainable Forest Management
- Sustainable Water Use
- Drylands Management and Land Degradation Neutrality
- Integrated Watershed Management Approach and Rural Development in Combat against Desertification
- Ecological Restoration
- Desertification and Drylands Restoration in Mediterranean
- Desertification, Erosion, and Watershed Monitoring Models
- Mountains – A Source for Resilience in Drylands
- Sustainable Land Management for Food Security and NENA Partnership
- Support to Climate Friendly Agriculture
- Agriculture in Future Project
- Land Degradation Neutrality Pilot Project Implementation: Turkey's Example
- Sustainable Land Use, Planning and Ownership in Combat against Desertification
- Support, Insurance and Incentive Strategies in Combat against Desertification
- Early Action for a Greener Future
- NGOs Role in Combat against Desertification, Employment
- Turkish Cooperation and Support Model in Combat against Desertification
- Public Information and Awareness Raising
- Flourishing Lives with Women in Rural Areas
- Socio-economic Aspects of Desertification
- The Role of Local Administrations in Combat against Desertification
- Climate Change and Carbon Management Workshop
- International Co-operation and Training

COP 12 Expo

The Sustainable Land Management exposition organised within the Conference drew great attention, and received a high level of participation from Turkey as well as from numerous other countries.

The expo took place in the Armada Shopping Centre and comprised 48 booths.

In addition to Turkish participants, 11 booths were set up by American, Chinese, and African participants.



COP 12 Cultural Activities

For the duration of the Conference, various activities were held to introduce Turkey and Turkish culture.



International “Desertification” Photo Contest Organised

A panel of Turkish and foreign judges evaluated 2000 photographs submitted by 600 Turkish and foreign photographers, and designated 64 photographs for the exhibition.





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