

# LANDdialogue OC Strategy Meeting 2018

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## Summary

Date: 13 June, 9.30 - 17.30 hrs.  
Location: Wageningen, Netherlands

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## Background

The LANDdialogue started in 2014. Since then, three High Level meetings chaired by the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation took place; several activities were started up by participating organizations, including expert meetings and workshops; and various publications and guidance notes and concrete tools have been developed. The LANDdialogue contributed to change processes in different institutions. On 13 June, the Organizing Committee held a one-day Strategy Meeting to reflect on past achievements and lessons learned, take stock of concrete outputs, reflect on the structure of the LANDdialogue and look to the future.

### *Organizing Committee*

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Utrecht University, LANDac, Both ENDS, Oxfam Novib, Rabobank, FMO

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## Setting the scene: the Netherlands and land governance

A first inventory of activities and work by Dutch knowledge institutes, civil society organizations, government institutions and private sector players working on land governance was done in 2007. This showed the diversity and extent of work already being done. Debates around cases of land grabbing and discussions on sustainability requirements in the private sector continued in parallel. Building on this expertise and network, the Netherlands Land Academy was established in 2010; this contributed further to coordination of Dutch efforts on improving land governance worldwide. The issue rose on the agendas of researchers, policy makers and practitioners alike.

When Minister Ploumen came to office in 2012, one of the first questions put during the public debate was about an investment case by a Dutch financial institution. Following this, a public hearing was organized in the Dutch Parliament, inviting researchers, civil society and private sector practitioners to inform members of Parliament about land governance. Following this hearing, eight NGO's wrote a letter to the Minister to provide her with eight concrete suggestions to become a champion of land rights, aligned with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Tenure of Land (VGGTs). One of the suggestions by the NGO's was to set up a national multi-stakeholder platform to support the application of the VGGT by Dutch stakeholders in their work and activities. This was the basis for the Land Governance Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue (LG-MSD), now the LANDdialogue.

The core mandate of the LANDdialogue was the development of concrete tools and improvement measures for land governance, based on the application of the VGGTs. The new Policy Note by Minister Kaag underlines the importance of good land governance for poverty reduction, sustainable investments and other aspects of the new government strategy for international cooperation.

## Success factors and risks: what works and what doesn't

As a starting point for the discussions, the OC identified activities or themes that were considered useful in the LANDdialogue so far, or which they like to put forward for consideration for a future LANDdialogue. Attention is also given to (potential) risk factors for the LANDdialogue in the future. Key themes for further discussion included: if and how other frameworks and developments (e.g. SDG's, UNGP's, OECD guidelines, IFC Performance Standards, Paris Agreement) should play a role in the LANDdialogue activities; how to strengthen our linkages with Southern partners and practice; how to strengthen private sector engagement; and whether the organizational set-up of the LANDdialogue is appropriate to respond to the above questions.

## Key themes for discussion

### Linking the VGGT with new frameworks and developments

Central question: How can the LANDdialogue respond to other initiatives, guidelines, and developments, including the SDGs, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), the Paris Agreement, OECD Guidelines and IFC Performance Standards? How relevant are the VGGT (still) in this context? To prepare this discussion, OC Members spoke with experts from Multilateral organizations, government and civil society, to assess the relevance of these initiatives for our discussions. This revealed that each of the guidelines is very relevant for land governance; at the same

time, none of these frameworks is so detailed about land in specific that they could replace the VGGTs. Rather, the VGGTs can be used to reach goals and principles laid out in these guidelines. However, a remaining question, according to the experts, is the application of the principles in the VGGT in practice. With this focus, the mandate of the LANDdialogue is still very relevant. There is need to more strongly underline the linkages between the VGGTs and other guidelines and principles. The OC will work on: updating the LANDdialogue's Terms of Reference, and organize a VGGT refresher course for Dutch stakeholders in the fall of 2018 in which these linkages will also more explicitly play a role. We will also continue support to apply the VGGT for the implementation of the Agreements promoting International Responsible Business Conduct (IRBC agreements).

#### Strengthen linkages with Southern partners and concrete activities in partner countries

In preparation of this discussion, OC members consulted with a range of local NGOs as well as with partners of a finance institution to scope for ideas and suggestions of how to more strongly link activities of the LANDdialogue with realities on the ground. This resulted in a longlist of relevant organizations to whom the LANDdialogue might reach out. It also led to two concrete suggestions: for each of us to always have a conscious check with every activity that the LANDdialogue organizes - how local knowledge and expertise is involved; and to initiate a pilot project on innovative pre-engagement in the case of new land-based investments. A working group from the OC will organize a first meeting on this in close collaboration with finance institutions, universities, embassies, NGOs and local partners.

#### Increase private sector engagement

Private sector engagement and collaboration is essential for reaching our objectives. OC members consulted with experts from civil society and private sector to identify existing barriers for private sector engagement in LANDdialogue activities. In terms of outputs, the LANDdialogue might want to develop its solution-driven and tool development oriented activities more strongly. This will contribute to showing companies the concrete added value of joining the LANDdialogue. Linked to this was a suggestion to more explicitly focus on the 'do good' agenda of the VGGT. The LANDdialogue should constitute a safe environment for open discussion and exchange. To build trust, one option is to start dialogue first internally within a specific sector, as was done with the infrastructure sector. This group can then later be expanded with other stakeholders. A third suggestion done after the consultations is to use the added value of the information and exchange that participation in the LANDdialogue offers. Concretely, activities will focus on engagement with trade missions, inviting private companies into the OC, seek more engagement with innovation companies and start-ups, continue with the infrastructure dialogue and strengthen embassy collaborations.

#### Structure of the LANDdialogue:

The current structure of the LANDdialogue is a parallel set-up of High Level meetings to involve decision makers of institutions, paired with case teams working on concrete topics and questions. This is supported by the Organizing Committee which is the executive body of the LANDdialogue and is responsible for the coordination of activities. This structure is flexible enough to respond to the ideas and suggestions raised above. Experiences show that the OC does sometimes not have enough capacity to boost the different case teams and continue to engage new institutions and companies. For this reason, support to the secretariat was hired and this has contributed to a more goal-oriented OC, with stronger outreach capacity, external communication, and more support to ongoing and new case team activities. Moreover, stronger collaboration with the approximately 50 institutions committed to the LANDdialogue (beyond the OC) will be strengthened on specific sub-themes. The composition of the OC will be reviewed, also based on the discussion around private sector engagement, while also paying attention to stronger integration of different departments within government.

#### **Way forward and our action agenda**

To initiate the ideas and plans above, the OC will start with two concrete actions: the 2014 Terms of Reference will be adapted in such a way that they reflect the new focus, with stronger connections to other agenda's (including the SDG's, UNGP's, Paris Agreement, OECD Guidelines and IFC Performance Standards) while applying the VGGT's as a way to strengthen land governance to contribute to those agenda's. This new focus will be reflected in a Land Governance 'refresher workshop' in the fall. We will start working on innovative pre-engagement for new investments: how to really engage all stakeholders, including local communities, in the process of identifying areas for investments? These ideas will also be introduced to Minister Kaag when a small delegation is meeting her on 5 July 2018 to discuss the Dutch efforts on strengthening land rights and land governance in countries where Dutch stakeholders are active.

*This overview provides a summary of the discussions and outcomes of a one-day Strategy Session. In case of any questions or interest in working with us, please feel free to contact the LANDdialogue secretariat: [Gemma Betsema \(g.betsema@uu.nl\)](mailto:g.betsema@uu.nl).*