Summary of Key Messages

Significant progress has already been made towards setting the LDN targets and now there is urgent need to build momentum in achieving these targets. The priorities are:

1. To ensure that national targets are fully embedded into sub-national policies and actions.
2. To catalyse and coordinate action across the main sectors concerned with sustainable land management, including agriculture, water, and environment.
3. To prioritize Nature-based Solutions and ecosystem approaches for environmentally sound and socially equitable outcomes.

Specifically, IUCN recommends the following:

- **Adopt Nature-based Solutions (NbS) as the preferred implementation approach through sound investment planning that leverages the multiple benefits derived from NbS, including managing the risks of drought and sand & dust Storms and mitigating conflicts and migration.**

IUCN recommends that institutional arrangements and capacities are strengthened to facilitate inter-sectoral collaborations on ecosystem based approaches, especially those responding to adaptation and disaster risk reduction, as a vehicle to deliver LDN.

- **Enhance investments in drylands as a neglected ecosystem through actions based on ecosystem restoration, which can simultaneously support meeting the LDN goals and advancing on commitments under the 3 Rio Conventions.**

IUCN recommends that ecosystem based approaches are prioritized in the implementation of LDN because they generate multiple benefits that contribute to the goals of the 3 Rio conventions. IUCN recommends greater efforts in capturing these synergies including cross sectoral mechanisms for monitoring and reporting.

- **Achieve progress towards gender equity through LDN actions**

IUCN urges parties to ensure inclusive and gender-sensitive LDN actions, recognizing the existing imbalances in power and information access. Improvement in women’s access to and control over land and other economic resources is essential for achievement of development goals, including poverty reduction and economic growth (UN 2009).

- **Creating enabling conditions for investment in supply chains that incentivise multiple values of sustainable land management.**

IUCN urges parties to create enabling conditions and put in place policies that motivate both the public and private sectors to invest in Sustainable Land Management. Major increases in private investment in sustainable land management are essential to achieve the transformational impacts of LDN.
IUCN’s role in addressing land degradation and desertification

At COP12, in 2015, the UNCCD adopted SDG Target 15.3: to achieve a Land Degradation Neutral world. As of June 2019, 122 countries have initiated National voluntary target setting for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), strongly supported by IUCN.

LDN is defined by the UNCCD as “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”. LDN aims to balance anticipated losses in land-based natural capital and associated ecosystem functions and services with measures that produce alternative gains through sustainable land management and restoration.

Measures to address land degradation are largely referred to as Sustainable Land Management (SLM): practices and technologies that integrate management of land, water, biodiversity, and other environmental resources to meet human needs while ensuring the long-term sustainability of ecosystem services and livelihoods. Large-scale adoption of SLM could generate up to USD 1.4 trillion in economic benefits. SLM helps maintain ecological resilience and stability of ecosystem services while providing diverse livelihoods for humans.

IUCN, in partnership with the Global Environment Facility and the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD, has supported 75 countries to set their national LDN targets and response strategies. IUCN is working with state and non-state members to scale-up action to deliver LDN targets through a growing portfolio of SLM and restoration actions.

IUCN’s support for addressing Land Degradation and Desertification includes the following:
1. Setting national targets for Land Degradation Neutrality and supporting countries to develop and implement investment strategies;
2. Delivering SLM and restoration on the ground, including Forest Landscape Restoration actions under the Bonn Challenge: a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.
3. Establishing knowledge products, including the Red List of Ecosystems and the Red List of Threatened Species, that can improve targeting of restoration and evaluating progress;
4. Developing multi-objective methodologies for landscape level action, like the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM);
5. Innovating in restoration and sustainable land management, including Ecosystem Based Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction, rangeland restoration, and forest landscape restoration;
6. Strengthening governance, policy, legal instruments, and institutions from local to global level; and
7. Convening partnerships for integrated action on the ground.

IUCN Main Messages

Nature-based Solutions are “actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits”. Nature-Based Solutions can make a major contribution to achieving LDN targets because they can simultaneously address food security, climate change, water security, disaster risk, social and economic development and other challenges. Nature-Based Solutions can include approaches like sustainable land management, forest landscape restoration, mangrove restoration and many others. They provide multiple values to society by restoring and protecting ecosystem functionality through sustainable management. Investments in NbS are the best option for countries to simultaneously deliver against multiple sustainable development goals.

Adopt “Nature-based Solutions” for implementing LDN investment plans

Notes:
**Restore ecosystem health to provide multiple benefits to society (including resilience food systems, water security)**

The UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration aims to greatly scale up the restoration of degraded ecosystems as a proven measure to fight the climate crisis and enhance food security, water supply and biodiversity. It offers an opportunity to upscale restoration efforts, including 350 million hectares of degraded land between now and 2030, with the ultimate goal of generating about USD 9 trillion in ecosystem services and removing an additional 13-26 gigatons of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

The Ecosystem Approach, which underpins Nature Based Solutions, has been adopted by the CBD and in the LDN Scientific Conceptual Framework. Parties to the convention are recommended to strengthen institutional arrangements, capacities and investments for implementing the ecosystem approach—including ecosystem based adaptation and disaster risk reduction—as a vehicle to deliver LDN.

