



G20 GLOBAL
LAND INITIATIVE

Annual Report 2022



Global Initiative for Reducing
Land Degradation and Enhancing
Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats

A woman with a joyful expression stands in a vibrant, green agricultural field. She is wearing a blue patterned top, a white lace-trimmed apron, and a purple and white striped skirt. The field is filled with rows of tomato plants supported by wooden stakes and strings. The background is a dense wall of green foliage under a bright sky.

Humans have transformed more than 70 per cent of the Earth's land area from its natural stateⁱ

Countries have pledged nearly 1 billion hectares of land for restoration by 2030ⁱⁱ

The G20 ambition is a 50 per cent reduction in degraded land by 2040ⁱⁱⁱ

OUR AMBITION:

REDUCE 50% OF GLOBAL DEGRADED LAND BY 2040

HOW?



Showcasing success stories that benefit nature and safeguard people's lives, jobs and incomes.



Engaging the private sector in sustainable land management, land restoration and habitat conservation.



Empowering civil society and the public on land stewardship for sustainable development.



Building capacity and sharing knowledge on land conservation and restoration outcomes.

VISION AND MISSION

The ambition of the G20 Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats (in short G20 Global Land Initiative) launched during the Saudi Arabian Presidency is to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in degraded land by 2040. To inspire all stakeholders to collectively deliver on land conservation and restoration outcomes: we showcase success stories; engage the private sector; empower civil society and the public; and share knowledge to build capacity among G20 members as well as interested non-member countries and other stakeholders.

i,ii UNCCD, 2022. Summary for Decision Makers. Global Land Outlook, second edition. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Bonn.

iii Leaders' Declaration, G20 Riyadh Summit, November 21-22, 2020

Director's Letter



Dr. Muralee Thummarukudy
Director, G20 Global Land Initiative
Coordination Office
Photo: ©UNCCD

The year 2022 was momentous for the Group of Twenty (G20) Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats - the G20 Global Land Initiative. I am delighted to present its first Annual Report.

The G20 Environment Ministers meeting formulated the Initiative in September 2020 in Riyadh under the Saudi Arabia G20 Presidency. The G20 Leader's Summit launched the Initiative in November, also in Riyadh. Operations began in April 2022, with my appointment as the director of the Initiative Coordination Office (ICO). We began to engage stakeholders and set up the ICO soon after.

Indonesia, the 2022 G20 Presidency, chose peatland and mangrove restoration as the priority action areas for land restoration. The Presidency has considerable experience in both issues, and worked with the Initiative to organize side events, and to keep land restoration on the political agenda.

The Initiative also established its presence, engaged with stakeholders, created awareness and advanced the topic of land restoration at each of the three Conferences of the Parties (COPs) of the Rio Conventions. The conferences for the Desertification, Climate Change and Biological Diversity Conventions took place respectively, in May, November and December.

During this period, the Initiative coordination office developed the draft Initiative Strategy in a consultative manner and presented it to the Initiative Steering Committee. The committee is made up of representatives of the G20 Members, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). All but one nomination have been received. At its first meeting held in November 2022, the Steering Committee discussed the Initiative Strategy and the work plan for 2022-2024, and the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

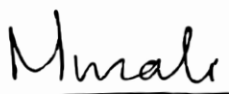
ICO was also formed in 2022 with the recruitment of a core staff team that started working immediately. A Technical Advisory Group made up of experts in various subjects and from different regions was also set up to support the staff team. A team of communication experts supports both.

The Initiative launched a website, published the first newsletter and started the global webinar series titled, *Let's Talk Land*. Stakeholders received the newsletter and webinar with enthusiasm.

The ICO leadership team knows that working with others is vital in motivating action to achieve the ambition of reducing 50 per cent of global degraded land by 2040. Therefore, it started reaching out to external partners, such as United Nations agencies, universities and private sector actors, to discuss collaborative work. For example, ICO collaborated with the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (UNDESR), which is active in the domain of restoration, to benefit from the latter's comparative advantages.

The ICO team is proud of its achievements in 2022, its year of inception, as modest as these results are. We have an exciting year ahead. We are ready for greater achievements in our march towards reaching our collective global ambition.

“The Initiative launched a website, published the first newsletter, and started the global webinar series titled, *Let's Talk Land*. Stakeholders received the newsletter and webinar with enthusiasm.”



Dr. Muralee Thummarukudy
Director, G20 Global Land Initiative
Coordination Office

Origins of the G20 Global Land Initiative

85%

of global GDP comes from the G20 countries

G20 is an international forum of the world's major developed and emerging economies that together make up 85 per cent of the global Gross Domestic Product, 75 per cent of international trade, about half of the earth's total land area and two-thirds of the world's population. The forum is made up of the European Union and 19 countries, namely: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Türkiye, United Kingdom and United States of America. The size, representation and strategic importance of the G20 makes it a crucial player in setting the global agenda.

The G20 Leaders' Declaration from their November 2020 Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, expresses their:

“Conviction that coordinated global action, solidarity, and multilateral cooperation are more necessary today than ever to overcome the current challenges and realize opportunities of the 21st century for all by empowering people, safeguarding the planet, and shaping new frontiers.”

They also committed to leading the world in shaping a strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive post-COVID-19 era.

The Declaration also states:

“Building on existing initiatives, we share the ambition to achieve a 50 per cent reduction of degraded land by 2040, on a voluntary basis.”

Concurrently, G20 Leaders launched the *“Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats to prevent, halt, and reverse land degradation.”* to realize this ambition.



Photo: ©iStock

“The G20 Global Land Initiative brings to the table at least three new elements.

First, it incentivises the global community to tackle climate change, biodiversity losses and land degradation together.

Second, it demands that while we think globally, we pursue inclusive solutions at the regional and national levels alongside indigenous and local communities, with their traditional knowledge at the heart of action.

Third, it demands the engagement of the public and private actors.”

— Ibrahim Thiaw
Executive Secretary, UNCCD

Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw
UN Under-Secretary-General
and Executive Secretary
of the United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification (UNCCD)
Photo: ©UNCCD



The three objectives of the Initiative are:

First, conserving land and halting habitat loss, fragmentation, and land degradation, notably through:

- sharing knowledge and best practices on conservation incentives, including strengthening physical and functional connectivity and quality of protected areas
- enhancing land conservation
- promoting sustainable land management practices
- promoting active fire management and
- implementation of other policies and best practices to enhance land conservation and reduce land degradation.

Second, promoting integrated, sustainable, and resilient land and landscape management through:

- nature-based solutions or ecosystem-based approaches
- financing mechanisms
- urban and land use planning processes at different levels and scales
- stronger implementation of international agreements and local environmental governance and laws
- the empowerment of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (including women, youth, and smallholders) in land management

- secure land tenure, property and land-use rights in accordance with national legislation as well as
- supporting sustainable land and water management policies and sustainable agricultural practices, including traditional practices, in order to maintain and enhance ecosystem functionality.

