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Sixth Regional Meeting of the Countries of Latin American and Caribbean on the United Nations Convention to combat Desertification and Drought

San Salvador, El Salvador, 17 to 19 October, 2000

Final Report

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I. Background

1. The Regional Annex for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought establishes the need to convene regional meetings to strengthen co-operation and exchange among countries Parties of the same for application of the Regional Implementation Annex.
2. In this context, the Latin America and Caribbean country Parties have held five Regional Meetings in Argentina, Mexico Cuba, Antigua and Barbuda, and Peru to identify priority actions and establish and develop sub-regional and regional co-operation through a Regional Action Program to Combat Desertification.
3. This present Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was convened in collaboration with the government of El Salvador, and was organised in two parts: a) a first part during which the Third Workshop for Focal Points of Latin America and the Caribbean of the Convention was held on 16th October, 2000; and b), a second with the hosting of the Sixth Regional Meeting from 17th to 19th of the same month.

II. Objectives of the Meeting

4. The objectives of the Sixth Regional Meeting for the Latin American and Caribbean countries were as follows:
 - To exchange experiences on the preparation national action programmes.
 - To highlight the progress made by the Secretariat in the implementation of the Convention in the region,;
 - To examine the work done by the Regional Executive Committee;
 - To analyse the projects proposals comprising the Regional Action Program;
 - To examine the conclusions of the synthesis of the national reports and the implementation of the sub-regional and Regional action programmes.

III. Participation

5. All Latin American and Caribbean Parties were invited to the Meeting, as well as regional and sub-regional intergovernmental organisations, agencies of the United Nations System and non-governmental organisations. 29 government representatives from 27 countries of the region, 9 representatives from 6 of international, regional and sub-regional bodies, 9 non-governmental organisations and 6 from other sectors attended. The list of participants is included as **Annex III** of this document.

Agenda item 1: Opening of the Meeting

6. The opening ceremony took place on Tuesday, 17th of October 2000 in Hotel Camino Real, San Salvador, El Salvador. In this ceremony addresses were made by Mr. Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought, and Her Excellency, Mrs. Ana María Majano, Minister of the Environment, who in the name of the Government of El Salvador declared the Sixth Regional Meeting for the countries of Latin American and Caribbean, officially opened

Agenda item 2: Organisation of Work

2.1 Election of Presiding Officers

7. The Meeting decided that the Presiding Officers of the meeting should be from following countries:

Chair:	El Salvador	(Mr. Ernesto López)
Deputy Chair:	Jamaica	(Mr. Philbert Brown)
Rapporteur:	Ecuador	(Mr. Carlos Valarezo)

2.2 Approval of the agenda of the Meeting

8. The Meeting approved the provisional agenda (**Annex V** of this report) without amendments. The representative of Argentina suggested a modification in the order of the day and proposed the examination of the report from the CCD Secretary and that of the Regional Co-ordination Unit on the morning of the first day.

Agenda item 3: Report of the Chair of the Third Workshop for Focal Points

9. Mr. Octavio Pérez Pardo, presented a report on the workshop for Focal Points. He informed of the results of the three working groups set up by sub-regions (Mesoamerica, Caribbean and South America). He emphasised the common successes, he needs, problems and obstacles that must be resolved for implementation of the Convention. The three groups coincided in identification of the need to link the struggle against desertification and drought with the fight against poverty. The also agreed on the need to initiate the project on the harmonisation of public policies as well as the need for technical and financial support in the preparation and implementation of the national action programmes in the sub-regions.

10. Among the needs for implementation of the Convention analysed by the working groups, emphasis was placed on the following: the South American group emphasised the need for an inter-agency approach to the heavily indebted countries with high indices of poverty and to work on the cancellation of the debt in the framework of the national programme for the development of arid areas. The urgent need to analyse land tenure as a structural problem of land degradation and desertification was also emphasised. The Caribbean group stressed the need to re-evaluate the systems and procedures for the granting of funds and technical assistance to the Caribbean sub-region taking into account their special needs and vulnerability. The Mesoamerica group highlighted the need to broaden the concepts of desertification and drought inco-operating the prevention of natural disasters. **Annex II** contains these conclusions in detail.

11. The RIOD representative asked for a clarification about the conclusions of the Caribbean, where the high level of awareness about the issue was presented as a success and an obstacle at the same time, as well as on the lack of coherence in public policies.

12. The representatives decided that the conclusions of the Regional Workshop for Focal Points would be incorporated as draft decisions for COP 4 to be held in Bonn, Germany. And taking into consideration successes, opportunities and areas to be resolved as regards desertification and drought in Latin America and Caribbean, a draft proposal for financial support for the development of national action programmes was submitted (see in **Annex II** of this report).

13. The representatives also stressed the need to formulate guidelines and a work plan for COP 4. A representative from the NGOs pointed out that the GRULAC is very weak during negotiations at the COP and expressed the need to formulate a diplomatic strategy especially with the members of the Group of 77 and China. As regards the diplomatic strategy it was considered pertinent that once the VI Regional Meeting was finished the relevant contacts should be made with foreign offices in each country so that the respective diplomatic corps can help in informing the various international organisations of the decisions of the meeting.

Agenda item 4: Report of the President of the Executive Committee

14. Mr. Cesar Cervantes, representing the outgoing President of the Executive Committee presented a report on the different activities undertaken in particular by the President of the Committee.
15. He stressed that thanks to UNEP a meeting of the Regional Executive Committee was held for 2 days. During this event three documents were prepared: a) A proposal on the rules for the organisation and functioning of the Regional Executive Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean on the United Nations Convention to combat Desertification and Drought; b) A proposal on procedures for nomination of representatives of Latin America and the Caribbean to the Committees of the Conference of the Parties; and c) A proposal on actions for the improvement and strengthening of the roll of the Regional Executive Committee. He also presented the conclusions and recommendations of the meeting.
16. Finally, he proposed a draft decision requesting space at COP4 where Latin America and the Caribbean can host an exhibition. The representatives supported this initiative.
17. The representative of Argentina reacting to the proposal on the procedure for nomination of representatives of the Latin America and Caribbean to Committees of the Conference of the Parties, underlined that for negotiations during CO4, GRULAC is chaired by Brazil and not by the Chair of the Regional Executive Committee. He also pointed out it had been agreed by previous decisions that the Committee will meet at least once a year. This last change was accepted and approved by the representatives.
18. The representatives of Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines requested that the Caribbean representation on the Regional Executive Committee be increased to 2 representatives. This proposal was accepted. Additionally, the representative of Saint Lucia raised the issue of the need for English/Spanish interpretation during the GRULAC meetings at COP4.
19. An NGO representative pointed out that the quorum of the Committee was not included in the regulation, as the Committee has five members it was decided that three would be a quorum.
20. The representative of Argentina submitted for discussion, a draft decision on the composition of the Committee.
21. The representatives of Cuba and Jamaica stated that they hoped for more active inter-sessional work from the new Regional Executive Committee.
22. On the other hand, the representative of Cuba also proposed the preparation of a draft decision thanking UNEP and an other on financing the Regional Co-ordination Unit.

