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REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AND OF ITS INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 22, PARAGRAPH 2(A) AND (B), AND ARTICLE 26 OF THE CONVENTION

**Review of the report on enhanced implementation of the
obligations of the Convention**

Note by the secretariat

Summary

1. Decision 8/COP.4 on commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) (Bonn Declaration) reaffirms the commitment of the Parties to step up efforts to combat land degradation in order to remedy the grave situation in several developing country Parties affected by drought and desertification, especially in Africa.
2. The Bonn Declaration identifies specific thematic and sectoral areas that it regards as priority strategic areas for action during the decade 2001-2010.
3. In accordance with decision 4/COP.6, the present report has been drafted to enable the Parties to form a judgment on the implementation of the Declaration on the commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the Convention.
4. On the basis of the information contained in the reports submitted by the Parties concerned in the various parts of the world, and the reports of the regional, international and non-governmental organizations, the report first gives an account of progress on the completion of the national action programmes.
5. Next, a preliminary assessment of the specific thematic and sectoral areas sets out the main achievements and constraints that have been identified. Analysis of the reports received indicates that combating desertification is now universally recognised as a priority for development.
6. Despite the difficulties reported by the countries in effectively implementing the Bonn Declaration, substantial efforts have been made, especially in the affected developing countries, to reflect that priority in the national development strategies. It should be noted, however, that certain strategic areas of action deserve greater consideration.
7. Five years after the adoption of the Bonn Declaration, it is recommended that guidelines be laid down to enhance implementation, and specific recommendations are suggested for eliminating some of the major constraints standing in the way of a robust implementation of the priority measures.
8. In order to achieve in full the objectives set out in the Declaration, by the end of their discussions at the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 7), the Parties are requested to decide on ways of intensifying action in the strategic fields of action adopted and to agree guidelines to be followed, taking account of the different levels of progress on the implementation of the Convention in the affected country Parties concerned.

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List of acronyms

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
CRIC	Committee for the review of the implementation of the Convention
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIS	Geographic Information System
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LADA	Dryland Degradation Assessment Project
NAP	National Action Programme
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
SADC	Southern African Development Community
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

I. BACKGROUND

1. The decision on commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations set out in the Convention (decision 8/COP.4), also known as the Bonn Declaration, recommends specific measures to step up efforts to combat land degradation in order to remedy the grave situation that prevails in several developing country Parties affected by drought and desertification, especially in Africa.
2. In order to enable the Parties concerned to make progress in that direction, the Bonn Declaration identified strategic areas of action for the implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification. These priority areas are (i) sustainable management of land use, particularly of water, soils and vegetation, in affected areas; (ii) sustainable use and management of rangelands; (iii) development of sustainable agricultural production and stockbreeding methods; (iv) promotion of new and renewable energy sources; (v) launch of reforestation/afforestation programmes and intensification of soil conservation programmes; (vi) development of early-warning systems for food security and drought forecasting; and (vii) desertification monitoring and assessment.
3. Decision 4/COP.6 also invites the affected developing country Parties and other Parties covered by Regional Implementation Annexes of the Convention to include systematically in their reports to the Conference of the Parties (COP) the strategic areas of action defined in the Declaration, so as to allow a better assessment of the state of implementation of the Convention at all levels.
4. It also encourages the affected developed country Parties and the relevant international organizations to further take into account the aims and objectives of the UNCCD in their strategies to support the efforts of the affected developing country Parties and other Parties covered by Regional Implementation Annexes of the Convention.
5. The Secretariat is requested to submit to the COP at its seventh session, an interim report on the implementation of the Declaration on the commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the Convention.
6. Following decision 4/COP.6, the present document has been drafted on the basis of the reports submitted by the Parties for the various regions of the world, and on the reports of regional, international and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
7. The method adopted is to incorporate into the report the information gleaned from the various submissions received, highlighting the main achievements, constraints identified and the main trends observed in the various regions concerned. This exercise aims not only to review progress on the honouring of the commitments aimed at enhancing the implementation of the Convention. It also offers a mid-term review in an attempt to identify shortcomings and proposes some issues for consideration by the Parties at COP 7, with a view to defining the guidelines needed for the 2006-2010 timeframe.

II. PROGRESS ON COMPLETION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

8. When adopting the Declaration on the commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the Convention, the Parties invited those affected countries which had notified the secretariat of their intention to prepare a national action programme (NAP) and to speed up the process with a view to completing it no later than the end of 2005.

9. At 30 June 2005 the situation by region of the countries that had completed their NAPs was as follows:

(a) In Asia, twenty-four (24) countries had completed their NAPs. The other Asian countries concerned are at various stages of preparing the NAPs. At least four countries report that they have completed the internal process, that their documents are being examined by the competent political authorities, and are due to be validated during the course of the year. The region's other sixteen (16) affected countries have begun drawing up their NAPs, but will complete them after the end of 2005, often because of a lack of financial resources;

(b) In Africa, thirty (30) countries had completed their NAPs. Substantial progress has been made in another group of thirteen (13) countries which have yet to draw theirs up. These countries could adopt their NAPs by the end of 2005. A third group of ten (10) countries report that they need more time to complete their NAPs;

(c) In the northern Mediterranean, four of the eleven affected countries have completed their NAPs. One country reports that it will validate its NAP by the end of 2005. Two other affected countries are at an advanced stage of preparation and may finish by the end of 2005. The other four countries concerned are at the drafting stage, but are likely to complete the process after the deadline;

(d) In central and eastern Europe, the affected countries Parties concerned are at various stages of completing their NAPs. Four countries have done so. The others are still at the stage of drafting this reference document;

(e) In Latin America and the Caribbean, seventeen (17) countries have completed their NAPs, while another group of sixteen (16) are making good progress with preparing theirs. Of the countries in the second group, seven (7) are well advanced and should complete their NAPs by the end of 2005. The other nine (9) report that they need more time.

