

## When participation becomes an empty promise: Civil Society Voices left unheard

The **Ministerial Dialogue on Drought Resilience** began by a introduction by Ibrahim Thiaw who reminded that drought is no longer an anomaly but a persistent issue that intensifies. By 2050, 3 out of 4 people will be impacted by drought. Mr Thiaw called for prospective approach, and proactive action on sustainable land management. The civil society perspective aligns with that perception and call Parties to urgent inclusive and systemic action.

Introduction was followed by statements from numerous Parties, some of which presented their action and strategies to adapt to drought. Many of the Parties debated over the adoption of a protocol, or a dedicated funding mechanism.

**CSOs had prepared a statement for this ministerial dialogue and requested the floor from the beginning of the session.**

Following the usual protocol, observers (including CSO) were planned to speak at the end. Due to the long list of Parties willing to speak and detail their national circumstances and actions, the dialogue ended at almost 7:30 with only one observer (international organization) being able to take the floor before closure by the Chair. **Sadly, the Civil Society speaker was not able to read the collective statement. Had we been able to take the floor, it would have been in front of a completely empty room as after 5:30, most delegates were leaving the room after delivering their statement.**

**While several parties were calling for inclusion of CSO in planning and implementation of drought adaptation strategy, not many of them were ready to wait for listening to what we had to say.**

Our statement will be posted online on the UNCCD website, and we ask the Secretariat to take note of it for the ministerial dialogue on drought.



### Key Message of the Day

Develop and implement policies and governance at the national and sub-national levels that actively:

- Support agroecological and agroforestry approaches and practices of local communities, pastoralist communities and Indigenous Peoples to ensure food security and the right to food.
- Support women-led, youth-led, community-led and Indigenous-led conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems, including forests, grasslands, and water bodies.
- Limit water-intensive business practices.
- End all public support for land-degrading agriculture, infrastructure, extractive industries and land conversion for renewable energy production.

## COP OPENING CEREMONY

***“Humanity is at a critical juncture, and for the first time, we need to consider the real risk of destabilizing life support on the entire planet. The planet is just barely balancing, For every day we lose more intact land, we lose that capacity, and the teetering balance will collapse” - Prof. Johan Rockström, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research***



### **From Coconut Monocrop to Resilient Food Forest: A Sustainable Model from India**

GOOD PRACTICES SECTION

In Pollachi, Tamil Nadu, a traditional coconut monocrop farm has been successfully transformed into a multi-storey food forest, showcasing an innovative approach to sustainable agriculture.

This initiative demonstrates how integrating biodiversity and ecological principles into farming can enhance soil health, boost productivity, and create long-term economic stability for farmers while reducing labor and external input requirements.

The transformation began in 2008 with a focus on rainwater management. Trenches were dug to retain rainwater, preventing runoff and improving soil moisture in a region with limited rainfall. Drip irrigation was installed to optimize water use.

The introduction of diverse crops, including nutmeg, banana, papaya, and timber trees, provided multiple income streams and enriched soil fertility. Fast-growing plants were also used to generate biomass, while nitrogen-fixing plants naturally improved soil quality, eliminating the need for chemical fertilizers.

A minimal-maintenance approach was central to this

system. Once established, the farm required no tilling or weeding, significantly reducing the farmer’s workload.

Enhanced biodiversity, with the presence of earthworms, birds, and beneficial insects, ensured natural pest control. Over 12 years, soil organic matter increased from 0.5% to 3.36%, while crop yields and quality improved markedly.

Although initial challenges included the physical demands of trench digging, pest pressures, and skepticism about the system’s feasibility, the results speak for themselves.

Farmers appreciated the visible improvements in soil health, crop resilience, and financial stability. The land value also increased, making this model an attractive, scalable solution for similar regions.

This transformation highlights the potential of multi-storey food forests to restore ecosystems, improve livelihoods, and reduce dependency on external inputs –offering a replicable pathway toward sustainable agriculture.

### CSO QUOTES

***“Encouragingly, global financial leaders are recognizing the risks land degradation poses and stepping up with bold commitments—\$1 billion from OPEC for restoration efforts and earlier this year the EU Central Bank acknowledging 90% of investments face climate risks. This shows a major shift in perspective since COP26 in Glasgow. When finance sector mitigates risk, the world follows.” - Praveena Sridhar, Chief Technical Officer, Save Soil Movement***