NATIONAL TARGET SETTING TO ACHIEVE LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY

GEORGIA

Final report

April 2018

This document has been prepared with the support of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP), a partnership initiative implemented by the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD, with support of the following partners: France, Germany, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, European Space Agency, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Global Environment Facility, ISRIC – World Soil Information, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, Soil Leadership Academy, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, World Resources Institute.

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1. Summary

On 25 September 2015, in New York, 193 Heads of State and Government adopted a resolution entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" in the United Nations General Assembly. This resolution defines 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as well as 169 targets and can be considered the final integration of ecological, economic and social Sustainable Development objectives. Among these is target 15 that urges countries to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. Target 15.3 aims to "combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world" by 2030. The indicator adopted to measure the achievement of SDG target 15.3 is "Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area".

At the twelfth session of the Conference of Parties (COP.12) of the United Nations Convention on Combat Desertification (UNCCD), held in Ankara, Turkey in October 2015, the Parties endorsed SDG target 15.3, which includes the concept of land degradation neutrality (LDN), as a strong vehicle for driving the implementation of the Convention. In response to the decisions taken by the UNCCD COP.12, the Global Mechanism (GM) of the UNCCD, in cooperation with the UNCCD Secretariat and numerous international partners, established a LDN Target Setting Programme (TSP), which aims to support countries to define national LDN targets and associated measures.

The Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN-TSP) aims to help countries establishing national voluntary targets for LDN and identifying transformative projects to achieve LDN targets.

Georgia as a Party of UNCCD actively took part in the LDN TSP process. As it is a small country with lack of land resources. Therefore protection and sustainable management of land resources is crucial objective of the country.

As there are numerous links between LDN and Sustainable Development Goals, such as eradicating poverty, ensuring food security, protecting the environment, the LDN process helps countries to achieve these goals. The LDN National Target setting process in Georgia has contributed to the national SDG nationalization

process. With support of data provided by LDN TSP it became possible to add 15.3 goal to the country's SDG priority list.

LDN target setting provides opportunities for leverage and coordination among different state bodies from sectors involved in land management as it should be aligned with national policies and development plans. In the frame of LDN TSP these plans were reviewed in order to identify opportunities to mainstream LDN principles.

It is imperative for LDN target setting to identify and involve representatives of key stakeholders in the process. In this regard, existing national-level coordination mechanisms, such as the LDN working groups, are important to bring together interested stakeholders to exchange information and views on the LDN target setting process. As land issues are very complex and cover many areas, it is very important to involve different institutions. In Georgia, all stakeholders had the opportunity to contribute to achieve LDN.

Setting LDN baseline and assessing current status, trends and drivers of land degradation help to better understand the dynamics of land degradation. Since Georgia has no national data, LDN TSP provided access to default estimates from global data sources. Therefore it became possible to establish and map the LDN baseline and thereafter to identify, quantify and localize areas affected by land degradation. Trends and drivers of land degradation have been identified. As a result decisions could be made about potential inventions and prioritize efforts in areas where degradations is happening.

Implementation of LDN on the national level would benefit from a broad, connected and understandable set of international obligations. s. The LDN approach focuses on preventative measures; if degradation can be avoided the country gets more benefit than waiting for the severe land degradation to occur and then trying to address the problem by restoring what has been lost.

After assessing available resources and with active participation of stakeholders, realistic and time bound targets were set, which the country wants to achieve by 2030. These national LDN targets are aligned to the sustainable development goals.

№	Georgia National Targets by 2030
1	Integrate LDN principles into national policies, strategies and planning documentations;
2	About 1500 ha of degraded forests will be afforested and about 7500 ha will be reforested and 60% of forests will be managed sustainably;
3	Protected areas coverage should reach 12 %
4	Degraded land will be rehabilitated
5	Irrigation and drainage system will be improved

2. Leveraging LDN

2.1. Interest of country to commit to LDN and set LDN targets

In 2015 Georgia expressed willingness to participate in the LDN TSP. On 18 December 2015 the official letter from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia was sent to the UNCCD secretary in which the country expresses readiness to participate in the program and set national targets.

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18 / დეკემბერი / 2015 წ.

To: Ms. Monique Barbut
Executive Secretary
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Dear Ms. Monique Barbut,

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia presents its compliment to the Secretariat of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and express our appreciation for existing cooperation in the field of environmental protection.

Sustainable Development Goals represent an important challenge, which determine the global course of actions to end poverty, promote prosperity and well-being for all and protect the environment.

Georgia expresses its readiness to participate as partner in Land Degradation Neutrality target setting support program, which assists countries in defining national baselines, measures and targets to achieve Sustainable Development Goal target 15.3 and Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030.

I would like to express gratitude to Global Mechanism, Global Environmental Facility and Government of Turkey for their commitment to provide financial resources in support of this target setting support program.

Please, accept the assurance of my highest consideration.

Sincerely yours,

First Depute Minister

Teimuraz Murgulia

The Inception workshop for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Southern Caucasus marked the regional launch of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN-TSP) of the UNCCD Secretariat and Global Mechanism. The LDN-TSP aims at helping countries in establishing national voluntary targets for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and identifying transformative projects to achieve these targets. The workshop was hosted by the Government of Georgia and held on June 6-7, 2016 in Batumi.

The workshop was attended by nine countries with at least two senior representatives per country, including all country consultants recruited by the LDN TSP in support of the programme. During the two day workshop, UNCCD national focal points (NFPs), LDN TSP country consultants as well as representatives of IUCN, UNEP, UNDP, REC (Caucasus) and the LDN-TSP project team discussed the roadmap to implement the Programme.

The main objectives of the workshop were to:

- Familiarize workshop participants with the approach to LDN target setting;
- Identify opportunities for leverage through the LDN target setting process; and
- Create a mutual understanding about the LDN target setting roadmap and mutual accountabilities.

Over the two day workshop, country representatives had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the methodological and operational approaches related to the target setting process and exchange their views and propositions for the implementation of the LND target setting process in their countries. Furthermore, this workshop provided an initial platform for regional exchange and collaboration along this process among countries. The content of the workshop was mainly focused on the presentation of the LDN target setting process and how to use this initiative as a vehicle to achieve SDG target 15.3.