10. The first lesson to be learnt from progress on completion of the NAPs is that the action programmes must be drawn up using a method designed to promote the combating of desertification by incorporating it into a broader context harmonizing all development policies and strategies.

**Progress on completion of National Action Programmes
at 30 June 2005**

AFRICA			
Country		Date of CCD ratification/accession	NAP completion date
1.	Algeria	22/05/1996	12/2003
2.	Benin	27/08/1996	11/1999
3.	Burkina Faso	26/01/1996	07/1999
4.	Cape Verde	08/05/1995	03/1998
5.	Djibouti	12/06/1997	06/2001
6.	Eritrea	14/08/1996	09/2001
7.	Ethiopia	27/06/1997	11/1998
8.	Gambia	11/06/1996	09/2000
9.	Ghana	27/12/1996	02/2002
10.	Kenya	24/06/1997	02/2002
11.	Lesotho	12/09/1995	01/1999
12.	Madagascar	25/06/1997	11/2001
13.	Malawi	13/06/1996	03/2001
14.	Mali	31/10/1995	05/1998
15.	Morocco	12/11/1996	06/2001
16.	Mauritania	07/08/1996	07/2002
17.	Mozambique	13/03/1997	05/2002
18.	Namibia	16/05/1997	07/1994
19.	Niger	19/01/1996	09/2000
20.	Nigeria	08/07/1997	08/2000
21.	Senegal	26/07/1995	08/1998
22.	Sudan	24/11/1995	04/2000
23.	Swaziland	07/10/1996	07/2000
24.	Tanzania	19/06/1997	08/1999
25.	Chad	27/09/1996	04/2000
26.	Togo	04/10/1995	12/2001
27.	Tunisia	11/10/1995	06/1998
28.	Uganda	25/06/1997	10/1999
29.	Zambia	19/09/1996	02/2002
30.	Zimbabwe	23/09/1997	02/1998

ASIA			
Country		Date of CCD ratification/accession	NAP completion date
1.	Saudi Arabia	25/06/1997	03/2005
2.	China	18/02/1997	05/1996
3.	United Arab Emirates	21/10/1998	12/2003
4.	India	17/12/1996	09/2001
5.	Indonesia	31/08/1998	11/2002
6.	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	29/04/1997	04/2005
7.	Kazakhstan	09/07/1997	01/2002
8.	Kyrgyzstan	19/09/1997	12/2000
9.	Lebanon	16/05/1996	06/2003
10.	Mongolia	03/09/1996	07/1996
11.	Myanmar	02/01/1997	10/2004
12.	Nepal	15/10/1996	11/2002
13.	Uzbekistan	31/10/1995	08/1999
14.	Pakistan	24/02/1997	09/2000
15.	Palau	15/06/1999	01/2005
16.	Philippines	10/02/2000	08/2004
17.	Syrian Arab Republic	10/06/1997	05/2002
18.	Lao People's Democratic Republic	20/09/1996	09/1999
19.	Sri Lanka	09/12/1998	11/2002
20.	Tajikistan	16/07/1997	12/2001
21.	Thailand	07/03/2001	03/2004
22.	Turkmenistan	18/09/1996	08/1997
23.	Viet Nam	25/08/1998	10/2002
24.	Yemen	14/01/1997	11/2000

LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN			
Country		Date of CCD ratification/accession	NAP completion date
1.	Argentina	06/01/1997	11/1996
2.	Bolivia	01/08/1996	11/1996
3.	Brazil	25/06/1997	2004
4.	Chile	11/11/1997	07/1997
5.	Colombia	08/06/1999	02/2005
6.	Costa Rica	05/01/1998	05/2004
7.	Cuba	13/03/1997	11/2000
8.	El Salvador	06/09/1995	2003
9.	Ecuador	06/09/1995	11/2003
10.	Guatemala	10/09/1998	11/2001
11.	Honduras	25/06/1997	07/2005
12.	Mexico	03/04/1995	1997
13.	Nicaragua	17/02/1998	11/2001
14.	Panama	04/04/1996	01/2005
15.	Paraguay	15/01/1997	11/2003
16.	Peru	09/11/1995	07/2001
17.	Venezuela	29/06/1998	08/2004

EUROPE			
Country		Date of CCD ratification/accession	NAP completion date
1.	Armenia	02/07/1997	03/2002
2.	Georgia	23/07/1999	04/2003
3.	Greece	05/05/1997	07/2001
4.	Italy	23/06/1997	02/2000
5.	Portugal	01/04/1996	06/1999
6.	Republic of Moldova	10/03/1999	04/2000
7.	Romania	19/08/1998	12/2000
8.	Turkey	31/03/1998	03/2005

11. From this point of view, in Latin America and the Caribbean, a great deal of effort was expended on adapting the NAPs to the strategies for combating poverty in those countries that have such a planning framework, such as Bolivia. In other cases, the effort went into integrating the NAP into the current environmental and social policies.

12. In Asia, the NAPs were implemented in synergy with the sustainable development strategies, which are an essential instrument for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Another requirement mentioned was to build bridges between the national, sub-regional and regional action programmes, so as to drive forward measures to combat desertification at the various levels of action.

13. Most northern Mediterranean countries have no specific legislation for combating desertification. Accordingly, the coordination bodies rely on the existing legal framework when attempting to implement an integrated approach to combat land degradation. In this context, the European Union directives are viewed as a source of inspiration for the NAPs. This applies in particular to the Water Framework Directive and the Common Agricultural Policy.

