



Combating desertification in Asia

Desertification manifests itself in many different forms across the vast Asian continent

Out of a total land area of 4.3 billion hectares, Asia contains some 1.7 billion hectares of arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid land reaching from the Mediterranean coast to the shores of the Pacific. Degraded areas include expanding deserts in China, India, Iran, Mongolia and Pakistan, the sand dunes of Syria, the steeply eroded mountain slopes of Nepal, and the deforested and overgrazed highlands of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Asia, in terms of the number of people affected by desertification and drought, is the most severely affected continent.

The Convention's Regional Implementation Annex for Asia recognizes particular circumstances and needs of each country

It calls for activities at the national, sub-regional, and regional levels in the form of coordinated and integrated action programmes. The integration of activities directly related to the combat against desertification into other environmental and sustainable development strategies is meant to maximize the output and benefit for affected country

Parties. Therefore, action at the local level should combine the fight against desertification with efforts to alleviate rural poverty.

29 Asian and Pacific countries have adopted their National Action Programmes (NAPs) as of March 2008

These countries are: China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Niue, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The other affected developing countries in the Asia and Pacific region are at various stages of NAP formulation. The preparation of NAPs is a dynamic ongoing process and the status of each country is subject to change over time. The Convention's "bottom-up" approach, whereby existing desertification programmes are reviewed by the stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local authorities, and community leaders, was generally adopted in formulating NAPs. Mainstreaming the NAPs in order to enhance their effective implementation is another important consideration in this regard.

Regional activities have been launched through Thematic Programme Networks (TPNs)

Based on the principles contained in the Convention to Combat Desertification and its regional annex for Asia, a number of regional meetings introduced an approach that has become central to regional cooperation in Asia: the TPNs. Each network deals with one core aspect, which is either a cause or an effect of desertification, and aims at providing and promoting regional solutions through improved and innovative regional cooperation and exchange of information. The networks have evolved following the 1997 Beijing Ministerial Conference, the 1998 Muscat meeting and the 1997 Tashkent Conference. The implementation of the NAPs is advanced by the promotion of regional cooperation and capacity-building at national and sub-regional levels through the six TPNs adopted at the Beijing Ministerial Conference. These are TPN1 - Desertification monitoring and assessment (hosted by China and launched in July 1999), TPN2 - Agroforestry and soil conservation (hosted by India and launched in May 2000), TPN3 - Rangeland management and fixation of shifting sand dunes (hosted by Iran and launched in May 2001), TPN4 - Water resources management for arid-land agriculture (hosted by Syria and launched in July 2002),

TPN5 - Strengthening capacities for drought impact mitigation and combating desertification (hosted by Mongolia and launched in July 2003), and TPN6 - Assistance for the implementation of integrated local area development programmes (hosted by Pakistan and launched in June 2004).

West Asian countries are implementing a subregional action programme (SRAP) to strengthen their activities under the Convention

In response to the sub-region's needs, West Asian country Parties and interested organizations formulated and implemented activities promoting intergovernmental cooperation within the sub-region. The activities focused on two main areas: water resources and vegetative cover. Following the adoption of the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) at COP 8, countries in the sub-region decided to review operational modalities and overall expectation of the SRAP in order to harmonize outputs and future activities. The review is expected to take place in 2008 and will ensure that sub-regional activities are in line with National Action Programmes (NAPs) while complying with broader developmental goals identified by The Strategy.

Severely affected or affected by drought and desertification, all Central Asian countries are Parties to the UNCCD

Since the early 1990s, all countries of the sub-region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) have been undergoing a process of radical socio-economic reforms, including democratization, decentralization, privatization, improved access to information



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for ordinary citizens, and land reforms, which have direct or indirect implications for environmental protection, including combating desertification. The Central Asian countries have adopted measures that are conducive to the effective implementation of the Convention. In 2003, they adopted the Sub-Regional Action Programme (SRAP/CD). Activities have been undertaken to implement SRAP/CD through national projects under the Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM), which was prepared in parallel to the SRAP/CD process as a 10-year programme of country-driven action and resource mobilization. The objective of CACILM is to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach to sustainable land management in CA states for the period 2006-2016. Since 2007, activities have been undertaken to establish a Drought Management Center for Central Asia in cooperation with the UNCCD secretariat, OSCE and WMO.

East, Southeast, and South Asia has a very varied climate and contain much biological diversity

Nevertheless, the magnitude of soil erosion and the resulting loss of biodiversity and agricultural productivity are increasingly threatening both the ecological and the economic base of many

countries. Concerted action is needed to halt the emerging trends. The 1996 Delhi Conference and the 1997 Beijing Ministerial Conference endorsed the principle of cooperation across climatically different regions in order to prevent further land degradation. South Asian Country Parties adopted SRAP in Sri Lanka in July 2004, and Southeast Asian Country Parties adopted SRAP in Bonn (at COP4) in 2005.

The Pacific Island Country Parties are unique in their problems and the ways to address those problems

Drought preparedness, land productivity and vulnerability to natural disasters and economic shocks are the main issues confronting them in relation to sustainable development, including this Convention. Since 2007, 14 Pacific countries and Timor-Leste are implementing activities on "Land degradation rehabilitation and drought effect mitigation" in cooperation with the UNCCD and the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, aimed at supporting grassroots activities such as controlling deforestation, re-vegetating deforested lands and preventing soil from erosion as well as water harvesting.

Relevant parts of the Convention
Annex II: Regional Implementation Annex for Asia

