

**Important Outcomes of the Previous Five Round Tables of Members
of Parliament on the United Nations Convention to Combat
Desertification**

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[This document has been prepared by Professor Uwe Holtz. The content of this document does not necessarily represent the views of the UNCCD Secretariat]

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACP	Africa Caribbean Pacific
AU	African Union
CBO	Community-based organization
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
IDA	International Development Association
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MP	Member of Parliament
NAP	National Action Programme
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PNoUNCCD	Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) plays a key role in the world's efforts to eradicate poverty, achieve sustainable development and reach the Millennium Development Goals. It is the only internationally recognized legally binding instrument that addresses the problem of land degradation in dryland rural areas. It enjoys a truly universal membership of 191 parties.

By these words UN Secretary General Kofi Annan paid tribute to the Convention on its tenth anniversary in 2004.¹

Since 1998 Parliamentary Round Tables have been organized in the context of the UNCCD Conferences of the Parties (COPs).² All previous five Round Tables met at the invitation of the Convention secretariat, with the full support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and in close collaboration with the Parliaments of countries which hosted the COPs.

The fifth Parliamentary Round Table which met in parallel to COP 6 in Havana (Cuba) in September 2003 turned out to be a real breakthrough: a Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD was created, the principle of establishing a parliamentary steering committee was agreed upon, and a parliamentary action plan was adopted. The Havana decisions got the endorsement by the IPU. Havana was a great achievement and is a challenge for future parliamentary activities in the context of the UNCCD implementation process.

In addition to the relevant activities in relation with the important recommendations made by the previous Parliamentary Round Tables, this document is also drawing the attention to the International Year of Deserts and Desertification in 2006. UNCCD Executive Secretariat encourages all countries to establish national committees to organize and plan activities linked to the celebration of IYDD.

Parliaments and MPs throughout the world should play a prominent part in this Year.

¹ cf. Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (Hg.): Preserving our common ground. UNCCD 10 years on, Bonn 2004, p.2. (also http://www.unccd.int/publicinfo/publications/UNCCD_magazine-eng.pdf)

² see also U. Holtz: The previous four Round Tables of Members of Parliament on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification - Achievements and Challenges, Bonn, May 2003.

II. THE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS

If a country wants to implement reform, adjustment or poverty reduction programmes, there is a very important group within the country that must not be left out of the consultations and that is the parliament and parliamentarians as elected representatives of civil society.³

As the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) states in its *Universal Declaration on Democracy*, democracy is founded on the right of everyone to take part in the management of public affairs.⁴ It therefore requires the existence of representative institutions at all levels and, in particular, a parliament which has the requisite powers and means to express the will of the people by legislating and overseeing government action.

During its 108th Conference (Santiago de Chile, April 2003), the IPU underlined the natural function of parliaments as one of mediation between the public and international organisations and institutions. The Conference emphasised that parliaments represent the basis for good governance grounded on democratic institutions that are responsive to the needs of the people, the rule of law, anti-corruption measures, gender equality and the need for a favourable atmosphere and environment for investment.⁵

Knowing that the parliaments in the different countries of the world play roles ranging from weak rubber stamp parliaments to strong transformative parliaments,⁶ the tendency for donors and international organisations to engage with civil society and NGOs but to neglect parliaments is neither acceptable nor prudent. They have to engage with parliaments who have the last word on laws and budgets and are the representative institutions providing the political base for policy and institutional arrangements.

Even if the WSSD Plan of Implementation does repeat the Rio “triangle” of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection – the triangle was transformed into a “quadrilateral” paradigm by the addition of the political dimension:

“Good governance within each country and at the international level is essential for sustainable development. At the domestic level, sound environmental, social and economic policies, democratic institutions ... are the basis for sustainable development. (...) Peace, security, stability and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,

³ See, for example, Shantayanan Devarajan / David R. Dollar / Torgny Holmgren (eds.): *Aid and Reform in Africa*, Development Research Group, World Bank, Washington D.C. 2001 - also <http://www.worldbank.org/research/aid/africa/intro.htm> .

⁴ The Declaration was adopted without a vote by the Inter-Parliamentary Council at its 161st session (Cairo, 16 September 1997). The Declaration may be found in Inter-Parliamentary Union, “Democracy: Its Principles and Achievements”, Geneva 1998, P. 3-8; see also <http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/161-dem.htm>

⁵ IPU. Parliaments' role in strengthening democratic institutions and human development in a fragmented world. Resolution adopted unanimously by the 108th Conference (Santiago de Chile, 11 April 2003), available at <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/108-1.htm> .

⁶ cf. John K. Johnson / Robert T. Nakamura: *A concept paper on legislatures and good governance*, a paper prepared for the United Nations Development Programme, New York July 1999; also <http://www.undp.org/governance/parldev/docs/conceptpaper.htm> .

including the right to development, as well as respect for cultural diversity, are essential for achieving sustainable development and ensuring that sustainable development benefits all.”⁷

WSSD Political Declaration⁸ and the Plan of Implementation promote the integration of the four components of sustainable human development as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars. The Johannesburg Summit acknowledged the UNCCD as an important tool for poverty eradication; it also stressed the need to mobilize adequate and predictable financial resources for the implementation of the UNCCD.⁹ Parliaments can contribute to providing for effective policy formulation, coordination, implementation, and monitoring of the processes of sustainable human development including the UNCCD process.

The UNCCD implementation process contributes to realising the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).¹⁰

⁷ WSSD, Plan of Implementation, arts. 4 and 5 - available online at http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/2309_planfinal.htm. The reference to cultural diversity underlines the relevance of the cultural dimension of development.

⁸ see <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org>

⁹ The political statement made by world leaders was instrumental to reaching the decision of the GEF Council to become a financial mechanism to UNCCD.

¹⁰ The goals are based on the UN Millennium Declaration (September 2000), and the United Nations General Assembly has approved them as part of the Secretary General’s road map towards implementing the Declaration. Consult <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals> .

III. HISTORY OF THE UNCCD¹¹ AND THE PARLIAMENTARY INVOLVEMENT

Desertification means¹² degradation of land and vegetation, soil erosion and the loss of topsoil and fertile land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations.¹³ Drought can trigger or aggravate desertification. The term “desertification” does not apply to hyper-arid zones (deserts).

Birth of the Convention in 1994

The United Nations Conference on Desertification (UNCOD), held in Nairobi in August/September 1977, addressed desertification as a worldwide problem for the first time and adopted a Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly, as requested by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), adopted Resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa.

On 17 June 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)¹⁴ was adopted in Paris. June 17 became the world day to combat desertification.

UNCCD enters into force in 1996

In December 1996, the UNCCD entered into force, 90 days after the 50th ratification was received. There are currently 191 Parties to the Convention.¹⁵

First Conference of the Parties in 1997

The First Conference of the Parties (COP 1) met at Rome, from 29 September to 10 October 1997. Rules governing the COP and its subsidiary bodies were established, the functions of the Global Mechanism set out. Parties selected Bonn as the location for the Convention’s Permanent secretariat and designated the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) as the organization to house the Global Mechanism. One plenary meeting was devoted to

¹¹ UNCCD Important Dates, online at <http://www.unccd.int/knowledge/importantDates.php>; Earth Negotiations Bulletin, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) - <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/desert/cric1>.

¹² UN Convention to Combat Desertification, art.1 - available at <http://www.unccd.int>. “Desertification means land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities.” Jagdish C. Katyal / Paul L.G. Vlek: Desertification - Concept, Causes and Amelioration, Discussion Papers in Development Policy, No. 33, ZEF, Bonn, October 2000, p. 16 propose the following definition: “Desertification is a condition of human-induced land degradation that occurs in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid regions (...) and leads to a persistent decline in economic productivity (>15% of the potential) of useful biota related to land use or a production system. Climatic variations intensify the decline in productivity, restorative management moderates it.”

¹³ Land over-exploitation, poor management of grazing areas and livestock, mechanised farming, bad irrigation practices, mismanagement of inputs and neglect of land improvement, inappropriate land use systems and policies, illegal and excessive logging, bush and forest fires, deforestation due to population increase trigger land degradation. Along with these anthropocentric factors, a range of natural factors are believed to influence the process of land degradation: year-round aridity, high variability in rainfall, recurrent drought etc.

¹⁴ See <http://www.unccd.int/convention/menu.php>.

¹⁵ 190 States and the European Community - see <http://www.unccd.int/convention/ratif/doiif.php>.

a dialogue between NGOs and delegates. Delegates subsequently adopted a proposal that a plenary meeting at future COPs be devoted to similar NGO dialogues.¹⁶

Second Conference of the Parties in 1998

Parties met for COP 2 at Dakar, from 30 November to 11 December 1998.

A meeting of parliamentarians on the UNCCD was organised for the first time in parallel to COP 2 on December 7. Some 31 parliamentarians from 18 countries participated (see Table 1) in the First Parliamentary Round Table at the invitation of the UNCCD secretariat, the National Assembly of Senegal and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. They discussed the process of implementation of the Convention and issued a Declaration on the *Process of implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*. (see Annex 1)

In January 1999, the permanent secretariat of the UNCCD was established in Bonn, Germany.

Third Conference of the Parties in 1999

Parties met for COP 3 at Recife, from 15-26 November 1999. The COP approved the long-negotiated memorandum of understanding between the COP and IFAD regarding the Convention's Global Mechanism. It decided to establish an ad hoc working group to review and analyse in depth the reports on national, subregional and regional action programmes to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the Convention. Delegates also agreed to continue consultations on the additional draft regional implementation annex for Central and Eastern Europe, with a view to adopting it at COP 4. They noted the need for a declaration on the commitment to enhance implementation of the Convention and decided to invite proposals for the formulation of such a declaration for consideration and adoption at the next COP.

At COP 3, some 41 parliamentarians from 20 countries met on 22 - 23 November for the Second Round Table of Members of Parliament at the invitation of the UNCCD secretariat and the National Congress of Brazil, with the full support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (see Table 1). They issued a declaration on the *Role of members of parliament in designing educational, scientific and cultural policies for the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*. (see Annex 2)

Fourth Conference of the Parties in 2000

Parties met for COP 4 from 11 to 22 December 2000 at Bonn. The Conference's notable achievements were the adoption of the fifth regional Annex for Eastern and Central Europe, the commencement of work by the ad hoc working group to review implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, the initiation of a discussion on the modalities for a committee to review implementation of the Convention submission of proposals to improve the

¹⁶ To date, over 720 NGOs have been accredited with observer status to the Conference of the Parties. The participation of these NGOs in the implementation of the Convention and their contribution to the various meetings is regarded as a necessary component of the successful implementation of the Convention.

work of the CST and the adoption of a decision on the Global Environment Facility (GEF) concerning the best options for GEF support for UNCCD implementation.

In the context of COP 4, the Third Round Table of Members of Parliament took place on 12 and 13 December and was organized by the UNCCD secretariat and the German Federal Parliament, with the full support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The 36 parliamentarians from 21 countries (see Table 1) discussed and adopted a declaration on *The support of members of parliament for the strengthening of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the identification of domestic revenue-neutral funding sources and the enhancement of technical and financial assistance to the countries most affected by desertification*. (see Annex 3)

Fifth Conference of the Parties in 2001

The Parties met from 1 to 13 October 2001 at Geneva. The COP focused on setting out the modalities of work for the two-year interval before the next COP, scheduled for 2003. Progress was made in a number of areas, most notably the establishment of a Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) as a subsidiary body of the COP and the identification of modalities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST.

The Fourth Round Table of Parliamentarians took place at Geneva on 4 and 5 October 2001. Some 26 parliamentarians from 25 countries participated (see Table 1), at the invitation of the UNCCD Secretariat through the IPU and with the assistance of the Government of Switzerland. At the end of the Round Table, they approved a *Declaration on the role of members of parliament in addressing the linkages between poverty and sustainable development, particularly desertification, within the framework of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*. (see Annex 4)

As of 2001, COP sessions – and Parliamentary Round Tables – will be held on a biennial basis.

