

International Land Coalition



International Land Coalition calls for improved land governance to combat desertification, land degradation and poverty.

30 September 2009

The International Land Coalition (ILC) stressed the importance of improved governance of land and natural resources to reduce land degradation and improve the livelihoods of the rural poor during a side event at COP-9, on 23 September 2009. The event, organized in collaboration with the UNCCD Secretariat, the Global Mechanism, the UNDP Drylands Development Centre, and SCOPE Pakistan, created an opportunity for focussed discussions on the linkages between land governance, land degradation and rural poverty. It was a key step in bringing together policy makers, scientists, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society organizations – representing farmers, land tenants and agricultural labourers – to engage in dialogue and forge new partnerships for action.

“Poverty has a rural face,” said Dr. Madiodio Niasse, Director of the ILC. “More than 70% of poor rural people are either landless or are small-scale farmers. We also know that land degradation and desertification are often the result of human behaviour rather than natural causes. In order to develop sustainable solutions, we therefore must examine these anthropogenic causes, and understand the role that failed land governance policies and misguided land allocation practices play in fuelling unsustainable agricultural practices and deforestation. We also must recognize that fair and effective land governance can be a powerful tool for empowering local communities to reverse land degradation trends, increase productivity, and improve their livelihoods.”

The panel discussion featured experts from the land policy and desertification communities from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Case studies of land governance experiences were presented by ILC members – including the Society for Conservation and Protection of the Environment (SCOPE), Pakistan; Community Self-Reliance Centre (CSRC), Nepal; and Centro Peruano de Estudios Sociales (CEPES), Peru – and partner organization Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG), South Africa. Topics presented and discussed included: the linkages between land reform processes and UNCCD objectives; how an innovative land-to-the-tillers programme has helped to increase productivity and improve socio-economic living conditions for the rural poor in Nepal; an example of competition for land resources between local indigenous communities, commercial farmers, and nature conservationists in Namaqualand, South Africa; and indigenous land governance experiences in

response to land degradation partly caused by oil mining in the Peruvian Amazon. The floor was then opened for questions and discussion, with participants offering perspectives their home countries.

Winding up the event, the ILC issued two calls for action:

1. that the COP recognise the importance of land governance in addressing challenges posed by DLDD (Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought) by placing the issue high on the UNCCD agenda, both from a science and policy perspective; and
2. that the UNCCD support partnerships aimed at designing and implementing practical land governance responses to DLDD challenges, in areas such as action research and the scaling up of best practices.

The event provided a lively exchange of ideas and underscored the fact that improved land governance, access to land, and land tenure security are urgently needed to empower the rural poor to combat desertification and land degradation around the world.

The conference presentations and abstracts will be available on the ILC website at <http://www.landcoalition.org>

The International Land Coalition is a global alliance of civil society and inter-governmental organizations working together to promote secure and equitable access to land for poor women and men through advocacy, dialogue and capacity building. Its members include UN agencies and other inter-governmental organizations, farmer organizations, research institutes, NGOs and community-based organizations in over 40 countries.