Third, restoring degraded land through:

- sustainable and locally or regionally appropriate reforestation, afforestation, natural regeneration/re-vegetation, restoration of ecosystem services, sustainable agricultural practices and
- deployment of nature-based solutions or ecosystem-based approaches for biodiversity conservation, among others, in order to restore ecosystem functionality in a landscape context.



This objective will seek to prevent the transfer of degradation, that is, avoid restoring one area to the detriment of another.

The Initiative will also seek to enhance collaboration among G20 members and non-member countries, as appropriate, to support the implementation of current commitments for land protection, sustainable land management, and restoration, as well as seek additional voluntary commitments from participating countries to raise ambition in this respect and contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 15, and, in particular, target 15.3. (Goal 15 is about land. Target 15.3 is about achieving a land degradation neutral world by 2030).

Markets are developing for protecting and restoring coastal ecosystems that store carbon, such as these mangroves in East Timor Photo: ©UNDP/Yuichi Ishida

Initiative Activities

Land conservation, sustainable management, and restoration website

The Initiative will establish a website that displays publicly available information on degraded lands, national and international commitments on land conservation and restoration, and best practices as well as success stories on land restoration, progress-made, results achieved, and lessons learned.

The website will serve as an information sharing hub to provide easier access to information on land degradation, conservation, sustainable management, and restoration, and to foster collaboration and broader engagement of various stakeholders in land conservation and restoration efforts. The information gathered by the website will be compiled from information and data shared on a voluntary basis by the participating countries and organizations and will cite attribution of information sources where possible.



Indigenous Seed Systems in Northwestern Vietnam Photo: ©CIAT/Trong Chinh

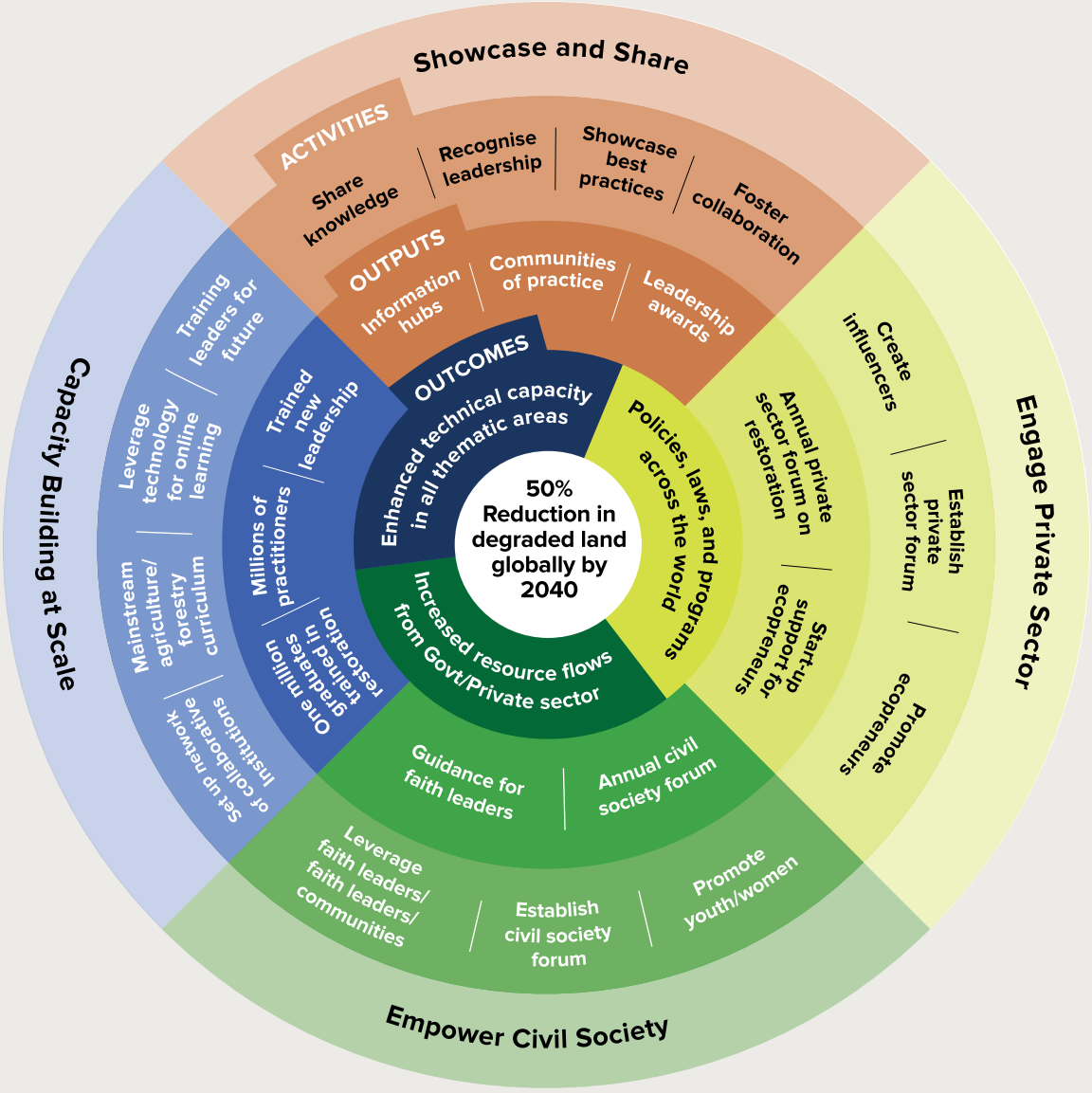
Engagement of private sector and civil society

The Initiative will engage the private sector to encourage it to support land restoration efforts and adopt sustainable land management practices. This activity will comprise an outreach/encouragement function to promote needed investments and provide information to link investors/contributors to interested initiatives. Similarly, with strong calls from society for urgent environmental action, the Initiative will encourage direct engagement of civil society, including by mobilizing the general public.

Sharing knowledge and building capacity

The initiative will support the exchange of know-how and capacity building between G20 members, non-member countries, and other partners and additional stakeholders, as well as support efforts to accelerate exchange of best practices to enhance land conservation and restoration efforts.

“The Initiative will establish a website that displays publicly available information on degraded lands.”



Theory of change visual

Strategy Development

The Strategy for the G20 Global Land Initiative builds on the mandate laid out in the 2020 G20 Environment Ministers Communiqué. The shared G20 ambition is to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in degraded land by 2040.

Achieving this ambition will require all actors to ramp up action on the existing commitments to:

- **prevent** further land degradation through conservation
- **halt** land degradation through sustainable land management and to
- **restore** degraded land through ecological rehabilitation or restoration.

A crucial factor for achieving this target is promoting increased investments in nature, both among G20 members and non-G20 members. The Initiative, in the coming two decades, will work towards achieving increased resource flows in land restoration.

The strategy for realizing this ambition was completed in 2022, following extensive consultations.

