

# Accelerating Action around Land for Enhanced Climate Action

UNGA 75 High-Level Virtual Side Event  
Meeting Summary

17 September 2020



The Commonwealth



**United Nations**  
Convention to Combat  
Desertification

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# Contents

<b>Background.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Key Points of Discussion .....</b>	<b>2</b>
High-Level Opening Remarks .....	2
<b>High-Level Panel.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Building resilience in the face of climate change and drought .....	3
Climate Change and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) .....	4
The potential of land restoration efforts .....	4
Strategies to Build Back Better .....	5
<b>Reflections .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Interventions .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Summary and take away messaging .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Main Outcomes .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>ANNEX I: AGENDA.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>ANNEX II: Event Photo Collage .....</b>	<b>10</b>

## Background

Climate change, desertification and biodiversity loss are major factors which threaten to derail development gains and prospects of developing countries which are the most vulnerable to these global threats. A coordinated approach in implementing the three Rio Conventions will enable the world address these interrelated threats more effectively and efficiently.

As countries currently review their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), a key component of the Paris Agreement, and update their climate targets, the Commonwealth Secretariat continues to call on member countries to accelerate action on sustainable land management, considering the impact of agriculture and deforestation on climate change as well as issues of land degradation associated with a changing climate and biodiversity loss. Encompassing land-based climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies in NDCs will have wide-ranging benefits in the interconnected areas of climate change, land degradation and biodiversity.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) 2018-2030 Strategic Framework is one of the most comprehensive global commitments to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in order to restore the productivity of vast expanses of degraded land, improve livelihoods, and reduce the impacts of drought on vulnerable populations to build.

It is against this background that the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNCCD held a high-level side event in the margins of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), which for the first-time convened the three Rio Conventions and Commonwealth member states with the aim of synchronising and catalysing action on land and climate change. The high-level side event, *Accelerating Action on Land for Enhanced Climate Action* held on 17 September 2020, set the foundation for Commonwealth member states to build momentum towards joint positive land related climate action under the Rio conventions in the run-up to the United Nations Biodiversity Conference, CBD COP15 (May 2021), the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (June 2021), the fifteenth session of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification - UNCCD COP 15 (September 2021) and the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP26 (November 2021).

The side event in partnership with UNCCD, featured a range of stakeholders including Ministers and Senior Officials from Commonwealth member states, the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Executive Secretaries of UNCCD, UNFCCC and UNCBD, Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General for Climate Action and High Commissioners.

# Key Points of Discussion

## High-Level Opening Remarks

This High-level side event commenced with the moderator of the event, Senior Director of the Economic Youth and Sustainable Development Directorate (EYSDD) of the Commonwealth Secretariat welcoming all attendees and setting the meeting context. This was then followed by opening remarks from the Commonwealth Secretary-General and UNCCD Executive Secretary, with the Keynote address by Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General for Climate Action.

**Dr Ruth Kattumuri, Senior Director, EYSDD, Commonwealth Secretariat**, in her welcoming remarks noted the Secretariat's ability to respond rapidly to crises and build partnerships aimed at finding solutions to chart new ways forward. The Senior Director highlighted the timeliness and urgent need for the meeting as countries continue to strive to ensure a sustained thrust towards the attainment of global environmental sustainability.

**Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD**, highlighted the importance of nature and land as fundamental to our common survival and prosperity. He indicated that 2021 will be a special year for nature with the start of the decade of ecosystem restoration, including the following key events - One Planet Summit, the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). He suggested the possibility of replicating for terrestrial ecosystems what the Commonwealth has done for protecting the oceans with the Commonwealth Blue Charter. He further indicated the need for inclusion of land in revised NDCs and the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework. Mr. Thiaw concluded by challenging Commonwealth member countries to be bold in their commitments and translate these into concrete actions. He also reaffirmed UNCCD's commitment to working with the Commonwealth Secretariat and all partners.

