



UNITED
NATIONS



**Convention to Combat
Desertification**

Distr.
GENERAL

ICCD/CRIC(5)/3/Add.2
19 December 2006

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION
Fifth session
Buenos Aires, 12–21 March 2007
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

**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,
AS WELL AS DECISION 1/COP.5, PARAGRAPH 10**

**REVIEW OF THE REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION OF AFFECTED COUNTRY
PARTIES OF REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA, INCLUDING ON THE
PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE GAINED
AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION AND
IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES**

**Review of reports on implementation by affected Latin American and Caribbean
country Parties, including on the participatory process, and on experience gained
and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of action programmes**

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

**Progress made in the formulation and implementation of the subregional and
regional action programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean**

Summary

1. Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region country Parties have been facing social and economic changes during the past 15 years that have led to many conflicting trends in the region and taken a heavy toll on the region's natural resources. The negative economic effects of liberalization and structural reforms are not reflected in the economic growth patterns as they are in the poverty indicators. Additionally, environmental degradation is increasing in many countries, aggravated by more recurring natural disasters.

2. Within the framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) implementation process, several initiatives have been undertaken in the region to address the causes and consequences of land degradation. Countries are adopting appropriate measures in this direction. However, many countries face serious constraints, such as non-availability of relevant technology and lack of financial resources. These hamper the achievement of the objectives identified in national policies, programmes and projects.

3. An updated proposal for the regional action programme (RAP), which was originally approved in 1997, was prepared by the secretariat and agreed to by LAC country Parties at the IX LAC Regional Meeting held in Colombia in 2003. The updated RAP included progress made by the region in the implementation of the UNCCD during the period 1998–2002, analysed different options to further develop the programme in the next five years (2003–2007) and proposed a new general structure providing thematic axes and synergy approaches among selected key topics and instruments at the national, regional and subregional level, while increasing opportunities for cooperation.

4. The aim was to highlight the specificities of the countries of the region in order to overcome common bottlenecks and profit from subregional similarities. Accordingly, the existing institutional and technical assets available in different countries and subregions have been integrated and coordinated in order to build upon the existing capacities, allowing national institutions to share experiences, knowledge and technology, and creating spillover effects and economies of scale so as to accomplish common regional and subregional objectives in a networking perspective.

5. The implementation of the UNCCD in the LAC region has moved forward and improved in the past four years. However, more progress could have been made if strong partnership had been developed and implemented at the national, subregional, regional and international levels. On one side, the developed country Parties continued to show limited interest in supporting UNCCD implementation activities in LAC countries, because the region is still perceived as not as affected by desertification and drought as other regions in the world. But this is a misperception. Likewise, LAC countries need to do more to include issues of land degradation, drought and desertification in their national development agendas, as well as in their national plans and strategies.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. According to decision 11/COP.1, any group of affected country Parties may make joint communications on measures taken at the subregional and/or regional levels in implementation of the Convention. The secretariat has prepared this report on regional and subregional activities using available documents and information, in particular the reports of the last three regional meetings, the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and other documentation available from the region.

II. PROGRESS IN THE SUBREGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

A. Subregional action programme for the sustainable development of the Gran Chaco Americano

2. The Gran Chaco Americano covers 1,000,000 km² of the northern and central regions of Argentina (10 provinces), the western part of Paraguay (3 departments) and southern Bolivia (3 districts), and represents one of the largest dryland ecosystems of the region with important biodiversity.

3. Since the launching of the subregional action programme (SRAP) of the subregion, aimed at promoting initiatives to eradicate poverty in the region, preserve the ecosystem and stop the severe degradation of its natural resources, the three countries involved have made efforts to promote and develop an institutional framework for cooperation, including it as a top priority for actions at the provincial, national and subregional levels.

4. In particular, the Gran Chaco SRAP seeks to mainstream sustainable land management within the framework of the overall action programme on sustainable development as well as into national policy frameworks; to formulate and implement integrated transboundary land use planning systems; and to build capacity in sustainable land management among local communities, including indigenous groups through participatory mechanisms.

5. Initiatives have been implemented to enhance producers' technical knowledge, promote the use of sustainable traditional technologies/techniques and appropriate practices, and improve access to markets and to financial opportunities so as to increase the profitability of sustainable alternative production systems.

