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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

Report of the Executive Director

Addendum

1. Since the preparation of the Executive Director's report (UNEP/GC.7/10), further action has been taken by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office.
2. The enlargement of UNSO's Regional Office at Ouagadougou is now almost complete, with three of the five professional posts filled, and the remaining two under active recruitment. These are in addition to the staff assigned to the Regional Office under UNSO's original rehabilitation and development mandate.
3. On 11 January 1979, following the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding by the Executive Director of UNEP and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, the latter notified the relevant organizations of the United Nations system, as well as the resident representatives, of the new desertification control mandate of UNSO. The Administrator explained the main elements of the joint UNEP/UNDP venture, as contained in the Memorandum of Understanding, as well as action taken by the UNEP and UNDP Governing Councils, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. In order to reflect accurately its enlarged responsibilities, the Administrator also announced the renaming of the United Nations Sahelian Office as the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, as agreed upon by the Executive Director and the Administrator and in accordance with paragraph 38 of the Executive Director's report to the Governing Council at its sixth session on measures to be taken for the benefit of the Sudano-Sahelian region (UNEP/GC.6/9/Add.2), which was specifically endorsed by the Governing Council of UNEP in its decision 6/11 B of 24 May 1978 and by the UNDP Governing Council in its decision 25/10 II of 27 June 1978.

4. As a follow-up to the above-noted actions by the Executive Director of UNEP and the Administrator of UNDP, UNSO has made extensive contacts with the relevant organizations of the United Nations system to obtain their full co-operation in UNSO's effort to assist the 15 countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region, on behalf of UNEP, in implementing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, and to develop working modalities for collaborative action. Special visits were made to the headquarters of FAO and UNESCO and both FAO and UNESCO agreed to make experts available to participate in planning and programming missions on desertification control to the 15 countries of the region organized by UNSO, and to co-operate with UNSO in the identification, preparation and appraisal of priority projects presented by Governments and in the implementation of approved projects for which appropriate financing was secured. Similar visits to other agencies are planned in the near future.
5. In preparing for the planning and programming missions on desertification control, UNSO held consultations for the preparation of the terms of reference and composition of the missions with Governments, UNEP and the resident representatives concerned; in this connexion a meeting with the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of the 15 Sudano-Sahelian countries took place at United Nations Headquarters on 2 March 1979. The Governments were further consulted on the timing, terms of reference and composition of the missions through the Resident Representatives concerned.
6. As of April 1979, planning and programming missions had been sent to Ethiopia, the Gambia, Kenya, Mali, Senegal, Somalia and Sudan; Government agreements were obtained and arrangements made for the fielding of missions to Niger and Upper Volta by the end of April; and consultations were being made with Governments for the scheduling of missions to Cape Verde, Mauritania, Nigeria and the United Republic of Cameroon by 15 May 1979.
7. As a follow-up to the planning and programming missions, it is envisaged that UNSO will submit for the consideration and approval of the Governments concerned proposed action programmes consisting of priority anti-desertification projects for which UNSO will, at the Governments' request, assist in mobilizing the necessary resources, including their presentation to the Consultative Group for Desertification Control.
8. Recognizing that programming is a continuous process, UNSO will obtain the services of additional experts to assist Governments in further specific tasks. These include such actions as preparing national plans for combating desertification, organizing national institutional machinery for mobilizing and co-ordinating desertification control activities and identifying, preparing and appraising desertification control projects for financing and implementation. It is envisaged that future action will also include the identification of proposals for institutional support to increase national capabilities in research and training.

9. Parallel to undertaking the planning and programming missions, UNSO began its resource mobilization efforts in connexion with those desertification control projects for which its assistance had already been requested and which were ready for submission to prospective donors. Following discussions with the Governments of Senegal and the Netherlands, a UNSO mission visited Dakar in January 1979 and signed an agreement with the Senegalese Government for the financing of a priority pilot project concerned with the development of the Casamance forest. The Government of the Netherlands has agreed to contribute \$1 million to the UNSO Trust Fund for the implementation of the project, for which FAO will serve as executing agency. Additional contributions are also expected from the Government of Senegal and from UNDP.
