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Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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What does the World Evangelical Alliance have to do with the desert?

On the Occasion of the UN Desertification and Drought Day 2020

(Bonn, 17.06.2020) On the occasion of the United Nations Day of Desertification and Drought 2020, the WEA announces its recently approved accreditation with the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Since 2019, the WEA and UNCCD have established a collaborative relationship, which has now been formalized through accreditation with the UNCCD. With this accreditation, the WEA can participate as an observer in the official Conferences of the Parties to the Convention and its subsidiary bodies. Thus, the WEA can bring the evangelical voice into the global fight against land degradation, desertification and drought.

Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. The Convention addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.

This year's UNCCD's Desertification and Drought Day is celebrated on June 17. On this occasion, Bishop Efraim Tendero, Secretary General of the WEA states: "The WEA strongly welcomes and supports the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals / the Agenda 2030. We are convinced that the Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved without the involvement of faith-based communities. Therefore, we

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WEA Delegation at UNCCD in February 2020 in Bonn © BQ/Martin Warnecke



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www.worldevangelicals.org/pdf/TN-47-1-Jan-2018.pdf

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seek partnerships with UN organizations, such as UNCCD. We recognize integrated land and water management as an accelerator for achieving most of the Sustainable Development Goals. Through our global network we are in contact with local church communities and other communal bodies who are directly affected by land degradation and the effects of climate change on their livelihoods. As a partner of UNCCD, WEA sees itself as a bridge between those local communities and multilateral environmental governance and land management on the global level. We are thankful to UNCCD for the trusted partnership and are looking forward to the fruitful cooperation as an accredited organization.”

The 2020 Desertification and Drought Day focuses on the links between consumption and land. To have enough productive land to meet the demands of ten billion people by 2050, lifestyles need to change. The Desertification and Drought Day, running under the slogan “Food. Feed. Fibre.” seeks to educate individuals on how to reduce their personal impact. If millions of Christians made faith-consistent sustainable lifestyle commitments, our community would have a big collective impact for the better on creation, the climate, and the wellbeing of our neighbors, especially those suffering from poverty who are hurt the most from the effects of climate change, polluted ecosystems and degraded land. If every consumer were to buy products that do not degrade the land, suppliers would cut back the flow of these products and send a powerful signal to producers and policymakers.



Bishop Ef and Pradeep Monga, Deputy SG of UNCCD © BQ/Martin Wamecke

The WEA launched the “Living the Change Campaign” in order to equip and encourage Christians to make personal sustainable lifestyle commitments motivated from a heart of faithful discipleship and the calling to care for creation. The Living the Change Campaign explains how Christians can reduce energy consumption, transition to renewable energy, use eco-friendly transport or eat a plant-based diet.

Background

What does the World Evangelical Alliance have to do with the desert? When speaking about the desert, most Christians might think of Biblical stories that take place in the desert. Jesus was tested in the Judean desert after his baptism. In this New Testament story, the desert is a place of hunger, thirst and suffering. When the Israelites passed

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the desert from Egypt to the Promised Land, they suffer from hunger and complain to God, some of them are hopeless and see no future for themselves, they even want to go back into slavery. The Bible uses the symbol of the desert to describe struggles, despair and hopelessness. By contrast, fruitful gardens and fertile land are signs of blessings by God to many personalities of the Bible. Green pastures are a place of comfort in Psalm 23 and in the beginning – as testified in Genesis – God created a world rich in nature with many different living beings that all interact beautifully in the world's ecosystem.

The dualist Biblical imagery could not be more relevant today as in almost all parts of the world, the fruitful land given to us by God is under severe pressure from desertification, climate change, droughts, and deforestation. Unfortunately, many of those challenges are human made. Our consumption patterns and economic activities destroy the green pastures and fruitful gardens. Cutting massive amounts of trees, over-use of water resources, e.g. for meat production, and high levels of CO₂-emissions contributing to climate change are human behaviors that foster desertification and drought, creating places of despair and hopelessness. According to the Secretariat of the UN Convention



Bishop Ef shaking hands with Pradeep Monga, Deputy SG of UNCCD
© BQ/Martin Warnecke

to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), today, more than two billion hectares of previously productive land is degraded. Over 70 per cent of our natural ecosystems have been transformed. By 2050, this could hit 90 per cent. Surely, the transformation is not positive but dangerous for many of our brothers and sisters across the globe. UNCCD's Global Land Outlook states that over 1.3 billion people are trapped on degrading agricultural land worldwide. It predicts that in five years, by 2025, 1.8 billion people will experience absolute water scarcity, and two thirds of the world will be living under water-stressed conditions.

As the World Evangelical Alliance, we believe that it is our call to respect and protect the land that God has given to us. To practically follow our call to protect land and nature, the WEA Creation Care Task Force (WEA-CCTF) and the WEA Sustainability Center (WEA-SC) work together towards sustainable creation stewardship. In May 2020, the WEA achieved accreditation at UNCCD to contribute Evangelical voices to the global fight against land degradation, desertification and drought.

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- **Photo 2:** WEA UN Joint Session in February 2020 in Bonn © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 3:** Bishop Ef and Pradeep Monga, Deputy SG of UNCCD © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 4:** Bishop Ef shaking hands with Pradeep Monga, Deputy SG of UNCCD © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 5:** UNCCD graphic on challenges to soil © UNCCD
- **Photo 6:** 2020 Desertification and Drought Day Event banner © UNCCD
- WEA Sustainability Center: <https://wea-sc.org/en/home-2>
- WEA Creation Care Task Force: <https://www.weacreationcare.org/>
- Living the Change Campaign: <https://www.weacreationcare.org/living-the-change>
- Information on the UNCCD Desertification and Drought Day 2020: <https://www.unccd.int/actions17-june-desertification-and-drought-day/2020-desertification-and-drought-day>
- UNCCD Global Land Outlook: https://knowledge.unccd.int/glo/GLO_first_edition

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