

UNCCD CSO Panel outputs by the view of EVA

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UNCCD CSO Panel was established in 2011 to unite civil society organizations accredited to the Convention on a common platform. The panel consists of a total of **5** people, one representative from each of the five regions of the convention. The purpose of the Panel, which is renewed every **2** years ;

- To encourage the active participation of CSOs in the negotiations of the Conference of the Parties (COP),
- To encourage local, national and regional CSOs to be accredited to the Convention,
- Increasing communication and information exchange among CSOs,
- To raise awareness about the implementation of the Con-

The last of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Non-Governmental Organizations Panel (**UNCCD CSO Panel**) was held in February 2020, it will be renewed in 2022.

The Ecology and Research Association is **accredited** to UNCCD at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15). **699** CSOs are represented in the Panel, including our association.

COP15 was held in Abidjan, the capital of Ivory Coast, between 9-20 May 2022, with the theme of “Land, Life, Heritage: From Scarcity to Prosperity”. The CSO Panel held more than 30 meetings prior to COP15. 1200 CSO representatives attended the conference.

During the conference, which lasted for two weeks, many topics such as finance, land rights, gender, migration, sand-dust storms, drought were discussed by the Parties and observers in many sessions such as high-level sessions, roundtables, and regional meetings. Although we are accredited to UNCCD, we could not participate in COP15, but we have discussed the issues discussed in the CSO Panel and in all sessions attended by CSOs from the perspective of **WOMEN** and have compiled them here for you.

The concepts used in global platforms are essential. It should not be forgotten that these concepts shape the future process and act as leverage for stakeholders to take action. In this respect, two important concepts that left their mark on the COP15 Panel draw attention, which will be frequently encountered in the upcoming period. These are the concepts of the **agroecological approach** and **regenerative practice**. In addition, the idea of land **restoration**, frequently repeated in UNFCCC COP26, also often uses images such as **value chain, small-scale business, sustainable production and consumption, food security, resilience, synergy, governance, and circular economy**. The common feature of these concepts is that they **do not make any changes in land use, protect** them in their current form, improve them for the same purpose, and aim to apply nature-friendly **natural methods** as much as possible.



Let's take a closer look at the agroecological approach, which is the intersection point of the concepts used in the documents. Agroecology is derived from the combination of the words *agriculture* and *ecology*. It is an integrated approach that combines **ecological** and **social principles** in designing and managing sustainable agriculture and food systems. On the one hand, it aims to optimize the interaction between living things and the environment. On the other hand, it addresses what people eat, how and where food is produced, and equitable access to

Agroecology is a science, a set of practices, and a social movement. It is a broad concept that covers food's ecological, socio-cultural, technological, economic, and political dimensions from production to consumption. There are ten key elements: **biodiversity, knowledge sharing, synergy, efficiency, recycling, resilience, human and social values, food habits culture, responsible governance and circular economy**



Figure 1: The 10 Elements of Agroecology (FAO)

Therefore, it is evident that the **agroecological approach** will contribute to the development of rural areas, reduce migration from rural to urban areas, develop sustainable production models, recycle, and strengthen the bond of the locals with the land.

Another concept that is used repeatedly with the agroecological approach is the concept of regenerative. Regenerative, which means regeneration, is an ecosystem-based approach that aims to improve the soil's durability, yield, and quality by reducing the effect of synthetic inputs. It is a concept that emphasizes partnership with nature, based on strategies of **harmony, flexibility, and renewal**—for example, reducing synthetic pesticides and fertilizers and less frequent tillage.

Leaving the concepts aside, another significant issue in the documents was the criticism of the existing order. In other words, it has been stated that in a world where 2 billion people are **deficient in micronutrients**, more than 150 million children under the age of 5 are **malnourished**, and soil wealth is deteriorated by up to **40%**, the current global food system is far from ensuring food security for everyone and protecting natural resources. If we add that **one-third of the food** produced is **lost or wasted**, we can say how appropriate the urgent call of CSOs is. The only way to move towards an inclusive, nurturing world imagined is to recognize and combat the **injustice** in our world today. So far, the work done is not enough to **mainstream gender equality**, ensure **women's full and effective participation** in relevant processes, and have **fair access** to the benefits that sustainable land use can provide. Another criticism is that the Parties have not been successful enough in reversing the land degradation in the 25 years.

Emphasizing the impact of the pandemic on **women and small-scale businesses**, in particular, it was recommended that land restoration be addressed on the basis of this most affected segment. According to FAO data, **more than 90%** of agricultural businesses in the world are **family businesses**. In other words, the production process is primarily based on the workforce of family members. In addition to small family businesses, the **empowerment of women** who do not appear to be economically registered but who have labored at every stage of the production process and ensuring their **access to land** will empower not only women but also girls by creating a domino effect. Therefore, there is a need to develop more policy tools to support such businesses and empower women who work hard at home and in the field.

Apart from the general evaluation we made above, we evaluated the issues discussed in the sessions under 5 headings, taking into account the UNCCD Gender Action Plan.

