

Promoting a new system of scientific and societal knowledge: research, education and training for an effective and contextualized fight against land degradation: a side event co-organized by DesertNet International at the 16th Conference of the Parties of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Riyadh (7 December 2024).

A side event entitled: “Promoting a new system of scientific and societal knowledge: research, education and training for an effective and contextualized fight against land degradation” took place on Saturday, December 7th and was jointly organized by DNI, the French Scientific Committee on Desertification (CSFD), the UN University for Peace and the Desertification Research Centre (NRD) of the University of Sassari, Italy.

The event consisted of a round table, moderated by Professor **Quirico Migheli** (Director of NRD and DNI representative in the CSFD), and included four distinguished panellists: Ms. **Veena Balakrishnan**, co-founder of the Youth Negotiators Academy, Professor **Tayebeh Mesbahzadeh**, University of Tehran, member of the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface, Professor **Lindsay C. Stringer**, Director of the York Environmental Sustainability Institute at the University of York, and Dr. **Badal Ahmed Hassan**, Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Federal Government of Somalia and advisor to the United Nations University for Peace. The discussion focused on the critical role played by cooperative research and education in raising a new generation of scientists equipped to combat desertification and drought. Research institutions and universities should promote an ethical approach to science, contextualizing specialized research within the wider issue of international solidarity. Integrating research and education bridges the gap between scientific knowledge and local needs, ensuring that solutions are tailored to specific environmental and socio-economic contexts. This integration also raises awareness of the broader social issues related to land degradation, such as gender inequality, land ownership, and the rights of local communities. By focusing on these cross-cutting issues, cooperative efforts in research and education empower marginalized groups and promote inclusive approaches to land management. Scholarship and mentorship initiatives may boost collaboration among researchers, research institutions, and local communities, creating a network of young, dynamic scientists committed to addressing the challenges of desertification and climate change.