Agenda item 5: Report of the CCD Secretariat on the activities carried out in the region

23. Mr. Oscar presented a report on the various activities carried by the CCD Secretariat in Latin America and the Caribbean in fulfilment of the decisions of the Fifth Regional Meeting, held in Lima, Peru, in August 1999. These were mainly centred on providing technical and financial assistance to the countries in the preparation of the national, sub-regional and regional reports and support for the consolidation of the Regional Co-ordination Unit in Mexico. He stated that the Secretariat is creating the conditions for the full operation of the DESELAC information network to be transferred to the Regional Co-ordinating Unit by the beginning of the year 2001.
24. Mr. Oscar Oramas also highlighted the holding of the Second Africa/Latin American and Caribbean Forum to Combat Desertification in Bamako, Mali in May 2000 as part of activities of the project on horizontal co-operation. He recalled that the final communiqué of the Forum calls upon the countries to implement the decision related to the use of traditional knowledge and practices in the implementation of the national action programmes.
25. Other concrete actions based on the decisions of the V Regional Meeting relates to decision 9/COP3 par.11 on collaboration between the Global Mechanism and the Secretariat concerning access to financial resources. Mr. Oramas reported that the Global Mechanism has committed itself to supporting the Gran Chaco Americano and Hispaniola sub-programmes as well as the project on harmonisation of public policies. As regards the last project, the Secretariat has

encouraged several countries to start the first stage of implementation, as financial and technical support was available from various international organisations. Other sub- regional programmes for which the Secretariat took steps to ensure their financing are that on the protection of bio-diversity and prevention of land degradation in Eastern Caribbean and those for Puna Americana and Mesoamerica. However, no positive response has been received to date.

26. As regards the decision related to the Regional Co-ordination Unit, Mr. Oramas reported that the document concerning the proposal of including the post of Regional Co-ordinator in the regular budget of the Secretariat has been prepared and will be discussed during the IV Session of the Conference of the Parties. He informed that Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago recently ratified the Convention.

27. Finally, Mr. Oramas pointed out that the Secretariat has prepared a synthesis of national reports and a data base on the implementation of the Convention. He also thanked the government of Finland, the Global Mechanism, the GTZ and UNEP/ROLAC for providing support during the preparation of the national reports.

28. The representative of Jamaica thanked the Secretariat for the efforts made in implementing its activities over the last year, in particular in the Caribbean region.

Agenda item 6: Presentation of the report from the Regional Co-ordination Unit and examination of the work of the same and proposals for its improvement

29. Mr. Rafael Rodríguez, representative of UNEP, reported on the different activities of the RCU and the needs to be met for the fulfilment of the work plan approved at the Fifth meeting held in Lima, Peru, in 1999. He pointed out that in the establishment and operation of the Regional Co-ordination Unit an assistant co-ordinator and secretary have been hired who work out of UNEP's regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Mexico City. This Regional Unit has assisted the countries technically in the preparation and follow-up of the national reports, sub-regional and Regional action programmes, as well as supporting the organisation of sub-regional and regional meetings and awareness campaigns. He noted that financial and technical support to carry out these activities was provided by UNEP.

30. He made special reference to the activities carried out by the Unit within the framework of the regional information network DESELAC, and informed of the recent installation of a matrix node with complete access to the Internet (<http://www.rolac.unep.mx/deselac>). He also highlighted the activities which were carried out on the project "Model of indicators for arid lands ecosystems in Latin America". This project done by the governments of Chile, Brazil and Mexico received financial support of US\$345,000 from the Global Environmental Fund and also the support of UNEP, and the Natural Heritage Institute. He referred to the regional project on harmonisation of public policies and the need to sign memoranda of understanding with the national governments and international organisations interested in developing a joint work program and a regional study on this subject.

31. Finally, he highlighted the financial contributions made by the CCD Secretary, UNEP, the governments of Mexico, Argentina and Chile in support of the proper functioning of the Regional Co-ordination Unit. In conclusion, and recommended the submission of the creation of the post of Regional Co-ordinator as part of the core budget of the Secretariat to the next Conference of the Parties.

32. The representative of Mexico questioned in part the need for the Regional Co-ordination Unit in terms of the little use the countries make of it thereby making its efficiency and justification doubtful. These was rejected by the representative of St. Vincent and the Grenadines who pointed out that the Regional Co-ordination Unit is useful for countries that have not yet developed their action programmes and that the regional meeting was concerned with how to make the best use of it.

33. The representative of Cuba pointed out that there should be more co-ordination between the RCU and the Regional Executive Committee and underlined the importance of the Unit in the implementation of the Regional Action Programme examined in previous regional meetings and that this was not the occasion to change decisions already made.

34. The representative of Argentina outlined the background to the creation of the Regional Co-ordination Unit. He pointed out the importance of the 3 bodies for the to successful implementation of the Convention: The Secretariat of the Convention, the global Mechanism the Regional Co-ordination Unit. He thinks that the Unit must have a greater presence in the region and

demanded that the three entities be co-ordinated. He also pointed out that the countries must contribute financially for the proper functioning of the Unit.

35. Mr. Rodriguez, emphasised the importance the voluntary contributions of the countries have in terms of obtaining funding.

36. After some deliberations pertaining to the financing of the Regional Co-ordination Unit, the participants submitted for the consideration and eventual approval of the plenary draft decisions, which are included in **Annex I** of this report. Finally, a proposal regarding the composition of the Regional Executive Committee was submitted for the consideration of the plenary.

Agenda item 7: Examination by the Secretariat of the conclusions coming out of the national, sub-regional and regional reports to be presented to the Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties

37. Mrs. Rosario Ortíz, consultant to the Secretary of the Convention emphasised that the implementation of the Convention in the Latin American and Caribbean region is basically a new process but that most of the country Parties are committed to the process of the preparation of their National action programmes for the implementation of the Convention and are exploring ways of integrating these with existing environmental programmes. She underlined that although the environmental plans of the countries have permeated several sectors, this new focus of the environmental dimension is only reflected in trade relationships (which influences the processes of land degradation) of a few countries of the region. Additionally, she emphasised that most of the countries in their reports paid attention to the close relationship between land degradation and poverty. She stressed that poverty is only a link in the causation chain which leads to land degradation. Therefore, the fight against land degradation must focus on the underlying causes of poverty

38. She added that of the 6 existing sub-programmes in the region, the Gran Chaco Americano sub-program is the most advanced. She also informed that the 9 projects which make up the Regional Action Plan have been activated, consulted and fine tuned as regards their objectives, successes and advances, but that the lack financial resources was the main reason why the majority of them has not been started. Only the project pertaining to the development of benchmarks and indicators to monitor desertification in Latin America and the Caribbean, and that concerning to the information network (DESELAC), have received financial support, and therefore have been launched.

