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**Promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies**

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and international organizations, institutions and agencies**

**Note by the secretariat\***

*Summary*

The present document provides information on the role the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) has played during 2008–2009 in pursuing collaborative partnerships towards strengthening the relationships and convergence frameworks envisaged under the UNCCD 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (The Strategy) (2008–2018). The information is presented in the context of The Strategy's four strategic objectives. The document also provides Parties with information on activities to strengthen working relationships with other relevant organizations and specialized agencies.

As the international community focuses increasingly on the need to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change, the United Nations system has recognized the need for strategic partnerships on cross-cutting issues of sustainable development. Therefore, special attention must be given to land within mitigation and adaptation processes and when setting priorities for biodiversity negotiations. Sustainable land management action relating to adaptation and biodiversity loss is central to survival in the dry and sub-humid lands, making collaboration with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity a cardinal activity.

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\* This document was delayed due to the need for extensive internal and external consultations in order to provide Parties with the latest available information.

Article 22, paragraph 2 (i), of the Convention requires the Conference of the Parties (COP) to promote and strengthen interaction with other relevant conventions. By its decision 4/COP.8, the COP requested the secretariat to report to COP 9 on relevant activities.

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## I. Introduction and background information

1. Since land degradation and the widespread qualitative and quantitative loss of fertile topsoil are gradual processes with the potential to become silent disasters, they must also be considered under the plans developed by United Nations agencies and other institutions to address climatic trends resulting, inter alia, from increased aridity, the greater frequency and magnitude of natural catastrophes and environmental scarcity, with their wide-ranging socioeconomic and geopolitical implications in all regions of the world.

2. The challenge for these institutions is global: salinization in the large irrigation systems of Asia, water scarcity in western and eastern Africa, deforestation and landslides in Latin America, loss of organic nutrients and pollution in the soils of many developed countries, soil compaction due to infrastructures, erosion in mountainous areas, and consequences of droughts in vulnerable ecosystems. These are some of the impacts of an ongoing aggression on land productivity and soil integrity.

3. The Executive Secretaries of the three Rio Conventions meet annually in a Joint Liaison Group (JLG) to discuss and address issues of common interest. By its decision 4/COP.8, the COP requested the secretariat to report to COP 9 on ongoing activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions. The present document reports on the latest developments in this regard.

4. In support of such decision the United Nations General Assembly, in resolution 63/218, “recognizes the cross-sectoral nature of desertification, land degradation and drought mitigation, and in this regard invites all relevant United Nations organizations to cooperate with the Convention secretariat in supporting an effective response to desertification and drought”. The secretariat is taking supporting measures to ensure that the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) is implemented in keeping with the United Nations initiative “delivering as one”. Although the secretariat’s supporting role is enhanced through the framing of issues relating to desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) at other United Nations agencies, its support functions need to be increased and strengthened. A detailed strategy for strengthening its partnership building should be developed, including identification of accountable organizations that can strengthen and make use of existing structures or networks, including a number of research networks. It is therefore incumbent on all stakeholders “to mobilize and improve the targeting and coordination of national, bilateral and multilateral financial and technological resources in order to increase their impact and effectiveness”<sup>1</sup>, particularly as the multilateral debate surrounding DLDD is intensifying.

5. As partnership means cooperating within a broader framework, in which each entity has its own role, the strengthening of established partnerships to implement The Strategy can be coordinated by the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The informal process could then be *formalized* through the United Nations Chief

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<sup>1</sup> Operational objective 5 of the Strategy (ICCD/COP(8)/16/Add.1, decision 3/COP.8, annex, page 20).

Executives Board (CEB)<sup>2</sup> as an official United Nations system-wide interagency mechanism to follow up land-degradation-related decisions. Options need to be further explored and discussed at the appropriate level of the bodies concerned, and at COP level.

6. A suggested structure for potential informal partnerships to address DLDD under The Strategy is to build on its four strategic objectives:

- (a) To improve the living conditions of affected populations;
- (b) To improve the condition of affected ecosystems;
- (c) To generate global benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD;
- (d) To mobilize resources to support implementation at all levels.

7. This document describes the benefits for effective resource mobilization of working in partnership. A larger partnership structure is needed not only for Strategy implementation but also for mobilizing and improving the targeting and coordination of national, bilateral and multilateral financial and technological resources, so that their impact and effectiveness are enhanced.

8. A regional approach to cooperative partnerships, in particular for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, should include an accepted financial structure, as in the case of, inter alia, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the United Nations regional economic commissions and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It is recommended that the benefits of the regional approaches should be further explored and that an official United Nations system-wide interagency mechanism to assist with targeted approaches on land-degradation-related decisions should be assessed. This could be formally requested to enable the United Nations to implement the initiative “delivering as one” on land, the main delivery being implementation of The Strategy. Such a mechanism or structure would build on donor coordination and a resource mobilization strategy for the secretariat.

