



Action programmes for combating desertification

The Convention to Combat Desertification is being implemented through national action programmes (NAP)

Developed country Parties and affected country Parties are expected to consult on their respective roles in supporting these programmes, which can result in a more holistic, integrated and participatory management of natural resources in drylands ecosystems. Once significant effort has been made to design a framework programme, international solidarity might facilitate the launching of specific projects and activities under the agreed policies, in an effective manner and without creating excessive transactional burden. Because programmes need to be adapted to particular regional circumstances, most of the specific requirements are described in the five regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe. As at March 2008, 102 National Action Programmes (NAPs) had been prepared and adopted. These instruments are considered to be core references for an ongoing process of planning for

poverty reduction and the sustainable development of drylands.

Efforts to combat desertification should be fully integrated into other development programme frameworks

Reversing land degradation and alleviating poverty go hand in hand. Both involve improving food security, educating and training people, strengthening the capacity of local communities, and mobilizing non-governmental organizations. Similarly, because desertification affects and is affected by environmental concerns such as loss of biological diversity and climate change, NAPs need to have a great potential to promote synergies with other programmes dealing with such issues. However, improved data at the country level and stronger recognition of the NAPs have yet to manifest this potential fully through concrete initiatives.

Programmes outline long-term strategies and are formulated with the active participation of local communities

These are essential for providing ownership and continuity for long-term programming. The

participatory process enables governments to coordinate and administer their resources more effectively while addressing the underlying socio-economic causes of desertification. These approaches pay particular attention to preventive measures and encourage a sense of commitment to sustainable practices by the very people who most depend upon the land. The programmes should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate new initiatives and local adaptations as circumstances change. In many instances, the strengthening of the capacities of key actors at the local level has proved successful in identifying and addressing challenges linked to decision making for natural resources management. The lack of a strong civil society presence in other affected states, however, continues to be a drawback in ensuring people's participation in the mainstream policy formulation and implementation process.

NAPs also specify the practical steps and measures to be taken as well as the commitments made by national governments to provide an "enabling environment"



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Specific measures to improve the economic environment could include creating financial instruments suited to local needs or the introduction of drought-resistant crops. Other measures could include promoting research activities, drought contingency plans, and improved early warning systems. National governments, for their part, can make commitments to remove obstacles and provide support by enacting new laws or strengthening existing legislation and adopting policies that encourage sustainable development, such as the replacement of fuelwood by other energy sources. Part of the national budget must be clearly earmarked for efforts to combat desertification and drought according to national conditions and capabilities, but the NAPs are also expected to mobilize substantial financial resources from external sources. Lack of predictable programme resources and funding has slowed and impeded the implementation of NAPs. As Parties are now moving from the phase of programme preparation to that of implementation, the establishment of a country-driven mechanism to mobilize

international support to the NAP in affected country Parties is urgently called for.

Subregional and regional action programmes (SRAPs and RAPs) can help to harmonize and strengthen national programmes

These are designed through consultations among the affected countries of each region (such as Africa) and sub-region (such as West Africa). In addition to boosting the efficiency of national programmes, SRAPs and RAPs can promote joint programmes for the sustainable management of shared rivers and other cross-boundary ecosystems. The thematic programme networks which often constitute the main elements of RAPs generate spin-off effects on activities taking place at the national level, such as water management, agroforestry and monitoring, and forge each country's scientific and technical capacities. They may help in disseminating the knowledge of appropriate technologies and good practices. As at March 2008, 11 subregional and 2 regional action programmes had been launched.

The Parties identified the integration of sustainable development policies into economic policies as a challenge to be overcome

They highlighted the urgent need of inter-ministerial cooperation and for the mainstreaming of action programmes into development strategies in order to address the problem in a comprehensive manner and to avoid duplication. Given that the NAPs cut across many development sectors such as agriculture, forestry and water management, the NAPs have, at times, encouraged inter-ministerial cooperation and focused attention on inappropriate land tenure or certain trade practices not conducive to sustainable land use. Furthermore, Parties called for the insertion of Convention-related measures into bilateral and multilateral negotiations.

Relevant parts of the Convention

Articles 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11, and Regional Implementation Annex for Africa Articles 4, 8, and 9

