Kubuqi Action Plan of Global Desertification Control
(2015-2025)
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At the eleventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) held in Namibia in 2013, it was decided that the new initiatives such as the Kubuqi International Desert Forum (KIDF), which was held four times since its inception in 2007, to serve as tools for strengthening the implementation of the Convention. In February 2014, the Chinese government decided to institutionalize the KIDF as a large international platform, which was to be co-organized by the Ministry of Science and Technology, the State Forestry Administration, and the Government of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of the People’s Republic of China, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UNCCD Secretariat.

The 5th Kubuqi International Desert Forum held on July 28-29, 2015, in Inner Mongolia, China was attended by 300 participants, including government officials, experts, scholars and members of different non-governmental organizations and social organizations from 40 countries, regions and international organizations, as well as representatives from enterprises interested in desertification control and ecological restoration. Based on the discussions and consensus of the participants, the Forum adopted the Kubuqi Action Plan of Global Desertification Control (2015-2025) as guidelines for the cooperation among scientists, entrepreneurs, artists, relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social groups in the field of desertification control during the next decade on a voluntary basis.

I. The Kubuqi International Desert Forum and Its Background

1. The Forum recalled the relevant chapters of The Future We Want, the final outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20), the relevant resolutions by the eleventh Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD, and the specific requirements in the United Nations Decade of Action for

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In recalling that the international community have kept their political commitments and taken actions to achieve sustainable development, the Forum gave special attention to the importance of alleviating desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) and emphasized the urgency of promoting ecological civilization construction, further rehabilitating degraded land, improving soil quality, enhancing water resource management, mitigating climate change and facilitating achievements in sustainable development and poverty eradication.

2. Caused by the imbalance occurring in a complicated and changing process, desertification is one of the focal areas in global environment and sustainable development. It is an issue of great concern, which needs immediate solutions and concerted approaches. Thanks to the joint efforts made by the international community and governments of different countries, significant progress has been made in national policies, mechanisms, funds, technologies, capacity building and other work in support of the fight against global DLDD. However, there remain 36 million square kilometers of deserts and areas of desertification in the world, covering about 1/4 of the total land area of the earth. Over 167 countries are afflicted by desertification. Across the world, desertification posts an annual loss of up to USD 40-50 billion and affects the livelihoods of about one billion impoverished people. At present, it is increasing at an annual rate of 50,000-70,000 square kilometers.¹

3. The Forum recognized by consensus that poverty eradication and sustainable development require urgent and practical actions by everyone, and emphasized the importance of the twin themes of Rio+20, “green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication” and “the institutional framework for sustainable development”, and the necessity to work together through public-private partnerships (PPP) among governments, civil society and the private sector to continue the sustainable development for future generations.

4. The Forum took note of the strategic initiatives on “Ecological Civilization Construction” and the “Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road” (or the “Belt and Road”) proposed by the Chinese government, and the outcomes of the Dialogue on Strengthening Connectivity Partnership held in Beijing in November 2014, including the launch of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Roads Foundation, as well as other measures aiming to promote policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bond and to create new opportunities of win-win cooperation on green development and desertification control in those countries along the “Belt and Road”.

5. The Forum recognized China’s distinguished achievements in the combat against

desertification. China is one of the countries with the largest area of desertification, which occupies 2.63 million square kilometers, accounting for 27.13 % of the total land territory, and China’s total land affected by sandification occupies 1.73 million square kilometers, accounting for 18.03% of the total land territory of China². The Chinese government has laid high priority on desertification control. It took the lead in the world to issue the Law on Desertification Prevention and Control and established the National Coordinating Group for Combating Desertification, which is composed of members from 19 ministries and in charge of supervising and coordinating the desertification control nationwide. For years, the Chinese government has optimized its policy mechanisms and improved the leader responsibility system at different levels, while promoting activities of desertification control through a range of key ecological construction projects, such as the sandstorm source prevention and control around Beijing and Tianjin, the Three-North Shelter Forest Program, the Grain for Green Program, and water and soil conservation projects. So far the trend of desertification has been preliminarily contained and the area of deserts and desertification is seen shrinking.