**The Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland QC, Commonwealth Secretary-General**, in setting the stage for the event, expressed her gratitude to the UN partners in joining the Commonwealth to tackle land degradation issues. The Secretary-General emphasized the essential role sustainable land management plays in climate change mitigation and adaption efforts. She noted that although the timeframe left to avert further environmental degradation is rapidly decreasing, the COVID-19 crisis and subsequent lockdowns have shown the potential of nature to self-restore. The Secretary-General highlighted how times of such crisis can be a great opportunity to forge new paths with reference made to the formation of the United Nations in 1945 following a global crisis, and how therefore the current global pandemic can serve as a pivot to usher in a greener, more sustainable era. She expressed her desire for the upcoming year to be marked in history as a year of significant transformative environmental change despite the pandemic. The Secretary-General made a call for the strong consideration of agriculture, forestry and other land use impacts in the revision of NDCs. She highlighted the existing efforts of the Secretariat in supporting member states in this regard. Reference was also made to the Commonwealth Call to Action on Living Lands to catalyse the global political momentum for enhancing climate action, building resilience, reducing biodiversity loss and arresting land degradation. Support for the Bonn Challenge in moving forward was also expressed. In speaking on the Secretariat's contribution towards addressing climate change, the Secretary-General spoke of its Climate Change programme including the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH) which assists member states in accessing climate finance. She reiterated that the Secretariat will continue to use its convening power and work with development partners to address these multiple environmental challenges.

**Mr. Selwin Hart, Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General for Climate Action**, in his keynote address focused on the two main crises of i) Land and biodiversity loss and ii) Climate Change and associated impacts. He acknowledged that the joint leadership between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the UNCCD can bring forth rapid solutions and applauded the Secretariat's CCFAH model. He further highlighted three key reasons for enhancing investments in land for climate action including i) Science - based on the importance of healthy lands as carbon sinks; ii) Nature's Security nets - degraded land leads to reduced agricultural productivity leading to loss of food sources, and which in turn lead to conflicts such as migration; iii) Economic value: according to World Economic Forum, investing in nature can generate up to USD 10.1 trillion in annual business value and create 395 million jobs by 2030, with one third of total employment depending on healthy soils. Mr. Hart reiterated the call for leaders to secure a new biodiversity framework that is solutions-oriented. The need for scaled up concessional and blended innovative finance instruments such as forestry bonds and natural capital venture funds<sup>1</sup> were mentioned, such that they can be accessible to those who need it most. Mr. Hart also called for all economic recovery plans to prioritize investments in nature with a focus on the UN Secretary General's six climate positive actions for all recovery plans as follows: i) invest in green jobs ii) avoid bailout of polluting industries iii) ending fossil fuel subsidies iv) accounting for climate risk in all policy and financial decisions v) collaborating in all endeavours vi) ensuring a just transition with no one left behind. In addition to reiterating the support of the United Nations in these efforts going forward, he concluded by calling on the Commonwealth to amplify and implement these solutions and policies with more ambitious commitments announced at CHOGM.

## High-Level Panel

In this session Ministers and senior officials from seven Commonwealth countries - Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Namibia, Pakistan, Rwanda and the United Kingdom - provided an overview of their country's efforts and commitments towards building resilience in the face of climate change and drought, as well as land restoration efforts and overall strategies to build back better.

### Building resilience in the face of climate change and drought

**Honourable Pohamba Penomwenyo Shifeta, Minister of Environment and Tourism of Namibia** in his remarks highlighted the extreme vulnerability of Namibia to climate change, due to their arid environment, and reliance on natural resources based economic sectors such as agriculture. He states that during Namibia's presidency of UNCCD COP11, increased attention was placed on addressing drought mitigation as a national priority. At the regional level in partnership with the African Union, the first Africa Drought Conference was convened resulting in adoption of the "The Windhoek Declaration for Enhancing Resilience to Drought in Africa" in 2016. The Honourable Minister presented Namibia's existing efforts to build resilience including the conducting of field-based land degradation assessments in the most vulnerable areas to inform what actions are needed for effective resilience efforts. The Minister further emphasized his government's intentions to ensure their interventions fall in line with SDG15, making mention of the Integrated Regional Land-Use Plan as well as a few transformative projects being funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) aimed at enhancing livelihoods and environmental resilience.

**His Excellency Malik Amin Aslam, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Climate Change of Pakistan** began by his intervention by postulating this year should be seen as nature's wakeup call to all. He highlighted the current restoration efforts being undertaken in Pakistan including the one billion tree project which seeks to restore roughly six hundred thousand hectares of forest and create

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<sup>1</sup> Reference was made to the August 2020 launch of the 'Natural Capital' investment fund by HSBC and the Pollination Group focusing on nature conservation and restoration

five hundred thousand jobs. He further placed a focus on nature-based solutions as a key to the climate change battle. His Excellency highlighted the “Green stimulus” initiative developed during the pandemic and focusing on the two broad objectives of 1) protecting nature and 2) creating jobs. This is further subdivided into three actionable areas involving i) tree planting, ii) protected areas initiative and iii) recharge Pakistan to tackle the issue of drought. He concluded by emphasizing the need for a nature-based green recovery out of the COVID-19 crisis and reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment in this regard.

