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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,
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 Northern Mediterranean and
Central and Eastern European country Parties and other affected 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 subregional and
regional action programmes in affected Northern Mediterranean and
Central and Eastern Europe country Parties and other affected country Parties**

Summary

1. This document has been prepared with the aim of reviewing and analysing subregional and regional activities in the Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European regions, in order to facilitate the review of the status of implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to be made by the Committee for the Review of the

Implementation of the Convention at its fifth session (CRIC 5). This report therefore covers the period since the last regional report, made in 2002 for CRIC 1. It compiles relevant information based on existing documentation, information on the UNCCD website (<<http://www.unccd.int/regional/northmed/meetings/meetings.php>> and <<http://www.unccd.int/regional/centraleu/meetings/meetings.php>>) and the outcomes of regional and subregional meetings held between 2002 and 2005.

2. Documents ICCD/CRIC(3)/INF.8 “Background information for the regional consultations of affected country Parties of the regional implementation annex for the Northern Mediterranean” and ICCD/CRIC(3)/INF.9 “Background information for the regional consultations of affected country Parties of the regional implementation annex for Central and Eastern Europe” also provide relevant information relating to the regional process under these two annexes.

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I. PROGRESS MADE AT REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL LEVELS UNDER THE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEX FOR THE NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN (ANNEX IV)

A. Subregional activities under Annex IV

1. After the Convention entered into force in 1996, a regional working group of the then affected country Parties of Annex IV (Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey) was created. This is known as the subregional “Group of Annex IV countries”. The group was chaired by Portugal in 1997 and until the end of 1998, Italy in 1999 and until June 2001, Greece in June 2001 and until the end of 2002 and by Turkey from the end of 2002 to 2004. During the meeting organized in Bonn during CRIC 3, Spain accepted the chairmanship of the group.
2. Some non-affected Parties are observers to the group, including the European Community, France and Monaco. Israel was also invited as an observer to the subregional Annex IV process.
3. The history of subregional meetings prior to 2002 is available on the UNCCD website (<[www.unccd.int/regional information/NM/meetings](http://www.unccd.int/regional%20information/NM/meetings)>). During a meeting of the focal points of the group, held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 22 July 2002, country Parties discussed the implementation of the terms of reference (TOR) of the subregional action programme (SRAP) and agreed on identifying pilot areas, to be linked in a subregional network.
4. The group held four more meetings between 2002 and 2005, at which the following topics were discussed:
 - The need to reconsider the TOR for the SRAP
 - The need to develop efficient communication with the scientific community in view of its potential contribution to further developments. The importance of this has been highlighted in many scientific projects carried out in the framework of the European Community (EC) funding budget lines. The EC could also potentially contribute to pilot projects and subregional network financing
 - The crucial role of sensitizing all stakeholders in affected areas, through education and training on desertification issues and increasing political awareness. Pilot projects can also be focused on fields that are important in the political agenda (forest fires, etc).
 - Political implications, links with different stakeholders and the relations with the local actors and national committees. All countries agreed that these are the main concerns to face when dealing with the implementation of SRAP and the regional action programme (RAP). Lack of funding is widely recognized as having a negative effect on the implementation of the RAP and SRAP.
 - Social and economic factors such as rural poverty, migration/overpopulation, low income, poor living conditions etc. Because these potentially accelerate the expansion of desertification, the group agreed to give them serious consideration, encouraging also the adoption of integrated and participatory approaches in the implementation of coordinated programmes and joint projects at all levels.

5. Many of the country Parties in the group participate in projects, funded mainly by EC–Directorate General Research, aiming to improve scientific and technical knowledge in biophysical, information technologies and earth sciences fields, as well as social, economic and political ones. In this context, although research partners represent many European country Parties, affected ones or donors, only some projects are directly connected with combating desertification activities in these countries. Again, only some are directly connected with the elaboration of monitoring and assessment methodologies.

6. Starting from the results of MEDALUS (Mediterranean Desertification and Land Use 1991–1999), Combating Desertification in Mediterranean Europe Linking Science with Stakeholders (DESERTLINKS) was based on extensive collaboration with local stakeholders in desertification affected regions (pilot areas are in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain), and a desertification indicator system for Mediterranean Europe was produced. This project finished in 2004.