6. With the support of the Inter-American Democratic Charter (IADC)/Organization of American States (OAS) the project for the "Sustainable development and integrated management for combating social, economic and environmental degradation in the Gran Chaco" was implemented, creating an institutional and operational mechanism to implement the SRAP.

7. In November 2003 a workshop was held to share experiences and lessons learned in agroforestry among countries sharing the Chaco and Puna ecosystems, bringing together representatives from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru, as well as other Andean countries such as Colombia and Venezuela, and southern cone countries such as Uruguay. The objective was to promote a forum for discussion and exchange of information on agroforestry at the local level involving local stakeholders living in the two ecosystems, national

authorities and cooperation partners dealing with activities to combat desertification processes in the region. The meeting allowed the dissemination of case studies on:

- environmental, cultural and socio-economic aspects of agroforestry;
- the development of an interactive dialogue on best practices and successful experiences in productive systems and water management, reforestation and afforestation in dry ecosystems, livestock, food processing etc.;
- the creation of project portfolios on agroforestry to be implemented at the local level without neglecting the national and subregional scale, as well as the opportunities and strategies for technical and financial cooperation, including possible financing by the Global Environment Facility (GEF);
- the identification of agroforestry benchmarks and indicators referring to clear objectives and stakeholders, including a management and monitoring system for desertification processes.

8. Additionally, ongoing agroforestry practices were classified considering institutional and governance aspects, as well as techniques used (i.e. the relationship between traditional knowledge and modern technologies), social vulnerability (including education, land tenure and food security), and economic considerations (local vs. international markets, agro-eco-tourism, employment, etc.).

9. Furthermore, the importance of promoting and strengthening synergy among sustainable development conventions at the local level, where agroforestry activities could be developed, was stressed, as was the need to promote effective links among the thematic programme networks (TPN) adopted in the region.

10. Finally, with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Global Mechanism (GM) it was possible to develop a full-size project in the Gran Chaco Americano; the project successfully entered the GEF pipeline in April 2005. To complement the GEF initiative, the GM has contributed to the mobilization of co-funding from other sources for the Chaco SRAP, including the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD).

B. Subregional action programme for the sustainable development of the Puna Americana

11. The Puna Americana is an area of 700,000 km², with a population of 12 million people; the territory is shared by Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru. It includes ecosystems of medium and higher elevations of the Andes.

12. The SRAP of the Puna Americana was formulated under the UNCCD framework to eradicate poverty and to promote local development in these fragile ecosystems. It integrates several axes of actions such as: tourist development; income generating activities; recovery and management of agro-pastoralism; wetlands and railways; integrated watershed management; reforestation; and conversion of mining activities into sustainable and environmentally sound tools.

13. The SRAP was officially initiated with the signing of the Rome Agreement in 2002 during CRIC 1 and with the support of the UNCCD secretariat and the GM.

14. Taking the opportunity of the TPN4 launching meeting in Guatemala City, Guatemala, in November 2004, the focal points of the Puna Americana SRAP and the UNCCD secretariat were able to make progress in identifying the main lines of support from the secretariat to the SRAP. As a first action it was proposed to link Puna and Chaco in agroforestry issues, establishing a link between the two SRAPs. It was also decided that the GEF and other agencies would be approached for financial support. In January 2005 a strategy of action to develop and link agroforestry activities in the Puna Americana with those of Gran Chaco was identified. The strategy has four main components: development of silvopastoralism and stockbreeding of camelids; enhanced development of agriculture and commercialization of original products; sustainable management of natural resources; and monitoring and evaluation.

15. The main components of the Puna SRAP, including thematic and geographic priorities, were finalized in 2004. In particular, three international border nodes were identified: node 1, Bolivia–Chile–Peru (Titicaca, Desaguadero, Poopo, Coipasa, Uchusuma, Parinacota); node 2, Argentina–Bolivia–Chile (Jujuy, Salta, Catamarca, Sud Lipez, San Pedro de Atacama, Alto Loa); node 3, Ecuador–Peru (Loja, Chimborazo, Piura). The SRAP has been validated by the focal points, national experts, national authorities, local governments and affected communities. The implementation of the SRAP involves a portfolio of 37 programmes and projects. Additionally, a full-size project to support selected priority areas identified in the SRAP and a medium-size project relating to the mining sector initiative currently being undertaken with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) as part of the financing strategy for the Puna SRAP were formulated and submitted to the GEF in 2005.

