

## Business Commits to UNCCD Capacity Building for Soil Leadership

September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013

WINDHOEK – UNCCD today launched a Soil Leadership Academy with support from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and leading WBCSD member Syngenta and called on other business and stakeholders to join. The main goal of the joint initiative is to fill the gap in capacity building opportunities for policy makers to address land management issues, through distilling and sharing the latest science, knowledge and expertise in soil conservation and sustainable practice.

The initiative aims to support the 10 year UNCCD strategy to fight desertification and land degradation by accelerating land restoration worldwide. Through the Academy, a network between research institutes, universities and key decision makers will be created. The Academy will offer information and training opportunities to eligible policy makers and land users worldwide. The ambitious project will become operational in early 2014 and will demand close cooperation between the partners, drawing on their comparative strengths.

Key objectives will be to:

- Develop an efficient, community, business and land user friendly decision making environment to prevent and reverse land degradation and desertification, to support soil conservation and facilitate greening of arid, semi-arid and dry-sub-humid regions of the world.
- Establish a network of business and business representative bodies/organizations for regular engagement with the UNCCD providing business solutions and inputs on sustainable land management to the Convention and its Parties in order to contribute towards building a land-degradation neutral world.

“Fertile soil is the foundation of sustainable agriculture. But every year we lose an area of land with the potential to produce 20 million tons of grain. Syngenta has made a global commitment to improve the fertility of 10 million hectares of farmland by 2020. Creating the Soil Leadership Academy with the UNCCD will help us meet this commitment and bring us closer to addressing the soil conservation challenge globally.” said Michael Mack, Chief Executive Officer, Syngenta.

“The Academy will serve as a source of state-of-the-art information related to soil conservation and land-management. It should help bridge the gap between science and policy and to build the capacity of those who manage the land to access knowledge.” stated Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary, UNCCD.

“Today’s launch here at UNCCD COP11 is a milestone. World Business Council Member companies are committing to action. Achieving a land degradation neutral world is at the heart of a sustainable future. Soil is at the heart of sustainable food, feed and fiber production. “ said James Griffiths, Managing Director, Natural Capital, WBCSD.

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