



**High-Level Political Forum 2018**  
**13<sup>th</sup> Meeting: Review of SDGs implementation**  
**SDG 15 - ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and half**  
**and reverse land degradation and half biodiversity loss.**

**13<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

**Katia Araujo, LANDESA, USA-Brazil**

Good Morning Chair,

I am Katia Araujo, Advocacy Director with Landesa, Rural Development Institute. I am here today speaking on behalf of the Women's Major Group.

Forests are rapidly disappearing, and so are forest-dependent peoples. Around 1.6 billion people depend on forests, including 70 million indigenous people.

We recognize the key drivers of deforestation to be the industrial agriculture, including the livestock sector, especially beef, and soy. Palm oil and other monoculture tree plantations, including for bioenergy production are also serious culprits of deforestation. We need governments to address this especially in light of the corporate capture of these sectors, which is alarming. Private investments are steering governance and undermining community livelihoods and the land rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and women. Governments must address the harmful incentives and subsidies in these unsustainable industries which are actually driving deforestation.

Insecure land rights for women and communities is also a key threat to forests and gender equality. Women own less than 20% of the world's land and in more than half of all countries. Additionally, patriarchal traditions and discriminatory social norms threaten women's secure tenure rights to land even when they are enshrined in the rule of law.

At the same time, more than a third of the Earth's land is currently degraded. Achieving women-led, community-based land management and restoration of degraded land will require a shift from "degraded-abandon-move" to "protect-sustain-rehabilitate and – restore." To that end, land tenure security is critical.

Governments must enact gender-responsive policies that engage and recognize women and Indigenous Peoples as rights holders, and ensure their roles in decision-making and governance in regards to secure land tenure rights to land and forests. Governments should also strengthen support for community-based conservation, forest restoration and

sustainable livelihoods, recognizing the traditional knowledge of Indigenous women and their communities.

Lastly, with the violent destruction of our forests also comes violence against forests dwellers and indigenous communities defending their land. Violence against women's human rights and environmental defenders continues unabated. On average, four people a week were killed worldwide in struggles against mines, plantations, poachers, and infrastructure projects in 2017 among others. The UN member states must protect these defenders who are protecting our environment.