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DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION: ENVIRONMENT

Implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification

Note by the Secretary-General

1. In paragraph 11 of resolution 35/73 of 5 December 1980, the General Assembly requested the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to continue to report to it, every other year, through the Economic and Social Council, on the overall implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

2. In section VII, paragraph 6 of its decision 10/14 of 31 May 1982, 1/ the Governing Council authorized the Executive Director to submit the attached report to the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session through the Economic and Social Council.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 25 (A/37/25).

* A/37/150.

ANNEX

Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, submitted in accordance with paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 35/73 of 5 December 1980

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I. CO-ORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE PLAN OF ACTION

A. Introduction

1. Almost five years have passed since the United Nations Conference on Desertification, and on this special occasion - 10 years after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held at Stockholm - it is imperative to pause to reflect and put together a comprehensive picture of desertification, this major environmental threat of our time. It is not intended to give an assessment of progress or a detailed account of the situation - that will be done in 1984/1985, seven years after the Conference, as required by the Plan of Action. For present purposes, it will suffice to recount briefly what may be considered major achievements in the fight against desertification.
2. The first major achievement is the creation and maintenance of awareness - at the global, regional and national levels - of the nature, extent and urgency of the threat of desertification. This began with the convening of the Conference, the preparation of background documents that contributed significantly to an understanding of the nature and context of desertification and the formulation and adoption of a comprehensive Plan of Action which was approved by the General Assembly. In response to the recommendations of the Conference UNEP established a Desertification Branch to discharge the responsibilities entrusted to it in the Plan of Action. In the five years since then, UNEP has provided and facilitated the exchange of information on desertification, through the Desertification Control Bulletin, GEMS and the INFOTERRA network and publications, and has helped to promote recognition of the importance of public awareness in support of action to combat desertification.
3. The second major achievement is the establishment, as required under the Plan of Action, of a mechanism for the mobilization of resources needed for the implementation of the Plan - the Consultative Group for Desertification Control, which has also served as a forum for exchanges of information and experience. With increasing emphasis on action at the national level, UNEP has maintained, through the Consultative Group, the essential links between Governments engaged in anti-desertification measures and sources of funds, and has advised on the preparation of projects and national plans.
4. Thirdly, an interagency Working Group on Desertification has been established, as required under the Plan of Action, to ensure that agencies in the United Nations system co-ordinate their activities in the field of desertification.
5. Fourthly, under a joint venture by UNEP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the mandate of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) has been broadened to enable it to provide assistance, on behalf of UNEP, to the 19 countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region and related regions in their efforts to fight desertification.
6. Fifthly, a number of training programmes and courses have been organized in

the field of planning and management of desertification projects. More than 570 participants from developing countries have been trained through courses and seminars in China, Italy, Senegal, Tunisia and the USSR.

7. Moreover, the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) has continued to report annually to the Governing Council on action taken by agencies in the United Nations system to implement the Plan of Action, and to offer its views on the constraints and difficulties hindering progress in such implementation.

8. On the other hand, some areas did not lend themselves to successful breakthroughs. These will have to be attended to as continuing challenges that require the concerted effort categorically and repeatedly called for both in the Plan of Action and in General Assembly resolutions and Governing Council decisions. Such areas are identified in the following paragraphs.

9. Governments of countries threatened by desertification need to be persuaded to give the problems of dry lands in general and desertification in particular high priority in their plans for national development, in the context of a systematic approach to the sustained management of arid and semi-arid terrestrial ecosystems. Developing countries do not seem to have made maximum effective use of existing scientific and technological knowledge. UNEP has identified possible remedies in both areas in its medium-term plan for 1982-1983, and is drawing attention to them through the Governing Council session of a special character.

10. It is recognized that, in many cases, the ravages of desertification transcend national political borders and need to be managed transnationally. Unfortunately, political relations between neighbouring countries have often not been conducive to the implementation of such joint programmes. UNEP remains committed to this approach and, particularly, to those transnational concepts approved by the Desertification Conference and the General Assembly, and this commitment is reflected in the medium-term plan and in the system-wide medium-term environment programme.

11. At the international level, insufficient financing has continued to hinder the implementation of the Plan of Action. The Governing Council has been informed of the state of the Special Account and the studies prepared to date, at the request of the General Assembly, on additional financing for implementation of the Plan. A continuing challenge is to identify and successfully put into practice ways and means of providing the necessary financial and other resources needed for programmes and projects to combat desertification. Related to this same challenge is the need to secure for desertification control projects different treatment from that accorded to standard development projects. The prospects for the various financial arrangements were fully explored in the studies presented by the Secretary-General in his report to the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly on financing the Plan of Action (A/36/141).

