

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

#### **ALGERIA**

Biskra: In observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification (WDCD) held on 17 June, the Association of Friends of the Environment (AAE), in collaboration with the Scouts, organized an awareness-raising day for children. The theme was "Preserving land and water = Protecting our future for us." In order to educate children about the importance of preserving land and water, the organization mounted an exhibition at the scouts' headquarters in Wilaya ya Biskra, Algeria. Organizers explained desertification, its causes, consequences and ways to fight the scourge, and also explained climate change, its causes, consequences, impact on different ecosystems, including drylands, and how to deal with the phenomenon.

Following a discussion with children on the exhibition, AAE screened the film Home, by Yann Arthus-Bertrand, to raise greater awareness on different environmental issues, including climate change and desertification. This film aroused curiosity and interest among the children on environmental issues and opened a lively and informative debate. To conclude the day, a contest was held on the best essay on the theme of the Day. The event was broadcast on local radio. This coverage and the banners designed for the event and posters provided by the secretariat of the UNCCD facilitated greater reach among the local people.

#### **AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

The African Development Bank has set up a website dedicated to the World Day to Combat Desertification to highlight the threat that desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) pose to human security by depriving people of their livelihoods. The page stresses the effects of DLDD in the context of migration noting that for the period leading up to the year 2050 there will be an estimated 200 million environmentally induced migrants. The page also offers insights into the expected revenue losses by regions severely affected by DLDD. It cites the fact that arid and semi-arid areas in sub-Saharan Africa are projected to increase by 60-90 million hectares by 2090, which the Bank stresses would imply revenue losses of 26% for drylands in sub-Saharan Africa by 2060. This amounts to approximately US\$26 billion (in constant 2004 terms) and is equivalent to three-quarters of aid transfers to the region. The link to the site can be found above.

#### **BENIN**

Gender, Communication and Social Welfare (GECOSOW): In the context of the World Day to Combat Desertification, the non-governmental organization Gender, Communication and Social Welfare (GECOSOW) in Benin organized a day of discussions on how best to raise awareness on

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

desertification and conducted training on the facilitation of knowledge dissemination. Members of the organization stressed the importance of involving students and young people, as these will be the future agents of change when it comes to combating environmental degradation.

A follow-up event was planned for 17 July 2009 that aims to do implement the recommendation. Thus 150 students will participate in the planned workshop, which will include the dissemination of material on desertification, land degradation and drought, a quiz on the information received with prizes for the winners and a screening of the film Desertification “the silent killer.”

### **BURKINA FASO**

In observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification on 17 June 2009, the non-governmental organization Association Prudence au Sahel (APS) from Burkina Faso, under the aegis of the Association Réelwéné pour le Développement (ARD), organized an awareness raising event on environmental challenges. As with the past, the event was held at the head office of the Association for the Development of Rambo Village in Burkina Faso.

The Mayor of the region and the head of department on environmental services addressed the gathering, which was attended by over 150 people. The event considered the interdependence of agriculture and the environment, environmental degradation and the sustainable management of natural resources in the context of decentralization in Burkina Faso.

### **BURUNDI**

The Organization for the Defense of the Environment in Burundi (ODEB) collaborated with the Government of Burundi and other partners in observance of the World Day of the Combat Desertification. ODEB distributed the UNCCD ten-year strategic plan and framework for the implementation of the Convention (2008-2010) to different media outlets, official and private radios, the administration and NGOs in order to raise awareness of the Strategy in the public. Increasing awareness would contribute to the achievement of the Convention’s objectives and enhance responses to the challenge of soil degradation and desertification.

### **CANADA**

Toronto Youth group: In the context of WDCD 2009, a small youth group, including a Grade 9 student at Ursula Franklin Academy High school in Toronto, Canada, took the initiative to organize a project to raise awareness of the effects of desertification, land degradation and drought.

The group created a website to explain the problems faced in drylands and why deserts shift and change and also highlighted some possible solutions including sustainable farming practices

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

and need for the issue to be taken seriously at the government policy level. They also utilized the media creatively using pod-casts, video and power point presentations to generate further understanding of the topic. The UNCCD encourages self-driven projects and knowledge sharing exercises amongst youth groups and provide information materials (for more information, contact secretariat (at) unccd.int).