World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (26 August to 4 September 2002, Johannesburg) acknowledged the UNCCD as one of the tools for poverty eradication and called on the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to become a financial mechanism of the UNCCD. In October 2002, the Second Assembly of the GEF at Beijing, adopted a decision to designate land degradation as its fifth focal area and to establish the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD. Advocacy was carried out around the message of the UNCCD Panel of Eminent Personalities to Consider the Poverty-Environment Nexus, in particular the “Agadez Call” and the “Report”,¹⁷ and it was promoted through side events and media channels as well as through informal meetings and discussions.

¹⁷ UNCCD, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification: A useful tool for sustainable development and poverty alleviation, Report of the Panel of Eminent Personalities, Bonn 2002 (<http://www.unccd.int/meetings/global/agadez2002/report-eng.pdf>).

On the occasion of the Parliamentary Meeting organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliament of South Africa (Johannesburg, 29 to 30 August 2002), members of parliament (MPs) deplored in their declaration “*Toward sustainability: implementing Agenda 21*” that in spite of progress on many fronts, the ten-year old Agenda 21 remains for the most part unfulfilled. Explicitly, they complained about the lack of support to land degradation and desertification. They pledged their continued support for Agenda 21 as the blueprint for MPs working for a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable world, and to work towards ratification and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.¹⁸

First session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 1) in 2002

CRIC 1 took place from 11 to 22 November 2002 at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) headquarters at Rome. Innovative solutions to combat desertification were identified and shared. A report was adopted and submitted to COP 6.

Sixth Conference of the Parties in 2003

In August/September 2003, the Parties convened in Havana, Cuba. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was designated as a financial mechanism of the Convention. CRIC 2 was held (26 – 29 August); recommendations on ways to improve the implementation of the Convention were endorsed.

*Alongside COP 6, some 91 MP from 44 countries met in Havana on 3 and 4 September 2003 for the fifth Parliamentary Round Table at the invitation of the Convention secretariat, with the full support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the assistance of the Government of Cuba (see Table 1). They adopted a declaration on *The role of members of parliament in promoting sustainable human development at national level in the context of a successful implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification* (see Annex 5).*

CRIC 3, 2005

CRIC 3 met in Bonn, 2–11 May 2005. CRIC assessed the efforts that governments have been making to tackle the desertification challenge, notably in Africa. Delegates gathered in four regional consultation meetings convened by the affected country Parties of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe. They focussed their attention on consensus policies for sustainable land management and ways of promoting best practices, know-how, technology transfer, in particular from the developed countries to the developing countries, for combating desertification globally.

¹⁸ The Parliamentary Declaration, online at: <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/Jbrg02/final.pdf> .

Officials from 130 countries who attended the meeting in Bonn, signalled¹⁹ that the UNCCD process has been instrumental in promoting an enabling environment through legislative harmonization. Yet, inadequate enforcement of laws on natural resources management remains to be a widespread weakness. While measures taken by developed country Parties and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) are increasingly acknowledged, activities organized in developing countries have not attracted adequate financing for combating land degradation.

The most important lesson delivered by the historical overview is that combating desertification and promoting sustainable development in general at the national and international levels requires overall strong political commitment.

¹⁹ UNCCD Press Release: “UN maps new ways to mainstream desertification”, Bonn, 12 May 2005.

IV. THE FIVE PARLIAMENTARY ROUND TABLES

Starting with the second UNCCD Conference of the Parties (COP 2), the COPs were accompanied by Parliamentary Round Tables organized by the UNCCD secretariat with the full support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the host country's parliament and/or government. Some 225 MPs participated at the previous five Round Tables (Rd. T.)

1 st Rd. T. (COP 2) 1998-Dakar 31 MPs from 18 countries	2 nd Rd. T. (COP 3) 1999-Recife 41 MPs from 20 countries	3 rd Rd. T. (COP 4) 2000-Bonn 36 MPs from 21 countries	4 th Rd. T. (COP 5) 2001-Geneva 26 MPs from 25 countries	5 th Rd. T. (COP 6) 2003-Havana 91 MPs from 44 countries
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With respect to the first four Round Tables, some 134 MPs, among them 21 women (16 per cent),²⁰ and one Member of the European Parliament participated in at least one of the four Round Tables. They came from 47 countries (out of which 31 developing countries). The fifth Round Table was so far the best attended Round Table: 91 MPs (among them 11 women) from 44 countries participated at the Havana meeting. (for more details see Table 1).

In their respective parliaments or parliamentary groups, many of the participating MPs were high ranking MPs and/or specifically involved in (sustainable) development matters. They were, for instance, (vice-) presidents of their parliaments, and chairpersons, or at least members, of the development, environmental or agricultural committees.

In relation to other comparable IPU parliamentary activities,²¹ one may conclude that the number of MPs and countries, the regional representation and the gender participation ratio of the UNCCD Parliamentary Round Tables is relatively satisfactory.

With respect to the active involvement of MPs in this important forum, it can be said that 112 MPs participated in one of the first four Round Tables. 5 MPs participated twice, and 4 MPs three times. The 5th Round Table saw many new MPs. To ensure that MPs would participate more continuously in these unique fora of the UNCCD, it would be necessary to provide appropriate funding resources.

²⁰ Worldwide, women accounted for about 15% of parliaments (2003), a share that is growing at a snail's pace see <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>.

²¹ For example the preparatory meeting for the Third Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Security and Co-operation (CSCM) in the Mediterranean, Ljubljana, 12 and 13 March 1999, which was attended by some 50 members of 19 countries from the category of main participants to the CSCM process, five associate participants and two observers.

Table 1
Five Parliamentary Round Tables (Rd. T.)
Countries and number of participants²²

Country	1 st Rd. T. (COP 2) 1998 Dakar	2 nd Rd. T. (COP 3) 1999 Recife	3 rd Rd. T. (COP 4) 2000 Bonn	4 th Rd. T. (COP 5) 2001 Geneva	5 th Rd. T. (COP 6) 2003 Havana
1. Algeria		1		1	2
2. Angola		1	1		3
3. Argentina				1	
4. Armenia					1
5. Australia	1	1	1		1
6. Bangladesh					2
7. Belgium				1	
8. Benin				1	2
9. Brazil	1	18	1	1	
10. Botswana	1				
11. Bulgaria			2	1	
12. Burkina Faso				1	1
13. Burundi					1
14. Cameroon					1
15. Cape Verde				1	4
16. Chile					1
17. China			1	1	
18. Congo, Dem.Rep.					4
19. Cook Islands					1
20. Costa Rica		2			
21. Cuba		1	1	1	13
22. Egypt					
23. El Salvador			4		
24. France		1	1	1	
25. Gambia	1				
26. Germany	1	1	10		5
27. Greece				1	
28. Grenada					1
29. Guatemala					1
30. Guinea					1
31. Honduras					1
32. India		1		1	1
33. Iran					2
34. Italy	1	2			4
35. Jamaica	1	1		1	
36. Japan	1		2	1	1
37. Kazakhstan				1	
38. Kenya					1

²² The information found in various documents differs slightly. The data used is that provided by the UNCCD secretariat and/or is based on own figures.

Country	1 st Rd. T. (COP 2) 1998 Dakar	2 nd Rd. T. (COP 3) 1999 Recife	3 rd Rd. T. (COP 4) 2000 Bonn	4 th Rd. T. (COP 5) 2001 Geneva	5 th Rd. T. (COP 6) 2003 Havana
39. Kyrgyzstan				1	
40. Malawi		1			
41. Mali	1	1	1	1	4
42. Mexico	1	1			1
43. Morocco					1
44. Mozambique	2				
45. Namibia	1		1		2
46. Niger	1				
47. Nigeria			2		4
48. Pakistan					5
49. Panama					2
50. Peru		1			
51. Poland					1
52. Portugal			1		2
53. Romania		1			1
54. Russia	1		1		
55. Senegal	13	2		1	1
56. South Africa	1	1		1	
57. Spain	1	1	1		1
58. Sudan					1
59. Switzerland	1			1	
60. Trinidad Tobago					1
61. Tunisia			1	1	1
62. Uganda			1		1
63. Ukraine				1	
64. United Kingdom			1	1	
65. United States of America			1		1
66. Venezuela				2	4
67. Zambia					1
68. Zimbabwe		1	1		1
European Parliament		1			
Total MPs	31	41	36	26	91
Total (Rd. Ts. I-V) 68 Countries (51 of them developing countries) ²³	18 (11)	20 (14)	21 (11)	25 (17)	44 (35)
Regional representation, countries from:					
Africa	8	7	7	8	20
Asia and Pacific	1	1	2	5	5
LAC	3	6	3	5	9
Others	6	6	9	7	10

²³ As listed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development Assistance Committee, see The DAC Journal, Development Co-operation Report 2004, Paris 2005, p. 244.

The IPU, in particular its Committee on Sustainable Development supported all the four Parliamentary Round Tables.²⁴ Important outcomes of the previous five Round Tables are described in the remainder of this chapter.²⁵

With their Declaration on *the process of implementation of the United Nations Convention to* recognised the importance of the Convention to Combat Desertification and its implementation at the national level. They underscored the fact that damages to the environment were essentially man-made and that environmental deterioration was a concern for all. They also (a) acknowledged the importance of working towards the development of public policies for allowing the strengthening of activities related to conservation and sustainable use of land resources (b) the adoption or strengthening of environmental legislation (c) the promotion of policies to strengthen institutional capacity (d) the protection of natural resources (e) the development of environmental education programmes and public awareness measures and (f) the promotion of the participation of women in decision-making processes (see Box 1 and Table 2).

In March 2000, the IPU Committee on Sustainable Development reviewed²⁶ the text of the final declaration adopted by members of parliament participating in the Second Round Table (1999, Recife) on their *Role in designing educational, scientific and cultural policies for the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.*²⁷

While it welcomed the declaration and its emphasis on the strengthening of educational, scientific and cultural policies addressing the causes and negative effects of desertification, the Committee issued a word of caution about the call made in the declaration for the establishment of a follow-up mechanism in the form of an open-ended high-level Forum of Members of Parliament engaged in the advancement of the Convention that would meet concurrently with each session of the Conference of Parties (see also Table 2). The Committee requested the IPU Secretary General to work with the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification on the proposed Forum to ensure that this initiative did not lead to the establishment of yet another separate parliamentary body, thus diluting efforts by the world parliamentary community to raise awareness globally on the impact of desertification on sustainable development.

The declaration adopted by the Third Round Table of Members of Parliament held in Bonn on 12 to 13 December 2000 in parallel with the Fourth Conference of Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, focuses on *the support of members of parliament to the strengthening of the implementation of the Convention, the identification of domestic revenue-neutral funding sources and the enhancement of technical and financial assistance to the*

²⁴ The IPU underwent an active reform process. In Santiago (108th Inter-Parliamentary Conference, April 2003), the Conference adopted all of the amendments proposed to the Union's Statutes and Rules on the recommendation of the Council. One of the decisions was to discontinue the existing Committee on Sustainable Development. The newly created Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade should integrate the work of the old Committee on Sustainable Development which did a good job in promoting the desertification issue within the IPU and also being an interlocutor of the UNCCD secretariat. At an IPU meeting in Geneva in March 1999, MPs listened to Mr. Oscar Oramas, a senior official of the UNCCD secretariat, who indicated that the declaration of the First Round Table was a milestone in the implementation of the Convention due to the fact that the parliamentarians participating at the meeting recognised the importance of the Convention and its implementation at the national level.

²⁵ IPU, Report of the Committee for Sustainable Development, CL/164/13(c)-R.1, 3 March 1999.

