

19 June 17:30-19:00, KFS-UNCCD Joint Side Event

Welcome Address at the Rio+20 Side Event of KFS, UNCCD and Partners

by

**Don Koo Lee, Ph. D.
President of the UNCCD COP 10
Minister of the Korea Forest Service**

17:30-19:00, 19 June 2012, Rio Centro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

➤ ***Event Title: Let's Go Land-Degradation Neutral World – The Role of Sustainable Land and Forest Management***

Mr. Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of UNCCD, Ms. Jan McAlpine, Director of UNFF, Mr. Uriel Safriel, Professor at Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mr. Kook Hyun Moon, President of the New Paradigm Institute, Mr. Seong-il Kim, Professor at Seoul National University, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon!

I am thrilled to welcome you all at the joint side event of Korea Forest Service and UNCCD on “Let’s Go Land-Degradation Neutral - The Role of Sustainable Land and Forest Management in a Green Economy.”

The theme of our side event is all the more pertinent considering the grave situation where more than 12 million hectares of land are lost every year due to desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) threatening the livelihood of local people in affected countries.

At the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) desertification, climate change and biodiversity loss were identified as the greatest challenges to sustainable development.

In commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, I hope our side event will provide a valuable chance to capitalize on the potentials of the Rio+20 and contribute to addressing the DLDD issue and other interlinked issues.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Now is the time for us to rethink the importance of land. Land is the earth’s very infrastructure for life and is crucial for human well-being, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.

Hence, the longer we delay our action against land and forest degradation, the harder and more costly it is to address them and achieve our common aspiration for sustainable development and all the existing targets.

In order to secure the continuous availability of productive land for present and future generations, now is the time to commit ourselves to a land-degradation neutral world by setting a sustainable development goal of zero net land degradation (ZNLD) at this important Rio+20 occasion.

A new target of zero net land degradation is ambitious but it is possible!
To this end, we need to take bold and creative actions to reverse, protect, restore and manage land and soil in a sustainable way.

Today, our side event will be a valuable occasion to share the successful experience of the Republic of Korea in restoring its once denuded land and forest, innovative views on land degradation neutral world through a green economy and the private sector's role in promoting sustainable land and forest management.

I do hope all the participants can learn many lessons, share valuable opinions, have lively and intellectually satisfying discussions and contribute to producing noteworthy and fruitful outcomes of the Rio+20.

Before I end, I would like to extend my special thanks to the Korea Forest Service, UNCCD Secretariat and our partners for their dedicated help to organize our side event and for taking part in our pursuit of achieving sustainable development.

I hope through this side event we can stimulate much needed collaboration to achieve 'zero-net land degradation.'

Welcome again and thank you so much!

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