14. In central and eastern Europe, the countries intend to make the NAPs an integral part of their national long-term environmental protection and economic development policies. Several countries in the region consider that it is vital to set up mechanisms linking the NAPs to the sectoral policies adopted in the fields of agriculture, forestry, management of water and energy resources, and land use planning. The NAPs draw up an inventory of the environment in the area affected by land degradation and identify priorities for action using the results of scientific research and assessments carried out. The CCD process is also viewed as an opportunity to develop regional and international cooperation, notably in the fields of scientific research, information exchange, technology transfer and training.

15. In Africa, the integration of the NAPs into macro-economic planning is an important issue. There is an acknowledged need to promote close links between the NAPs and the strategies for combating poverty, which currently determine the structure of development efforts. In several countries, the mechanisms for coordinating the various sectoral policies are as yet of fairly limited effectiveness. Furthermore, national policy guidelines for combating desertification are not always coordinated with the objectives of local action. Moreover, the measures as a whole usually lack visibility. This limitation on the running of the ongoing programmes and on the control of the investments mobilized to combat desertification results in sectoral planning processes that are not always able to take maximum advantage of the real available potential.

16. In general, it is essential to integrate the NAPs into macro-economic policy in order to ensure more efficient programmes to combat desertification and land degradation. The reports stress this requirement but do not always describe the means to be used to establish close links between these NAPs and the other strategic development policies.

III. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE SPECIFIC THEMATIC AND SECTORAL AREAS

17. The Bonn Declaration identified specific thematic and sectoral areas that it regarded as priority strategic areas for action during the decade 2001-2010. Owing to the diversity of the situations prevailing in the various parts of the world and of the seriousness of land degradation and desertification, different levels of progress have been achieved in the strategic action areas. Depending on its perception of the challenges posed by desertification/land degradation, each country has tended to focus its efforts on a fairly limited number of the areas identified by the Bonn Declaration.

18. In most of the cases referred to in the Declaration, it seems that the choices of investing in the thematic areas are dictated by a rational use of existing financial resources and by the hope that the objectives pursued will directly benefit the hardest-hit populations.

19. The adoption of a participative and iterative approach in the context of the assessment of the level of achievement of the commitments set out in the Declaration is an important concern. As the report submitted to the FAO points out, the involvement of the populations in these periodic assessments is of crucial importance, in that it ensures their support and commitment, by guaranteeing them control of the decision-making processes and the use of the financial resources mobilised to support initiatives to combat desertification.

A. Sustainable management of land use, particularly of water, soils and vegetation, in affected areas

20. In Africa, the ongoing initiatives for rehabilitating degraded land are focused on reforestation, soil conservation and integrated management of water resources. These measures involve a variety of methods, though they all address common concerns for creating conditions aimed at allowing the natural productive resources to be renewed.

21. The preparation of the NAPs has enabled certain countries to capitalize on their knowledge of natural resources, by combining biophysical and socio-economic analysis parameters. This exercise has led to the identification of major problems arising in the various ecosystems and has enabled their acuity to be measured and appropriate solutions to be envisaged.

22. In its report, the Commission of the Africa Union states that it is committed, in the context of its 2005/2007 work programme, to promoting activities for managing shared water resources for the development of agriculture and the protection of the environment. These activities will be carried out in a partnership with the regional integration bodies, in particular the regional economic communities (CILSS, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), SADC, IDAG, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC), and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)).

23. In the northern Mediterranean, it is observed that in many cases, the decision-makers do not always view combating desertification as a national priority. In certain countries affected by desertification, no mention is made of arrangements planned or measures taken to ensure that strategic areas of action such as land use are taken into account. On the other hand, special emphasis is placed on spatial planning.

24. In Asia, since fragile land is used, it has become more difficult to find a balance between traditional space management methods and strategies to promote high-productivity agriculture. The policy of certain countries to discourage nomadic life, pastoral mobility and the exploitation of certain rangelands has led to greater dependence on agricultural and sedentary life. This has put greater pressure on the natural environment and increased the risks of land degradation.

25. It is also noted that in a context of a sustained population dynamic in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid dry areas, the strategies to be devised must take account of the characteristics of the land that can be exploited in a sustainable way, so as to support the populations' lifestyles and ways of making a living. It is nevertheless demonstrated that in arid areas it is possible to provide for the needs of the populations, provided that at least minimal fertility of the land is preserved.

26. One of the most important positive changes noted in Asia, for example, is linked to greater participation by civil society stakeholders in the land reforms initiated and the activities implemented in rural areas. An improved participation process in this area is an important asset in a context where the CCD is recognized as a suitable framework for promoting sustainable development.

27. In central and eastern Europe, soil conservation activities are implemented with the support of initiatives focusing mainly on combating soil erosion, land fertility management and water conservation. It is also noted that economic and financial instruments are used to stimulate rational management of natural resources.

28. In its report, the FAO points out that the rehabilitation of degraded land is a long-term battle, requiring an appropriate political and institutional framework to be put in place, able to ensure the support and participation of farmers, stockbreeders, forestry workers and other users of the land. It adds that the intervention strategies must be based on in-depth knowledge of the ecosystems, and of the interactions between the biophysical and socio-economic factors.

29. The CCD process must help to reconcile the immediate needs of the populations with the requirements for long-term conservation and sustainability. In other words, the measures designed to increase agricultural and animal production must be compatible with the protection of the basis of those resources.

30. The FAO reports that it is currently working on the promotion of reforestation activities by supporting the drafting and implementation of forestry policy, the adoption of tools for managing natural resources,¹ the development of regional and international cooperation and the coordination of action. Its intervention strategy is based on (i) establishing technical reference standards, (ii) developing initiatives in cooperation with other partners, and (iii) conducting operational programmes aiming to promote sustainable agricultural systems and to ensure the development of bio-energy.