16. Support has been provided to the development of an international framework agreement among the five countries involved in the Puna Americana SRAP with the aim of raising the status of the programme to the level of an international treaty. The text of this framework was agreed through a fully participatory process culminating in a meeting held in Jujuy, Argentina, in September 2004, which brought together UNCCD focal points, representatives from the ministries of foreign affairs, members of parliament and representatives from civil society, including indigenous groups and the private productive sector. In this context, the ECLAC supported an initiative aimed at engaging the private mining sector companies that operate in these countries in a consultative process with the stakeholders of the Puna Americana SRAP so as to identify potential investment opportunities in support of the priorities established within the SRAP. A first seminar on the “Contribution of mining to sustainable development of the Puna Americana” was held at ECLAC headquarters in Chile, in December 2005 which allowed exchanges of views on the role that mining companies could play, through increases in investment, in reducing socio-environmental impacts of their activity while improving the economic stability of the area.

17. Eventually, a proposal was submitted to the IACD on the rescue, validation and integration of traditional knowledge and practices for combating desertification and alleviating poverty in rural communities of the Puna Americana. The project is yet to be funded, but possible financing sources are being explored.

C. Subregional action programme in Mesoamerica

18. There is a pressing need to formulate a comprehensive SRAP in the Mesoamerica subregion. To this aim, the tri-national initiative in the Gulf of Fonseca, integrating El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, could constitute the first nucleus of such programme.

19. Sustainable land management in the watersheds draining into the Gulf of Fonseca is of great importance due to their impact on the Gulf itself. Sedimentation and pollution originating from land erosion upstream to affect the coastal and marine environment in the Gulf of Fonseca, which is one of the most biologically rich areas of Central America and provides spawning and feeding grounds for a range of species including turtles, fish, crabs, shrimp and molluscs.

20. A project submitted to the GEF in 2005 through the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre (CATIE), with the support of the secretariat and the GM, was approved in 2006. It will consolidate cooperation between the three countries in the management of watersheds that drain into the Gulf. The expected outcomes include the recovery of degraded land, ecosystem conservation through sustainable land management practices, and increased food security. The project will be based on a tri-national cooperation framework harmonizing policies, strategies and national priorities within their respective national action programmes (NAPs).

21. The project supports the objectives of the RAP, in particular with its thematic programmes: promotion of agroforestry practices for poverty reduction, improved management practices and traditional knowledge, and watershed resources. The project also responds to the priorities areas defined by the Central American Commission on Environment and Development (CCAD); the Gulf of Fonseca is one of the 11 priority areas. Finally, the project will support the objectives of the Tri-national Authority for the Gulf of Fonseca through strengthening its overall capacities and working through it in the coordination of ongoing bi-national and tri-national activities.

D. Subregional action programme in the Caribbean

22. The secretariat, together with the GM and some United Nations agencies, continues to provide support to the establishment of partnership-building processes and to South-South cooperation agreements aimed at achieving the priority objectives identified in the NAPs. In response to a call by the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean for Sustainable Development during their 14th Meeting (Panama, November 2003), to facilitate the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA), the secretariat supported the umbrella project promoted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) involving least developed countries and small island developing states (LDC-SIDS) that provides assistance and fast-tracks the approval of GEF medium-sized projects, as well as the UNEP Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) for the subregion.

23. At a meeting of the Caribbean Subregional Workshop on Land Degradation held in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on 3–6 February 2005 a decision was taken to establish the SRAP as an integral part of the Caribbean SIDS programme in support of the implementation of the UNCCD. This aims to provide an overall framework for a cohesive approach to the

implementation of the Convention and it is expected to be launched soon. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago and UNEP will provide support for this initiative, which has among its main objectives the mobilization of resources, capacity-building and awareness raising.

24. The secretariat is also addressing issues relating to the Convention in the context of the cooperation between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) countries, by participating in several meetings organized in this framework and promoting concrete initiatives in the Caribbean subregion.