The strategy sets the Initiative on four mutually reinforcing pillars of action.

- **showcase** success stories that benefit nature and safeguard people's lives, jobs, and incomes
- **engage** the private sector in sustainable land management, land restoration, and habitat conservation
- **empower** civil society and the public on land stewardship for sustainable development
- **share** knowledge and develop and mobilize capacity between G20 members, non-member countries, and other stakeholders to collectively deliver on land conservation and restoration outcomes.



Photo: ©UN Women/J Saad

“The shared G20 ambition is to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in degraded land by 2040.”



Photo: ©UN Women/Ryan Brown



The G20 Global Land Initiative Implementation Strategy and Work Plan 2022-2024

The strategy sets out five cross-cutting principles:

1 Global and inclusive of all countries.

The Initiative, as stated by the G20 members in their Ministerial Communiqué, will seek to be inclusive of all countries. Interested countries will have opportunities to contribute to and to benefit from the Initiative.

2 All terrestrial ecosystems are included.

The Initiative stresses that ecosystems including, but not limited to forests, grasslands, dry lands, rangelands, croplands, peatlands, mangroves, soil, tundra, karst and wetlands are essential for the existence, survival and sustainability of biodiversity as well as food security and human well-being.

3 Multistakeholder-based.

The Initiative will work with other stakeholders, such as the private sector, academia, media, communities and non-governmental organizations as well as faith-based and financial institutions.

4 Importance of leadership.

Transformative action in the domain of land restoration happens when visionary leadership takes up land restoration and habitat conservation issues as a priority and steers it towards scale and implementation. Learning from such leadership actions and recognizing them, including through global awards, is an important signal for leadership elsewhere.

5 Aligned with other initiatives.

There are many ongoing national and global initiatives to reduce land degradation and increase restoration and conservation. The Initiative will promote and project these efforts to achieve the common goal of land restoration.

Building the Team

The ambition of the Initiative is global and significant. The G20 Environment Ministers Communiqué mandates the creation of an office to coordinate the Initiative, with oversight from the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Accordingly, the office will have a dedicated, full-time staff and an annual budget to fund its core activities, with UNCCD Secretariat providing the administrative support and financial oversight.

Core Team

The ICO core team will have about a dozen staff. Led by a director, it will look after the administration, finance, policy, program management, stakeholder engagement and communication requirements of the Initiative. Recruitment of this team started in 2022. Half of the team is in place.



Participants visited a field site where restoration of a mining area close to Bonn is in progress. This was both a capacity building exercise and a team building activity. Ms. Dhruthi Shaw, a Technical Expert on communications, shares her experiences of the visit in this [story](#).
Photot: A. Trompieri

Technical Expert Group

The technical scope of the Initiative is broad, ranging from preventing land degradation to achieving sustainable land management. It will cover all types of land, from forests to grasslands to wetlands. In addition, the Initiative will work with a wide range of stakeholders, such as youth, women, the private sector and indigenous communities.

A senior technical team will support the ICO to plan and implement the elements of the Initiative. The combined expertise of this technical team is:

- restoration of arid lands
- restoration of wetland ecosystems
- restoration of peatland ecosystems
- restoration of tropical forests
- economics of restoration
- women engagement
- youth engagement
- private sector engagement and
- capacity building.



The G20 Global Land Initiative Coordination team in Bonn, Germany.

Photo: UNCCD

250
years of
international
experience
collectively, is what
the expert team
brings to the table.

Each expert has over 20 years of experience in their domain. Collectively, they bring to the table over 250 years of international experience.

These experts work at many levels for the Initiative. They represent the Initiative at international technical events to increase its projection and grow its reach. They volunteer for the Initiative to produce working papers and engagement strategies in their specific domains of expertise. They link the Initiative to their communities of practice and related institutions. Finally, the group meets monthly to discuss progress and collective action.

Communication and Branding Team

The Initiative must be sufficiently visible to achieve its global ambition. A communication team made up of consultants in visualization, digital strategy and outreach was put together under a head of communication. The team was instrumental in producing all the communication products and in setting up the Initiative website, a new monthly newsletter and the exhibition booth at the Convention on Biological Diversity Conference in Montreal. In 2023, the team will be strengthened with the addition of media content producers, especially for video and press materials.

Team Building

In September, the first international expert team workshop of the Initiative was held in Bonn, Germany. ICO staff, technical experts, and communication experts participated. UNCCD Unit heads were invited. They presented the Convention's activities and discussed how to leverage UNCCD secretariat and ICO strengths.

Steering Committee

The Ministerial Communiqué mandates the establishment of a Steering Committee for the Initiative. The Initiative Steering Committee is to be made up of all interested G20 members, the Secretariats of the UNCCD, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and interested G20 non-member countries. ICO has received all, but one G20 member-state nomination. Other institutions that contribute to the work of the ICO are to provide strategic direction to the coordination office.

A simple analysis shows most nominees are from the ministries of environment (and Climate Change). The others are from the ministries of agriculture and the ministries of foreign affairs or their equivalent.

First Meeting of the Steering Committee

The first meeting of the G20 Global Initiative Steering Committee was held in November 2022. Dr. Osama Ibrahim Faqeeha, Deputy Minister for Environment in the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Environment, Kingdom of Saudi



Deputy Minister for Environment of Saudi Arabia
Dr. Osama Ibrahim Faqeeha

Arabia, chaired the meeting. Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD, addressed the meeting.

The meeting had four agenda items:

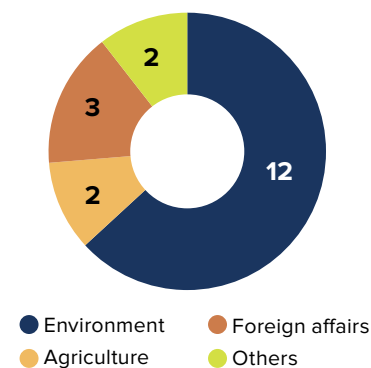
- Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee
- Draft Strategy of the G20 Global Land Initiative
- Reports from the Indonesian G20 Presidency on the G20's agenda on land
- India's plans for inclusion of land on the G20 agenda during its 2023 Presidency.

The meeting was held virtually due to the geographical distribution of the G20 countries. Despite the inconvenient timing for many of the Steering Committee members, participation was not just active for all the topics under discussion but exceptionally high, with only three abstentions – of which two were due to prior commitments.

“I am delighted to see that the Global Initiative is taking shape. With active involvement from all Steering Committee members we have a unique opportunity to make a big change in the domain of land restoration globally.”

— Dr. Osama Ibrahim Faqeeha,
Deputy Minister for
Environment, Saudi Arabia

Steering Committee Representation from Various Ministries





Photos: UN Women/J Saad

G20 Global Land Initiative at UNCCD COP 15

The 15th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP15) was held 7-19 May 2022 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. This was the first UNCCD COP since the UNCCD Secretariat started hosting the G20 Global Land Initiative. The Initiative Coordination Office and UNCCD secretariat had two important objectives. First, to sensitize the parties about the initiative and obtain their endorsement. Second, to present the initiative to the wider audience participating in the COP.