7. A project with similar aims is the “Indicators and thresholds for desertification, soil quality and remediation” (INDEX) project. Starting in 2004 and ending in 2006, INDEX aims to apply existing knowledge to develop dynamic indicators based on soil microbiology, characteristics of the dynamic humus pool and soil physics to assess land degradation and its remediation. Under the coordination of a German partner, Spain and Italy are involved at the scientific level. In addition, DESURVEY, a flexible surveillance system based on analysis of climatic and socio-economic factors, is progressing under Spanish coordination. The pilot project areas are in Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

8. Some other projects aim to assess desertification using remote sensing tools. Among them are “Geomatics in the assessment and sustainable management of Mediterranean rangelands” (GEORANGE), “Remote sensing and geo information processing in the assessment and monitoring of land degradation and desertification in support of the UNCCD” (DESERTSTOP) and “Land degradation assessment in Mediterranean Europe” (LADAMER).

9. In order to enhance the use of these research projects by other stakeholders, LUCINDA is a new project aiming to provide an information pack containing guidelines for sustainable land management in desertification-affected areas; the guidelines are derived from the scientific results of past and ongoing European Union (EU) research projects and will make this information available to national and local stakeholders.

10. Finally, the “Environmental assessment of soil for monitoring project” (ENVASSO) project, aims to develop a system to harmonize existing data sets on eight threats to soil (erosion, declining organic matter, contamination, compaction, salinization, biodiversity loss, soil sealing and landslides) in order to allow an easy exchange of information and data. Greece, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain are partners in this project.

11. The improvement of knowledge in the fields of restoration, soil conservation and the mitigation of effects is the principal objective of the following projects: “Restoration actions to combat desertification in the Northern Mediterranean” (REACTION) and “Conditions for restoration and mitigation in desertified areas” (RECONDES). They aim to mitigate desertification by using vegetation in specific landscape configurations prone to severe degradation processes. The project “Soil conservation and protection strategies for Europe”

(SCAPE) aims to provide scientific support to incorporate soil conservation and protection into the EU policy for sustainable development. This will take place through the analysis of existing information and by considering future data and information needs for implementing a sustainable multifunctional soil conservation policy.

12. Built on a partnership involving all Group of Annex IV country Parties, the project entitled “Clearing house mechanism on desertification for the Northern Mediterranean region” (CLEMDES), ended in 2004. This project took into consideration the insufficient communication, at both national and international level, and proposed the creation of a clearing house mechanism to allow easy structured and unstructured communication among partners and all stakeholders. It also set up an Internet-based network devoted to improving the diffusion of information.

13. Other projects aim to support the policies promotion and implementation and/or the exchange of information, such as MEDACTION (covering policies for land use to combat desertification, with the objective of developing an information and decision-support base on desertification issues in the Northern Mediterranean to assist decision makers) and MEDRAP (concerted action to support the Northern Mediterranean RAP to combat desertification) and focusing on building tools to support the elaboration of the Annex IV RAP. Both activities ended in 2004.

14. All countries of the Group of Annex IV country Parties are involved in DESERTWATCH, funded by the European Space Agency. DESERTWATCH involves the development of a desertification monitoring system for the northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea based on satellite earth observations. It attempts to involve directly national focal points (NFPs) and national coordinating bodies (NCBs).

B. Regional cooperation activities under Annex IV

15. In addition to the country Parties of the Group of Annex IV, other Northern Mediterranean (NM) countries have ratified or acceded to the Convention, including some that are also from the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) region (such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia) and that are entitled to participate in activities under both the regional implementation annex for Northern Mediterranean (Annex IV) and the regional implementation annex for Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V). Some of the new NM country Parties (Croatia, Cyprus and Malta) asked the UNCCD secretariat to help to facilitate the establishment of a regional process involving all countries from the Northern Mediterranean including the group of Annex IV countries. Following the first regional consultative meeting of affected NM country Parties (23 July 2002, Geneva, Switzerland) these Parties presented several possible areas of cooperation to be explored further. The Group of Annex IV countries declared its readiness to facilitate cooperation with the newcomers to Annex IV. As a result of the meeting, country Parties of Annex IV requested the UNCCD secretariat to act as a facilitator to Annex IV – to interact with the interested Parties and to analyse their suggestions on scientific and technical cooperation.