31. In its report, the UNEP laid stress on the holding of regional training workshops, with a view to helping the countries to take better advantage of the approaches of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) regarding sustainable land management. These workshops were attended by 400 people from 130 countries (operational focal points of the GEF, GEF regional coordinators, accredited NGOs, CCD focal points, and representatives of regional and sub-regional organizations). The training given helped to prepare projects under GEF Operational Programme 15.

32. In its report, the IUCN stated that its efforts were aimed at promoting an ecosystemic approach in order to foster a dynamic of integrated management of land, water resources and all living resources. Such an approach takes account of the priority concerns for improving the living conditions of the populations whose subsistence depends directly on the products and services provided by the ecosystems in which they live. From the operational point of view, the activities carried out cover (i) trans-border conservation of resources and (ii) communal management of natural resources, mainly in west and east Africa.

B. Sustainable use and management of rangelands

33. In several parts of the world where extensive stock-rearing systems are used, it is indispensable to create conditions favouring the gradual emergence of a grazing right, in a context where the absence of a specific law on the use of grazing land is a major handicap. Several communications indicate that the conditions for the use of grazing land are still governed by a multitude of articles contained in a variety of land and forestry laws that have a general tendency to restrict breeders' access to natural resources.

34. In certain countries, grazing land reforms are brought about by the changing context of the development institutions. In view of the mixed results of experiments with ranching and control of animal densities, these land reforms have brought the issue of rehabilitating pastoral farming back into the limelight. In this context, researchers and civil society organizations have developed a case for fairer systems of access to natural resources, including for livestock breeders. The new pastoral legislation introduces important innovations linked in particular to (i) the preservation of pastoral mobility, which is essential for operating extensive livestock rearing systems and (ii) the possibility for breeders to access resources of a strategic nature for the development of their production activities.

35. However, these innovations should not conceal the fact that the pastoral charters or codes still contain ambiguities and shortcomings that could leave pastoral farming with a permanent marginal status and exacerbate conflicts between different groups using the space. In several African countries, sectoral grazing legislation has transferred responsibility for management of natural resources to the pastoral communities, yet without giving them any real decision-making power. Moreover, breeders' support for these reforms remains limited since they do not always appreciate what is at stake. Given this situation, more attention should be given to approaches that enable breeders to (i) better appreciate the stakes and implications of land reform; (ii) make proposals regarding the terms of their involvement in the ongoing decentralization process; (iii) define independent views of the issues concerning the development of stock-breeding; and (iv) upgrade their skills in forecasting, negotiation, planning, and implementing, monitoring and assessing stock-breeding policies.

36. In Asia, many countries report that they have vast stretches of rangeland where the communities practise traditional stock-rearing, relying more on land-tenure customs than on modern law. In certain Asian countries, efforts are being made to introduce an environment policy with a view to enhancing the diversity of the ecosystems. In some cases, the reforms introduced have led to mixed results, owing mainly to the persistence of non-sustainable grazing practices. In some countries of central Asia, agricultural policies that promote highly mechanized and industrialized farming have led to overgrazing of rangelands where there are high animal densities.

37. Faced with these constraints, most Asian countries have adopted a varied range of initiatives designed to improve pastoral living standards by diversifying activities, promoting micro-loans and supporting the provision of basic social services, especially the improvement of basic infrastructures and the introduction of incentive schemes designed to encourage stock-breeders to reduce the size of their herds or flocks.

38. In central and eastern Europe, sustainable management and use of rangelands figure among the important activities. This choice is amply justified since overgrazing is a crucial problem owing to the considerable increase in animal density.

39. In the northern Mediterranean, information in the exploitation of rangelands is provided by a number of research projects being conducted in the region. Inter alia, these projects cover (i) assessment of the condition of the rangelands based on satellite data; (ii) identification of the physical and socioeconomic factors involved in the process of land degradation; (iii) devising of rangeland management scenarios; and (iv) development of soil conservation techniques. Also highlighted is the commitment of many countries in the region to developing cooperation and information exchange concerning the monitoring of animal density and rangeland management, with a view to setting up scientific networks, acquiring appropriate technologies and upgrading the knowledge and skills of the institutions and players involved in combating desertification.

C. Development of sustainable agricultural production and stockbreeding methods

40. In African, Latin-American and Asian countries, the ongoing discussions of agricultural policy guidelines take account of the situation of family smallholdings, which are faced with climatic hazards which may have a serious impact in that the farming activities depend on the exploitation of natural resources which are not always certain to be renewable.

41. Many reports give an account of progress on improvements in farming techniques. Research efforts are aimed not only at increasing the productivity of cropping systems but also at ensuring that agriculture is sustainable.

42. In this connection, special attention is paid to irrigation and soil rehabilitation techniques. Some countries are also trying to develop horticulture and agroforestry. Others are experimenting on improving the productivity and quality of forestry products.

43. UNESCO reports that its activities focus on science, education and the enhancement of skills in this particular area of activity. In 2004 the Organisation launched a project for sustainable management of marginal arid areas in north Africa and Asia. This project supports

applied research, training and exchange of information between participating countries, by promoting the exploitation of techniques and practices based on local know-how and the development of cooperation relationships between holders of land rights, stockbreeders and other users of the space.

44. In other affected developing countries, the main challenges of the predominant farming and stockbreeding systems are the need to upgrade and modernize the small-scale production structures, security of land tenure, integrated management of natural resources and priority for food-security activities.

45. The introduction of a competitive environment for access to the factors of production increases social differentiation in the countryside and polarizes agriculture into two types: competitive modern farming systems oriented solely towards the market, and family subsistence farming, which embraces most of the workers on the land. Attention should be paid to the implications of each of these farming types in relation to semi-arid and dry sub-humid ecosystems. Economic efficiency and social equity, which are essential factors throughout the development of the policy, require the relative weight of the various component production systems to be taken into account.