### **The collaborative approaches of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to address The Strategy**

9. The need for consolidation and convergence of United Nations entities towards a cooperative partnership to address the challenges of The Strategy has been demonstrated at various meetings since COP 8 (Madrid 2007). The Strategy aims to “forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas, in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Chief Executives Board (CEB), which brings together on a regular basis the executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations and cooperation on a whole range of substantive and management issues within the United Nations system. In addition to its regular reviews of contemporary political issues and major global concerns on the basis of recommendations from bodies reporting to it, CEB approves policy statements on behalf of the United Nations system as a whole.

<sup>3</sup> ICCD/COP(8)/16/Add.1, decision 3/COP.8, annex, para. 8.

Decision 4/COP.8 calls for more coordinated cooperation in a broader framework to implement The Strategy.

Sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development  
(held in May 2008 and May 2009 respectively)

10. Concerned by the negative impacts that desertification, land degradation, loss of biodiversity and climate change have on each other, and recognizing the potential benefits of complementarities in addressing these problems in a mutually supportive manner, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) agreed to strengthen the institutional framework for policy implementation and to enhance cooperation among the UNCCD, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (the “Rio Conventions”), while respecting their individual mandates. The CSD requested mutually supportive action by the three Rio Conventions and not only cooperation between the secretariats.

11. The UNCCD secretariat participated in the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the CSD (CSD-16 and CSD-17) and their preparatory meetings, contributing to the forum to identify, assess, discuss and propose policy options for effective implementation of the six themes of the CSD. In the cycle these were: agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. The international preparatory meetings (IPM) organized for CSD-17 followed two other meetings, in Bangkok and Windhoek, held in January and February 2009. A combination of related global crises – food prices, energy, financial crises and the challenge of climate change – fuelled the discussion.

12. The UNCCD secretariat’s work with the Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) of the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs directly addressed outcomes 1.2 and 2.5 of The Strategy. Outcome 1.2 concerns DLDD and has been addressed in relevant international forums on, inter alia, agricultural trade, climate change adaptation, including drought, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, rural development, sustainable development and poverty reduction. Outcome 2.5 of The Strategy relates to mutually reinforcing measures among desertification and land degradation action programmes, biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

13. At CSD-17 participants also agreed to encourage and establish scientifically based drought and desertification-related local, national and, where appropriate, regional indicators and benchmarks and related web-based information systems, bearing in mind the set of indicators being developed under The Strategy. The UNCCD-related policy recommendations of CSD-17 spell out the need to call upon Member States to support and strengthen the UNCCD for Strategy implementation and to encourage enhanced coherence among United Nations programmes, funds, agencies and entities working on desertification, drought and land issues, in cooperation with the UNCCD secretariat. Other policy recommendations relating to The Strategy called for an improvement in existing, and the establishment of new centres of excellence and monitoring in developing countries to combat desertification; urged developed country Parties, and invited the GEF Council to provide, in the fifth replenishment of the GEF, adequate, timely and predictable financial resources, including new and additional financial resources, for the

focal area on land degradation; and called for increased regional cooperation, in particular within the UNCCD framework.

## **II. An active role for the partnerships of the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in addressing desertification, land degradation and drought**

14. By resolution A/RES/63/218, the United Nations General Assembly invited all relevant United Nations organizations to cooperate with the UNCCD secretariat in supporting an effective response to desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD). As desertification is a cross-cutting issue, the relevant organizations are those with mandates relating to land, not only in the agricultural sector but in governance, poverty, health, and disaster reduction, and organizations concerned with the effects of land degradation in downstream regions including water resources and coastal areas. Depending on their respective mandates and functions, United Nations entities are playing important roles<sup>4</sup> in providing support within their respective fields and contributing to bridging the gap “between the reduction in vulnerabilities and the provision of global benefits”.<sup>5</sup>

15. Coordination arrangements should be seen as a global partnership for a system-wide contribution and response to the UNCCD Strategy, specifically to reverse and prevent DLDD in affected areas and thus to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

16. The annex sets out the various agreements with United Nations institutions, and the meetings, conferences and workshops of United Nations bodies that the UNCCD secretariat has attended.

17. The operational objectives of The Strategy are intended to guide all UNCCD stakeholders and partners in their efforts to attain the Strategy’s goals. The Strategy aims to actively exert influence, to provide solutions based on scientific inputs, including capacity building, and to prevent and reverse DLDD. Targeting resource mobilization for DLDD will help to effectively address these strategic objectives.<sup>6</sup> Most of the actions towards attaining

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<sup>4</sup> The mandate of the World Bank includes all the various aspects presented herewith; The Bank should be a ‘universal’ partner in Strategy implementation.

