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DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION: ENVIRONMENT

Implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat DesertificationNote by the Secretary-General

1. In its resolution 3337 (XXIX) of 17 December 1974 the General Assembly decided to convene in 1977 a United Nations Conference on Desertification. In paragraph 7 of resolution 3511 (XXX) of 15 December 1975, the Assembly requested the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to act as the intergovernmental preparatory body for the Conference, and in paragraph 2 of resolution 31/108 of 16 December 1976 it designated the Executive Director of UNEP as Secretary-General of the Conference.
2. The Conference, held at Nairobi from 29 August to 9 September 1977, approved the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification 1/ which specified that "The seven-year period 1978-1984 has been chosen for the implementation of the immediate actions required and as an indication of the time at which a first general assessment of progress could be made". 2/ In paragraph 1 of resolution 32/172 of 19 December 1977, the General Assembly approved the report of the Conference containing the Plan of Action.
3. The Executive Director of UNEP informed the Governing Council at its ninth session of his intention, in conformity with the view of the Conference and the General Assembly, to prepare a comprehensive report on the implementation of the Plan of Action for submission to the Council at its thirteenth session, to be held in 1985. The Council, by decision 9/22 A of 26 May 1981, endorsed that intention and urged the Executive Director to submit the report, if possible, earlier than the target date of 1985.

* A/39/150.

4. Subsequently, by decision 11/1, section VIII, of 24 May 1983, the Governing Council approved the Executive Director's recommendation that at its twelfth session it devote two days to a detailed assessment of progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action. The General Assembly, in paragraph 8 of its resolution 38/165 of 19 December 1983, welcomed that decision of the Governing Council.
5. The views expressed by the UNEP Governing Council during its consideration of the Executive Director's report on the general assessment of progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification are reflected in the proceedings of the Council at its twelfth session (UNEP/GC.12/19). The report of the Executive Director (UNEP/GC.12/9 and Corr.1) is available to delegations for information.
6. Decision 12/10 was adopted by the Governing Council following its consideration of the Executive Director's report. 3/ In paragraphs 26 and 27 of that decision, the Council authorized the Executive Director to transmit to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, the reports which appear as annexes to the present note. These are the reports on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (annex I), submitted pursuant to Assembly resolution 32/172 and subsequent resolutions, most recently 37/218 of 20 December 1982, and the report on the implementation in the Sudano-Sahelian region of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, submitted pursuant to Assembly resolution 38/164 of 19 December 1983. The comments of the Governing Council on those reports are to be found in the proceedings of its twelfth session (UNEP/GC.12/19).

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Desertification, Nairobi, 29 August-9 September 1977 (A/CONF.74/36), chap. I.

2/ Ibid., para. 9.

3/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 25 (A/39/25), annex.

ANNEX I

Report on the Implementation of the Plan
of Action to Combat Desertification

1. In most regions of the developing world, factors contributing to desertification such as below-average rainfall, severe drought and increased pressure on the land continued virtually unabated during 1983. Drought occurred in many of the continents, but Africa in particular has had the most catastrophic drought, affecting some 34 countries and causing major dislocation of population and famine. In the Sudano-Sahelian region, the 1969-1973 drought is generally considered not to have ended, but to be continuing and significantly contributing to the severity of desertification that has continued to increase in the region.
2. If only one achievement were to be named in this field it would undoubtedly be the increased awareness of desertification problems. This awareness has been growing ever since preparations were initiated for convening the United Nations conference on Desertification in 1977. It is lamentable that this increased awareness of the problem has been matched neither by actions to fight desertification nor by the technical and financial preparedness needed for the fight; they continue to lag far behind while the situation worsens year by year.
3. This gloomy picture has, however, been slightly brightened by reports indicating that a measure of success has been achieved in containing dune encroachment, that concerted efforts are under way to control waterlogging and salinization in irrigated lands, that some advances have been made in assessing and monitoring the problems of desertification and that an increasing number of research and training facilities are being established.
4. The Consultative Group for Desertification Control held its fourth session at Nairobi in February 1983 to consider the mobilization of financing for 18 high-priority anti-desertification project proposals and to discuss ways and means of improving the functioning of the Group. Only five projects received expressions of support. Of these, three have been fully financed with the active participation of the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) and are now being implemented. Another has received a contribution of \$88,362 from Australia, and the additional external financing required is being negotiated with other potential donors.
5. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Desertification held its eighth and ninth meetings at Geneva in April and September 1983, respectively. At its eighth meeting, the Group discussed the involvement of the United Nations agencies concerned in the implementation of the system-wide medium-term environment programme during its first biennium (1984-1985) and particularly the concrete projects and activities related to desertification. At its ninth meeting, the Group reviewed progress in the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of its previous meeting, with particular emphasis on arrangements for the general assessment of progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action. The Group also considered reports by member agencies on their recent activities related to desertification matters.

