

## Launch Event of the "Group of Friends on Desertification, Land Degradation, and Drought (GoF-DLDD)"

**Date :** Monday, 17 February 2025

**Time :** 11:00 - 14:00

**Venue :** FAO HQ - Sheikh Zayed Media Centre

**Format:** Hybrid : <https://fao.zoom.us/j/98333284886> **Password:** 99748817

### 1. Background and Rationale

**Desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD)** present a critical threat to global sustainability, food security, food systems, and livelihoods, disproportionately impacting vulnerable communities in arid and semi-arid regions. Exacerbated by climate change, these challenges lead to displacement, resource scarcity, and potential conflict. Addressing DLDD demands a multifaceted approach incorporating enhanced international cooperation, coherent policies, innovative solutions, and increased awareness. Land and water resources are inextricably linked, and their sustainable management is crucial for ensuring food security, mitigating climate change, and preserving biodiversity.

In response, the Africa Regional Group, under the Chairmanship of **H.E. Fatimata Cheiffou**, *Ambassador of Niger to Italy and the UN in Rome and Africa Regional Group Chairperson 2024* - in collaboration with **Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw** - *Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)* -, and in partnership with the **Rome-based UN agencies and International Organizations**, will launch the "**Group of Friends on Desertification, Land Degradation, and Drought**" (**GoF-DLDD**). This initiative will bring together Member States from the Rome-based UN agencies (FAO, IFAD, and WFP) and beyond, as well as specialists, academics, and stakeholders, including women and youth organizations, to strengthen global efforts against DLDD.

The event, hosted at FAO Headquarters, aligns with the **UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030)**, offering an opportunity to intensify actions toward land restoration goals set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### 2. Vision and Mission of the GoF-DLDD

*The GoF-DLDD envisions a collaborative platform that integrates expertise from International Organization, Specialists, Academics, and Member States to promote sustainable land management, restore degraded land, and build resilient agrifood systems. This mission aligns with **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 (Life on Land) and contributes to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)**.*

The initiative builds on the Principles and Objectives established during COP16 in Riyadh (2–13 December 2024), emphasizing a multi-stakeholder approach that combines scientific research, policy development, and grassroots actions. By leveraging the strengths of the International Organizations in Rome and UNCCD, the GoF-DLDD aims to enhance sustainable land use, improve water resource management, and bolster food security while reducing vulnerabilities in affected communities.

### 3. Event Highlights

The event will begin with opening remarks by **H.E. Fatimata Cheiffou** and a keynote address from **FAO, IFAD, WFP, and UNCCD** and other high-level representatives from **CGIAR, UNIDROIT, and ICCROM** will provide insights into collaborative efforts to combat DLDD. Discussions will emphasize the scientific, policy, and legal dimensions of sustainable land and water management. Their interventions will provide a comprehensive perspective on sustainable resource management and resilience-building strategies.

The event will also feature interventions the **Ambassador of Mongolia**, concluding with closing remarks by **Hon. Minister Mahmoud Kombo of Tanzania**.

### 5. Closing

The event will serve as a catalyst for strengthening future international DLDD commitments and advocating to achieve the objectives of COP16 and the 2030 Agenda. Through dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and collaborative engagement, the GoF-DLDD aims to generate impactful solutions in the fight against DLDD and contributes to building a sustainable future where ecosystems, food systems, and communities thrive in harmony with the environment.