

CSO Statement delivered by Nathalie van Haren, Both ENDS  
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Closing session CST S-4 in Cancun

Thank you chair, for letting me address this distinguished conference.

102 government officials,  
122 scientists,  
24 persons from intergovernmental organisations,  
22 CSO representatives,  
8 persons of UN organisations, and;  
many people from the UNCCD secretariat

That is more than 300 people, who came from all over the world, all the way to the beautiful azure of Cancun to talk about science, technology, traditional knowledge and practices for sustainable land management in drylands.

We had good discussions on indicators for sustainable land management, trans-disciplinary action research, involvement of communities to build on the shoulders of local knowledge, creating an enabling environment for up-scaling SLM and on formulating clear recommendations to policy makers, including SWOT analysis and cost-benefit analysis.

The big questions are:

-Are we proud of the meeting we had here in Cancun?

-And what will happen with all of this? Will it bring change to people living in drylands here and now?

You could take home this new knowledge and just go back to business-as-usual: taking remote sensing satellite images as far as possible from the people living in drylands. Or taking thousands of soil samples and analyse them on organic carbon and moist content.

Or... you... we... each of us personally... could remember Mark Reed's story on Sophie and that her future is our future.

And feel the need for changing our habits.

Three proposals for action that will evoke change

### **First of all, Understanding each other**

We have been talking about synergies between and indicators for the Rio conventions. And although the conventions were all born in Rio de Janeiro and they are complementary working towards sustainable development, **there are different approaches to tackle land degradation, sustainable land management and drought.**

And this is an example of a global different understanding of a unique problem.

The same happens within countries, between sectors and between stakeholders. Ask a farmer about food security and she will say that it means enough food to feed her children, ask a policy maker about food security and he will talk about land productivity.

Maybe it is an idea to ask Sophie how she conceives land degradation neutrality?

**Mister Chair .... We should not continue working in silos.**

### **Secondly, Respecting each other....**

All around the world, the movement of small-scale farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk are joining hands with concerned consumers, urban farmers, permaculturists, vertical window farmers and food foresters. These movements want to regain control over their future and their children's future, by reclaiming their seeds, practicing agro-ecological farming, peer-to-peer agricultural production guarantee systems, demarcating land for community-maps. Land users should be part of the research agenda instead of being a passive research subject to researchers and scientists.

Engage with Sophie and her community on an equal base, understand each other and build new knowledge combining local knowledge and science.

### **And the last point: Working together with each other**

When civil society is asked about its experiences working with scientists, many come up with good experiences, and many with bad experiences. I would like to share with you four experiences from which we can learn the most:

1. Research is sometimes perceived as far from reality. One CSO said: "We want research to be "closer to the earth", that is to lead to practical end results, and not to more... AND more... AND more research."
2. There is a tendency to not take the experiences and analysis of CSOs seriously. One CSO said: "Why do scientists ignore the fieldwork of civil society organizations and the human bond that they have with communities?"
3. CSOs find the scientific community closed for others than scientists. One CSO said: "We want farmers and rural people to be more involved in research, so that research focuses more on their actual needs than on needs as perceived by some research teams."
4. Scientists are perceived not to take their results outside of the scientific communities. They seem not to actively communicate with policy makers and/or people on the ground. As one CSO put it forward: "Do Scientists speak to decision and policy makers to inverse land degradation and climate change? And what do Scientists do to put their good findings in the hands of communities to increase their resilience towards the serious climate change and land degradation threats that they face today?"

Colleagues, ... the time has showed us that the real move forward to sustainable land management will not come only through scientific innovations, but through a collective and joint commitment with adequate political and social leadership.

And there is change in the air... : we see a growing amount of multi-disciplinary teams doing trans-disciplinary research.

Farmers are getting involved in data collection via smart phones. Research results are shared with land users. We see multi-stakeholder project teams evolve to do action research with communities AND for communities. And an increasing number of scientists are doing efforts to simplify their results to policy makers by writing short policy briefs, sharing Youtube videos of their presentations, and entering into multi-stakeholder dialogues.

We as the CSOs gathered here, hope that the results of this conference will become part of the important decisions in the forthcoming COP12 in Ankara.

Please think of Sophie, her relatives, friends or all those other people living in drylands, and support them to take control over their futures and to use their lands in a sustainable way: Understand... Respect... And work together!

Thank you