²⁶ IPU, Report of the Committee for Sustainable Development, CL/166/16(d)-R.1, 3 March 2000.

²⁷ Annex 2 of this report.

*countries most affected by desertification.*²⁸ Among other things, it advocates the creation within the Global Environment Facility of an additional funding instrument for the implementation of the Convention.

In addition, the decision was taken to set up a High-level Forum of Members of Parliament, a sort of permanent bureau of the Round Table designed to ensure effective follow-up to the recommendations made at the meeting (see also Table 2). Lastly, the assistance of the Inter-Parliamentary Union was sought with regard to technical support for the Forum, the holding of the Fourth Round Table and the dissemination of the declaration.

Members of the IPU Committee on Sustainable Development agreed – under the heading of “Desertification”²⁹ – that the declaration should be submitted to the Council of the IPU for endorsement and recommended that the IPU provide further technical assistance to the secretariat of the Convention for the holding of future parliamentary round tables.

As for monitoring of recommendations made at the Round Table, it was explained that the round tables were meant to allow exchange of information but were not to be viewed as an international parliamentary monitoring mechanism since appropriate parliamentary oversight took place at the national level.

At the fourth edition of the Round Table of Parliamentarians on the UNCCD in 2001³⁰, legislators from countries affected by desertification, invited by the United Nations through the IPU, had the opportunity to give their views on the implementation of this international instrument.

At the end of the Round Table, the participating MPs approved a Declaration *on The role of members of parliament in addressing the linkages between poverty and sustainable development, particularly desertification, within the framework of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.*³¹ The declaration was then presented to the Conference of Parties which took note of it with appreciation and decided to include it in its report.

The attention of members of the IPU Committee for Sustainable Development was drawn to a recommendation in the declaration by which participating MPs requested the States Parties to the Convention to designate the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as an operational financial mechanism of the UNCCD, and also requested that the GEF, at its next assembly in Beijing in October 2002, make desertification a fully fledged GEF focal area.

²⁸ Annex 3 of this report.

²⁹ IPU, Report of the Committee for Sustainable Development, CL/168/13(d)-R.1, 14 March 2001.

³⁰ IPU, Report of the Committee for Sustainable Development, CL/170/13(d)-R.1, 20 March 2002.

³¹ Annex 4 of this report.

Box 1 Some anti-desertification measures propagated by the five Parliamentary Round Tables

1. Measures designed to combat desertification directly and to promote sustainable management of natural resources
 - a) erosion control
 - b) conservation and sustainable use of land resources
 - c) rehabilitation of degraded land
 - d) better land, water and river basin management
 - e) establishment of sustainable irrigation facilities to secure stable water supplies
 - f) sustainable forest management and effective reforestation programmes
 - g) use of modern and safe bio-technologies to disseminate drought-resistant species
 - h) designation of land degradation as a focal area of the GEF
2. Measures designed to promote indirectly the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources
 - a) land use planning and adequate land tenure policy
 - b) sustainable agricultural policies
 - c) sustainable use of scarce natural resources including renewable sources of energy
 - d) protection of biodiversity
 - e) coping with population pressures
3. Capacity-building measures and know-how transfer
 - a) improvement of technical land and water management skills
 - b) promotion and utilisation of traditional and site-specific technological knowledge and practices
 - c) training, environmental education and environmental information
 - d) promotion of specific research on the causes and negative effects of desertification
 - e) advancement of applied agricultural and biotechnology research
 - f) capacity-building such as training sessions and dispatch of experts to enhance scientific and technical capacity for combating desertification, taking into consideration the special role of women
 - g) transfer and adaptation of environmentally sound technologies
 - h) use of state-of-the-art information technologies such as geographic information systems
4. Additional measures
 - a) call upon developed countries, in conformity with the letter and spirit of the UNCCD, to take appropriate actions aimed at relieving the current burden on developing countries, particularly through the promotion of economic reforms aimed at combining growth with human development, equity and social justice by, inter alia, agreeing on the relief of external debt, reducing interest rates and improving the overall trading environment
 - b) proposal to accompany anti-desertification measures with secured and innovative financing
 - c) clear orientation of public policies towards addressing the root causes of poverty through participative and democratic processes leading to a real and efficient empowerment of communities, especially women, at the front line of the sustainable development struggle
 - d) closer collaboration with local communities, non-governmental and community-based organisations and civil society, which carry out grass-roots aid activities and play an important role in combating desertification
 - e) avoid production and consumption patterns with negative impacts on land
 - f) declaration on the land that feeds us, and particularly what is known as its topsoil layer, as a common human patrimony requiring imperative, urgent, concerted and worldwide protection

During the five Round Tables the parliamentarians addressed very specific recommendations in which they should be involved – these include the following:

Table 2
MPs' self-commitments in relation to the UNCCD

MPs committed themselves to foster/promote:	1 st Rd Table Dakar 1998	2 nd Rd Table Recife 1999	3 rd Rd Table Bonn 2000	4 th Rd Table Geneva 2001	5 th Rd Table Havana, 2003
Poverty reduction / sustainable development	x	X	x	x	x
Decision-making, participative and democratic processes, gender equality	x			x	x
Good governance					x
Involvement of all stakeholders, in part. civil society, NGOs, youth and women's associations	x	X			x
Introduction, strengthening and implementation of national legislation	x	x	x		x
Integration of the main UNCCD provisions in national policies for sustainable development	x				x
Inclusion in the overall government agendas	x				x
Streamlining of desertification issues into NAPs, PRSPs etc.					x
Monitoring and control of government activities					x
Capacity strengthening of Parliaments and MPs					x
Specific national budget lines			x		x
National action programmes covering water management and applied agricultural research	x				x
Action programmes based on the reforestation and rehabilitation of land	x				x
Debt-for-nature swaps for land rehabilitation and reforestation	x				
Capacity / institution building or strengthening	x	x	x		x
Monitoring of government action	x				
Access to information , public awareness campaigns	x	x			x
Involvement of schools, academia and artists, environmental education	x	x	x		x
special parliamentary events, the "International CCD-Day - 17 June			x		x
Commemorative postal stamps			x		x
A follow-up mechanism by creating an open-ended High-Level Forum of Members of Parliament or a steering group		x	x		x
Mobilisation of financial resources	x	x	x		x
Involvement of the private sector			x	x	x
Synergies in the implementation of the different sustainable development instruments				x	x
International, regional and sub regional co-operation		x			x
Parliamentary diplomatic activities					x
Parliamentary oversight mechanism of the GEF					x
Creation of a parliamentary network					x

V. IMPACT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ROUND TABLES

Though it is rather difficult to evaluate the impact of the five Parliamentary Round Tables, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- (a) It is of great merit that – with the support of the IPU and the UNCCD secretariat – a parliamentary dimension was added to the UNCCD process and to the work of the Conferences of the Parties.
- (b) The Parliamentary Round Tables have become a platform for exchange of views and interaction among parliamentarians on desertification issues.³² It has been clearly recognised that due to the multiple causes of land degradation, combating desertification requires a wide range of measures (see Box 1).
- (c) Each of the COPs 2-6 took note “with appreciation” of the Declarations, adopted by the Round Tables, and decided to include them as annexes to the reports of the COP sessions. However, with respect to the official outcomes of the COPs, the Parliamentary Round Tables were not a “front-runner” in formulating specific demands related to the desertification cause. Though they were sometimes quite innovative (see for instance the Second Round Table’s emphasis on educational, scientific and cultural policies for implementing the Convention).
- (d) The IPU, in particular its Committee on Sustainable Development³³, has dealt with the outcomes of the different UNCCD Parliamentary Round Tables and considered where appropriate – the issues of land degradation, soil loss and desertification in its resolutions.³⁴ In future, the newly created IPU Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Trade and Finance is expected to cover the work and activities of the old Committee.
- (e) The Council of the IPU generally endorsed the round table outcomes, recommending that the IPU provides further technical assistance to the secretariat of the UNCCD for the holding of future parliamentary round tables, and following the findings of its Committee on Sustainable Development. However, the IPU did not endorse the idea (proposed at the second and third Round Tables) to establish a follow-up mechanism by creating an open-ended High-Level Forum of Members of Parliament engaged in the advancement of the Conventions objectives. However, in 2003 the IPU Governing Council approved the creation of a Steering Committee and of the Parliamentary Network on UNCCD.

³² Due to the lack of time and to problems inherent with finding out the specific impacts that parliamentary conferences, declarations or resolutions have on given policy areas, it has not been possible to say more of the extent to which the Round Tables have influenced the anti-desertification policies of countries.

³³ IPU, Reports of the Committee for Sustainable Development: CL/164/13(c)-R.1, 3 March 1999; CL/166/16(d)-R.1, 3 March 2000; CL/168/13(d)-R.1, 14 March 2001; CL/170/13(d)-R.1, 20 March 2002.

³⁴ See, for example, the parliamentary message to the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, adopted by the IPU Council at its 168th session (Havana, 7 April 2001): “Natural and environmental resources constitute the common inheritance and capital assets of the poor. It is the poor who suffer most from the degradation of land, soil, water and forestry resources which are vital to their food security, their livelihood and their very survival. Multilateral rules and standards, whether they be in trade, investment, intellectual property or the environment, should contribute to the maintenance, regeneration and enhancement of these assets, instead of their erosion.”

- (f) Some specific self-commitments made by the parliamentarians deserve further follow-up, such as the organisation of an annual parliamentary event (International Day to Combat Desertification) or the calls for monitoring government action, for strengthening the participative and democratic processes, for specific budget-lines and for consistent integration of the main UNCCD provisions in national policies for sustainable development.
- (g) Considering the high political relevance of land degradation and desertification issues in the poverty reduction strategy papers in place,³⁵ there is at the national, (sub) regional and international levels – a need for improved parliamentary participation, greater parliamentary involvement, capacity strengthening, and more parliamentary networking.
- (h) Parliaments and MPs could do more to realize the various good ideas put forward during the parliamentary round table (in particular the last one).

³⁵ Cf. U. Holtz: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Country Strategy Papers and their relationship to the combat against desertification. The role of parliaments, Bonn 2003 (<http://www.unccd.int/parliament/data/bginfo/PRS.pdf>). Desertification has many impacts on food security, natural resources and eco systems, migration, political stability and on sustainable human development as a whole. See U. Holtz, The UNCCD and its Political Dimension, Bonn, May 2003 ([http://www.unccd.int/parliament/data/bginfo/PDUNCCD\(eng\).pdf](http://www.unccd.int/parliament/data/bginfo/PDUNCCD(eng).pdf)).

VI. A STRONGER PARLIAMENTARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE UNCCD IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS – THE HAVANA PLAN OF ACTION

A stronger parliamentary involvement may issue from the main functions and tasks of democratically elected and functioning – often bicameral – parliaments as described and analysed in the IPU's *Universal Declaration on Democracy*³⁶, the United Nations Development Programme Human Development Report 2002, *Deepening democracy in a fragmented world*,³⁷ and the IPU's Resolution on *Parliaments' Role in Strengthening Democratic Institutions and Human Development in a Fragmented World* (2003),³⁸ as well as the scientific literature.³⁹

While acknowledging that national parliaments represent the basis for good governance, it is recognized that parliaments take on different shapes or what emerges is a model of parliamentary governance I label as the “parliamentary hexagon”.

The parliamentary hexagon

The “parliamentary hexagon” describes the main roles six and functions of parliaments⁴⁰ consisting in:

- (1) Making laws (legislative power)
- (2) Deciding on the budget (power of the purse)
- (3) Holding government accountable and exercising control of executive action (power of parliamentary oversight)
- (4) Representing democratic publics (power of representation and discourse)
- (5) Electing the executive (elective power), and
- (6) Influencing foreign policy and international relations (treaty and war power, power of mediation between the public and international organisations and institutions).