6. The Forum also noted specifically of the increasing function Chinese enterprises have played in the combat against desertification. For years, as a private enterprise guided by the concept of green growth, Elion Resources Group, for example, has been active in leading the local efforts to prevent and control desertification. Its long-standing strategy of pursuing a balanced growth for the local ecological protection, economic development and improvement of livelihood has received many plaudits from the Chinese government and local people, and has been recognized as a model of good practice by the United Nations. Over the past 27 years, Elion Resource Group has been dedicated to driving industry development through continuous technical innovations for a more effective ecological management to improve the livelihood of local people through the public-private-people partnership (PPPP). Its continued efforts in greening the deserts has improved the ecosystem and financial wellbeing of the local community, benefiting over 100,000 local farmers and pastoralists, and facilitated its own business development at the same time. In 2013, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in cooperation with a research institute based in China, launched an assessment of the ecological value of the Kubuqi Desertification Prevention and Control and valued these projects at a total of RMB 30.591 billion³ in gross ecological production (GEP), which represents a good balance between economic development and environmental protection.

7. The practical experience of Elion Resources Group and other enterprises shows that it is possible to achieve green development for sustained economic growth, harmonious social development and a more favorable ecological environment, as long as we act collectively by following the rules of nature and relying on the guidance of


science, promote social awareness, increase investment, develop enabling policies and encourage active public participation. All the previous sessions of the KIDF called for a comprehensive analysis of the “public welfare- and market-oriented and industry-based sustainable approach for desertification control” adopted by Elion Resources Group, and encouraged the use of such an integrated model to promote global actions against desertification and achieve the balance among population growth, ecological protection, economic development and the livelihoods of local people.

8. The Forum recalled the initiative of “Kubuqi Action for Global Desertification Control” proposed by over 300 delegates at the 4th Kubuqi International Desert Forum held in 2013, which called for the development of a specific implementation plan (2015-2025) for the *Kubuqi Action for Global Desertification Control* under the framework of the KIDF to provide guidance for post-2015 actions, and the cooperation among governments, civil society and enterprises as well as international institutions to take all forms of short, medium, and long-term actions and measures to reverse global land degradation and desertification. The Forum took note of a number of actions taken in the international, regional and national levels. Close links should be established as far as possible to facilitate the complementary implementation of these actions.

II. The Objectives

9. Currently, in addition to the UNCCD which functions as an intergovernmental cooperation mechanism, the international community has launched a number of initiatives at various levels and implemented several programs for preventing and combating desertification, which have generated a wealth of experience and model practices. How to promote these mechanisms to work in a more efficient manner to maximize synergy is an urgent task facing us today. The goals of the *Kubuqi Action Plan (2015-2025)* are to encourage voluntary actions to improve the coordination and cooperation between various mechanisms. It aims to encourage international cooperation at various levels in ecological restoration and desertification control as well as in addressing climate change by facilitating partnerships between governments and the private sector using market mechanisms and business means.

10. Specifically, the objective of the *Kubuqi Action Plan* is to promote capacity building and improve technology management around the world, including Africa and those countries along the “Belt and Road”, especially developing countries, through various measures such as information exchange and sharing, development of and training for practical technologies, regional policy dialogues and consultation, technology transfer, pilot incubator projects and project promotion. With that, the action plan aims to achieve the global goal of “the neutrality of land degradation by 2030”, contributing its share to the ultimate goals of sustainable development and
poverty eradication worldwide.

III. The Priorities

11. Desertification Information Network and Sharing

Objective: To establish an open global information platform for desertification prevention and control, to promote sharing of related knowledge and experience, expert resources and technologies for common development, through:

a) Piloting the establishment of focal points for cooperation on the Action Plan in countries along the “Belt and Road” to maintain communication among full-time staff via the Internet;

b) Establishing an official website for the Kubuqi Action Plan and opening columns and webpages for information sharing and technical exchange;

c) Publishing newsletters regularly to update all parties on progress in desertification control and other work-related information; and

d) Exploring the idea of establishing a database for desertification control technologies, to compile information on germplasm collections from various ecological habitats, and provide information service to support sharing of new breeds, methods and technologies.

12. Promoting Capacity Development

Objective: To support establishing the comprehensive implementation and enforcement mechanisms, build teams of competent professionals, especially leading experts in desertification prevention and control, and improve execution efficiency and management, through:

a) Facilitating the establishment and effective operation of Kubuqi Global Desert Institute in consultation with UNCCD Secretariat, to develop it into a world leading training center specializing in ecological restoration of deserts and eco-economic development within 5 years. The initial plan is to organize, in each year, one or two sessions of training programs using funds to be raised through the Elion Public Welfare Foundation, to nurture 10-15 leading professionals in desertification control for developing countries;