16. As reported in document ICCD/CRIC(3)/INF.8, political constraints and problems in knowledge availability, information exchange, and a lack of funding, made it difficult for Annex IV countries to elaborate a regional action programme, particularly after the increase in numbers

of country Parties. The UNCCD secretariat therefore took the initiative to explore potential areas and forms of future regional cooperation through a questionnaire that was distributed to 11 NM country Parties. The initial results were discussed at the second regional consultative meeting of Annex IV (November 2002, Rome).

17. During the first workshop for Annex IV focal points (April 2003, Bonn), an 'Activity Master' for regional cooperation on land degradation in NM countries and a 'Regional Cooperation Kit' for each individual NM country Party based on the results of the questionnaire were introduced by the secretariat. These documents were presented as two new tools for launching cooperation at bilateral, subregional, transboundary and regional levels; they provide invaluable information for the specific needs expressed by each country and encourage exchanges between focal points, experts, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) etc. in other countries. Therefore, regional cooperation in land degradation and land resources management between interested countries has been facilitated.

18. This cooperation is based on four pillars:

- Pillar 1. Scientific cooperation
- Pillar 2. Technology/savoir faire
- Pillar 3. Training/capacity-building
- Pillar 4. Documentation/material/publications

19. During the "Regional meeting to strengthen the cooperation among Northern Mediterranean countries in the field of land resources management (17–18 May 2004, Bonn, Germany), representatives of Annex IV country Parties examined operational ways and means to promote this cooperation and decided to establish a work programme for the coming years. In general, financial and other necessary resources for organization have to be ensured at national level by each proposing country Party. The UNCCD secretariat will support initiatives through coordinating and supporting the exchange and dissemination of information.

20. Eight priority areas for scientific cooperation (pillar 1) were identified:

- Reforestation/afforestation/tree plantation in affected areas
- Water erosion control/preventive measures
- Sustainable agricultural policies
- Control of overgrazing/stock levels/range
- Soil conservation strategies/planning
- Sustainable forest strategy
- Sustainable water management
- Sustainable traditional techniques/methods in water saving/conservation

21. Annex IV country Parties also agreed on the establishment of regional thematic networks (RTNs), defined terms of reference (TOR) for these RTNs and also drafted a methodological note that can be followed when drafting TORs for each RTN at regional and subregional levels. Several countries said they would establish RTNs, pointing out also some possible hosting institutions, even if the abilities of these countries to start the process of launching RTNs were not at the same level. A process for establishing RTNs has been also agreed.

22. On pillar 2 (technology/savoir faire) country Parties agreed to organize regional technical workshops to promote the exchange of technologies, and several countries proposed the organization of regional technical workshops.

23. Training and capacity-building activities under pillar 3 were proposed by some countries; the use of existing facilities to serve as regional training centres (RTCs) was agreed, and terms of reference were drafted. In addition, participants agreed on underlining the potential of some organizations (International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme/Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP), etc.) to contribute to regional training.

24. For pillar 4 (documentation/material/publications), the importance of accessing, exchanging, sharing and disseminating information was strongly underlined. With these aims, the use of existing facilities to serve as regional reference centres (RRCs) was agreed, and terms of reference were drafted, in order to ensure a methodological guidance of this activity, and to establish a database on sources of information. Some proposals on the use of existing facilities were examined. The participants noted the possibility of using the CLEMDES clearing house, presented by Italy.

25. Several technical meetings and workshops have been organized in Italy, some in conjunction with already financed activities, in particular by the European Commission. In September 2004, a workshop was organized in Alghero, Italy, on regional cooperation and networking, adopting a platform for sharing information, for homogenizing data and methodologies, and for supporting local action plans; the workshop was organized on the occasion of the finalization of the DESERTNET project, funded by the EC, and was developed at subregional level in order to make the results available to all NM country Parties. The result of this workshop is the establishment of a new cycle of the project, enlarging the partnership by adding Portugal and Greece, to Italy and Spain.

26. In November 2004, an international conference on forest fire prevention and control was promoted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was held in Reggio Calabria and many national focal points of NM country Parties actively participated.

27. These activities were reported in the second regional meeting to strengthen the cooperation among Northern Mediterranean countries in the field of land resources management (21 October 2005, Nairobi, Kenya) during COP 7. During that meeting, focal points and/or representatives of NM country Parties brought more clarification to their proposals and their organizational process.

28. For the biennium 2006–2007, participating countries provided information on the current status of their proposals for each pillar of regional cooperation, and the related activities have been reshaped.

