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Special segment: interactive dialogue sessions

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Draft decision submitted by the President of the
Conference of the Parties at its eighth session

The Conference of the Parties,

Having considered the Madrid Declaration on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification,

1. *Welcomes* the text of the Declaration attached to the present decision;
2. *Decides* to annex the Declaration to the report of the Conference of the Parties on its eighth session.

Annex

MADRID DECLARATION

1. Desertification and drought affect 70 per cent of drylands, which account for one quarter of the Earth's surface and approximately one sixth of the world's population. They exact a heavy toll on human living conditions and natural resources, with grave social consequences including economic losses and forced migration. As ever, it is the poorest and most vulnerable who are most at risk. Securing their basic rights - right to water, right to food - demands the full implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Moreover, desertification must be regarded as a global problem directly or indirectly affecting the whole of humankind.
2. "Desertification and adaptation to climate change" was the main focus of the ministerial segment that took place in Madrid during the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to UNCCD. It is acknowledged that the living conditions of millions of people affected by desertification are very sensitive to climate variability and climate change. The drylands represent the ultimate frontier where the battle for sustainable land and water management must be won.
3. Faced with evolving patterns of climate change, modern society has yet to prove convincingly that it can wisely use its comparative advantage over other earlier civilizations that collapsed from shortages of natural resources. We have the means, the science, the technology and, through the adoption of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the expression, as well, of the resolve of 191 nations to cooperate through multilateral solidarity.
4. The strategic orientation of the Convention, which has now been consolidated in Madrid, reaffirms our common political commitment to the process of UNCCD implementation and promises to provide a more specific response to this question. We can fulfil our commitments and we must do so. All that is needed is stronger political will.
5. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment confirmed that the extent of and trends in desertification, the links between desertification and climate change, and local, regional and national interactions, must be better understood. The reformed UNCCD subsidiary committees can combine their efforts to meet this objective.
6. Integrated drylands management should foster initiatives for alternative means of livelihood in vulnerable areas and sustainable farming crop and livestock programmes that provide incomes and guarantee the right to food security. Renewed support through action programmes can spread and encourage best practices for protecting vulnerable people and ecosystems. To that end, the mobilization of adequate, predictable resources through the promotion of South-South and North-South cooperation is a priority.

7. To obtain positive results in these circumstances, attention should be given to the following important areas:

(a) Establishment of specific targets as part of the UNCCD process through the adoption and pursuit of a 10-year strategy plan to combat desertification and drought so as to provide, as soon as possible, an operational plan and, in particular, indicators to evaluate progress.

(b) The Committee on Science and Technology should, without delay, set a target for activities related to carbon sinks and increased land productivity to be met in all drylands. Likewise, it should set a target for effective forestation and reforestation activities in drylands worldwide to be met over the 10-year period.

(c) Consideration of the social and economic costs of desertification, and especially the costs of failure to take action on land degradation, in order to raise awareness and increase efficiently the support provided to the affected areas.

(d) Strengthening of linkages through increased cooperation between the three Rio conventions, making optimum use of existing instruments.

(e) Promotion of scientific and technological cooperation over vulnerability, degradation and carbon sinks.

(f) Closer relations between institutions and programmes to facilitate access by UNCCD Parties to the human and financial resources they need to stimulate and support national efforts.

(g) Promotion of effective participation by NGOs and other civil-society stakeholders in UNCCD processes.

8. Lastly, the adoption of the strategic framework of the UNCCD on the eve of the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, which will consider such topics as Africa, agriculture, rural development, land degradation, desertification and drought, offers a valuable opportunity to recommit investments in rural areas where prevention and rehabilitation must go hand-in-hand with securing the fundamental rights of population groups affected by land degradation, desertification and drought. We therefore welcome the establishment of voluntary partnerships aimed at expanding the existing cooperation between key actors, and at combining efforts to provide assistance to countries affected by land degradation, desertification and drought.