6. In response to the request in paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 35/73 of 5 December 1980, UNEP, in co-operation with other United Nations bodies, has been working towards the creation of specific programmes of research and training at the national, regional and international levels. The first activity, carried out in 1983 as part of a programme prepared by the Inter-Agency Working Group at its sixth meeting, was a survey of research and training institutions in the region of the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) with a view to the preparation of a directory.

7. Early in 1983, UNEP and ECWA held a joint programming meeting to explore areas of future co-operation in environmental matters. Among the areas chosen was desertification, and the specific fields agreed upon for co-operative activities included preparation of national plans of action and specific pilot anti-desertification projects, support to training courses and seminars and the establishment of regional research and training networks and programmes.

8. In response to Governing Council decision 10/18 of 31 May 1982, in which the Executive Director was requested to facilitate a process of exchange of information and expertise on desertification matters in Africa, draft reports on available information and experience on desertification control in the region, and directories of national, regional and international institutions involved in research and training on subjects relevant to desertification have been prepared for the Kalahari, north African and Sudano-Sahelian regions. A meeting held in September 1983 with representatives from the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) discussed those reports and approved their publication, which is scheduled for 1984.

9. One of the main tasks of UNEP in this field in 1983 was preparing for the Governing Council's general assessment of progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action. As part of the preparations for the assessment, UNEP sent a questionnaire on desertification to 91 countries affected by desertification and 10 other countries involved in providing assistance to affected countries. UNEP and UNSO provided assistance to over 70 developing countries in collecting data required for the questionnaire. A total of 66 responses were received, though the quality and quantity of the data supplied varied widely from country to country. In addition, three technical reports, eight regional assessments, a review of demographic changes between 1973 and 1983 as they affected the status of desertification, a report on anti-desertification activities conducted by non-governmental organizations, an updated compendium of United Nations system activities in the field of desertification, an experimental digitized map assessing desertification in Africa and three major supporting documents were prepared under the supervision of UNEP. Three updated case-studies were prepared with the assistance of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and two of the nine associated case-studies prepared for the 1977 Conference were updated as part of the assessment process. In addition, 26 country reports were received and analysed.

10. UNEP is taking advantage of the occasion of the general assessment, during the twelfth session of its Governing Council, to launch a comprehensive public information campaign with the overall aim of contributing towards more effective

implementation of the Plan of Action and desertification control in general by mobilizing concern in affected and donor countries alike. The principal elements of the campaign will be multi-projector and single-projector slide shows for conferences, meetings of non-governmental organizations, exhibits etc.; a film series for television; radio programmes for regional and international broadcasting; and a briefing document, press folder and photo sheet for journalists.