29. For pillar 1, some RTNs have been proposed – by Bosnia and Herzegovina, in cooperation with Serbia and Montenegro in the field of promotion and use of Mediterranean plant/tree species; by France on sustainable agricultural policies; by Malta on slope terracing; and by Spain in the field of rehabilitation techniques for degraded soils. These countries

confirmed their readiness to provide a host institution for the establishment of NM RTNs in the biennium 2006–2007. Some country Parties made proposals but mentioned that they could not put them into practice immediately for various reasons. These country Parties agreed to inform the UNCCD secretariat, as well as other Annex IV countries, as soon as they are ready to put these proposals into effect.

30. Technical workshops relating to pillar 2 have been announced by Portugal and Turkey for the formulation of pilot projects for integrated sustainable rural development. Turkey also proposed a technical workshop on the control of overgrazing/stock levels/range management. And Portugal also announced its willingness to organize a regional technical workshop on forest fire monitoring and control but not in the immediate future. The possibility of inviting focal points to future national workshops to enhance regional cooperation was strongly recommended.

31. For pillar 3, France, Spain and Turkey affirmed their interest in hosting some RTCs, for sustainable agricultural policies, for rehabilitation techniques for degraded soils (reforestation/afforestation/tree plantation in affected areas) and for soil conservation strategies/planning, respectively. Also for this pillar, Portugal announced its intention of organizing training on modeling changes and trends in land degradation and on biodiversity management in drylands, but not in the immediate future.

32. For pillar 4, France announced its intention to promote an RRC on sustainable agricultural policies and Portugal on forest fire monitoring and control. Italy expressed its interest in developing the theme of traditional knowledge, through building an RRC or establishing an RTN. Israel, as an observer, expressed its interest in using one of its centres as an RRC on a specific area. Spain stated the possibility of contributing with documentation on an inventory of the technologies operational in Spain to combat desertification, which may be developed within the next biennium. Portugal declared its possible involvement in hosting an RRC on modeling of changes and trends in land degradation, but not in the immediate future.

33. During the two regional meetings of Annex IV country Parties to strengthen the cooperation among NM countries in the field of land resources management, held in Bonn in 2004 and in Nairobi in 2005, some other related issues were discussed and underlined, including:

- the importance of the participation of the national focal points in activities carried out by other international organizations and in the EU Soil Strategy process, covering erosion, declining organic matter, contamination, compaction, salinization, loss of biodiversity, soil sealing and landslides. A broad variety of activities relating to land resource management in NM are carried out and/or planned by international organizations (EC, FAO, UNEP, etc.) and some networks and activities in the field of desertification are going on in the region. Focal points for such networks and activities in each given country should know each other and possibly meet to share their experience and coordinate their activities;
- the need for an improved involvement of NGOs in the UNCCD process and for strengthening existing NGOs' networks, in particular the European Networking Initiative on Desertification (eniD);
- the acknowledgment that all proposed activities for regional cooperation could not be launched at the same time, but that once an activity is launched it should represent a commitment for all interested partners. Each NM country was

welcomed to reactivate a former proposal any time or to introduce a new proposal for activities under the four pillars of regional cooperation, as this should be a dynamic and evolving process.

34. The proposed activities for regional cooperation constitute a wide portfolio for NM country Parties.

II. PROGRESS MADE AT REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL LEVELS UNDER THE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEX FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (ANNEX V)

A. Subregional and transboundary activities under Annex V

35. The regional meeting held in Minsk, Belarus, in 2003 (see paragraph 44 below) requested the UNCCD secretariat to finalize a draft project proposal on organizing a technical workshop on drought mitigation for the Balkans and neighbouring interested countries, taking into account comments and proposals from interested countries.

36. Also during that meeting, transcaucasus countries expressed their interest to prepare and submit to the UNCCD secretariat a proposal for a pilot project for transboundary cooperation on rehabilitation of degraded forest areas taking into account the need for synergy between the UNCCD, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other multilateral environmental instruments. In addition some countries at the meeting expressed interest in cooperation on sustainable development in the context of international river basins management.

