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COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION
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**REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AND OF
ITS INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 22,
PARAGRAPH 2 (a) AND PARAGRAPH (b), AND ARTICLE 26 OF THE
CONVENTION, AS WELL AS DECISION 1/COP.5, PARAGRAPH 10**

**REVIEW OF THE REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION BY AFFECTED
AFRICAN COUNTRY PARTIES, INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY
PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED
IN THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION
PROGRAMMES**

Addendum

**Progress in the formulation and implementation of subregional action
programmes and the regional action programme in Africa***

* The submission of this document was delayed in order to enable the secretariat to take account of all subregional action programme reports.

Summary

At the subregional level, four subregional action programmes (SRAPs) on desertification control are currently being implemented and one programme is in the course of preparation.

In the West Africa and Chad subregion, the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which serve as liaison centres for the implementation of the SRAP, made a special effort to promote partnerships aimed at ensuring coordinated management of natural resources and in particular of the region's rivers. These partnerships involve not only the countries of the subregion but also partner countries and international organizations. The progress achieved with decentralization in West Africa has had a positive impact on the effective participation of communities in desertification control. The SRAP recognizes the key significance of benchmarks and indicators for desertification control and has planned many activities in that respect. On account of the plague of locusts, however, these measures have proved to be inadequate, so that a new strategy is needed in this area.

In Central Africa, the preparation of the SRAP has made good progress. The Conference of Ministers for the Forests of Central Africa (COMIFAC), the specialized body in charge of providing the Convention's technical secretariat, has prepared a Convergence Plan for the policies of member States and has recognized it officially as a basic document for the drafting of the SRAP. Furthermore, decisions have been taken regarding the institutional arrangement for piloting the preparation of the SRAP and a roadmap for its implementation. Although some funds have been mobilized for the preparation of the SRAP, the shortage of resources remains one of the main stumbling blocks for the practical implementation of the Convention in the region.

In the Arab Maghreb region, the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) has undertaken to ensure that all the stakeholders involved in desertification control should participate in the implementation of the SRAP and has succeeded in mobilizing development partners for that purpose. The report shows that member States have undertaken to contribute to the cost of certain projects. It is also worth mentioning the opportunities recently seized by the AMU for developing new activities in the area of desertification control as part of the Operational Programme on sustainable land management of the Global Environment Fund (GEF) and the Environment Initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Lastly, the AMU is playing an active part in desertification monitoring and assessment.

In East Africa, steps have been taken to implement each of the nine areas of the SRAP. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has made a real effort to involve civil society, especially by setting up a regional body of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) responsible for coordinating civil society activities. IGAD has also mobilized resources and organized collaboration mechanisms with its partners with a view to coordinating development efforts within IGAD in order to reduce the risk of any overlap of activities and funding.

In Southern Africa, the implementation of the SRAP has been delayed by the restructuring of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the subregional intergovernmental organization in charge of coordinating the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The report stresses the need for the SRAP to be updated in

order to take account of new factors arising as a result of this restructuring. Nevertheless, new transboundary initiatives to combat soil degradation have been launched with the support of various development partners, while several projects have been taken on by the NEPAD Environment Initiative. The report highlights the importance attached by the SADC to the dissemination of information and better practices, aimed at improving the quality and impact of desertification control projects.

At regional level, the six thematic networks which constitute the basis of the Regional Action Programme (RAP) were launched in the course of technical workshops organized by the institutional focal points between December 2000 and November 2004, namely:

1. Integrated management of international river, lake and hydrogeological basins;
2. Promotion of agroforestry and soil conservation;
3. Rational use of rangelands and development of fodder crops;
4. Ecological monitoring, natural resources mapping, remote sensing and early warning systems;
5. Promotion of new and renewable energy sources and technologies;
6. Promotion of sustainable agricultural farming systems.