**His Excellency Jigmet Takpa, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India** provided an overview of the level of degradation being experienced in India, highlighting that one out of four hectares of productive land has become unusable and 75 percent of this has been altered from its natural state. He further highlighted that this current extreme pressure on land is expected to grow with the rising level of consumption. With India currently serving as UNCCD president and hosting the largest ever UNCCD COP14 event, the joint secretary reaffirmed the country’s commitment to achieving the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets with a goal of 26 million hectares of degraded land to be restored by 2030, and the establishment of a centre of excellence to facilitate knowledge sharing in science and technology in sustainable land management and combating land degradation for south - south cooperation. India remains on track to achieving both targets. His Excellency mentioned that land has to be seen as an accelerator to achieving most of the SDG goals and India will attempt to steer the UNCCD COP leadership towards building a better and greener world.

### Climate Change and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

**His Excellency Dr. Hussain Rasheed Hassan, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Maldives** reiterated the fact that SIDS are among the most vulnerable to climate change and the high cost of taking urgent action due to the small size of their economies justifies the dire need for international cooperation and multilateralism now more than ever. He highlighted the strides made as it relates to the blue economy. He stated that a loss of culture and heritage as well as increase in climate refugees is increasingly likely in the Maldives if more support to address climate change and associated impacts is not granted. He mentioned that with 80 percent of the island below 1.8 metres above sea level, the threat of sea level rise is significant to survival. He highlighted Maldives’ heavy dependence on the biodiversity sector for employment, food security, and overall quality of life, given it contributes to 98 percent of exports, 89 percent of GDP, 71 percent of national employment, 62 percent of foreign exchange and 49 percent of public revenue. He concluded by reiterating the need for improved access to climate finance for SIDS and specifically without the condition of bankability particularly for adaptation and resilience building projects.

### The potential of land restoration efforts

**Her Excellency Begum Habibun Nahar, Deputy Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of Bangladesh** prefaced her remarks by highlighting land degradation and desertification as a major economic, social and environmental issue. She highlighted the challenges of shrinking water resources and food scarcity as well as pollution and stated that Bangladesh is losing an estimated 69,000 hectares of land annually, causing severe food security issues. The Deputy Minister spoke of progress made on land degradation issues including revising their national environmental policy in 2018, with special attention to prevent land degradation. A 100-year plan has been formulated whereby USD 37 billion of state finance is to be spent by 2030 to ensure food and water security. A successful roadside plantation and coastal afforestation effort along with a target of planting 10 million trees by 2020 is to be achieved. She further indicated that some of the land restoration efforts employed in Bangladesh can be replicated elsewhere. In providing recommendations she expressed the need to change the outlook towards soil and land, not merely viewing such as a source of revenue but as a living entity worthy of protecting. She further suggested the need to provide low cost adequate soil assistance to farmers, in addition to intensifying research and development in

developing countries as well as facilitating technology transfer and knowledge sharing regarding soil conservation.

## Strategies to Build Back Better

**Honourable Dr. Jeanne d’Arc Mujawamariya, Minister of Environment of Rwanda**, in providing her perspective on ways to build back better in relation to land, emphasized that the fundamental component missing is nature-based solutions and land use management is a critical part of this. Land being an imperative at the forefront of pandemic recovery efforts was a clear message the minister sought to bring across. Existing efforts in Rwanda to address issues of deforestation, erosion and landslides include a land degradation programme resulting in 7 million land deeds being issued to land owners as well as a pilot use of blockchain technology to improve security of land transactions. There has been significant progress made in digitizing all land related transactions in Rwanda. Under the Bonn challenge thus far, seven hundred thousand hectares of degraded land has been restored. It was mentioned that the Ministry of Environment continues to organize countrywide annual afforestation and forest rehabilitation activities. In urging states to prioritize landscape restoration in recovery and updated NDC plans, the Minister states “None of us is resilient if all of us aren’t resilient”.