12. In order to improve upon the disappointingly slow implementation of the Plan of Action, there is a need to review more closely the responsibilities and objectives of Governments, both individually and working together, and international organizations. As a general rule, assessment and evaluation need to be clearly

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defined. More quantitative information on the status and trend of desertification must be provided than has hitherto been possible, by making available methodologies for the assessment and mapping of desertification at the national level (see para. 35 below). Similarly, it is necessary to assess the efficacy of available measures in combating desertification.

13. As required under the Plan of Action, a general assessment of progress made in the implementation of the Plan is to be undertaken seven years after the Conference. It is hoped that, in the next two years, progress will be made in all areas where continuing challenges have been identified.

B. Action taken to implement the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and decisions of Governing Council

14. At its thirty-fourth, thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions, the General Assembly adopted the following resolutions of relevance to the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification: 34/184, 34/185, 34/187, 35/72, 35/73, 36/190, 36/191 and 36/192. Governing Council decisions 8/17 and 9/22 are also relevant.

15. Matters dealt with in these resolutions and decisions included the state of the Special Account, implementation of the Plan of Action in the Sudano-Sahelian region, the work of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control and additional financing. Furthermore, the General Assembly called on UNEP to institute, in co-operation with the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, specific programmes of research and training at the national, regional and international levels, while the Governing Council endorsed the initiation of action for a first general assessment of the progress made in the implementation of the Plan of Action to be undertaken in 1984.

1. Consultative Group for Desertification Control

16. As a result of further declarations of interest since the Council's ninth session, the core membership of the Group has increased by three Governments (Australia, Japan and Kuwait) and one organization (Commission of the European Communities).

17. The third meeting of the Consultative Group was convened by the Executive Director from 26 to 28 August 1981 at Geneva. It considered 11 project proposals submitted by Governments and one by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), of which 10 received expressions of interest or support from participants. The Group recommended a number of specific actions to ensure the better preparation and implementation of projects.

18. The Executive Director, after consultation with the co-sponsors, intends to convene the fourth session of the Consultative Group in mid-February 1983.

2. Interagency Working Group on Desertification

19. The Interagency Working Group on Desertification established in compliance with General Assembly resolution 32/172 held its fourth and fifth meeting on 7 and 8 April and 15 September 1981. It discussed ways and means of implementing General Assembly resolution 35/73, calling upon UNEP, in its co-ordinating and catalytic role, to institute, in co-operation with organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, specific programmes of research and training at the national, regional and international levels, and reviewed progress in that direction. It also considered the relevant section of the UNEP medium-term plan for 1982-1983.

20. In pursuance of Governing Council decision 9/22 A regarding a first general assessment of progress made in the implementation of the Plan of Action, the Group agreed that United Nations bodies and agencies would include in their reports on the occasion an account of specific achievements in the implementation of the Plan of Action, with particular reference to the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region. The Group also discussed the final text of the compendium of projects and programmes of the United Nations system in the field of desertification.

3. Studies on additional measures for financing the Plan of Action

21. In compliance with General Assembly resolution 35/73, a study with specific recommendations for the implementation of additional means of financing the Plan of Action was prepared by a group of high-level experts convened by the Executive Director in July 1981. The study called attention to the possibility of obtaining resources for development purposes, including efforts to combat desertification, through international taxation of trade flows, yields from International Monetary Fund (IMF) gold sales, and proceeds from a proposed indirect link between allocations of special drawing rights and development finance. The study also set out detailed arrangements for obtaining financial resources on a concessionary basis. The third section of the study contained a detailed work plan for the establishment of an independent financial corporation to fund anti-desertification programmes and projects, including a proposed structure and organization.

22. The Secretary-General annexed the study to his report to the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly on financing the Plan of Action (A/36/141). After considering the report, the Assembly adopted resolution 36/191, the pertinent sections of which are as follows:

"The General Assembly,

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"Requests the Secretary-General to obtain the views of Member States on the feasibility studies and concrete recommendations for the implementation of the additional measures of financing deemed practicable by the Secretary-General, and also on the modalities for obtaining financial resources, as described in paragraphs 13 and 17 of the report of the Secretary-General;

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"Also requests the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, to obtain the views of Member States on the establishment of an independent corporation for the financing of desertification-control projects on the basis of the plan presented in the annex to the report of the Secretary-General and also to ascertain the views of Governments as to their interest in participating financially therein."

