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GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

**SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION
TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING
SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION,
PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA: 1999-2000**

Note by the Executive Director **

This information note is submitted in response to operative paragraph (1) of Governing Council decision 20/10 requesting the Executive Director to maintain the capability of the United Nations Environment Programme to respond to global land-degradation issues so as to serve its role as Task Manager for chapter 12 of Agenda 21, and to support the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in particular its Committee on Science and Technology, in the assessment and monitoring of desertification and the enhancement of the scientific and technological knowledge base on land degradation.

* UNEP/GC.21/1.

** This document was submitted late to Conference Services owing to the need to include all activities undertaken in 2000.

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1. In response to Governing Council decision 20/10, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) continues to act as the Task Manager for chapter 12 of Agenda 21, on land degradation, and through the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, reports to the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on chapter 10 of Agenda 21.
2. In accordance with the same decision, UNEP continued to support the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa during the period covered by this report. From 1998 to 2000 a consortium of 15 United Nations and non-United Nations agencies, coordinated by UNEP, implemented the identification phase (phase one) of a survey. The work was done under subcontract by the Convention and evaluated the networks, institutions, agencies and bodies relevant for the implementation of the Convention. At the invitation of the Bureau of the Committee on Science and Technology of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention, UNEP, on behalf of this consortium, submitted a proposal to implement the second phase of the Survey: "A detailed survey and evaluation of CCD-relevant parties in southern Africa and maintenance and further development of the web-based database created in phase one".
3. UNEP continued to support countries and their regional and subregional organizations in the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, through, inter alia:
 - (a) The framework of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment. In collaboration with the Convention secretariat, the Office for Combating Desertification and Drought of the United Nations Development Programme (UNSO) and subregional organizations, UNEP supported African countries in preparing their report to the Convention Conference of the Parties. In West Asia UNEP supported Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Palestine in preparing their national reports. Furthermore, UNEP assisted, in close collaboration with UNSO and the Convention's Global Mechanism, in resource mobilization for the implementation of the Convention in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Southern African Development Community subregions of Africa;
 - (b) UNEP also continued to assist the development and initiation of Convention regional coordination units and mechanisms, including subregional action programmes in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. For example, in West Asia member states agreed that the UNEP Regional Office for West Asia should serve as the regional coordinator for the subregional action plan. UNEP also contributed to the development of a Web-based Middle East database on desertification. Subregional action programmes for the southern European and Asian parts of the Russian Federation were completed and published in 2000. A national meeting on subregional action programme implementation in the Russian Federation was organized by the Center for International Projects, in cooperation with UNEP, and was held in Abakan, Russia, from 9-12 October 2000;
 - (c) At the national level, UNEP supported the implementation of the Convention in the member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). National action programmes for Uzbekistan and Armenia were developed in 1999-2000 with UNEP financial and technical assistance. Following the development of the national action programme for the Kalmyk Republic in the Russian Federation, UNEP has supported the implementation of a project on the reclamation and management of the Black Lands and the stabilization of moving sands in Kalmykia.
4. In 2000, UNEP, with support from the Norwegian Government, helped raise awareness on useful plant resources by supporting small-scale rooibos tea producers in Northern Cape Province, South Africa.

5. UNEP, jointly with the Government of Zimbabwe and the International Soil Reference and Information Centre, is implementing a case study entitled "The impact of desertification on food security in Southern Africa", to be completed by mid-2001. UNEP assisted the Government of Senegal to carry out a project entitled "Women and Youth Involvement Strategy Development Project Sustainable Natural Resources Management" (1999).
6. UNEP also provided technical support to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, to organize the International Conference on Desertification, held 12-15 February 2000, and also to the King-Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to organize a desertification conference, held 28 November-2 December 1999.
7. To raise awareness on soil degradation in the European region among the general public and decision makers, UNEP and the European Environment Agency jointly produced a report entitled "Down to earth: Soil degradation and sustainable development in Europe: A challenge for the XXI century".
8. UNEP co-sponsored two Convention related meetings in Bangkok in November 2000, one for the regional Convention national focal points in the region, and the other on approaches to resource mobilization for the Convention.
9. A UNEP-sponsored publication "Land tenure and environmental degradation in the drylands of Asia, case studies from India, Mongolia and Nepal", was disseminated in 1999. A followup project proposal, "Development of policy guidelines and tools for mainstreaming the findings of land tenure and environmental degradation in the Drylands of Asia", was prepared and submitted to donors in 2000.
10. In collaboration with the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, the follow-up to the project "Wind Erosion in Africa and Western Asia – Problems and Control Strategies", was completed in 1999.
11. To promote the ratification of the Convention by the Russian Federation and catalyse action, UNEP supported awareness-raising activities in the southern part of the Russian Federation through the publication of a newspaper on desertification in Kalmykia. The Government of Norway supported the production of a film in Kalmykia. Accompanied by a booklet and posters, the film is being disseminated to schools throughout the steppe region. Another Russian-made film on sand encroachment into south-eastern Europe was completed and an English-language version has been produced to ensure wider dissemination. Two brochures, "Man and desert" and "Desertification in questions", were prepared for use in schools in cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Kalmyk Republic.
12. In 1999-2000, UNEP, in cooperation with the Institute of Geography in Moscow, Moscow State University and other Russian institutions, undertook a project on the assessment and mapping of desertification and land degradation in the Russian Federation and Armenia. A technical report on the findings, indicators for desertification and land degradation, and desertification maps were produced for both countries.
13. UNEP disseminated information on problems related to desertification control around the world, through its Desertification Control Bulletin. Over the past two years three issues have been published. Unless additional funds are raised in the near future, no additional bulletins are planned. UNEP and Russian national institutes produced and disseminated the following publications (in CIS countries):
 - (a) Population migration as a result of desertification and drought in the CIS region;
 - (b) Desertification and soil degradation;
 - (c) Anthropogenic degradation of landscapes and ecological security.
14. UNEP, in cooperation with Governments and national research institutions, continued to conduct training programmes in combating desertification and land degradation, mainly in CIS countries. During