A critical assessment is to be made of the work of the coordinating institutional focal points and of the operation of networks in order to ensure the effective implementation of priority activities identified at the launch workshops. A consolidated document on the preliminary draft RAP is currently being prepared and will be completed with the participation of the stakeholders concerned at regional, subregional and national level.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. GENERAL	1 - 4	5
II. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES	5 - 49	6
A. West Africa	5 - 13	6
B. Central Africa	14 - 21	8
C. North Africa	22 - 31	10
D. East Africa	32 - 41	12
E. Southern Africa	42 - 49	14
III. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME	50 - 70	16
A. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned	51 - 53	16
B. Consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the regional action programme and partnership agreements	54 - 69	17
C. Financial allocations to support programme implementation by affected country Parties of the region, and technical and financial assistance received and/or needed	70	20
IV. CONCLUSIONS	71 - 81	20

I. GENERAL

1. In decision 11/COP.1 on procedures for the communication of information and review of implementation, the Conference of the Parties (COP) decided that in addition to reports on action programmes pursuant to paragraph 5, any group of affected country Parties may make a joint communication, directly or through a competent subregional or regional organization, on measures taken at the subregional and/or regional levels in implementation of the Convention. In the same decision, the COP asked the secretariat to collect information supplied by the relevant organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations, as well as by other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, on measures taken or planned in support of implementation of the Convention.

2. In decision 1/COP.5, the COP set up the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) with the aim of helping the COP periodically to review the implementation of the Convention in the light of experience acquired at the national, subregional, regional and international level and of facilitating the exchange of information concerning the measures taken by the Parties pursuant to article 26 of the Convention. The CRIC's mandate specifies that the review process shall examine, inter alia, reports submitted by other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and such other reports as the Conference of the Parties may call for.

3. In decision 9/COP.6 on the programme of work of the third session on the CRIC, the COP decided that the committee would review information provided by relevant organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, on their activities in support of the implementation of the Convention in affected African country Parties.

4. Regarding the SRAP process in Africa, the information contained in this document is taken from the third series of reports submitted by intergovernmental organizations serving as liaison centres for subregional activities, namely the AMU, the CILSS, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), COMIFAC, the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC), IGAD and SADC. The full reports as submitted by these organizations may be consulted on the secretariat web site (<http://www.unccd.int>). As regards the RAP, the report basically describes the progress made since the submission of the last report in 2002.

II. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

A. West Africa

1. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned

5. The two main goals of the West Africa SRAP are:

(a) To provide a common denominator for the programmes and projects of actors involved in the management of transboundary resources;

(b) To ensure harmonization of the national action programmes (NAPs) of CILSS and ECOWAS member States.

6. Eight priority areas have been identified for the SRAP:

(a) Sustainable management of shared water resources;

(b) Sustainable management of shared and/or transboundary plant and animal resources;

(c) Sustainable development of energy resources;

(d) Efforts to combat pests affecting crops and forest species;

(e) Early warning of drought and mitigation of its impact;

(f) Scientific and technical cooperation;

(g) Information, training and communication;

(h) Development of trade in local products within the region.

7. The key measures taken in the course of the period under review have concentrated on the management of water resources, the management of ecosystems of the Fouta Djallon Highlands and early warning. The main actions may be summed up as follows:

- Establishment of permanent coordination and monitoring machinery including a water resource coordination unit directly attached to the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat, aimed at creating a regional cooperation framework for the coordinated management of shared watersheds and the integrated management of water resources, as well as the preparation of national and regional strategies for the mobilization of financial resources;
- Launch of a coordinated approach for the development of the Niger River and the use of its water resources by neighbouring countries;

- Establishment of a body in charge of managing the Volta Basin with a view to setting up arrangements for the collection and transmission of hydrological and climatological data to assist decision-making related to the sustainable management of the water resources of the Volta Basin (Volta-HYCOS);
- Promotion of activities to develop cooperation between countries of the Fouta Djallon Highlands region for improved management of the highland's water resources. These include regional programmes to support the integrated management of natural resources (AGIR) and the integrated management of water resources in the Upper Niger basin (GIRENS);
- Promotion of the integrated management of the resources of the Senegal River, especially through the Organization for the Development of the Senegal River (OMVS);
- Launch of coordination and capacity-building activities in relation to the integrated management of invasive aquatic plants;
- Introduction of continuous desertification monitoring networks with the support of the meteorological transition project in Africa launched in 2004, involving national meteorological authorities in the UNCCD process.

2. Consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the subregional action programme and partnership agreements concluded with the developed countries or other interested entities

8. The SRAP provides a permanent framework for coordination between the countries of the region and has facilitated the establishment of bodies for the purpose of ongoing consultations on specific topics. These joint bodies have received the support of the international community within the framework of multilateral and bilateral partnerships.

9. Under this heading it is also worth mentioning the steady spread of the participatory approach arising from the progress achieved by the States of the subregion with decentralization. The decentralization policy has led to increased involvement by local stakeholders in the management of natural resources and the resulting emergence of a growing number of legally recognized farmers' organizations.