39. Finally, she referred to international co-operation and informed that the countries were categorical in affirming that effective support from international partners to co-operate in the implementation of CCD as regards technical support, capacity building, training and knowledge and technology transfer have been low or insignificant. Some 77% of the countries agreed on this.

40. The participants recognised that the synthesis was good. The representative of Cuba pointed out that it should be noted that if the problem of mono-crop cultivation is technological managed this can be a solution to avoid land degradation. She was also of the opinion that the presentation of the reports would be more complete if the countries adopted the recommendations derived from the synthesis to be presented during COP4.

41. After discussion, the representatives decided to set up a commission to prepare a document of the meeting to be presented at COP 4 that must highlight the comments made including those of the following representatives:

- a The representative of Surinam proposed the holding of national awareness seminars in the Caribbean region.
- b The representative of Argentina suggested changing the title of the document from conclusions to synthesis. He also suggested that a point of the document related to the Regional Co-ordination Unit, which states that the Unit is under the administration of CCD Secretariat, be changed in accordance with the mandate from the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.
- c The representative of Brazil suggested the preparation of a flow chart showing the relation between the UNCCD Secretariat, the Regional Co-ordination Unit, and the Global Mechanism and to attached this to the report of the REC.

- d The representative of Surinam with support from St. Vincent and the Grenadines conveyed that the Caribbean has requested the support of the Secretariat in the preparation of the national action programmes.

42. On this issue, Mr. Oramas suggested that the recommendations be made now and then be taken by the participants to their countries so that they can be studied. A final decision can then be taken during the GRULAC meetings in Bonn. The region will therefore be better position to present its interests at the COP.

43. After some deliberations pertaining to the synthesis of the national, sub-regional and regional reports, the participants submitted for the consideration and eventual approval of the plenary draft decisions, (see **Annex I** of this report).

Agenda item 8: Presentation on El Gran Chaco

44. Mr. Montoya, representative of the Ministry of Sustainable Development of Bolivia, made a biophysical and social-economic characterisation of the bio-geographic area of “El Gran Chaco Americano”. Mr. Luis Molinar, from Paraguay presented the sub-regional action programme for Gran Chaco, underlining the specific objectives of this Programme. Mr. Perez Pardo, the representative from Argentina presented the action program, product of a tri-national workshop held in Santiago del Estero, Argentina with the participation of 300 persons representing all interest groups. He discussed the Gran Chaco Americano Internet web-page and the services being offered.

45. The representatives thanked the presenters for the presentations.

Agenda item 9: Exchange of opinion on the positions of the region on the main subjects of the Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties

46. The participants met in three groups to discuss the synthesis on Latin America and the Caribbean progress on the implementation of the national, sub-regional and regional action programmes.

47. The representative of Mexico related the recommendations of the Mesoamerica Group, Chile for the South American group and St. Vincent and the Grenadines for the Caribbean.

48. One of the common recommendations of the three working groups was that in the future, workshops of the Global Mechanism should be part of the regional meetings. The dates of the meetings must be determined in advance so as to avoid logistic and co-ordination problems.

49. Another recommendation was to request the Secretariat to support the evaluation and cartographic characterisation of desertification in each country. The representative of Costa Rica, proposed that on soil erosion maps, the scale should be 1:100.000. The representative of Mexico emphasised that the question is not just to have a map, there is need to find a point of convergence of the social-economic information problem. There is a need to find the basic integral line.

Agenda item 10: Presentation of the report on the desertification problem in Central America

50. Mr. Dahl Ostergaard, consultant of COWI, Denmark made an introduction on the technical scientific documents related to the problem of desertification in Central America. He informed that that the actual extent of desertification in Central America has still not been determined. There are eight eco-regions which are located in the sub-humid, dry to semi-arid climatic zones. These eight eco-regions cover approximately 45% of the total area Central American. Topography, climate and human activity are factors which make some of these eco-regions vulnerable to desertification.

51. He emphasis that the change in land use, the unsustainable extraction of forest resources and the deforestation of large areas for conversion to pasture represent a major problem in Central American. Forest and agricultural fires are also serious problems in the 8 sub-regions. 80% of the population of Central America lives on 25% of the territory, and the most populated areas are those eco-regions most vulnerable to desertification.

52. Finally, he explained that the social-economic dynamics of Central America exclude the poor from the most suitable areas for agricultural. He emphasised that poverty and marginalisation must be understood as a direct cause of unsustainable agricultural practices; and therefore, placing the alleviation of poverty at the top of the agenda is the most effective way of preventing desertification.

Agenda item 11: Presentation of the diagnostic on the desertification.

53. Mrs. Krause, from GTZ of Germany, presented the proposal of Dr. Andrea Schloenvoigt, a conceptual framework and methodology for the identification and characterisation of areas at risk to desertification. The methodology incorporates information from four variables (climatic variable, human intervention, social-economic and institutional-political framework), which in combination can lead to desertification. She informed that this methodology was applied in the 8 eco-regions mentioned and 3 of these eco-regions were found to be more vulnerable to desertification.

54. She added that the general diagnosis concluded that the Central America cedar and pine forests which cover an area of 125,000 km² shared by Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua can become a nucleus of desertification in the isthmus by being the eco-regions most threaten by human activity.

Agenda item 12: Presentation of the report on social, economic and environmental impact of desertification and drought in Central America

55. Mr Juaréz, representative of CATIE, underlined that one of the most significant impacts of desertification is in agriculture, since there is a clear relationship between soil erosion, loss of soil fertility, and poor crop yields. He also added that given that soil erosion affects the availability of water, its use in agriculture as for the human consumption could be seriously affected by desertification. He emphasised that the indigenous peoples, the poor and most vulnerable of the region, are those most affected by this scarcity of water in the region.

56. He added that desertification in the region increases the vulnerability to hurricanes and torrential rains which regularly affect Central America and that this has an economical cost in particular as regards transport infrastructure.

Agenda item 13: Presentation of the report on monitoring and early warning systems.

57. El Sr. Weissemen, representative of CATIE and Mrs. Kraus from the GTZ of Germany, informed on the Early Warning and Monitoring Action System (SIATMA), which has among its various objectives the maintenance of updated information on the environment, land degradation and the desertification process in Central America, providing preventive measures (early warning), in case of an emergency, to contribute to increasing environmental management capacity by offering tools so that the governments can take actions.