<sup>5</sup> See ICCD/CRIC(7)/2, The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention.

<sup>6</sup> The Strategy builds on Section V of the Convention, “Operational objectives and expected outcomes”. Objective 1, “Advocacy, awareness raising and education”, is needed “to actively influence relevant international, national and local processes and actors in adequately addressing desertification/land degradation and drought-related issues”. Objective 2, “Policy framework”, is needed “to support the creation of enabling environments for promoting solutions to combat desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought”. Objective 3, “Science, technology and knowledge”, is needed “to become a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought”. Objective 4, “Capacity-building”, is defined as “to identify and address capacity-building needs to prevent and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought”. And objective 5, “Financing and technology transfer”, is defined as “to mobilize and improve the targeting and coordination of national, bilateral and multilateral financial and technological resources in order to increase their impact and effectiveness”.

the goals are to be undertaken by the Parties to the Convention, but UNCCD bodies will also provide support in accordance with their mandates. Hence, the secretariat has prepared advocacy and awareness-raising activities and a comprehensive communication strategy, while the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) is mobilizing the scientific community and technology experts. The Strategy should actively influence local processes, provide solutions based on scientific inputs and capacity building, to prevent and reverse DLDD. Targeting resource mobilization will help address all the strategic objectives.

### **A. Strategic objective 1: Improving the living conditions of affected populations**

#### **1. United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

18. The UNCCD, together with its partner agencies and institutions, is endeavouring to improve the living conditions of affected populations by working towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) pertaining to poverty and hunger and ensuring adequate livelihoods. Several United Nations agencies, such as UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), have implemented alternative livelihood programmes.

19. The UNCCD secretariat together with UNDP and UNEP have agreed to build a robust and effective partnership for the implementation of the UNCCD and it is anticipated that future reports to the CRIC would reflect positive impacts of the partnership at national, subregional and regional levels. The three agencies agreed on the importance of building synergies and thus agreed to work together in presenting a case for the drylands to the international community. The case would look at the important role played by drylands in carbon sequestration placing emphasis on adaptation and food crisis, issues that evolve around DLDD and climate change, with the ultimate objective of coming up with a specific joint programme for the drylands. In this regard, the three agencies agreed to specifically focus on the vulnerability of the drylands inhabitants taking into account such issues as food insecurity. The three agencies further agreed to support countries to mainstream their NAPs into national development strategies.

20. During a STAP meeting held in Nairobi, Kenya, to conduct a science stock taking of the GEF portfolio and to propose a vision for GEF5, an important impulsion was given to cooperate with UNEP for the implementation of the strategy as a follow up to the discussions held during the Monaco GEF council.

#### **2. United Nations Development Programme**

21. The aim of the UNCCD/UNDP retreat, held on 4–5 June 2009 in Bonn, was to build common ground and a cooperative framework for a partnership to combat desertification and land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought. Participants came from the UNCCD secretariat, the Global Mechanism, and UNDP's Environment and Energy Group and Drylands Development Centre (UNDP-DDC). After a productive meeting, the UNCCD secretariat and UNDP agreed to establish a strategic working partnership motivated by the urgent need to draw attention to and catalyse international cooperation to address the needs of the one billion of the planet's poorest people living in the drylands, in particular under climate change

scenarios. This partnership will build on the complementarities and respective comparative advantages of the two organizations. UNDP and the UNCCD secretariat have agreed to collaborate on a range of programmatic actions with the overall aim of reducing poverty by enhancing ecosystem functions and services in the drylands.

22. This complementary partnership between UNDP and the UNCCD secretariat is the beginning of a process of aligning other United Nations institutions having common objectives as they relate to DLDD. The UNCCD Strategy complements UNDP's main focus, which is policy coordination, mainstreaming and related capacity development towards achieving the MDGs by assisting individuals, organizations and societies to acquire, strengthen or maintain their capabilities for setting and achieving their own development objectives.

23. Priority areas and relevant activities for convergence under The Strategy are:

(a) Build desertification, land degradation and drought capacity in United Nations Country Teams;

(b) Assess and develop land degradation capacity in regional and national institutions;

(c) Develop tools and training packages;

(d) Capture, systematize and disseminate good practices; and

(e) Establish linkages to regional institutions and programmes.

24. A convergence framework for NAP alignment under The Strategy and technical support to UNDP's work at the regional level could be oriented towards strategy and programme formulation, technical assistance to high-risk, focus countries through partnerships with relevant regional organizations, regional knowledge sharing and documentation of results. This entails capturing good practices within country programmes and better systematizing them by fostering mutual support among country offices as well as maintaining and strengthening the network of UNDP regional advisers in collaboration with the UNCCD CST scientific correspondents.

