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DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION: ENVIRONMENT

Implementation in the Sudano-Sahelian region of the Plan  
of Action to Combat Desertification

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In paragraph 6 of resolution 37/216 of 20 December 1982, the General Assembly requested the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme to continue to report to it annually, through the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation in the Sudano-Sahelian region of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

2. In section VII B, paragraph 4 of its decision 11/7 of 24 May 1983, 1/ the Governing Council of UNEP authorized the Executive Director to submit the attached report to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session through the Economic and Social Council.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-eighth Session,  
Supplement No. 25 (A/38/25).

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\* A/38/150.

ANNEX

Implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification  
in the Sudano-Sahelian Region

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The 19 countries now covered by the desertification control mandate of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) a/ have a population of 213 million and an area of 12.4 million square kilometres, of which 80 per cent are arid or semi-arid, compared with a world average (excluding Antarctica) of 33 per cent. It is estimated that over 90 per cent of the rangelands and 85 per cent of the rainfed crop lands of the Sudano-Sahelian region are affected in various degrees by desertification.

2. In the face of the world-wide recession of 1982 and the widespread decrease in the level of donor contributions to multilateral assistance programmes, UNSO intensified its resource mobilization efforts, and was able to increase the resources mobilized as well as the level of assistance it extended, on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to desertification control programmes in the Sudano-Sahelian region and adjacent countries.

3. The level of funds mobilized and allocated by UNSO through the United Nations Trust Fund for Sudano-Sahelian Activities for desertification control activities during 1982 amounted to \$12.1 million. b/ Another \$6.8 million was mobilized by UNSO for additional inputs provided directly by donors to complement the financing of these activities. At the time this report was being prepared, UNSO had also obtained from donor agencies, subject to formal approval by their executive boards, indications of interest in the amount of \$11.9 million for additional projects. Approval of these further contributions and their earmarking through the Trust Fund for specific projects are expected in early 1983. Programme support from the UNEP contribution to the joint venture was utilized exclusively for project formulation missions.

## II. MAIN FEATURES OF DESERTIFICATION CONTROL OPERATIONS IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION

4. During the past year, UNSO has continued to mobilize resources and assist Governments in the formulation and implementation of projects or programmes in the areas of deforestation control, range management, water resources management, sand-dune fixation, and planning and co-ordination. Other activities involving integrated approaches and alternative or supplementary livelihood systems aimed at easing pressure on the land received increased support. All projects and programmes supported by UNSO continued to focus, in response to priority requests of Governments, on the main causes and manifestations of desertification in the region.

5. The more important projects UNSO has formulated or supported in 1982 in the above priority areas are described below. No in-depth analysis of their expected results at the field level is attempted in this report, since the impact of desertification control measures carried out since the adoption of the Plan of Action will be the subject of a comprehensive report by the Executive Director on the assessment of the progress of the Plan during the first seven years of its implementation. Admittedly, the influence of individual projects is generally

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limited in relation to the overall problem of desertification control, and their results do not become evident until the medium to long term. These individual projects, however, have important catalytic, pilot and demonstration effects in the desertification control programme of the Sudano-Sahelian region. At this stage, moreover, positive results have already been felt in raising the consciousness of the Governments and populations of the region of the importance of desertification control programmes and projects, as reflected in the number of countries that have prepared or are in the process of preparing national plans or strategies for combating desertification, as described (see sect. E below). Desertification control and the need to give it high priority in national development plans have also been stressed in recent policy statements by Heads of State or highest level officials of the Governments of the Gambia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Somalia and the Sudan. The Government of Niger has also made desertification control one of the main features of its round-table conference with donors.

6. Other general features of UNSO's desertification control programme have been the emphasis on the use of national administrative structures and personnel and the active involvement of the people affected in the projects it has supported. The emphasis on national involvement is reflected in the fact that over 40 per cent of the total volume of Trust Fund assistance provided by UNSO is Government-executed, a policy that is designed to help develop the technical expertise of national personnel and enhance their capacity to manage programmes and project operations. The necessary backstopping is provided by UNSO's headquarters and regional office staff, the resident representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP and the specialized agencies, which act as co-operating agencies to help expedite the procurement of equipment, training and logistic support.