UNCCD Parties welcomed the establishment of the Initiative and its hosting at UNCCD. The Initiative was also specifically mentioned in the *Life, Land and Legacy Declaration* and the COP decisions.

The Life, Land and Legacy Declaration took note of the G20 Global Land initiative. It states:

Noting the outcomes of the United Nations Food Systems

Summit and the momentum of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and also noting the Group of 20 Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats to prevent, halt, and reverse land degradation by achieving, on a voluntary basis, a 50 per cent reduction of degraded land by 2040.

Decision 3/COP.15 on “Integration of Sustainable Development Goal 15 and related target 15.3 into the implementation of the Convention and land degradation neutrality” requests the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, within their respective mandates and subject to available resources, to:

Continue to develop new and strengthen existing partnerships to support the implementation of the Convention and achievement of land degradation neutrality, collaborating notably with the Global Initiative on



Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats, the Group on Earth Observations Land Degradation Neutrality Initiative, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030), the Changwon Initiative, the Ankara Initiative, the Peace Forest Initiative, and other complementary initiatives, as well as with national, sub-regional, and regional scientific bodies, to provide support to the Parties.



Photos: UN Women/J Saad

**Decision 4/COP.15 on
“Implementation of the United
Nations Convention to Combat
Desertification communication
plan” requests the secretariat,
subject to the availability of
resources, to:**

Explore the development of communication products and activities linked to initiatives such as the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) and, as appropriate, the Group of 20 Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats, which communicate the benefits and positive impacts of achieving land degradation neutrality, as appropriate.

**Decision 8/COP.15 on
“Promotion and strengthening
of relationships with other
relevant conventions and
international organizations,
institutions and agencies”
acknowledges that:**

The implementation of the Convention benefits from strong and effective collaborations to leverage synergies with relevant organizations and international instruments including, inter alia, the Convention on Biological Diversity Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the Group of 20 Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Paris Agreement.



Photo: ©UNCCD

Side Event at COP 15

The ICO, in partnership with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, the incoming G20 Presidency in 2022, hosted a side event in the margins of COP15 to present the Initiative to the Conference participants.

Dr. Osama Faqeeha, Deputy Minister of Environment, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in a pre-recorded welcome message, presented the Initiative that was negotiated under his chairmanship of the G20 Deputy Ministers' Meetings in 2020. Dr. Muralee Thummarukudy, Director, ICO, announced the establishment of the Initiative Coordination Office and presented its implementation plan. Mr. Sigit Reliantoro, representing the incoming (2022) G20 Presidency, presented Indonesia's G20 agenda and identified peatland and mangrove ecosystem restoration as its priority action areas for the G20 Global Land Initiative. Mr. Reliantoro was Co-Chair of the Environment Deputies Meeting and Climate Sustainability Working Group (EDMCSWG) under the Indonesia Presidency.

“We are ready to share our experiences on mangrove and peatland restoration with member countries and other stakeholders, so that this effort can be duplicated and upscaled.”

— Ir. Sigit Reliantoro, M.Sc

Director General of Environmental Pollution and Degradation Control, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Republic of Indonesia/ Co-Chair EDM G20 Indonesia Presidency

G20 Global Land Initiative at UNFCCC COP27

“I am excited to see that the G20 Global Land Initiative is taking off. Our Initiative is looking forward to collaborating and combining efforts for impact and speed to halt land degradation and repair valuable ecosystems like peatlands”

**— Ms. Dianna Kopansky
Coordinator, Global Peatlands Initiative at UNEP**

The 27th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was held 5-16 November 2022 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. The G20 Global Land Initiative organized a side event titled, *Towards 50 per cent reduction in degraded land by 2040*, to introduce its work and discuss other ongoing global initiatives on land restoration. Participants discussed how to build momentum for land restoration, the need for coordinated action now, the potential role of the G20 and its members, and questions from the floor about how countries and organizations could join and associate with the Initiative.

Dr. Muralee Thummarukudy, Director, ICO, presented the Initiative and its 2023 and 2024 work plans. Ms. Dianna Kopansky, Coordinator, Global Peatlands Initiative at UNEP, spoke about the restoration of peatlands in an initiative that involves many partners. She highlighted the findings of the recent Global Peatland Assessment report titled, *The State of the World's Peatlands*.

Dr. Khaled Al-Abdulkader, Chief Executive Officer, National Center for Vegetation Cover and Combating Desertification, Saudi Arabia, spoke about Saudi Green Initiative opportunities and challenges for land restoration, and how they plan to go about it.

Mr. Yuri Jain, Isha Foundation, spoke about the importance of soil conservation and the campaign to promote these activities at the local level. He highlighted the social momentum created under the Save the Soil Movement led by renown spiritual leader, Sadhguru, during his bike ride early in 2022, from London to New Dehli.



The G20 Global Land Initiative organized a side event titled, *Towards 50 per cent reduction in degraded land by 2040*. A recording of the session is available [here](#). Photo: UNCCD

G20 Global Land Initiative at CBD COP 15

The second part of the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) was held 6-18 December 2022 in Montreal, Canada. This was a significant event globally. The new Global Biodiversity Framework was under consideration, with hopes high for an ambitious framework and associated resources to carry out the work.

This was the first major event the ICO attended after it formulated its corporate identity and recruited a technical team of experts. It was a moment to present the Initiative and engage with all the potential partners. The Initiative designed an exhibition booth to present the G20 Global Land Initiative and its visual identity to the COP participants.

Some of the G20 Global Land Initiative technical experts travelled to Montreal. They participated in the event and helped it to establish networks. They also participated in side events to promote the Initiative and to support the calls to have a global restoration target.



Discussion in the G20 Global Land Initiative exhibition booth at the CBD COP15 in Montreal, December 2022. Photo: UNCCD

The ICO Director, on behalf of UNCCD, delivered a statement supporting an ambitious global biodiversity framework at the working group meeting. He said:

Land is the operative link between biodiversity and climate change. By focusing our actions on restoring the health and productivity of terrestrial ecosystems, we can simultaneously protect habitats, capture and store carbon, and improve the living conditions of local communities.

