



World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

'Land Belongs to the Future, Let's Climate Proof It'

On June 17, countries around the world will observe World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. This Day was first declared by the UN in 1994 - twenty years - and first celebrated in 1995. The Day acknowledges that desertification and drought are global problems that affect all regions of the world. Its purpose is to highlight ways to prevent desertification and recover from drought.



Moreover, World Day to Combat Desertification promotes public awareness relating to international cooperation to combat desertification and the effects of drought, and the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). This year's theme for World Day to Combat Desertification is ecosystem-based adaptation, with the slogan: *'Land Belongs to the Future, Let's Climate Proof It'*

Desertification

Desertification is a type of land degradation in which a relatively dry land region becomes increasingly dry, typically losing its bodies of water as well as vegetation and wildlife. It is caused by a variety of factors, such as climate change and human activities. Desertification is a significant global ecological and environmental problem.

Desertification affects 1/6 of the world's population and 1/4 of the total land area of the world.

The most obvious impact of desertification, in addition to widespread poverty, is the degradation of 3.3 billion hectares of the total area of rangeland. In other words, almost three quarters of the world's rangeland have a low potential for human and animal carrying capacity due to low soil fertility and poor soil structure. Included in this are croplands that have become degraded and on which a large population depend for food.

Land Management Critical for Climate Change Resilience

This year's World Day to Combat Desertification aims to emphasize land and soil within climate change adaptation; mobilize support for sustainable land management; and call for the inclusion of land and soil and their significance in food security into national; and climate change adaptation policies.

Emphasis is also being given to raising awareness of the fact that desertification, land degradation and drought dramatically affect the biodiversity resident in the soil. There is a close relationship between livelihood and ecosystem wellbeing, and soils that are rich in biodiversity. Healthy soils produce life, and yet soil health depends a lot on how individuals use their land. What we do to our soils determines the quality and quantity of the food we eat and how our ecosystems serve us. *Our increasing ecological interdependence also means enhancing soils anywhere enhances life everywhere.*



Land Management Priorities

The priority in combating desertification should be the implementation of preventive measures for lands that are not yet degraded, or which are only slightly degraded. However, the severely degraded areas should not be neglected. In

combating desertification and drought, the

participation of local communities, rural organizations, national Governments, non-governmental organizations and international and regional organizations is essential. In Guyana, we have large scale agriculture and extractive sectors on upon which our economy is heavily dependent; therefore, we are not immune to desertification since it's a gradual process. In this regard, the Government of Guyana has taken several steps to enforce regulations especially in the sectors such as mining and forestry as a precautionary approach to land degradation.

Source: <http://www.un.org>

<http://www.unep.org>

You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com