



**Ministry for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation**

**Environmental Protection Agency**

**Republic of Ghana**

# **Republic of Ghana National Land Degradation Neutrality Targets**

**Accra, Ghana**

**2017**



**THE GLOBAL  
MECHANISM**  
United Nations Convention  
to Combat Desertification



# MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

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## **SUBMISSION OF GHANA'S NATIONAL LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY (LDN) TARGETS**

We wish to acknowledge with great appreciation, the support and close collaboration of the Global Mechanism (GM) in the implementation of Ghana's LDN Target Setting Project.

The Government of Ghana has long realized the scourge of land degradation on the country's wealth and sustainable socio-economic development. Consequently, the Government views land degradation as an enormous developmental challenge, and is taking major steps to address the issues of desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD). Specific interventions in this regard include sustainable natural resources management programmes, as well as projects which have been mainstreamed into, and implemented by several of our land-related Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

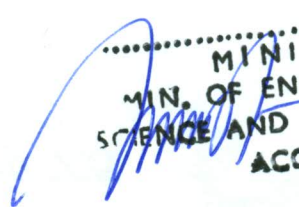
The Sustainable Development Goal 15, "Life on Land", and its target 15.3 on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), have provided us a unique opportunity to reinforce our efforts at curbing the threats of land degradation in order to reap the multiple

socio-economic benefits of LDN. Ghana has made a firm commitment to the tenets of the UNCCD, and has adopted the LDN Target Setting Programme as part of our continued efforts towards Sustainable Land Management (SLM). Through these, Ghana has set voluntary targets and baselines for the LDN indicators (land cover, land productivity and carbon stocks), and has also formulated associated measures to achieve LDN.

By this letter, we are forwarding to GM and other national and international stakeholders, the attached governmental high-level note that communicates the endorsed LDN ambitions of the Government of Ghana, and the measures we intend to take in order to achieve them.

Long live our collaboration with GM and other partners to achieve the goal of Land Degradation Neutrality for the well-being of present and future generations.

Regards,



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MINISTER  
MIN. OF ENVIRONMENT  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
ACCRA

**PROF KWABENA FRIMPONG BOATENG**  
MINISTER

## 1. Introduction

Land is a key resource of our country's wealth and underpins the national economy by generating the bulk of the national income and employment both directly and indirectly.

The livelihoods of a large majority of the population, especially the rural population, depend on the land resources (soil, vegetation, water and genetic diversity) of the country through agriculture, forestry and fishing.

In spite of its livelihood support function and ecosystem services provision, our land resources are undergoing variable temporal and spatial intensities of degradation including deforestation, erosion, soil fertility and productivity decline, deterioration of rangelands, desertification and degradation of water bodies (quantity and quality).

The Government of Ghana (GoG), therefore, considers land degradation as a developmental issue that requires a decisive action, backed by a resolute political will, to stem its scourge on the country's wealth and sustainable socio-economic development.

This underpins the Government's provision of leadership in addressing land related issues including desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD). Interventions include sustainable natural resources management programmes and projects implemented by most of the land-based Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). Among these are the Ghana Environmental Management Project (GEMP) and Sustainable Land and Water Management Project (SLWMP) in selected watersheds in the Northern Savanna Zone to reverse land degradation and enhance agricultural production; and the launch of the land restoration programme in 2015, targeted at transplanting one million tree seedlings in degraded and deforested landscapes of the country towards the Greening Ghana Initiative.

The introduction and our membership of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP) have, therefore, come to reinforce our efforts to combat land degradation. By target 15.3 of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) 15, LDN is to be achieved by the year 2030. As a participant in the LDN TSP, Ghana has gone through the process of assessing land degradation trends and drivers; identifying measures to address the negative trends; and establishing baselines for the LDN indicators (land cover, land productivity and carbon stocks). Appropriate interventions, comprising key policy/technical measures have been assembled for implementation by our LDN TSP to address both the direct and indirect drivers of land degradation towards the achievement of LDN by 2030.

The measures are envisaged to be implemented in the form of programmes, or projects tailored to specific areas/watersheds at a given geographical and temporal scale. The technical measures for the direct drivers comprise the relevant elements of sustainable land management (SLM), Sustainable Forest Management (SFM), Integrated Landscape Management (ILM) and Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR). Measures for the indirect drivers are directed at issues of enabling environment. These involve appropriate reforms in national policies, legal and institutional frameworks, sectoral policies and mandates, land and environmental governance and enforcement of relevant regulations and guidelines on sound environmental practices.