b) Developing a collaborative network with existing training centers, including the CICA International Research and Training Center for Combating Desertification in Turkey, University of Central Asia and its campuses in other countries, Federal
University of Ceará, Brazil, Argentinian Institute for Arid Zones (ADIZA), Agrarian University of La Molina, Peru, University of Chile, with its two centers, namely Agrimed (Center of Agriculture and Environment) and CEZA (Center of Studies on Arid Zones), Pri Mehr Ali Glah University of Arid Agriculture Ramalpudj, Karakum International University, Sheh Abdul Latif University Kharpur, the Desert Research Center of the Ministry of Agriculture of Egypt, Arid Zones Institute of Tunisia, Brazil Bhuth University Shengil, the International Center for Agricultural Research in Deserts and Drylands in Israel, and Arid Land Research Center of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, as well as the Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University, Beijing Forestry University and Inner Mongolia Agricultural University in China to cultivate highly competent researchers for relevant countries and regions through sharing of teaching materials, experiences and teacher exchange programs;

c) Establishing demonstration centers and strengthening technical service institutions, to disseminate relevant technologies, and skills, including the life-style and traditional knowledge of indigenous and local communities, to the local communities in a more effective way; and

d) Organizing experts to provide field consultancy, including on-site training and technical guidance for local communities and farmers participating in engineering projects;

e) Promoting DLDD education and the provision of opportunities for early career scientists to undertake DLDD research.

13. Scientific Research and the Industrial Technology Innovation Coalition

Objective: To promote innovation and desertification research to support development of industries related to DLDD Mitigation, through:

a) Establishing and improving relevant mechanisms to support related institutions in data collection and evaluation, and in developing basic databases for DLDD studies in due time.

b) Encouraging and supporting collaborations between enterprises and state-owned scientific research institutions to establish technology incubators. This, for example in the case of China, includes facilitating research on the causes of desertification and drought conducted by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Chinese Academy of Forestry and other research institutions and finding solutions and technologies that address the specific needs of residents in desertified regions and improve their living standards;

c) Promoting the establishment of demonstration centers on the control of DLDD in the Kubuqi desert, helping establish the germplasm bank and strengthen the technology application and promotion center based on the existing work of the Elion Resources Group, and encouraging specialists and researchers to use the facilities in
the Kubuqi desert in technology research and innovative eco-friendly industries; and

d) Establishing an international industrial technology innovation coalition on desertification prevention and control to explore best available technological resources that integrate the industrial development of desertification control, facility agriculture, desert economy and sand industry, and to experiment with new mechanisms and models of cooperation between industry and academia, in order to develop creative and effective modality for desertification control, and for industrial technological innovation and core technology development.

14. Demonstration and Consulting Services

Objective: To set up a reviewing system of the best practices, promote operational mechanisms, and coordinate experts to provide consulting services on the technologies for desertification prevention and control, through:

a) Summarizing lessons learned from success and failures, and experiences and best practices from various countries, such as the “public welfare- and market-oriented and industry-based sustainable approach for desertification control”, *inter alia*, by Elion Resources Group, to find a development model highlighting the balanced development between environment protection and economic growth for adaptation by various countries around the world;

b) Exploring market mechanisms and business models for the “Greening Silk Road Partnership Program” through public-private partnerships (PPP). The first phase of this project will see 130 million trees planted under this program in regions and countries along the “Silk Road Economic Belt” in the next three to five years;

c) Incorporating cooperations on desertification control and ecological restoration in countries and regions along the “Belt and Road” into countries’ national development strategies and inter-governmental collaboration plans for the purpose of strengthening their capacity building for desertification control and climate change mitigation and adaptation, and creating a favorable ecological environment for the “Silk Road Economic Belt” initiative;

d) Promoting collaboration on policy issues related to the implementation of the “Belt and Road” initiative, and providing consulting services on the green economy and related technology policies for infrastructure construction projects along the “Silk Road Economic Belt”. These efforts include establishing think tanks to provide consulting services related to policy issues in desertification control and response to climate change; and

e) Actively seeking to formulate a specific technology development plan on ecological civilization construction and desertification control that can potentially be incorporated into national research programs and supported by government funding.