3. Financial allocations by affected country Parties of the subregion in support of the implementation of the Convention and technical and financial assistance received or sought, with an indication of needs and order of priority

10. Many efforts have been made to mobilize resources in favour of desertification control in the subregion, such as the regional initiative on "Global environment and desertification control" supported by French cooperation and the "Desertification control fund for poverty reduction in the Sahel" supported by the Italian Government. Furthermore, thanks to Global Mechanism support, the CILSS has been able to assist countries with the preparation of their NAPs, with a view to ensuring a certain overall uniformity as regards desertification control strategies at subregional and national level.

11. The SRAP plans to review all actions undertaken within the framework of desertification control, in order to achieve a greater degree of harmonization, which is expected to lead to improved management of resources allocated and more accurate estimates of financing requirements.

4. Consideration and evaluation of benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress

12. The importance of this item has been recognized and often reaffirmed in the implementation of the SRAP. This determination has been further strengthened by the recent plague of locusts, which has demonstrated both the need for this activity and the inadequacy of measures taken so far.

13. Many initiatives have been launched by the CILSS/Regional Centre for Training and Application in Agrometeorology and Operational Hydrology (AGRHYMET) in cooperation with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Centre for the Application of Computer Science in Agriculture (CeSIA). They include the project on the "Introduction of continuous desertification monitoring networks in West Africa", the main objective of which is to strengthen local, national and subregional capacities in the areas of prevention, drought control, desertification, food insecurity and the degradation of natural resources.

B. Central Africa

1. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned

14. The Conference of Ministers for the Forests of Central Africa (COMIFAC), the specialized body in charge of the UNCCD's technical secretariat for the Central Africa subregion since August 2003, has prepared a Convergence Plan for the policies of member States based on 10 strategic objectives:

- (a) Harmonization of forest and fiscal policies;
- (b) Knowledge of resource;
- (c) Ecosystem planning and reforestation;
- (d) Conservation of biological diversity;
- (e) Sustainable enhancement of forest resources;
- (f) Development of alternative activities and poverty reduction;
- (g) Capacity-building, involvement of communities, information, training;
- (h) Research and development;
- (i) Establishment of financing mechanisms;
- (j) Cooperation and partnerships.

15. Strategic objective (c) is more specifically concerned with desertification control activities and includes the planning of subregional forest projects to combat desertification in environmentally vulnerable areas.

16. Programmes are currently being prepared for the implementation of these strategic objectives, with four priorities in mind:

- (a) Support for NAP preparation in countries of the subregion still without NAPs;
- (b) Improved collection and management of data (biophysical and socio-economic) and elaboration of systems for the collection and processing of harmonized data for all countries in the subregion;
- (c) Search for funding to continue the preparation of the Central Africa SRAP and NAPs;
- (d) Awareness-creation among stakeholders at subregional level regarding the Convention and the problems of sustainable land management.

17. It is worth noting that special attention has been given to ensuring that all the stakeholders concerned in the subregion should participate in making the SRAP operational.

2. Consultative process in support of the implementation of the subregional action programme and partnership agreements concluded with developed country Parties and other interested entities

18. The Central Africa subregion has several consultation and coordination bodies dealing with the problems of the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources. The guidelines for preparing the SRAP were worked out in the course of a strategic consultation held in Libreville, Gabon, in August 2003, jointly with the UNCCD secretariat, the Global Mechanism and the CILSS. This consultation entailed the participation of the main actors involved in combating desertification in the subregion in accordance with the key principles of the UNCCD. It also laid the foundations for the preparation of the SRAP, in particular through:

- (a) Establishment of an institutional facility responsible for piloting SRAP preparation;
- (b) Official acceptance of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan as a basis for SRAP preparation;
- (c) Formulation of a roadmap for SRAP implementation.

3. Financial allocations to support Convention implementation by affected country Parties of the subregion, and technical and financial assistance received or needed, with an indication of needs and order of priority

19. So far only limited budgetary provision for the implementation of the Convention has been made by countries in the subregion and by subregional organizations. Nevertheless, in terms of cooperation with development partners, it is worth noting the assistance contributed:

(a) At regional level by the Global Mechanism for SRAP preparation;

(b) At national level by the Global Mechanism and the GEF for the preparation of NAPs and national reports.