58. They added that the SIATMA contemplates monitoring a series of environmental, climatic, social-economic indicators as well as for water. On the other hand, to characterise the essential elements of the SIATMA, they defined the inputs, products, services and operative processes which are expected from them. Finally, they emphasised that the SIATMA was conceived so that the local communities working the land participate in it as primary suppliers of data, and at the same time as the beneficiaries of the system, to have access to the products of the same.

Agenda item 14: Presentation of the report on integration and participation of the private sector in the implementation of the national, sub-regional and regional action programmes,

59. Mr. Juarez, representative of CATIE, informed that any civil society, including small peasant community organisations and private companies can be involved in the monitoring and early warning system as suppliers of data, as data organisers or data analysts, or as users of the data. He added that the involvement of the private sector depends on the economic opportunity that it represents to them. The peasant organisations and small farmers will be interested in participating in this system, once it presents the possibility of acting against land degradation and therefore, improve their basic income. He emphasised that it is

crucial, that in the design of this system in Central American, a genuine effort be made to identify the entities in the civil society that have a direct interest in maintaining and supporting this system.

Agenda item 15: Approval of the final report of the Meeting

60. The Reporter presented to the Meeting a draft of the Final Report of the Sixth Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought. After incorporating the amendments that the different delegations considered pertinent, the Report including the decisions, contained in **Annex I** was approved by the Meeting.

Agenda item 16 of the Program: Closure of the Meeting

61. The Meeting ended at 17:00 hours on October 19, 2000 with the participants of the Meeting expressing thanks to the People and Government of El Salvador. The representative of El Salvador on behalf of his Government declared the Sixth Regional Meeting for Latin American and the Caribbean countries on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought official closed.

ANNEX 1

DECISIONS

The Government representatives at the VI Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought held in San Salvador, El Salvador, from 17th to 19th October 2000, decide:

Decision 1	The NAPs and the IV Conference of the Parties
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Having revised and evaluated the contents of the national reports of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on the implementation of the Convention and having consulted those prepared by the Secretariat, the region has agreed to proposed the following decision to be presented to the next Conference of the Parties (COP IV).

DECIDE

1. To request the COP to obtain through technical and financial assistance support for the preparation of the NAPs of the 24 countries which have not yet done these and that it assists the implementation of the NAPs in those countries which have completed the preparation stage.
2. To request of the Committee on Science and Technology to give priority to the formulation of a unified system of benchmarks and indicators which will allow the valuation of environmental services and the social and economic benefits from the fight against land degradation and the mitigation of drought and desertification. In this context it is of fundamental importance to initiate actions to obtain resources and special support with the aim of making cartographic evaluation of desertification in the countries of the region.
3. To request of the COP to secure technical assistance for the design of economic instruments which permit the channelling of fiscal and private investment to combat land degradation.
4. To request of the COP the renewal of its commitment to developing Regional Co-ordinating Units considering them as an organic part of the functioning of the Secretariat with the aim of improving the efficiency in service to the regions. It's particularly important that it approves as part of the regular budget of the Secretariat the salary of the persons in charge of the Regional functioning Co-ordination Units.
5. To request of the COP that the Secretariat, through the RCU, take the necessary steps for the management and monitoring of the action programmes at the, regional and sub-regional levels.
6. To request that the COP guarantees through the Global Mechanism the development of a clear strategy for the mobilisation of financial resources ensuring that countries can access the various sources of funding.

Decision 2	National Development Policies
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Taking into account the need to guarantee the continuity of the agreements reached by the country Parties for the implementation of the Convention and to avoid changes in governmental administration which affect the implementation of the CCD in the respective countries:

DECIDE

To request the Secretariat to take steps with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture of each member country Party to the CCD that they include and to give priority to the objectives of the Convention in the national development policies.

Decision 3

Holding of awareness seminars in the Caribbean Sub-region

Taking into consideration the fact that of the fifteen States comprising the Caribbean Community which have ratified the UNCCD, only three of these have been able to hold national awareness seminars.

Being aware of the urgent need to address the rising problem of land degradation in this sub-region and the necessity to raise awareness at all levels as the first step to combat the problem.

Recalling that the lack of awareness has been identified as a serious problem in all of the national reports from these countries.

Conscious of the limited resources of these countries

Recognising that these countries have made limited progress in the formulation and development of their national action programmes

Recalling Decision 8 of the IV Regional Meeting held in Antigua and Barbuda in April/May 1998, which recognised the urgent need to address the multiple problems faced by these small island states

Recognising the importance of national awareness seminars in bringing different stakeholders together as a means of initiating the development of ideas for preparation of national action programmes

Taking into consideration that the sub-region is currently preparing itself for implementation of a major project on biodiversity and the prevention of land degradation and,

Taking into consideration the consequent need to raise awareness which would facilitate effective participation in the said project.

DECIDE

1. To request the Secretariat of the UNCCD to assist those countries in the sub-region that have not yet held their national awareness seminars to realise this objective before the end of 2001.
2. To request the international organisations, agencies and the donor community to lend significant support to this process.
3. To request the local UNDP and UNEP offices to support these countries in their efforts to achieve this objective.

Decision 4	Increase in the number of representatives of the Caribbean sub-region on the Regional Executive Committee
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Considering the fragile Nature of the ecosystems of Caribbean Island states and the rate of land degradation occurring in the same.

Considering further, the serious lack of human and other resources existing in these countries to implement the UNCCD

Bearing in mind, that there is the need to enhance the implementation process of the UNCCD in these island states

Bearing in mind, that the objective is to have a Regional Executive Committee which is representative of the four sub-regions agreed on for Latin America and the Caribbean

Recalling Decision 8 of the IV Regional Meeting held in Antigua and Barbuda which stipulates the need to develop special programmes to assist the implementation of the UNCCD in this sub-region

Recalling Decision 16 of the V Regional Meeting held in Lima, Peru in 1999 which requires the Secretariat of the UNCCD to involve the island states of the Caribbean in every way possible in the implementation process

Taking into consideration the need to increase the participation of these Island states at the regional level in the activities of the UNCCD

Taking into consideration that the Caribbean sub-region needs to progress rapidly to attain the level of other sub-regions in the preparation, formulation and implementation of their national action programmes, and consequently needs special attention in these areas

DECIDE

1. To increase the membership of the Caribbean sub-region on the Regional Executive Committee from one (1) to two (2);
2. In instances where the President or the Vice President of the Committee is a representative of the Caribbean sub-region, one (1) other representative will be elected.
3. To approve all the documents submitted by the REC at this VI Regional Meeting related to regulations on the operation and the composition of the same with the changes approved by the meeting as contained in **Annex IV**.