The LDN approach promotes measures to avoid, reduce or recover land degradation processes. The LDN objective is to balance losses of land-based natural capital with measures that lead to land restoration. The main idea of LDN is the establishment and fulfillment of sustainable land management practices to improve the economic and social environment of the country. Georgia is a small country with lack of land resources. Therefore protection and sustainable management of land resources are crucial issues for the country. Georgia as a Party of UNCCD took actively part in the LDN TSP process. Top decision makers and key stakeholders were actively engaged in the target setting process of the country. Stakeholders appreciated assistance of the LDN TSP team, who provided guidance on the LDN TSP steps to be undertaken, which were followed by the

country. The LDN terminology was translated in the national language, and final outputs of the process were approved by national working group members.

As Georgia is a Party country of UNCCD, it prepared in 2014 the Second National Action Programme (NAP) to Combat Desertification, which provides the strategic objectives of the government to ensure food security and alleviate poverty by providing sustainable livelihood options, also innovative rural income generation through sustainable land management and climate change smart agriculture development in rural communities of arid and semi-arid regions of Georgia. All these objectives align with main idea of LDN.

2.2 Link between LDN, achieving SDGs and other country commitments

As there are numerous links between LDN and the Sustainable Development Goals, such as eradicating poverty, ensuring food security, protecting the environment, the LDN process helps countries to achieve these goals. The LDN National Target setting process has contributed to the process of SDG nationalization of the country. After the adoption of the post 2015 development agenda held in New-York in September of 2015, the Government of Georgia took the initiative to contribute to sustainable development through volunteer efforts as a continuation to the Millennium Development Goals. The Administration of Government of Georgia (AoG) expressed high level political support to prioritizing SDGs. The Government of Georgia (GoG) started nationalizing SDGs in 2015 and undertook important steps in this direction. The same year, the AoG was granted coordination functions of the implementation of SDGs. At the initial stage, the AoG established a technical working group and involved experts of various sectoral ministries. The working group prioritized specific goals and targets that were relevant to the Georgian context at the time. As a result, Georgia currently commits to all 17 goals, 99 targets and more than 200 indicators at national level, including SDG Target 15.3. The GoG aims to nationalize all 169 SDG targets till 2030.

The Sustainable Development Goals Council was established for monitoring and efficient coordination of SDG implementation. The Council has four thematic Working Groups: Social Inclusion; Economic Development; Democratic Governance and Sustainable Energy and Environmental Protection. The AoG

performs the functions of Secretariat of the Council. The Council makes political decisions, while Working Groups work on thematic directions and coordinate the work of the involved institutions on data collection and SDGs integration into national policy documents. The Head of the Administration of Government chairs the Council and the UN Resident Coordinator in Georgia performs functions as the Council's Co-chair. In addition, representatives of CSOs and the private sector may also be involved in the work of the Council to guarantee transparency and inclusiveness of the process.

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia is actively involved in the process of assessment and selection of environmental targets which would be considered as national priority. Targets were selected according to existing national data (indicators), which were available at that period. Data collection is the main challenge for the implementation of SDGs at this stage. Data is the key to measuring progress on implementation. Target 15.3 was not included in the priority list due to lack of national data and indicators. With support of data provided by LDN TSP, it became possible to add 15.3 goal to the country's SDG priorities.

Georgia has already defined the path towards further mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on a national level:

- GoG will establish a SDG M&E system at both central and local levels to track progress: annual reporting cycles will be established. AoG will also seek independent, third-party, evaluations to assess the progress and to advice on adapting the country's institutional setup for SDG review;
- The Government will capture the specificities of the development needs and strengthen national statistical capacities and data collection as far as possible;
- The Government will foster a dialogue to serve as platform for the development of more comprehensive implementation and accountability mechanisms.

Still, much remains to be done and in the coming years the Government of Georgia will be focusing on sustainable development activities towards providing real opportunities and improving the living standards of its citizens. Despite the

fact that both the Council and the Working Groups now function as a review platform for the general progress on SDGs, they will require strong data collection capacities starting next year. The first progress report on SDGs will be elaborated in 2019 and will cover data for 2015-2017. The progress achieved in the process of implementing SDGs will also be positively reflected on agenda of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Summit to be held in Tbilisi on July 17-19 2018.

2.3 Leverage opportunities

LDN target setting provides opportunities for leverage and coordination among different state bodies from sectors involved in land management. The LDN TSP process was fully aligned to the national policies and development plans.

In the frame of the LDN TSP, the national strategies and policies were reviewed with the view to identify entry points for inclusion of LDN principles.

Document	Leverage opportunity
Revision Georgia's Second National Action Program to Combat Desertification for the years of 2014-2022. NAP has been adopted by governmental decree on December 29th, 2014.	Make sure LDN principles are reflected in the document.
Development of National Environmental Action Programme for Georgia	The document will include LDN principles
Georgia's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)	Framework identifies measures for four year. It improves policy coherence between planning and financing initiatives and allocates annual State budget in line of development priorities. Promote allocation finances in the sectors that

	are related to the SLM.
Law on Soil Protection	Preparation of new law
Law on Biodiversity	Preparation of new law
Forestry Code	Preparation of new Code
Strategic Plan for Agricultural Development	Preparation of new strategy
The Third National Communication to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.	Assessment of the document
Fourth National Communication to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change	Preparation of Fourth Communication
National Adaptation Plan and Action Plan 2020-2030 for INDC implementation	Preparation of the document
National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan	Take into account LDN principals during fulfillment strategy targets.

The national commitment and response to the global LDN agenda is depended on the successful implementation of the agenda at micro levels. This is only possible if the micro-level structures are equipped with the right institutional and policy frameworks, supportive capacities including technical know-how and required resources. The availability of relevant data is also important to serve as baseline and help track the progress towards achieving LDN. Innovative integrated land-use plans, which incorporate LDN as an essential component, allow the conceptualization of land use planning for sustainable agriculture and rural development.

At present many municipalities do not have any land use plans and capacities for development of such a plans. Under the UNEP/GEF Project: "Generating economic and environmental benefits from sustainable land management for vulnerable rural communities of Georgia", land use planning processes will be

established in four municipalities: Sagarejo, Kvareli, Gori and Kareli. The staff of four pilot municipalities will be trained to create an enabling policy and relevant institutional environment that will take into account the LDN principles towards avoiding, reducing and/or reversing the levels of land degradation in the municipalities.