7. The active involvement of the people affected is one of the most important dimensions of UNSO-assisted projects, UNSO's view being that projects should not simply be formulated and dictated from above. The purported beneficiaries must be convinced that they will be fully involved and understand the benefits of the projects to be carried out. Thus emphasis has been placed on projects that increase the productivity of their work or provide them with alternative or supplementary livelihood systems to increase their income in a manner that makes sense in terms of their life styles and expectations.

#### A. Main activities supported

##### 1. Forestry

8. UNSO's expanded assistance to countries in afforestation and reforestation has been reflected in various new projects. In Benin, a project for multi-purpose tree planting has been designed with a total cost estimated at \$1,405,400, of which \$306,900 is being contributed by the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND). A contribution of \$825,000 by the Government of the Netherlands through the Trust Fund is expected, and the remainder will be contributed by the Government of Benin. In Niger, UNSO has mobilized resources for two large-scale projects: the establishment of a green belt around the city of Tahoua, with an earmarked contribution from the Netherlands of \$480,335; and

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"Operation Gao", which aims at the induced and natural regeneration of 300,000 leguminous, soil-enriching gao (Acacia albida) saplings in the department of Dosso. This last-mentioned project will be financed over a five-year period through an earmarked contribution of \$1,101,000 to the Trust Fund by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), which provided some preparatory technical assistance in 1981.

9. In the Upper Volta, UNSO is providing funds for two major forestry projects: reforestation in the Saponé region, with a contribution of \$320,000 from AGFUND through the Trust Fund and \$80,000 from UNSO general resources; and village and family woodlots in the department of Koudougou, with a \$1.4 million contribution by SIDA through the Trust Fund.

10. In Ethiopia, a national project for the establishment of fuelwood plantations in the towns of Dessie, Debre Birhan, Nazareth and Dire Dawa has been formulated. This project is to be submitted to the Consultative Group for Desertification Control at its fourth session. The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) has already indicated its interest in assisting the establishment of fuelwood plantations around the towns of Debre Birhan and Nazareth. Negotiations are currently under way regarding the financing of these components.

11. In addition to these projects, UNSO has provided assistance in the formulation of projects for the establishment of fuelwood plantations around urban centres in Somalia, and a programme involving 13 activities for the protection and ecologically sound exploitation of the Casamance forest in Senegal.

## 2. Development of renewable alternatives to fuelwood

12. In Senegal, a project for the study, development and marketing of fuel briquettes made from, for example, groundnut shells and peat as a substitute or a supplement to the use of fuelwood went into full operation in 1982, following feasibility studies initiated the previous year. The project is being financed through an earmarked contribution of \$755,310 made to the Trust Fund by DANIDA in late 1981. In Cape Verde, field operations commenced in 1982 for the installation of wind turbines in urban, village and sparsely populated rural areas, and the training of personnel in their installation, modification and maintenance, with contributions by DANIDA to the Trust Fund and from UNSO general resources totalling \$1,496,000 also made in late 1981.

13. In Niger, UNSO and the UNDP energy account are jointly financing a World Bank mission to formulate the terms of reference for an energy master plan which aims at the reduction of fuelwood consumption through the use of various energy alternatives. In Mali, agreement has been reached, after initial delays, to carry out, with UNIDO as executive agency, an UNSO-financed feasibility study for a production facility for solar energy equipment.

## 3. Design, development and production of fuel-efficient stoves

14. Another approach UNSO has been taking to reducing fuelwood consumption is the development of fuel-efficient cooking stoves. Following a joint DANIDA/UNSO

mission, preparatory activities and an earmarked contribution to the Fund of \$398,800 by DANIDA in late 1981, a project was started in 1982 for the experimental design and production of improved cooking stoves and their promotion and distribution in the Gambia. The project will involve cooking stoves utilizing briquettes made from ground-nut husk in urban areas, and the improvement of the efficiency of wood cooking stoves in rural areas.