20. Efforts are also being made to find additional resources with bilateral and multilateral partners.

4. Consideration and evaluation of benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress

21. Given the current state of progress, no action has been taken at the subregional level to address this point.

C. North Africa

1. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned

22. The SRAP for the Maghreb, coordinated by the AMU, which provides the institutional framework for regional integration, includes six components:

(a) Institutional support for the subregional Maghreb SRAP coordination body;

(b) Evaluation of the desertification process in the Maghreb and establishment of a database and a system for the circulation of information on desertification;

(c) Encouragement of a participatory approach at subregional level;

(d) Establishment of a regional network of continuous ecosystem monitoring;

(e) Establishment of master plans for combating the effects of drought and for assistance in the event of natural disasters;

(f) Implementation of transboundary integrated development programmes in arid ecosystems of the Maghreb.

2. Consultative process in support of the implementation of the subregional action programme and partnership agreements concluded with developed country Parties and other interested entities

23. The AMU has undertaken to ensure that the implementation of the SRAP should proceed in consultation with all partners and with the participation and active involvement of civil society, in accordance with the basic principles of the Convention.

24. It is worth noting the following initiatives:

- (a) The subregional project to encourage a participatory approach;
- (b) Establishment of a technical coordination unit responsible for:
 - Supporting AMU member States for NAP preparation and implementation;
 - Implementing SRAP activities, as adopted by the Algiers Forum (September 1999);
 - Strengthening interregional and international cooperation in the area of desertification control;

(c) Active cooperation between the AMU, CILSS and the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) for the purpose of setting up a regional consultation facility aimed at developing research and development programmes in the area of desertification control;

(d) Signature of the cooperation agreement with the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), by which this international agency specializing in research on dry areas undertakes to support the AMU with SRAP implementation.

3. Financial allocations to support Convention implementation by affected country Parties of the subregion, and technical and financial assistance received or needed, with an indication of needs and order of priority

25. Several multilateral and bilateral partners have expressed their willingness to provide financial support for the implementation of the SRAP, including the Islamic Development Bank (funding for the technical coordination unit), the World Bank (watershed management) and the European Union (establishment of national and regional monitoring and assessment systems and dissemination of information on NAP activities, as well as a pilot project for desertification control with the involvement of agropastoral communities).

26. An agreement has also been signed between the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD and the general secretariat of the AMU to support the implementation of the SRAP in AMU countries. As far as the GEF is concerned, a range of eligible projects has been prepared and submitted as part of the Operational Programme on sustainable land management.

27. In partnership with the UNCCD secretariat, the AMU has prepared a portfolio of projects for inclusion in the plan of action of the NEPAD Environment Initiative, which was presented in Algiers in December 2003.

28. It is worth noting lastly that member countries have agreed to contribute to the subregional project for the promotion of a participatory approach by providing administrative support, managerial services and contributions to operating costs.

4. Consideration and evaluation of benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress

29. In cooperation with the OSS, the AMU is planning to implement systems for monitoring and assessing the impact of desertification control programmes and is making an effort to improve national systems for the circulation of information. In this it relies on synergy between national structures, the subregional body in charge of implementing the SRAP and the OSS.

30. A special effort has been made to allow countries of the subregion access to advanced technologies that give them a more accurate understanding of the causes and development of the desertification process, such as the mapping of areas exposed to desertification and drought, the monitoring and assessment of the impact of activities planned under the NAPs, the circulation of information and the establishment of data bases. The AMU has initiated many activities in these areas.

31. Cooperation with Annex IV of the UNCCD has also yielded results in this respect, such as the introduction of an information system on desertification control in countries bordering on the Mediterranean and the Network for Research to Combat Desertification (DESERTNET) project, aimed at setting up a Mediterranean network on desertification monitoring.

D. East Africa

1. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned

32. Nine priority cooperation areas have been identified and measures have been taken or planned for each:

- (a) Development and management of transboundary natural resources;
- (b) Promotion of a climate favourable to Convention implementation, especially at the legislative, institutional, economic and political levels;
- (c) Data collection, analysis and exchange;
- (d) Research and development;
- (e) Education and public awareness;
- (f) Coordination of programmes to develop alternative energy sources;

- (g) Cooperation in the management and control of pests, weeds, vectors of human and animal diseases and diseases affecting animals and plants;
- (h) Early warning systems and joint plans for mitigating the effects of drought;
- (i) Capacity-building.