Under the UNDP/GEF project: "Enhancing Environmental Monitoring and Reporting in Georgia" it is planned to develop a system of information exchange in order to support environmental monitoring for implementation of the Rio Conventions. The Environmental Information Management System, which will be operated by the Environmental Information and Education Center, will be a unified electronic system for environmental data, information and services. The system will ensure the access to environment information and data at different level of users. The proposed environment information and data in the system will be accessible to any interested parties including other public entities, private agencies, non-governmental organizations, business sector and general public in easily understandable format of on-line databases. Mechanisms will be further developed which allow for managing information flows from various stakeholders, namely: governments, academic sector, multilateral agents, NGOs, community level associations, and the private sector.

2.4 LDN working group – issues discussed and agreed upon

The national working group was established by Ministers Decree on 14 November, 2016. Involvement of all stakeholders helped to set such LDN targets, which can be reached.

It is imperative for LDN target setting to identify and involve representatives of key stakeholders in the process. In this regard, existing national-level coordination mechanisms have been screened in order to identify suitable mechanisms able to serve as LDN working groups, i.e. as a platform, where interested stakeholders can exchange information and views on the LDN target setting process. As land issues are very complex and cover many areas, it is very important to involve different institutions. The responsible national agencies as well as all stakeholders engaged in the process were identified. Official letters were sent from the Minister of Environment and Natural

Resources Protection to all stakeholders, inviting them to participate in the LDN TSP process. Representatives of national ministries, social organizations, scientists, international organizations (such as UNDP, GIZ), private sector are presented in the national working group.

The National working group inception workshop marked the national launch of the LDN-TSP and the establishment of the national working group. The workshop was organized by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia with support of the LDN TSP and held on November 28, 2016 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The Second National working group meeting was organized by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia on May 1, 2017 in Tbilisi, Georgia. The second workshop was dedicated to the validation of baseline data which was provided by LDN TSP.

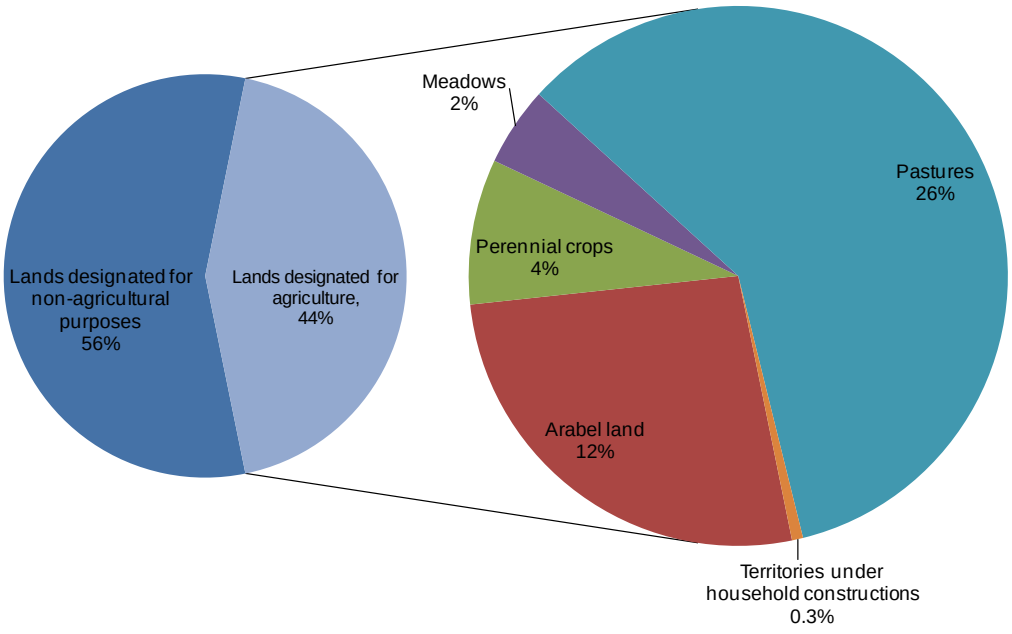
The Third National working group meeting was held on August 10, 2017 in Tbilisi, Georgia. After analyzing the baseline data, 9 municipalities and 25 sites were selected to be visited. Information and data of field trips were presented at the workshop. According to all data and information obtained, LDN national targets were drafted, presented and approved by the national working group (see annex 2).

Land has diverse functions and covers many sectors and stakeholders. The establishment of the national working group helped to bring these sectors and stakeholders together to discuss and resolve problems connected to land management. Every stakeholder has the opportunity to contribute to the LDN process. The national working group will support the decision making process and fulfills tasks connected with land related issues. The National working group will also be involved in the process of UNCCD reporting.

3. Assessing LDN

3.1 LDN trends and drivers

Georgia has a total land area of 69,700 square kilometers. Agricultural land covers 44% of the total land area. About one-quarter of agricultural land is cropland, and 4% is permanent cropland. Irrigated lands comprise 44% of the total area of cropland. 26% of Georgia‘s total land area is classified as permanent pastureland and 40% of the total land area is forested. Four percent of the total area is protected.



Source: National Report on the State of the Environment of Georgia (2011-2013)

Approximately 54% of the territory of Georgia is mountainous. The high mountains and plains occupy respectively 33% and 13% of country's territory. Correspondingly, the 70% of the territory is below the altitude of 1,700 meters. These altitudes contribute to the development of agriculture, while higher altitudes are mainly covered by pastures.

As Georgia had no national data on the three LDN indicators, i.e. land cover; land productivity (metric: net primary productivity); and carbon stocks above and below ground (metric: soil organic carbon, SOC), data provided by LDN TSP was assigned for setting the LDN baseline situation. According to this data forest cover from 2000 to 2010 year has decreased on 93 km^2; shrubs, grasslands and sparsely vegetated areas decreased on 56 km^2 and croplands on37 km^2. According to these data, areas of wetlands and water bodies, artificial, bare land and other territories from 2000 to 2010 remained stable.

As for land productivity dynamics indicator, forest areas where land productivity were declining equals to 62 km^2, for shrubs, grasslands and sparsely vegetated areas is 351 km^2, for croplands 338 km^2, for bare land and other areas 301 km^2. These data show that in Georgia from 2000 to 2010 no significant land cover change was observed. The indicator on land productivity dynamics shows that land productivity is declining mainly in grassland and cropland areas, this happened because of unsustainable agricultural activity and overgrazing, which are main problems for the country. Also the indicator on carbon stocks above and below ground shows that land cover changes caused a decreasing amount of carbon. Due to forest land cover type change to cropland, carbon loss reached 63108 ton (2000-2010), and in case forest cover change to bare land and other areas the loss is 504 ton (2000-2010). Afforestation and illegal tree cutting is also a problem for Georgia.