23. Action is being initiated to seek the views of Governments on these matters. They will be summarized in a report to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session.

4. Reports by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination

24. In the section of its report to the ninth session of the Governing Council dealing with co-ordination and follow-up of the implementation of the Plan of Action (UNEP/GC.9/4/Add.1, chap. II), ACC identified certain priority areas of activity in the field of desertification control, with a view to strengthening the efforts and co-operation of the United Nations system. These areas included collection of information for the assessment and monitoring of desertification, application of available knowledge, strengthening of national and regional capabilities in science and technology, promotion of research and training programmes and strengthening of popular participation. ACC also noted that in the years ahead there would be a need for national plans of action to combat desertification. While noting the estimated costs and benefits of anti-desertification measures described in the study of additional measures submitted to the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly, ACC considered it to be of the highest importance that the additional external resources required for the developing countries should be made available.

25. In its report to the Governing Council at its tenth session (UNEP/GC.10/4/Add.1), ACC noted that obstacles hindering rapid progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action are still far from being removed, and expressed its deep concern over "a disappointing and increasingly worrying situation". It pointed out that, in addition to making the necessary resources available, Governments and regional and international organizations, not least those within the United Nations system, should intensify their efforts in accordance with the priorities identified by the General Assembly, the Governing Council and ACC in order to achieve the goals set out by the Conference and endorsed by the General Assembly.

C. Action taken by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session

26. General Assembly resolutions 36/191 and 36/192 were dealt with earlier. Assembly resolution 36/190, on the implementation of the Plan in the Sudano-Sahelian region, as well as suggested action by the Governing Council in response to this resolution, will be dealt with in the addendum to the present report.

D. Action taken by UNEP and other members of the United Nations system

27. UNEP has continued to support, catalyse and co-ordinate a number of activities aimed at furthering the purposes of the Plan of Action that are financed bilaterally and/or multilaterally. These activities include the formulation of national plans of action to combat desertification, the drawing up of or support for priority corrective anti-desertification measures (such as green belts or the major regional aquifer project), ecological monitoring of desertification, the Integrated Project on Arid Lands (IPAL) project in Tunisia, desertification assessment and mapping, combating desertification through integrated development and several training courses.

28. During 1981, the Desertification Branch organized programming and project formulation missions to Bangladesh, Burundi, Democratic Yemen, Nepal, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Yemen. The purpose of these missions was to explore the present situation in the countries with respect to desertification and the current activities to combat it, and to assist the Governments in preparing national plans to combat desertification and formulating high-priority anti-desertification projects.

29. Together with UNDP, UNEP co-sponsored an Interagency Meeting on Desertification and Protection of the Environment in Africa held at Nairobi in March 1981. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss proposals for inclusion in the UNDP Regional Programme for Africa (1982-1986) and measures to be taken in pursuance of a UNDP Governing Council decision concerning the establishment of a special programme to provide increased assistance to drought-stricken African countries.

30. Phase I of the "Transnational green belt project: establishment of the North African Green Belt Secretariat and co-ordination of national efforts" was completed in October 1980, and the project has moved into phase II, which started in November 1980 and involves national anti-desertification projects as well as subregional training programmes prepared during phase I.

31. The following activities were carried out with UNEP support using non-convertible currencies for the most part:

(a) An international symposium to promote exchanges of views and experience in combating desertification and consider and approve guidelines for the establishment of regional integrated development schemes was held at Tashkent, USSR, from 6 to 14 October 1981. Some 73 experts from 27 developing and developed countries as well as 5 officials from the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA), FAO, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) attended the symposium;

(b) Teams of experts to assist Peru and Mali in establishing regional integrated development schemes have been appointed, and will start work in 1982;

(c) Three training courses on desertification control were held in 1981 on

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rangeland ecology and pasture productivity, reclamation of saline irrigated soils, and sand dune fixation. Fifty-six participants attended these courses;

(d) A desert control training seminar for developing countries was held in China in 1981 and was attended by 15 participants.

32. United Nations organs and specialized agencies as well as regional intergovernmental bodies continued to support and execute projects and activities that contributed to the implementation of the Plan of Action.