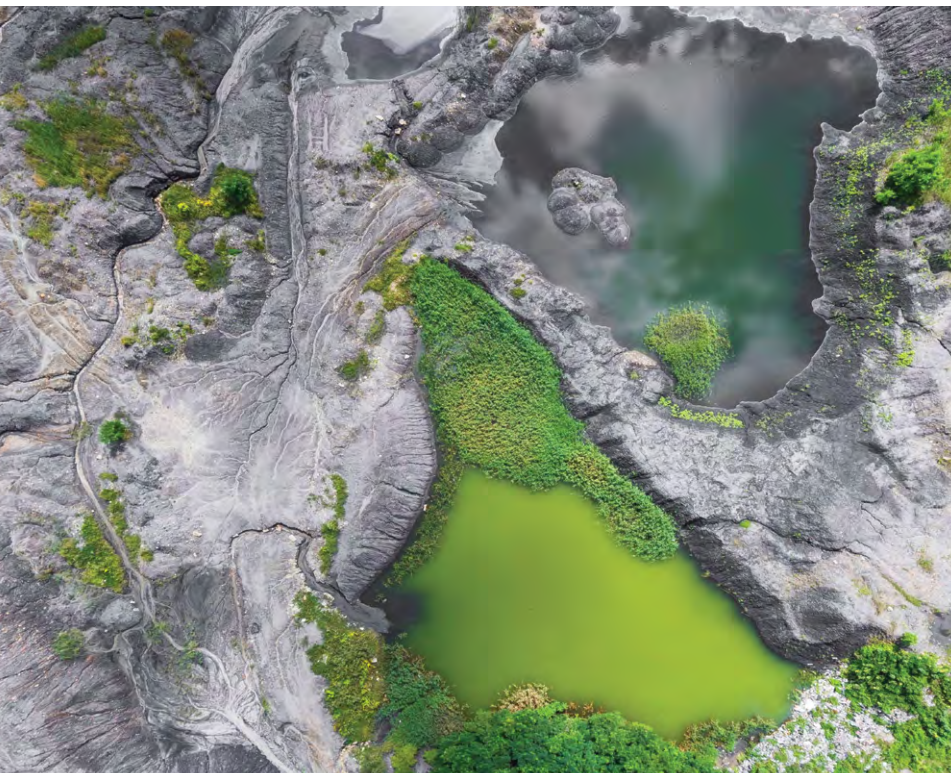
Global commitments to restore degraded land by 2030 have reached one billion hectares, with nearly half of the pledges coming

from the Land Degradation Neutrality targets under the UNCCD.

At their recent COP in Abidjan, the UNCCD Parties agreed to explore complementarities within relevant multilateral environmental agreements in the implementation of sustainable land management, ecosystem-based approaches or nature-based solutions.

The Rio Conventions must deliver a coherent and integrated plan of action at all levels to finance and effectively tackle the intertwined biodiversity, land and climate crises.

Visitors streamed to the booth



Drone shot showing the environmental impact of coal mining

Photo: Unsplash.com

throughout the two-week COP period. Experts and institutions gave their contact details to further collaboration.

The target on restoration (Target 2), which was agreed at COP 15 in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, states:

Ensure that by 2030 at least 30 per cent of areas of degraded terrestrial, inland water, and coastal and marine ecosystems are under effective restoration, in order to enhance biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, ecological integrity, and connectivity.

This target is a big boost for global restoration efforts. It is a solid anchor that the Initiative can use to connect many of its activities.

“The Society for Ecological Restoration promotes the ecological rehabilitation of degraded land. We just launched a standard specifically on ecological restoration of mined areas. We are pleased to learn that the 2023 India Presidency of the G20 will be taking up restoration of mining areas as a priority.”

**— Ms. Bethanie Walder,
Society for Ecological Restoration**



Photo: ©UN Women/J Saad

Outreach and Communication



Webinar

In December, ICO launched the Webinar Series titled, *Let's Talk Land* in December 2022. All the topics of interest to the restoration community will be featured here. The first topic was the proposed European Union Restoration Law. Ms. Bettina Doser, European Commission, presented the basics of the proposed law and the science behind the development of the law. Dr. Nick Brown from Oxford University, Dr. Karen Sudmeier, Independent Consultant, and Ms. Mirey Atallah, UNEP, participated as panelists.

The webinar drew a lot of interest from people all over the world. Over **1800 people from 72 countries registered**, with 5634 people reached in the first week through Facebook.

The G20 in 2020 laid out all the essential outreach and communication elements of the Initiative when they set up it up. The Global Land Initiative website, www.g20land.org, went live in October 2022.

This is the go-to hub for those seeking information about the Initiative. Its Search Engine Optimization is being developed to increase its traffic.

The Initiative social media handles for LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube are also in place. It is still early days, but the traffic

to these sites is picking up. We are setting ambitious reach and engagement targets for these social media handles.

Newsletter

The Initiative launched its first newsletter in October to promote the restoration agenda by increasing visibility among the stakeholders. The newsletter carries weekly updates from the Initiative and news of what is happening in the field of restoration. It attracted over **2000** subscribers to date, with an increase in numbers a key target in the coming months.

Global Internship Program

A vibrant youth engagement strategy is critical to the success of the Initiative. Therefore, in October 2022, ICO started a global internship program. The first round of internship was offered on a remote basis due to the restrictions on movement imposed because of the COVID-19 pandemic and considering United Nations rules on internships.

Following a global advertisement, ICO selected seven interns to work for the Initiative for three months. The first group of four interns started working in November on various tasks assigned to them under senior experts. The interns are working from Cairo (Egypt), Dubai (UAE), Vienna (Austria) and Siegburg (Germany).

A detailed internship plan was developed to ensure the interns get international exposure, which is one of the key features of an internship at the United Nations. The internship began with a meeting with the ICO Director and a comprehensive orientation program.

The interns were assigned both independent and collaborative tasks. They met daily under their own rotating leadership to discuss the assigned topics. They met their supervisors at least once a week and periodically with senior experts from UNCCD to get exposure to the work beyond UNCCD. Eventually, they will be evaluated for their work and provided with career guidance, including working in the United Nations system.

“The internship at the G20 Global Land Initiative was the best possible start to my career, as it not only taught me the fundamental importance of reducing land degradation, but it also demonstrated that cooperation and diversity are essential to creating a regenerative world.”

– Maria Rother

“Interning at the UNCCD was one of the most fruitful and enriching experiences of my life so far. I got a chance to work with and learn from the most experienced of people in their fields. From going to talks with experts to career counselling, this truly has been enriching and I will be cherishing this experience for a lifetime.”

– Adithyan Veetil

Promoting the Initiative



Photo USAID

The G20 Global Land Initiative is only known in limited circles beyond the G20 community. Therefore, the ICO director joined the UNCCD Executive Secretary during the latter's visit to the United States of America in October 2022. The aim was to place the Initiative on the radar of influential actors.

They met representatives from:

- Bezos Earth Fund
- Conservation International
- Global Environment Facility
- Inter-American Development Bank
- International Finance Corporation
- International Monetary Fund
- International Union for Conservation of Nature
- The Nature Conservancy
- The World Bank
- World Resources Institute
- World Wildlife Fund (US).

Land restoration is getting increased attention within the context of the UN Environment Assembly. Their decisions have: defined land restoration as a nature-based solution; raised awareness of the potential of land-based solutions for climate change adaptation; and increased the understanding of land as a link connecting the three Rio conventions on Biological Diversity, on Climate Change and on Desertification.



