

UNCCD Statement on Koronivia joint work on agriculture

SB50 workshop on Koronivia: Improved soil carbon

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Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of one of the sister Rio conventions, the one which is focused on land. The UN Convention to Combat Desertification would like to thank the UNFCCC secretariat and all others involved for the excellent organization of this workshop. We have benefited from the experiences of countries including Brazil, the U.S., the Russian Federation, Japan, Norway, Kenya, Senegal, Zambia, France and Asian countries, as well as vital organizations (World Bank, GEF, Green Climate Fund, the Global Soil Partnership under the FAO, the Global Research Alliance, the World Business Council, and environmental NGOs).

The UNCCD country Parties view soil organic carbon as pivotal. Much of the carbon that is lost from soils ends up in the atmosphere. And soils without carbon are dead – no soil biodiversity means low or no biodiversity above the ground. Without soil organic carbon, productivity falls and dependence on subsidies rises, reducing the resilience of communities and ecosystems and impacting the livelihoods of all, but particularly the most vulnerable. In other words, investment in preventing the loss of soil organic carbon and in putting it back in the soil are wise. Studies on the economics of land degradation show a return on investment of between 2 to 1 rising to 5 to 1 (depending on location) – meaning healthy land is the key to poverty alleviation. This is why the country Parties of the UNCCD have adopted soil organic carbon as one of the essential variables to monitor land degradation and progress towards Land Degradation Neutrality targets, which are also SDG target 15.3. And the challenges in measurement and monitoring are why the global community has responded: the Group on Earth Observations (made up of countries and the major Earth observation organizations) has launched a multilateral Initiative on Land Degradation Neutrality, which includes the identification of data quality standards for soil organic carbon for SDG 15.3.1. However, we would like to emphasize that global and national monitoring of soil organic carbon and local project needs for data on this variable are very different. Both are necessary, and both require commitments by countries to reinforce measurement and monitoring.

All this said, the UNCCD wishes to place this discussion in perspective. A transformation in agriculture is more than soil organic carbon, no matter how indicative this variable may be for our ambitions. Much of what we have heard is about soil and land *management*. But if we take into account the extraordinary findings of the recently released IPBES Global Assessment, the pace of land conversion is accelerating at an alarming rate – 75% of the Earth's land surface has already been transformed. It is no longer a process limited to converting natural areas to

agriculture. Today, it is also about the development of prime agricultural land for municipal purposes. This means integrated land use planning is as important as all of the discussion on management, measurement and monitoring. Ensuring that municipal planning, agricultural planning and conservation planning are conducted together could help us navigate the trade-offs represented by land and optimize for all the competing demands for the same land resources. This is the basis for Land Degradation Neutrality, something which has multiple entry points for climate change mitigation and adaptation projects as well as biodiversity conservation, and those efforts to pursue responsible and inclusive land governance.

With these comments, we would like to express our support of your efforts to consider soil organic carbon as indicative of the multiple benefits we seek from land. We encourage all of you to leverage the opportunity Land Degradation Neutrality provides for keeping land in balance. And we wish you success further Koronivia work on agriculture.

Soil carbon has been rejected in the Clean Mechanism, and is not used in the carbon markets as “we may not deliver on the mitigation”.