

THE NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS TO COMMEMORATE WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

The World Day to Combat Desertification has been observed since 1995 to promote public awareness relating to international cooperation to combat desertification and the effects of drought. In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly declared (General Assembly Resolution A/RES/49/115) June 17 the "World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought" to promote public awareness of the issue, and the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. Ever since, country Parties to the Convention, organizations of the United Nations System, international and non-governmental organizations and other interested stakeholders have celebrated this particular day with a series of outreach activities worldwide. The World Day to Combat Desertification is a unique occasion to remind everybody that desertification can be effectively tackled, that solutions are possible, and that key tools to this aim lay in strengthened community participation and cooperation at all levels. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development declares that "we are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations". Specifically, Goal 15 states our resolve to halt and reverse land degradation.



Figure 1: Procession creating awareness around Makindu Market

The 2019 theme for World Day to Combat Desertification was “**Let's grow the future together**”. It urged stakeholders to move away from unsustainable land use and make a difference by investing in the future of land. This event provides an opportunity to look back and celebrate the 25 years of progress made by countries on sustainable land management, as well as looking at the broad picture of the next 25 years where we will achieve land degradation neutrality. The celebrations hence served as a platform to create awareness to communities and empower them on the importance of collaborating together in efforts of tackling land degradation neutrality to provide a solid basis for poverty reduction, food, water security and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Some of the activities that could be undertaken to combat desertification include:

- Reforestation and tree regeneration
- Water management — saving, reuse of treated water, rainwater harvesting, desalination, or direct use of seawater for salt-loving plants
- Fixating the soil through the use of sand fences, shelter belts, woodlots and windbreaks
- Enrichment and hyper-fertilizing of soil through planting and Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), enabling native sprouting tree growth through selective pruning of shrub shoots. The residue from pruned trees can be used to provide mulching for fields thus increasing soil water retention and reducing evaporation.

3.0 WDCD 2019 MAIN EVENT

This year’s event was commemorated in Makindu town, Makueni County. The theme for this year’s event served to help us reflect on the many challenges facing Kenya in our effort to combat desertification. It focused on how consumers can regenerate economies, create jobs and revitalize livelihoods and communities by influencing the market to invest in sustainable land management. Makueni County (formerly Makueni District) is a county in the former Eastern Province of Kenya. Its capital and largest town is Wote. The County has a population of 884,527 (2009 census) and an

area of 8,008.9 km².



Figure 2: Former D.G. NEMA giving his remarks

4.0 ACTIVITIES DURING THE WDCD 2019 EVENT

4.1 TREE PLANTING

The Guest of Honor, Chief Administrative Secretary in the Ministry of Environment and Forestry led other dignitaries in a tree planting ceremony at the venue of the national event. Tree planting was conducted under the leadership of the National and Local Steering Committees including the Chairman, NEMA Board, Director General NEMA, County Commissioner and CEO's of various institutions including KWS, UNDP, UNEP and the Deputy Governor.



Figure 3: Students planting trees

Acknowledgement

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