Introduction to the event

Ecosystems dominated by grasses, forbs and shrubs constitute our grasslands, savannahs and rangelands. Highly diverse landscapes, they support millions of livelihoods including for farmers and pastoralists and are shaped through an association with grazing ungulate migrations. These landscapes cover 54% of global terrestrial land, provide a shared home for people and wildlife, and offer life giving services and benefits like biodiversity, food, freshwater, climate regulation and fibre. Significantly all these diverse ecosystems are undervalued and subsequently face some of the fastest and largest rates of land conversion and degradation, resulting in livelihood, habitat and biodiversity losses, carbon emissions, food and freshwater insecurity.

African tropical savannas are part of these ecosystems and cover approximately 10 million km² or one billion hectares with warm temperatures year-round and with its highest seasonal rainfall in the summer. These biomes are known as the world’s most agriculturally useful habitats but in Africa two-thirds of its savannas are cultivable and only about 10% is known to be cultivated. Furthermore, the African savannas are purportedly facing several challenges of degradation and fragmentation from human activities such as slash-and-burn agriculture, wildfires, mining, unsustainable harvesting of wild resources, and urbanization as well as being threatened by the vagaries of climate change. The potential of transforming part of uncultivated Savannas into the global food basket calls for immediate actions that will make savannah’s land healthy, productive, and available to sustain life.

Building on to progress towards increased concerted actions for grassland, savannah and rangeland restoration, the session aims to articulate the relevance of grassland and savannah ecosystems and rangelands to the land, food, climate and biodiversity agendas within the Rio Conventions, and their positive contributions to deliver the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets and other global

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commitments; and stimulate discussions that address, socioeconomic, and environmental issues and explore opportunities that can sustainably contribute to shaping the agenda of mitigating climate change, restoring degrading land, and fighting against deforestation.

The session will be organized in 2 segments as follows:

1. A roadmap for positive action and commitment to protecting manage and restoring grasslands, savannahs, and rangelands
2. Upscaling land restoration, and environmental sustainability for food security, in the savannas of Africa

Segment 1 will discuss means and options to increase action and commitments to rangeland, grassland and savannah restoration. Some key presentations on the global importance of rangelands and grasslands will be presented as well as a case study from a country Party to stimulate the discussions.

Segment 2 will focus is to draw benefits from the effective implementation of technological and institutional innovations by applying economically, environmentally, and socially, sustainable practices including promoting tenure security that influences the adoption of restoration, fighting deforestation, and sustainable land and forest management practices. It will be organized around a panel presentation that will stimulate participants’ discussion.

Objectives of the side event

The objectives of the side event are

- To advance new Policy Agendas and national commitments in favour of overlooked grasslands, savannahs and rangelands, and their farmer and pastoralist stewards.
- To provide a platform to share experiences and successes on land restoration and fight against deforestation that enhance and create resilient societies and economies in Africa
- To discuss constraints and propose policies issues for creating enabling environment for healthier and more resilient societies and economies
- To propose investments areas to sustainably drive the change that can quickly, at relatively low cost, and with modest technological solutions, contribute to shaping the agenda.

Outline of the event (90 min)

1. Opening of the event and introduction by the moderator: Chris Magero
2. Opening Remarks
   - AfDB: Ms Leontine Kanziemo, Advisor to the Director, Natural Resources Management
   - IUCN: Mr Aliou Faye, Regional Director, PACO
   - WWF: Martina Fleckenstein, Global Policy Manager Food
3. Segment 1: A roadmap for positive action and commitment to protecting manage and restoring grasslands, savannahs, and rangelands
   - Key note speaker:
Focal Point Burkina Faso: Lazare Dambatia Tagnabou
Topic: Short overview of the importance of rangeland/grassland restoration in their country, and the opportunities for international collaboration to increase restoration action

- WWF/IUCN – Bora Masumbuko
  Topic: The Global significance of rangelands and grasslands and how they are neglected in current restoration initiatives and commitments

- SNV Netherlands Development Organisation – Mr. Joost Nelen
  Topic: the contribution of pastoralism to climate change mitigation and adaptation in West Africa

- WOCAT / CIAT-Bioversity – Stéphanie Jaquet
  Topic: Sub-Saharan Africa Rangeland best practices

- Q&A from the audience - Moderated by Chris Magero, IUCN

4. Segment 2: Upscaling land restoration, and environmental sustainability for food security, in the savannas of Africa

- Key speaker: Dr Peter A Minang, Director for Africa, Global Coordinator, ASB Partnership for the Tropical Forest Margins, CIFOR/ICRAF
  Topic: The magic that can restore Africa’s degraded forests, farms, and pastures (confirmed)

- Speaker 1: Youth Initiative for Land in Africa (YILAA)
  Topic: The role of youth in shaping land and forest management Agenda (confirmed).

- Speaker 2: International Land Coalition (ILC)
  Topic: The impact of the Multi-stakeholders approach in combating desertification (confirmed).

- Speaker 3: African Development Bank (AfDB)
  Topic: technological and institutional innovations for food security in the Savannas (confirmed).

- Q&A from the audience - Moderated by– Mr Ablasse Bilgo, AfDB

5. Closing session-Wrap-up: Moderator
  Topic: Call for actions