



**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. COLLEN V. KELAPILE  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

**AT**

**WORLD SOIL DAY**

**“HALT SOIL SALINIZATION, BOOST SOIL PRODUCTIVITY”**

**7 DECEMBER 2021  
11:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.**

**VIRTUAL MEETING**

*Please check against delivery.*

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I am pleased to join you today to celebrate **World Soil Day** on the theme “**Halt Soil Salinization, Boost Soil Productivity.**”
2. Last July, the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development expressed great concerns regarding the increase in poverty and hunger triggered by COVID-19. It called for addressing the multiple dimensions of poverty and hunger and their root causes.
3. Halting soil salinization and boosting soil productivity is part of the answer to this call. Soil salinization is a threat to food security because it reduces crop yields and quality.
4. The intrinsic link between soil health and our food systems is recognized in the 2030 Agenda. Under **SDG 2 on eradicating hunger**, it calls for ensuring “**sustainable food production systems and implementing resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production... and that progressively improve land and soil quality.**”

**Excellencies,**

5. The September Integrated Food System Summit shed light on this emergency.

6. Soil salinization also hinders climate action, environmental sustainability, biodiversity and progress towards other related SDGs.
7. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), around **10%** of irrigated cropland, **10%** of rainfed cropland and **8%** of agricultural land worldwide is affected by salinity or sodicity. Some regions are hit particularly hard, but all continents are affected.
8. We must not leave farmers to struggle alone. We know what we need to do to address soil salinization and sodification:
  - We must bolster political will and raise awareness as we are doing today.
  - We must adopt integrated policies that address integrated food systems, promote transfer of knowledge and technology to developing countries and combat climate change.
  - We must implement sustainable soil management practices.
  - We must encourage the use of farming systems adapted to saline/sodic environments. We can plant crops that are adapted to tolerate higher salt content.

- We must mainstream sustainable soil management in various policies based on scientific evidence and technological innovation.
  - We must enable the world's **1.7 billion** smallholder farmers to access finance, productive inputs and information needed to optimize farm production.
  - We must mobilize the private sector to invest in opportunities that restore soils health.
9. There is no dearth of initiatives and frameworks to support those actions. The Integrated Food System Summit generated new commitment and initiatives.
  10. So have the Conference of Parties (COPs) on Climate Change, such as our renewed commitments at COP26 to sustainably use and safeguard our natural resources.
  11. We must also accelerate the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, despite COVID-19.
  12. I am confident that we can jointly overcome the challenges of saline-affected soils.
  13. I assure you of ECOSOC's continued commitment to promoting action, including through guidance to the UN system.

**I thank you for your kind attention.**