46. In several developing countries, it is observed that the deficit in the production of food is exacerbating conflicts related to access to natural resources, particularly fertile land, now an increasingly scarce resource. In order to remedy the situation, a number of countries report that they have stepped up policies for promoting market gardening, agroforestry and the establishment of cereal banks. They are also endeavouring to encourage agricultural research as a means of creating conditions for improved production systems. More targeted initiatives are being carried out in some countries to develop unconventional varieties of cereals and other plant varieties suited to drought and the specific conditions of arid and semi-arid areas.

47. In Latin America and the Caribbean, several research and development activities have enabled experience to be acquired in the fields of applying alternative technologies and enhancing local know-how. However, the information on these experiments would benefit from being exploited and made readily accessible. To that end, emphasis should be placed on the need to develop exchanges of information between national coordination centres. There are indeed academies and research centres in the region specializing in the study of arid areas and management of water resources. However, with a few exceptions, the work of these institutions is not linked to bodies responsible for the process at national level.

48. Evolution towards a sustainable system of agricultural production, suited to the natural conditions of the biophysical environment, is the ideal way of giving renewed impetus to this key sector of the rural economy in most countries affected by desertification.

D. Promotion of new and renewable energy sources

49. In several parts of the world, energy is an especially challenging issue since households rely on wood for their energy consumption. For instance, in many Asian countries it is reported that firewood represents over three quarters of the energy supply.

50. In African rural communities, wood is also the basis of domestic energy consumption. However, many of the country reports indicate considerable potential for renewable energies, though they have yet to be exploited in an optimum way.

51. As a general rule, the energy profile of the African, Asian, Latin-American and Caribbean countries most affected by desertification is characterized by a substantial discrepancy between the available wood resources and potential sources of energy, for the rural sectors' economic and domestic needs.

52. This low availability of energy, especially in rural communities, both curbs the development of rural activities and aggravates the desertification process. Indeed, dependence on wood biomass leads to massive felling of plant cover to satisfy domestic energy needs, so accelerating the process of deforestation and soil degradation.

53. Regarding the African region, considerable efforts are being made to promote renewable energy sources (development of photovoltaic systems and alternatives to oil) and improve hearths, all of which help to reduce exploitation of wood fuel.

54. In Latin America and the Caribbean, certain integration institutions such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean report that they support the countries of the region so as to allow them to take stock of the energy sector and define policy guidelines for the reforms to be promoted. The issue of policy guidelines is very important at a time when the countries are increasingly committing to reforms of the energy sector.

55. In practice, the reforms so far undertaken in the renewable energy sector have not achieved the expected results. In sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia, as in certain parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, the poorest elements of the population remain excluded from access to energy services and are tending to become increasingly dependent on the biomass.

56. Certain researchers, experts and civil-society organizations are expressing concern about the direction of these energy reforms. They are worried that the reforms are market-oriented, focusing both on increased efficiency and on reducing government involvement, so preventing those governments setting up programmes to support wider access to energy.

E. Launch of reforestation/afforestation programmes and intensification of soil conservation programmes

57. Efforts in Asian countries have concentrated on creating a favourable institutional and political environment, and adopting global, integrated approaches to the management of forestry resources that take account of soil conservation concerns. These countries have successfully stimulated labour-intensive reforestation programmes in the wetlands.

58. Of the world's ten leading countries in terms of reforestation, five belong to the region (China, India, Indonesia, Japan and Thailand). In Indonesia, efforts are focused on rehabilitating degraded natural forests and involve not only government agencies but also private companies. China has introduced a system of compensation to reward the efforts of rural stakeholders in planting trees and protecting or managing common forests.

59. It is considered that the success of the reforestation programmes depends to a large extent on a reform of environment policies, which has encouraged the emergence of an enabling environment. The convincing results obtained in the field of reforestation/afforestation are explained by several factors, notably the setting-up of mechanisms facilitating access to financial resources, the introduction of remunerative prices for products and the use of conservation technologies. The reform of forestry policy is introducing two important innovations: (i) preparation of forest management plans² and (ii) adoption of forest certification and labelling systems.

60. In Africa and many other parts of the world, we are seeing a gradual switch from centralized administrative management of natural resources to accountability of the basic communities.³ These decentralization policies have led to a transfer of competence to local natural-resource management bodies based on various models. This development underlines the importance of the issues of access to and control of natural resources, in a context characterized by recurrent cycles of drought and a continuing increase in demand for natural resources in order to satisfy the needs of the populations concerned. One report highlights the need for a right to control natural resources, especially as their market value is high from the point of view of the rural populations in dry areas, who usually see resources as a point of convergence of their economic activities.

61. In such a context, the transfer of the power to control resources to local communities should lead to expansion of activities to upgrade the skills of the various categories of stakeholders, so as to introduce an awareness among citizens of the way natural resources are appropriated.

62. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the direction and scope of the policies for decentralizing forestry management vary considerably from one country to another. Over the region as a whole, however, the decentralization process is gathering pace, and local decision-making levels are increasingly able to have a say in the way natural resources are managed.

F. Development of early warning systems for food security and drought forecasting

63. Regarding this thematic area of the Declaration, the reports submitted give a brief account of the main ongoing initiatives, progress achieved, difficulties encountered and needs felt.

64. In Africa, with very few exceptions, countries have done little to introduce early warning systems. Some efforts have been made at regional level, however, and it has been decided in particular to set up an observatory on drought and desertification in countries of the AMU and the CILSS. In the specific case of the Sahel countries, the existing warning systems aim to eliminate the constraints linked to the many different approaches adopted by the various parties involved. In this connection, specialist cooperation agencies are taking part in the promotion of an integrated system based on a combination of analysis methods and the existing instruments in order to provide a uniform framework at regional level, while endeavouring to adapt to the specific characteristics of the various sub-regions.

