



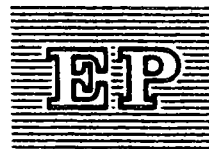
United Nations Environment Programme



Distr.
GENERAL

UNEP/GC.14/15
15 April 1987

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH



GOVERNING COUNCIL
Fourteenth session
Item 9 of the provisional agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present document is submitted to the Governing Council to obtain its views on a number of specific policy issues related to the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

Paragraphs 3-15 concern the status and validity of the Special Account to finance the implementation of the Plan of Action. They describe a possible new approach to encourage Governments and international financing institutions to contribute voluntarily to the Account, suggesting that recipient Governments might establish national accounts for desertification control and that UNEP should approach donors to discuss modalities for contributing to the Account. A possible course of action is also suggested in the event that the levels of contributions set out in the report are not achieved. A table listing paid contributions and unpaid pledges to the Special Account in the period 1981-1986 is annexed to the report.

In the remainder of the report, the Executive Director seeks guidance from the Governing Council on the following four issues and suggests action that the Council may wish to take on each of them:

(a) The role of UNEP in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery 1986-1990, and the Cairo Programme for African Co-operation (para. 16);

(b) Assistance to countries in the formulation of national plans to combat desertification (paras. 17-18);

(c) Implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (para. 19);

(d) Implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region (para. 20).

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The suggested action that the Governing Council may wish to take on the issues included in this report is set out in the body of the text, as indicated in the summary above.

Introduction

1. At its thirteenth session, the Governing Council adopted decision 13/30, on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. In paragraph 19 of that decision, the Executive Director was requested to report to the Governing Council at its fourteenth session on its implementation. Pursuant to that request, the Executive Director has reported on most of the relevant points in the comprehensive descriptions of the implementation of the Plan of Action contained in Chapter IV, paragraphs 234-253, of his 1985 Annual Report (UNEP/GC.14/2) and Chapter IV, paragraphs 222-257, of his 1986 Annual Report (UNEP/GC.14/3). Furthermore, chapter IV, paragraphs 254-271, of the 1985 Annual Report and chapter IV, paragraphs 258-278, of the 1986 Annual Report describe the implementation of the Plan of Action in the Sudano-Sahelian region.
2. There are, however, some policy issues related to the implementation of the Plan of Action that call for specific guidance and action by the Governing Council. The present document is being submitted to the Council to obtain its views on those issues.

/...

A. Status and validity of Special Account to finance the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification

3. In paragraph 5 of its decision 13/30 A, the Council decided "to review at its fourteenth session, the status and validity of the Special Account created under General Assembly resolution 32/172, on the basis of a report to be prepared by the Executive Director after consultation with Governments". This section of the present report has been prepared in response to that decision.

4. The Special Account was established as an integral part of the Plan of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Desertification in 1977 and subsequently approved by the General Assembly by resolution 32/172. Its purpose was to help mobilize additional resources to meet the substantial financial expenditures required for the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

In his report to the General Assembly at its thirty-third session (A/33/117), the Secretary-General noted that "the purpose of establishing and operating the special account will be to facilitate receipt and disbursement of funds for financing projects, programmes and other activities to help implement the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification".^{1/} On the principles and modalities for the establishment and operation of the Special Account, the report compared a special account with a trust fund, both of which are normally established within the United Nations outside the Organization's regular budget accounts for specific activities authorized by legislative action or deemed appropriate by the Secretary-General.^{2/}

6. As in the case of trust funds, contributions to the Special Account could originate not only from Governments but also from other sources including inter alia, international taxation, donations, multilateral financing institutions and interest-free loans. To this effect, the report suggested ^{3/} that the General Assembly might also wish to consider the relationship between the Special Account and sources of financing other than existing ones, such as measures which might be put into effect as a result of a consideration by the Assembly of the study by a group of senior experts on additional measures and means of financing the implementation of the Plan of Action (UNEP/GC.6/9/Add.1).

7. Seven years after it was set up, the flow of funds into the Special Account is still short of the minimum needed to make it effective. As of 30 December 1986, a total of \$US 176,886 in paid contributions from Australia, Chile, Mexico, Panama, Sierra Leone and Sudan, have been received and credited to the account. Unpaid pledges totalling \$15,000 from Greece and Senegal are still awaited. A table giving details of all paid contributions and unpaid pledges is annexed to the present report.