### 3. United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

25. The UNCCD mandate on drought issues correlates with the risk management and vulnerability aspects of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). Both organizations are working on the identification of concrete action on drought policies in Africa through networking priorities.

26. There is a need for more information and for the gaps on drought to be filled, particularly in sub-Saharan and eastern Africa where drought and land degradation are associated with major disaster impacts, forced migration, conflicts and poverty outcomes. As a natural phenomenon, drought is impossible to control, but the resulting impacts can be mitigated through early warning and risk management strategies as outlined in the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA),

which is now complemented by the UNCCD Strategy. To this end, the UNCCD secretariat is accelerating its collaboration with the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) and other partners in the development of a global drought portal under The Strategy. The creation of international, national and regional drought observatories in order to collect further data and analyse the conditions of water resources to prevent drought impacts is encouraged. Future drought risk management mechanisms should be aligned with both the HFA and The Strategy. Climate change forecasts, which point to a decrease in precipitation and a rise in temperature, predict an increase in the number and intensity of these phenomena, especially in areas already experiencing water scarcity.

27. The UNCCD secretariat works in partnership with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) on the Sand and Dust Storm Warning Advisory and Assessment System to promote capacity building in Africa and Asia with regard to sand and dust storms.

#### 4. The Executive Secretariat of the Community of Countries of Portuguese Language

28. As the Member States of the Community of Countries of Portuguese Language (CPLP) are Parties to the UNCCD, the secretariat has helped to establish a platform of joint cooperation to combat desertification, land degradation, drought, water scarcity and poverty at the country level. The CPLP and the UNCCD secretariat signed an agreement to strengthen cooperation (5 November 2008).

29. Steps have been taken to sensitize CPLP policy and decision makers to the need for cooperation mechanisms for the elaboration and implementation of priority actions under The Strategy, through support for NAPs integrated into national policies. The effective coordinated participation of relevant stakeholders involved in DLDD and poverty-related events and programmes will be required.

### **B. Strategic objective 2: Improving the condition of affected ecosystems**

30. The UNCCD secretariat and a number of partner agencies are endeavouring to improve the condition of affected ecosystems. Reducing the degradation of land and water provides the basis for ecosystem functioning in drylands and is therefore fundamental to improving the condition of affected ecosystems. UNEP, CBD, UNDP-DDC and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) are all actively working to secure ecosystem goods and services, including their means for survival. FAO takes an ecosystem approach to achieving sustainable agriculture.

31. Reducing degradation and soil erosion by rivers and wind, which sequentially impacts downstream ecosystems, is another important element in improving the condition of affected ecosystems. As long-term climatic fluctuations and ongoing global warming will severely alter the condition of affected ecosystems, adaptation strategies and policies are crucial.

#### 1. Convention on Biological Diversity

32. The CBD/UNCCD joint work programme (JWP) on the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands gives guidance on developing synergy among activities addressing

biological diversity, desertification and land degradation. The CBD's work programme on dry and sub-humid lands (including dryland, Mediterranean, arid, semi-arid, grassland, and savannah ecosystems) adopted in May 2000 includes support for best management practices through targeted actions, and promotes partnerships among countries and institutions. The work supports sustainable livelihoods, through diversifying sources of income, promotion of sustainable harvesting including wildlife and exploring innovative sustainable use of biological diversity. Biodiversity loss can be both a cause and a consequence of desertification. The JWP seeks to address the multiple and increasing threats to dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity, including climate change.

33. The ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP 9) took place in Bonn, Germany, from 19–30 May 2008. Decision 17/COP.9 on “Biodiversity of dry and sub-humid lands” pertains directly to the UNCCD goals and objectives (see annex).

34. The UNCCD secretariat envisages a forward-looking approach with CBD (a) to prepare a proposal on the way forward with CBD for the next biennium based on The Strategy and to prepare a strategy for implementation of the decision including the issues of forestry and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) (carbon in soils among others); (b) to establish a programme of work to jointly address common thematic areas of implementation and problem areas as mandated by the relevant UNCCD and CBD decisions; (c) to post on the UNCCD website information on CBD-UNCCD action; (d) to raise awareness on joint action through future events during upcoming conferences (COP 9 of the UNCCD and COP 14 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)); and (e) to prepare guidelines for joint reporting to the JLG between the three Rio Conventions.

## 2. United Nations Forum on Forests and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests

35. The significance of the intricate relationship between forests, deforestation, land degradation and climate change is reflected in UNCCD's collaboration with the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). The non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, agreed to by the UNFF and subsequently adopted by the General Assembly in 2007, is a solid framework to address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation at the national and international levels. It also contributes extensively to the realization of some of the objectives of UNCCD, in particular, through its Global Objectives on Forests (GOFs). The first and third GOF aim to “reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation”, and to “increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainable managed forests, and increase the proportion of forest products from sustainable managed forests”, respectively. The land degradation focal area under the fifth replenishment of the GEF will also promote support to the generation of sustainable flows of forest ecosystem services in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas as a means to combat the effects of DLDD.