Parliaments are stronger or weaker in accomplishing the 6 different roles.⁴¹ And policy-making is a result of complicated political, social and institutional processes.⁴²

³⁶ The Declaration was adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council at its 161st session (Cairo, 16 September 1997) - available at <http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/161-dem.htm>.

³⁷ Human Development Report 2002 *Deepening democracy in a fragmented world*, UNDP, New York 2002, p.17: “Democratic governance is valuable in its own right. But it can also advance human development, for three reasons. First, enjoying political freedom and participating in the decisions that shape one’s life are fundamental human rights: they are part of human development in their own right. ...democracy helps protect people from economic and political catastrophes such as famines and descents into chaos. ... democratic governance can trigger a virtuous cycle of development - as political freedom empowers people to press for policies that expand social and economic opportunities, and as open debates help communities shape their priorities.” And see p.55: “The most benign dictatorship imaginable would not be compatible with human development because human development has to be fully owned.”

³⁸ Resolution adopted unanimously by the 108th Conference (Santiago de Chile, 11 April 2003), available at <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/108-1.htm>.

³⁹ See for instance, Inter-Parliamentary Union (ed.): *Democracy: Its Principles and Achievements*, Geneva 1998, in which eleven experts and scholars from different geopolitical currents present their views on the principles and achievements of democracy.

⁴⁰ A very important role is played by the political opposition, which should be adequately represented in the workings of the parliament and be given the resources it needs to do an efficient job. See *Parliaments' Role in Strengthening Democratic Institutions and Human Development in a Fragmented World*. Inter-Parliamentary Union, CONF/108/4-Doc.Inf.1, 28 February 2003, p. 2.

The Havana Parliamentary Action Plan and its follow-up

Parliaments and MPs can contribute to more effective policy formulation, better coordination, implementation and monitoring the process of sustainable human development including the UNCCD process. In line with the framework of the parliamentary hexagon, the 5th Round Table in Havana (3/4 September 2003) adopted unanimously a “Parliamentary Action.”⁴³

First, the MPs reaffirm their overall commitment to sustainable human development as a universal concept which incorporates the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development economic development, social development and environmental protection - at local, national, regional and global levels while remaining committed to the indivisibility of human dignity for all and to democratic systems as well as to democratic global governance with more effective and accountable international and multilateral institutions.

And they recall the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, the outcomes of the relevant UN conferences and summits, in particular the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) and the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development which define a complete vision for the future of humanity and provide a comprehensive basis for action at the national, regional and international level with the key objective of poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, sustainable development and improvement of living conditions of people everywhere.

Then, they endorse the “Parliamentary Action Plan” which foresees the following:

- (1) The strengthening of national legislation and its harmonization with the provisions of the UNCCD, and the streamlining of desertification issues into NAPs, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and country programmes supported by the donor community.
- (2) The creation of specific budget lines for combating land degradation and the observance of consistent budget strategies appropriately integrating foreign assistance into a country's own development and support to all initiatives which aim at encouraging sustainable development promotion in order to ensure the best use of financial and human resources and the effective use of available expertise and comparative advantages, including

⁴¹ In many countries parliaments are in the hands of powerful government machines and dominated by the executive branch. The legislature often plays a limited role in policy-making for example, with budgets discussed only at their final stage in many parliaments. Often parliaments simply lack technical capacity and the required equipment, office space and access to information. Democratic decentralisation requires more than just decentralising and devolving power. It also requires widening participation especially by people who are often marginalized, such as women, minorities and the poor and increasing the accountability of public officials at local levels.

⁴² In theory policy-making is a problem-solving process which is rational, linear, balanced, objective and analytical. However, very often, the whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes. Practice teaches that policy implementation is an ongoing, non-linear process that must be managed. It requires consensus building, participation of key stakeholders, conflict resolution, compromise, contingency planning, resource mobilisation and adaptation. New policies often reconfigure roles, structures, and incentives, thus changing the array of costs and benefits to implementers, direct beneficiaries, and other stakeholders. As a result, policy implementation is often very difficult. Experience has shown that an inwardly focussed, ‘business as usual’ approach will fall short of achieving intended results. In Rebecca Sutton, *The Policy Process: An Overview Working Paper 118*, (Overseas Development Institute), London, August 1999.

⁴³ see Annex 5 of this report.

traditional knowledge, in both developed and developing countries as well as the public and private sectors.

(3)

- The recognitions of the unique role of parliamentarians in scrutinizing, monitoring and holding national governments to account in respect of the implementation of international agreements;
- The monitoring of executive actions and control if desertification issues are included in overall government agendas (by means of oral and written questions to ministers, motions, committee hearings etc.);
- The pursuit of coherent and better coordinated policies in the area of anti-poverty and sustainable human development strategies including anti-desertification, the enhancement of synergies between the Rio conventions and the building-up of a culture of coordination of the NAPs with other national development priorities.⁴⁴

(4)

- The mobilization of public opinion and the raising of awareness on sustainable human development and desertification issues through campaigns, annual events (World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought on 17 June), special parliamentary debates, environmental education, the involvement of schools, academics and artists, and commemorative postage stamps;
- Partnership-building between policy makers, the academic community, the business sector and non-governmental as well as community-based organizations;
- The orientation of public policies towards eliminating the root causes of poverty through participative and democratic processes leading to a real and efficient empowerment of communities, especially women and youth, at the front line of the sustainable development struggle.

(5) The setting up of a Parliamentary or a Government Commissioner for Future Generations, who should submit regular reports on the state of combating land degradation, soil loss, and desertification and the progresses achieved.

(6)

- Forms of international, regional and subregional cooperation favourable to improving relations between the relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and actors, including - if necessary - parliamentary diplomatic activities;
- With respect to the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Doha, Qatar, further examination of the relationship between trade, environment and development and actions, particularly to reduce the current system of subsidising agricultural production and exports as well as barriers to the import of food from developing countries, the increase of Official Development Assistance as promised in Monterrey, and the realization of the WSSD Plan of Implementation;

⁴⁴ Obviously there is a lack of coherence and coordination among the different plans and programmes in addition to a lack of parliamentary participation, As discussed in U. Holtz: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Country Strategy Papers and their relationship with the Combat against Desertification - Role of Parliaments, Bonn, May 2003 (www.unccd.org).

- Support to multilateral, governmental, non governmental and volunteer action at all levels for promoting forestation, reforestation, rural agricultural development and sustainable alternative livelihood development in the context of UNCCD implementation;
- The establishment of a parliamentary oversight mechanism of the Global Environmental Facility.

Last but not least, the MPs propose the creation - under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union - of a Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD (PNoUNCCD).

The idea of creating international parliamentary networks specific policy matters is not new. Three examples:

- (a) In 2000, the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank started out as an informal network of parliamentarians interested in the work of the World Bank and development. Today the World Bank Network is a non-profit association which gathers together over 140 parliamentarians from 60 countries. Its purpose is both to increase parliamentary involvement and effectiveness in the field of international development and to encourage dialogue between MPs and the World Bank. Unfortunately, there is no direct relationship between this network and the IPU.
- (b) The IPU Conference, held in Amman in May 2000, called on governments to acknowledge that the human rights of children are frequently breached, resulting in their physical and sexual abuse, and to take practical measures to combat such abuse it proposed “the establishment of an inter-parliamentary network under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to combat child abuse”. (There has been no follow-up so far.)
- (c) In February 2003, the President of the Council of the IPU, Chilean Senator Sergio Páez, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture Organization (UNESCO) Director General, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, discussed the possibility of creating a parliamentary network within the IPU on matters related to UNESCO, particularly in the field of education. The network was launched on the occasion of the UNESCO General Conference in October 2003.

There was a fivefold need and motivation for the establishment of the PNoUNCCD under the auspices of the IPU and with the support of the UNCCD secretariat:

- (1) Given its linkages with poverty reduction efforts, the fight against desertification, land degradation and soil loss deserves a stronger parliamentary commitment;
- (2) The parliamentary declaration on the occasion of the World Summit on Sustainable Development calls for bringing a parliamentary dimension to the United Nations;
- (3) MPs have an essential role to play (see the “parliamentary hexagon”), especially in the implementation of the UNCCD and the mainstreaming anti-desertification, including through the adoption of budgets by parliaments.

- (4) MPs need relevant and up-dated information for a stronger UNCCD commitment, noting that the UNCCD is a legally binding treaty and as such a unique tool to combat both poverty and environmental deterioration. MPs need to be empowered in the spirit of the parliamentary hexagon through influence and capacity strengthening and – primarily thanks to the new information technologies through pooling and exchanging information, through sharing experiences and examples of good practice;
- (5) The IPU is the appropriate and right “umbrella” for such a network: it is the world organization of parliaments, experienced in fostering contacts, coordination and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries and in introducing parliamentary dimensions to international processes (e.g. Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCM) or parliamentary round tables.

The MPs present in Havana expressed the wish to see the PNoUNCCD under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to be facilitated by a parliamentary steering committee with the technical support of the UNCCD Secretariat. For them the PNoUNCCD should be

- a network of information, interaction and influence with the aim of increasing parliamentary involvement and efficiency in the fields of combating desertification, soil erosion and land degradation,
- a tool of pooling information and of ensuring greater parliamentary input into international negotiations and organizations.

A report on the 5th Round Table including the Havana Declaration was presented at the IPU Governing Council held in October 2003. The Council welcomed the outcomes of the Havana parliamentary forum and approved the proposal made at that meeting to establish a parliamentary network for the Convention on the UNCCD.⁴⁵

The Havana participants set up a steering committee for the network on which all geopolitical groups – as recognized by the IPU⁴⁶ - are represented and which would include one member of the Bureau of the IPU Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade.

On its first meeting, in Bonn on June 3, 2004, the Steering Committee elected Prof. Ali Nouhoum Diallo, President of the ECOWAS Parliament, as President of the Steering Committee. The other vice-presidents were elected according to a geographical distribution: Ms. Dagmar Schmidt (Germany) represents Europe; Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh) represents Asia; Mr. Mario Arias Salas (Venezuela) represents Latin America and Caribbean countries, and Mr. Abdelkader Reguig (Algeria) represents the Arab countries.

Activities undertaken by the UNCCD Secretariat include the establishment of a web site link, which aims at assisting the work of the parliamentary network and the Steering Committee. All information pertaining to the activities of the Parliamentarians (including all the Round Tables and the respective Declarations) can be found under the item “Parliamentarians in Action” (<http://www.unccd.int>). The Secretariat also organized the meeting of the Steering Committee in

⁴⁵ See the "Results of the 109th Assembly and related meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union", Geneva, 1-3 October 2003, as a PDF file: <http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/109.pdf>.

⁴⁶ The African, Arab, Asia-Pacific, Eurasia, Latin American, and the Twelve Plus Groups.

Bonn and the side event on linkages between combating desertification and renewable energies – with a strong participation of MPs. For these events an issues paper on the topic was prepared.⁴⁷ This keynote paper is an important contribution to the International Conference on renewable energies (Bonn-2004).

The Havana Declaration, the PNoUNCCD and the respective web site could enhance more pooling and information exchange activities. So far one single activity was communicated to the UNCCD Secretariat and may be found on the parliamentary web site. Within the framework of a general debate on development policy on February 12, 2004, the German Bundestag discussed a motion on combating desertification. Speakers from the government parties and the opposition parties highlighted the Havana Declaration as an excellent parliamentary document in the fight against desertification and land degradation. They underlined the relevance of combating desertification for the eradication of poverty, the protection of the environment and the promotion of peace and security. The motion included key issues raised in the Havana Declaration. After deliberations in the relevant parliamentary committees, the German Federal Parliament adopted the document on December 16, 2004.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Youba Sokona / Salimata Wade (ENDA TM Energy Programmes): **The Contribution of Renewable Energies to the fight against Desertification: Some lessons learned from projects and programmes promoting the use of renewable energy to improve access to water and the sustainable use of biomass in the Sahel**, May 2004.

