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## PRESS RELEASE

### BEIJING INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND DESERTIFICATION

Bonn, 19 May - The UNCCD Secretariat, together with the governments of Algeria, China and Italy, will hold an international meeting on the role of women in combating desertification, in Beijing, China, from 29 May to 1 June. It is one of several major conferences taking place to mark the 2006 International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD).

Experts in the fields of gender issues and sustainable development, representatives of civil society, as well as high-level country representatives and other eminent personalities will gather to share experiences and seek ways of empowering women as an effective means to counter land degradation and rural poverty.

Women's equal participation in the economic and political development of communities and countries has been recognized as a fundamental prerequisite for achieving international sustainable development commitments.

"Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance", said Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) breaks new ground by enshrining a bottom-up approach in tackling desertification, which seeks to involve those directly affected, and specifically emphasises "the important role played by women". This was underlined by the choice of Women and Desertification as the theme to celebrate the 2005 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.

The UNCCD has also been recognized as a major tool to implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by incorporating gender into poverty reduction and environmental protection strategies.

Beijing also hosted the Fourth World Conference on Women held in 1995. This resulted in the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA), which urged governments to vigorously address women's rights and gender equality as core development concerns.

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**Note to journalists:** For further information see [www.iydd.org](http://www.iydd.org) or contact Joyce Hannah at (+49-228) 815 2857 or send an e-mail to [press\(at\)unccd.int](mailto:press(at)unccd.int)