Decision 5	Regional Co-ordinating Unit
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Recalling Decision 7 of the XI Meeting of the Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean and Decision 6 of the Fourth UNCCD Regional Meeting which called for the establishment of the Regional Co-ordinating Unit (RCU);

Recalling also Decision 6.4 of the Fourth UNCCD Regional Meeting which requested the Secretariat and the Regional Executive Committee to define a scale of contribution so that countries provide support to the RCU;

Considering that the RCU has been functioning for the last two years and has made a significant contribution to the regional implementation process;

Bearing in mind that the question of financing of the RCU will be up for consideration at the next Conference of the Parties to take place at the end of this year;

Reaffirming their commitment to supporting financially the effective and efficient functioning of the RCU;

DECIDE

1. To call upon the country Parties to make voluntary financial contributions, based on the indicative scale of financial contributions to the RCU.
2. To further request the adoption of a resolution by the Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention ensuring the funding of the RCU through the UNCCD Secretariat.
3. To recommend to the Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention that the post of Co-ordinator of the RCU be included in the regular budget of the Secretariat of the Convention as of 1st January 2001.

Decision 6	Latin America and Caribbean panel at the IV Session of the Conference of the Parties.
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Taking into consideration that the IV Session of the Conference of the Parties will take place in Bonn, Germany from 11 to 22 December 2000;

Recognising that the Latin American and Caribbean region has made progress in terms of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought at the national, regional and international levels

Recognising that the hosting that the IV Session of the Conference of the Parties is a world forum in which the progress of the region and its contribution to the resolution of the problem of desertification and drought can be exposed;

DECIDE

1. To request the Secretariat of the Convention and the RCU to organise the necessary activities so that the Latin American and Caribbean region can prepare an exhibition space at the Conference of the Parties to disseminate information on the progress of the region.
2. To request the Countries of the region to prepare in co-ordination with the Secretariat of the Convention exhibits for the regional panel before the start of the Conference of the Parties.

Decision 7	Expression of thanks to the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ)
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The representatives of Governments and non-governmental organisations attending the VI UNCCD Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, in recognition of the valuable

support that the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ) has given to various countries of the region in their efforts to achieve sustainable development;

Bearing in mind the assistance this agency provided to projects specifically related to the fight against land degradation in these countries;

Recalling the significant support provided by the same to some countries during the preparation of their national reports;

DECIDE

1. To express special thanks to the GTZ for the support given to the countries.
2. To request the Secretariat of the Convention to convey to the GTZ through the relevant channels the appreciation of the region for the assistance given.
3. To request the GTZ to continue to support the countries of the region in their efforts to implement the Convention.

Decision 8	Host of the Seventh Regional Meeting
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Considering that the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Regional Meetings were held in South America (Buenos Aires, Argentina, Lima Peru) in Mesoamerica (Mexico City, Mexico and San Salvador, El Salvador) in the Caribbean (Havana, Cuba and St. John's Antigua and Barbuda);

Considering that it's desirable to maintain a rotation between the sub-regions for the hosting of future regional meetings;

DECIDE

1. To accept with thanks the offer of the delegation of Chile to be the host of the Seventh Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and to hold this meeting at least three months before the hosting of the Fifth Session of the Conference of the Parties in 2001;
2. To request the Secretariat of the Convention to establish the necessary contacts with the Government of Chile. The tentative date of the meeting is September 2001.

Decision 9	Expression of Appreciation to the IDB
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Taking into account the very significant contribution made by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Considering that the bank has shown consistent commitment to the implementation process in the entire region.

DECIDE

1. To express appreciation and thanks to the IDB for all support given to the regional process.
2. To request the Secretariat to continue its efforts to involve this agency where possible.
3. To request from IDB to continue their support for the implementation process at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

Decision 10

The Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties

Taking into account that the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties will take place in Bonn, Germany, 11 to 22 December 2000;

Considering that the Latin American and Caribbean region has set an example in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought at the national, regional and international levels.

Accepting with thanks the offer of the Government of Germany to take the necessary steps for the hosting and success of the Fourth Conference of the Parties of the Convention;

DECIDE

1. To offer its support to the Government of Germany and to the Secretariat of the Convention for the success of the meeting;
2. To make the necessary efforts to ensure that the country Parties to the Convention in Latin America and the Caribbean are fully represented at the same;
3. To request the Secretariat of the Convention, the agencies of the United Nations system, international organisations, financial institutions and donor countries to collaborate with the Government of Germany to guarantee the success of the meeting;
4. To invite the international community to participate in the work of the Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties of the convention.

Decision 11

Support of the Secretariat of the Convention for the NAP process

Considering the urgency of advancing with the preparation of the national action programmes in those countries in Latin America and the Caribbean which have not yet prepared them;

Considering that the majority of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have ratified the Convention;

Considering also that concrete NAPs already exist in some countries of the region;

Taking note that the countries of the region contained in Annex III of the Convention have prioritised the themes on prevention and mitigation of the impacts of drought as fundamental to their sustainable development and it is therefore necessary to continue examining the contribution of the country Parties and observers in this respect.

Recognising that the function of the Secretariat of the Convention is to provide the necessary support for the effective implementation of the NAPs, including a methodology for their preparation;

Taking into account that in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean which have not yet formulated their NAPs as well as in those which have, there is a lack of technical resource, materials and finance necessary for their formulation or for the hosting of round tables with the co-operating community and international donors for the financing of the activities and projects contained in the same,

DECIDE

1. To request the Secretariat of the Convention in co-ordination with other multilateral agencies, to formulate a plan of support for the preparation of the NAPs including methodological guidelines for the formulation of the national action programmes in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean which do not have the same for discussion and approval during the next Conference of the Parties of the Convention;
2. To also request the Secretariat of the Convention to in consultation with the parties and relevant agencies of the co-operating community and international donors, initiate activities on the holding of round tables in search of financial support for the NAPs already prepared in the countries of the region and adjusted according to the modalities of the donor community;
3. To incorporate in the implementation of this decision the necessary measures to guarantee that the adoption of national policies in the countries of the region as well as those coming out of the regional meetings receives through the national action programmes the urgent attention that the countries of the region give to the subject land degradation and the negative effects of drought,

Decision 12	GEF window on Desertification and Drought
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Taking into account that the majority of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have ratified the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought and have presented to the Secretariat their reports and other prepared national action programmes reflecting the importance that their governments attach to the aspects of land degradation and drought compiled in these reports;

Recalling that there is need to follow-up the proposals contained in these reports, as well as formulate and execute the respective national action programmes for the prevention and mitigation of drought;

Considering that the countries of the Latin American and the Caribbean region have adopted as priority of their countries the activities related to vulnerable zones affected by aridity and drought and by aspects of concomitant vulnerability, resulting in inundations, internal and international migration and the increase of poverty among the population in these affected zones,

DECIDE

1. To request Global Environmental Fund (GEF) to open a window with sufficient and adequate resources to address the priorities reflected by the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in their various reports as obligated under the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought which can be used for the financing of the formulation and execution of the national action programmes.
2. To support the national initiatives of these parties of the region and of the other regions of the world which have expressed the urgent need for fresh resources from the GEF for formulating and executing program activities and projects contained in the national action programmes;
3. To express their recognition to the Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought and other multilateral agencies which regardless of the existing limitations, have made efforts with the aim of consolidating the efforts of the countries of the region in the implementation process, expressed in the identification of the need to make

available adequate, expeditious, effective and efficient mechanisms in the financing of the development of the national action programmes.