⁴⁸ The motion (translated into English and French) is available at www.unccd.int (> Parliaments in action > Please choose > Follow-up Actions)

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is proposed that the forthcoming Parliamentary Round Table could consider the outcomes of the previous fora with a view to define a reasonable work plan for the next two years.

For instance the Havana Plan of Action is still very relevant – many points are yet to be realized by Parliaments and MPs. During the debates in Havana several important proposals going beyond the Havana Declaration were made and these include:

- (1) Regional meetings of parliamentarians to monitor the implementation of the agreements adopted and to know the experiences of the different countries.
- (2) Organization of a youth segment on the occasion of next COP sessions.
- (3) Creation of a mechanism to ensure that decisions adopted in Round Tables are carried out. This task lies on the activities of the Steering Committee.

During the Steering Committee meeting in Bonn, 3 June 2004, the following ideas were put forward:

- (1) The Parliamentary Network needs a focal point with whom the Secretariat could work on a regular basis. Therefore it is advisable that someone could be designated to follow-up contacts with all members of the networks and ensure that information collected are made available so as to enable Parliamentarians to fully participate in the follow up aspects of the Action plan adopted in Havana.
- (2) The main focus should remain on parliamentary action within the countries concerned and not oriented towards international organizations. Activities should be directed at working towards a more coherent policy in the fight against poverty and desertification at home.
- (3) One member of the Steering Committee proposed to organize in each country a seminar/workshop for parliamentarians together with the UNCCD Secretariat, so that the local aspects can be seen in the different countries.
- (4) Better coordination of parliamentary activities is needed.
- (5) Local authorities and governments should inform the national and regional parliaments about the situation in the different areas; representatives from civil society groups should be involved as well.

At the CRIC 3 held in Bonn, 2-11 May 2005, the analysis of some 46 reports received from African countries which are particularly hit by serious drought and desertification highlighted a few major lessons which should certainly be taken into account when considering the adjustments required for more effective implementation of the Convention:⁴⁹

- (1) In many reports, some of the strategic action areas still appear as sectoral projects limited in time by financing agreements which are not guaranteed to last;
- (2) Many reports consider the incorporation of strategic action areas within national action programmes (NAPs) and the link between the latter and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

⁴⁹ UNCCD: Consideration of necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of action programmes, including review of the enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention, ICCD/CRIC(3)/5, 17 February 2005, p. 2, 14, 20.

(PRSPs) to be essential. Nevertheless, few countries have gone as far as integrating their NAPs within their national development strategies in practice.⁵⁰

- (3) With regard to the developed country Parties' there is a need to improve coordination between the external supports and to simplify the procedures applied for managing funds allocated to African countries. Little attention appears to be given to renewable energies, the sustainable management of rangelands and the introduction of early warning systems.
- (4) African countries must adopt budgetary measures that give practical effect to their proclaimed wish to promote desertification control and the sustainable management of natural resources.
- (5) It also appears that the importance attached to desertification control in the cooperation policies of some developed countries needs reassessing, in view of the priority this matter is given by most African countries.

The CRIC 3 considered the GEF Country Pilot Partnership as a welcome development geared to delivering the needed change in the financing of the UNCCD implementation. The GEF was invited to consider providing timely financial support in the next phase of the CRIC reporting cycle for country Parties of the regional implementation annexes other than Africa, which will present their national reports at CRIC5. The CRIC3 called for a significant increase in the replenishment of the GEF4 resources during the ongoing negotiations, in order to inter alia ensure adequate support for the land degradation focal area. The GEF national focal points were called upon to more actively foster synergies with the key players at the country level, (including Implementing and Executing Agencies, Rio Convention Focal Points, etc) to ensure NAP-related projects are developed and funded by the GEF. The World Bank led TerrAfrica initiative should be closely associated to the Convention implementation process, in order to be harmonised with countries' national development strategies.

The PNoUNCCD should include in its work program the following:

- (1) provide the members of the network with a platform for knowledge sharing, interaction and coordinated proactive measures;
- (2) help increase parliamentary involvement in monitoring the national and international anti-desertification activities;⁵¹
- (3) facilitate awareness-raising, timely consultative processes and the exchange of information, experience and good practices;⁵²
- (4) support resource mobilization;
- (5) encourage coalition-building and partnerships between parliamentarians and policy makers, the academic community, the business sector and non-governmental organizations;
- (6) promote forms of international, regional and subregional cooperation, favourable to improving relations between the relevant intergovernmental organisations, including, if necessary, parliamentary diplomacy activities;

⁵⁰ The same findings in U. Holtz: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Country Strategy Papers and their relationship with the Combat against Desertification - Role of Parliaments, Bonn, May 2003 (<http://www.unccd.int/parliament/data/bginfo/PRS.pdf>).

⁵¹ MPs should participate in and/or try to influence other relevant international conferences, which may have an impact on the fight against soil erosion, land degradation and desertification (as it was the case for the Conference on Renewable Energies, Bonn, June 2004).

⁵² In this respect the web could be very helpful. It is international, immediate and interactive, and it offers connectivity, content and capability. A digital divide among parliamentarians should be avoided at all costs.

(7) support the Parliamentary Round Tables.

The UN General Assembly has declared 2006 the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD). The resolution in this regard⁵³ encourages countries to contribute to the Convention and to undertake special initiatives in observance of the Year with the goal of enhancing the implementation of the Convention; it calls upon all relevant international organizations and Member States to support the activities related to desertification, including land degradation, to be organized by affected countries, in particular African countries and the least developed countries.

Parliaments and MPs are invited to consult amongst themselves and agree on specific activities they could undertake at various levels within their work program to contribute to the success of the IYDD.

⁵³ cf. A/RES/58/211, 9 February 2004.

ANNEX - Parliamentary Round Table Declarations

1.

PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNCCD - DECLARATION⁵⁴ BY THE ROUND TABLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ORGANIZED BY THE CONVENTION SECRETARIAT AND SPONSORED BY THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

(Dakar, 7 December 1998)

I. We, the Parliamentarians invited to meet in Dakar, Senegal, on 7 December 1998 by the Convention secretariat, the National Assembly of Senegal and the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the context of the second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, declare that:

1. We are deeply alarmed by the impact of desertification which affects 3,600 million hectares, representing 70 per cent of the potential productive land in arid zones. The rapidity of this progression means that there is a loss of 6 million hectares annually. We are conscious of the gravity of the situation in different regions of the world as in Africa, a continent where deserts or arid zones constitute two-thirds of the total land area and 73 per cent of the arid land is already seriously or moderately degraded; in Asia where around 1,400 million hectares are affected by desertification, which corresponds to 71 per cent of the arid land of the continent which is moderately or severely degraded; in Latin America, where nearly three quarters of the arid land is moderately or severely degraded and the Mediterranean, where almost two-thirds of the arid land is severely degraded; the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where 40 per cent to 80 per cent of the arid land is severely degraded;

2. It is intolerable that at the beginning of the twenty-first century near 1 billion men, women and children, are permanently threatened by desertification; that hundreds of millions of people suffer from a chronic shortage of basic necessities such as water; and that millions of "environmental refugees" are forced to abandon their native land to seek relief elsewhere;

3. We share fully the founding premise of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, according to which sustainable development cannot be attained unless:

- (i) it is oriented towards people in protecting the interests of the affected populations and eradicates poverty;
- (ii) it involves these populations fully in the decision-making process, in measures for the protection of the environment and in the struggle against desertification;
- (iii) it includes the dimension of the fight against poverty.

4. We believe that desertification, poverty, famine, social and political disturbances, wars, migration and the displacement of populations, which have led many times to new and most serious degradation of the natural environment, are all interconnected;

5. We take note of the serious budgetary constraints of the poorest affected countries, which still have to devote a considerable proportion of their scant financial resources to debt repayment and servicing.

⁵⁴ All the Round Table Declarations are available at www.unccd.int (> Parliaments in action > Please choose).

II. Affirming our total commitment, as Parliamentarians, to contribute fully to the implementation of the Convention, in countries that are Parties to the Convention.

6. We support where necessary the adoption or the strengthening of legislation concerning the fight against desertification and the preservation of the ecosystems in all the affected countries,

7. We subscribe to the promotion of policies and the strengthening of appropriate institutional frameworks for the favourable development of co-operation among the countries affected by desertification and their partners in development;

8. We support the strengthening of social, education, health and policies through public awareness campaigns about the negative effects of desertification as well as the participation of youth and women in the development programmes;

9. We subscribe to the integration of the main provisions of the Convention in national policies for sustainable development;

10. We subscribe to the initiative that the year 2000 be the starting point of the decade to combat desertification;

11. We support fully the initiatives of agencies, donor countries and civil society to mobilise financial assistance for the promotion of sustainable development in poorest countries with fragile ecosystems, through the Convention's Global Mechanism.

III. We undertake to promote in our respective Parliaments:

12. The follow-up of implementation of the Convention, making full use of the mechanisms available in our Parliaments to monitor government action and thus ensure that the Convention is fully implemented;

13. The formulation of national legislation and its harmonisation with the provisions of the Convention;

14. The inclusion of the combat against desertification in the overall agendas of our national governments so as to make the combat a priority matter for our countries as for our regional and sub-regional organisations;

15. The formulation of national action programmes covering water management and applied agricultural research in the poorest countries affected by desertification and others as necessary, and their financing in accordance with the provisions of the Convention;

16. The adoption of practical measures to include environmental education, in particular the fight against desertification, in school curricula.

IV. We are deeply convinced of the need to undertake far-reaching action with the main priorities:

17. To promote forms of regional and sub-regional co-operation, favourable to improving relations between our relevant intergovernmental organisations;

18. To set up, at the local level, action programmes based on the reforestation and rehabilitation of land which involves all stakeholders in the field, in particular the education system and representatives of civil society, especially youth and women's associations;

19. To define action programmes involving international organisations, including United Nations agencies, donors, national institutions, elected representatives, NGOs, and the local population, in particular resource users, both men and women, to promote the objectives of the Convention;

20. As appropriate in the case of poorest affected countries to expand debt-for-nature swaps for land rehabilitation and reforestation.

V. We Parliamentarians address an urgent appeal:

21. To all relevant participants in civil society, such as financial institutions, personalities in the fields of finance, commerce, sport, the media and the arts, to support the mobilisation of financial resources to support the fight against desertification which is under way in the developing countries most seriously affected by desertification and drought;

22. To academic institutions, the scientific community and research centres for their support in the various tasks of implementing the Convention in affected countries with particular regard to the needs of developing countries;

23. To the Inter-Parliamentary Union to give the widest publicity possible to this Declaration and, notably that it be transmitted to all national parliaments for their attention;

24. To the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to continue the actions taken up to this time to support the countries affected by desertification, and to take all necessary measures to the present declaration universally known;

25. To the secretariats of the UNCCD and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to take follow-up action on the present meeting and organise similar meetings in conjunction with future conferences of the Parties.

Annex 2.

DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT - SECOND ROUND TABLE OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT - THE ROLE OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN DESIGNING EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL POLICIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNCCD

(Recife, 22-23 November 1999)

I. We, members of parliament meeting in Recife, Brazil, from 22 to 23 November 1999 for the second Round Table at the invitation of the Convention secretariat and the National Congress of Brazil, with the full support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in the context of the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, declare that:

1. We are deeply alarmed by the impact of land degradation and desertification processes that are occurring, and accelerating, over much of the 30 percent of the Earth's surface, which is designated by the UN as dry or semi-arid. We are conscious that over 70 per cent of this area is used for agriculture or pastoral activities and that approximately 15 per cent of the world's population and 25 per cent of the total land area of the Earth is directly affected by land degradation and desertification processes. We are conscious of the gravity of the situation in different regions of the world as in Africa, a continent where deserts or arid zones constitute two-thirds of the total land area and 73 per cent of the arid land is already seriously or moderately degraded; in Asia where approximately 71 per cent of the Continent's arid lands are severely degraded; in Latin America, where nearly three-quarters of the arid land is moderately or severely degraded; the Mediterranean, where almost two-thirds of the arid land is severely degraded, and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where 40 to 80 per cent of the arid land is severely degraded;

2. It is a cause for great concern that losses of productivity implied by desertification processes severely undermine sustainable economic growth, limit food security and exacerbate susceptibility to famine, often accompanied by large-scale movements of displaced people. The failure of marginally productive land to cope with population pressures, together with increasingly variable climate, including recurrent drought, may already have displaced as many as 25 million people worldwide from their land and constituted a source of inter-communal conflict in many parts of the world;

3. We share fully the founding premise of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, according to which sustainable development cannot be attained unless:

- (i) it is clearly oriented towards people, addresses the interests of affected populations and has as its ultimate objective the alleviation of poverty;
- (ii) it fully involves affected populations and local communities in the decision-making process, as well as in the implementation of measures to protect the environment, improve land and water resources management and to overcome the main causes of land degradation and desertification;

4. We reaffirm our belief that desertification, poverty, famine, social and political disturbances, wars, migration and the displacement of populations, which have on many occasions led to further serious degradation of the natural environment, are in many cases interconnected;

5. We take note with concern that the consequences of land degradation and desertification pressures fall hardest on developing countries and that remediation programs compete for scant financial resources, much of which is still required for debt repayment and servicing. We urge the international community to seriously consider the ordeal and alienation of heavily indebted least developed countries and urge it to implement appropriate relief measures to be undertaken with the help of the Global Mechanism, particularly in those countries seriously affected by drought and desertification.

II. In affirming our commitment, as members of parliament, to contribute fully to the implementation of the Convention, we congratulate those countries which have ratified the Convention and urge those that have not yet ratified it to do so as soon as possible and join the initiative to make the year 2000 the starting point of the decade to combat desertification.

Moreover:

6. We support the wide and active participation of all Parliaments in ratifying countries, in the implementation of the Convention including, where necessary, the introduction, strengthening and implementation of legislation relating to the fight against desertification and the preservation of ecosystems in countries affected;

7. We attach highest importance to the strengthening of educational, scientific and cultural policies through effective public awareness campaigns about the causes and negative effects of desertification, as well as the active participation of civil society, local communities, youth and women in efforts to identify country or region-specific solutions and strategies; We also recognised the need to ensure the raising of awareness on the protection of biodiversity and causes of climate change;

8. We support fully the initiatives of agencies, donor countries and civil society to mobilise financial assistance, through the Convention's Global Mechanism, for the implementation of sustainable development strategies in poor countries with fragile ecosystems.

III. In highlighting the fundamental role that education, science and culture play in the challenge to achieve sustainable development, we members of parliament agree:

9. To initiate with this second Round Table a concerted effort to promote concrete action-oriented measures in the area of education, applied research and capacity building to combat desertification;

10. That such measures could include, for example: awareness raising on production and consumption patterns and their impact on land, water and river basin management, improvement of technical land and water management skills, sustainable use of scarce natural resources including the use of renewable sources of energy, promotion of specific research on the causes and negative effects of desertification, transfer and adaptation of environmentally sound technologies for better land and natural resource management, the effective use of modern and safe bio-technologies to disseminate drought-resistant tree species, the use of state-of-the-art information technologies such

as geographic information systems, the rational and integrated management of river basins, and the protection, promotion and utilisation of traditional and site-specific technological knowledge and practice

IV. We agree to establish an effective follow-up mechanism by creating an open-ended High-Level Forum of Members of Parliament engaged in the advancement of the Convention objectives and for which we seek the sponsorship of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The High-Level Forum of Members of Parliament:

11. Will meet concurrently with each session of the Conference of the Parties to share information on national initiatives and monitor implementation of Round Table decisions in parliaments of countries that are Parties to the Convention;

12. If necessary, undertakes to work for effective national legislation with a view of facilitating the implementation and harmonisation of provisions of the Convention;

13. Undertakes to submit to the executive branches a proposal for the inclusion, where necessary, in school curricula of disciplines focussing on the protection of the environment and natural resources, particularly land and water resources, so as to make combating erosion and desertification a priority for our countries, as well as for our regional and sub-regional organisations;

14. Undertakes to support the formulation by our respective governments of national action plans or equivalent strategies to combat land degradation, improve water and river basin management and advance applied agricultural and biotechnology research in countries affected by desertification;

15. Underlines the importance of accompanying these national action plans with secured and innovative financing, where financing programs are not in existence, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention;

16. Decides to explore ways of enhancing synergies of these national action plans with other national development priorities such as education and science advancement strategies. As a first step, we recommend that an awareness day on the global environmental problem of erosion and desertification be organised or marked symbolically, possibly on an annual basis;

17. Decides to enhance co-ordination in the implementation of regional action programmes, in particular with respect to the integrated management of river basins, whether these are located within countries or shared by more than one country, and keeping fully into account relevant physical, biological and socio-economic aspects;

18. Requests the Convention secretariat to compile and synthesise a brief progress report with relevant information regarding Round Table decisions for its attention at the next meeting.

V. We are deeply convinced that Parliaments can play an essential role in the global effort to fight causes of desertification by encouraging far-reaching action geared towards:

19. Promoting inter-regional, regional and sub-regional co-operation and the improvement of relations between our relevant intergovernmental, non-governmental and community-based organisations;

20. Setting-up or continuing, at the local level, measures for sustainable forest management and effective reforestation programmes which involve all stakeholders, in particular civil society representatives, youth and women's associations, in the rehabilitation of degraded land;

21. Widely disseminating relevant information focussing on the linkages between poverty, lack of access to education, technical and scientific knowledge and land degradation and desertification, which tend to reduce development potential of countries;

22. Adopting or maintaining multi-stakeholder action programmes, including between neighbouring countries experiencing drought and desertification, and involving international organisations, donor agencies, national institutions, elected representatives, NGOs and the local population directly affected;

23. Incorporating traditional site-specific technical and cultural knowledge and know-how in policy making.

VI. We Members of Parliament reiterate our urgent appeal:

24. To the international community to address desertification not only as an environmental and/or ecological problem, but also as a serious development problem with severe long-term economic, social, political and environmental consequences, if not mitigated in time;

25. To the developed Parties to the Convention to promote capacity building activities in affected countries, which may include the funding of public awareness, education and research programmes, as well as the dissemination of "best practices" in the field of land, forest management, water and river basin management;

26. To all relevant participants in civil society, such as financial institutions, experts in the fields of finance, commerce, sports, the media and the arts, to support the mobilisation of financial resources for the fight against desertification and land degradation, in particular in those developing countries most seriously affected by desertification, erosion and drought;

27. To academic institutions, the scientific community and research centres for their support in the various tasks of implementing the Convention in countries affected with particular regard to the needs of developing countries;

28. To the Inter-Parliamentary Union to give the widest possible publicity to this Declaration and, notably that it be transmitted to all national parliaments for their attention and engagement;

VII. In closing, we further request:

29. The secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, in co-operation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, to provide technical support to the High-Level Forum of

Members of Parliament in its role of monitoring action carried out by governments, and to mobilise additional resources for the servicing of the High-Level Forum;

30. The Inter-Parliamentary Union to lend its full support to the High-Level Forum of Members of Parliament and to assist in the co-ordination of its work;

31. The secretariats of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to continue their co-operation and to submit a proposal for the dissemination of information on progress in fighting desertification by the next session of the Conference of the Parties;

32. Both secretariats to organise another round table of the High Level Forum of Members of Parliament in conjunction with that session;

33. The secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to take follow-up action on the present Round Table decisions and develop strategies in order to achieve universal awareness of the declarations and progress reports of the High-Level Forum of Members of Parliament.

Annex 3.

DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AT THE THIRD ROUND TABLE OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT - THE SUPPORT OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNCCD, THE IDENTIFICATION OF DOMESTIC REVENUE-NEUTRAL FUNDING SOURCES AND THE ENHANCEMENT OF TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE COUNTRIES MOST AFFECTED BY DESERTIFICATION

(Bonn, 12-13 December 2000)

I. We, the members of parliament meeting at Bonn, Germany, from 12 to 13 December 2000, for the third Round Table at the invitation of the Convention secretariat and the German Federal Bundestag, with the full support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in the context of the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa,

reiterate the declaration we adopted at Dakar, Senegal, and at Recife, Brazil, on our role as members of parliaments in the implementation of the Convention, and being greatly concerned with the lack of progress in combating of desertification worldwide,

we declare that:

1. We are conscious that approximately 15 per cent of the world's population and 25 per cent of the total land area of the Earth are directly affected by land degradation and desertification processes. We share fully the founding premise of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, according to which sustainable development cannot be attained unless: (a) it is clearly oriented towards people, addresses the interests of affected populations and has as one of its main objectives the alleviation of poverty; (b) it fully involves affected populations and local communities in the decision-making process as well as in the implementation of measures to protect the environment, to improve the management of land and water resources and to overcome the main causes of land degradation and desertification;

2. We are greatly concerned that losses of productivity implied by desertification processes severely undermine sustainable economic growth, threaten food security and exacerbate susceptibility to famine, which are often accompanied by large-scale movements of displaced people. The failure of marginally productive land to cope with population pressures, together with increasingly variable climates, including recurrent drought, may already have displaced as many as 25 million people worldwide from their land and constituted a source of inter-communal conflict in many parts of the world. Additionally, we are equally concerned that women and children, the socially and economically weak, tend to be hit hardest by the serious consequences of desertification;

3. We are deeply concerned with the gravity of the situation in different regions of the world, such as in Africa, a continent where deserts or arid zones constitute two thirds of the total land area and where 73 per cent of the arid land is already seriously or moderately degraded; in Asia where approximately 71 per cent of the Continent's arid lands are severely degraded; in Latin America and the Caribbean, where nearly three quarters of the arid land, representing almost one fourth of the region, is moderately or severely degraded; the Mediterranean, where almost two thirds of the arid land is severely degraded, and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where from 40 to 80 per cent of the arid land is severely degraded.

II. Conscious of the economic losses that result from decreasing the productive capacity of land resources and convinced that preventing further land degradation and desertification is more cost effective than remedying its environmental, social and economic consequences, we as members of parliament acknowledge that such consequences fall hardest on developing countries, that remediation programmes compete for scant financial resources and that, at the same time, these countries in fulfilling their international agreements have to divert considerable resources for debt repayment and servicing. We, therefore:

1. Urge the international community to seriously consider the ordeal and marginalization of heavily indebted poor countries (HIPCs) and urge it to implement appropriate relief measures, particularly in those countries seriously affected by drought and desertification;

2. Reaffirm the importance of ensuring access to appropriate financial resources, including new and additional ones, for affected developing countries in order to allow them to fully deliver the obligation contracted under the UNCCD;

3. Welcome in this regard the decision taken by the Council of the Global Environmental facility (GEF) during its meeting held in Washington D.C. from 1 to 3 November 2000, by which it requested the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the GEF to explore the best options to strengthen the support of the GEF to affected developing countries, particularly in Africa, in their process of implementation of UNCCD

4. Urge the international community, and particularly the executive branches of Parties to take all necessary measures for the establishment of a new window within the GEF for the specific purpose of financing the incremental costs of the UNCCD implementation;

5. Call for a concerted effort by bodies of the UN System, regional development banks, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to enhance desertification monitoring systems as a support for sustainable agricultural policies, better water resource and forest management, land use planning, as well as urban planning;

6. Invite executive branches of government in developing countries to consider the formulation of revenue-neutral national policies to counter further land degradation and desertification. These policies should be justified on the basis of avoidance of future costs resulting from biodiversity loss, adverse effects of climate change, further encroachment of deserts into arable land areas, increased displacement of people and refugee flows, and amplified potential for conflicts within poor countries and between neighbouring countries;

7. Urge international organisations and developed countries to increase assistance to developing countries in the implementation of their own domestic policies in combating desertification. These policies should fully integrate the adverse consequences of land degradation and desertification into economic, social, agricultural and land planning; and

8. Fully support all initiatives of agencies, donor countries and civil society to mobilise new and additional financial resources to implement the Convention to Combat Desertification as a concrete tool for ensuring the promotion of sustainable development in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid ecosystems.