**Rt Hon Lord Zac Goldsmith of Richmond Park, Minister of State for the Environment and the Pacific of the United Kingdom**, in a pre-recorded statement, spoke of the rapid rate of loss of forests, the importance of regulations and the need to tackle deforestation. He mentioned that despite the significant role nature-based solutions can play in overcoming these challenges, it attracts just 3 percent of global climate investments thus illustrating the need for governments to step up their commitments. Rt Hon Lord Goldsmith announced that the United Kingdom has pledged to double its international climate finance commitments to GBP11.6 billion, with an increased emphasis on nature-based solutions. He indicated that the UK continues to mobilize early action through partnerships, building alliances and as the UNFCCC COP26 president, seek to remove deforestation from commodities trade policy and facilitate a reform towards sustainable agriculture, protecting land and sea. He reiterated the need for a continued push for a coherent approach in 2021, given this is the first time all three conventions will meet in one year. He concluded by recommending the need to map out recovery efforts through a sustainability and resilience lens.

## Reflections

**Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary, UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD)** in her remarks first recognized the exemplary ongoing actions in Commonwealth member countries. She emphasised the high cost of inaction to member states, stating that for instance, a lack of urgent action is expected to cost the Caribbean over USD22 billion annually by 2050. The estimated cost of land degradation in Namibia is estimated at USD1.6 billion or 19 percent of GDP. The Executive Secretary emphasised the need for the underlying drivers of land degradation to be addressed collectively with National Adaptation Plans (NAPS) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and to include nature-based solutions in turn contributing to biodiversity conservation. She stated that nature-based solutions offer immediate and cost-effective long-term benefits to mitigate climate change whilst also addressing increasing threats to biodiversity. She stated that delivering nature-based solutions to develop sustainable food and land use business models has the potential to lift an estimated one billion people out of poverty, create 70 million jobs and add USD 2.3 trillion in productive growth to the global economy while addressing all 3 crises. Ms. Mrema mentioned the forest ecosystem restoration initiative supporting 12 projects in 12 countries, contributing to knowledge products on forest ecosystem restoration. A Short-term action plan on ecosystem restoration was adopted in 2016 at COP13 which provides guidance for integrating biodiversity consideration into ecosystem restoration. In concluding her presentation, she made reference to the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework as an opportunity to bring all parties together to

address these challenges, which can serve as one of the pillars of international environmental architecture, ensuring biodiversity conservation, LDN targets and the 2030 agenda in support of Paris agreement are achieved.

**Ms. Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change** in her comment placed a great emphasis on the unifying goal of the three conventions which is to establish a clean, green sustainable world. She highlighted the interlinkages between the three conventions making reference to the great green wall in Africa, which can be a solution to threats beyond the continent. The Executive Secretary indicated the threat multiplier effect of climate change, means such issues cannot be looked at in isolation. She encouraged member states to ensure their voices and programs must reflect the importance of these issues. Ms. Espinosa stated that the SDGs must be the unifying guide for all and countries and that strong NDCs are central for a true green recovery. She urged countries to use their revised and updated NDCs as an opportunity to raise ambitions, and encouraged developed states to fulfil their commitments specifically with regards to the USD 100billion annual global contribution. In reiterating the need to work collaboratively as well as pledging the UNFCCC support to ongoing efforts, Ms Espinosa stated “Climate Change does not respect boundaries, it does not care what party or nation you belong to, it is a threat to all people”.

## Interventions

**Ms Elena Stylianopoulou presented the intervention from Cyprus on behalf of His Excellency Prof Costas Kadis, Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment** and highlighted the seriousness of the desertification issue in Cyprus. The actions being taken inclusive of their drought management plan have been implemented taking into account the impact of drought and water scarcity in the country. The Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment remains committed to promoting sustainable development for agriculture and land management. A brief mention of climate change in view of the European Green Deal was also mentioned as a focus for the Cypriot government.