36. As a core member of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), the UNCCD secretariat has contributed to CPF's success in agreeing upon a collaborative framework on climate change. Message 2 of the CPF Strategic Framework for Forests and Climate Change,

namely that “forest-based climate change mitigation and adaptation measures should proceed concurrently”, stresses that the livelihoods of the world’s poor need to be a key target.

37. The focus should be on programmes, financing and strategies for reducing emissions from all land uses in order to expand the agenda to trees outside forests, low forest cover countries and to build the linkage to the agricultural sector and jobs. Message 4, which stresses the urgent need for capacity building and governance reforms, addresses the growing competition among land uses as forests are used to store carbon.

38. Increased emissions are largely from forest degradation due to increased land competition. The challenge posed by increased forest fires and land degradation calls attention to the fact that the importance of the environmental and social functions of forests, the human dimension, has surpassed that of wood production. The world’s least forested region, the Near East, where forests have a clear relation to agriculture and rangeland, needs capacity building and knowledge management on fire, wildlife management and forest policies. Many deforestation and land degradation drivers are outside the forest sector and point to an urgent need for synergy among all United Nations agencies dealing with land issues.

39. There are multiple gaps in the financing architecture for sustainable forest management (SFM) within the climate change regime, which affect low forest cover countries (LFCC), small and medium-sized countries with still-intact forest, African and small island developing countries (SIDS) and many least developed countries (LDCs) and low-income countries. There are clear gaps in financing for Africa and certain country groups, and limited interest in LFCCs and SIDS. The GEF has described the changing international architecture for environmental financing and its implications for forests. The move towards catalytic and results-based financing, and the proliferation of funding require mandates to be coordinated under a collective United Nations sustainable land regime.

### 3. The thirteenth and fourteenth Senior Officials meetings (2007 and 2008) of the Environment Management Group

40. In the context of The Strategy, the Environment Management Group (EMG) plays an active role in efforts to mobilize a United Nations network on sustainable land management and land-use issues. The EMG Senior Officials meeting held in Poznan in October 2008 and the EMG technical meeting of February 2009 ([www.unemg.org](http://www.unemg.org)), aimed at identifying the scope, modalities, and deliverables of an EMG process on land, including identification of time-bound issues for a coordinated United Nations system-wide contribution to the implementation of The Strategy. On the initiative of the UNCCD secretariat, the EMG considered a road map to make sure that conservation and soil integrity issues are fully integrated into the broader agenda of sustainable development and incorporated in the programmes of work of the United Nations agencies and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEA).

41. EMG members, such as FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), are working to provide adequate responses to land-based problems, such as soil fertility and food production, and address the important issue of rural development in the renewed context of a looming food crisis.

42. Other agencies, directly or indirectly, address land degradation and land-based issues. They include the CBD on drylands, wetlands and forest ecosystems, UNFCCC on climate change and adaptation, the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, the Chemical Cluster on land pollution issues and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) on urbanization-related land management. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are concerned with drought-related malnutrition, while the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assess the push factors of migrant flows and address the environmental impact of refugees in drylands. The UNISDR is closely linked to UNCCD-related matters such as drought, sand storms, forest fires or flash floods. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), especially within the current CSD cycle, focuses on agriculture, rural development and land degradation and desertification.

43. In supporting the implementation of The Strategy and in seeking a consistent response to it, the EMG meetings of 2008 and 2009 agreed on the need for a common, harmonized system-wide vision to set the agenda for action on the state of land, on challenges and opportunities vis-à-vis the emerging issues and/or opportunities for investment as seen from a coherent economic, social and environmental perspective. In order to respond to these concerns and set out a clear agenda, the EMG will prepare an inter-institutional report, with the support of core agencies, to highlight the importance of drylands as they relate to key issues in the global agenda, including climate change and food security and the investment opportunities offered. The report will provide concrete recommendations on opportunities, particularly those in support of drylands for energy production, carbon sequestration and associated social, institutional and economic innovations, including economic incentives for land-use management. The EMG secretariat, in consultation with the UNCCD secretariat and the core group of United Nations agencies, will submit the report to the EMG Senior Officials meeting in September 2009. The report would include updates on the progress and results of the consultations on land, preparations for the UNCCD COP 9 and the establishment of an issue management group on land to follow up the work of the core group.

### **C. Strategic objective 3: Generating global benefits through effective implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification**

44. Effective implementation of the UNCCD will generate global benefits, particularly if conducted within a comprehensive and integrated partnership approach, taking into consideration the different causes and aspects of land degradation and desertification.