25. Additionally, and as a complement to all ongoing actions in the subregion, the secretariat facilitated the preparation of a proposal to strengthen cooperation and foster youth commitment in the revival/protection of these island ecosystems. The cooperation mechanism in this community-based proposal integrates the support of countries such as China and Venezuela, as well as many countries from the subregion. This proposal, entitled "Environmental rehabilitation programme with the participation of youth in the Caribbean States and the development of a subregional action programme for the Caribbean", was made to the secretariat, which organized a meeting in Havana, Cuba, in May 2006 to discuss it. The Caribbean States agreed to work on national activities that will be integrated in a comprehensive programme for the subregion.

E. Transboundary action programme in Hispaniola

26. In collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) Investment Centre, the GM and other partners, the secretariat has technically supported the transboundary action programme (PANFRO) covering the border area between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. This area has the highest incidence of poverty in the Hispaniola Island and suffers from severe degradation of natural resources. This initiative has been successful in mainstreaming UNCCD priorities into the programmatic cycles of bilateral actions (the transboundary projects being co-financed by Germany and Canada). Furthermore, these projects are currently being considered as the baseline for a bi-national GEF full-size project on land degradation.

27. The PANFRO has been conceived as a planning tool to address land degradation and drought phenomena and it is based on participatory and decentralization processes that already exist in the countries, aiming at strengthening local ownership. Activities are currently being carried out to establish local planning committees on both sides of the border.

28. The PANFRO programme is a framework for combating desertification and promoting negotiation mechanisms that include and inter-institutional working group, achievement of synergy, coordination and information sharing on programming cycles of national and international institutions involved, and support of local participation. Among the most relevant results are the definition of a national agenda, the consolidation of a national consulting process, the creation of strategic cooperation alliances, the collaboration agreements with GM, German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), FAO, UNDP and the Government of Canada, the development of project proposals in the Artibonito river watershed, the integration of a number of initiatives along the border and the design of the project on the harmonization of public policies.

29. With the cooperation of the GM, GTZ and the secretariat, a two-part meeting took place in the Dominican Republic in December 2003 and January 2004, aimed at integrating agroforestry issues, among others, into the agenda of horizontal cooperation between Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Cuba, and at strengthening the exchanges of information at the national, bi-national and subregional levels to facilitate the design of the respective NAPs. The agroforestry experience has been constantly developed in the Dominican Republic, where 14 nurseries along the border have been created while the “environmental brigades” involving youth have already planted more than 1 million trees.

III. PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

30. During the IX LAC regional meeting the country Parties decided to adopt six regional thematic programme networks (TPNs) and integrate them within the ongoing initiatives as part of the technical core of the RAP. The TPNs adopted are: TPN1: Benchmarks and indicators; TPN2: Information Network on Drought and Desertification in Latin America and the Caribbean (DESELAC); TPN3: Integrated water resources management; TPN4: Agroforestry; TPN5: Traditional knowledge; and TPN6: Renewable energy.

A. TPN1: Regional thematic programme network on benchmarks and indicators of desertification and drought

31. The LAC region has developed a comparative advantage in the issues of benchmarks and indicators over the past 10 years. Several initiatives have been implemented in the region for the design of this TPN (in accordance to decision 5 of the VII Regional Meeting, Chile, 2001). Three regional workshops were held in the region, in Argentina for South America (2002), in Honduras for Mesoamerica (2003) and in Saint Lucia for the Caribbean countries (2002).

32. The TPN1 benefits from inputs developed in the region. For example, in 2002 the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) approved a project in six countries (Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru) with four main components: development of indicators for Latin America; implementation of the project in pilot areas selected in each country and design of software; training; and dissemination. Another project has been implemented during 2000–2003 with the support of GEF/UNEP for Chile, Brazil and Mexico. This project created a unified system of indicators, field protocols for evaluation of indicators and software (MONITOR) with tools for monitoring desertification, including automatic cartography capacities.

33. In 2004 the UNCCD secretariat, with the support of the GM, organized a one-day workshop in Guatemala, for the official launching of the TPN1, based on a comprehensive proposal for its coordination and functioning. After agreeing on a two-year work plan, the countries selected Argentina as coordinating country and appointed Saint Lucia and Costa Rica as subregional coordinators for the Caribbean and Mesoamerica, respectively.