33. The United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development is implementing a number of projects related to water resources planning, development and management, mainly in drought-stricken African countries. Two new projects on ground-water investigation and the strengthening of pump and bore-hole maintenance systems in the Gambia became operational in 1981.

34. Implementation of two integrated projects on arid lands under the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) continued in Tunisia, with financial support from UNEP, and in Kenya, now with full funding by the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1981, UNESCO launched a "Major project of research, training and demonstration applied to the integrated management of arid and semi-arid regions" to reinforce the network of MAB pilot projects in arid and semi-arid lands. The MAB International Scientific Conference on Ecology in practice held in Paris in September 1981 emphasized the need for further strengthening of activities in arid and semi-arid lands, and made a number of suggestions for future MAB activities in marginal areas.

35. The FAO International Programme on Ecological Management of Arid and Semi-Arid Rangelands, aimed at furthering the application of ecological knowledge in the management of range resources, has successfully completed its second phase. A draft methodology for assessment and mapping of desertification has been developed under a UNEP/FAO project on "Desertification assessment and mapping", and is currently being tested in 10 countries.

36. In pursuance of the decisions adopted by the Eighth World Meteorological Congress in 1979, WMO has continued its activities in such fields as the collection and handling of climatological data for anti-desertification purposes, the application of satellite technology to agricultural and anti-desertification activities, and studies of the role of agrometeorology in combating desertification and in land management. A joint UNEP/WMO pilot project on the ecoclimatology of Sahelian pastoral ecosystems has been formulated and submitted for comments to the countries concerned.

37. The International Labour Office is implementing a number of labour-intensive public works programmes related to such areas as soil conservation, afforestation and water management. It has also recently launched a programme for training artisans in rural technology including wood-saving techniques in the Upper Volta.

38. A detailed account of the contributions of United Nations organizations to the implementation of the Plan of Action is given in the compendium of projects and programmes of the United Nations system in the field of desertification referred to in paragraph 20 above.

E. Action by regional commissions and other regional intergovernmental bodies

1. Africa

39. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is engaged in the development of two regional project proposals aimed at desertification control: "Studies of national capabilities in ground-water resources assessment, evaluation and utilization in arid zones in Africa and preparation of guidelines to standardize and facilitate the preparation of hydrogeological maps" and "Development of manpower capabilities for the control and management of arid and semi-arid lands in Africa".

40. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which met at Lagos on 28 and 29 April 1980, identified desertification and drought as one of the priority areas of environmental concern for African countries. This concern is reflected in the Lagos Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa.

2. Asia and the Pacific

41. A meeting of senior government representatives from 10 South Asian countries was held from 18 to 25 February 1981 to discuss the feasibility of regional co-operation in environment-oriented development activities. The meeting adopted a Declaration and a set of Articles of Association for the initiation of the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), and also approved a plan of action covering desertification among other subject areas. To date, 9 of the 10 South Asian countries - Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka - have expressed the wish to join this new intergovernmental venture.

42. A regional Workshop on the Implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification was held at Jodhpur at the Central Arid Zones Research Institute of India, with financial assistance from Australia, from 20 to 23 October 1981 in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 32/172. Experts from 12 countries (Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand, the United States of America and the USSR) and 5 organizations (UNESCO, the World Food Programme (WFP), WMO, the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme and the Press Foundation of Asia) attended the Workshop. UNEP and FAO contributed two papers to the meeting. During the technical seminars held as a part of the Workshop, a number of country papers were presented highlighting major programmes to combat desertification initiated since the adoption of the Plan of Action in 1977. The Workshop endorsed a number of recommendations on further technical research, monitoring (strengthening the

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regional project of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on transnational monitoring of desertification processes in South-west Asia), regional training centres, enhancement of public awareness and participation and communication.

3. Western Asia

43. In response to a decision adopted by the Economic Commission for Western Asia at its sixth session in April 1979, an Expert Meeting on Management, Conservation and Development of Agricultural Resources in the ECWA region was held at Damascus from 9 to 11 May 1981 in the context of the implementation of the Plan of Action in the ECWA region. The meeting drew up regional programmes for desertification control in the countries of the region and approved specific recommendations for their implementation.

F. Action by Governments at the national level

44. It is necessary to reiterate here that the primary responsibility for the implementation of the Plan of Action rests with Governments. The following paragraphs recount some of the specific activities reported by Governments in this respect. Additional information is available in the compendium referred to in paragraph 20 above; the addendum to this report will give more information on activities in the Sudano-Sahelian region.