Due to the climate and topography, natural soil erosion takes place on quite a large scale in Georgia. **Water erosion** takes place in the western part of the country and is accelerated by overgrazing and the ploughing of steep slopes. **Wind erosion** takes place in the eastern part and is due to the destruction of the wind shelter belts (of their 2,000 km, 1,800 km were logged for firewood) and overgrazing by large sheep flocks.

Desertification in eastern Georgia is accelerated by human activities, causing widespread severe erosion. Erosion and desertification have affected arable land and pasture land: the upland watershed ridges and most of the Kakheti ridge slope are overgrazed.

During the last decades, nearly all **windbreaks were cut down** by the local population to meet their demand of firewood. More than 80 % of the former grids of about 50000 km of windbreaks were not functional any more. As a result, yield

decreased significantly due to heavy winds in winter and causing erosion of the top soil.

Despite the decrease in herds, the condition of the pastures has not been improved. **Overgrazing** by sheep, goats and cattle is occurring at all altitudes in 30 per cent of the sub -alpine and alpine pastures, as well as in 50 per cent of the steppe and semi-desert ecosystems in the southeast of the Kura River basin. Cereal wild relatives of wheat and millet are increasingly at risk by overgrazing and desertification of their habitats.

Overgrazing promotes the replacement of the original vegetation by unpalatable or grazing- resistant species ("weeds") and leads to lower species diversity. In the spring, the flock grazes intensely the new germinating annual forbs and neglects the less palatable grass and bushes. This affects the botanical composition and the productivity of the pastures.

Approximately 1.1 million hectares of Georgia's unallocated state-owned land is classified as pasture. Composed of summer and winter pastures, this land is used by communities and families for livestock grazing. The majority of the country's pastures have not been privatized, and only 48% of state-owned pastureland is leased. A portion of unallocated pastureland is located on the borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Access to pastureland is limited in some areas, which constrains household livelihoods. In conflict-stricken areas, 20% of villages listed access to pastureland as a problem, while 5% did not have access to more than half of their pastureland because of conflict (National Report on the State of the Environment of Georgia (2011-2013)). Pastures suffer from overuse and lack of oversight; many pastures are overgrazed, degraded and produce low yields.

Soils have degraded over the last 200 years due to intensive agricultural production and industrial pollution. Soils in Georgia continue to face three main threats:

- **Soil erosion by wind and rain**. Erosion affects both the productivity of soils but also water quality and aquatic ecosystems.
- **Compaction** of soil reduces agricultural productivity and water infiltration, and increases flood risk through higher levels of run off.

- **Organic matter decline**. The loss of soil organic matter reduces soil quality, affecting the supply of nutrients and making it more difficult for plants to grow, and increases emissions to the atmosphere.

All these threats may be magnified by climate change. Safeguarding soils for future generations means managing them better, reducing degradation and building resilience to increasing pressures in order to provide a sustainable food supply and cope with changing climate.

Soil changes slowly, and understanding of these changes is incomplete. In addition, the impacts of human actions today may not be seen for many years. To prevent degradation of soils need to develop knowledge and start taking action now to build the necessary resilience to the challenges Georgia will face in the future.

Soil monitoring was stopped after 1991. The National Environmental Agency re-established the monitoring of **soil pollution** in early 2014 in large industrial cities. Nowadays, soil pollution with concentration of pollutants beyond MACs occurs in all the country's industrial regions. For example, in Ambrolauri, there is a high concentration of arsenic in soils; in Chiatura, manganese concentration in soils is slightly elevated; and in Bolnisi, heavy metals exceed limits in soils due to leaking from copper mining and tailings.

3.2 LDN institutional and legal environment

By the Georgian Government decision in the beginning of 2018 the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection and the Ministry of Agriculture were merged and management and protection of land resources now is under responsibility of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia. All functions of both ministries will remain the same as it was before they have been merged.

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia (MoENRP) is the main national institution responsible for land resources policies and activities. According to national legislation, the tasks and competences of the MoENRP are directly or indirectly linked with the land resources.

MoENRP has been working with a large range of stakeholders over recent years, these included representatives from the farming, environmental and

academic/research sectors, as well as a number of key Government Departments and Agencies who acted as delivery bodies for some of the specific elements of the present document.

The Ministry of Agriculture has overall state responsibilities for agricultural production, soil fertility, plant protection, livestock breeding and agricultural engineering, and is responsible for carrying out state control over irrigation systems. Irrigation systems are state owned and state managed through the Ministry's Melioration Policy Department.

In 2013, the Ministry of Agriculture established a Soil Management Division in the Melioration Policy Department. The structure of the Ministry will include a laboratory for scientific research on soil degradation and soil monitoring. It will perform basic soil analysis for farming enterprises and will support the extension service. As of September 2014, there are two main soil laboratories: one at the Agrarian University and a private one, Multi test.

Also in 2013, the Ministry of Agriculture set up thematic maps (1:500,000) of lands exposed to wind erosion and water erosion (actual and potential areas) and lands under acidification, and the state of the nutrients in the soils. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection published an *Atlas of Natural Risks and Hazards in Georgia*, in 2013, with maps on floods, drought and fire. There are no maps on salinization or on soil pollution by heavy metals.

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection created a new Land Resources Protection and Mineral Resources Service in 2013. Its main responsibilities are participation in the process of developing and implementation of governmental policies of sustainable management of land resources and mineral resources; coordination, planning and implementation of measurements for land degradation and desertification prevention. After merging of two ministries, the service will be changed to the division under the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and all function will remain.

The laboratory of the National Environmental Agency, monitoring air, water and soil, is equipped for analyzing heavy metals in the soils, but there is no legal basis allowing the monitoring of private agricultural plots that might be polluted.

The **National Agency of Public Registry** (NAPR), under the Ministry of Justice, was created in 2004, replacing the State Department of Land Management

(SDLM) and the Bureau of Technical Inventory. Through its territorial offices, the NAPR provides registry services for immovable and movable property, as well as a real estate cadaster. By 2006, NAPR was self-financed due to increased registrations, a new fee structure, and fund retention at the.

The **Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development** (MESD) is in charge of managing the privatization process of state-owned lands and confirmation of private ownership of the land parcels formerly owned by the State. MESD oversees the leasing of state-owned agricultural land, with technical support from local employees of the NAPR.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia will take responsibilities on issues connected with land protections and will support implementation all international obligation including SDG 15.3, including LDN.