33. A plan to implement the SRAP was developed and finalized in November 2002 and a subregional support facility was set up with the support of the Global Mechanism and the backing of the African Development Bank (ADB) to assist the implementation of NAPs and the SRAP. Thanks to the conclusion of the peace process between Sudan and Somalia and various initiatives, the situation is now more favourable for the implementation of IGAD development programmes. It is also worth mentioning that a bureau for the promotion of gender equality and a forum on civil society have been set up within the IGAD secretariat.

34. Several programmes have been developed to improve the exchange of information between stakeholders in the IGAD region, such as the Regional Integrated Information System (RIIS), the IGAD-HYCOS network and the Market Information System (MIS). The collection, analysis and exchange of information have been considerably facilitated thanks to the development, amongst others, of projects on remote sensing, the Preparation for the Use of Meteosat second-generation data in Africa (PUMA) and the African Monitoring of the Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD).

35. A study on agricultural technology for semi-arid areas in East Africa has been launched with a view to developing sustainable crop production in the drylands of the subregion. IGAD has also put forward a project on Environment Education and Training.

36. Several training workshops have been organized and capacity-building projects have been prepared. The capacities of the IGAD secretariat and its member States have also been expanded through the use of information technologies and the networking of offices. An effort has been made to mobilize resources for the implementation of capacity-building projects and training programmes on NAP monitoring and assessment to combat desertification.

2. Consultative process in support of the implementation of the subregional action programme and partnership agreements concluded with developed country Parties and other interested entities

37. Studies, workshops and seminars have been initiated in order to ensure the active involvement of civil society in the implementation of the SRAP in accordance with the basic principles of the Convention. A regional NGO body is to be set up in order to work on implementation of the Convention within the framework of the IGAD Civil Society Forum as a means of coordinating civil society activities.

38. IGAD has also established cooperative mechanisms with its development partners in order to implement its projects and programmes, such as the IGAD Partners' Forum or the Regional Support Strategy. These mechanisms facilitate a better management and coordination of development efforts within IGAD, thereby avoiding the wastage and overlapping of resources and leading to improved results.

3. Financial allocations to support Convention implementation by affected country Parties of the subregion, and technical and financial assistance received or needed, with an indication of needs and order of priority

39. The full IGAD membership has embarked upon the establishment of national funds for combating desertification and some States have already supplied resources to the funds. At the subregional level, IGAD and its member States are on the point of establishing a subregional support structure in order to make cooperation between IGAD and its partners more effective. Member States have undertaken to contribute national resources directly to the facility.

40. IGAD has also received financial and technical support from the Global Mechanism and from several multilateral and bilateral development partners.

4. Consideration and evaluation of benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress

41. A regional training workshop on the development and use of performance benchmarks and indicators to measure progress with NAPs was organized in Djibouti with the financial and technical support of the OSS.

E. Southern Africa

1. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned

42. Despite difficulties arising from current restructuring, the SADC has continued to develop programmes and activities in support of the implementation of the Convention within the priority areas identified by the SRAP, namely:

- (a) Capacity-building;
- (b) Strengthening of early warning systems;
- (c) Cooperation for the sustainable development of shared natural resources and ecosystems;
- (d) Information gathering, processing and exchange;
- (e) Development of the transfer of appropriate technology at the community level;
- (f) Development of alternative sources of energy;
- (g) Socio-economic issues.

43. It is important to note, however, that this restructuring and the preparation of the SADC's Regional Indicative Development Plan (RIDP) require that the SRAP should be updated to take account of these developments. A review is expected in 2005.

44. The main actions taken to make the SRAP operational may be summed up as follows.
45. The programme to combat land degradation and desertification, the main objectives of which are to deal with these two problems, in addition to alleviating the effects of drought in the subregion and initiating the coordination of the relevant subregional activities, was the first to be launched. The programme also aims to provide support for member States with the implementation of their NAPs.
46. The SADC has supported the identification and implementation of transboundary natural resource management projects, such as the medium-sized project initiated at the end of 2004 for sustainable land management in the Limpopo basin, a project conducted by UN-HABITAT with the support of the GEF and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Several of these transboundary projects were presented at the Partners' Conference on the NEPAD Environment Initiative, which was held in Algiers in December 2003. A project for the management of natural resources at grassroots level is currently being finalized with the support of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

2. Consultative process in support of the implementation of the subregional action programme and partnership agreements concluded with developed country Parties and other interested entities

47. The SADC has made a determined effort to ensure that all those engaged in combating desertification should take an active part in preparing and implementing the SRAP. In this connection a regional body is to be set up to provide technical support for land reform, which will be in charge of facilitating the implementation of projects in this important field, by ensuring regional coordination and optimum resource management. The SADC is also promoting the circulation of information and dissemination of best practices in accordance with the Convention's principles, as reflected in the Desertification Interact Project initiative, which is aimed at documenting successful experiments in desertification control and sharing them among national focal points of the UNCCD.

