

ACHIEVING LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SRI LANKA

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Land degradation is the key constraint for managing land resources sustainably. The world leaders recognized the economic and social significance of sustainable land and soil management at the Rio+20 that stipulated to achieve a land-degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which highlighted the importance of SDG target 15.3 on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN). Attaining LDN will significantly contribute to sustainable development through rehabilitation, restoration, conservation and sustainable management of land resources. Establishment of national-level voluntary LDN targets is one of the key decisions taken at the 12th session of the COP of the UNCCD in 2015. Land Degradation is a global concern for sustainable development and it has close links with other environmental and sustainable development challenges, including poverty, food security, climate change and biodiversity loss. Consideration of synergies of the three Rio Conventions UNCCD, UNCBD and UNFCCC is important and the national priorities of thematic areas under these conventions should be recognized. In Sri Lankan context, LDN is not a new concept. According to the requirement of the UNCCD, Sri Lanka has compiled its National Action Program (NAP) to combat land degradation and desertification in line with the 10-year strategic plan and an Integrated Financing Strategy for sustainable land management to support country to mobilize necessary financial resources effectively and efficiently. Several green growth development strategies have been successfully employed to make the country green. Several Government and Non-governmental agencies, projects and programs are working on achieving LDN at national and local level.