**Emphasize Nature-based Solutions for addressing the human impacts of land degradation, including drought, sand and dust storms, conflict and migration**

The consequences of land degradation affect millions of people each year, and the cost to society is billions of dollars: drought alone costs an estimated US$35 billion per year, with 83% of these losses (US$29bn) in the agriculture sector (FAO, 2017). Land degradation greatly exacerbates drought, and sand and dust storms, but drought and disaster management strategies typically neglect sustainable land management.

Land degradation and climate change combined are two of the main drivers of migration, instability and violent conflict. The IPBES Land Degradation and Restoration Assessment reports that land degradation and climate change together may cause 50 to 700 million people to migrate by 2050.

Restoring natural systems can build the resilience of ecosystems and societies, which can mitigate the frequency and severity of hazards and strengthen the capacity of countries to withstand their impacts.

Ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk reduction and adaptation work by restoring natural systems as a way to buffer the impacts of climate change, maintain the resilience of natural ecosystems, and help people and communities adapt to changing conditions. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction pays little attention to land degradation and drought, but it provides a mechanism to raise the profile of these slow onset disasters and strengthen global action on measures to address desertification.

**Prioritize investments in ecosystem restoration that contribute simultaneously to the goals of the 3 Rio Conventions**

The three indicators of Land Degradation Neutrality—land productivity, land use change, and soil organic carbon—highlight the synergy between responses to desertification, biodiversity loss and climate change. Sustainable land management contributes to restoring ecosystem functionality at the local and the landscape level, contributing to restore connectivity and protect habitat. Sustainable land management also contributes to climate change mitigation, for example through sequestration and reduced emissions from agriculture, and adaptation. Placing 350 million hectares of deforested and degraded land under restoration by 2030 could potentially sequester 1.7 GtCO2e per year - closing the “emission gap” by approximately 13%.

Countries should raise the priority of investing in ecological restoration, including sustainable agriculture. The capacity of different interventions to deliver synergies between the Rio Conventions should be taken into consideration when prioritizing investments and greater effort is needed to improve monitoring and reporting of the synergy.

**Enhance investment in drylands as a neglected ecosystem, and a key to meeting the goals of the UNCCD**

Drylands include many valuable ecosystems—such as grasslands and savannahs—that provide important ecosystem services and are home to unique human cultures and a wealth of biodiversity. The drylands store one third of all terrestrial carbon and harbour a similar proportion of biodiversity. While they occupy 41% of all land, they provide almost half of global agricultural production, yet they remain among the poorest and least developed regions on earth.

LDN has successfully put land health more firmly on global and national agendas, and the inclusion of all land in LDN target setting is a welcome move. Nevertheless, the UNCCD has particularly significance for the dryland regions that must not be lost. Pursuing LDN without
proportional action in drylands is against the principles of LDN, as laid out in the scientific conceptual framework. Increased action is strongly recommended for sustainable land management and restoration in the world’s drylands.

**Achieve progress towards gender equity through LDN actions**

Men and women often have different roles, and different rights, in land management, and desertification affects them in different ways. For example, women may be affected disproportionately when desertification contributes to drought and water scarcity. In many countries, women provide the majority of agricultural labour, yet they often have insecure land rights and low access to economic assets that determine the way they manage the land. Improvements in women’s access to and control over land and other economic resources is essential for achievement of development goals, including poverty reduction and economic growth (UN 2009). The LDN Scientific Conceptual Framework clearly establishes principles for gender sensitivity and gender inclusion in LDN target setting. Parties are urged to ensure inclusive and gender-sensitive actions to deliver LDN targets, recognizing the existing imbalances in power and information access. Support for mainstreaming LDN can be accessed from the IUCN LDN Gender Helpdesk.

**Prioritise land rights and governance for sustainable land management**

Large-scale restoration and sustainable management of land depends on resource users having secure rights, including the right to manage their land. Effective decision-making and implementation for sustainable land management, both on individual land units and in larger landscapes, depends on effective governance of land and associated natural resources (including water). Effective governance requires appropriate institutions, including public and community institutions. Governments and private actors are strongly urged to follow the guidelines of the LDN Scientific Conceptual Framework, the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure, and other standards in order to ensure desirable LDN outcomes. This includes the development of supporting legal instruments to achieve LDN.

**Promote innovative investment in the multiple values derived from SLM, and look at investments along food and agriculture supply chains**

Major increases in investment in restoration and sustainable land management are required to achieve LDN by 2030. This includes innovation to catalyse investments by land users as well as investments along value chains. A number of sectors that influence land management, including the agriculture sector, need to adopt criteria for sustainable land management. There also needs to be a rethink of food supply chains to identify investments that incentivise and enable sustainable land management.

Sustainable land management provides public as well as private goods, which justifies a combination of public and private investment. Governments should explore options for using public investment as a mechanism to promote public goods and simultaneously incentivize private investment. Supply-chain investments that incentivize sustainable land management require further innovation.