3. Financial allocations to support Convention implementation by affected country Parties of the subregion, and technical and financial assistance received or needed, with an indication of needs and order of priority

48. A subregional facilitation fund had been set up with the technical and financial support of the Global Mechanism in the SADC-HUB. As a result of the HUB's disappearance, however, this facility is no longer operational. Instead resources have been made available to member States to complete their NAPs, and some SADC member States receive GEF support for the development of sustainable land management capacities. Funds have also been mobilized with bilateral and multilateral partners to launch and implement projects such as the second stage of the environment education programme.

4. Consideration and evaluation of benchmarks and indicators used to measure progress

49. A second bulletin on the state of the environment in Southern Africa was to have been issued in 2002, but its publication had to be postponed until 2005 owing to financial constraints.

III. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME

50. This report summarizes progress on the regional action plan (RAP) for the implementation of the Convention and assesses activities carried out since the submission of the last report of CRIC 1 held in November 2002 in Rome (Italy).

A. Areas of cooperation under the programme and measures taken or planned

51. In accordance with article 13 of the regional annex for Africa, which provides an overall definition of the priority areas in which the RAP offers comparative advantages, the Pan-African Conference held in Burkina Faso in March 1997 identified seven areas in which cooperation should take place at regional level:

- (a) Rational management of the water resources of the major transboundary river, lake and hydrogeological basins;
- (b) Agroforestry and soil conservation;
- (c) Rational management of rangelands and promotion of fodder crops;
- (d) Ecological monitoring, natural resources mapping, remote sensing and early warning systems;
- (e) Promotion of renewal energy sources and environment-friendly technologies;
- (f) Sustainable farm production systems;
- (g) Promotion of an enabling environment for desertification control and capacity-building.

52. In order to render the RAP operational in accordance with the recommendations of the Pan-African Conference, the African Ministerial Conference held in preparation for COP 3, which was organized jointly by the Convention secretariat and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Kenya in September/October 1999, set up six thematic programme networks covering the above-mentioned areas. The Regional Coordination Unit for Africa, attached to the ADB, was chiefly responsible for ensuring that these networks were launched and operational in practice in order to assist effectively with the implementation of the RAP in Africa.

53. In addition to the three networks started in the previous period (TPN 1 - “integrated management of international river, lake and hydrogeological basins” - in December 2000; TPN 2 - “agroforestry and soil conservation” - in June 2001; and TPN 3 - “rational use of rangelands and development of fodder crops” - in November 2001), the three remaining thematic programme networks were launched in the period under review:

(a) The ecological monitoring, natural resources mapping, remote sensing and early warning systems network, for which the launch meeting was held in Tunis in October 2002 with the financial support of Germany and the Netherlands. Consultations were held in April 2004 with the network’s institutional focal point (the African Organization for Cartography and Remote Sensing), thanks to which the recommendations of the launch meeting could be converted into priority projects. One of these projects was submitted to the GEF;

(b) The promotion of new and renewable energy sources and environment-friendly technologies network, coordinated by the Tunisian National Agency for Renewable Energies, in close cooperation with the NGO “Environmental and Development Action in the Third World (ENDA)”, based in Senegal, for which the launch meeting was held in Nairobi (Kenya) in May 2004 under the aegis of the African Ministerial Conference in charge of the energy sector, with the support of the Global Mechanism and UNEP;

(c) The sustainable agricultural farming systems promotion network, coordinated by the African Union’s specialized office for Semi-Arid Food Grain Research and Development (AU/SAFGRAD), Burkina Faso, which was launched in Tunis in November 2004 with the financial support of Germany and Norway.

B. Consultative process in support of the preparation and implementation of the regional action programme and partnership agreements

54. Several activities have been undertaken with a view to preparing and implementing the RAP, including the following:

1. Activities related to the thematic programme networks

55. The three launch meetings for the thematic programme networks brought together participants of the African regional institutions involved in the respective areas, the national focal points of the Convention and other interested partners. Work programmes were prepared indicating short- and medium-term priority activities and the roles to be played by the various stakeholders.