37. The UNCCD secretariat was requested to continue its activities relating to the transboundary cooperation between Belarus and Ukraine on issues relating to the Chernobyl accident in the context of the UNCCD. Further to this request the UNCCD secretariat organized an assessment mission for Ukrainian experts to German scientific institutions to exchange information on possible areas for cooperation on Chernobyl issues. The UNCCD secretariat is trying to identify a source of financing for a similar assessment mission for experts from Belarus.

B. Regional activities under Annex V

38. Annex V, which entered into force on 6 September 2001, takes into account the particular conditions of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region which apply in varying degrees to the affected countries of the region, and offers to the countries of the region concrete opportunities for strengthening scientific and technical cooperation within and outside the region. Because land degradation/desertification and drought are cross-border problems requiring joint action, it was decided to develop a RAP to combat land degradation and desertification for the CEE countries within the context of the UNCCD.

39. At the first regional meeting for Northern Mediterranean, Central and Eastern European and other affected country Parties in preparation for the first session of the CRIC, held in Geneva, Switzerland, in July 2002, participants agreed on several recommendations relating to development of regional cooperation in Europe:

- The CEE countries requested the UNCCD secretariat to assist in organizing, on a yearly basis, a meeting of focal points of CEE countries to facilitate regional consultations;
- The EC as a Party to the UNCCD was also encouraged to strengthen its participation in activities under Annex IV and Annex V;
- Non-affected developed country Parties from Annex IV and Annex V were encouraged to participate in the implementation of the Convention under their respective annexes.

40. On the occasion of the first session of CRIC, held in Rome, Italy, in November 2002, a first consultative regional meeting for CEE countries was organized to launch the process of coordination in accordance with Article 8 of Annex V. Focal points shared some views on development of regional cooperation and mentioned the following possible forms of cooperation: a thematic information network, periodical bulletins, regional meetings or conferences, field visits, consultancy, exchange of information, discussions, sharing of lessons learned, and SRAPs. Soil/land degradation was mentioned as a priority area.

41. To launch the preparation of a framework document the UNCCD secretariat took the initiative to explore the potential areas for regional cooperation through a questionnaire that was distributed to 18 CEE country Parties. Based on the answers to the questionnaire, the secretariat developed, in July 2003, two tools for launching cooperation at bilateral, subregional, transboundary and regional levels in CEE. These tools, which are intended to be used to create a common regional platform for cooperation for CEE, are called the 'Activity Master' and the 'Regional Cooperation Kit'.

42. In parallel with the second regional meeting for Northern Mediterranean, Central and Eastern European and other affected country Parties (July 2003, Geneva, Switzerland) in preparation for COP 6, workshop for CEE focal points on regional cooperation activities was held in order to circulate to the focal points the above-mentioned tools. These two documents provide invaluable information for the specific needs expressed by each country and encourage exchanges among focal points, experts, NGOs, etc. in other countries. Therefore, regional cooperation in land degradation and land resources management between interested countries has been facilitated.

43. A first draft paper on potential priority areas for regional and subregional cooperation in CEE was also presented and distributed at the workshop. It was understood that the CEE focal points needed more time to review all the information presented and distributed and also to get internal feedback in a view of a regional meeting planned to take place in the CEE region before the end of 2003.

44. The regional meeting for strengthening cooperation in the field of land resources management in CEE took place in Minsk, Belarus, in December 2003. Following the countries' proposals for regional, subregional and transboundary cooperation in the CEE region, the identification of elements of the RAP and agreement on priority areas for regional initiatives, participants decided to start initial RAP developments. They also decided that regional cooperation in land degradation and land resources management between interested countries will be based on four pillars:

- Pillar 1. Scientific cooperation
- Pillar 2. Technology/savoir faire
- Pillar 3. Training/capacity-building
- Pillar 4. Documentation/material/publications

45. The priorities for regional cooperation, outlined below, constitute the framework for implementation of joint and/or national pilot projects.

46. The following areas are considered to be priorities for regional scientific cooperation (pillar 1):

- Reforestation/afforestation/tree plantation in affected areas
- Improvement of irrigation/drainage water management/modernization of irrigation practices
- Water erosion control/preventative measures
- Catchment management/watersheds
- Soil conservation strategies/planning
- Sustainable traditional techniques of soil fertility/topsoil conservation
- Definition of benchmarks and indicators for soil degradation/soil type mapping and monitoring
- Development of methodologies for assessing land degradation
- Development of new sustainable techniques in agriculture
- Sustainable traditional techniques/methods in water conservation
- Preparation of cadastral surveys
- Sustainable forest strategies
- Reuse of treated wastewater
- Sustainable water management policies

47. Regional cooperation in the above areas will be achieved in particular through the establishment of RTNs. In this respect Romania proposed that the National Forest Administration Romsilva Forest Research and Management Institute in Bucharest be used to host an RTN on "Afforestation in temperate zones affected by drought". A concrete proposal on the establishment of RTNs was circulated to all CEE country Parties. The launching meeting was scheduled for 2006.