65. In Asia, the establishment of regional networks has helped to promote exchanges of information on the management of natural resources, with the aim of increasing capacities and developing effective early-warning systems. Thanks to these thematic networks, it should be possible to capitalize on experience in the region and exploit best practices. It is considered necessary to take account of local knowledge and link it to the modern information and communication system.

66. In the northern Mediterranean, many databases are available in farming resources, land use and socio-economic conditions. They have been pressed into service to set up early-warning systems for forecasting periods of drought. These databases are still fragmented and must be consolidated if the early-warning systems are to become more effective.

67. In most parts of the world, research institutes have been involved in improving data collection and analysis systems, thanks to the use of remote sensing and geographic information systems (GISs). Besides the use of satellite images and powerful data-processing technologies, efforts have focused on broadening the scope of action of the alert systems, so as to take account of food security concerns.

68. However important these achievements may be, there are persistent constraints linked to the fact that the approaches used by the research institutes often fail to take account of whether the knowledge gained can be disseminated or transferred. Many countries mention the need for substantial increases in capacity in this area, and easier access to existing scientific information.

G. Desertification monitoring and assessment

69. In Africa, progress in this area remains modest, but it is reported that one of the major objectives pursued in the NAPs relates precisely to the identification of procedures allowing account to be taken of the changes affecting both the natural environment and the socio-economic context, by means of continuous readjustments based on regular assessments. Some countries' NAPs contain monitoring and assessment components designed to check the consistency of desertification control activities as a whole, to assess their impact and to draw up measures aimed at either rectifying weakness in current policies and/or consolidating what has already been achieved. Others have not yet set up systems devoted specifically to monitoring desertification, but use data derived from monitoring poverty and famine, as well as information supplied by weather centres or other research institutes. In such cases, problems generally arise when it comes to coordinating and harmonizing data collection systems.

70. In central and eastern Europe, most countries are involved in exercises to define indicators for monitoring and assessing desertification. When constructing their indicators, the countries report that they aim to comply with the highest environmental monitoring standards. They are keen to mobilize expertise available in universities, research institutes and institutions specializing in monitoring and assessing land degradation. Although the region has very substantial amounts of information available, it has not yet been possible to set up integrated frameworks for environmental assessment.

71. In Asia, the initiatives taken at various levels (national, sub-regional and regional) have resulted in large databases being set up, and the work of harmonizing the desertification monitoring/assessment procedures is very well advanced. Discussions are in progress to establish a frame of reference that can be used as a kind of control panel, so as to monitor progress on combating desertification.

72. In the northern Mediterranean, several countries have set up their own databases for monitoring land degradation. Efforts to produce a consolidated Mediterranean database are in progress. Certain projects currently in progress in countries or pilot areas are endeavouring to produce vulnerability maps of degradation or the risk of land degradation. Special efforts are also being made to improve integration of socio-economic indicators into desertification risk scenarios.

73. In the great majority of regions featuring arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, one of the major weaknesses of the monitoring/evaluation systems is that they are not always designed to make optimum use of the existing equipment. The preferred option is generally to define the operating methods of the monitoring/assessment equipment starting from a single scheme, and in many cases to build the assessment system using non-exhaustive criteria.

74. Many affected developing countries acknowledge that an adequate drought and desertification monitoring and assessment system would help face up the multiple risks such as food insecurity, recurring drought and other disasters such as flooding, forest fires and landslides. It would seem that the CCD Committee on Science and Technology, and the Dryland Degradation Assessment Project (LADA) coordinated by the FAO could play a major role here, by helping these countries to harmonize their desertification monitoring and assessment methods in line with established standards.

75. The reports submitted by many countries also mention a need to increase human and institutional capabilities, in order to overcome the many constraints such as poor quantification of natural resource degradation phenomena, a scattering of data, difficult access to existing information, the use of different terminologies and scales, or the compartmentalization of agencies which possess information.

H. Remarks and conclusions

76. The reports submitted do not always go into much detail regarding the measures taken to implement the strategic areas of action identified by the Bonn Declaration. These reports do clearly state, however, that combating desertification, particularly in relation to the objective of reducing poverty, is now regarded as a priority in the affected developing countries.

77. The seven themes analysed are priorities for all the affected countries, which recognize that efforts are being made to reflect these priorities in the national development strategies. Certain areas, however, such as renewable energy sources and desertification monitoring and assessment, would merit closer attention in future reports.

78. In this respect and in order to allow for a more thorough analysis of each strategic area of action, it would perhaps be advisable at each COP session to select only a limited number of areas of action for examination. This would enable the countries concerned to present more detailed reports.

79. The COP is also requested to take into account that in most regions, the regional action programmes have developed priority themes in the form of networks. These thematic programmes cover the same areas as those identified in the Bonn Declaration. It would therefore be worth examining progress achieved with the regional action programmes in correlation with the programmes aimed at enhancing the implementation of the obligations of the Convention.

IV. RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR ENHANCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE CONVENTION AND SUPPORTING THEIR EFFECTIVE AND FULL IMPLEMENTATION

80. At the end of June 2005, some seventy-nine (79) countries had completed their NAPs. In many cases, however, the operational phase is only just beginning, particularly as regards the implementation of the strategic areas of action identified in the Bonn Declaration.

81. The major difficulty most often reported by affected developing countries is still the lack of financial backing. The resources mobilized out of own funds, while tending to increase, remain limited and quite inadequate for the scale of the work envisaged. According to these countries, some of their main cooperation partners do not always seem to treat combating desertification with the importance it deserves. In such a context, the designation of land degradation – mainly desertification and deforestation – as an area of GEF action has done much to raise hopes in affected developing countries. They nevertheless emphasize that the resources made available in the third cycle of the GEF for land degradation were limited. The allocation of substantial resources under the fourth cycle of the GEF would be an important signal of renewed commitment by the international community to giving greater support to the funding of priority projects for combating desertification and land degradation.

