



Kingdom of Swaziland

Ministry of Agriculture

Kingdom of Swaziland National Land Degradation Neutrality Targets

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**THE GLOBAL
MECHANISM**
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to Combat Desertification



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22 August 2017

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Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: SUBMISSION OF SWAZILAND'S NATIONAL LAND DEGRADATION
NEUTRALITY (LDN) TARGETS**

With this letter, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the UNCCD Global Mechanism for the support and close collaboration in the successful implementation of the LDN Target Setting Process (TSP) within the Kingdom of Swaziland.

As a small landlocked developing country, we face many challenges caused by land degradation and climate variability. Left unaddressed, the challenges could easily undermine our economic potential, as demonstrated during the recent devastating *E/ Niño* drought which caused huge financial and environmental losses to the southern Africa Region, including Swaziland.

Realizing such challenges, we voluntarily joined the LDN TSP and over the last 12 months, a concerted effort has been made by various LDN stakeholders and partners to reflect on the causes and impacts of land degradation in the country, with a view to address them. The close cooperation between my Ministry, the LDN National Working Group and various stakeholders made up of individuals experts, government representatives, civil society, academia community, UN Agencies and the private sector, is highly commendable.

This process culminated in the development of a set of national level LDN targets for Swaziland which aim to ~~avoid, minimize and reverse land degradation~~; reduce current annual loss of forest to cropland; increase forest cover through afforestation and agroforestry programmes; increase land productivity in all our four regions through SLM practices; improve soil organic carbon stocks; increase the amount of land set aside for nature and wildlife conservation; rehabilitate degraded and abandoned land for crop production; and reduce the rate of conversion to artificial land cover by halting the spread of invasive alien plant species.


Under the LDN process, we are optimistic that by 2030 we will reach a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources, necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remains stable or increases within our borders.

The LDN process offers Swaziland a massive opportunity to improve the livelihoods of people staying in our country, especially in drought prone areas. Going forward, we would like to ensure that the LDN process is complemented by national and regional policies, programmes, projects and measures to prevent, control, halt and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought. We also realize the need to strengthen our efforts for resource mobilization to fund national strategies that lead to land rehabilitation and poverty reduction.

His Majesty's Government's is already doing a lot in an effort to achieve sustainable land management (SLM) in the country, so as to realistically address the challenges of desertification, land degradation and drought in view of a changing climate. Our country is party to the three Rio conventions and is committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including goal 15.3 which specifically addresses land degradation.

In this regard, we look forward to continued collaboration with the GM and other partners within the government, international cooperation community and private sector in executing our on-going SLM initiatives and achieving LDN in Swaziland.

With compliments,


MOSES M. VILAKATI
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

1. Introduction

In August 2016, Swaziland became one of the countries that are undertaking the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Target Setting Process. Under this process the country is expected to set Voluntary National Targets for achieving land degradation neutrality, which is “a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources, necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remains stable or increases within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems”.

Overall, the LDN target setting process takes stock of anticipated losses through land degradation and in Swaziland and aims to achieve a balance between ongoing land degradation and future efforts to improve degraded land. In other words, it aims at **reaching, at least, a neutral status (no net loss of healthy and productive land) by balancing potential gains and losses** in terms of ecosystem services and functions that are provided by land resources. This is in line with Swaziland’s commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), various multilateral environmental agreements, including, UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNCCD, her constitution (2005) and the national development strategy.

2. Achieving LDN as a national priority

Swaziland has just come out of the devastating *El Nino* drought that caused huge financial and environmental losses to the southern Africa Region, including Swaziland. Indeed financial losses due to drought and land degradation are quite severe as recently published statistics released by the UNCCD Global Mechanism in March 2017 tell us. It is estimated that land degradation costs Africa about US\$ 65 billion annually, which is around five per cent of the continents gross domestic product.

3. National LDN baseline

In terms of neutrality, the LDN concept aims to achieve a balance between anticipated new land degradation and future efforts to improve degraded land (e.g. through land restoration, increasing land productivity and SLM). Taking action to achieve LDN by i) avoiding land degradation; ii) upscaling SLM/ILM practices; and iii) adopting restoration and rehabilitation measures is environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable to secure the healthy and productive land needed for equitable and sustainable development.