Decision 13	Support to RIOD-LAC
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Taking into consideration the provisions of Article 10, 2. f of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, reaffirmed in Article 3. 2 of the Regional Annex, referring to the full participation of NGOs and local community at local, national and regional level in the planning and formulation of policies, decision making, the implementation and revision of the national action programmes.

Taking into consideration the important roll that NGOs must play through the International Network of NGOs on Desertification for the Latin America and the Caribbean (RIOD-LAC) in the countries of the region.

Recognising the need for enhanced support to civil society in all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Considering that the advances made in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification at the regional level require a corresponding update of the co-ordinating mechanisms of RIOD-LAC.

DECIDE

1. To request the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to support the organisation of the Third Regional Meeting of RIOD-LAC which is tentatively set for the first quarter of 2001 in Havana, Cuba.

Decision 14	Formation of Experts on Desertification
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Considering that the reports presented by Barbados and Venezuela during the workshops on Focal Points, highlighted the need to develop national and sub-regional expertise on desertification;

Being aware of the importance to recover the traditional knowledge and to develop new technical-scientific knowledge to combat desertification;

Considering the initiatives that different countries are implementing to promote specialised formation processes and investigation into the different dimensions of desertification;

DECIDE

1. To encourage national and regional initiatives aimed at the formation of specialised human resources, with an integral concept of sustainable development of the dry areas and the fight against desertification, in an investigative framework which considers the different dimensions of desertification and the recovery of the traditional knowledge.
2. Request international agencies and organisations, donor agencies and community to provide significant support to these initiatives.

3. Recommend to the countries that are developing these initiatives, to initiate a process of exchange of experience and mutual strengthening.

Decision 15	Statutes of the Regional Executive Committee
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Recalling that the first Regional Executive Committee was constituted at the Third Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean held in Havana, Cuba.

Taking into account that the Regional Executive Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean plays central role in the coordination of the activities for the implementation of the UNCCD in the region as mentioned in article 7.1(b).

In accordance with the stipulations of document IICRD/DOC.3/REV.2, (this document lays the basis for the establishment of the REC), the CCD focal points in the region shall meet periodically at regional meetings. At each meeting a Regional Executive Committee is elected to serve until the next meeting.

DECIDE

Statutes on the composition and participation in the Regional Executive Committee;

1. The Regional Executive Committee shall comprise representatives from the four sub-regions of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Caribbean sub-region shall have two representatives irrespective of the composition of the Committee. RIOD shall have one representative with observer status. To guarantee the representation of all the regions and to avoid increasing the number of representatives, it is agreed that the region which has the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Committee will not designate another representative to the Committee. The Caribbean region shall designate an additional representative in the case where it occupies the position of Chair or Vice-Chair.
2. The election of members of the REC shall be done in accordance with the established practice i.e. by consensus.

Statutes on the functioning and activities of the REC

3. The REC shall meet once at least (1) a year. Extraordinary meetings may be held when considered necessary. The REC can also meet during the Conferences of the Parties and at other meetings in which its members are participants; it will also carry out its functions through the INTERNET. The Regional Co-ordinating Unit (RCU) shall assist the Committee in the organisation of these meetings.
4. The functions of the REC includes the follow-up of decisions of the regional meetings for Latin American and the Caribbean with the aim of achieving the optimum implementation of the Convention and in particular the programmes at the national, sub-regional and regional levels as well as making recommendations for their improvement.
5. The RCU shall assist the REC in the preparation of its annual reports, especially those concerning the implementation of the Regional Action Program (RAP). These reports shall be submitted to the Regional Meeting for consideration.
6. The President of the REC with the assistance of the UNCCD Secretariat will send once a month a report on the activities undertaken to the members who must send their comments on the same within fifteen days. After consolidating this document the President shall send it to all focal points through DESELAC. The representatives on the REC shall inform and consult with the country parties on the initiatives undertaken. The REC shall request the UNCCD Secretariat to send a report of the regional meetings to the Chairs of GRULAC in New York, Geneva, Nairobi and Rome.

7. The REC, in co-ordination with the UNCCD Secretariat and in the framework of the RAP, shall promote co-operation among inter-governmental and non-governmental institutions with the aim of facilitating specific actions at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.
8. The Chair or a member of the REC will attend the meetings of the Forum of the Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as others on sustainable development of the region with the aim of informing on the Convention activities in the region.
9. The REC shall in co-ordination with the UNCCD Secretariat, seek the assistance of international agencies including those of the United Nations system for the implementation of the mentioned decisions.

Financing of the Regional Executive Committee

10. The UNCCD Secretariat, UNDP, UNEP and other relevant bodies shall provide the assistance necessary for the holding of meetings of the REC.

Decision 16	Composition of the Regional Executive Committee
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On the definition of the composition and participation of the Regional Executive Committee, the representatives to the sixth regional meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean countries

DECIDE

To form the Regional Executive Committee as follows:

1. President the representative of El Salvador
2. Vice-President the representative of Peru
3. Representatives from the Caribbean, Jamaica and St. Lucia
4. Representative from the Southern Cone, Uruguay
5. Representative of RIOD, shall be selected by the same.

Decision 17	Synergies Between the Rio Conventions
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The representatives of the Parties at this VI Regional Meeting have expressed the convenience and the need to promote actions and strategies conducive to a real integration of work, as well as to focus on the search for common objectives between the Rio Conventions.

DECIDE

1. **To request** the Executive Secretaries of the Desertification, Climatic Change, and Biological Bio-diversity Conventions to promote the establishment of synergies between the three Conventions and to carry out short term pilot plans.

Decision 18	Expression of thanks to UNEP
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The representatives of the governments present at the VI Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on the United Nations Convention to Combat desertification

Considering that the Forum of the Ministries of Environment from LAC have expressed their interest to support the implementation of the Convention in the region.