82. Similarly, recent UNDP and World Bank initiatives indicate increasing interest in issues related to combating desertification insofar as it is related to the fight against poverty. The hope is expressed that other development cooperation institutions will introduce or step up their policies for robust action to combat desertification.

A. Providing substantial financial resources and other forms of assistance to affected developing country Parties

83. Despite many approaches to bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies, the vast majority of affected Asian countries report that they have obtained only very limited financial support for implementing the priority activities set out in the Bonn Declaration, which are also identified as priorities in their programmes to combat desertification.

84. In Latin America and the Caribbean there have been similar difficulties in mobilizing funding to support the implementation of the priority areas of action.

85. These difficulties are also partly explained by the fact that many affected countries do not always include the issue of combating desertification and land degradation in the priorities to be given financial support by their cooperation partners. The fight against poverty very often boils down to making a choice between many urgent factors, taking account of the available financial resources. Against this background, many national political decision-makers would do well to include combating desertification/land degradation in the urgent action to be taken at national, sub-regional and regional levels. They will of course be more inclined to consider this option if their development partners show a willingness to fund strategic areas of action such as those identified in the Bonn Declaration.

86. In Africa, several countries emphasize their willingness to improve the efficiency of the funding mechanisms for measures to manage natural resources and local development (rural credit, village investment funds, tax rebates, taxes on the exploitation of natural resources, etc.). In a context where the stakeholders are dispersed, financial resources could be mobilized more efficiently by enhancing existing mechanisms for collecting and coordinating the various contributions. This seems to be a more promising approach than setting up national development funds, since the countries are having difficulties in making such mechanisms work properly.

87. To facilitate the mobilization of the financial resources, it is indispensable to integrate, as harmoniously and systematically as possible, activities to combat desertification into national strategies and programmes of cooperation with development partners.

88. This approach should also involve an increase in the level of investments in the sectors involved in combating desertification. Logically, the promotion of rural activities that are financially profitable in the short or medium term could offer an incentive for national private operators.

B. Promoting the mobilization of new and additional funding

89. Since combating desertification is a global exercise, several developing countries belonging to a common interest group (Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean) have long called for the introduction of new mechanisms to be funded principally by developed countries. The setting-up, within the GEF, of a thematic area for combating land degradation can be interpreted as a positive response to that call. The goal of GEF Operational Programme 15 is to stimulate, through action programmes, integrated land-use planning efforts, by coherently linking the satisfaction of needs to the requirement to preserve the ecosystems. In order to benefit from the opportunities offered by this Operational Programme, several countries are taking the approach of promoting sub-regional and multilateral partnerships and developing cross-border cooperation for managing shared resources. At the same time, they are endeavouring to improve their capacity for formulating and carrying out projects, in accordance with the GEF's requirements. But, as indicated above, there is a risk that these efforts will have only limited impact unless sufficient resources are allocated under the GEF's fourth supply cycle currently under discussion.

C. Encouraging the mobilization of funding from the private sector and other non-governmental sources

90. The concern to enhance efforts to combat desertification requires the funding base of the action programmes to be expanded beyond the conventional mechanisms (public development aid, national budgets). In the new phase of the implementation of the Bonn Declaration that begins at the end of 2005, the Parties may wish to explore all the innovative funding possibilities that exist, including decentralized cooperation, the involvement of private-sector stakeholders, debt-for-nature swaps, and the development of carbon-emissions trading.

91. In certain countries, the foundations have been laid with the aim of seeking private-sector funding. This is the case in particular of South Africa, where the results of a study designed to identify potential donors concerned to promote environmental sustainability and the improvement of the populations' living conditions have enabled mechanisms to be set up for mobilizing financial resources from private companies, in order to support the implementation of the NAP.

92. In Latin America too, public institutions have reportedly made contacts with mining companies established in the region, to explore the possibilities of investment to support the priorities set out in the Puna Americana. In the specific case of Nicaragua, catalyst funding obtained has helped to launch an initiative involving several partners, with the aim of identifying concrete proposals for the provision of environmental services, particularly targeting carbon emissions trading. A similar initiative is currently in progress as part of a joint project between Peru and Ecuador, with the aim of mobilizing funding through carbon trading.

93. On the whole, real but limited progress has been made on mobilizing funding. The stakeholders and institutions of the affected countries have not yet succeeded in adopting innovative and attractive approaches for medium- and long-term investments in their arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.

94. It is clear that this issue of funding CCD activities remains an essential precondition, but is not in itself sufficient. The experience of rural development and management of natural resources in certain countries reveals that a successful implementation of the strategic areas of action depends to a large extent on factors such as the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms and a considerable organizational capability.

D. Facilitating access by affected country Parties to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how

95. Affected developing countries are aware of the considerable impact that the use of appropriate technologies can have on their action to combat desertification. Certain affected developing countries (Brazil, China and India) have succeeded in freeing themselves from this constraint by becoming technology exporters rather than importers. They are also among the countries embarking on major action to combat desertification, with very convincing results.

96. In Africa, progress is reported with improvements in farming techniques. Research efforts are aimed not only at increasing the productivity of cropping systems but also at ensuring that agriculture is sustainable, with the promotion of production systems suited to semi-arid and

arid ecosystems. In this perspective, special attention is given to irrigation techniques, and to promoting suitable crops and soil rehabilitation. Some countries are also trying to develop horticulture and agro-forestry. Others are experimenting with improving the productivity and quality of forestry products.

97. Several northern Mediterranean countries have made an inventory of traditional techniques for growing olive trees, protecting old terraces and repairing old irrigation systems. The reports emphasize the need to network all the institutions possessing information on natural resources, in order to capitalize on the available information in forms suited to the needs of the various users.