48. For pillar 2 (technology/savoir faire), the following areas are considered as priorities for regional technological cooperation:

- Improvement of irrigation/drainage water management/modernization of irrigation practices
- Cultivation of crops resistant to drought or salt or acidic soils
- Implementation of local agricultural pilot projects with proven success
- Preparation of cadastral surveys
- Sustainable forest strategies
- Monitoring of deforestation/destruction of vegetation cover

- Reforestation/afforestation/tree plantation in affected areas
- Integral control of forest pests and diseases
- Reuse of treated wastewater

49. Regional cooperation in the above areas will be achieved through a number of technical workshops.

50. Areas that are considered to be priorities for regional cooperation in pillar 3 (training/capacity-building) include:

- Development of good practice codes for farming
- Support for biological farming and certification of biological products
- Implementation of local agricultural pilots projects with proven success
- Soil conservation strategies/planning
- Forest fire monitoring and control
- Sustainable water management practices
- River management in affected areas
- Harmonization of environmental legislation to integrate UNCCD
- Development of national clearing house/observatory/environmental information systems
- Involvement of NGOs and local population/participatory processes
- Management of interface city/rural areas
- Formulation of pilot projects for integrated /sustainable rural development
- Development of a strategy for awareness raising
- Awareness campaigns for local communities in affected areas
- Awareness campaigns for academic and research community/private sector
- Training of professional trainers in land degradation.

51. At the initiative of, and with financial support from, the Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic, an interactive workshop on “Development of projects on Land degradation” for four affected CEE country Parties was organized in Lednice, Czech Republic, in July–August 2003. Bulgaria proposed to use the Scientific Institute of Soil Science “Nikola Poushkarev” in Sofia as an RTC on soil protection. The first training course was scheduled for 2006. Armenia proposed that “Zikatar” Forestry Regional Training Centre be used for regional cooperation under Article 5 of the UNCCD. Training can be started in 2006–2007.

52. For pillar 4 (exchange of documentation, materials and publications), effective regional cooperation demands the organization of a properly functioning mechanism of information sharing. One method is through the use of existing documentation centres to act as RRCs on sources of information on specific topic areas. The Czech Republic proposed to use the University of Olomouc as an RTC on “Soil conservation strategies/planning”.

53. Document ICCD/CRIC(3)/INF.9 also provides relevant information relating to the regional process under Annex V.

54. At a meeting on the regional activities under Annex V (27 October 2005, Nairobi, Kenya), CEE representatives participating in COP 7, reconfirmed their intention to develop a

regional cooperation on issues relating to implementation of the UNCCD. It was also mentioned that more time was needed in order to start developing appropriate concrete activities at national level. In particular these activities relate to the establishment of RTNs, the organizing of RTCs, and the exchanging of documentation, materials and publications in the field of land resources management. The representatives agreed on the need to prepare a document as a “platform” of cooperation dealing with all proposals from CEE countries. It was acknowledged that all proposed activities for regional cooperation could not be launched at the same time, but once an activity is launched all interested partners should commit to it; each CEE country was welcomed to reactivate a former proposal at any time. Representatives were also afforded the opportunity to introduce a new proposal for activities under the four pillars of regional cooperation, as this should be a dynamic and evolving process.

III. JOINT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEX FOR THE NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN (ANNEX IV) AND THE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION ANNEX FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (ANNEX V)

55. As a result of interregional cooperation between Annex IV and Annex V countries, these launched back-to-back preparatory meetings for CRIC 1, where countries expressed their interest in it. Further to a decision taken at Minsk (see paragraph 44 above), the first technical workshop on drought preparedness in the Balkans within the context of the UNCCD was organized by the UNCCD secretariat in cooperation with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) (25–26 October 2004, Poiana Brasov, Romania), attended by countries from South-Eastern Europe under Annexes IV and V, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Romania and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in the presence of representatives of a number of international organizations and programmes. They agreed on the need to establish a subregional centre relating to drought management issues in the context of the UNCCD.