**Honourable Prof. Foday M. Jaward, Minister of the Environment, Sierra Leone**, spoke of the renewed thrust by the Government of Sierra Leone towards sustainable development with the newly formed stand-alone Ministry of the Environment in November 2019. The Honourable Minister further spoke of the formation of an Inter-ministerial committee on land and water catchment areas. With 70 percent of local forest cover gone, the government has undertaken a national reforestation and afforestation project of planting 5 million trees by 2024, with 1.2 million planted thus far and with the potential to create nearly ten thousand jobs. Fostering policy coherence is a key focus with their Medium-term National Development Plan (2019-2023) providing for cross sector collaboration across ministries with the objective of ensuring natural resource management for sustainable land management which is central to LDN targets. He also mentioned the LDN transformative project which is still at the proposal development phase. He further highlighted various LDN targets set by the government, including implementing wetland conservation measures and land reclamation rehabilitation in areas of excessive mining.

**Honourable Keriako Tobiko, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Kenya**, sought to provide further justification for economic recovery plans to mainstream nature to avoid a recurrence of past land degradation results. The lasting generational effect of currently destroying nature was also mentioned. The Cabinet Secretary emphasized the need for any approach to involve community ownership, engagement and participation. Under the Bonn Challenge Kenya aims to restore 5.1 million hectares by 2030 and increase total forest over by 10 percent by 2022. He also called for an integrated and holistic approach in addressing the issues of climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss, and for all these to be viewed as one and the same thing.

**Mr Ritesh Dass, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji** indicated that Fiji recognizes the importance of addressing SDG15 as this leads to positive progress in achieving SDG 1,2,13 and 14.

Reference was made to Fiji's Presidency of UNFCCC COP23 and subsequent involvement in COP24, following which significant progress was made in their aligning national policy framework with global climate change initiatives. It was mentioned that Fiji is in the final stages of approving a climate change bill which in declaring a climate emergency will call for a rapid transformation to a resilient economy. Fiji has also set a target of planting 30 million trees in 15 years for carbon sequestration, and in recognizing the importance of partnerships has adopted a REDD+ action plan addressing land degradation. Through support from the GCF, Fiji recently launched an agro-photovoltaic system which is a combination of a solar energy and agricultural production farm. The Permanent Secretary reiterated Fiji's commitment to combatting these challenges, prioritizing sustainable land, agriculture and food security as the pillars for a green economy which can lead to poverty eradication in the country.

**Mr. Trevor Thompson, Land Use Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Forestry and Fisheries, Grenada**, highlighted the multiple issues surrounding land degradation affecting the Caribbean island and pledged their support despite limited resources in joining global efforts to advance their restoration program and create opportunities for sustained livelihoods.

## Summary and take away messaging

**Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD** in his closing remarks reiterated the need for increased investments in land especially in SIDS since this is a safety net for the most vulnerable populations as losing agricultural productivity translates to a loss of livelihoods. He emphasized the importance of investing in rural development to combat these challenges. Harnessing the demographic dividend, especially youth given 60 percent of the Commonwealth population comprises of young people, was a key recommendation made by the UNCCD Executive Secretary. He said the youth can be innovative and agents of change once empowered. Mr. Thiaw mentioned that given degraded ecosystems affect people and planet there is a clear need to respond to both aspects in building a greener future. He mentioned that sustainable land management is critical to the post 2020 biodiversity framework, which in turn is key to protecting biodiversity. He said by not protecting our biodiversity, we would hinder our ability to protect people. He urged that collaboration has to be more than words and has to be real concrete action on the ground with countries supporting the work of the respective secretariats - Commonwealth, UNCCD, UNFCCC and UNCBD - in a mutually beneficial relationship. Access to finance which promote nature-based solutions was another key area for improvement mentioned, as well as the need to strengthen national and regional capacity for joint approaches to climate resilience, sustainable land management and ecosystem restoration. Mr. Thiaw expressed his gratitude to the Commonwealth Secretariat for the collaboration in jointly organising the event and called for the 2021 CHOGM to drive momentum towards a fair, inclusive and sustainable approach to nature.

**The Rt. Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth** in her closing remarks expressed gratitude to all multilateral partners including the UNCCD, UNFCCC, and UNCBD. She reiterated the need for holistic solutions which are nature-based and community centred. The Secretary-General recognized the issue of implementation and the need to explore tools to overcome this deficiency. The need for climate finance to become more accessible was also reiterated. She indicated that UNFCCC COP26 and CHOGM both in 2021, provide a collective opportunity to create a platform which will be a springboard to deliver on commitments made by member countries. The Secretary-General concluded by reiterating the potential of the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub as an enabling tool in this process towards a regenerated world which is fit for future generations, and indicated that this side event has to be a commitment towards attaining this desired future.