1999-2000, three training courses, which were attended by a total of approximately 100 technicians from 12 CIS countries, were organized and held in Russia:

- (a) An international training course entitled “Anthropogenic Degradation of Landscapes and Ecosystems” was held in Volgograd, Russia in 1999;
- (b) An international workshop entitled “Rangeland Management and Desertification Control in CIS Countries” was held in Elista, Kalmykia, in September 2000;
- (c) A national training course entitled “The Methods of Phyto-Reclamation of Moving Sands” was held in Kalmykia for local staff from 25-29 October 1999. In total, approximately 100 technicians from 12 CIS countries attended these courses.

15. UNEP, in cooperation with the Institute of Soil Science of the Moscow State University, organized an international conference entitled “Desertification and Soil Degradation”, which was held in Moscow in November 1999. The conference was attended by over 100 participants.

16. A Brief Study on Desertification, based on the World Atlas of Desertification, was published in Arabic in 1999 with support from the Zayed International Prize for the Environment.

17. During the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in Recife, Brazil, in 1999, UNEP presented "Saving the Drylands" awards to seven community-level projects, two in Africa and five in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The awards were given for awareness-raising activities on emerging success stories and best practices in desertification control. Success stories have been published in the latest issues of the Desertification Control Bulletin. UNEP is also developing an Internet-accessible database on success stories and best practices.

18. In collaboration with international organizations and national bodies, UNEP continued to implement and develop projects on land degradation for financing through the Global Environment Facility. ^{1/}

19. In 1999, UNEP joined the Facilitation Committee of the Convention's Global Mechanism.

^{1/} Implementation of the following full scale projects continued: The People, Land Management and Environmental Change programme continued in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Arrangements for implementation of the Management of Indigenous Vegetation for Rehabilitation of Degraded Rangelands in the Arid Zones of Africa programme were finalized in Botswana, Kenya and Mali. The Community-based Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands of Transboundary Areas of Senegal and Mauritania programme was started. The Indicator Model for Dryland Ecosystems in Latin America programme was started. The Strategic Action Programme for the Binational Basin of the Bermejo River entered its second phase.

The following projects were under development: Rehabilitation of Degraded Lands and Biological Diversity Conservation in Arid and Semi-arid Regions of Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe; Desert Margins Programme; Dryland Land Degradation Assessment; Integrated Land and Water Management Initiative for Africa; Integrated Management of the Fouta Djallon Highlands; Integrated Sustainable Management of Transboundary Environmental Resources in Southwestern Djibouti and Northeastern Ethiopia; Land Use Change Analysis as an Approach to Assessing Biodiversity Loss and Land Degradation; Integrated Management of Natural Resources in Transboundary Areas of Niger and Nigeria; Lake Baringo Community-based Integrated Land and Water Management Project; Alleviating land degradation in the Caribbean region.

20. In 1999 and 2000 together, a total of \$1,265,000 from the Environment Fund and \$1,101,000 in external funds (\$250,000 from the Government of Norway, \$414,000 from the Convention and \$437,000 from the Russian Fund) were received for carrying out the above activities and projects. In addition, the GEF financing for the land-related projects under implementation or in a preparatory phase during 1999 - 2000, listed above, totals about 41 million. For the coming years, UNEP will continue to support Convention land degradation activities and policies, but the extent to which it does so will depend on the availability of additional resources.