3.3. LDN baseline

LDN can be understood as a commitment to maintaining or enhancing the land-based natural capital relative to a reference state. Thus, the reference state, or baseline, is the (minimum) target. The three LDN indicators are used to define the baseline and tracking progress towards LDN targets. As per Technical Guide of the LDN TSP, this baseline should be calculated by estimating, for each of the following indicators, the average value across the 10-15 year baseline period:

1. land cover;
2. land productivity (metric: net primary productivity); and
3. carbon stocks above and below ground (metric: SOC).

As part of the LDN TSP, participating countries were provided with default data derived from global data sources. The countries were encouraged to validate these data. Qualitative information and stakeholder involvement played an essential role in this process.

Georgia has no national data related to the three LDN indicators: land cover, land productivity and SOC land. Some private GIS companies have this kind of data but they do not cover the whole territory of Georgia and are not approved by the government. The only reliable information existing is database which was created by a KfW project on Land Cadastre and Registration. The assessment of

soils were undertaken in 2003-2007, but this information was not useable due to the loss of connection between different databases. It is planned to restore this data under the Regional Environmental Center Caucasus project "Applying Landscape and Sustainable Land Management (L-SLM) for Mitigating Land Degradation and Contributing to Poverty Reduction in Rural Areas", funded by GEF. The above mentioned database was restored and ultimately, a unified geodatabase has been created, in which graphic and alphanumeric datasets are combined. The database includes information on soil samples gathered from different location of the country. Results of laboratory analyzes of samples are part of the database, which includes chemical and physical characteristics of the soil samples. The software has been already installed at the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources as well as at the relevant departments of the Ministry of Agriculture. These data does not include information on LDN indicators, but the database could be used for the creation of national data for LDN monitoring.

Baseline data provided by the LDN TSP had to be validated and approved by Georgian stakeholders. Due to that lack of national data, there was a problem with the validation of the data, which was provided by UNCCD LDN TSP program. The GIS&RS Consulting Center "GeoGraphic" was selected to validate the data. GeoGraphic is the leading company in Georgia in the field of geoinformation systems. Due to the absence of national data, the company used the following global data:

- Satellite images: Landsat 2000 year.
- WorldView 2010 year.
- Modis landcover 2000-2010y:
- Aerial images: Orthophoto 2006 year. Orthophoto 2007 year for verification

Results of the validation process were presented during the second workshop of the national working group. **The verification revealed errors in urban and water body detection. It should be emphasized that for a relatively small country like Georgia with variety of relief and natural conditions resolution of 300m is not sufficient.** Taking into account that no national data was available, the LDN National working group decided to accept and validate

the baseline data provided by the LDN TSP programme.

LDN Target Setting Programme

Table 1 - Presentation of national basic data using the LDN indicators framework

Land Use/Cover Category	Area (2000)	Area (2010)	Net area change (2000-2010)	Net land productivity dynamics (NetLPD)** (sq km)						Soil organic carbon (2000)**
	sq km*	sq km	sq km	Declining	Early signs of decline	Stable but stressed	Stable not stressed	Increasing	No Data***	ton/ha
Forest	35138	35045	-93	62	128	514	6226	26308	1807	111.1
Shrubs, grasslands and sparsely vegetated areas	14036	14092	56	351	117	351	7385	5632	255	95.9
Croplands	17210	17247	37	338	211	455	7990	7918	335	89.2
Wetlands and water bodies	433	433	0	12	2	11	142	157	109	88.6
Artifical areas	1449	1449	0	27	10	24	624	695	70	75.2
Bare land and other areas	1367	1367	0	301	1	63	874	5	123	87.7
SOC average (ton/ha)										**101.3**
Percent of total land area				**2%**	**1%**	**2%**	**33%**	**58%**	**4%**	
Total (sq km)	**69633**	**69633**	**0**	**1091**	**470**	**1418**	**23242**	**40715**	**2698**	

Changing Land Use/Co	Net land productivity dynamics (NetLPD) trend 2000-2010 (sq km)					
	Declining	Early signs of decline	Stable but stressed	Stable not stressed	Increasing	Total^
Forest to Cropland	0.5	1.0	1.4	9.3	24.6	**36.7**
Forest to Shrubs, grasslands and sparsely vegetated areas	0.7	2.3	3.2	21.5	27.5	**55.4**
Forest to Bare land and other areas	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	**0.1**

Changing Land Use/Cover Category	Net area change (2000-2010)	Soil organic carbon 0 - 30 cm (2000-2010)				
	sq km	2000 ton/ha	2010 ton/ha	2000 total (ton)	2010 total (ton)****	2000-2010 loss (ton)
Forest to Cropland	37	93.8	76.8	347229	284121	-63108
Forest to Shrubs, grasslands and sparsely vegetated areas	56	103.7	103.7	580527	580527	0
Forest to Bare land and other areas	0	0	0	1134	630	-504
Total	**93**			**928890**	**865278**	**-63612**
Percent loss total SOC stock (country)						**0.01%**

After baseline data validation, which was provided by LDN TSP, the **main LDN hot stop areas were identified** and field trips to these territories were planned. The following areas of land degradation were detected: Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti, Shida Kartli, and Samtskhe-Javakheti territories. Three routes and 25 points were planned to visit to identify land degradation drivers.

1. Route I – Kvemo Kartli territory (9 sites): Marneuli, Bolnisis, TeTritskaro municipalities. Sites visited:
   a) X 44.924931; Y 41.320979 - pasture
   b) X 44.927933; Y 41.318833 – abandoned cropland
   c) X 44.955979; Y 41.330437 - pasture
   d) X 44.977161; Y 41.33877 - pasture
   e) X 44.859421; Y 41.294608 - pasture
   f) X 44.769704; Y 41.366149 – abandoned cropland
   g) X 44.793821; Y 41.383592 - crop land
   h) X 44.678033; Y 41.400617 - abandoned cropland
   i) X 44.610053; Y 41.551052 – mowing land

Hot spots cover grazing/abandoned cropland areas. Main driver identified: overgrazing, unsustain agricultural practice, wind erosion.

2. Route II – Kakheti territory (5 sites): Sighnaghi, Dedoplistskaro municipalities.
   Sites visited:
   a) X 45.024724; Y 41.69078 - pasture
   b) X 46.224227; Y 41.516593 - pasture
   c) X 46.177611; Y 41.559924 - cropland
   d) X 46.205258; Y 41.562815 - cropland
   e) X 46.225461; Y 41.564841 - abandoned cropland

Hot spots mainly cover grazing/cropland areas. Main driver identified: unsustainable agricultural practice, overgrazing, wind erosion.

