

Declaration of a commitment towards an national dryland restoration strategy

From a national workshop, “Dryland restoration and dry forest management: Sharing knowledge to meet local needs and national commitments”

Addis Ababa, 10 April 2021

The potential future role of dryland regions for economic development and as crucibles for climate change adaption and mitigation, as well as the associated potential for peacebuilding, is vast, but hardly recognized, and almost entirely untapped.

We, the participants of this national workshop on dryland restoration, acknowledge the overwhelmingly crucial role of Ethiopia’s drylands to its national wellbeing. These landscapes are a fundamental source of livelihoods and cultural identity, especially through pastoralism. But they are also becoming increasingly degraded, and many are in such a severe state that immediate remedial action is required.

This workshop has allowed a sharing of experiences that has helped to build a greater understanding and confirmed the importance of Ethiopian drylands towards meeting national commitments to continental and global goals. We have identified many issues that must be addressed, including but not exclusively: rural enterprises, employment, youth, gender, local ownership, decentralization of resource governance, fodder and livestock, fuel and charcoal, and developing new value chains and those for gums and resins and other forest products.

Inspirational good practices that demonstrate the potential of drylands and specific challenges have been shared from dryland regions of Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Oromia, Somali and Tigray. And we acknowledge that each region has its own distinct context that will be considered separately in a national plan.

But these few days have also shown that there is still much to share, and much to do – and we declare that we will continue to do so through individual and institutional commitments to collaboration, sharing knowledge and raising awareness.

We, representatives of the federal government, of regional governments, of international organizations and of NGOs, agree on the need for consensus on a clear and coherent draft national strategy on dryland restoration, and commit ourselves to working together to achieve this goal by the end of 2021.

The UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration is just beginning, and we wish that these efforts will flourish and contribute significantly to Ethiopia’s part in Africa’s commitments to achieving the Bonn Challenge, the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, and the goals of UNFCCC’s Paris Agreement.

We resolve to work towards:

- Improved knowledge management.
- Planning with a longer-term perspective.
- Greatly enhanced participation of communities in identifying options for building livelihoods and sustainably managing landscapes.
- Inclusive value chains and markets for dryland forest products.
- Greater coordination of activities across sectors and actors, governmental agencies and NGOs, federal and regional administrations, communities and CBOs.
- A national drylands restoration strategy and action plan with clear lines of responsibility and accountability in relation to implementation and coordination.

And we sincerely acknowledge, with thanks, the full support of the Government of Ethiopia, the work of all workshop participants and their partners, the workshop organizers PENHA and Tropenbos International as neutral knowledge brokers, and financial support from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