98. In Asia, as in Africa, efforts have focused on setting up thematic networks linked to the regional action programme to combat desertification. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the countries are also working to set up these networks, providing for the exchange of information and knowledge in certain of the strategic areas of action. Initiatives have been taken with the help of regional coordination units not only to identify good practices and successful experiments on combating land degradation, but also to ensure that the information collected is disseminated.

V. GENERAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

99. By adopting the Declaration on the commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the Convention, the Parties wished to emphasize the central importance of combating desertification and its close connection with important international initiatives designed to reduce poverty and provide an enabling environment. These strategic areas should therefore be seen as basic measures contributing directly to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

100. Five years have gone by since the adoption of the Declaration on the commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the Convention, the deadline of which is 2010. The present preliminary assessment work has taken account of the main lessons learnt from similar exercises carried out in the context of earlier sessions of the COP and the CRIC. It would be advisable to make recommendations to eliminate certain major constraints hindering the effective implementation of the Bonn Declaration.

101. The reports received from the Parties, international organizations and the United Nations emphasize the substantial achievements in the implementation of the Bonn Declaration. Many difficulties nevertheless remain, in areas as diverse as ensuring consistency between decision-making centres, coordination of institutional levels of action, choice of priorities for development and the challenges of combating desertification, expertise with technical tools suited for arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, conditions for making financial resources available, and enhancement of the capabilities of stakeholders on the ground.

102. In order to achieve in full the objectives laid down in the Declaration, there is a need to define methods of intensifying the strategic areas of action adopted and to agree guidelines to be followed in accordance with the spirit and letter of the Convention.

103. The Parties are therefore requested to take the opportunity of examining the interim report on the implementation of the Declaration on the commitments to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the Convention, in particular to decide whether it would be appropriate to set intermediate objectives. The desired aim is still to mobilize in a concerted and non-binding way all the concerned or interested stakeholders, including the affected countries, the sub-regional, regional, international and non-governmental organizations, along with players in the private-sector.

104. In this perspective, during their discussion at the seventh session of the COP, the Parties are requested to take account of the following factors:

(a) At institutional level, to encourage the countries concerned to broaden the powers of their national coordination bodies, so as to respond more effectively to the new requirements associated with the operational phase of the national action programmes;

(b) The current state of the CCD process highlights at least three categories of affected countries. The first category concerns countries which finalized their NAPs in the late 1990s. Some of these countries need support to update their NAPs and implement their priority areas of action. The second category concerns countries which finalized their NAPs recently. They also need substantial support in moving straight from the formulation phase to the implementation phase of their NAPs. The third category concerns the affected countries which are unable to finalize their NAPs in 2005. This group also needs support from their main partners, in order to enable them to finalize their NAPs as quickly as possible in line with the guidelines set out in the Convention;

(c) An analysis of progress on the implementation of obligations under the Convention also reveals that, with the modest human and financial resources at their disposal, many countries do not have the means to send full and detailed information to the COP on a regular basis on progress achieved in implementing the Bonn Declaration. In this context, for each future session of the COP the Parties may wish to select a limited number of themes for examination from those of the strategic areas for action adopted for the decade 2001-2010;

(d) Regular monitoring of the obligations under the Convention must also take account of certain external factors directly affecting developing countries. In this respect, the relationship between international trade and environment is of great importance in the effort to stimulate activities in the rural sector of developing countries affected by desertification;

(e) Certain strategic areas of action, such as the development of early-warning systems or monitoring and assessment of desertification, deserve special attention in view of their importance as regards both food security and the relevance of decisions taken at national level;

(f) The seven strategic areas of action identified in the Declaration designed to enhance implementation of the obligations of the Convention are sectors of activity needing substantial financial investment. It is therefore desirable that all current initiatives for funding programmes to combat desertification give special attention to projects concerning one or other of these strategic areas of action;

(g) Support would be welcome from the institutions of the GEF family for networks of CCD regional thematic programmes to support the strategic areas of action;

(h) The many initiatives aimed at creating strategic support frameworks for the implementation of the Convention are very encouraging, although the development cooperation institutions behind these initiatives should simplify access to resources by referring to the basic principles of the Convention (advisory processes, integrated approach, participation) and harmonizing these tools with the existing strategic approaches for reducing poverty;

(i) Similarly, the measures announced at international level for cancelling the debts of developing countries open the possibility of discussing, without preconditions, the redeployment of the financial resources thereby released for an effective implementation of the priority areas for combating desertification;

(j) Finally, since the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is recognised as a tool contributing to the goal of eliminating poverty, it would be appropriate to regard the level of investment for managing natural resources in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas as an important development indicator.

Notes

¹ Various tools have been developed at local level to promote the inclusion of all users of the same resource in decision-making processes. Thus, local agreements that are currently tested on the ground can potentially give fairer and more inclusive access to natural resources.

² The use of the participative approach in experiments for managing forest areas offers many challenges. One of the major ones is how to involve the stakeholders concerned in the management scheme. As ongoing experiments in certain regions show, the participative nature of the exercises for drawing up the management plans is more fictitious than real in that these management schemes are predefined; this means that consultations with the population relate not to the orientations of the plan or the rules to be observed, but solely to the conditions governing what is allowed and the penalties for infringing the fixed rules.

³ Forestry projects have been a driving force in this general evolution of practices for managing natural resources towards a more decentralized approach that involves people on the ground. The failure of intervention strategies mainly focusing on forestry activities and especially reforestation programmes under government control has led to the adoption of new approaches based on a more general understanding of resources in a rural environment. This transition process has enabled forestry projects to acquire a new perception of the problems of managing natural resources, taking account of the evolution of both ecosystems and production systems.