#### **DRYNET - SLIDESHOW**

In observance of the World day to Combat Desertification, Drynet organized a slide show of images to depict the beauty, diversity and resilience of drylands and their inhabitants. Drynet is a three-year networking and capacity building initiative that aims to strengthen the voices of local dryland communities through their organizations. It is made up of 14 civil society organizations (CSO) from different parts of the world that are involved in combating land degradation by addressing the gap between policy making and implementation needs of local communities and organizations living and working in drylands.

#### **ELECTROLUX, WATERSAVINGS**

In observance of the UN World Day to Combat Desertification, Electrolux, a global leader in appliances for household and professional use, launched an on-line water calculator that allows individuals to compare how much could be saved in every household, city and 22 European countries, if everyone used a modern dishwasher as opposed to washing dirty dishes by hand. According to the website, Europe could potentially save more than 990 million m<sup>3</sup> of fresh water every year, equivalent to the annual consumption of water by Denmark, if residents switched to automated cleaning. UNESCO's World Water Development Report indicates that by 2023, the quantity of fresh water available to everyone will have decreased by 33%. Already, an estimated 41 million people lack access to safe drinking water and 85 million people lack access to basic sanitation in Europe.

“A lot of people have the misconception that the ease of using a dishwasher comes at the expense of consuming huge amounts of water and energy when, in fact, the opposite is true,” says Henrik Sundström, head of Sustainability affairs at the Electrolux Group. In fact, if all UK households that wash dishes by hand changed to modern dishwashers, 125 billion litres could be saved. The Electolux campaign sought “to underline that everyone has a role to play in facing the challenge of water scarcity. By adopting energy and water-lean technologies, consumers can make eco-smart choices a part of their daily life.” The WaterSavings site is an awareness raising tool on the role Europeans can play in meeting this challenge.

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

#### **EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY (ESA)**

The European Space Agency (ESA) is supporting the 2009 World Day to Combat Desertification. The ESA has been developing information services based on satellite Earth Observation technologies in order to allow a better assessment and monitoring of desertification and land degradation for more than 8 years now. In Europe, a program named “DesertWatch” has been launched in 2004 with the support of three of the most affected European countries Italy, Turkey and Portugal – an extension of this program is planned. In Africa, the ESA has set up the “Tiger initiative”, another satellite based project on water management.

#### **FIJI**

Ministry of Agriculture: On 17 June, Fiji will organize an event in Koromakawa Village in the Cakaudrove province, with a view to showcase a project on sustainable land management (SLM) being implemented there. Speaking to Fiji’s press, Osea Bolawaqatabu, Principal Research Officer for Land Use in the Ministry of Agriculture, said: “on this day we would like to remind everyone that [the] threat to soil security unleashed by land degradation and the effects of droughts constitute a peril to securing our common future.”

Activities to stress this message will include presenting the techniques of soil conservation and farm management used on Koromakawa’s SLM project and displays focusing on the primary theme of the day ‘Conserving land and water = Securing our common future’. Organizers of WDCD in Fiji are focusing on knowledge sharing and awareness raising as well as a commemorating the efforts undertaken to combat desertification in the region.

#### **FRANCE**

SOS Sahel: SOS Sahel hosted ‘Jam Sahel 2009’, a music extravaganza organized in the spirit of solidarity with the Sahel, in observance of the 17 June World Day to Combat Desertification. Performers from a variety of musical genres – from hip hop to jazz electro, and funk to world music – gathered at the Paris’ Parc de Choisy for an evening of musical improvisation. This sixth free musical event organized by SOS-Sahel since 2003 was to raise awareness about the plight of the 180 million Sahelians living in a constant struggle for survival due to desertification and land degradation and continued periods of drought. To view information and photographs of the event, visit: <http://www.jamsahel.org/>. For more information on SOS-Sahel, go to: <http://www.sossahel.org/>.