Taking into account that UNEP through its regional office have been actively supporting the implementation of the Convention, in particular the work of the Regional Co-ordination Unit.

DECIDE

1. To recognise UNEP's support and its commitment to the party countries of the region; in the preparation elaboration of sub-regional and regional reports on the implementation of the Convention; as their valuable contribution to the work of the Executive Committee and the Regional Co-ordination Unit.
2. Request that the UNEP and the Secretariat strengthen their co-operation to continue supporting the work of the mentioned unit and in particular the implementation of the Regional Action Program.
3. That UNEP and the CCD Secretariat strengthen their co-operation with other agencies of the United Nations system and international organisations, with related activities on the fight against land degradation with the aim off achieving effective implementation of the Convention in the region.

Decision 19	Expression of gratitude to the Government of SPAIN
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The representatives of Governments and non-governmental organisations attending the VI UNCCD Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification hosted in the city of San Salvador, El Salvador, from 17 to 19 October 2000, being aware of the support that the Government of Spain has given to the holding of these regional meetings;

Considering the significant assistance that the Government of Spain has provided for specific projects in the region such as the Gran Chaco sub-regional program;

Recognising the continuing commitment of the said Government in supporting the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean in their quest to achieve sustainable development while protecting their environment:

DECIDE

1. To express on behalf of the Peoples and Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean sincere thanks to the Government of Spain for its support to the regional implementation process over the years.

2. To request the UNCCD Secretariat to convey to the Government of Spain through the relevant diplomatic channels the appreciation of the Peoples and Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean for the efforts made by the said Government in support of the implementation process in the region.
3. To request the Government of Spain to continue supporting the region in its efforts to achieve sustainable development and the protection of its environment.

Decision 20	Gratitude to the People and Government of El Salvador
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The representatives of governments, international organisations and NGOs present at the VI Regional Meeting for Latin America and Caribbean countries on the Convention of the United Nations to combat desertification, held in San Salvador, El Salvador from October 17-19, 2000, considering the deliberation of this meeting:

DECIDE

1. To expressed the most profound recognition to the People and Government of El Salvador for it generous hospitality for this meeting, which was the basis of its success;
2. To expressed its gratitude to the participants of the Meeting for the efforts made to achieve the objectives of the IV Regional Meeting.

Annex II

Workshop on Achievements, Opportunities and Challenges in Desertification and Drought in Latin America and the Caribbean.

SUCSESSES

1. The issue is already on the educational agenda.
2. There is conscious inter-institutional co-ordination by governments.
3. There is greater awareness of the problem of land degradation, since the preparation of national reports.
4. There is a diagnosis of the land degradation problem.
5. There is an environmental legal framework in a significant number of countries.
6. The Convention has been ratified by almost all of the countries.
7. There is purposeful dialogue on the issue with the civil society.
8. The Caribbean countries are developing synergies between the Rio Conventions.
9. National committees that deal with environmental issues including land degradation have been established in the Caribbean.
10. Development and submission to GEF of the project entitled "Conservation of Bio-diversity and Prevention of Land Degradation in Caribbean Small Islands' Ecosystems".
11. Initial steps in the preparation of national action programmes have been taken in some countries.
12. Initial assessment of the legislative framework.
13. There is increased awareness of the need of early warning systems on drought.
14. There is increased awareness among youth, including school children.

OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED (OPPORTUNITIES)

1. The issue is not considered as priority on the agendas of the governments and there is therefore lack of commitment to give political support to the fight against land degradation.
2. Few links between the governments and the civil society on this issue.
3. Serious low levels of awareness in: the determination and implementation of policies; among the, general public, the private sector and international partners.
4. Lack of financing (programmes, activities and projects).
5. Lack of integration of the implementation processes among the Rio Conventions, in certain countries.
6. Non-existence of a national organism, in the majority of countries to facilitate the issue.

7. Land degradation is seen as an environmental problem and not in terms its socio-economic effects, such as lowering of living in the rural world.
8. There are no impact indicators including economics ones, to determine the economic losses caused by land degradation.
9. Lack of short, medium and long term follow-up strategies.
10. The issue of mitigation of the effects drought is not discussed in the NAPs.
11. Instability and changes of focal points and the representatives of the governments of the Region.
12. Non-existence of technical information on the state of land degradation, in some countries.

ASPECTS TO BE RESOLVED

1. The creation, strengthening and consolidation of the national co-ordination bodies.
2. The promotion and application of the harmonisation of public policies.
3. Integrated management of the Rio Conventions through the environmental services.
4. Definition of the methodology for preparation of national action programmes, taking as a base participation at all levels. Using as a base the FAO/UNEP methodology (Art. 10, Convention).
5. Strengthening the Regional Co-ordination Unity for it to fulfil the mandate given by the countries.
6. The NAPs must be included in integral programmes of priority to ensure or assist their implementation.
7. The temporal distribution of the population needs to be analysed from a gender perspective in the preparation and implementation of the NAPs.
8. To promote the sustainable diffusion of information on the problem of land degradation dry zones, at all levels in each country.
9. To develop programmes on environmental education to more effective reach the communities and that the integration of the synergies of the other Rio Conventions be considered as regards the particular case of the dry zones.
10. The institutional strengthening the focal points.
11. To analyse the land tenure as a structural problem of the land degradation.
12. To seek increased NGOs and civil society participation in this process.
13. To de-monopolise the Convention from the Ministries of Environment, under a clear development policy and that it forms part of the national development and reconstruction plans.
14. To hold awareness seminars in all the countries.
15. To develop relevant information systems and research of basic indicators on land degradation in the small island states.
16. Re-evaluation of the systems and procedures of funds allocation and technical assistance to the Caribbean sub-region, taking into consideration their special needs and vulnerability.

ANNEX III

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ANNEX IV

STATUTES ON THE ORGANISATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ON THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (UNCCD)

1 Background

1.1 The Regional Executive Committee (REC) for Latin America and the Caribbean plays a central role in the co-ordination of activities for the implementation of the UNCCD in the region.

1.2 In accordance with the stipulation of document IICRD/DOC.3/REV.2 (this document lays the basis for the establishment of the REC), the CCD focal points in the region shall meet periodically at regional meetings. At each meeting a Regional Executive Committee is elected to serve until the next meeting.

2. Composition of and participation in the Regional Executive Committee

2.1 In accordance with Decision 4 of the Antigua and Barbuda Regional Meeting (May 1998), the REC shall be composed of one (1) representative from each of the following sub-regions: Meso-America, the Caribbean, the Andean countries and the Southern Cone and one representative from RIOD. The President shall be the representative of the host country of the Regional Meeting at which the Committee was elected. The immediate past President shall serve as the Vice-President of the newly elected Committee. There shall not be two representatives from the same sub-region.