ANNEX II

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

1. The volume of funds mobilized and allocated by UNSO in 1983 through the United Nations Trust Fund for Sudano-Sahelian Activities amounted to \$12.9 million, bringing the total resources mobilized by UNSO to \$59.5 million since the start of its desertification control mandate in 1979. Programme support from the UNEP contribution to the joint venture was utilized exclusively for project formulation. Despite the resources mobilized, lack of sufficient financing remained one of the principal constraints on the effective implementation of the Plan of Action in the Sudano-Sahelian region.
2. During the year under review, the main thrust of UNSO anti-desertification operations was in the areas of deforestation control, range management, water resources management, soil protection and sand dune fixation, and planning and co-ordination. UNSO continued to emphasize the involvement of the people affected in the planning and implementation of projects. It also continued to work with the Governments and populations of the region in consciousness raising on the importance of desertification, the preparation of national plans or strategies for desertification control and the establishment or strengthening of the institutional machinery.
3. Expanded activities carried out by UNSO in the area of forestry included the establishment of fuelwood plantations to meet the energy requirements of rural and urban populations in an ecologically sound way. In Ethiopia, the Danish International Development Agency agreed to contribute \$5.9 million through the Trust Fund for the establishment of 8,700 hectares of fuelwood plantations near the towns off Debre Birhan and Nazret, and the Finnish International Development Agency is contributing \$500,000 through the Trust Fund for the provision of infrastructure and the establishment of 200 hectares of plantations. With the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as executing agency, UNSO also supported short courses in nursery and afforestation techniques and species trials for rain-fed fuelwood plantations in Somalia.
4. In Senegal, a programme was formulated for rehabilitation of the saline soils of the Sine-Saloum region through reforestation. The Canadian International Development Agency, which made a \$150,000 contribution to the Trust Fund to finance the first phase of the project, involving cartographic and pedological studies of the region, is now engaged in negotiations for financing of the entire project at a cost of over \$1.5 million.
5. New projects were also formulated for the establishment of shelter belts in northern Sudan and assistance to the Shelter Belt Research Station at Kano in northern Nigeria.
6. A particular approach UNSO has been pursuing is agroforestry. Among projects UNSO has helped design are schemes ensuring complementary and mutually supportive forestry and agricultural activities in Kano in northern Nigeria and in the Kerio

forest in Kenya. Agroforestry activities include the planting of Acacia albida which, with its deep tap-roots, is drought-resistant, does not compete with food crops, improves the fertility of the soil through its nitrogen-fixing qualities, and provides fodder and shade for livestock. In Benin, UNSO allocated \$1,131,900 for a multi-purpose tree-planting programme financed by earmarked contributions through the Trust Fund of \$306,900 from AGFUND and \$825,000 from the Netherlands Government. UNEP made a \$10,000 contribution to the project, and the Government of Benin is meeting the remaining costs.

7. UNSO continued to support projects for the development of alternative sources of energy. In Senegal, feasibility studies were completed for the systematic harvesting of peat for use in briquettes as fuel and in mixtures in sandy soils to improve their structure, organic content and productivity. The studies indicated considerable potential for the use of peat as a source of energy (which could reduce demand for charcoal in Dakar by 50 per cent), for soil protection and to increase agricultural productivity. UNSO also initiated feasibility studies for the possible production of fuel briquettes in the Niger and the Sudan. In Nigeria, UNSO has been exploring with the Government the possibility of producing charcoal from by-products of wood-based industries in the south for utilization in the north, which has limited ligneous resources. In the Gambia and Senegal, a UNSO technical mission examined the condition of the mangroves in Casamance and Sine-Saloum and along the Gambia river. Proposals were made for projects aimed at the protection, salvaging and ecologically sound harvesting of mangrove trees, some of which have fallen victim to die-back, the causes of which are being studied.

8. As another means of reducing demand for fuelwood, UNSO continued, to support the design, development and production of fuel-efficient cooking stoves that use less wood or different kinds of fuel. In Mali, Mauritania and the Niger, UNSO and the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women financed preparatory assistance activities for the design and development of fuel-efficient wood-burning stoves. UNSO is seeking resources, in co-operation with the CILSS secretariat, to finance large-scale follow-up projects in these countries. UNSO also agreed to finance a regional preparatory project for the design of improved wood-burning stoves in Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and the Sudan.

9. UNSO also dispatched missions to Benin and Guinea to assist the two Governments in the preparation of large-scale projects for controlling bush fires.