By the demands of the LDN TSP, the Government has taken a center stage in setting voluntary targets to achieve LDN by 2030. This governmental high-level note communicates the endorsed

LDN ambition of the Government and measures to achieve it to both national and international stakeholders.

## **2. Achieving LDN as a national priority**

- The country shares the LDN's goal, objectives, processes and integrated land use planning and management approaches in holistically addressing land degradation through its response hierarchy that encourages broad adoption of measures to avoid and reduce land degradation, combined with localized action to reverse degradation to achieve LDN across each land type.
- The LDN-related decisions in the context of Ghana, found in our national development agenda, policies, strategies, programmes, projects and commitment to international development frameworks, accord with the following LDN objectives:
  - Maintain or improve sustainable delivery of ecosystem services
  - Maintain or improve productivity in order to enhance food security
  - Increase resilience of the land and population's dependence on the land
  - Seek synergies with other social and environmental objectives
  - Reinforce responsible and inclusive governance of land
- The country stands to gain from LDN's multiple environmental and societal benefits, which help to address issues such as food security, income equality, poverty and resource availability. It further provides significant benefits for the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. Other benefits are from the direct contribution of LDN targets and measures to the implementation of national climate plans and vice versa; the facilitation of the country's delivery on the SDG's commitments through the direct linkages between LDN and SDGs in the area of poverty, food security, environmental protection and sustainable use of national resources
- The implementation of the country's LDN targets and measures will support and catalyze the achievement of the following policies and agenda, among others, of the Government:
  - Planting for food and job policy
  - Restoration of 30000 ha/annum of degraded areas within and outside forest reserves through reforestation and plantation development using fast growing indigenous and exotic species
  - Support the protection of the remaining network of natural forest and biodiversity hotspots in the country, to serve as gene banks for indigenous species and refuge areas for threatened, endemic and rare species
  - Replanting of trees along the banks of all major water bodies and their tributaries to reduce siltation and other negative human activities adjacent to river banks
  - Ensuring that mining and logging activities are undertaken in an environmentally sustainable manner
  - Ensuring that land restoration is undertaken after the end of mining operations.

### 3. National LDN baseline

Tracking progress towards the achievement of the country's voluntary targets for the realization of the LDN by 2030 required the establishment of baselines to serve as reference for monitoring the performance of the LDN indicators. These are: i) land cover; ii) land productivity {metric: net primary productivity (NPP)}; and iii) carbon stocks below and above ground {metric: soil organic carbon (SOC)}. The establishment of the baselines was based on the change analysis in the indicator values over a ten-year period (2000-2010) using Tier 1 default data derived from global sources.

The major negative trend at the national level was a decrease in the total forest area of Ghana by 882.86 km<sup>2</sup> through conversion to shrubs, grasslands and sparsely vegetated areas (724.23 km<sup>2</sup>) and croplands (158.63 km<sup>2</sup>). This constitutes the area to be **reversed/restored** to forest land to attain neutrality (no net loss)

After the conversion, the following areas under the different land use/ cover types remained unchanged but experienced productivity decline requiring interventions for **reducing** the declining productivity:

- i. 5107.70 km<sup>2</sup> forest cover
- ii. 4593.39 km<sup>2</sup> shrubs, grasslands and sparsely vegetated areas
- iii. 18475.79 km<sup>2</sup> cropland

The rehabilitation/restoration of these areas over the total national or regional land area gave the additional proportion of land area improved (net gain). At the national level, this was 11.80 %. The Regional values are presented in a decreasing order of area affected.

The following land use/cover types that remained unchanged had stable, unstressed productivity, and increasing productivity requiring measures for **avoiding/preventing** degradation:

- i. 45079.92 km<sup>2</sup> forest cover
- ii. 31404.44 km<sup>2</sup> shrubs, grasslands and sparsely vegetated areas
- iii. 96185.14 km<sup>2</sup> cropland.

- The total soil organic carbon loss over the period was 182061 Mg, representing 0.02 % of the total national soil carbon stock under forest conversion to cropland.

### 4. Ghana LDN Targets Set and associated measures

The specific targets to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation at the National level are summarized below. All listed targets should be accompanied by sustainable management of the resource and envisaged to be achieved by 2030.

- Reforest 882.86 km<sup>2</sup> of converted forest into other land use/cover types, and rehabilitate/restore all abandoned legal and illegal mineral mining and sand winning sites by 2030.