34. During the period 2004–2005 the coordinating country, with the support of the secretariat and the subregional coordinators, worked on a basic set of indicators in order to have a quantitative status of desertification in the region. It also created an electronic library on

benchmarks and indicators to be published in the DESELAC site where the first results are available, and on a CD-ROM distributed to all focal points.

35. During the X LAC Regional Meeting (Brazil, 2005) the Parties requested the coordinator country to foster the organization of TPN1 activities in conformity with those of the Programme to Combat Desertification in South America, implemented by IADB/Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), as well as the ongoing Land Degradation Assessment for Drylands (LADA) initiatives in the region, in particular, those for the identification and definition of a common set of baseline indicators to allow exchange of information to assess desertification status in countries of the region, and for sharing successful experiences to non-participating countries.

36. Considering the existing expertise and the results from ongoing initiatives in the region, current achievements on the utilization of benchmarks and indicators for baseline determination should be made available to the countries. Unfortunately, the results in terms of a set of basic indicators on desertification, the general methodology for selection and implementation and the coordination mechanism of the TPN did not fulfil all expectations. This can be attributed to several factors, such as the unpredictable financial resources for implementing the work plan, the poor effectiveness of the coordination mechanism, and low interest showed by participating countries.

B. TPN2: Regional thematic programme network on information: DESELAC

37. During the IX Regional Meeting, the secretariat presented a new format for the DESELAC website, emphasizing the history of the network and its importance as an interactive mechanism for sharing and exchanging technical, scientific and socio-economic information among all the involved actors so that this network could be made available to other regions as well.

38. The countries decided to adopt TPN2 as the information network, based in DESELAC, and have requested the secretariat to develop a work plan in order to take advantage of this new platform. The secretariat prepared such a work plan, listing the following main activities: the accomplishment of the country profiles on the status of desertification and land degradation; a forum on traditional knowledge in order to prepare the launching of the TPN5; the electronic publication of the NAPs and other documents; and the finalization and implementation of the DESELAC website.

39. At the Forum on Traditional Knowledge organized through DESELAC during 2006 as a preparation for the launching of TPN5 on best practices and traditional knowledge at the end of the same year, an important number of participants from all the continents shared their views on these issues. This innovative and effective approach of the forum enable several issues for the launching of the TPN5 to be discussed.

40. However, DESELAC has yet to become the decentralized management tool expected by country Parties. Many shortcomings still prevail as the low amount of information exchanged, the obstacle represented by the various languages used, the low level of access and participation of the focal points (generally overwhelmed and taking care of different issues, without adequate infrastructure and personnel), continue to challenge the functioning and usefulness of the

desertification website for the region. Even in the circumstances of limited resources, many advances have been made; the network is meeting more and more of the information needs of the Parties concerned and considerable efforts have been made in the area of improving its information content and links to all the other TPNs in the region.

C. TPN3: Regional thematic programme network on water

41. The background for TPN3 started with the conclusions and recommendations from the technical workshop on integrated watershed management held in Venezuela, in 2001. The main recommendations were based on the promotion of full participation of users in the implementation of appropriate initiatives for sustainable water-resources management, the establishment of preventive measures and early warning systems against drought, including the coordination at the regional and international level, and the strengthening of cooperation and information dissemination among all countries on water issues.

42. As requested by countries, the secretariat prepared a comprehensive background paper on water and watershed issues in LAC, with the support of CAZALAC (Water Center for Arid Zones in Latin America and the Caribbean). This proposal was officially presented and discussed by the national focal points in a meeting held in Caracas, Venezuela, in 2004. The basic principle of the TPN, adopted by the national focal points, concerned the need that management, distribution and use of water in desertification-related ecosystems must be transparent and involve all stakeholders and relevant actors providing them with the information, education and knowledge they require to participate in the decision-making process and in the implementation of actions regarding water management and conservation. The role of women in water-resources management was also recognized as was the importance of using benchmarks and indicators on water at the local, national and regional level, accessible to all stakeholders.

43. In the same way, participants agreed that it is necessary to develop appropriate methodologies for the rehabilitation and sustainable use of degraded lands, to foster community income-generating activities aimed at combating poverty, and to contribute to the development of strategies for water and watershed management in drylands. Finally, as in the second UNCCD reporting exercise, the adoption of preventive measures and early warning systems covering all relevant risks, such as drought, floods and land degradation, was strongly recommended.