Overall, the LDN target setting process takes stock of anticipated losses through land degradation and in Swaziland and aims to achieve a balance between ongoing land degradation and future efforts to improve degraded land. In other words, it aims at reaching, at least, a neutral status (no net loss of healthy and productive land) by balancing potential gains and losses in terms of ecosystem services and functions that are provided by land resources.

During the period, 2000-2015, land cover patterns in Swaziland have been driven by expansion of land under agriculture, particularly sugar cane cultivation, more at the expense of the other land cover categories. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) supported Strengthening the National

Protected Areas Network in Swaziland (SNPAS) Project and Alien Invasive Plants Species (AIPS) land cover studies confirm that the area under agriculture increased by 1.4%. This is the same magnitude the area under forest declined during the same period. For the period 2000 to 2010 cropland increased by 0.3% while forest declined by 0.2%.

4. Swaziland's LDN targets and associated measures

By subscribing to the LDN Concept, Swaziland boldly commits to be a land degradation neutral country by 2030. The LDN targets, together with the associated measures identified, are summarized below:

Specific targets to avoid, minimize and reverse land degradation

- Increase forest cover through Afforestation/Agroforestry in existing forests; areas of shrubs/grassland; wetlands; croplands by 465,290 Ha
- Increase by 10% net land productivity in all land cover categories through SLM practices
- Improve by 50% productivity and SOC stocks in cropland and grasslands by 2030 as compared to 2015
- Increase Protected Area land coverage from 70,000 Ha to 113,000 Ha by 2022
- Rehabilitate 115,000 Ha of degraded and abandoned land for crop production by 2030
- Reduce current annual loss of forest to cropland of 9,1 km² to 4 km² by 2022 and achieve zero forest loss by 2030.
- Reduce the rate of soil sealing (conversion to artificial land cover) by 30% by 2030 as compared to 2010.

5. Leveraging LDN targets through the national sustainable development agenda

Swaziland is a party to the three Rio Conventions, which underscores its commitment towards environmental conservation efforts and promotion of sustainable development. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland (2005) provides a firm platform for integrating environmental sustainability and natural resources management issues at national and sectorial levels. It implores Swazi Citizens to “protect and make rational use of the state’s land, mineral and water resources as well as its fauna and flora, and to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to conserve and improve the environment for the present and future generations”.

Swaziland has further adopted the SDGs, which are currently being mainstreamed into relevant sectors in an effort to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals can be realized. To this end diverse legislation and policies have been enacted to spearhead realization of sustainable development. The Government has also developed a Green Economy Strategy and Implementation Plan (GESIP) to support development efforts towards addressing key challenges such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, environmental degradation, climate change and variability, infrastructure gaps and food security among others.

The *National Development Strategy*, formulated in 1997 and reviewed in 2014, is the over-arching framework that provides a platform for the achievement of sustainable development in the country.

It seeks to balance the needs of the Swazi people with the environment's carrying capacity. The strategy has a medium to long term perspective (25 years).

Various national strategies, such as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2015), the *Draft National Climate Change Policy* (2014) and the Nationally Determined Intended targets of the UNFCCC, aim to address sustainable development (within the context of national development). This is further supported in Swaziland's Third National Communication to the UNFCCC (2016), where the country commits to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through various programmes containing climate change mitigation and adaptation measures, and various other interventions relevant to the achievement of the objective of the Convention.

6. Joint bold action to achieve LDN in Swaziland

The UNCCD, through the Global Mechanism in Bonn- Germany, has availed technical and financial assistance for each country to undertake the LDN process. A local consultant has been engaged to lead the process and coordinate all the activities related to the target setting, working with stakeholders and a national working group made up of experts and individuals representing government, civil society, academia community and private sector. All sectors affected by land degradation in Swaziland have been identified and are invited to contribute to the LDN target setting process, hence their final approval will be endorsed by all stakeholders concerned.