45. A partnership comprising all relevant United Nations entities, the World Bank and other stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would improve current land management standards in desertification-affected countries. This could be done under a 'UN-Land' framework in which integrated land and water resources management could be improved and effectively implemented. By reducing desertification and land degradation, ecosystem goods and services can be secured and poverty reduced, all of which generate global benefits. The UNFCCC, UNEP/CBD and UNDP are currently active in this area as well.

## 1. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

46. The UNCCD secretariat works with the UNFCCC secretariat on the main operational objectives of The Strategy, which calls on stakeholders to foster sustainable land management (SLM) practices in drylands as they have significant carbon sequestration potential. Due to the increased awareness of the carbon content of dryland soils combined with the promotion of carbon finance as a possible source of future resources, attention is now focused on partnerships that strengthen weak institutions, improving limited infrastructure and aligning resource-poor agricultural systems to increase capacity to undertake action under climate adaptation work.

47. The secretariat is placing DLDD at centre stage as a process that creates beneficial synergies to address both climate change (mitigation and adaptation) and land degradation. This requires an action-oriented focus in LDCs, SIDS, mountainous regions and other affected developing countries; by jointly implementing at the field level the priorities set forth in the UNCCD/NAPs and, where they exist, the UNFCCC National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs). This can result in 'combating desertification' becoming the subject platform for addressing global challenges that include food security, forced human migration and environmental refugees and the right to water. The NAPs and NAPAs can be positioned as the implementation and investment instruments. Building partnerships for the implementation of the NAPs, The Strategy, the NAPAs and the UNFCCC national climate change strategies, as reported in the national communications, represent an important opportunity to establish a comprehensive policy instrument and cost-effective synergy for implementing the Conventions.

48. Synergy action should be linked both to mitigation and to adaptation and taken into account when implementing the UNCCD/NAPs. Examples of synergy-in-action may be found in the following countries: Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, which jointly prepared a submission to the fifth session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the UNFCCC (AWG-LCA 5) in April 2009, to flag the importance and relevance of a decision for including the potential of soils in drylands in sequestering carbon. One such exponent is "biochar", a soil amendment technology and bio-energy co-production from agricultural and forestry biomass that can significantly help in improving efficiency in the use of biomass for energy and reducing emissions by displacing fossil fuel use and sequestering carbon in stable soil carbon pools.

49. Work at the country level is aimed at demonstrating the complementarity and convergence of NAPs and NAPAs. Partnerships between UNFCCC and UNCCD secretariats are a growing feature of sustainable environmental management in countries affected by desertification. The secretariats of the UNFCCC and UNCCD agreed in May 2008 to promote projects in least developed countries addressing/that address both climate change and land degradation as specified in NAPs and NAPAs.

50. Multi-institutional partnerships are needed for soil carbon sequestration accounting because it is increasingly clear that no sector in society can address the complexities surrounding land issues on its own. By aligning NAPs with The Strategy and seeking for joint

implementation with NAPAs, the UNCCD secretariat will be in a better position to assist countries to accomplish goals that none could achieve alone.

## 2. Participation in the Climate Change and Migration Forums organized by the United Nations University and others

51. During the 2008–2009 forums, two presentations were made on water-scarce ecosystems, migration and the integrated role of land. Water-scarce ecosystems should be included within the adaptation framework negotiated under the UNFCCC because economic opportunities can be promoted thematically (water scarcity) and translated into options for resource allocation and investment. The role that markets and the private sector play alongside governments in addressing water scarcity is extremely relevant. It has been observed, however, that the relationships between land and water need to be enhanced in the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Several meetings of the United Nations Water Group attended by the secretariat, and meetings with its coordinator included a number of special presentations on The Strategy. The UNCCD secretariat is tasked to draw up a draft proposal, terms of reference and a draft strategic work programme, with targets and deliveries for two years.

## 3. The UN-Water framework

52. The UNCCD secretariat is taking an active role in the work of UN-Water, the body which strengthens coordination and coherence among United Nations entities dealing with issues relating to all aspects of freshwater and sanitation, including surface and groundwater resources, the interface between freshwater and seawater and water-related disasters. A coherent, coordinated approach is clearly required as these issues represent some of the most urgent development challenges of our time. The secretariat participated in the tenth annual meeting of UN-Water, held in Perugia, Italy, to discuss how the UN-Water mechanism should address emerging issues and challenges and their impact on the water and sanitation agenda. The discussion focused on both technical and organizational aspects, including how best to address the issues within the UN-Water mechanism, the scope, how issues should be selected and how to disseminate the findings of the processes.