10. In Kenya, a UNSO mission prepared a rangeland management and development plan for the arid and semi-arid zones of the country. The plan and related projects will be used by UNSO for resource mobilization purposes. In Djibouti, UNSO allocated \$543,800, with contributions from AGFUND, UNEP and UNSO general resources, for a pilot project for desertification control and ecologically sound development of the natural resources in the coastal plains of the country. In Somalia, UNSO financed a pre-feasibility study for the establishment of a Nomadic Studies Institute, while in Senegal it supported a regional workshop on ecological monitoring of the Sahelian rangelands of Senegal in November 1983. The purpose of the workshop was to familiarize the participants with the methodology developed and other results achieved by the UNEP/FAO project on the inventory and monitoring of Sahelian pastoral ecosystems.

11. In the Gambia, UNSO obtained a contribution of \$472,000 to the Trust Fund from the Government of Australia for a project for the construction of small dams for irrigation and protection against salt water intrusion. The project will help to ensure a sufficient supply of fresh water for longer periods, including periods of drought. UNSO has also agreed to finance a project for the management of ground-water resources in the Banjul area. The project will be implemented by the Government with the United Nations as co-operating agency. Arrangements have been made for the construction of a mathematical model and the training of Gambian nationals in ground-water modelling by the computer company IBM.
12. In Mali, UNSO has agreed to allocate \$500,000, for which a contribution by the Government of Yugoslavia is expected, to finance a project to strengthen the operational capacity of the Department of Water Resources in ground-water exploration and exploitation.
13. In Cape Verde, UNSO allocated a \$200,000 contribution by AGFUND to the Trust Fund for the continuation of a pilot project for the protection of the Sao Joao Bautista valley against soil erosion. The project will involve afforestation to provide vegetative protection for the soil, and the building of dikes for water erosion control and water harvesting purposes. In the Sudan, a feasibility study was carried out on a pilot research programme for the utilization of gardud soils, the surface of which has hardened as a result of the combined effect of rainfall impact and wind erosion. In Somalia, UNSO allocated \$1.3 million through a Trust Fund contribution from the Danish International Development Agency for coastal sand dune stabilization over 1,500 hectares in the Brava area, through dune fixation and water erosion control. In the Niger, the Government of Norway has agreed to contribute \$560,000 as an initial contribution to the Trust Fund for a project aimed at controlling the encroachment of sand dunes upon the palm groves of Bilma district.
14. Following a meeting of donors for the reconstruction of Chad held in November 1982, a joint CILSS/Club du Sahel/UNSO mission visited Chad in January 1983 to assess the needs of the country and prepare the ground for the re-establishment of technical co-operation with the Government. This was followed by an UNSO multidisciplinary desertification planning and programming mission in April, which prepared a report on desertification and identified 20 desertification control projects jointly with the technical services concerned. It is envisaged that these projects will form the core of a future national plan for combating desertification and will be used for future UNSO resource mobilization efforts for the country.
15. In Senegal, UNSO has initiated assistance to the Government in the preparation of a national strategy for combating desertification, with the World Bank as executing agency. A committee of representatives from various ministries, under the aegis of the Ministry of Planning, has been established and will convene a national seminar in 1984 to formulate the strategy. In Burkina Faso and the Niger, UNSO provided assistance to the Governments for the formulation of national desertification control strategies, with UNESCO as executing agency. The national strategy for the Niger will include an updating of the case-study on desertification prepared by the Government for the Desertification Conference in 1977. In Guinea-Bissau, the preparation of a national plan for combating environmental degradation, and especially soil degradation, was funded by UNSO with

UNESCO as executing agency. In Benin, UNSO funded a project, also with UNESCO as executing agency, to assist the Ministry of Planning in the development of an institutional structure and work programme for combating desertification.