III. In affirming our commitment, as members of parliaments, to contribute fully to the implementation of the Convention, we agree to initiate or continue serious efforts in the national parliaments of developed countries to strengthen technical and financial assistance to combat desertification in the most affected and poorest countries, attaching central importance to support for their own self-help efforts. We also commit ourselves:

- (a) To convene an annual special event, the “International Day to Combat Desertification”, in our parliaments on 17 June to raise awareness on the implementation of the Convention and to support such initiatives as commemorative postal stamps, among others;
- (b) To strengthen national initiatives to enhance the fight against desertification;
- (c) To advocate increased financial and technical support from national budgets to combat desertification and land degradation;
- (d) To submit, where necessary, to the executive branches of governments a proposal for the inclusion in school curricula of disciplines focusing on the protection of the environment and of natural resources, particularly land and water resources, so as to make combating erosion and desertification a priority for our countries, as well as for our regional and subregional organisations;

IV. We note those countries that have ratified the Convention and urge those that have not yet ratified it to do so as soon as possible as a concrete step towards a concerted effort to combat desertification.

- (a) Moreover, we support the active participation of all parliaments in the implementation of the Convention including, where necessary, the introduction, strengthening and implementation of legislation relating to the fight against desertification and the protection and preservation of ecosystems in countries affected;
- (b) In doing so, we urge Parliaments and the international community to address desertification not only as a serious environmental and/or ecological problem, but also as a serious hindrance to development with severe long-term global economic, social and political consequences.

V. In highlighting the fundamental role that technical assistance, enhanced environmental monitoring and capacity building play in the challenge to achieve sustainable development, we members of parliament urge donor agencies and countries to consider strengthening their support for the following measures, building upon self-help efforts to be made by developing countries:

- (a) awareness raising on production and consumption patterns and their impact on the land;
- (b) water and river basin management;
- (c) improvement of technical land and water management skills;
- (d) sustainable use of scarce natural resources including renewable sources of energy;
- (e) promotion of specific research on the causes and negative effects of desertification;

- (f) transfer and adaptation of environmentally sound technologies for better land and natural resource management, and the effective use of modern and safe bio-technologies to disseminate drought-resistant species;
- (g) use of state-of-the-art information technologies such as geographic information systems, the rational and integrated management of river basins, and the protection, promotion and utilization of traditional and site-specific technological knowledge and practices;
- (h) reforestation and forest conservation to combat desertification caused by drought as well as by deforestation due to population increase, overgrazing, illegal and excessive logging, bush and forest fires, etc;
- (i) agricultural development, for example, by establishing sustainable irrigation facilities to secure stable water supplies;
- (j) capacity building such as training sessions and despatch of experts to enhance the scientific and technical capacity, taking into consideration the special role of women, for combating desertification;
- (k) promotion of deeper dialogue with and the active participation of the local community so that aid programmes can be tailored to local conditions;
- (l) closer collaboration with non-governmental and community-based organisations and the civil society, which carry out grassroots aid activities and play an important role in combating desertification.

VI. We commit to establish an effective follow-up mechanism for the purpose of overseeing and ensuring the systematic monitoring of the implementation of the decisions we have taken and decide:

- (a) To underline the importance of operationalizing a viable inter-sessional mechanism through an open-ended high-level forum of members of parliaments composed of a chairperson, a rapporteur and five vice-chairpersons, with at least one coming from each of the following regional groups: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Eastern Europe and North America.
- (b) To request, in this regard, the Convention secretariat, in consultation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union to prepare a concrete proposal for the functioning of the high-level forum and to circulate it among members of parliament involved in previous round tables, for response not later than 31 May 2001, with a view of approving it before the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.
- (c) To solicit the Convention secretariat to post and update information on round table discussions on the UNCCD website;
- (d) To request all presiding officers to take steps to publicise the present declaration by placing it on the agenda of their national parliaments or by bringing it to the attention of all members of their parliament in some other appropriate way.

VII. We members of parliament reiterate our urgent appeal:

- (a) To all participants in civil society, such as financial institutions, experts in the fields of finance, industry, commerce, sports, the media and the arts, to support the mobilisation of financial resources for the fight against desertification, in particular in those developing countries most seriously affected by desertification, erosion and drought;
- (b) To academic institutions, the scientific community and research centres for their support in the various tasks of implementing the Convention in the affected countries with particular regard to the needs of developing countries;
- (c) To the Inter-Parliamentary Union to give the widest possible publicity to this Declaration and, particularly, to ensure that it be transmitted to all national parliaments for their attention and implementation.

VIII. Finally, we request the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, with the assistance of the Inter-Parliamentary Union:

- (a) to provide technical support to the high-level forum of members of parliament in its role of monitoring action carried out by governments, and to mobilise additional resources for the servicing of the high-level forum;
- (b) to organise the next round table of members of parliaments in conjunction with the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention;
- (c) to take follow-up action on the decisions of the present round table and to develop strategies in order to achieve universal awareness of the declarations and progress reports of the high-level forum of members of parliament.

Annex 4.

DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AT THE FOURTH ROUND TABLE OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT - THE ROLE OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN ADDRESSING THE INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN POVERTY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, PARTICULARLY DESERTIFICATION, WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNCCD

(Geneva, 4-5 October 2001)

I. We, members of parliament, meeting in Geneva on 4 and 5 October 2001 for the fourth Round Table at the invitation of the Convention secretariat, with the full support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the assistance of the Government of Switzerland, in the sidelines of the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa,

Deeply concerned by the persistent trends of desertification worldwide, particularly in the fragile ecosystems of developing countries' economies,

Aware of the enormous losses generated by this large-scale phenomenon and its direct consequences for global equilibrium, particularly insofar as it relates to food production and availability, disruption of traditional migration flows, and human security,

Conscious of the global threat that lies in the continuous degradation of the land that sustains us,

Mindful of the direct causality links existing between land degradation and poverty which generate vicious circles of land over-exploitation by increasingly deprived communities,

Bearing in mind the increasing deprivation suffered by poor people in terms of social, economic, environmental and cultural services and opportunities,

Recalling the warning of the Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme regarding the risk of producing a "world gargantuan in its excess, grotesque in its human and economic inequalities" if the imbalance in economic growth continues,

Conscious that not all the economic growth is beneficial when it embraces policies leading to development that is jobless (creates unemployment), ruthless (benefits on the rich to the exclusion of the poor), voiceless (suppresses democratic expression), rootless (destroys links to community and culture) and futureless (destroys the planetary support system),

Declare that:

1. We are deeply alarmed by the increasing environmental degradation, particularly desertification that has now reached such magnitude that it threatens the very basis of life on Earth.
2. We are greatly concerned by the continuous losses in productivity of the first sector, which still constitutes the main source of revenue for the economies of the majority of developing countries.

3. We are seriously worried by clear and sustained data indicating that desertification processes severely undermine sustainable economic growth, limit food security and exacerbate susceptibility to famine, often accompanied by large-scale movements of displaced people and by armed conflicts.

4. We are conscious of the fact that the established trends in terms of natural resources exploitation as well as the current patterns of consumption have by far exceeded the earth's carrying capacities.

5. We are convinced that addressing the issue of poverty eradication, particularly widespread environment-induced poverty and its tragic consequences in terms of macro-social disruptions, must be conceived as a total priority of integrated international policy schemes towards the promotion of sustainable development.

6. We are persuaded of the necessity to declare the land that feeds us, and particularly what is known as its topsoil layer, as a common human patrimony requiring imperative, urgent, concerted and worldwide protection.

7. We firmly believe that public policies should be clearly oriented towards addressing the root causes of poverty through participative and democratic processes leading to a real and efficient empowerment of communities, especially women, at the front line of the sustainable development struggle.

8. We underline our conviction that growth can not constitute an objective per se and should therefore be accompanied by social regulatory mechanisms which ensure an equitable redistribution of wealth amongst all, which address the issue of land tenure and which guarantee access to education in order to empower poor people and allow them to realise their potential, and in order to reduce their vulnerability to exogenous pressures.

9. We recognize that prevailing macro-economic policies have great impacts on the processes of impoverishment, and we call therefore upon developed countries, in conformity with the letter and spirit of the Convention, to take appropriate actions aimed at relieving the current burden of developing countries, particularly through the promotion of economic reforms aimed at combining growth with human development, equity and social justice by, inter alia:

- Agreeing on the relief of external debt,
- Reducing interest rates,
- Improving the overall trading environment.

II. In affirming our commitment, as members of parliament, to contribute fully to the implementation of the Convention, we note with appreciation that the international community in its wisdom has decided to address the urgent issue of UNCCD funding, particularly by defining ways and means of identifying reliable and centralized multilateral financial mechanisms in order to ensure that affected developing country Parties to the Convention dispose of the required financial predictability essential to their economic planning and policy formulation.

In this regard:

10. We fully support the decision of the last Governing Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) held in Washington D.C. in May 2001, which requested the Chief Executive Officer “to explore the best options for enhancing the support of the GEF in assisting affected countries, especially those in Africa, to implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, taking into account the third replenishment of the GEF”.

11. We further agree with the GEF Governing Council that addressing the issue of land degradation is an integral part of the pursuit of sustainable development, poverty alleviation and synergism amongst the global environmental conventions. We consequently praise the GEF Council for agreeing that the designation of land degradation (desertification and deforestation) as a GEF focal area should be pursued, as a means for enhancing GEF support for the successful implementation of the UNCCD.

12. We strongly request the country Parties to the Convention to designate the GEF as the operational financial mechanism of the UNCCD, in order to provide it with the predictable financial resources which will enable it to achieve its objectives in a timely and efficient manner.

13. Accordingly, we further request the GEF, at its next Assembly meeting in Beijing, China, in 2002, to make desertification a fully fledged GEF focal area along with biodiversity, climate change, the protection of the ozone layer and international waters.

14. We firmly believe that all major environmental issues are intrinsically linked and require a concerted international effort to address them synergistically. Particular emphasis should be placed on building up a culture of synergism in the implementation of the different legally binding sustainable development instruments at the field level.

15. We fully support all initiatives which aim at encouraging sustainable development promotion in order to ensure the best use of financial and human resources and the effective use of available expertise and comparative advantages, including traditional knowledge, in both developed and developing countries as well as the public and private sectors.

16. We request all presiding officers to take steps to publicise the present declaration by placing it on the agenda of their national parliaments or by bringing it to the attention of all members of their parliament in some other appropriate way.

III. Finally, we request the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, with the assistance of the Inter-Parliamentary Union:

17. To take all necessary measures to bring the present declaration to the attention of the world leaders at the forthcoming meeting of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2002.

18. To organize the next Round Table of members of parliament in conjunction with the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention;

19. To take follow-up action on the decisions of the present round table and to develop strategies in order to achieve universal awareness of the declarations and progress reports of the parliamentary round table process.

Annex 5.

