

Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission

Special session - Mobilizing Youth to Advance the 2030 Agenda, July 24, 2018

Remarks by Mr. Chetwynd Osborne, Policy Analyst

Good afternoon my fellow young guns

- ✚ It is a pleasure to be a part of this special session, which seeks to mobilize youth to advance the 2030 Agenda. In keeping with the focus of this session on good practices of involving young people in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, I would share what the Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission as the National Focal Point to the UNCCD has been doing in relation to SDG 15 (Life on Land).
- ✚ Decisions taking to link the implementation of the Convention to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in general, was a breakthrough agreement at the 12th session of the Conference of Parties of the UNCCD held in October 2015 in Ankara, Turkey. Globally, 169 countries are affected by land degradation and/or drought. Of these, 116 countries are committed to achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) under the UNCCD LDN Target-Setting Programme. This includes countries in the Caribbean that have completed such as Guyana with endorsement by the highest political level. Having all the Rio Conventions (UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD) housed under the Ministry of the Presidency is key for political coordination and endorsement.
- ✚ Guyana's National Action Plan (NAP) was aligned to UNCCD 10 – Year Strategy (2008 – 2018) to steer Guyana along a Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) path as we strive to achieve SDG 15 by 2030. The Aligned NAP provides consideration for the need for urgent efforts to integrate and strengthen existing National Policies, Strategies, Action Plans and the planning framework for conservation, promotion of sustainable land management and combating the exacerbated effects of degradation.
- ✚ LDN is aligned with Guyana's national development priorities; along a Green Economic Pathway through the national overarching Country Development Framework, the Green State Development Strategy (GSDS). Achieving LDN will not only improve livelihood and contribute to food security in Guyana but also improve the country's Gross Domestic Product and economic well-being relative to the people living in affected areas.
- ✚ The new strategic framework of the Convention for 2018 – 2030 that emanated from COP 13 enshrines the integration of SDG 15 ("Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss") and target 15.3 (aims "by 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world") into the implementation of the

Convention. SDG 15 has also been championed by UNCCD and partner countries and has become a strong vehicle to drive UNCCD implementation.

- ✚ Attainment of this target would ensure harmonization with climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, food and water security, disaster risk reduction, and poverty reduction. This sort of harmonization ties into a Rio Mainstreaming Project that Guyana is currently undertaking – UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNCCD. SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life Below Water) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) all fits in.
- ✚ The UNCCD Strategy aims to guide the actions of all UNCCD stakeholders and partners through the following strategic objectives:
 - Strategic Objective 1: To improve the condition of affected ecosystems, combat desertification/land degradation, promote sustainable land management and contribute to land degradation neutrality.
 - Strategic objective 2: To improve the living conditions of affected populations.
 - Strategic objective 3: To mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems.
 - Strategic objective 4: To generate global benefits through effective implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.
 - Strategic objective 5: To mobilize substantial and additional financial and non-financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention by building effective partnerships at global and national level.
- ✚ In Guyana, land degradation has been occurring from natural resource utilization and natural disasters in sporadic areas. The coastline is prone to erosion, along with saltwater intrusion and flooding, and losses of arable land due to floods and droughts.
- ✚ The UNCCD provides the global framework for addressing land degradation and sustainable land management issues in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Given the scope of this instrument, which, if used effectively, could significantly contribute to the attainment of the objectives of poverty eradication (SDG 1 – No Poverty) and food security (SDG 2 – Zero Hunger) in line with the Convention’s mandate.
- ✚ Results of the 2018 reporting process will be discussed during the Seventeenth Session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC17), which will be held in January 2019 in Guyana for the first time.
- ✚ The hosting of CRIC17 in Guyana will also be the first of its kind of the UNCCD process in the English speaking Caribbean. The hosting of CRIC17 also creates an opportunity for Latin American and Caribbean countries to effectively collaborate and highlight our best practices as it relates to the implementation of the Convention. Youths will play a major role in the planning process.

- ✚ The Mainstreaming of Sustainable Land Development and Management in the Co-operative Republic of Guyana is being implemented at a time that will complement the on-going national efforts to implement UNCCD. Projects of this nature can serve as a model for other SIDS as we all strive to achieve a land degradation neutral world by 2030.
- ✚ The Guyana Lands and Surveys Commission (GLSC) is currently collaborating with the Mangrove Restoration and Management Department of the National Agriculture Research & Extension Institute (NAREI) to plant mangrove seedlings on the Essequibo Coast at Walton Hall in observance of this year's World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD) under the theme "Land has true value. Invest in it." The planting of 15,000 seedlings of black (majority) and red (few) mangroves is significant for the designated area which is affected by erosion, an area estimated to be thirty six thousand, five hundred and sixty square meters (36,560 m²/9 acres/3.7 hectares).
- ✚ GLSC will mobilize with NAREI to sensitize people about making wise investment in land to support current and future generations. Youth involvement will be captured through the participation of Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA) and Anna Regina Multilateral High School in planting activities.
- ✚ In closing, I urge community based organizations, civil society organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders to create space for youth involvement as we all strive to draw attention to land issues and educate the public about effective methods of achieving LDN.
- ✚ We all have a role to play. Consumers can spend their money on organic products to avoid land degradation. Farmers can invest in smart agriculture that leads to higher yields despite a reduction in inputs like pesticides. Policy makers and land managers can support bio-economy by investing in new SLM technologies and processes.