

**Statement of  
The World Conservation Union (IUCN)**

at

**The Special Segment of the Seventh Conference  
of the Parties to the United Nations Convention  
to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 7),  
17 – 28 October 2005**

**25 October 2005  
Nairobi, Kenya**

**World Headquarters**

Rue Mauverney 28  
CH-1196 Gland  
Switzerland

Tel.: +41 22 999 0000

Fax: +41 22 999 0002

E-mail: [mail@iucn.org](mailto:mail@iucn.org)

Web: <http://iucn.org>

**IUCN**  
The World Conservation Union

# IUCN Statement to the Special Segment of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (Check against delivery)

Nairobi, 25 October 2005

## Economic Opportunities in the Drylands

Mr. President, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The World Conservation Union (IUCN) welcomes the opportunity to address UNCCD COP 7 on behalf of our Director General Achim Steiner, and takes this occasion to emphasize the strong nexus between combating poverty and securing dryland ecosystem services.

The recent World Summit has shown that we must re-double our efforts and re-focus our approaches, if the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including halving extreme poverty by 2015, are to be achieved. Two billion people live in drylands – with one billion depending directly on the services drylands provide for their livelihood security. At present, however, there is insufficient recognition of this essential economic contribution.

Therefore, IUCN calls on the Parties to the UNCCD to:

- First, *Mainstream the value and importance of dryland ecosystem services in national planning frameworks* – For instance, here in Nairobi, 50% of the city's beef (nyama choma) comes from drylands.. To ensure continued delivery of such services, countries need to mainstream environmental sustainability in drylands, into national planning frameworks for combating poverty. Coordinated design and implementation of National Action Programmes under the UNCCD, and plans or programmes of similar nature under the other Rio Conventions would help foster such mainstreaming – as would high-level dialogues between Agriculture and Environment Ministries and the Ministries of Finance and Economic Planning.
- Second, *Increase economic opportunities by promoting diversification of livelihood systems in drylands* – Diversification of livelihoods systems in drylands in the face of global change and environmental uncertainty will enhance economic opportunities and reduce the risk of sudden collapse. The development of innovative management schemes and policies to promote diversification should be guided by local institutions and build on local expertise. Improved incentives for the maintenance and restoration of ecosystem services in drylands, such as enhanced recognition of land tenure and resource use rights, are especially needed. Innovative financial and institutional mechanisms such as micro-credits and private sector-community partnerships can make such incentives more effective.
- And finally, we call on the Parties to *Recognize the importance of pastoralism and other traditional management systems for sustainable dryland management* – Pastoralists have developed effective risk management strategies adapted to the high variability of climate conditions in drylands, as noted at the side event jointly organised by IUCN, UNDP, ICRAF and the World Alliance for Mobile and Indigenous Peoples. We urge the Parties to ensure full participation of indigenous peoples and local communities, especially pastoralists, both in land use planning and decision making at national and subnational levels and at the negotiations of the Conference of the Parties to UNCCD. The UN International Year of Deserts and Desertification presents a unique occasion to reinforce their role within the UNCCD. We welcome the enhanced recognition of mobile pastoralism in drylands at CRIC 3 and 4 and look forward to the adoption of concrete and practical measures in support of sustainable livelihoods for pastoralists under the umbrella of a programme of work on rangelands and sustainable pastoralism.

In making these recommendations, we recognize that understanding of the impact of human activities on ecosystem functioning in the context of global climate change remains incomplete. However, there is a wealth of information and expertise on sustainable dryland management – including from indigenous and local land users as well as the scientific community. IUCN encourages the UNCCD to fully draw on the existing knowledge on managing drylands for securing the delivery of ecosystem services. We welcome the outcomes of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment as a scientific base to guide policy and decision-makers on how to address land degradation and invite the UNCCD to further capitalize on existing knowledge networks, including IUCN's extensive global pool of experts, members and partners..

IUCN reiterates its commitment to support Parties and local communities in the implementation of the UNCCD and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you.

Created in 1948, IUCN - The World Conservation Union brings together 82 States, 111 Government agencies, 800 plus NGO's, and some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in a unique worldwide partnership. IUCN's mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

IUCN is the world's largest environmental knowledge network and has helped over 75 countries to prepare and implement national conservation and biodiversity strategies. IUCN is a multicultural, multilingual organization with 1000 staff located in 62 countries. Its headquarters are in Gland, Switzerland