8. In his report to the Governing Council at its twelfth session on progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (UNEP/GC.12/9 and Corr.1), the Executive Director suggested that "consideration should be given to according a more positive role to the Special Account whilst preserving its voluntary character. For example, more emphasis should be paid to private donations and interest-free loans. Also it could be made to provide additional funding for special transnational and global projects prepared within the framework of the Consultative Group [for Desertification Control]".^{4/}

9. In spite of repeated appeals by the Executive Director to the international community, pursuant to various General Assembly resolutions and Governing Council decisions, little progress has been made in mobilizing sufficient funds to make the Account viable. The relevance of the Special Account clearly depends on its being operational - a status which is also a function of the predictability of the flow of contributions into it.

10. Consequently, there is a need for a new and realistic approach towards encouraging Governments and international financing institutions to contribute voluntarily to the Special Account. Such a new approach requires a firm commitment by Governments of the affected countries to approach desertification projects and programmes on a priority basis in their national development plans and to allocate a proportionate percentage of their national resources to that end.

11. In this connection, the Governing Council may wish to consider and recommend that recipient Governments, especially those who have developed national plans of action to combat desertification, should set aside a specific percentage of their national budgetary resources, both from domestic and external sources, for the implementation of anti-desertification programmes and projects and place them in a national account for desertification control.

12. Under this arrangement, the national account would maintain two entries:

(a) Receipts from the national treasury (a specific percentage of budget deposits) plus any external contributions to the account (contractual or non-contractual) for the implementation of specific anti-desertification projects;

(b) Disbursements reflecting activities and their cost to the account.

13. Such national accounts would act as a stimulus for investments by bilateral and multilateral donors and as a catalyst in the orientation national development activities, as well as serving as a corresponding (parallel) mechanism to the UNEP Special Account (in which similar entries for all national accounts will be recorded and kept for global monitoring of resource flows to desertification control activities).

14. At the bilateral aid level - by far the largest channel of contributions to development programmes in the third world - UNEP should approach donors through the OECD Development Assistance Committee and other regional and subregional groupings to discuss modalities for contributing to the Special Account. The suggestions should be made that a specific percentage (perhaps 1 per cent) of the estimated \$17 billion in bilateral development assistance funds should be set aside as possible contributions to the Special Account. Of this amount, no more than 10 per cent should be used to support efforts by countries without national plans of action to combat desertification, with the balance used to support implementation of national plans that have already been adopted.

15. If the above levels of contributions, from both affected countries and bilateral donors cannot be achieved, the Governing Council may wish to consider recommending to the General Assembly that the Special Account should
/...

be discontinued. The existence and maintenance of an ineffective mechanism is counter-productive. The elimination of the Special Account would serve to focus attention more clearly on other existing vehicles for financing the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, especially the Consultative Group for Desertification Control and the Environment Fund in general.

B. The role of UNEP in the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery 1986-1990, and the Cairo Programme for African Co-operation

16. There is need for the policy guidance by the Governing Council on the role of UNEP in general, and that of its Desertification Control Programme Activity Centre in particular, in the implementation of United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, 5/ Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery 1986-1990 6/ and the Cairo Programme for African Co-operation. 7/ In considering such policy guidance to be incorporated in its decision, the Governing Council may wish to:

1. Acknowledge the fact that the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery 1986-1990 and the Cairo Programme provide a framework of short-, medium- and long-term measures for dealing with the critical environmental problems that underlie the African crisis;
2. Note the proposed actions to combat desertification as set out in the United Nations Programme of Action and to recommend the linking up of these programmes with the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification;
3. Request the Executive Director to ensure that UNEP plays a leading role in co-ordinating the implementation of the desertification component of the United Nations Programme of Action within the framework of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification;
4. Call upon the Desert and Arid Lands Committee set up under the Cairo Programme for African Co-operation to assume as one of its responsibilities the implementation of the desertification and drought control programme of the United Nations Programme of Action.

C. Assistance to countries in the formulation of national plans for combating desertification

17. In paragraph 11 of its decision 12/10, the Council urged Governments of countries suffering from or prone to desertification to consider favourably giving priority to the establishment of national programmes to combat desertification. By paragraph 12 of the same decision, the Council also authorized the Executive Director to assist Governments, upon request, in those endeavours. The efforts of UNEP in this respect are described in chapter IV, paragraphs 249 and 250, of the 1985 Annual Report (UNEP/GC.14/2), and in chapter IV, paragraphs 224-226, of the 1986 Annual Report (UNEP/GC.14/3).