UNCCD team meets representatives of international organizations in the United States

Photo UNCCD

Meeting with agencies of potential partners in the United States

The United States is a member of the G20 and is involved in developing the G20 Global Land Initiative. The US representative to the Steering Committee of the G20 Global Land initiative has attended various G20 meetings. Taking advantage of the presence of the UNCCD team in the United States, he arranged meetings with various government departments including, the Departments of Agriculture and of the Interior, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The exchanges helped participants to understand UNCCD work, the growing attention to the land agenda and, more specifically, the G20 Global Land Initiative and the role of the United States.

This approach was considered a model that the Initiative could follow for similar occasions. When the Executive Secretary is visiting a G20 country, the ICO could request the relevant steering committee member to facilitate a meeting of the various government agencies involved in land management and restoration efforts. In this way, any issue could be addressed on a 'Whole of Government' basis.



Photo Root Capital

Engagement with Indonesia Presidency

Indonesia's G20 Presidency began in December 2021 and ended in November 2022. In keeping with tradition, many meetings among Deputy Ministers, Ministers and the Summit of leaders took place. Some Deputy Ministers' meetings met in hybrid mode. Ministers' and the Leader's Summit were held in person.

The Indonesia Presidency organized two Environmental Deputies' Meetings (EDM) in March and June, and the Ministerial Meeting in August 2022. Indonesia focused on the two ecosystems in which it has considerable experience and of relevance to the Global Land Initiative: the restoration of peatlands and the restoration of mangroves.

ICO participated in the March event virtually. G20 members agreed that the Global Land Initiative will work with Indonesia and other G20 countries to build capacity and share experiences on the restoration of peatlands and mangroves. The Initiative will work with Ramsar Convention (and Global Peatland Initiative) on this matter to avoid duplication and leverage

their synergies. The members also agreed that subsequent Presidencies would build on the work of the G20 Global Land Initiative instead of creating a new initiative.

Mangrove and peatland restoration were the key topics at the side events held during the Indonesia Presidency. ICO participated in the events, including through in-person participation at the June event held prior to the second meeting of the Environment Deputies.

In August 2022, UNCCD Executive Secretary, along with the ICO Director and ICO Policy Officer travelled to Bali. The meeting took place shortly after one of the most severe droughts in living memory swept across the world: from China and Chile, Germany and Somalia, to the United States. The Executive Secretary shared with governments the links between climate change, land restoration and drought management. He said:

Land restoration can serve as a climate solution, an energy solution and, indeed, a solution to many challenges,

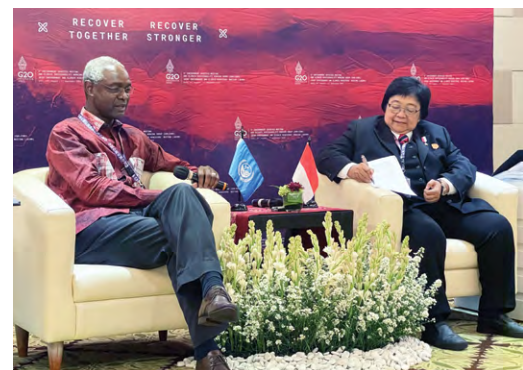


Photo UNCCD

from boosting livelihoods to restoring nature. Protecting and restoring land resources reduces emissions and sequesters carbon. It could provide over one-third of the cost-effective, land-based climate mitigation needed between now and 2030. Ecosystem restoration is one of the quickest ways of boosting natural capital and carbon stocks. Degraded farmlands abandoned worldwide are currently estimated at 30 per cent of global cropland area. Options for bringing these lands back to productive life include rehabilitation for sustainable food and commodity production or rewilding for biodiversity and climate benefits.



Photo UNCCD

G20 leaders made another declaration on the Initiative in Bali, Indonesia.

The G20 Bali Leaders' Declaration issued 15-16 November 2022 states:

We will scale up efforts to combat biodiversity loss, deforestation, desertification, land degradation and drought, as well as restoring degraded land to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030, and in support of the G20's ambition to reduce land degradation by 50% by 2040 on a voluntary basis. We recognize the effort made by a number of countries to ensure that at least 30% of global land and at least 30% of the global ocean and seas are conserved or protected by 2030 and we will help to make progress towards this objective in accordance with national circumstances.

The G20 Chair's Summary, Joint Environment and Climate Ministers' Meeting, 31 August 2022, states, among other things:

We will continue and scale up our efforts to combat desertification, land degradation and drought, as well as restoring degraded land to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030, as per SDG 15.3,

towards the G20's ambition to reduce land degradation by 50 per cent by 2040 on a voluntary basis and towards a number of related UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and Targets. We emphasize the importance of preparation and implementation of the voluntary land degradation reports by countries to achieve the UN Agenda 2030.

We continue to support the G20 Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats adopted under Saudi Arabia's Presidency and to enhance land protection, conservation, and restoration, address common land tenure challenges in accordance with national legislation in line with the recent decision 27 at UNCCD COP15 and promote inclusive sustainable land management by actively contributing to the operational development of the Global Initiative. We are committed to further meaningful and inclusive engagement with the whole of society, including engaging the private sector and civil society, indigenous peoples, local communities, women, youth and children, persons with disabilities,



Photo iStock

and people in vulnerable situations, the academia, and governments at all levels as appropriate in sustainable land management, protection, conservation, and land restoration including in related programs and projects. We recognize the crucial role of traditional and indigenous knowledge as well as their role as key protagonists in sustainable land use and preventing deforestation and protecting, conserving sustainability by using and restoring biodiversity.

We acknowledge that wetlands in all their diversity, including peatlands and mangroves, are unique ecosystems and particularly important in the provision of many ecosystem services as well as in climate change mitigation and adaptation. We emphasize our commitment to implement measures to protect, conserve, sustainably use, and restore them, and to ensure their sustainability and resilience. We recognize important measures taken by G20 members to contribute to wetlands protection, conservation, sustainable

use, and restoration in line with National Action Plan for Wetlands, consistent with their conservation and wise use obligations under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, UNEA Resolution 4/16 on Conservation and Sustainable Management of Peatlands and UNEA Resolution 4/13 on Sustainable Management for Global Health of Mangroves. We will increase efforts for the establishment or improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems, including, among others, early warning systems to build community and ecosystem resilience.

Engagement with other Initiatives

Many global, regional and local initiatives to achieve ecosystem restoration and land rehabilitation are either in progress or being planned. It is important for the G20 Global Land Initiative to recognize and collaborate with them to leverage their strengths.

The Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

The United Nations General Assembly, through Resolution 73/284, proclaimed 2021–2030 the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (hereafter “UNDER”). It is the decade to prevent, halt, and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide. Ecosystem restoration is also

vital to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Strategy for the UN Decade was developed throughout 2019 and 2020 in an open and collaborative process with input from over 1,000 organizations, institutions, governments, businesses and individuals. Since its launch in June 2021, over 150 organizations have joined it as official partners. Thousands of people are part of #GenerationRestoration, a science-led global movement for people and nature.