15. In the Upper Volta, a project for improving the efficiency of wood-cooking stoves is being carried out with an earmarked contribution of \$238,000 to the Trust Fund from SIDA. In Mali and Niger, UNSO and the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women are jointly financing preparatory consciousness-raising activities for the launching of large-scale projects for the widespread production and utilization of improved cooking stoves produced by local artisans using local materials. Similar project activities are being extended to Mauritania. The projects are being carried out in close co-operation with the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and under the aegis of a regional programme co-ordinating mechanism financed through the Trust Fund by an earmarked contribution of \$210,000 from SIDA.

#### 4. Bush fire control

16. Major projects have been formulated for bush fire control in the Gambia and in the Bafata Gabu area of Guinea-Bissau, and will be submitted to the Consultative Group for Desertification Control in February 1983. At the time this report is being written, missions are also scheduled to visit Benin and Guinea with a view to formulating projects for the protection of woodlands and grasslands from bush fires.

#### B. Range management

17. In the Sudan, a major project for the management of grazing resources around permanent water supplies, costed at \$1.4 million, was finally approved in 1982. SIDA has contributed \$910,000 to the Trust Fund towards the cost of financing the project, which aims, inter alia, at protecting the lands from overgrazing and trampling. In the Gambia, a \$400,600 project for pasture development and protection of lands around livestock watering points, financed by AGFUND, was approved in December 1982. In Senegal, a major project for the operation of a centre for the production of pasture seed has been formulated. The cost of the project is estimated at \$2.8 million, of which \$2.3 million are required from external sources. Negotiations are under way with the Government of Yugoslavia which has indicated an interest in providing substantial services and materials for the project. It is envisaged that the reseedling of rangelands with improved varieties will enhance their productivity and resistance to drought.

18. On a regional basis, a joint UNSO/UNESCO/Sahel Institute mission reformulated a regional pastoral training programme to extend ongoing activities and expand the training to middle-level technicians. Contributions of \$550,000 from UNDP and \$120,000 from UNSO will cover project activities until the end of 1983. The expanded project is also being submitted to the Consultative Group for Desertification Control for additional financing.

### C. Water resource management

19. In Mauritania, a major project for the construction and rehabilitation of small earthen dams received an earmarked contribution to the Trust Fund of \$558,000 from AGFUND.

20. UNSO has also sent a formulation mission to the Gambia to develop a project for the construction of small dams along tributaries of the Gambia river.

21. In 1982, UNSO continued to extend its support to the programme for the ecological rehabilitation of the Fouta-Djallon massif. A formulation mission was carried out, followed by intensive meetings with the Government of Guinea, UNDP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), for a project aimed at the agro-sylvo-pastoral development of the massif and the rehabilitation and enhancement of its natural resources. Of the total estimated cost of \$3.1 million, \$1.5 million will be contributed by UNDP, \$500,000 by UNSO from Trust Fund general resources, \$700,000 by the Government of Guinea and \$400,000 by OAU subject to the approval of the next annual meeting of its Council of Ministers in 1983. In addition, UNSO and the Government of Guinea have formulated a pilot project with an estimated international financing requirement of \$1,030,000 for the protection and integrated development of the Kakrima Valley in the massif, which will be submitted to the Consultative Group for Desertification Control.

22. In Somalia, a major project for the rehabilitation of rural reservoirs costing \$3,627,000, has been prepared with a contribution for equipment valued at \$3 million from the United Nations Capital Development Fund. The Government of Australia has contributed an additional \$306,360 through the Trust Fund, and the remaining cost of the project will be funded from other sources.