44. Country Parties approved the TPN3 by consensus and it was published and disseminated in CD-ROM format, produced in partnership with the International Centre for Demonstration and Training in Utilising Rainwater (CIDECALL). However, although Venezuela had informally declared its interest in coordinating actions on behalf of the region, the official identification and appointment of the regional coordinator is still pending, as well as the coordination at the subregional levels. In addition, countries accepted Guatemala's candidature to act as the subregional coordinator in Mesoamerica. This caused a critical delay in the linking of the strategies identified during the launching meeting to achieve the planned objectives in the field of training and capacity-building on water-resource management in the framework of the Convention, institutional strengthening of sectors related to TPN3, and use and transfer of appropriate technology.

D. TPN4: Regional thematic programme network on agroforestry

45. As approved by the IX Regional Meeting, the UNCCD secretariat started consultations with the national focal points and donor countries in order to facilitate the preparation of the TPN on agroforestry in the LAC region.

46. The TPN4 programme focuses on the users of natural resources and stakeholder participation. Due to the characteristics of the population living in affected drylands (generally low-income farmers and local groups) a positive impact of the TPN4 is expected in the mobilization of various stakeholders and sectors involved in the design of alternatives of technical and social innovation of relevant agroforestry systems and strategies to combat desertification and poverty. A gradual approach was chosen based on pilot initiatives at subregional scale to provide guidelines and recommendations for the future design and implementation of this regional network.

47. The secretariat supported the preparation of a background paper and organized a meeting in Guatemala, in 2004 for launching the TPN4. The country Parties agreed during the meeting on a two-year plan of activities, on the basic indicators on agroforestry and on a specific coordination mechanism. These agreements are aimed at mainstreaming agroforestry issues, mainly in the ongoing subregional Puna and Chaco SRAPs, and at strengthening both subregional programmes and generating synergy among them. Despite the importance of the TPN4 and the information and experiences accumulated in the region, no country has yet offered to act as coordinating country.

E. TPN5: Regional thematic programme network on best practices and traditional knowledge

48. Traditional knowledge has been considered a fundamental issue for UNCCD implementation. On different occasions country Parties have expressed their support for the configuration of global and regional programmes on this issue.

49. Decision 12/COP.5 mentions that the promotion of traditional knowledge must be considered a priority for the country Parties at the moment of formulating their NAPs and recommends to continue promoting research on this matter. At the IV LAC Regional Meeting, country Parties decided to ask for the development of a regional project to rescue, identify and use existing traditional knowledge and technologies in LAC. At the V LAC Regional Meeting, the secretariat prepared a document on this matter that listed more than 2000 technologies from South America, to be validated within the NAP framework. The TPN5 is based on objectives identified at the local level to move forward issues of desertification and drought with proven technologies to be included within government strategies.

50. At the time of the second reporting exercise in 2002, LAC countries presented positive experiences on traditional knowledge and sustainable practices on soil conservation, and during CRIC 1 the region presented some technologies relating to biomass increase, zero tillage and conservationist agriculture.

51. During April–May 2006 the secretariat carried out an Internet Forum on Best Practices and Traditional Knowledge through DESELAC. The main objective of the six-week forum was

to contribute to the establishment and strengthening of a network serving as a preparatory activity for launching the TPN5 later in 2006.

52. The innovative approach used in this TPN aims at avoiding some constraints on the selection of coordination actions. At the same time the Internet forum can be considered as a tool for fully integrating this TPN with ongoing initiatives and for securing resources for mobilizing experts and institutions for future partnerships.

53. However, participation of the national focal points in the said Internet forum was lower than expected. About 200 persons registered in the forum, from countries and regions beyond Latin America and the Caribbean. As mentioned above, focal points are not well prepared for the inclusion of new activities and this represents a very important concern for the implementation of the UNCCD as a whole.

F. TPN6: Regional thematic programme network on renewable energies

54. As with other TPNs the secretariat was requested to take necessary measures for its implementation. In 2004 it submitted for the consideration of the countries a concept paper, later updated with the support of Germany and Brazil, so as to be ready for the TPN launching by 2006–2007.

55. In consultations with LAC countries and donors, the secretariat received an initial proposal from Brazil to host the meeting for the launching and further implementation of the TPN6. The revised background paper is available and the secretariat together with the Government of Brazil, is consulting with donors in order to mobilize financial resources for launching and implementing the TPN6 on schedule.