18. In view of these efforts on the part of UNEP, to assist countries in formulating national plans for combating desertification, the Governing Council may wish to:

1. Note that previous efforts to assist Governments in preparing and implementing national plans of action to combat desertification were not effective because in none of the countries where such assistance was provided were the plans integrated and implemented within the overall national development plan;
2. Endorse the Executive Director's policy of concentrating, in co-operation with relevant multilateral and bilateral organizations, on a limited number of affected countries for short-term periods of four to six years during which comprehensive corrective and preventative desertification measures will be integrated into the overall national development plans and country-wide awareness and involvement mobilized;
3. Approve the criteria used in the selection of countries, namely:
 - (i) That the chances of success are good;
 - (ii) That the need for assistance is great.

D. Implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification

19. In paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 40/198 A, the Governing Council was requested to report to the General Assembly at its forty-second session, through the Economic and Social Council, on the progress made in the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. Pursuant to that resolution, the Governing Council may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines.

Recall General Assembly resolutions 32/170 and 32/172 of 19 December 1977, 33/88 and 33/89 of 15 December 1978, 34/185 and 34/187 of 18 December 1979, 35/73 of 5 December 1980, 36/190 of 17 December 1981, 37/147 of 17 December 1982 and 37/216, 37/218 and 37/220 of 20 December 1982, 37/248 of 21 December 1982, 38/160 of 19 December 1983, 39/168 A of 17 December 1984 and 39/215 of 18 December 1984 and 40/198 A of 17 December 1985;

Recall also its decisions 9/22 A and B of 26 May 1981, 10/14 of 31 May 1982, section VII, 12/10 of 28 May 1984 and 13/30 of 23 May 1985 on desertification;

1. Take note of the reports of the Executive Director on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in 1985 and 1986 8/;
2. Authorize the Executive Director to submit his reports on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in 1985 and 1986, on behalf of the Council, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its forty-second session.

/...

E. Implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification
in the Sudano-Sahelian Region

20. In paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 40/198 B, the Governing Council was requested to make the necessary arrangements, in conformity with General Assembly resolution 39/217, for submitting to the Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation in the Sudano-Sahelian region of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. In compliance with that resolution, the Governing Council may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

Recall General Assembly resolutions 36/190 of 17 December 1981, 37/216 of 20 December 1982, 38/164 of 19 December 1983, 39/168 of 17 December 1984, and 40/198 B of 17 December 1985;

Recall also part seven, section B, of its decision 11/7 of 24 May 1983 and section B of its decision 13/30 of 23 May 1985, on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region;

1. Take note of the reports of the Executive Director on the implementation in the Sudano-Sahelian region of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in 1985 and 1986 9;
2. Welcome the steps taken by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, on behalf of the Environment Programme, toward the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in 22 countries of the Sudano-Sahelian and neighbouring region;
3. Authorize the Executive Director to continue support to the Office as a joint venture with the United Nations Development Programme;
4. Urge the Executive Director and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme to intensify efforts to mobilize resources for continued assistance to the countries served by the Office in combating desertification;
5. Authorize the Executive Director to submit his reports on the implementation of the Plan of Action in the Sudano-Sahelian region in 1985 and 1986, on behalf of the Council, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its forty-second session.

Notes

1. A/33/117, para. 5.
2. Ibid, para. 8.
3. Ibid, para. 17.
4. UNEP/GC.12/9, Executive Summary, para. 25.
5. General Assembly resolution S-13/2, annex.
6. A/40/666, annex I, declaration AHG/Decl.1 (XXI), annex.
7. African Ministerial Conference on the Environment: Report of the Conference (UNEP/AEC.1/2 and Corr.1), annex I.
8. UNEP/GC.14/2, chap. IV, paras. 234-253, and UNEP/GC.14/3, chap. IV, paras. 222-257.
9. UNEP/GC.14/2, chap. IV, paras. 254-271, and UNEP/GC.14/3, chap. IV, paras. 258-278.

/...

Annex
PAID CONTRIBUTIONS AND UNPAID PLEDGES, TO THE SPECIAL ACCOUNT 1981-1986

Countries	1981		1982		1983		1984		1985		1986		TOTAL	
	Paid	Unpaid	Paid	Unpaid	Paid	Unpaid	Paid	Unpaid	Paid	Unpaid	Paid	Unpaid	Paid	Unpaid
Australia					88 362								88 362	
Chile	10 000		15 000		5 000		5 000		5 000		5 000		45 000	
Greece									10 000					10 000
Mexico	5 000		5 000										10 000	
Panama			4 000										4 000	
Senegal									5 000					5 000
Sierra Leone			9 524										9 524	
Sudan	10 000		10 000										20 000	
TOTAL	25 000		43 524		93 362		5 000		5 000	15 000	5 000		176 886	15 000