Ecosystem restoration is an immense challenge, with many possible paths and actions to take.

The Restoration Challenges break down the mandate of the UN Decade and its strategy into key priority areas. The aim is to unite and mobilize partners and all stakeholders around ambitious calls to action to achieve the outcomes of the UN Decade. This will contribute to the 2030 Agenda and other national, regional, and international commitments.

ICO worked with the UN Decade since the former began operations. Experts from the UN Decade also participated at ICO events. The two organizations shared a booth at the CBD COP15. The G20 Global Land Initiative has been selected as the formal lead for one of the eleven restoration challenges titled, *Restoration Challenge-Land*.



UNITED NATIONS DECADE ON
**ECOSYSTEM
RESTORATION**
2021-2030

Middle East Green Initiative

The first Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) Summit was held in October 2021 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. MGI aims to reduce carbon emissions in the region, plant 50 billion trees and restore up to 200 million hectares of land in MGI member countries.

The ICO is engaging with the technical team that is developing the Middle East Green Initiative to share insights on technical and governance arrangements from its international experience.

The countries represented were Algeria, Bahrain, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt (virtual), Ethiopia (virtual), Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco (virtual), Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

ICO participated at both the meeting of experts and the pre-Summit meeting of ministers held in Riyadh.

Ms. Andrea Meza, UNCCD Deputy Executive Secretary, who led the delegation to the technical meeting stressed the importance of the Middle East Green Initiative. She said:

Without your collective ambition, political will, and joint vision, this initiative would not have been possible. You have come together today to affirm your commitment to work collaboratively to reduce land degradation and enhance the conservation of different ecosystems. You are sending a strong message that the Afro-Asian transcontinental region of the greater middle east will be playing a key role in implementing innovation to restore and protect nature. The UNCCD is committed to supporting your collective action and the joint priorities we share under the Middle East Initiative.



Presentation by Ms. Andrea Meza, UNCCD Deputy Executive Secretary, at the Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, October 2021.
Photo: UNCCD



Middle East Green Initiative

Looking Ahead to 2023

Monitoring Global Commitments to Restore Land

Land restoration is not a new endeavor, but the concerted commitment to restore land on a global scale is a new development. Parties to multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) under the United Nations, for example, have made binding commitments to, or objectives on, restoration. These include the UNCCD commitments to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030, the restoration targets under the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) of the Convention on Biological Diversity

and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. There are other processes, such as the Bonn Challenge and AFR100, with commitments to restore ecosystems.

The Netherlands Agency for Environmental Assessment, PBL, has prepared the most comprehensive compilation of restoration commitments in their report titled, *Goals and Commitments for the Restoration Decade*.

They estimate the total commitments made under CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC and Bonn Challenge at between 750 million and one billion hectares, as shown in the two figures below. The G20 Global Land Initiative Coordination Office will continue updating these figures as new data becomes available. The data will be available to all stakeholders in a format they can use.

Figure 2: Global restoration commitments made as of 2020

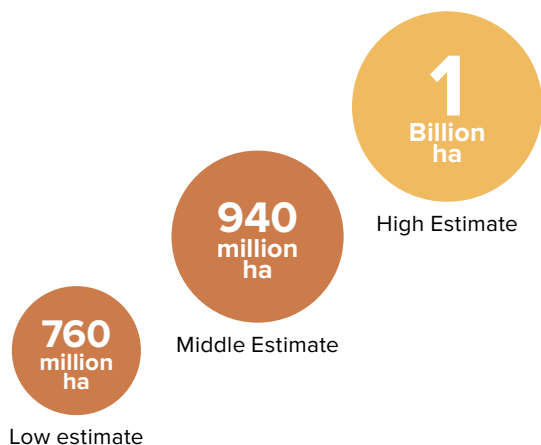
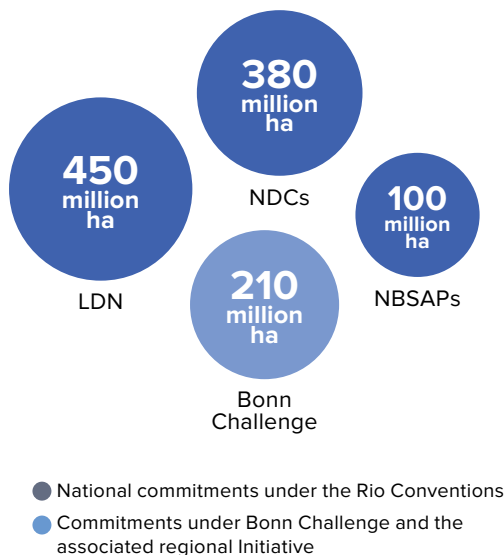


Figure 3: Estimates per program (high)



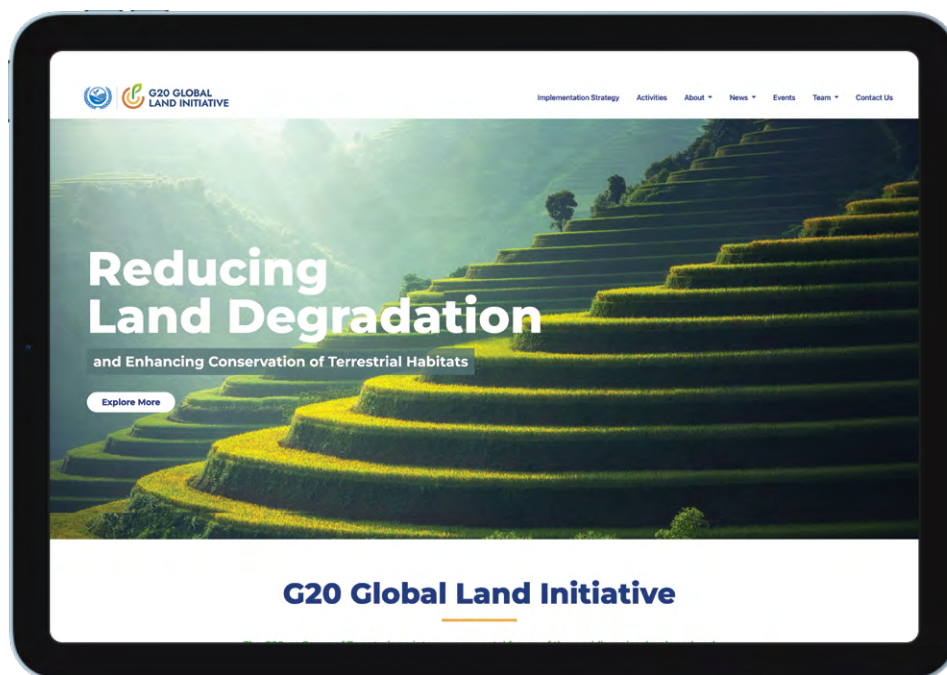
Establishing a Website

The G20 mandated the Initiative to establish a website that showcases publicly available information on degraded lands as well as national and international commitments to conserve and restore land. The website is also required to showcase best practices and success stories on land restoration, and report the progress-made, results achieved and lessons learned. The website was designed to serve as an information sharing hub

to provide easier access to information on land degradation, conservation and sustainable management.