Australia. During 1980-1981, Australia contributed over \$US 115,000 to a sand dune fixation project in Somalia endorsed by the Consultative Group for Desertification Control at its second session. It also provided \$US 60,000 to sponsor an ESCAP Regional Workshop on Desertification held at Jodhpur, India, in 1981 (see para. 42). Australia also financed a six-week course on desertification at Brisbane between June and August 1981, in which representatives from 15 developing countries participated.

Bangladesh. The Government of Bangladesh has undertaken a large-scale afforestation programme to counter the deterioration of soil due to soil erosion provoked by the cutting of trees for fuel.

Egypt. During 1981, 80,000 acres of desert land were reclaimed. The Government plans to reclaim a total of 1.8 million acres by the year 2000; 812,000 acres will be reclaimed in the next five years.

France. France actively participates in the work of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control. Through bilateral and multilateral aid mechanisms, it spends about \$US 12.5 million a year on desertification control. In 1979, according to a report made available to the Governing Council at its ninth session, France contributed \$US 278 million to development projects, including desertification control, in the Sahelian countries. An Arid Zone Unit established in 1978 within the Groupe de recherche et d'échanges technologiques, and a small team set up by the Comité de lutte contre l'aridité du milieu tropical, have continued to

assemble, collate and disseminate information on arid zones. France is now consulting with the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences in Costa Rica on possible support for desertification monitoring activities in the Americas.

Germany, Federal Republic of. The Government has continued to support desertification control projects in the Sudano-Sahelian region. Some \$US 2.6 million have been contributed to a co-ordinating project in the CILSS countries over a period of four years. Support for the IPAL project totals \$US 4.6 million for 1980-1983, and over \$US 600,000 has been spent on co-operation with the International Council for Research in Agro-Forestry.

India. Integrated natural resource surveys are being conducted by the Central Arid Zones Research Institute (CAZRI) and several other organizations. The survey areas are selected for their vulnerability to desertification. The National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA) receiving station is now operational, and a large number of application projects are currently in progress at NRSA, including natural resources surveys, water resources surveys and various soil studies. The Drought-Prone Areas Programme and the Desert Development and Integrated Rural Development Programmes launched in the 1970s are co-ordinating and implementing activities in the Thar Desert with scientific backing from CAZRI.

Kenya. The Government of Kenya has established a standing presidential commission on soil erosion and afforestation to initiate policy and co-ordinate all activities in the field of soil conservation and afforestation in the country. A Rangeland and Ecological Monitoring Unit within the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources has been established to give greater attention to the development of pasture and rangeland, mainly in the arid and semi-arid areas of the country. The Integrated Project on Arid Lands (IPAL) has successfully continued its activities in Kenya, and now operates five field stations. Results obtained in the project are used in training workshops and seminars in which Kenyan and other scientists from the Sudano-Sahelian region participate.

Kuwait. Through the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development and the Arab Fund for Economic Development, Kuwait has financed bilaterally several projects directed towards combating desertification. The Kuwait Fund also acted as host to a conference of Sahelian countries in November 1980 to discuss problems related to the deterioration of agricultural land.

Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya is implementing two components of the transnational green belt project, one dealing with the development of Jedaida Nursery and the second with sand dune fixation. The establishment of an international information centre on desertification and the preparation of a national programme to combat desertification are now under discussion by the authorities.

Mali. Two participants from Mali attended a training course held in the USSR in April-May 1980 under the UNEP/USSR project on combating desertification through integrated development. A team of experts is to be sent to Mali to initiate the second phase of this project, the objective of which is the establishment of regional schemes for integrated development.

Mexico. A national plan of action to combat desertification is under preparation in Mexico. Mexico is also in close contact with the United States regarding co-ordinated action to combat desertification problems facing both countries. In February 1982, the Government intends to convene, with full financial support, a desertification conference for North and South America and the Caribbean.

Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan is endeavouring to provide commercial fuels to its population, particularly in the rural areas, to reduce total energy consumption, the bulk of which comes from natural vegetation which is being over-exploited without any regard for its replenishment. It has embarked on a research programme for the development of appropriate and environmentally sound technology to harness renewable sources of energy, such as the sun and the wind.