3. Route III – Shida Kartli (7 sites) and Samtskhe-Javakheti (4 sites): Gori, Kareli, Khashuri, Akhaltsikhe municipalities.
   Sites visited:
   a) X 44.046562; Y 42.013112 - constructed area
   b) X 44.022424; Y 42.034956 – cropland
   c) X 43.999994; Y 42.044224 – cropland/garden
   d) X 43.968954; Y 42.051083 – cropland
   e) X 43.910865; Y 42.140023 - cropland/garden
   f) X 43.837333; Y 42.103996 - cropland/garden
   g) X 43.732938; Y 42.064398 - cropland/garden
   h) X 43.161629; Y 41.713014 - mowing land
   i) X 43.100813; Y 41.700567 - mowing land
   j) X 43.028458; Y 41.660426 - pasture
   k) X 43.110448; Y 41.655944 - pasture

Hot spots mainly cover cropland/pasture territories. Main driver identified: unsustain agricultural practice. Also some sites were covered by construction areas, driver: land sealing.

Mainly all hotspots cover agricultural cropland and pasture territories. Introducing LDN principles into national policies and planning documents will contribute to the establishment of sustainable land management practices.

All this information was presented and main drivers were discussed and validated by the national working group.

4. Setting LDN Targets

4. 1 LDN targets

LDN target setting is a process which assesses available resources and sets realistic time bound objectives, which the country is committed to achieve to prevent, reduce and reverse land degradation.

With the involvement of national working group members from different sectors, also taking into account national priorities and SDG, the following LDN targets were identified, which should be reached by 2030:

1. Integrate LDN principles into national policies, strategies and planning documentations and legislations;
2. By 2030 about 1500 ha of degraded forests will be afforested and about 7500 ha will be reforested and 60% of forests will be managed sustainably;
3. By 2030, protected areas coverage should reach 12 %.
4. Degraded land will be rehabilitated;
5. Irrigation and drainage system will be improved.

All above listed targets are aligned with the SDG national targets. LDN Target 2 refers to national SDG 15.2 - By 2030, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, reduce deforestation, restore degraded forests and increase afforestation and reforestation. Target 3 – national SDG 15.1 - By 2030, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements. As it was mentioned targets are aligned to national SDGs and time reference for national SDG is 2030.

4. 2 Associated measures to achieve LDN

Soil is a fundamental natural resource on which life depends. It provides many essential services on which we rely, including food production, water management and support for valuable biodiversity and ecosystems. As a large store of carbon it also plays a vital role in the fight against climate change.

An absence of awareness and knowledge was observed concerning the LDN approach and Sustainable Land Management in Georgia. The problem is aggravated by low levels of awareness and understanding among land users about the socio-economic and environmental impacts of land degradation and its relationship to poverty and decline in household incomes. These issues need to be addressed in future SLM initiatives. Favorable actions should be undertaken for awareness raising and communication activities to inform and provide accessible knowledge for the policy makers and other groups (farmers, women, and youth) on SLM best practices. **Awareness-raising campaigns on SLM planning** and implementation at the community scale, and showing cases of economic benefits derived from sustainable land management should be developed and shared nationally.The rehabilitation of windbreaks is a critical issue to ensure the protection of arable fields against wind as well as providing the habitat for birds, animals and other components of biodiversity. At the same time, the windbreaks rehabilitation activities have only sense if a clear legislative base has been established with clear definition of responsibilities between governmental bodies, municipality administrations and farmers.

As it was mentioned above, LDN national targets are aligned to national SDGs. LDN Target 2. *By 2030 about 1500 ha of degraded forests will be afforested and about 7500 ha will be reforested and 60% of forests will be managed sustainably* refers to national SDG 15.2 By 2030, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, reduce deforestation, restore degraded forests and increase afforestation and reforestation.

The country's forests cover is about 40 % of the territory, a total of 2,822,500 ha. From this, about 100 000 ha (3.5 %) can be considered to be sustainably managed. In order to ensure and support sustainable management of forests, the National Forest Concept was adopted in 2013 as well as the Forest Sector Reform Strategy and an Action plan for 2016-2021 has been prepared and will be adopted. The national forest inventory started in 2017 and the exact data and state of forests will be revealed in two years. Between 2003 and 2015, 690.4 ha were reforested within the state forest fund. According to 2013 estimates, 34 000 ha require afforestation and reforestation, out of which about 1500 ha of degraded forests will be afforested and about 7500 ha will be reforested.

LDN Target 3. – *Protected areas coverage should reach 12 %* - refers to national SDG 15.1 - By 2030, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements. Protected areas cover about 597 556 ha, which consist of about 8.57 % of the whole territory of the country. By 2030, the coverage of the protected areas will be increased up to 12% based on the establishment of Racha, Svaneti and Erusheti Protected Areas.

LDN Target 4. - *Degraded land will be rehabilitated* – refers to various projects financed by different donors. Main objectives are land resources protection and rehabilitation, including the improvement soil condition.

5. Achieving LDN

Leverage already achieved

For LDN implementation it is important to support the integration of the LDN approach in the country's policy and project documents. As LDN is newly introduced approach, it cannot be fully reflected in the existed national strategy documents, but as LDN idea consists sustainable land management principals it can be considered that some national policy documents include measures that will support LDN approach implementation in the country:

1. Georgia's Second National Action Program to Combat Desertification for the years of 2014-2022 has been adopted by governmental decree on December 29 th, 2014. The NAP provides the strategic objectives of the government to ensure food security and alleviate poverty by providing sustainable livelihood options, innovative rural income generation through sustainable land management and climate change smart agriculture development in rural communities of arid and semi-arid regions of Georgia.
2. National Environmental Action Programme for Georgia (2012-2016) has finished in 2016. The document includes long term targets such as: reduce degraded land areas, improve the soil quality and minimize soil contamination. The New National Environmental Action Programme for Georgia (2017-2021) is under preparation. The LDN principles will be reflected in this document.
3. New Law on Soil Protection - Law is under preparation
4. Assess the Third National Communication to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change – Assess vulnerability of the agricultural sector (water shortage, land degradation, harmful insects and diseases, extreme weather events - drought, hail, heavy rains, strong winds/blows) to climate change. Identify adaptation priorities, such as rehabilitation of drainage and irrigation systems and windbreaks, artificial forest cultivation, reducing land degradation, rehabilitation of degraded lands, seed material.