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

#### **GEORGIA**

EcoVision: In observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification on June 17, the non-governmental organization EcoVision of Georgia, in cooperation with GTZ, held a seminar in the Dedoplistskaro Administrative District, Georgia. Lekso Matchavariani, Deputy Minister of Environment, opened the meeting. The UNCCD National focal point at the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources presented the UNCCD's and Georgia's roles in the implementation of the Convention. Presentations highlighted the severe effects of land degradation on local agriculture, which is the only developed sector of the economy in the region, and stressed the deteriorating environmental conditions in the Southern Caucasus region.

The knowledge, skills and advanced tools developed by the UNCCD's Committee on Science and Technology (CST) were also shared with local stakeholders and linked to the region's local, long-term experience and traditional knowledge. Attended by representatives from the Ministry of the Environment, local government, farmers, NGOs, local school teachers and national and local media, the event aimed to draw attention of government bodies to the critical effects of climate change on local agriculture and to strengthen the involvement of civil society in the implementation of the Convention.

#### **GERMANY**

Illingen (Saarland): During the educational lesson entitled "Wüste" ("Desert"), Class 7a of the Illtalgymnasium (Illigen/Saarland) constructed models of deserts that they later presented at a public "geographical vernissage" (a geographic exhibition) in Illigen. The pupils, aged about 10-11 years, also conducted lectures on several issues connected with desertification and produced other learning and documentation materials on desertification and land degradation. Class 11 from the same school and its teacher are shooting a short film on protecting soil and water, with the intention of raising awareness. In preparation for the activity, the pupils have already designed various power point presentations focusing on different aspects of water scarcity. They have also prepared and exhibited posters depicting the overexploitation of natural resources at the Landtag of the Saarland.

#### **GHANA**

Friends of the Earth-Ghana: To commemorate the World Day to Combat Desertification this year, Friends of the Earth-Ghana (FOE-Ghana) undertook a number of activities in Wulugu, a small but busy farming community in the West Mamprusi District of the Northern region. On 16 June, FOE-Ghana organized a tree planting activity with Women groups in the community. Mango seedlings were provided by FOE-Ghana, and planted in community open spaces by over

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

30 members. Measures were taken to protect the seedlings from damage, and FOE-Ghana provided further advice on how to care for them. FOE-Ghana announced that the condition of the tree would be evaluated in a year's time and those that were maintained would receive prizes. Meetings were held throughout the day in which additional projects were agreed, especially the creation of community mango tree farms. The women's groups had stressed the importance of the mango fruit as a source of their food and income and suggested it would help cushion them from food insecurity and hunger. In response, FOE-Ghana accepted their proposals and committed to fundraise to support them in the scheme.

Additional activities were undertaken on 17 June. FOE-Ghana participated in the national rally also held in Wulugu, and was attended by neighboring community groups, policy makers, NGOs, school children, farmer and women's organizations and the local media. The speeches delivered stressed the challenges of desertification in the area and their negative implications for livelihoods, and sustainable development in Ghana. Sherry Ayitey, Minister of Environment, Science & Technology, urged people to engage in environmental protection in the coming years. Local groups performed traditional dances, cultural displays and drama, and prizes were awarded to individuals in recognition of their contribution to combating desertification in Ghana's northern savannah.

ADICOD: Actions for the Integral Development of the Deprived Communities (ADICODE), a non-governmental organization from Ghana, is organizing a one-day parade in Kpetoe in the Adaklu-Anyigbe District on 17 June. Local communities, schools, the district assembly and stakeholders will participate with a view to raise awareness on the issues of climate change, land degradation and the restoration of the Tordzie River, and how to reverse the effects of desertification. The event will also involve presentations, awards to the most "environmentally conscious" individuals and schools in the local community and a session on how women can become more environmentally conscious in their day to day activities.

### **HAITI**

In commemoration of the World Day to Combat Desertification, a number of activities were organized by governmental and non-governmental organizations in Haiti under the Day's theme, "Conserving land and water = securing our common future."