Sudan. A national Desertification Control Co-ordination and Monitoring Unit has been established under the Natural Resources Secretariat of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources as part of a project endorsed by the Consultative Group for Desertification Control at its second session. The Institute of Environmental Studies of the University of Khartoum is engaged in various research and training activities relevant to desertification. The Government plans to upgrade the Institute into a Regional Centre for Environmental Training and Research.

Sweden. In 1981, Sweden increased its support for soil conservation projects to \$US 10 million. Sweden was involved in the final formulation of, and committed financial support for, a desertification control project in the Sudan endorsed by the Consultative Group for Desertification Control at its third session.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. An all-Union scientific conference on the integrated development of desert areas in Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan was held at Ashkhabad (Turkmen SSR) from 13 to 16 October 1981. The conference discussed problems involved in the study and development of deserts and a report on a national plan of action to combat desertification. The Government is continuing scientific and technical co-operation with a number of developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America in land reclamation and the rational utilization of arid lands (see also para. 31 (a) above).

United States of America. A joint anti-desertification programme is at present under negotiation with Mexico. Bilateral and multilateral support was continued to anti-desertification projects, particularly in the Sudano-Sahelian region. During 1981, the Council on Environmental Quality published a report entitled "Desertification of the United States".

II. CONCLUDING REMARKS

45. In the past two years, the programme of work of the Desertification Branch, as well as the medium-term plan for 1982-1983, have been prepared entirely on the basis of the "Recommendations for immediate initial action" set out in the Plan of Action. The recommendations were designated for implementation within the seven-year period ending in 1984, the year of the first general assessment of

progress made in the implementation of the plan, as requested by the Conference. As reported earlier, UNEP and other United Nations bodies and agencies are expected to report on their activities in 1984. Apart from reports on progress made, an assessment will be made of the process of desertification, to be used as a base-line for more accurate comparisons and evaluations of progress in the future.

46. The progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action reported to the Governing Council at its ninth session (UNEP/GC.9/8 and Add.1) and in the present report falls well short of the aspirations of the Conference in adopting the Plan of Action, and there are still many obstacles that hinder such progress. This is distressing when it is borne in mind that the net loss of cropland world-wide, coupled with population increases, reduced the area under cereals, per person, from 0.24 hectares in 1950 to 0.17 hectares in 1980, with a further decrease to 0.13 hectares likely by the year 2000, according to a 1981 projection.

47. The shortage of financial resources remains the major constraint on the implementation of the Plan of Action at the international level. The General Assembly and the Governing Council have repeatedly called for generous contributions to the Special Account and strong support for the work of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control. It is encouraging to note the increase in the core membership of the Consultative Group since the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The Group has continued to develop its functions, and ACC considered that the conclusions and recommendations made at the third session of the Consultative Group concerning the improvement of its work procedures and the strengthening of its follow-up mechanism might lead to increased efficiency.

48. In view of the approaching stock-taking in 1984, this report cannot be concluded without remarking that financial support from donor countries and organizations and developing countries in a position to contribute has generally been meagre. It was originally hoped that the issue of desertification, having been the object of global concern and publicity since 1977, would benefit from special treatment that would obviate the conventional dealings and procedures that control ordinary donor-recipient relations on development projects and programmes. It would seem that substantially increased efforts are needed to reach that aim.

49. Although progress is being made, the Executive Director considers that the information reviewed in this report on action taken at the global, regional and national levels to implement programmes to combat desertification is still a long way from demonstrating a comprehensive concerted effort. Once more, it is obvious that national and international efforts need to be intensified and additional resources need to be made available to achieve the goals envisaged by the Conference and endorsed by the General Assembly.

III. SUGGESTED ACTION BY THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

50. As the Governing Council is required to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in its totality, the Council may wish:

(a) To note the action taken by Governments, UNEP and other members of the United Nations system for the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification;

(b) To note the results of the third session of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control and to urge the Group to continue and intensify its efforts to mobilize funds for the implementation of desertification control projects.

(c) To urge all Governments, organizations of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental bodies, non-governmental and all other organizations to augment their efforts to combat desertification in order to accelerate progress in implementing the recommendations of the Plan of Action for immediate initial action;

(d) To take note of General Assembly resolution 36/191 concerning a study on financing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, and to urge all Governments to respond favourably and promptly to the Secretary-General's inquiries undertaken in pursuance of the resolution;

(e) To authorize the Executive Director to present this report, and the decision of the Governing Council thereon, on the Council's behalf to the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, as the biannual report of the Council to the Assembly on the implementation of the Plan of Action.