G. Interregional platform of cooperation between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean

56. The cooperation between African and Latin American and Caribbean countries under the UNCCD framework started with the interregional forum (Recife, Brazil, October 1998), when the two regions began a dialogue on possible cooperation and partnerships to combat desertification and drought through strengthening of their capacities. This cooperation should enhance exchanges of experiences, technologies, knowledge and other capacities between the affected countries of the two regions. Its implementation should also involve developed countries and international institutions.

57. The platform focuses on implementation of agreed joint activities and new measures to reinforce the partnership among countries of the two regions in the context of the implementation of the UNCCD.

58. The IV Forum on the Platform of Interregional Cooperation was held in November 2004, in Tunis, Tunisia. It focused on sustainable agricultural systems. Among the outcomes, a cooperation framework was agreed for identifying opportunities and proposals that promote exchanges of experience with home gardens, agricultural production, transformation and trade, capacity-building, and community participation with particular emphasis on women and youth involvement in development projects, as well as on eco-tourism and environmental services of agroforestry systems.

59. The secretariat, together with the respective government authorities and specialized institutions, continues to foster contacts among the countries of the two regions interested in consultations and exchanges; at the aim is to establish interregional partnerships in the context of the cooperation platform, prioritizing on sustainable agriculture systems initiatives.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

60. The need to raise more awareness of, and attention to, the UNCCD among different stakeholders, and to identify major challenges in this regard, is crucial. There is need to identify what has already been done, what actions still need to be taken and what advice can be acknowledged to promote a sustainable environment for UNCCD activities that facilitate the mobilization of resources in the different countries and subregions of LAC.

61. The intimate relationship between poverty and environmental issues in general, and land degradation in particular, needs to be clearly highlighted as a first regional and subregional priority; ensuring sustainable management of natural resources, combating climate change, deforestation and desertification, and halting biodiversity loss, are essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

62. The SRAPs and TPNs are approaches for making more effective the implementation of regional programmes, as they are based on predictable mobilization of technical, institutional and financial resources into the region; the majority of countries do not have all the necessary resources to participate and implement the priorities of the regional programmes as traditionally conceived.

63. However, the main concerns on the conditions for the implementation of the UNCCD in the region prevail: political weakness of the national coordinating bodies and focal points; lack of real and effective synergy among the conventions at the national and regional levels; and lack of financial resources to realize the priority projects set forth in the NAPs/SRAPs/RAP.

64. The development and implementation of SRAPs continued moving forward in South America (Chaco and Puna), as well as in Hispaniola. The Caribbean SRAP can be further developed and begin implementation, taking into consideration that several initiatives are ongoing in the subregion, particularly the youth and environment programme. The Mesoamerican SRAP has received some attention and support from the secretariat, the GM and other agencies, but still lags behind as compared with other subregions.

65. It is possible to make progress in the implementation of the TPNs. The secretariat has a fundamental and catalytic role in their processes. However, mechanisms for implementing such networks and for supporting the subregional programmes in their implementation need to be strengthened and supported.

66. The secretariat, together with the GM, was able to support the SRAPs of the region through proposals approved by the GEF operational programme 15 (OP15) for Chaco, Puna, the SRAP for Mesoamerica/Gulf of Fonseca, and the Caribbean SRAP, with the inclusion of youth issues into the latter SRAP.

67. Two workshops on gender and desertification were organized in Mexico, in 2005 with the aim of including the gender issues in the activities of the UNCCD. However, more efforts are needed to integrate the gender perspective in the programmes and project priorities.

68. The secretariat continued involving civil society in the implementation of the Convention at the local, national and international levels. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were invited and supported to participate in all events and forums within the UNCCD framework, both in LAC and worldwide, ensuring balance in geographical and gender representation. For example, at the LAC NGO meeting held in Guatemala in November 2004, supported by the secretariat and other institutions, the new subregional representatives and the International NGO Network on Desertification and Drought (RIOD) regional coordinator were elected; and support provided to create the RIOD in Venezuela and Honduras. However, it is also important to stress that the presence of LAC NGOs within the Convention is still lagging behind, representing only 13 per cent of NGOs accredited to the COP.

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