



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MRS. MARÍA VICTORIA CHIRIBOGA, UNDERSECRETARY OF CLIMATE CHANGE OF THE MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF ECUADOR, AT THE OPENING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (COP13 UNCCD) (Ordos, China, 11 September 2017)

M. President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Group would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the 13th Session of the COP and looks forward to significant leaps during your tenure at the helm of the UNCCD processes. We also extend our appreciation to the Executive Secretary, Ms. Monique Barbut, for her leadership and commitment at the UNCCD.

We thank the People's Republic of China, one of our members, for hosting this important COP session and thank its Government and People for the hospitality extended to all of us since our arrival.

During the opening plenary of the COP13, on 6 September 2017, a statement was delivered by the Group of 77 and China stressing our position on several aspects related to the global challenges of desertification, land degradation and drought, which are also linked to the global threat of climate change, impacting human life, biodiversity and its ecosystems. We recalled that there is an urgent need for concrete and prompt actions to eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions, reduce inequalities within and among countries, and generate opportunities for sustainable development for all in harmony with nature. We highlighted the importance of our actions to preserve human dignity and the need to reach the furthest behind and the most vulnerable first.

Mr. President,

The Group has been committed with the work undertaken by the UNCCD since its creation back to the Earth Summit in 1992. Important progress has been made since then, but much more is there to be done. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development the international community established target 15.3 to combating desertification, restoring degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and striving to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world by 2030. In this sense, the Group reassures its readiness to work with all the international community and encourage effective partnerships and synergies, including public, private and with civil society, on our joint efforts for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs.

We are pleased with the work of the UNCCD Executive Secretary in taking action to make Target 15.3 a guiding principle for the implementation of the Convention, and we look forward for further engagement on the way leading to the 2018 High Level Political Forum where Sustainable Development Objective 15 will be reviewed. We believe that the attention given to Land Degradation Neutrality contributes significantly for the implementation of the Convention, and that the way this target has been approached within the UNCCD constitutes an important showcase

that can inspire other processes involved in addressing the SDGs implementation.

Among the innovative actions taken that deserve recognition is the Land Degradation Neutrality target-setting program, which has already been engaged voluntarily by 110 countries, most of them members of our Group. We stress the importance of its linkages with the execution and implementation of National Action Plans. We also recognize the establishment of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund and look forward to its entry into operational phase, as well as to having concrete discussions on the sectors, programs and projects that this fund could consider so that these parameters can be agreed upon before funding can be provided.

We are pleased that the time frame of the new Strategic Framework would coincide with that of the 2030 Agenda and encourage all parties to work together for its adoption. We look forward to strengthening linkages between the indicators used for the strategic framework of the Convention and those used in the LDN initiative. The Group also calls on the GEF, serving as the financial mechanism of the Convention, to allocate substantial resources to its land degradation focal area during GEF.7, consistent with the importance of land in its role to address several global challenges such as poverty, food security, forced migrations, climate adaptation and mitigation, which afflict specially developing countries.

Mr. President,

We look forward for the ministerial round tables proposed for this high-level segment. On round table 1, the Group highlights that land degradation is indeed a challenge to development, prosperity and peace, as it creates instability and has direct implications on the three dimensions of sustainable development. Political will and engagement will always be needed to address this challenge. We call for innovative responses at different levels and to boost international action to mobilize funds to implement programs related to land degradation.

Regarding round table 2, the Group is preoccupied by the severity, the scope and the frequency of droughts, sand and dust storms. Drought bears a heavy cost on countries' economies, especially the developing countries, and entrenches poverty and hunger. So far, the approach of the international community to drought has been largely reactive. It is the hope of the Group that this COP should prioritize the urgent need to design mechanisms to increase the resilience against drought taking into account the different realities at the national and regional level. The identification of risk mitigation activities based on sustainable and integrated land and water management, could be included in LDN plans; as well as early warning activities reaching local communities. We are pleased that the new UNCCD Strategic Framework has an objective to deal specifically with drought, and we encourage all parties to work together to its adoption. In the same vein, the Group recognizes sand and dust storms as a serious challenge to sustainable development in the affected countries and regions, and once again calls upon the United Nations system and all other related organizations to play its role in advancing international cooperation and support to combat sand and dust storms.

Roundtable 3 on land degradation neutrality is most welcome. We recall that the achievement of the SDG's and targets, including Goal 15 and target 15.3, would serve as an accelerator to ending poverty and hunger, tackling inequality, empowering women and stimulating economic growth. We also note that combating desertification, land degradation and drought, including through sustainable land management, can contribute to easing forced migration flows influenced by a number of factors, including economic, social, security and environmental concerns, which can, in turn, reduce current and potential fighting over resources in degraded areas.

Mr. President

The Group of 77 and China will continue to engage constructively during this high-level segment and until the completion of COP13 to have fruitful outcomes and achieve great success. We recall our determination to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations.

Thank you.