In observance of the Day, Haiti Survie organized a three-day training and capacity building workshop on water management, which was attended by 98 representatives of grassroots organizations. Over the past two years, Haiti Survie, a civil society organization, has conducted a national campaign on desertification and reforestation, sustainable agriculture, climate change,

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

erosion and soil degradation and waste management. The organization conducts awareness raising campaigns on various issues.

#### **INDIA**

Tamil Nadu: The Tamil Nadu Environment Council (TNEC), in collaboration with the VAIGAI Trust, observed the World Day to Combat Desertification by holding a tree planting and awareness-raising rally at the Kallar Government Higher Secondary School in Nilakkottai, Tamil Nadu, and India. Presenters explained the causes and impacts of desertification to students and stressed the key role every day human activities play in further degrading the land. The tree-planting programme engaged students in a procession aimed at highlighting the issues of desertification, drought and land degradation.

The Yerala Projects Society will launch the "Save 300 Million Litres of Water" project to celebrate the 2009 World Day to Combat Desertification. The launch of the project aims to inform about the project's design and the wider impacts of desertification and loss of biodiversity, and will allow participation through a question and answer session. The launch will take place in the drought-hit villages of Jath block of Sangli in Maharashtra, India. Organizers expect the scheme involving more than 250 local farmers to realize the sustainable use of water in the region.

The project area receives an average of 450 mm of rainfall each year therefore, the efficient use of every drop is crucial. In this context, new subsoil irrigation techniques using 'diffusers' will be introduced in 200 acres of horticultural orchards that are irrigated by the traditional method at present. The Yerala Project Society considers this a highly sustainable water saving technique as it does not require machinery or electricity to function. This is vital to assisting locals in their day-to-day struggles for water access.

#### **ITALY**

Istituto Europeo di Design, Turin (IED): The Istituto Europeo di Design of Turin, Italy, inaugurated the photo exhibition titled "TERRA DESERTA - Desert Land" on 17 June during the observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification. During the 2007-2008 academic year, the Istituto Europeo di Design (IED) decided to dedicate the final thesis project by students in the three-year photography course to desertification, and to desertification in Portugal in particular. For several years, IED has engaged in a policy to focus attention to, and heighten awareness on, social and environmental challenges. Thus, every year, the institute dedicates the final thesis to a current social, environmental or cultural challenge. In 2008, the initiative entailed a mission by 20 young photographers to the Portuguese territories of Alentejo and

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

Algarve that are among the most affected by desertification, to communicate the reality of these regions through dramatic photographic images.

The 'Un Punto Macrobiotico' International Association (UPM): UPM from Ancona, Italy, in collaboration with the Italian National Commission for UNESCO and the Department of Agriculture of the University of Ancona, is organizing a conference on 19 June. Titled "Ma-Pi Polyculture: a proposal for sustainable agriculture," the conference aims to raise awareness on issues connected with combating desertification. The organization also hopes it can formulate proposals on sustainable agriculture from the contributions of the participants from scientific and academic communities, as well as local farmers. The conference is the second of its kind. The first, on the same subject and organized in partnership of the UNCCD, took place a year ago to mark the World day to Combat Desertification in 2008.

National Forestry Department: The Italian National Forestry Department, in cooperation with the Italian Academy of Forest Science and the Italian Federation of Agronomists and Foresters hosted a workshop on the role of forest resources in combating drought and desertification on the occasion of the observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Italian scientific and academic institutions. During the event, a monograph was presented focusing on the role of reforestation in combating desertification in the Mediterranean drylands and the long-term environmental benefits of reforestation activities.

The Italian Institute for Agricultural Economics Combating desertification: new challenges and national and international operative tools.

To celebrate the World Day to Combat Desertification, the Italian Institute for Agricultural Economics held an institutional workshop in Rome on 17 June. Roberto Menia, Under-Secretary of State for the Ministry of Environment with a specific mandate on desertification, opened the meeting. In order to address the challenge of desertification, he suggested that the UNCCD develop effective measures to enhance synergy with other conventions and for the protection of water resources. He added that the Italian Government should update the NAP, assume the leadership role at international level and establish new synergies with other national institutions, such as the Ministry of Agricultural Policies, the Regions and river basin authorities. In this regard, the 2015 Expo, in the framework of food security policies, would be a good opportunity for Italy to obtain more visibility at the international level.