DECLARATION ADOPTED BY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

(Havana, 4 September /2003)

Fifth Round Table of Members of Parliament

Havana, 3-4 September 2003

in parallel with the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

The role of members of parliament in promoting sustainable human development at national level in the context of a successful implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

I. *We, members of parliament*, meeting in Havana on 3 and 4 September 2003 for the fifth Round Table at the invitation of the Convention secretariat, with the full support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the assistance of the Government of Cuba, alongside the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa,

Reaffirming our commitment to sustainable human development as a universal concept which incorporates the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development economic development, social development and environmental protection - at local, national, regional and global levels while remaining committed to the indivisibility of human dignity for all and to democratic systems as well as to democratic global governance with more effective and accountable international and multilateral institutions,

Deeply concerned by the persistent trends of environmental degradation and increase in poverty, particularly in the fragile ecosystems and drylands of developing countries,

Aware of degradation of land, the losses of forests, topsoil and biodiversity, due to the intensification of desertification, and the effects of climatic variations and their direct consequences for global equilibrium, particularly in so far as they relate to food production and availability, to disruption of traditional migration flows, and to human security,

Conscious of the global threat that lies in the continuous degradation of the land that sustains us,

Mindful of the direct causality links existing between land degradation and poverty, which generate vicious circles of land over-exploitation by increasingly deprived communities,

Bearing in mind the increasing deprivation suffered by poor people in terms of social, educational, economic, environmental and cultural services and opportunities,

Bearing in mind that desertification and drought have special and negative impact on living conditions, including food security, health and water quality,

Recalling the United Nations Millennium Development Goals,⁵⁵ the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits, in particular the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)⁵⁶ and the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development⁵⁷ which define a complete vision for the future of humanity and provide a comprehensive basis for action at the national, regional and international level with the key objective of poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, sustainable development and improvement of living conditions of people everywhere,

Underlining the relevance of water and of the access to water for the combat against desertification and welcoming the outcome of the third World Water Forum,⁵⁸ that recommended actions for sustainable water resource management vital for combating desertification,

Recognizing that poverty eradication, changes in consumption and production patterns, and protection of natural resources are essential for sustainable development,

Conscious that the gap between the rich and the poor constitutes a threat to global security,

Declare that

1. We are deeply alarmed by the increasing environmental degradation, particularly desertification, which has now reached such a magnitude that it threatens the very basis of life on Earth, and are determined to correct this dangerous course, it is therefore more than ever incumbent on us, parliamentarians and representatives of our peoples, to work together towards the common objective of sustainability - social, economic, environmental and political.
2. We are greatly concerned by the continuous losses in agricultural productivity; agriculture still constitutes the main source of revenue for the economies of the majority of developing countries.
3. We are, further, seriously worried by substantiated data indicating that desertification processes severely undermine sustainable economic growth, limit food security and exacerbate susceptibility to famine, at times accompanied by large-scale movements of displaced people and by armed conflicts.
4. We are conscious of the fact that the established trends in terms of natural renewable and non renewable resources exploitation, as well as the current patterns of consumption, have by far exceeded the earth's carrying capacities.
5. We are convinced that addressing poverty eradication, particularly widespread environment-induced poverty (generated, inter alia, by the increasing lack of water) and its tragic consequences in terms of macro-social disruptions, must be conceived as a total priority of integrated international policy schemes towards the promotion of sustainable human development.

⁵⁵ 6-8 September 2000, New York.

⁵⁶ Adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002.

⁵⁷ International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002.

⁵⁸ Kyoto, Japan (17 - 22 March 2003).

6. We are persuaded of the necessity to recognise that the land feeding us and particularly what is known as its topsoil layer are a precious resource requiring imperative, urgent, concerted and worldwide protection.
7. We firmly believe that public policies should be clearly oriented towards eliminating the root causes of poverty through participative and democratic processes leading to a real and efficient empowerment of communities, especially women and youth, at the front line of the sustainable development struggle.
8. We underline our conviction that growth can not constitute an objective per se nor a justification for environmental degradation and should therefore be accompanied by social policies which ensure an equitable redistribution of wealth amongst all, which address the issue of land tenure and which guarantee access to education in order to empower poor people and allow them to realize their potential, and in order to reduce their vulnerability to exodus pressures.
9. We re-emphasise all measures to combat desertification promoted by the previous round tables of parliamentarians, including sustainable land use and erosion control, rehabilitation of degraded land, effective reforestation programmes and sustainable forest, water and land management, use of renewable sources of energy, capacity building and environmental education programmes.
10. We acknowledge the encouraging signs of progress contained in 151 national reports which were submitted to the UNCCD for review in Rome, Italy, from 11-22 November 2002; however, we deplore the fact that too often national poverty eradication programmes supported by the donor community do not take desertification issues sufficiently into account.
11. We recognize that prevailing macro-economic policies may have great impacts on the process of impoverishment, and we call therefore upon developed countries, in conformity with the letter and spirit of the Convention, to take appropriate actions aimed at relieving the current burden of developing countries, particularly through the promotion of economic reforms aimed at combining growth with human development, equity and social justice by, inter alia:
 - Relieving external debt
 - Reducing interest rates
 - Removing barriers to freer and fairer trade
 - Facilitating access to essential drugs to combat pandemics

II. In affirming our commitment, as members of parliament, to support sustainable human development, we note with appreciation the outcomes of the WSSD which aim to strengthen the implementation of the Convention in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, to address causes of desertification and land degradation in order to maintain and restore land, and to address poverty resulting from land degradation. We call upon all parties involved to make every effort to ensure that the Summit declarations of intent are followed up with definite actions.

In this regard:

12. We fully support the call of the WSSD to the Second Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to designate land degradation (deforestation and desertification) as a focal area of the GEF as a means of GEF support for the successful implementation of the Convention and, consequently, to consider making the GEF a financial mechanism of the Convention. We consequently welcome the decision of the GEF Assembly, in Beijing, China, in 2002 to endorse this request by making land degradation (deforestation) a fully-fledged GEF focal area along with biodiversity, climate change, the protection of the ozone layer and international waters, as eventually approved by the GEF Council in May 2003.
13. We strongly support the decision of the VI Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD held in La Havana, Cuba, in 2003 to designate the GEF as an operational financial mechanism of the UNCCD, in order to provide it with substantial and predictable financial resources, which will enable it to achieve its objectives in a timely and efficient manner.
14. We address an urgent appeal to all participants in civil society to support the mobilization of financial resources for the fight against desertification.
15. We also agree with the decision of the WSSD to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in order to promote regional cooperation and sustainable development, and we support the creation of the Pan-African Parliament of the African Union which, inter alia, could serve as the African Development Bank's parliamentary overseeing mechanism.
16. We propose the establishment of a parliamentary oversight mechanism of the Global Environmental Facility.
17. We firmly believe that all major environmental issues are intrinsically linked and require a concerted international effort to address them synergistically. Emphasis should be placed on building up a culture of synergism in the implementation of the Rio conventions, in particular at national level.
18. We fully support all initiatives which aim at encouraging sustainable development promotion in order to ensure the best use of financial and human resources and the effective use of available expertise and comparative advantages, including traditional knowledge, in both developed and developing countries as well as the public and private sectors.
19. We reaffirm the vital role of local participation in sustainable development.
20. We reiterate our support to multilateral, governmental, non governmental and volunteer action at all levels for promoting forestation, reforestation, rural agricultural development and sustainable alternative livelihood development in the context of UNCCD implementation.
21. We request all presiding officers to take steps to publicize the present declaration by placing it on the agenda of their national parliaments or by bringing it to the attention of all members of their parliament in some other appropriate way.

III. We endorse a Parliamentary Action Plan, taking into account the Parliamentary Declaration on the occasion of the WSSD adopted unanimously on the occasion of the Parliamentary Meeting organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliament of South Africa (Johannesburg, 29-30 August 2002). We recognize the unique role of parliamentarians in scrutinizing, monitoring and holding national governments to account in respect of the implementation of international agreements and we shall work to put in place:

- (a) New regulatory and administrative foundations to make the integrated approach to sustainable development permeate every act of government;
- (b) National strategies for sustainable development that include a measure of decentralisation of public and private institutions for appropriate local decisions in order to provide a coherent policy framework and measurable targets;
- (c) Requirements for thorough environmental and social impact assessments;
- (d) Systems providing timely access to information relevant to people, decision makers and others;
- (e) Regulations to implement new and rigorous methods of green accounting in both public and private sectors;
- (f) Democratic institutions and processes which are accountable, which allow for consultation with, and input from, civil society, which abide by the rule of law and which respect fundamental human rights and human dignity.

We acknowledge that parliaments can contribute decisively to good governance grounded on democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people, anti-corruption measures, gender equality and a favourable atmosphere and environment for investment.⁵⁹

22. We propose the creation - under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union - of a Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD (PNoUNCCD), a network of information, interaction and influence with the aim of increasing parliamentary involvement and efficiency in the fields of combating desertification, soil erosion and land degradation, of pooling information and of ensuring greater parliamentary input into international negotiations and organizations, to be facilitated by a parliamentary steering committee with the technical support of the UNCCD Secretariat.

23. We request the active involvement of elected representatives at a regional, subregional, national and local level and the strengthening of the capacity of parliaments and their members to influence and monitor their governments' actions. We undertake to promote in our respective parliaments, as appropriate:

⁵⁹ Cf. IPU Resolution Parliaments' Role in Strengthening Democratic Institutions and Human Development in a Fragmented World, adopted unanimously by the 108th Conference (Santiago de Chile, 11 April 2003).

- (a) The strengthening of national legislation and its harmonization with the provisions of the UNCCD, and the streamlining of desertification issues into NAPs, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and country programmes supported by the donor community;
- (b) The pursuit of coherent and better coordinated policies in the area of anti-poverty and sustainable human development strategies including anti-desertification, the enhancement of synergies between the Rio conventions and the building-up of a culture of coordination of the NAPs with other national development priorities;
- (c) The creation of specific budget lines for combating land degradation and the observance of consistent budget strategies appropriately integrating foreign assistance into a country's own development plans;
- (d) The monitoring of executive actions and control if desertification issues are included in overall government agendas (by means of oral and written questions to ministers, motions, committee hearings and so on);
- (e) The submission of regular 'green accounting' reports on the state of combating poverty and land/natural resource degradation as well as progress achieved (by a Parliamentary or a Government Commissioner for Future Generations), thus providing citizens with the information needed to hold governments accountable and ensuring an effective process within parliaments for reviewing progress with regard to the economic, social, environmental and political aspects of sustainable development at the national level, but also in order to monitor the international agenda for sustainable development;
- (f) The mobilization of public opinion and the raising of awareness on sustainable human development and desertification issues through campaigns, annual events (World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought on 17 June), special parliamentary debates, environmental education, the involvement of schools, academics and artists, and commemorative postage stamps;
- (g) Partnership-building between policy makers, the academic community, the business sector and non-governmental as well as community-based organizations;
- (h) Forms of international, regional and subregional cooperation favourable to improving relations between the relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and actors, including - if necessary - parliamentary diplomatic activities;
- (i) With respect to the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference in Doha, Qatar, further examination of the relationship between trade, environment and development and actions, particularly to reduce the current system of subsidising agricultural production and exports as well as barriers to the import of food from developing countries, the increase of Official Development Assistance as promised in Monterrey, and the realization of the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

24. We are determined to ensure the effective and timely implementation of the UNCCD at country and regional level through appropriate measures, including the submission of National Action Programmes by all the affected country Parties.

IV. Finally, as members of parliament, we request the secretariat of the UNCCD, with the assistance of the Inter-Parliamentary Union:

25. To organize the next round table of members of parliament in conjunction with the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.
26. To take follow-up action on the decisions of the present round table and to develop strategies in order to achieve universal awareness of the declarations and progress reports of the parliamentary round table process with respect to the implementation of the UNCCD.