53. The organization of a dialogue on drought issues was also envisaged, considering that drought poses serious and long-term water scarcity challenges that have global impacts, undermine poverty and hunger eradication efforts and threaten attainment of the MDGs. Thus, such a dialogue was considered imperative in reviewing and assessing the impacts of drought in affected water-scarce ecosystems on the availability and accessibility of water resources, as a tool for harnessing the development of better knowledge on the effects of DLDD on water and assessing the cost of inaction and income forgone through the loss of livelihoods in affected water-scarce ecosystems.

54. Consequently, in implementing The Strategy – which recognizes that the impacts of DLDD on fresh water sources are one of the most crucial challenges faced by dry and arid communities – the UNCCD secretariat is taking action on integrated policy development on water scarcity. This is based on the potential for generating resources for investment in water-related action in dryland communities that accrue global environmental benefits by sustainably

conserving significant agricultural biodiversity and resilient agro-ecosystem management practices,<sup>7</sup> preservation of habitats and genetic resources and reversal of DLDD trends.

#### 4. Recommendations of the fifth World Water Forum as inputs for Parties

55. The fifth World Water Forum took place in Istanbul, Turkey, from 16–22 March 2009. The Forum aimed to find sustainable solutions to current water-related problems. Of particular interest for the UNCCD secretariat was the prominent recognition given to the process of mitigating the effects of drought. Drought is a natural phenomenon whose occurrence is impossible to control, although the resulting impacts can be mitigated to a certain extent, namely through appropriate surveillance and planning and management strategies. Although, in the past, drought has been characterized by particular climatic zones, drought episodes are becoming more frequent, and countries that had never faced this challenge before have to be prepared to deal with it. Climate change forecasts, which point to a decrease in precipitation and a rise in temperature in the coming years, predict an increase in the number and intensity of these phenomena, especially in areas already experiencing water scarcity. In this sense, the Forum recognized that there was a need to start changing the approach to drought events. The world can no longer afford to be reactive, developing only crisis management strategies. Drought management plans must be drawn up as a matter of urgency with specific measures that are based on a risk prevention approach. Bearing in mind the experiences of countries that have already faced such events, participants were convinced that data collection and monitoring of water resources must be a fundamental part of the strategy and strongly defended the creation of drought observatories, whose mission would be to collect data and analyse the conditions of water resources to prevent drought impacts. The Forum also recommended that drought risk management mechanisms should be established and early warning systems should be further developed to reduce the possible economic, social and environmental effects of droughts. Noting that water scarcity appeared when water demands exceeded the water resources exploitable under sustainable conditions, the Forum agreed that this was a major issue that had to be tackled jointly with drought planning management.

56. Drought does not recognize political or administrative boundaries. Aware of the relevance of cooperation between riparian states during a drought episode, the Forum strongly encouraged riparian states to conduct dialogues, to exchange views on how to manage drought situations and to develop common mechanisms to prevent damaging impacts while protecting hydrological ecosystems. The Forum further recognized the need for action at different levels, such as metering programmes or improving saving and water efficient technologies, as well as raising public awareness of the importance of rational water use. The Forum encouraged countries to increase the use of non-conventional water resources, such as wastewater re-use and desalination. The development of sound indicators on drought should be included when addressing water policies. One suggested indicator is 'soil moisture'. Finally, the Forum recommended the strengthening of national and international cooperation in drought relief and disaster reduction.

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<sup>7</sup> These practices include, inter alia, reducing soil erosion and sedimentation; adapting sustainable techniques such as organic farming and agro forestry; restoring soil productivity through nutrient cycling, moisture and land cover management; water management for domestic uses, fishing, and irrigation or drainage and other conservation measures; restoring water quality and recharge; and protecting wetlands and coastal zones from agricultural and settlement encroachment.

#### **D. Strategic objective 4: Mobilizing resources to support implementation at all levels**

57. A comprehensive stakeholder partnership is needed to implement The Strategy and provide long-term, sustainable relief to the affected country Parties that help to improve the living conditions of affected populations and to improve the condition of affected ecosystems. Strong partnerships secure capacity building and build scientific networks that provide knowledge to accelerate the implementation of the Convention.

58. The partnership structure needed to implement the Convention should involve relevant United Nations bodies, including those with a mandate to provide food security, ensuring ecosystem functioning and addressing climate change aspects, and the social or economic aspects linked to the DLDD nexus. A United Nations framework for convergence in the delivery of The Strategy needs to include a broader spectrum of agencies.

##### 1. Global Environmental Facility: further inputs for Parties - a way forward

59. The GEF's mandate is derived from the three principal environment-related international conventions – the UNCCD, the CBD and the UNFCCC. The elements of the draft GEF strategy for its fifth replenishment cycle were to be released in June 2009, need to clearly address the generation of sustainable flows of ecosystem goods and services and land degradation due to competing land uses. The role of land issues in the fifth replenishment provides an opportunity for multi-sector leadership and synergy to build sustainable land management under The Strategy. Further information relating to the role of the GEF can be found in documents ICCD/CRIC(8)/3 and Add.1.