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

Participants stressed the need for knowledge, better use of existing resources, better coordination between agencies and conventions, establishment of training in public-private partnership and an efficient communication strategy.

#### **LEBANON**

**Makhzoumi Foundation:** The Makhzoumi Foundation, based in Lebanon, celebrated the Day by conducting an awareness raising initiative through advertising. Information on the Foundation's reforestation project and posters in Arabic and English on the day's theme, "Conserving land and water=Securing our common future," were mailed out on 17 June to approximately 10,000 people. Established in 1997, the Makhzoumi Foundation is a private, Lebanese non-profit organization contributing through its programs to civil society development. It has been a member of the UNCCD since 2003 and works to promote sustainable agriculture, effective management of natural resources and combating desertification through its agroforestry development project and environmental education. View the posters in English and Arabic.

#### **LIBRARIES**

A number of libraries in the Bonn area have made efforts to provide information on the issues of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought in observance of the Day.

**InWent Library:** The Inwent Documentation Centre and Library has made a page available with research papers relevant to the theme of World Day to Combat Desertification. The library provides information in the field of development cooperation, developing countries and global structural policy. Commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Documentation Centre and Library is a broker of knowledge and information for public and private institutions and persons active in the field of German development cooperation. It promotes public approval of development policy objectives in Germany.

**CAESAR library:** The library at CAESAR specializing in scientific and technical information has set up an exhibition for the World Day to Combat Desertification in its lobby. The topics of the collected materials correspond to the research profile of the institute.

**DWA Library:** The library of DWA (German Association for Water, Wastewater and Waste) has established a special webpage for the World Day to Combat Desertification. A specialist technical and scientific organization, DWA focuses on clear concepts and a clean environment, supports sustainable water-resources management and provides expert advice for legislative bodies and policy makers.

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

It has established a discussion forum for ideas and the exchange of opinions, including on the "generally acknowledged rules of technology," rules and standards, training and education programmes, highly specialized publications and materials for public relations work in water-resource management, wastewater, waste and soil conservation. A newly established committee on "Surface Water and Soil" is dealing with issues of comprehensive watershed management, responding to current questions on ecology, a focus on the evaluation, maintenance and design of flowing surface water. Its members assess issues on land utilization, soil conservation and the effects of and possible responses to soil and groundwater pollution.

### **MAURITANIA**

The Government of Mauritania observed the World Day to Combat Desertification on 17 June through a ceremony organized by the commune of Dar Naim to highlight the importance of combating desertification given an increasingly unfavorable climate and other natural hazards.

Mauritania is a Sahelian country located at the front-line of desertification and is threatened by both drought and desertification. The country is also facing major environmental challenges such as vulnerable and fragile ecosystems, and an imbalance in the available, and exploited natural resources. For example, Mauritania's rangeland reserve covers an area of approximately 4.4 million hectares with an annual wood production potential of 565,000 m<sup>3</sup>. However, the annual wood consumption is estimated at 1.8 million m<sup>3</sup>, three times the potential production from the country's existing forest cover.

### **MOLDOVA**

Miscarea Ecologista din Moldova: On 17 June, the organization Miscarea Ecologista din Moldova (MEM-Comrat) conducted a radio broadcast in an effort to raise awareness on desertification, land degradation and drought. The group which works through seminars and training programmes in Moldova with the local level of the agricultural sector (farmers, peasants) and students, answered questions on the state of desertification in the region and what activities are being carried out in an effort to combat and reverse its effects. The 40-minute discussion broadcast, which aired in South Moldova, invited calls from listeners, and provided locals with an opportunity to air their concerns over their environmental situation.

### **PAKISTAN**

Society for the Conservation and Protection of Environment (SCOPE): The Society for the Conservation and Protection of Environment (SCOPE) from Pakistan contributes to the 2009 World Day by organizing a radio programme on desertification and climate. This radio

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

programme consists of an attention-grabbing discussion where experts and general public will be involved. Pakistan is mainly a dry land country. 80 % of the land is arid or semi-arid, and therefore, vulnerable to desertification. SCOPE is involved in UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) since 1993. SCOPE is very concerned about the problem of desertification and land degradation and is thus initiating programmes against desertification in various regions of Pakistan.