2.2 The election of members of the REC shall be done in accordance with the established practice, i.e. by consensus.

3. Functioning and activities of the REC

3.1 The REC shall meet at least once (1) a year. Extraordinary meetings may be held when considered necessary. The REC can also meet during the Conferences of the Parties and at other meetings in which its members are participants; it will also carry out its functions through the INTERNET. The Regional Co-ordinating Unit (RCU) shall assist the Committee in the organisation of these meetings.

3.2 The functions of the REC include the follow-up of the decisions of the regional meetings for Latin American and the Caribbean with the aim of achieving the optimum implementation of the Convention and in particular the programmes at the national, sub-regional and regional levels, as well as making recommendations for the improvement of the same.

3.3 The RCU shall assist the REC in the preparation of its annual reports, especially in the preparation of those concerning the implementation of the Regional Action Programme (RAP). These reports shall be submitted to the Regional Meeting for consideration.

3.4 The President of the REC, with the assistance of the UNCCD Secretariat, will send once a month to the members, a report on the activities undertaken, who must then send their comments on the same within fifteen days. After consolidating

this document the President shall send this report to all focal points through DESELAC. The regional representatives on the REC shall inform and consult with the country parties on the initiatives undertaken.

3.5 The REC shall request the Secretariat of the UNCCD to send a report of the regional meetings to the Chairs of GRULAC in New York, Geneva, Nairobi and Rome.

3.6 The REC, in co-ordination with the UNCCD Secretariat and in the framework of the RAP, shall promote co-operation among inter-governmental and non-governmental institutions with the aim of facilitating specific actions at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

3.7 The Chair or a member of the REC will attend the meetings of the Forum of the Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as other fora on sustainable development of the region with the aim of informing on the activities in the region in the framework of the Convention.

3.8 The REC shall, in co-ordination with the UNCCD Secretariat, seek the assistance of international agencies including those of the United Nations system for the implementation of the mentioned decisions.

4 Financing of the Regional Executive Committee

4.1 The UNCCD Secretariat, UNDP, UNEP and other relevant bodies shall provide the assistance necessary for the holding of meetings of the REC and for financing its other activities.

PROCEDURES FOR THE NOMINATION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN FOR THE COMMISSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

In the interest of facilitating effective negotiation of the positions of the Latin America and the Caribbean region during the Conference of the Parties, the following procedures are suggested for adoption:

1. As regards the participation of the delegates of the region in the Committees and /or the Active Groups of the Conference of the Parties, it would be most practical to nominate these representatives during the meetings of GRULAC formed at the COPs. This will be a more efficient process of selection depending on the dynamics of the negotiation processes.
2. The nomination of the representatives of Latin America and the Caribbean will be done by the national focal points of member states of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.
3. During the conference of the Parties, the representatives of Latin America and the Caribbean will analyse the most relevant points of the Agenda in order to present a strategy to obtain optimal results for the benefit of the region.
4. The nomination of speakers of the region to participate in the different commissions or working groups of the COP, does not imply that the interested countries can not participate and express their points of view.
5. The speakers nominated must report daily to the GRULAC on the results of their negotiations, and the working directives will be examined in the corresponding instances.
6. Drafting groups will be formed to prepare proposed declarations in the name of GRULAC which will be approved during GRULAC meetings.
7. It is important to use all means of information at the COP headquarters, such as the stands designated for the regions.

ACTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT AND STRENGTHENING OF THE ROLE OF THE REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. The strengthening of the Regional Co-ordination Unit is fundamental for the proper functioning of the Executive Committee and thus the governments of the region are invited to make financial contributions towards the budget for the functioning of the Regional Co-ordination Unit, headquartered in Mexico, according to the scale of voluntary contributions which was discussed in Recife, 1999.
2. To request of the Secretary of the Convention, the Director of the Global Mechanism, as well as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, UNDP, UNEP and GEF to prepare specific financial plans in support of the National, Sub-regional and Regional Action Programmes.
3. To request from the organisations of the United Nations, bilateral and multilateral agencies, to continue supporting the decisions adopted at the regional meetings, where specific projects or actions have been adopted at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.
4. To promote a strategy in the region aimed at making the government authorities and the different national actors aware of land degradation and their social and economic consequences for the population.
5. To cooperate with the countries in the drafting and implementation of their respective National Action Plans.

ANNEX V

VI UNCCD Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean San Salvador, El Salvador, 17th - 19th October 2000.

AGENDA

17th October

- 8:30 – 9:45 Arrival and registration of the participants
- 10:00 – 10:30 Opening of by the Minister of Environment of El Salvador, Dra. Ana Maria Majano, by the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD Mr. Hama Arba Diallo.
- 10:30 - 11:00 Election of the Chairman and officer; comments of the organisation of the meeting.
- 11:00 – 11:15 Report of the President of the Workshop for Focal Points on the conclusions coming out from the meeting.
- 11:15 – 12:00 Report of the President of the Regional Executive Committee of the outcomes of the activities developed since the V Regional Meeting in Lima.
- 12:00 – 13:00 Report of the UNCCD-Secretariat on the activities being held in the Region. Comments.
- 13:00 – 15:00 Lunch break
- 15:00 – 18:30 Examination of the conclusions coming out of the National Reports to be presented at the fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties introduced by the Secretariat.
Examination of the conclusion coming out from the reports on the implementation of the Regional Action Program and Sub-regional activities.
- 19:30 Cocktail offered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador.

18th October

- 9:00 – 10:45 Presentation on El Gran Chaco by Antonio Medina Netto.
- 10:45 – 11:00 Coffee break.
- 11:00 – 12:45 Presentation of the reports of the Regional Co-ordinating Unit and examination of the work of the same and proposals for its improvement by Rafael Rodriguez Capetillo.
- 12:45 – 15:00 Lunch break
- 15:00 – 18:45 Exchange of opinion concerning the positions of the Region on the main topics of the Fourth Session of the Conference of the Parties.

19th October

9:00 – 9:30	Presentation of the report on the problem of the desertification, especially in Central America.
9:30 – 10:00	General diagnosis of the problem of desertification.
10:00 – 10:30	Presentation of the report on the social, economic and environmental impact of the desertification and drought in Latin American and the Caribbean.
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break.
10:45 – 11:15	Presentation of the report on monitoring and early warning systems.
11:15 – 11:45	Presentation of the report on integration and participation of the private sector on the implementation of the National, Sub-regional and Regional Action Programs.
11:45 – 12:15	Support at sub-regional level and plans for assistance at the national level.
12:45 – 16:00	Lunch break.
16:00 -	Adoption of conclusions recommendations and final report. Cocktail offered by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.

20th – 21st October

(Meeting with the Global Mechanism. Agenda will be distributed later)