60. The Adaptation Fund (AF) was adopted by the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol at its third session to finance concrete adaptation projects in developing countries that are Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. AF funding offers a further opportunity for countries with arid and semi-arid areas or areas likely to suffer from DLDD, and developing countries, especially LDCs, SIDS, and those with fragile mountain ecosystems to implement their policy priorities on adaptation to climate change.<sup>8</sup>

##### 2. World Bank and Sustainable Land Management

61. The World Bank, as a GEF implementing agency, has several programmes and approaches for addressing the DLDD complex through SLM. SLM is defined as a knowledge-based procedure that helps to integrate land, water, biodiversity and environmental management (including input and output externalities and spill-over effects) to meet rising food and fibre demands while sustaining ecosystem services and livelihoods. The SLM approach is the basic

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<sup>8</sup> Some of these can be related to those set forth in the NAPs such as: dry land management; risk management (warning systems, prevention); agriculture production and mobile livestock production; water resources; fragile ecosystems (including mountain forest ecosystems and forests); monitoring and early warning systems for DLDD control and assessment; natural resource management, sand and sand-dust control; implementation of innovative income-generating activities, food security; harmonization of environmental and public policies; and possibly for the establishment of regional and subregional drought management centres as well as for assessing the impacts of resilience reduction resulting from natural catastrophes linked to DLDD.

approach mainstreamed into World Bank projects to address land degradation, including those within the World Bank/GEF under the TerrAfrica umbrella. SLM is necessary to meet the requirements of a growing population. Improper land management leads to land degradation and a reduction in the production of goods and services (biodiversity niches, hydrology, carbon sequestration and ecosystem services) functions of watersheds and landscapes.

62. The roles and functions of the World Bank in addressing DLDD could be several, as Bank projects are addressing the living conditions of affected populations and the condition of affected ecosystems. Currently, the UNCCD secretariat is supporting the TerrAfrica platform as the most important World Bank supported initiative addressing DLDD.<sup>9</sup>

### **III. Joint Liaison Group for the Rio Conventions**

63. The JLG is supporting a framework to promote synergies in the implementation of the UNFCCC's NAPAs, the CBD's national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) and the UNCCD's NAPs. Advice on strengthening the links between NAPs, NBSAPs and NAPAs remains a critical ingredient of work programmes. The JLG provides opportunities for synergy among activities for climate change mitigation and adaptation, activities to combat land degradation and desertification, and activities for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

64. The process of establishing the JLG was begun in 2001 by the UNFCCC and CBD secretariats at the fourteenth session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of the UNFCCC. The UNCCD secretariat was invited to participate in order to enhance coordination between the three conventions and explore opportunities for further cooperation. The session emphasized the need for enhanced cooperation between the UNFCCC and other relevant conventions and stressed the importance of coordination at the national level; it also welcomed the proposal by the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the CBD on potential areas of collaboration and coordinated action and it further encouraged Parties of the UNFCCC to promote the involvement of climate change expertise in the CBD pilot assessment of the inter-linkages between climate change and biological diversity. Over time, the JLG has produced and recommended substantive information on various tools and methodologies that have benefited the design of projects and activities at the national level. The Secretariats CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC have shared information and experience on a number of work programmes, policies and guidelines that have provided guidance to other institutions, particularly the GEF.

65. The COP may wish therefore to provide guidance on appropriate ways and means to follow up actions under The Strategy, in the following areas:

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<sup>9</sup> Another programme addressing DLDD is the World Bank's Rural Land Resources Management (LRM) Programme, which develops and promotes knowledge-based technical, social, institutional and policy choices for countries. The programme aims at improving management of rural land and includes raising the profile of the risk and vulnerability impacts of climate change on communities' natural resources (land/water) and promotes appropriate adaptation mechanisms and mainstreaming of integrated approaches to land and water resources management for food security and poverty reduction.

(a) Opportunities and modalities for synergy action at the appropriate levels, including institutional, with local and global benefits;

(b) Opportunities for the inclusion of carbon contained in soils (mitigation and associated synergy options);

(c) Adaptation to climate change using SLM as key implementation practice of the Strategy;

(d) Implementation of strategic objective 4, in particular, through the GEF Adaptation Fund;

(e) Dryland assessment, including biodiversity targets and forest management, for policy advice, based on scientific inputs;

(f) Synergy and inter-linkages on implementation of policies and measures on DLDD at the regional level, including Regional Action Programmes (RAPs);

(g) Partnership building modalities and a cooperative framework within the United Nations system; and

(h) Dialogue on drought risk management, its global framework system, including early warning.

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