23. For the development of ground-water resources, UNSO carried out jointly with the Government of Yugoslavia a mission to Mali to formulate a project aimed at strengthening the operational capacity of the National Department of Natural Resources for hydrogeological exploration and exploitation. UNSO is discussing with the Governments of Mali and Yugoslavia the modalities of possible co-operation for the financing and implementation of this project. In October, UNSO also sent a mission to the Gambia which formulated with the Government a proposed national plan, to which the Government has given highest priority, for the ecologically sound management and use of the country's ground-water resource potential.

### D. Sand-dune fixation

24. In Mauritania, where a comprehensive research project on the nature and extent of sand movements in the country and the formulation of an operational programme for the control of sand movements were carried out in 1981, a major project has been approved which will involve an earmarked contribution by DANIDA of \$2.3 million through the Trust Fund, a contribution of \$450,000 by UNDP, a contribution of \$1.4 million for equipment by the United Nations Capital Development Fund and a comprehensive training programme to be financed by the Government of Algeria.

Field operations are expected to start in early 1983. The project is part of a regional programme for sand-dune fixation to be submitted to the Consultative Group for Desertification Control, which also includes another project for dune fixation in the Brava area of Somalia (at an estimated cost of \$2.8 million) and a third project for sand-dune stabilization and reclamation in the Darfur region of the Sudan (at an estimated cost of \$1.1 million). It is envisaged that this regional programme will facilitate a region-wide cross-fertilization of information and experience relating to the most effective methods of sand-dune fixation, using popular participation and up-to-date technologies.

25. The Somalia component of the regional programme will supplement an ongoing UNSO-assisted project for the stabilization of coastal sand dunes, approved in 1981, which is being financed through earmarked contributions to the Trust Fund by the Governments of Italy (\$730,000) and Australia (\$231,000). In Niger, an UNSO-financed technological mission has been carried out by UNSO and FAO experts to prepare a project for the control of moving sand dunes which are encroaching upon the oases of the Bilma region.

#### E. Planning, co-ordination and monitoring

26. In 1982, UNSO initiated with financial support from UNEP further projects involving assistance in the preparation of national plans for combating desertification in Djibouti, with UNESCO as executing agency, in the Gambia, with the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development as executing agency, and in Senegal, with the World Bank as executing agency. This brings to light the number of Governments that have developed national plans for combating desertification. A similar approach is being used in the Upper Volta. In Benin, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, missions will concentrate on soil erosion and general environmental degradation problems. On a subregional basis, UNSO helped finance and participated in a CILSS/UNSO meeting at Banjul in October to review the joint UNSO/CILSS/Club du Sahel strategy for combating desertification in member States of CILSS.

#### F. Integrated and supplementary livelihood systems projects

27. In Mali, a project was approved in 1982 for the integrated development of the Lake Region (Zone Lacustre), with an earmarked contribution of \$388,100 to the Trust Fund by the Government of Australia. This project will be dovetailed with a project financed by the Federal Republic of Germany under arrangements agreed upon by a joint Government of Mali/Federal Republic of Germany/UNSO mission which took place in December 1982. In Djibouti, a multi-sectoral project for the integrated development of the coastal plain has been formulated and will be submitted to the Consultative Group for Desertification Control. AGFUND has agreed to make a matching contribution of \$250,000 towards the cost of the project.

28. In all its activities, as was noted earlier, UNSO emphasizes national involvement, incentives and the participation of the populations concerned at the family and village levels. In the development and implementation of project



proposals, provision is made for the utilization and training of national staff to help build up their expertise and managerial capability for carrying out project operations. The projects also provide for popular participation by bringing in local leaders, school teachers, managers of co-operatives and the like in the critical stages of project preparation and ensuring their continuous participation throughout the implementation of the projects.

### III. PROGRAMMING AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

29. As was noted in paragraphs 2 and 3, UNSO intensified its resource mobilization efforts in 1982. These efforts included the sending of joint missions with representatives of donor Governments for the identification and formulation of projects. The involvement of donors at the earliest stages of project development has proved effective in increasing and promoting new interest on the part of the donor community in desertification control. In addition to traditional donors, the Governments of Australia and Norway have recently become active supporters of the UNSO-assisted desertification control programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region, and UNEP has secured the support of AGFUND for a number of projects. The Governments of Italy and Yugoslavia have also intensified their participation in the programme.