56. The recommendations produced by these meetings emphasized the need to consolidate and pool the information available in the three areas and to establish cooperative links among network members, the aim of the latter being to harness the scientific and technical potential available in Africa in order to assist the implementation of the Convention.

57. The recommendations also make it clear that the institutional focal points and thematic network members will be putting forward project documents for inclusion in the “regional and subregional initiatives in support of Convention implementation” portfolio.

58. A number of projects concerning network activity programmes on environmental monitoring and renewable energies have been prepared or are in the course of preparation and will be submitted to multilateral partners, such as the GEF, the ADB's FINESSE Programme (*FINancing Energy Services for Small-scale Energy users*) or bilateral interested parties. The renewable energy network has also been included in the International Action Programme adopted at the International Conference for Renewable Energies held in Bonn (Germany) in June 2004.

59. At the launch of the sustainable agricultural production systems network in Tunis in November 2004, a three-year work programme was adopted for the purpose of developing partnerships with the many institutions working in the field of sustainable agriculture. In its recommendations, the Africa-Latin America Forum on the same theme also called for concrete measures for implementing the Convention based on exchanges of experience arising from the work of the Forum.

60. Lastly, it is expected that similar action will be taken by the other subregional and regional stakeholders of thematic networks, subject to overcoming a number of financial and institutional constraints which have hampered the operation of the networks ever since they were launched.

2. Cooperation between the African Development Bank and the Convention secretariat

61. Within the framework of cooperation between the ADB, which hosts the Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) for Africa, and the Convention secretariat, it may be noted that following the Bank's transfer to Tunis RCU staff have been relocated there and are continuing their activities as before.

62. In April 2004, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, accompanied by RCU staff, visited Mr. Omar Kabbaj, President of the Bank, in order to undertake a joint assessment of the implementation of the memorandum of understanding between the ADB and the UNCCD of May 1999.

63. The conclusions and recommendations of the meeting reflect a substantial enhancement of cooperation between the two institutions. This takes the form of:

- The Bank's determination to devote significant resources to combating land degradation and desertification through field projects monitored by the Bank's operational departments. It was agreed that there would be closer cooperation with the UNCCD's national focal points in the field, with a view to providing support in the form of capacity-building activities, especially for the preparation and management of rural development projects in which the Bank is involved;
- The establishment of a Trust Fund, in which non-regional member countries can also participate, aimed at facilitating the funding of programmes and projects arising from the implementation of the Rio conventions, especially in the area of desertification and land degradation control;

- Enhanced cooperation with the GEF;
- Closer involvement by the Bank in current bilateral initiatives, such as the Italian initiative to combat land degradation in Africa.

64. In addition, the Bank cooperated closely with the RCU to prepare the launch meeting for the renewable energies network. The FINESSE Programme took an active part in the work and is ready to help convert the TPN's priority recommendations into concrete pilot projects for the promotion of renewable energies within the framework of the implementation of the Convention.

3. Cooperation between the Convention secretariat and the Sahara and Sahel Observatory

65. Since CRIC 1, the OSS has made a considerable effort to improve the communication and exchange of information between different stakeholders in Africa, especially between the national focal points, the institutional focal points of the six thematic networks and the RCU.

66. The fifth session of the OSS Administrative Council and the second session of its General Assembly, which were held in April 2004, restated the need to introduce an information exchange and circulation system as part of the follow-up to the regional action programme to combat desertification in Africa.

4. Launch of the RCU bulletin

67. The RCU news bulletin has been launched and is now in circulation. This first edition of the bulletin, which is distributed in electronic form, provides basic information concerning the RCU and the activities of the TPN and may be consulted on the website of the UNCCD secretariat. Its main objective is to support the implementation of the Convention in Africa through the promotion of regional cooperation and the dissemination of best practices and lessons learned.

5. RCU participation at international meetings

68. Through its participation at several regional and international meetings, the RCU has facilitated awareness and where possible the integration of the preparation and implementation of the RAP in current initiatives implemented in Africa (such as NEPAD, the Italian Initiative, the Programme of Work of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) and the Programme of Action of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States).

69. In addition, the RCU's participation at two training workshops, one organized by the Energy Institute of French-speaking Countries (IEPF) on the formulation of projects to combat desertification eligible for the GEF (Niamey, Niger, 11-21 November 2003), and the other by UNEP on sustainable land management within the framework of the GEF (Tunis, Tunisia, 11-13 October 2004), will prove very useful for its efforts to monitor projects to combat land degradation arising from TPN activities and eligible for the GEF.