## Main Outcomes

- A renewed commitment by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth member states present, UNCCD, UNCBD, UNFCCC to work collectively in addressing land degradation issues.
- Recognition of the need and willingness to ensure sustained global efforts for sustainable land management remains at the forefront of global discussions and efforts for and at CHOGM and the Conference of the Parties of the Three Rio conventions all scheduled for 2021.
- A call for improved access as well as predictable and sustained climate finance for SIDS, with increased support for mainstreaming nature-based solutions.
- A call to view not only the interconnectedness of climate change and land degradation including desertification and biodiversity loss but treat these holistically as one overall issue with different perspectives.
- A thrust towards prioritizing sustainable land management in Post COVID-19 economic recovery plans towards the development of a more sustainable future.

## ANNEX I: AGENDA

TIME	AGENDA
15 mins 11:00 - 11:15	<p><b>Welcome</b> Dr Ruth Kattumuri, Senior Director, EYSDD, Commonwealth Secretariat Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD</p> <p><b>Setting the Stage</b> The Rt. Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth</p> <p><b>Opening Remarks</b> Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD</p> <p><b>Keynote Address</b> Mr. Selwin Hart, Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General for Climate Action, United Nations.</p>
30 mins 11:15 - 11:45	<p><b>High Level Panel</b> <b>Building resilience in the face of climate change and drought</b></p> <p>Honourable Pohamba Penomwenyo Shifeta, Minister of Environment and Tourism of Namibia</p> <p>His Excellency Malik Amin Aslam, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Climate Change of Pakistan</p> <p>His Excellency Jigmet Takpa, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India.</p> <p><b>Climate Change and SIDS</b></p> <p>His Excellency Dr. Hussain Rasheed Hassan, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Maldives</p> <p><b>The potential of land restoration efforts</b> Her Excellency Begum Habibun Nahar, Deputy Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of Bangladesh</p> <p><b>Strategies to Build Back Better</b></p> <p>Honourable Dr. Jeanne d’Arc Mujawamariya, Minister of Environment of Rwanda</p> <p>Rt Hon Lord Zac Goldsmith of Richmond Park, Minister of State for the Environment and the Pacific of the United Kingdom - via video</p> <p><b>Summary Remarks:</b> Dr Ruth Kattumuri, Senior Director, EYSDD, Commonwealth Secretariat</p>
10 mins 11:45 - 11:55	<p><b>First Reflections</b> Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary, UNCCD Ms. Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC</p>
55 mins 11:55 - 12:50	<p><b>Discussion: Are land and other nature-based solutions for sustainable development and to fight climate change being taken seriously enough?</b></p> <p><i>Interventions/guidance from Ministers/High Commissioners/ Senior Officials</i></p> <p><i>Questions/Responses from the panel</i></p>
10 mins 12:50 - 13:00	<p><b>Closing:</b> <b>Summary and take away messaging</b> Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Executive Secretary, UNCCD</p> <p><b>Final Remarks</b> Rt. Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth</p>

## ANNEX II: Event Photo Collage



Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, delivering opening remarks



Executive Secretary UNCCD Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, delivering his opening remarks



Executive Secretary UNCBD Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, providing a reflection on the discussion



Executive Secretary UNFCCC Ms. Patricia Espinosa, adding her voice to the discussion



Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General for Climate Action, United Nations Mr. Selwin Hart, delivering the keynote address



Honourable Pohamba Penomwenyo Shifeta, Minister of Environment and Tourism of Namibia during the High-Level Panel



High Level-Panel Speakers (L-R), His Excellency Jigmet Takpa, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India; His Excellency Dr. Hussain Rasheed Hassan, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Maldives, His Excellency Malik Amin Aslam, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Climate Change of Pakistan



High Level-Panel Speakers (L-R) Honourable Dr. Jeanne d'Arc Mujawamariya, Minister of Environment of Rwanda; Her Excellency Begum Habibun Nahar, Deputy Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of Bangladesh; and Rt Hon Lord Zac Goldsmith of Richmond Park, Minister of State for the Environment and the Pacific of the United Kingdom



Interventions by (L-R) Elena Stylianopoulou on behalf of H.E Prof Costas Kadis, Minister for Environment Forestry & Tourism of Cyprus; Mr Ritesh Dass, Permanent Secretary of Agriculture, Fiji; Mr. Trevor Thompson, Land Use Officer, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Forestry and Fisheries, Grenada

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