16. UNSO submitted 10 projects to the fourth session of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control. Through various planning and programming missions and continuous consultations with the authorities concerned, UNSO has identified with the Governments of the region a total of 309 priority projects requiring investment of \$743.5 million, of which a total of \$412.6 million has been committed by bilateral, multilateral and other sources. This leaves over \$330.8 million of external resources still needed to finance priority anti-desertification projects for which the Governments of the region have requested assistance. Thus, there is still a need for considerable volumes of assistance to combat desertification that can be mobilized only by a concerted effort on the part of the international donor community.

17. UNSO continues to maintain close working relationships with regional and other bodies, both within and outside the United Nations system. It participated in donors' round tables convened by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Djibouti and Mali for the purpose of co-ordinating and increasing donors' interest in mobilizing resources. UNSO has also continued to co-operate with the Governments of the member countries of CILSS in organizing, with the support of the Club du Sahel and CILSS itself, special round tables on forestry aimed at assessing the latest situation in the forestry sectors and proposing national strategies for forest conservation in the CILSS countries. In accordance with a co-operation agreement signed in 1982 with the West African Economic Community (CEAO), UNSO and the Community are financing a study, carried out by FAO, which will produce recommendations on technical aspects of grain and cereal storage at the village and farm levels in the member States of CILSS.

18. In April 1983, a seminar was held in Senegal under the joint sponsorship of UNSO and the International Trade Centre on the latest developments concerning gum arabic research, production and marketing. UNSO also participated, in October, in a workshop on soil physics sponsored by the International Centre for Theoretical Physics at Trieste, Italy, and, in November, in a seminar convened by UNESCO at Medenine, Tunisia, on soil erosion in pre-desert zones. Together with UNEP and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), UNSO sponsored and participated in the preparations for and holding of a multidisciplinary meeting on the impact of drought on socio-economic systems in Africa, which was held at Nairobi in December 1983.

19. As part of a programme to promote the exchange of information on and expertise in desertification matters, UNSO prepared a survey and a directory covering the Sudano-Sahelian region (see annex I, para. 8).

20. Finally, UNSO commissioned and helped in the preparation of an assessment of desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian and adjacent regions seven years after the adoption of the Plan of Action. This assessment, together with a global assessment prepared by senior advisers to the Executive Director, was reviewed at a meeting held in December at Geneva.

21. In paragraph 4 of its resolution 38/164 on the implementation in the Sudano-Saharan region of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, the General Assembly invited the Governing Council of UNEP to examine at its twelfth session the possibility of including Ghana and Togo in the list of countries which received assistance through UNSO in implementing the Plan of Action and to report on the matter to the Assembly at its thirty-ninth session.

22. In considering the possibility of including Ghana and Togo within the geographical scope of the desertification control mandate of UNSO, the following considerations were taken into account: Ghana and Togo are located directly to the east of Benin (which the Council decided to include in the desertification control mandate of UNSO by decision 9/22 B), and directly south of Burkina Faso. Although their climates are not as arid as those of the true Sahelian bioclimatic zones, they contain extensive subhumid areas similar to those of Benin. The northern parts of Ghana and Togo, like northern Benin, are especially vulnerable to the harmattan, a hot, desiccating, dust-laden wind that blows from the north-east across the Sahara. Partly because of these climatic factors, there is extensive savannah in Ghana, especially north of the Kwahu plateau, and in northern Togo. Togo's coastal areas in the south, as well as Ghana's south-eastern coast, are also dry, and both countries were hit by drought in 1982 and 1983. Consequently, there are extensive areas in both Ghana and Togo which are suffering from desertification.

23. Finally, it should be noted that conditions in the Atakora massif, which forms a watershed between the Niger and Volta basins, affect the flow of the Niger river in the Sudano-Saharan countries of the Niger, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. The massif is a continuous mountain chain extending from northern Ghana through northern Togo to northern Benin. The geographical and ecological interrelationship between northern Benin and its northern Sahelian neighbours was one of the reasons for the inclusion of Benin in the desertification control mandate of UNSO.

24. For these reasons, the Governing Council decided (decision 12/10, para. 10) to include Ghana and Togo among the countries eligible to receive assistance through UNSO in implementing the Plan of Action.