C. Financial allocations to support programme implementation by affected country Parties of the region, and technical and financial assistance received or needed

70. African country Parties have allocated no financial resources for the programme implementation process. Over the period under consideration, however, the process has received financial or technical support from various bilateral partners and from the ADB. This has opened the way for the launch of activities of the three remaining thematic networks and facilitation of the process at regional level by the RCU.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

71. The following considerations may be put forward in the light of the analysis of the five reports submitted by the subregional intergovernmental organizations serving as liaison centres to coordinate the formulation and implementation of SRAPs.

72. All the subregions are firmly committed to ensuring the participation of the Parties concerned, and especially civil society, in the drive to combat desertification and land degradation. In order to enhance the impact of this participatory approach, the subregions have also made considerable efforts to build up the capacities of the main stakeholders. Considerable importance is attached to coordinating activities at subregional level and the institutions have tended to implement and manage this coordination effectively by setting up ad hoc bodies as necessary. This makes it easier to manage the resources available for the implementation of the Convention by ensuring that they are channelled rationally and to best effect. In this respect, the subregions have undertaken to ensure the circulation of information and dissemination of best practices through various networks.

73. Although most of the subregions have recognized the importance of monitoring and assessment and data collection in the desertification control process and have developed many activities for the purpose, it should be noted that some subregions have fallen far behind in these areas, although they must clearly be considered fundamental.

74. Resource mobilization has been facilitated in all subregions by the Global Mechanism through workshops and/or the establishment of subregional facilitation funds. Lastly, most of the subregions - though by no means all - have taken advantage of the opportunities offered by the GEF's operational programme on sustainable land management and by the NEPAD Environmental Initiative.

75. The above considerations lead to the following conclusions:

(a) The implementation of SRAPs is generally making satisfactory progress, despite substantial structural, political and economic difficulties;

(b) New initiatives and opportunities have given a fresh impetus in some cases to the implementation of SRAPs. It would appear, nevertheless, that the subregions which have not yet taken advantage of such opportunities should do so as soon as possible on the basis of existing experience;

(c) The implementation of SRAPs is generally in line with the basic principles of the UNCCD, namely cooperation and participation;

(d) Concrete efforts are being made to make the best use of available resources, especially through the establishment of coordination and management mechanisms. There is a need, however, to introduce such mechanisms throughout the subregions;

(e) Effective monitoring and assessment tools should also be spread throughout the subregions.

76. At regional level, the preparation and implementation of the RAP to combat desertification have gone ahead in the period under review with the launch of the remaining three thematic networks.

77. While the initial activities planned for the implementation of recommendations adopted at the first three launch workshops could not go ahead, it was possible to make a start on those related to the environmental monitoring and renewable energies networks thanks to greater involvement by the institutional focal points and a more enabling environment (such as the Conference of African Ministers in charge of the energy sector held in Nairobi in May 2004 or the International Conference on Renewable Energies held in Bonn, in June 2004, in which the network took an active part).

78. It must be recognized, however, that generally speaking all the institutional focal points appointed at the end of 1999 to coordinate the thematic networks lacked the additional technical and financial support they needed to carry out their task effectively. The secretariat proposes bringing these focal points together at forthcoming regional conferences in order to arrive at a critical assessment of their activities and to pinpoint whatever remedies appear necessary.

79. The information exchange and circulation system planned for the Regional Coordination Unit could certainly facilitate the work of the thematic networks in Africa. The recent launch of the RCU bulletin undoubtedly marks a step in the right direction. Many specialized African institutions, who might potentially be involved in the RAP's thematic networks, as well as bilateral, regional and multilateral partners, have shown a growing interest in the programme, which could play a key role as a catalyst leading to positive initiatives that would be complementary to the efforts of States and subregional institutions.

80. A new stage in the development of the process at regional level has therefore begun with the implementation of recommendations put forward at network launch meetings and especially with negotiations for the funding of coordinating pilot projects as suggested by the meetings. The RCU is now in a position to produce the consolidated document of the preliminary draft RAP, which will be circulated as soon as it is ready.

81. The RCU will also be in charge of following up regional activities conducted in partnership with the ADB for UNCCD implementation in Africa and will initiate new activities with the help of regional and subregional partners of the UNCCD. In addition, the RCU will take an active part in promoting the International Year of Deserts and Desertification in 2006.

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