LDN transformative projects and programmes opportunities identified

Some initiatives and projects which are undertaken currently in the country may be relevant for the LDN implementation process:

Project/programme	Lead agency	Time	Relevance to LDN
Climate Resilient Flood and Flash Flood Management	Adaptation Fund	2012-2017	Objectives of the Project: Development of policies to promote resilience to flood and flash flood risks. Introduction of the flood managements practices to the local communities. Establishment of an early warning system to improve preparedness and adaptation of the local population.
Applying Landscape and Sustainable Land Management (L-SLM) for mitigating land degradation and contributing to poverty reduction in rural areas	GEF	2017-2019	Objectives of the Project: Implementing policy, regulatory and institutional reforms in the field of landscape / sustainable land management; Demonstration of the benefit of implementing best practices of landscape-land resource management; Improving National capacities and awareness management.
Enhancing Environmental Monitoring and Reporting in Georgia	GEF	2015-2018	Objectives: Best international practices and innovative approaches incorporated into the national policies to assist Georgia in

			fulfilling its international environmental obligations under the Rio Conventions. Increased effectiveness of environmental management. Improved monitoring of environmental impacts and trends. Increased professionalism of the technical and managerial staff responsible for environmental information management and monitoring.
First Biennial Update Report to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change	GEF	2015-2016	Results: Data on national context and institutional arrangements updated; Greenhouse Gas Inventory for 2012-2013 and update of Greenhouse Gas Inventory for 2010-2011 in preparation; Assessment of the technological and financial gaps and recommendations for effective mitigation in preparation
GEF Small Grants Programme	GEF	2016-2018	Programme supports initiatives in the following areas: community landscape and seascape conservation, climate smart innovative agro-ecology; low carbon energy access co-benefits; local to global chemical

			management coalitions.
Georgia's Third National Communication to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change	GEF	2011-2015	Project supported the preparation of the following reports and strategic documents: Electronic database for the greenhouse gas (GHGs) inventory. 2006-2010 GHG inventory for the following economy sectors: energy (excluding transport), industry, waste, land-use and forestry. Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Ajara Autonomous Republic. Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Upper Svaneti. Climate Change Impact on Agriculture in Kakheti.
Enhancing Management of the Protected Areas in Ajara	GEF	2014-2018	Project assistance aims to: Improve financial and administrative planning and management of the Protected Areas. Introduce adaptable and participatory approaches into the management Engage local population into decision-making. Enhance operation of the recently established Machakela

			National Park.
Clima East: Sustainable Management of Pastures in Georgia	UNDP	2013-2016	Results of the Project: 4,000 ha of degraded pastures and 300 ha of sheep migratory routes have been fully rehabilitated. Two pilot farms have been set up, demonstrating best practices for sustainable pasture management. A water supply system is in place to provide water to fifteen farms, greatly increasing the efficiency of farming and grazing. Two automatic meteorological stations have been installed and connected to the national system. A unified veterinary service for Tush shepherds established to meet the needs of approximately 30 thousand sheep in the region.
Sustainable Livelihoods and Responsible Attitude to Environment	UNDP	2012-2015	Results of the project: Up to 80 ha of burnt forest cleaned, fenced and restored; 120,000 seedlings planted; Training and jobs for 30 local workers and 15 IDPs;
Integrated Biodiversity Management, South	GIZ	2016-2019	Objectives: In Dedoplistskaro - introducing

Caucasus (IBiS)			farming methods that nurture biodiversity and are adapted to the impacts of climate change. Yields have increased by 80%. In Akhmeta - piloting new spatial planning methods, sustainable forest and pasture management, and integrated erosion control.
Reaping economic and environmental benefits from sustainable land management in Arid and semi-arid zones of Georgia	GEF	2018-2020	Objectives: Creating an enabling environment at municipal scale for achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Country Voluntary target Pilot implementation of measures avoiding degradation, intensifying sustainable land management practices and land rehabilitation to improve ecosystem functions and services. Knowledge Management and Capacity Building
Integrated Green City Solutions for Kutaisi City	GEF		
The Forth National Communication to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change	GEF	2017-2021	Objectives: Support the Government of Georgia to mainstream and integrate climate change considerations into development strategies and sector-based policy frameworks,

			through ensuring continuity of the institutional and technical capacity building, partly initiated and consequently sustained by reporting instruments under the UNFCCC; and ensuring a regular mechanism of national monitoring, reporting and verification, and move towards a low-carbon and climate resilience development pathway.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Overall achievements and lessons learned of the LDN target setting process

Land provides numerous services connected with land management covering multiple sectors and stakeholders. The LDN approach helped to bring these sectors and stakeholders together to discuss and resolve problems connected to land management. Every stakeholder had through the LDN target setting process the opportunity to contribute to achieve LDN.

The LDN target setting process and its importance to achieve LDN by 2030 was understood and accepted by all Georgian stakeholders. Setting LDN baseline and assessment of current status, trends and drivers of land degradation helps to better understand the dynamics of land degradation. Since Georgia has no national data, the LDN TSP provided access to default estimates from global data sources. It became therefore possible to establish and map the LDN baseline and thereafter to identify, quantify and localize areas affected. Trends and drivers of land degradation have been identified. As a result decisions could be made about potential inventions and prioritize efforts in areas where degradations is happening.

LDN target setting is not a stand-alone process; instead, it should be embedded in overarching national development policy processes. Strong country ownership and the active involvement of all stakeholders, groups and sectors impacting on the land resources and participating in LDN target setting process are key to contribute to Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030 and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is critical to support the integration of the LDN approach in country's policy and project documents. Therefore, mobilizing the highest level of governmental leadership and all stakeholders' engagement, as well as the private sector and international organizations, is crucial.

Implementation of LDN on the national level would benefit from broad, connected and understandable set of international obligations. This would not only increase the focus on land degradation neutrality, but it would also increase the attention of the country to the land degradation problems. The LDN approach focuses on preventative measures. If degradation can be avoided, the country gets more benefit than waiting for severe land degradation to occur and then trying to address the problem by restoring what has been lost. Therefore LDN is a powerful

instrument for land resources protection, as land is a basic for the security of the country and Georgia has scarce land resources not to be wasted.