30. At the time of the preparation of this report, UNSO had identified with the Governments of the region a total of 258 projects requiring an investment of \$710.2 million, of which \$404.6 million has been committed from bilateral and multilateral sources, including the Trust Fund. This leaves a \$305.6 million in external resources required to finance the priority anti-desertification projects for which the Governments of the region have requested UNSO assistance. Thus, despite the volume of financing that has been mobilized, there is a need for a considerably higher level of assistance to the Sudano-Sahelian region and adjacent countries to help combat desertification, and this can be provided only by a concerted effort on the part of the international donor community.

### IV. CO-ORDINATION AND INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL CO-OPERATION

31. UNSO continued in 1982 to maintain close working relationships with various bodies, both within and outside the United Nations system, on matters having a bearing on the problem of desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region.

32. At the subregional level, UNSO continued to work closely with CILSS, participating in most of the planning and programming activities carried out by the CILSS Executive Secretariat and the Club du Sahel. As a principal partner of CILSS, UNSO also attended the Conference of Heads of State, held at Praia in January, as well as the regular meetings of the CILSS Council of Ministers, held in January and June.

33. A series of meetings was also held by the Director of UNSO with the Secretary-General of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on the

joint programming and financing of activities and the strengthening of co-operative arrangements between the Community and UNSO. As a result of these meetings, agreement was reached on several joint project undertakings at the subregional level, including programmes for the systematic use of Acacia senegal in development activities in the northern Sahelian belt and for the promotion of fuel-efficient cooking stoves. The possibilities and advantages of undertaking a joint programme for the development of village facilities for post-harvest storage to serve, inter alia, as insurance against the risk of drought, were also discussed in detail.

34. In July, UNSO participated in the regional meeting of UNDP resident representatives in Africa, which took place at Lomé. UNSO reviewed proposed and ongoing desertification control projects with the resident representatives from the Sudano-Sahelian and related countries, including the relation of various desertification control activities and proposals to the country programmes of the Governments concerned.

35. Finally, UNSO continued to work throughout the year closely with UNEP on the different aspects of UNSO's anti-desertification activities. This included consultations on programme activities and administrative arrangements under the UNEP joint venture with UNDP, all aspects of the preparation for the fourth session of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control, the preparation of the Executive Director's assessment of progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, the promotion of the exchange of information and expertise on desertification matters, and specific programmes for training and research for combating desertification. It participated in the Interagency Working Group on Desertification and other meetings convened by UNEP.

36. As is evident from the present report, the institutional arrangements for implementing the Plan of Action in the Sudano-Sahelian region, where desertification is particularly acute, have continued to prove effective. Through close working relationships with the Sudano-Sahelian countries and the international donor community, in 1982 UNSO was able to expedite the flow of assistance for specific desertification control projects and to assist the countries, on behalf of UNEP, in their planning, programming and project implementation activities at an expanded level. A continuation of the special arrangements for the region, as a joint venture of UNEP and UNDP is therefore indicated.

#### Notes

1/ Under the terms of decision 6/11 B of 24 May 1978 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and decision 25/10 of 27 June 1978 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which were endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 33/88 of 15 December 1978, UNSO operates as a joint UNEP/UNDP venture.

2/ Including \$5.9 million for new activities and \$6.2 million for complementary activities, modifications and new phases of ongoing projects.

APPENDIX

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish:

(a) To note the steps taken by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme, towards the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in 19 countries of the Sudano-Sahelian and related regions;

(b) To authorize the Executive Director of UNEP to continue support to the joint venture at a level commensurate with the pressing needs of the region and with the efforts being carried out by UNSO, on behalf of UNEP, to meet these needs;

(c) To authorize the Executive Director of UNEP to submit the present report on behalf of the Governing Council, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session.

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