Participation of Women in Decision Making Processes

- The central role played by **women and small businesses** in food production and consumption should be recognized by States and therefore should be involved in decision-making processes, • Keeping **data disaggregated** by gender and age in groups at UNCCD meetings,
- Ensuring women's full **participation** and free expression in groups such as CRIC, COP and CST to ensure the implementation of the gender policy framework, Prioritizing and supporting the **participation** of women in the least developed (LDC) and developing countries,
- Facilitating women's **participation** in the COP and other global negotiations,
- Involving a **gender expert** in other groups such as SPI and CRIC, COP and CST, where it is not sufficient to discuss the Gender Action Plan as an independent plan at COP meetings,



Women's Empowerment

- Greater efforts by the Parties for **women** living in low productive lands and struggling to cope with **economic difficulties**,
- Women farmers have been the protectors of the land for years, **empowering** women at all levels is one of the strongest levers for the implementation of the Convention and the achievement of LDN goals,
- Encouraging women to **develop leadership** capacity,
- The campaigns on **women's empowerment** will also have a great impact on **girls' school attendance, the fight against early marriage, and the limitation of migration from rural to urban areas**,
- Encouraging **financing mechanisms** for informing and development of land users, especially **women**, youth, local communities,
- Establishing a **gender-sensitive financing** and resource mobilization mechanism that includes gender-specific budgeting within the UNCCD,
- **Financial institutions** such as GEF, GCF and IFAD and donor countries cooperate with CSOs to support especially **women** and youth in agroecological approaches and regenerative practices,

Women's Land Ownership Right

- In order for the Convention to be implemented, legally addressing the injustice suffered by women due to reasons such as ignorance about **owning land**, gender norms, customs and traditions,
- Facilitating women's and youth's **access to land**, strengthening their rights and allowing control over land,
- It will not be possible to reach the LDN goals without the **land ownership rights**, especially **of women**,
- In many countries, women still face serious barriers to accessing land and important assets,
- Using the term “**people/communities living in fragile conditions**” instead of using the expression “**fragile people/communities**” in UNCCD official documents on **land ownership**, the effects of drought and other issues,
- Explain who the most vulnerable people are and what they will face in case of **land ownership insecurity**,
- Monitoring the effects of the determined policies and strategies on the **population living in the most fragile conditions**, **disaggregating** the data according to gender and age,

Particular attention should be paid to the four priorities of the Gender Action Plan by the Parties to the COP16 in 2024.

- Women's participation in decision-making processes,
- Economic empowerment of women,
- Women's property rights and equal access to resources,
- Women's access to information and technology

Collaborations

- Promoting active cooperation between UNCCD and **UNWOMEN** to ensure more inclusive implementation of the Convention,
- Ensuring **regional cooperation** and **South-South** experience sharing for women to make their voices heard, voice their needs and disseminate their knowledge,
- States' implementation of the LDN approach, together with UNCCD and FAO; Carrying out awareness studies on the legitimate right of use, consultation-participation and a **gender sensitive approach**,
- UNCCD continues to work with **key stakeholders**, including youth, **women's organisations**, local farmer organizations, local governments, parliamentarians,
- **Co-creating** knowledge by **academics**, local research centers, **research organizations** and researchers with affected communities such as **women**, smallholders, livestock farmers and forest villagers,
- Encouraging knowledge production and sharing by encouraging women's participation in **research** institutions

Sustainable Land Management

- 5% of women and 8.7% of young people were **unemployed** during the pandemic process, and this job loss will negatively affect the achievement of Land Degradation Compensation (ATD-LDN) targets,
- Based on the experience of CSOs directly with **women** and youth, **agroecological approaches** and **regenerative practices** will increase local resilience, reduce dependency on purchased inputs and ensure food security in crisis-prone regions, highlight strong **local and regional markets**, and increase solidarity between producers and consumers, With the integration of **women** and small-scale farmers, production will be diversified and the use of chemicals in agriculture will be reduced,
- Setting criteria to identify those who live in the most fragile conditions, increasing their **resilience** in case of drought and supporting them in **sustainable land use**

EVA's Suggestion

Women have a significant role to play in tackling land degradation. Parties need to make great efforts to implement both the National Action Plans and the Gender Action Plans. Each country has a National Focal Point in order to ensure the coordination of the National Action Plan within the country and the coordination of the countries with the UNCCD. In addition to this focal point in terms of more effective implementation of the Gender Action Plan, we believe that each country's determining a focal point as the **Gender Focal Point** is important in terms of women's participation in the decision-making process and empowerment of women.

Rural development is multi-faceted, including education, health, socialization, providing basic needs such as economic empowerment, creation of a value chain, access to healthy lands, restoration of degraded lands, ensuring the sustainability of pasture and animal husbandry, education and health to hold on to the places where they are located. We care about its implementation.

In order to make the discussions effective and understandable, we expect tools and solutions to be developed that will eliminate the **language barrier** in the right of participation of CSOs from different regions with different mother tongues.

Especially women, children and small-scale enterprises are among those most affected by land degradation, drought, and land degradation, and these groups are also the main actors of the struggle. At the point of **producing knowledge**, academicians and researchers work together with the most affected people living in the most fragile conditions; In the process of sharing and disseminating information, we think it is important to cooperate with CSOs that are the voice of the local and have field experience. We believe that it is very valuable to be able to discuss the problems with the participation of all stakeholders, based on our past experience, by organizing **regional trainings** and awareness seminars with the participation of relevant public institutions, municipalities, private sector, farmer organizations, development agencies, citizens and of course CSOs in the fight against land degradation.

One of the 10 elements of the agroecological approach is **recycling**. For this reason, as we have mentioned many times, we attach importance to the preparation of guides, incentives and financial support for the use of compost obtained from organic wastes for the improvement of degraded lands and for its use in green areas such as residences, parks and gardens in the city center.

Resources

UNCCD COP15 CSO documents

Lyle, J. T. 1994. Regenerative Design for Sustainable Development. John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY

<https://www.dortmevsimekoloji.org/agroekoloji/>

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