



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



---

## **Healing the Land: Confronting Degradation Amid Conflict in the Arab Region**

UNCCD COP16 Side Event | Blue Zone | LAS Pavilion  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia | 5 December 2024 | 11:00 to 12:30

### **CONCEPT NOTE**

#### ***Background***

The Arab region, home to the world's largest displaced population, faces a critical crisis of land degradation exacerbated by prolonged conflicts and occupation. Armed conflicts have severely disrupted land management, intensifying soil erosion, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and water scarcity. The instability in these areas weakens regulatory oversight and environmental protection, leading to unsustainable practices that further degrade natural resources.

These conflicts contribute to land degradation both directly and indirectly. Military activities, including bombings and artillery strikes, destroy vegetation, compact soil, and leave hazardous materials that contaminate soil and water resources, posing lasting health risks and impeding land recovery. Displaced populations, often concentrated in fragile ecosystems, further strain resources. Lacking stability and resources, these populations often resort to unsustainable practices like illegal farming, deforestation for fuel, and overgrazing, which degrade soil, increase erosion, and contribute to desertification. In the absence of effective governance, resource exploitation and land mismanagement become widespread, amplifying the degradation of already vulnerable lands. Moreover, in conflict settings, environmental priorities often receive limited attention, as resources are diverted to urgent humanitarian aid and infrastructure rebuilding. This lack of focus on land rehabilitation threatens long-term habitability, exacerbating food insecurity, water scarcity, and compromising the livelihoods of affected communities.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) released a fact sheet titled "[Conflict in the Arab Region degrading the land, threatening the future](#)", to mark the 2024 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. This document offers an overview of how conflicts impact land degradation in the Arab region, with case studies from Lebanon, Gaza, Yemen, Sudan, and Syria that highlight long-term consequences for communities and ecosystems. The fact sheet also suggests pathways to achieving sustainable land management and recovery.

To address the impact of conflicts on land degradation in the region, ESCWA and the League of Arab States (LAS) are organizing an event titled "Healing the Land: Confronting Degradation Amid Conflict in the Arab Region" at the LAS Pavilion during the [UNCCD COP16](#) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 5 December 2024. This 90-minute event will bring together experts, policymakers, and regional stakeholders to discuss the intersection of conflict and land degradation. Discussions will focus on the challenges of land restoration, environmental resilience, and governance in conflict-affected areas. Through this exchange of knowledge and experiences, the event aims to identify shared obstacles and foster collaboration, with a focus on creating pathways for future action and resilience.

## ***Objectives***

The main objectives of the side event are:

- To foster a dialogue on the impact of conflict on land degradation, by exchanging country-specific experiences, sharing lessons learned, and discussing successful approaches from similar contexts.
- To explore regional perspectives on land restoration and governance in conflict zones, identifying common challenges and opportunities for future cooperation and action.

## ***Agenda***

---

*Thursday, 5 December 2024*

---

Moderator:	Mr. Hammou Laamrani, Economic Affairs Officer, Climate Change and Natural Resource Sustainability Cluster (CCNRSC), ESCWA
10:30 – 10:35	<b>Opening Remarks</b>
10:35 – 10:50	<b>Keynote Presentation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mr. Abderrahim Loulou, Land Expert and Technical Advisor to the Director General, Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Drylands (ACSAD), Syrian Arab Republic</li></ul>
10:50 – 11:35	<b>Panel Discussion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• H.E. Mr. Ahmed Al-Zamki, Deputy Minister, Head of Department of Irrigation and Land Reclamation, Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery, Yemen</li><li>• Mr. Salem Darwich, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon</li><li>• Ms. Martina Jaskolski, Climate, Peace and Security Policy Scientist, CWANA Regional Lead, MENA Regional Climate Security Hub, CGIAR, FOCUS Climate Security, Egypt</li><li>• Mr. Abderrahim Loulou, Land Expert and Technical Advisor to the Director General, Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Drylands (ACSAD), Syrian Arab Republic</li><li>• Ms. Nisreen Lahham, Expert, Middle Regional Office, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD)</li></ul>
11:35 – 11:55	<b>Q&amp;A</b>
11:55 – 12:00	<b>Closing Remarks</b>

---

## ***Correspondence***

For more information, please contact:

Mr. Hammou Laamrani

Economic Affairs Officer, Climate Change and Natural Resources Sustainability Cluster, ESCWA

Beirut, Lebanon

E-mail: [hammou.laamrani@un.org](mailto:hammou.laamrani@un.org)