



CONCEPT NOTE

Central Asia Regional Triologue on Land Degradation, Biodiversity and Climate Change

9-11 October 2019
Almaty, Kazakhstan

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Central Asia hosts rich biodiversity. The transborder Mountain of Central Asia, for example, are designated as one of the global biodiversity hotspots, encompassing a large number of endemic and endangered species and providing water, food, fuel, animal feed and other key resources for local populations.

Six former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) countries in Central Asia, i.e. Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, are facing the common challenge of land degradation and desertification. Natural landscapes and traditional fallows have rapidly been converted to agricultural and industrial landscapes, following the dissolution of USSR and disintegration of collective farms. Although estimates vary and are imprecise, land degradation is claimed to be extensive, ranging from 4-10 per cent of cropped land, 27-68 per cent of pasture land and 1-8 per cent of forested land. In total, this represents 40-100 per cent of area degraded across each country.¹

Widespread losses of fertile topsoil and nutrients has negative impacts on natural ecosystems and the quality of life of the local populations, particularly the rural poor, who depend directly on these ecosystems, posing a major threat to sustainable development of the Central Asia countries. There is a pressing need to establish and/or strengthen long-term sustainable land management (SLM) strategies for the well-being of their economy and people. Part of this corrective effort among the countries in the region necessarily includes the clear understanding of the multiple values of land and co-benefit of SLM in conserving critical natural capital, preserving ecosystem services, tackling climate change, securing livelihoods and improving food, energy, and water security.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 15.3, countries in the region have committed 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. In order to inform land use and management decision-making effectively at regional, national and local levels, it is of critical importance to articulate the interface and interactions of land degradation, biodiversity and associated ecosystem services (e.g., pollination, pest control, soil carbon) and climate change.

TRIALOGUE: BACKGROUND

The Triologue is a face-to-face three-way communication and capacity building methodology promoted by the [Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network \(BES-Net\)](#). BES-Net Triologues aim at enhancing national capacity to integrate findings and policy-relevant options from the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services' \(IPBES\)](#) thematic assessments into policy, planning and on-the-ground programmes and projects by strengthening the interface between science/traditional knowledge holders, policymakers and practitioners.

IPBES is mandated, in response to governments' requests, to mobilize international experts and assess the trends, status and future trajectories of biodiversity and ecosystem services at global, regional and thematic levels based on existing knowledge and up-to-date pool of evidence. To date, IPBES produced two thematic assessment reports, which are of critical importance and value to the Central Asia countries in addressing the inter-linked land-biodiversity-climate agendas: 1) [Thematic Assessment Report on Land Degradation and Restoration](#) (2016); 2) [Thematic Assessment Report on Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production](#) (2018)

The platform's [Regional Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services for Europe and Central Asia](#) (2018) also provides insightful finding and recommendations.

TRIALOGUE: OBJECTIVES

The Regional Dialogue for Central Asia will bring together academic scientists, policymakers and practitioners with indigenous and local knowledge in the region to jointly review the key messages of the two inter-linked IPBES thematic assessment reports as well as the regional report and assess their relevance to the ongoing efforts to achieve SDG 15.3/ Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and other land-related SDG targets. More specifically, the Central Asia Regional Dialogue aims to:



Assess the trends and drivers of change in the status of land, and the impacts on achieving SDG15.3 and other related targets;



Assess the latest knowledge of the contributions that unique regional biodiversity and their key ecosystem services provide towards SLM, climate resilience building, agricultural productivity and other sustainable development priorities;



Review and acknowledge success stories on local community actions contributing to the synergetic achievement of land-biodiversity-climate targets; and



Identify and agree on practical SLM measures that improve the resilience of ecosystems and their services and contribute to LDN, biodiversity and climate adaptation.

During the Central Asia Regional Dialogue, participants will share the latest knowledge about the current situation, including economic impact and drivers, of land degradation in the region, and the impacts of land degradation and associated climate change on biodiversity and ecosystem services (e.g. pollinators decline) at national and regional levels.

Furthermore, participants will identify the important benefits of SLM practices and integrated landscape management approaches. They will exchange, showcase and celebrate “success stories”, or proven good practice examples existing in the Central Asia countries, through which to reverse desertification, adapt to climate change and enhance food production, while at the same time, combatting land degradation – in ways that are scalable and can contribute to national LDN targets. Participants will review progress in their LDN implementation and generate an action-oriented outcome document, stipulating a set of concrete actions that are within the mandate/capacity of the Dialogue community and identifying policy windows and opportunities to further the integration of biodiversity management in development programmes.

TRIALOGUE: TARGET AUDIENCE

The Central Asia Regional Dialogue will convene six USSR countries within the region: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The three-day event will be hosted by the Ministry of Ecology, Geography and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It will be held in collaboration with IPBES, the [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#) (UNCCD) and the [Coalition of the Willing on Pollinators](#) and with the financial support of the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. The Dialogue will bring together 50-60 participants from the three communities of government policymakers, academic scientists and practitioners – including some with indigenous and local knowledge - working in agriculture, environment, health, climate and related fields. Participants will jointly explore the opportunity for “bright spots” of practical measures that harness biodiversity and ecosystem services in ways that simultaneously contribute to the achievement of the SDGs on LDN, climate change and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

METHODOLOGY AND AGENDA

The Dialogue uses an approach that ensures active engagement and interaction by enabling participants to openly share concerns, make complex information locally relevant, proven success stories and identify innovative prototypes for good practices in their own areas that highlight the role of biodiversity and ecosystem services in LDN implementation. The Dialogue methodology includes ways to practically apply the IPBES findings and options for decision-makers through multiple-stakeholder dialogue, particularly in ways that give voice to indigenous peoples and local community knowledge-holders. The Dialogue also hosts a special breakfast for high-level policymakers and donors on Day 3 to encourage them to be champions of the actions being proposed by the participants.

The Central Asia Regional Dialogue will be organized back-to-back with the IPBES Capacity Building Workshop, which will be held on 7-8 October 2019 in Almaty by the Institute for Biodiversity Network. Targeting 20-30 representatives, the workshop will inform participants about functioning of IPBES, possibilities of participation, stakeholder engagement and how to contribute to regional and global assessments. Some of the workshop participants are also expected to attend the Dialogue and integrate their improved understanding of the IPBES roles, functions and opportunities into the thematic discussion.

1. The Economics of Land Degradation (2016). Central Asia Regional Report. https://www.eld-initiative.org/fileadmin/pdf/ELD_CA_regional_report.pdf

