

## **Belgian Statement at the UN General Assembly High Level meeting on Desertification**

### **UNGA High-level meeting on addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.**

*20 September 2011*

Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Belgium very much welcomes this high level event on addressing desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. It represents an excellent opportunity for policy makers to give due attention to this issue of global importance. DLDD threatens the very life-sustaining basis of people, in particular poor people and Africa. Climate change, loss of biodiversity, poor water management, excessive use of chemicals, among other factors, only add to the problem. As a result, the loss of productive land induces food insecurity, more poverty, higher disaster risks, unwanted migration, and may jeopardize even peace and security. Addressing such a multi-faceted challenge, which is both environmental and developmental, warrants an integrated approach. Sustainable land management (SLM) takes into account all vital aspects of the land, as well as its associated threats. Thus, a systematic application of the SLM approach will contribute to poverty alleviation and food security in the long run. In the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, Belgium stands ready to align its support with these policies in our partner countries. At the upcoming 10th Conference of the Parties of the UNCCD in Changwon, South Korea, we intend to continue collaborating with all Parties to strengthen the Convention through the implementation of the 10-Year Strategic Plan and the effective cooperation between Convention bodies. The 10-year Strategy, agreed by all Parties after a considerable amount of reflection and work, outlines the correct direction for the Convention, based on its original objectives and mandate. It should remain the guidance for the scope and the activities for the implementation of the Convention in the immediate future. The challenge of desertification needs to be addressed head-on now and we shouldn't waste time in devising additional institutional structures. For the same reason Belgium believes that we should keep the current housing arrangements for the Global Mechanism. Its location within the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) remains the best setting for coordinating its financial brokering function with many of the most important players in the field of combating desertification and ensuring food

security. Finally, because desertification is a multi-faceted challenge Belgium believes that actions to address this scourge can benefit a lot from true synergies with other conventions. Climate change and the loss of biodiversity are both a cause and a consequence of desertification. A synergistic approach that integrates all these aspects in the development agenda of affected countries will greatly improve the power to protect the land and ecosystems that are the very basis of their livelihood. And since we firmly believe that understanding and remediating challenges should be based on sound scientific knowledge and adequate technology, we will continue to endeavour to improve the scientific knowledge base of the Convention. In this undertaking also, synergy with the other conventions can boost progress in a cost-efficient manner.

Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention.