BACKGROUND

Land degradation and desertification corrodes the productive capacity of LDCs in multiple ways. The geography of land degradation and desertification coincides with that of LDCs. It is estimated that more than a billion hectares, globally are affected by desertification and land degradation, most of it in LDCs. In economic terms, on site productivity, loss due to land degradation and desertification, at the global level is around 3-5% of agricultural GDP (approximately US$490 billion per year). But in LDCs agricultural GDP losses due to land degradation and desertification, are much higher than the global average. To cite an example agricultural GDP losses due to land degradation and desertification are estimated to be as high as 30% in Mali and 20% in Burkina Faso.

Land degradation and desertification therefore are among the major impediments to sustainable development of LDCs, whose economies are primarily agrarian in nature and dependent on the agricultural sector for revenues, livelihoods and food security. Indeed studies suggest continued climate induced water stress and land degradation could lead to a loss of up to 2/3rds of all arable land in Africa alone by 2025, plunging the 650 million people who depend on rain fed agriculture, most of whom reside in the LDCs, into abject poverty. Land degradation and desertification, particularly in LDCs also carries a high human cost, corroding human productive capacities, as it uproots millions from their desertified lands and fuels political instability, social breakdown and conflicts over scarce water and land resources.

Climate change is further aggravating the situation and many regions in LDCs are becoming drier or experiencing more frequent and prolonged droughts or at the other extreme facing floods. As a result more land is lost to desertification or soil erosion, further undermining productive capacities particularly in the agricultural sector and increasing vulnerability to climatic shocks.

OBJECTIVE

The key to any meaningful effort to build productive capacity, particularly climate resilient in LDCs, lies in the land on which they are so crucially dependent. This session will discuss how to build the productive capacity of land in LDCs, through sustainable land management policies, striving for land degradation neutrality by reclaiming and rehabilitating land and adopting a land based approach to adaptation. It will highlight the multiple benefits that will be generated as a result, including enhancing agricultural productivity, ensuring food security, generating employment and livelihoods and contributing to lifting populations from poverty and putting LDCs on a trajectory of sustainable climate resilient growth.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- How can we meet the growing demand for food and the need to increase food production by 70% by 2050 when the productive capacity of land is declining due to desertification and land degradation?
- What can be done to stop land degradation? How can Sustainable Land Management contribute to reversing land degradation and enhancing the productive capacity of land?
- Is land degradation neutrality achievable? What can be learned from best practices?
- How can a land based approach to adaptation enhance productive capacity of land and place LDCs on a trajectory of climate resilient growth and sustainable development?