56. At the second technical workshop on the establishment of a subregional centre relating to drought in South-Eastern Europe in the context of UNCCD was organized by the UNCCD secretariat in cooperation with WMO from 26 to 28 April 2006, in Sofia, Bulgaria, representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey unanimously reached an agreement on establishing a Centre on Drought Management for South-Eastern Europe (DMCSEE). Representatives from Serbia and Montenegro also attended the workshop as observers. The workshop agreed on the aims, objectives, core functions and core tasks of the DMCSEE. A decision on the legal status of the centre will be taken at a later stage. The participants also agreed on the further steps toward the establishment of the Centre including a transparent process of submission of candidatures to host the centre as well as a voting process to select the host country to be held in September 2006 in Geneva. The report of the meeting including its conclusion could be found under the UNCCD website <unccd.int/regional/information/NM> or <unccd.int/regional/information/CEE/meeting/subregional>.

57. For both meetings, participation of national focal points, national meteorologists and national experts on drought issues ensured a fruitful exchange of views and positive cooperation between the different channels.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions and recommendations on the regional and subregional processes for Annex IV

58. The process facilitated by the UNCCD secretariat to enhance cooperation between Annex IV country Parties is an important step for reaching a common degree of technical knowledge, taking into account similarities and differences and respecting their circumstances. It is necessary to strengthen the involvement of country Parties and develop stronger relations between scientific stakeholders (scientists and researchers) and institutional stakeholders (NFPs and NCBs). The mobilization of funds from other sources and the creation of local authority networks could be a first step towards a complete involvement of all stakeholders. Interesting examples of stakeholder involvement can be found in some of the projects funded in the framework of cooperation between European regions (INTERREG) such as DESERTNET or SEDEMED projects.

59. Most activities, particularly at subregional level, are often based on voluntary agreements between scientific entities. Often NFPs and NCBs do not participate in these activities. NFPs and NCBs should be encouraged to participate or to take into account their results. Their involvement could be enhanced through the information dissemination tools based on information technologies, the joint organization of workshops and conferences by scientist and decision makers, and the continuous informal exchange of knowledge.

60. The establishment of the Annex IV RAP represents a crucial step towards defining an agreed framework of activities, and stimulating partnership building at all levels. Cooperating and sharing the experience and good practices developed by the Group of Annex IV country Parties may represent an important starting point and an important first step towards a RAP.

B. Conclusions and recommendations on the regional and subregional processes for Annex V

61. Annex V country Parties to the UNCCD represent a unique group within the framework of this Convention. All of them are members of the United Nations Eastern European Group; some are already also members of the EU, and some are in the process of accession. In principle all of them are affected to varying degrees by land degradation, drought and desertification. Some formally informed the UNCCD secretariat that they are affected countries and consequently have prepared, or are in the process of preparing, NAPs to combat land degradation/desertification. A number of countries are emerging donor countries. All these factors make development of regional, subregional and transboundary cooperation a major challenge for the nearest future.

62. Successful functioning of RTNs, training courses and RRCs will mainly depend on NFPs, which have to be organized in the context of awareness-raising activities aimed at explaining to potential stakeholders the benefits that they may receive from participating and using the instruments that are being elaborated to develop regional cooperation.

63. In the field of technology/know-how some CEE countries have invaluable experience, which can be shared with other countries. Therefore it would be welcomed if they could inform

the UNCCD secretariat about their abilities to organize workshops to share such experience. In this respect the secretariat is awaiting "bottom-up" proposals.

64. Predictability of partnership and financial support remains a key issue for developing regional, subregional and transboundary cooperation under Annex V. The process of political and economic stabilization noted in the CEE country Parties in recent years creates a good basis for more predictable and efficient drawing of financial resources needed for combating land degradation and desertification.

C. Conclusions and recommendations on the interregional cooperation between Annex IV and Annex V

65. Countries of Annex IV and Annex V have their own specificity but also have much in common in terms of scientific capacity, European problems of land degradation, influence on them by both the European Community legislation and access to funding possibilities. They are interested in sharing experience, savoir-faire, training and documentation and also participating in some joint scientific programmes. Some NM and CEE countries could be also donor countries for other European countries on regional activities.