15. International Cooperation

Objective: To promote the institutionalization of cooperation mechanisms between
countries and regions on desertification control to significantly enhance the capacity of countries to combat desertification, through:

a) Improving the mechanism and operation of the KIDF, especially strengthening the capacity of the KIDF Secretariat to provide effective service for the organization of the biennial forum as an active and result-oriented non-governmental platform to support the implementation of UNCCD and as an advisory body engaging dialogues on ecological restoration, the eco-economy and the improvement of people’s livelihood in various regions. The ultimate goal of the Forum is to provide an opportunity for international organizations, government officials, scientists, and entrepreneurs involved in desertification control, ecological restoration and community enrichment, as well as NGOs and artists interested in ecological protection to demonstrate the latest technologies, exchange creative ideas on management, enhance capacity building and promote international cooperation;

b) Facilitating the cooperation between the Secretariat of the KIDF and related international organizations and governments;

c) Supporting the launch of pilot projects based on the Kubuqi model in countries along the “Belt and Road”, in accordance with each country’s unique plans and needs, to explore sustainable commercialization models for desertification control at a larger scale; and

d) Holding conferences from time to time for policy and technology exchange to share best practices of desertification prevention and control, in line with the progress made on the control of DLDD by international communities and relevant countries.

IV. Monitoring and Evaluation

16. Objective: To establish a reliable monitoring and early warning network as well as an evaluation and assessment system to improve the monitoring technologies, through:

a) Facilitating research and development by responsible authorities, as appropriate, of criteria and indicators for green economy in the context of global efforts to combat DLDD and to achieve sustainable development and poverty eradication, drawing on the existing national-level criteria and indicators for forest sustainable management in Dry Zone Africa and the Near East;

b) Monitoring desertification and updating data using satellite remote sensing technology based on available information and database to develop and improve a monitoring network for desertification prevention and control;

c) Providing trainings to improve capacity for monitoring techniques; and

d) Enhancing cooperation and exchange among various organizations and institutions to facilitate information sharing as an complement to related action plans of the concerned governments and UN organizations.
V. Implementation, Guarantee and Prerequisites of the Action Plan

17. Desertification is a global issue which requires the international community, the UN and its affiliated agencies to provide, within the scope of their authorities, ongoing support to and advice on funding mobilization, technology development and capacity building on desertification control and climate change mitigation through global mechanisms, especially those that promote sustainable development and poverty eradication in developing countries.

18. Great importance should be attached to technology transfer to developing countries and the access to eco-friendly technologies, special skills and expertise by all countries, while creating a favorable environment for the development, adaptation, distribution and transfer of new knowledge and technologies. Efforts should be made to assist all countries, especially developing countries, in enhancing their capacity of developing science and technology sustainably and support the development of appropriate technologies, skills and methods for monitoring technologies and data collection.

19. Countries should strengthen collaboration, and engage in effective and proper international actions in response to the challenges of DLDD. The governments of all relevant countries which are mandated with the primary responsibilities for sustainable economic, social and environmental development should fulfill their political commitments, constantly improve relevant policies, increase investment and enhance coordination and guidance to lead national efforts towards the target of the neutrality of land degradation within their own country.

20. Desertification poses a risk to the world peace and stability, and poverty eradication is the greatest challenge in desertification control, thus calling for the engagement of the whole society and all stakeholders. Governments, enterprises and the public should join hands to integrate policy-making, research and production. Civil organizations, environment protection foundations, the private sector, enterprises and local communities should be encouraged to play an active role in planning, decision-making and implementation of desertification projects.

21. Governments are urged to prioritize allocation of resources to sustainable development and poverty eradication in line with their national priorities and needs. They should provide close guidance to ensure the coordination and consistency of various funding mechanisms and projects. South-South cooperation, trilateral cooperation and voluntary partnerships should be promoted while maintaining the official development assistance (ODA) by developed countries at least at 0.7% or above.

22. Governments should highlight desertification control and provide supporting policies, mechanisms, systems and legislation. Preferably, projects that address global hotspot issues should be prioritized, such as land ownership confirmation, responsible investment in land, and protection and improvement of the livelihood of small farmers and disadvantaged groups.

23. Positive actions should be taken to improve market mechanisms and enhance
incentive policies design, and encourage the private sector and civil organizations to participate in desertification control and poverty eradication through business means and innovative funding mechanisms. Financial institutions should be leveraged on to finance and facilitate the mechanisms for sustainable development and poverty eradication in developing countries.

24. Governments, scientists, entrepreneurs, artists and organizations dedicated to desertification control and poverty eradication are called upon to form various coalitions to play active roles in the implementation of the Kubuqi Action Plan and help achieve the global goal of “the neutrality of land degradation by 2030”.

25. The KIDF Secretariat should keep in close contact with the UNEP and UNCCD and regularly inform to the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD on the accomplishments of the Forum and the progress of the Action Plan to draw more international attention and participation.