The Initiative started by creating a website **www.g20land.org** that provides information about the ambition of the G20 Global Land Initiative. The Global Restoration Information Hub is being designed in parallel, in consultation with the international partners who have the data on restoration

and conservation, such as the UN Environment Programme, World Conservation Monitoring Center, International Union for Conservation of Nature and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The information hub will share publicly available information and make it accessed worldwide through geospatial and search windows. It will also have an Artificial Intelligence enabled chatbot to support visitors in real time.



Screenshot of the homepage of the G20 Global Land Initiative website www.g20land.org

Engagement with Private Sector

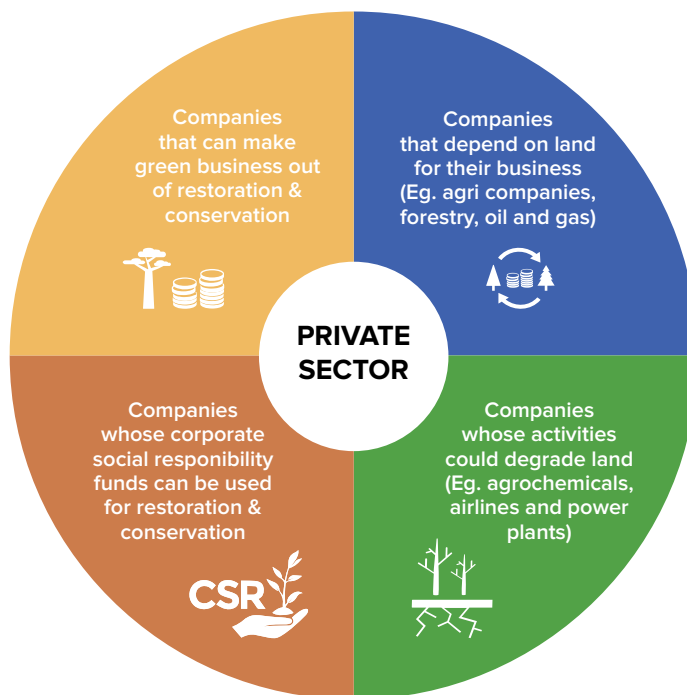
Commercial financial institutions, investors, corporations and philanthropic organizations influence land use and land management positively or negatively. Therefore, it is important to engage and encourage this sector to support land restoration efforts and to adopt sustainable land management practices in their own activities.

But the private sector is not monolithic. They have varying interests in the land management agenda. Four private sector groups are important stakeholders with regards to land stewardship:

- Companies, including multinational corporations, working in the oil, gas, mining and agricultural sectors. With millions of hectares under their direct legal ownership or management, they have a duty of care.
- Companies whose activities may have a direct or indirect impact on land, such as agrochemical companies as well as companies that contribute in a significant way to climate change, such as power plants and airline companies.

- Companies and philanthropic organizations that invest in reforestation and land restoration as part of their corporate social responsibility.
- Companies involved in land management, in particular restoration, as an economic activity in itself. These organizations have an economic incentive to increase sustainable land management.

Currently, small land holders operating at community level are leading the land restoration efforts. However, they are unable to tap into the technical expertise, technology, capital or market intelligence and phenomenal opportunities opening up through global land restoration initiatives and in carbon financing. The Initiative is in discussion with the World Economic Forum and UNEP, which have targeted programs to promote “Ecopreneurs”, to spearhead a campaign to reach at least 10,000 ecopreneurs by 2040.



Engagement with Civil Society

The social and environmental aspects of land management and land stewardship go together, but are linked in complex ways.

Participatory community management helps to achieve desired outcomes, such as securing livelihoods, enhancing social and environmental resilience, and protecting natural ecosystems. Land governance, including land tenure and land rights, is key to achieving these objectives, particularly for vulnerable, marginalized and poor people. Awareness about the importance of secure land rights – including those of Indigenous peoples and women – is increasing among stakeholders. However, the main challenge is the limited integration of rights-related issues in land degradation programmes, initiatives and policies.

The Initiative will encourage the direct engagement of civil society, including through mobilizing the public, to take urgent action to promote sustainable land management. Success in engaging the public will require calls to action that combine at least three elements.



They use a rights-based approach, apply interventions suited to the local conditions and build on societal assets, such as local and traditional groups, networks and institutions.

The Initiative is mandated to work with the entire range of civil society. Large international NGOs, women's groups, youth and faith groups can all

participate. The Initiative is already working with various G20 Engagement Groups: women (W20), youth (Y20), civil society (C20), business (B20) and startups (Startup-20). The Initiative and Global Landscapes Forum are exploring the possibility of organizing periodic global events on restoration to bring together civil society actors.

Capacity Building

Access to clear, evidence-based information on effective land management practices is essential for achieving sustainable land management and long-term land stewardship. Its absence yields at least three policy failures.

First, land users may not own local problems fully, which limits the adoption of new methods, norms and policies. Second, important lessons are often not documented. As a result, the solutions for a given land management problem remain localized. Their uptake and adaptation for replication and upscaling is hindered. Third, it hampers the transfer and scaling up of technology innovation due to the absence of systems and networks for the exchange of knowledge around evidence-based land management approaches through updated, easily accessible, collaborative, and culturally appropriate media.

Synergy can be enhanced through adaptive learning and knowledge-sharing as well as accelerating collaboration between local, national and global communities

of practice in and among member countries. Climate, biodiversity conservation, and land management policies that are mutually supportive can sustainably and efficiently utilize resources, enhance social resilience, support restoration, enhance conservation of terrestrial ecosystems, and foster engagement and collaboration between multiple stakeholders and across scales.

The Initiative is working towards establishing a Global Research and Academic Network on Land Restoration. It will link collaborating institutions from G20 member countries and beyond to promote the agenda on land restoration and sustainable land management. The main objective is to make land restoration and sustainable land management part of the curriculum of agricultural universities and forestry institutes around the world. This would ensure future generations of agricultural scientists and forestry experts are fully familiar with the science, technology and economics of land restoration and habitat conservation.

The initiative is also working with the UN Staff College to establish a Global Leadership Programme to sensitize future leaders on climate change, biodiversity loss and the importance of sustainable management as a basis for sustainable development. Discussions are also ongoing with various centers. The International Tropical Peatland Center for training and technical assistance in peatlands. The International Center for Biosaline Agriculture, which provides training on restoration using water of increased salinity. And the Indian Council for Forestry Research and Education for training in sustainable land management. Collaborative work is also ongoing with Society for Ecological Restoration to promote their training programs on ecological restoration and to design a new training program on restoration of decommissioned mining sites based on their new standard.



Photo: Faizal Abdul Aziz/CIFOR

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United Nations
Convention to Combat
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United for land