- Improve productivity and soil organic carbon stocks in 18475.96 km<sup>2</sup> of cropland by 2030.
- Rehabilitate/restore 5107.70 km<sup>2</sup> of degraded forest, including abandoned legal and illegal mineral mining sites for enhanced productivity by 2030.
- Rehabilitate/restore and sustainably managed 4593.39 km<sup>2</sup> of degraded shrubs, and sparsely vegetated areas for improved productivity and reduction in bush/wild fires by 2030.
- Reduce conversion of 45079.72 km<sup>2</sup> of remaining forest to other types of vegetation, and halt all illegal mining activities by 2030.
- Increase the soil organic carbon of degraded croplands and rangelands by 66 % (i.e., 1.20 % to 2.0 %) by 2030.

## **5. Leveraging LDN targets through the national sustainable development agenda**

The following measures are proposed for the incorporation of the LDN targets into selected national priorities:

- Priority attention will be given to the incorporation of the LDN targets into the medium-and long-term development agenda of the country by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) for subsequent mainstreaming into the design and/or implementation of policies, strategies and plans of relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Metropolitan, Municipal and Districts Assemblies (MMDAs). The capacity of the NDPC will be strengthened to enable it fulfil its mandate of coordinating the formulation of national development policies and their implementation; leading the implementation of the SDGs in Ghana; incorporating the SDGs into national plans; and monitoring and evaluation.
- The Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda, which drives the country's developmental agenda, with key state agencies playing variables roles, encompass several focus areas, policy and strategies which accord with LDN. These are captured in the sectoral policies and activities of the major land-based Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), the Directors of which are members of the National LDN TSP Working Group. The relevant programmes and projects will be identified and mechanisms developed to leverage their efforts and resources in support of LDN implementation for a win-win achievement of programme objectives.
- The Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), under which the Focal Points of the three UN Conventions reside, will support the LDN initiatives through the incorporation of the LDN process and targets into the revised NAP and mainstreaming LDN into the national biodiversity (CBD) and climate change (UNFCCC) policies and strategies to leverage investments in these related areas.
- Ensure an enabling environment for the promotion of mechanisms for integrated land use planning and mainstreaming of the principles of LDN into sustainable land management programmes and projects of relevant land-based ministries and agencies



- Support the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms at national, regional and district levels for education, sensitization and awareness creation, and to collaborate in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating LDN interventions.
- Integrate LDN into the sustainable land use and food security, forest management and energy security components of the country's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Programme (2020-2030) by MESTI/EPA.

## **6. Joint bold action to achieve LDN in Ghana**

- The provision of solutions to the complex and enormous land degradation problem goes beyond the capacity of individual governments. A concerted effort by both national and international partners, which is the spirit of the UNCCD, in the provision of technical assistance and financing support is a prerequisite for both the LDN target setting and its implementation.
- Available SLM/LDN sources of financing and investment programmes and initiatives, supported by various international development partners will be targeted for our LDN implementation. These include GEF, UNDP, LDN Fund of the GM, IFAD, World Bank, FAO, EU, AF, Dryland Fund, African Development Bank, Green Climate Fund (GCF).
- Multistakeholder platforms will be established at the national, regional and district levels to engage relevant investment managers, NGOs, businesses, public and private investors and policy makers to better understand LDN and how it can be implemented by the sectors; and to identify typology of actions that can be implemented by the sectors individually and /or jointly through public-private partnerships. Industry players in the food and beverages, timber, textiles, and other sectors that rely on soil health and productivity of land directly or indirectly for sourcing inputs and materials for their operations will be equally engaged.
- Sustained effort will be made to identify and harness private sector-led initiatives focused on SLM and land restoration projects that aim to mobilize the business community around the issue of land degradation to make significant contribution to the achievement of LDN
- Development of mechanisms for improving access to financing resources for SLM/LDN to individual farmers or community-based organizations will be pursued to include:
  - Micro-credit programs and the development of appropriate financial service products (savings and credit) that can facilitate the adoption of SLM;
  - Matching grants to land users who switch to SLM;
  - Payment for environmental services (PES) scheme for services provided by SLM adoption (including water regulation and quality control, carbon sequestration);
  - Strengthen financial service providers to extend their reach to rural areas;



- Encourage and facilitate financial service providers to develop products that can ease the adoption of SLM; and
  - Incentives for promoting progressive involvement of the private sector will be an option.
- A coordination mechanism will be established at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ensure a better flow of information and effective coordination of projects and funding for SLM/LDN involving a wide range of relevant stakeholders; including the Ministries, Technical Institutions, Civil Society Organization (CSOs), the Donor Group and others.