6.2. Recommendations and way forward

As part of the LDN TSP, the national LDN baseline was defined using LDN indicators that are applied globally namely: i) land cover; ii) land productivity and iii) carbon stocks above and below ground. However, country specific measurable indicators were not applied in the assessment. Due to data limitations, it is extremely difficult to use the same indicators at the municipal level. Thus, there is an urgent need to define a locally relevant set of indicators with the potential for scaling-up and to develop LDN monitoring systems. Although a number of organizations and agencies collects and holds various data of certain statistical and spatial parameters, detailed data regarding degraded lands are currently not available. To enable planning and an effective decision-making process to achieve LDN at country as well as municipal level is extremely difficult if not impossible, in the absence of data. Without data, maps and socio-economic information on trends and drivers of land degradation, it would not be possible to track progress towards LDN targets. Thereafter, it is crucially important to start produce and collect national data.

It has to be mentioned, that currently, there is no local institutional framework to advice and technically guide the LDN target setting process and implementation at municipal level. Farmers and other local stakeholders, who have large land footprints, are not aware and do not participate in efforts to achieve LDN targets. Public support and participation is critical for applying and implementing methods of prevention and rehabilitation control of degraded land. Lack of the local institutional framework and public participation mechanism result in unclear and incommensurate responsibilities of the related local authorities and causing lack of SLM initiatives and harm implementation of LDN targets. Therefore it is important to develop targeted knowledge products on Sustainable Land Management practices as well as information consolidation and dissemination strategies to ensure the wider understanding of the global, national and sub-national principles of the LDN agenda. Thus, awareness raising and communication activities to inform and provide accessible knowledge for policy

makers and other groups (farmers, women, and youth) on SLM best practices is imperative.

Despite strong rates of economic growth demonstrated more recently, the rate of unemployment (12.72%) and poverty levels have remained high in Georgia. According to 2016 data, around 1.27 million individuals (around 40% of the country's population) were registered in the Targeted Social Assistance (TSA) database. Agricultural production is dominated by smallholder agriculture and small-scale livestock management that produces low-income levels, resulting in the rural population having the highest levels of poverty in the country. There is a strong connection between poverty and SLM that needs urgent interventions to support the avoidance and reversing of land degradation. Land degradation is severely affecting the livelihoods of people mainly in rural territories.

Preparation of LDN local transformative projects/programmes should be initiated with the involvement of local stakeholders. Resource mobilization plans should be developed, which includes draft investment financeable / bankable proposals for transformative LDN projects / programs through innovative financing mechanisms and identification of partnerships with global service/knowledge providers as well as financing partners for LDN; e.g. LDN Fund, GCF etc.

It is imperative to build a strong, local base and pathways for increased investments for LDN measures, to develop monitoring program to track changes in the values of LDN indicators and to assess the achievement over the implementation of LDN targets.

Annex 1.

National Working Group members

Government

Name of organisation	Name of representative
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia	Nino Chikovani
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia	Maka Manjavidze
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia	Nino Tkhilava
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia	Tea Levidze
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia	Grigol Lazrievi
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia	Nona Khelaia
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia	Lasha Dzadzamia
Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia	Eka Sanadze
Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia	Giorgi Ghambashidze
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia	Kakha Potskhishvili
Ministry of Finance of Georgia	Nato Mokverashvili
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia	Khatia Khorava
Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia	Sophio Chitadze
Ministry of Justice of Georgia National Agency of Public Registry	Ivane Tsartsidze
Government Cancelary	Ana Kvernadze
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia	Nino Lazashvili

Science

Name of organisation	Name of representative

Vakhushti Bagrationi Institute of Geography	Nana Bolashvili
Georgian National Academy of Sciences	Gela Ghlighvashvili
Agricultural University of Georgia	Tengiz Urushadze
National Environmental Agency	Gizo Gogichaishvili
Tbilisi State University	Joseb Salukvadze

Civil society

Name of organisation	Name of representative
CENN	Nana Janashia
Green Althernative	Kety Gujaraidze
Green Movement of Georgia/Friends of Earth	Nino Chkhobadze
REC Caucasus	Sophiko Akhobadze
NACRES	Kakha Artsivadze
ELKANA	Mariam Jorjadze
Sustainable Development Center “Remisia”	Marina Shvangiradze
GIS lab	Giorgi Mikeladze
GIS&RS Consulting Center "GeoGraphic"	Malxaz Khurtsidze

Private sector

Name of organisation	Name of representative
Farmer	Gela Tetrauli
Farmer	Irina Pkhovelishvili
Farmer	Amiran Kodiashvili

International Partners

Name of organisation	Name of representative
UNDP	Tornike Phulariani
UNDP	Nino Antadze
UNDP	Nino Gvazava
GIZ	Natia Kobakhidze

Annex 2.

National Working Group workshops

1. The National working group inception workshop

The National working group inception workshop marked the national launch of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN-TSP) and establishment of the national LDN working group. The workshop was organized by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia with support of the LDN TSP held on November 28, 2016 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Working group members were familiarized with the methodological and operational approaches related to the LDN target setting process, along with the step by step approach and how to use this initiative as a vehicle to achieve SDG target 15.3.

Participants exchanged their views and propositions for the implementation of the LND target setting process in the country.

2. Second workshop of LDN TSP National working group on baseline data validation.

The second LDN TSP National working group was focusing on LDN baseline validation, held on May 1, 2017 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Baseline data provided by the UNCCD secretariat were presented at the workshop. Data validation process was conducted by GIS&RS Consulting Center "GeoGraphic" which is the leading private company working in the field of geoinformation systems. As there is no national data available on the three LDN indicators, the validation process was conducted using the global default data. Working group members were familiarized with the results of the validation process.

Participants exchanged their information and views on existing national data and baseline data validation process in the country.

3. LDN TSP National working group third workshop on

The workshop was organized by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia and held on August 10, 2017 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The LDN TSP National working group accepted baseline data provided by the LDN TSP, taking into account that absence of national data. The next step was field trips organized to "hot spots" that have been detected from baseline data. Field trips were organized and conducted by UNCCD TSP country consultant and UNCCD NFP. 25 sites of "hot spot" territories were visited and possible drivers were identified.

Information and data of field trips were presented at the workshop. After analyzing baseline data, 9 municipalities and 25 sites were selected to be visited. The UNCCD TSP country consultant, UNCCD NFP and GIS/soil expert conducted the field works. Working group members were

familiarized with the results of field trips. Drivers of land degradation were discussed.

According to all data and information obtained, LDN national targets were drafted and presented to the national working group. Participants exchanged their views on presented information and whole LDN process in the country and validated the LDN targets.