The Ministry of Environment in Islamabad, Pakistan, is organizing a Roundtable Meeting in observance of the Day on June 17. Participants will be drawn from stakeholder organizations of the UNCCD and its National Action Programmes (NAP). The Meeting aims to build consensus on national issues relating to desertification, with specific regard to monitoring land degradation, project financing, review and revision of NAPs and preparation for the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, which will take place in Buenos Aires, Argentina later this year. The meeting will be an opportunity for stakeholders to present their achievements in sustainable land and water management, and to introduce future plans for the successful implementation of the convention.

### **PALERMO**

The non-governmental organization CISS (South-South International Cooperation), in collaboration with the Italian task force of NGOs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organized an international conference titled, "Desertification: a future of sand?" in observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification. Held on 18 June in the botanical garden of the University of Palermo, the conference was the closing activity of the 2009 awareness raising campaign entitled, "Deserts: NGOs and the challenge of desertification," undertaken by the network of NGOs. The meeting brought together 30 participants, including Italian and foreign NGO partners, scientists and students. Discussions focused on the link between global environmental challenges, land degradation and sustainable agriculture, and stressed the need to develop new synergies. A prize-giving ceremony also took place to recognize and award winners of a competition that was part of the campaign. Among the winners are high school students whose award is a trip to Tunisia for a field visit to the areas where the NGOs are implementing projects on combating desertification.

### **PERU**

Peruvian NGO Centro ECO organized an awareness-raising event in observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification. Hosted in Illimo in the Lambayeque region, the event involved a special mass, a public procession, presentations about desertification in Peru and globally, a traditional meal and dance and a field visit to the NGO's local projects. According to Centro

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

ECO, the northern coast of Peru is severely affected by desertification, and loses several hectares of dry forest annually. Centro Eco works to prevent and reverse the processes of desertification, deforestation and erosion, while improving the quality of life of rural and marginalized urban populations living in areas suffering high environmental degradation and extreme poverty. It promotes sustainable activities and income generation among inhabitants that depend on the dry forest.

### **PORTUGAL**

National Commission of the NAPCD: The Portuguese National Commission of the NAPCD has announced a seminar themed "Rural Development and Combat to Desertification", to be held in Lisbon on 18 June in commemoration of the World Day to Combat Desertification. The seminar, which will be attended by Portuguese stakeholders and high level institutional representatives of Portuguese speaking countries (Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tomé et Príncipe and Timor), aims to present and discuss the Portuguese experience on the architecture and development of the ProDeR programme (2007 - 2013). This initiative has adopted several actions to combat desertification in Portugal, and received financial support from the European Union.

Prior to the World Day to Combat Desertification celebration on 16 June 2009, the representatives will attend a one-day workshop with field visits to areas affected by desertification in the Margem Esquerda of Guadiana River Region. There will be opportunities to present success stories on the development of projects linking initiatives to combat to desertification and climate change, the protection and promotion of biodiversity and regional water management processes. The areas and projects to be visited include the Alqueva Dam/Reservoir with drought mitigation projects and irrigated areas; the Amareleja Photovoltaic Power Plant, the largest of its kind in the world; and the Contenda forest projects on the restoration of degraded lands.

The UNCCD Secretariat, with the Forestry Department of the Government Portugal, welcomed the initiative, in recognition of the need to involve young people in the fight against desertification and to raise public awareness on the impact of this scourge. The involvement of IED exemplifies the central role that educational institutions can play in addressing desertification, land degradation and drought. During their mission, the students made very personal journeys that provide an opportunity to express their perceptions through photography. The landscape, the faces, the workplaces and daily life in these locations were the objects of the photography reports.

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

Approximately half of the projects focused on the social and cultural aspect of desertification. Images of desolation, abandon and migration depicted through the eyes of the students tell the story, in very graphic terms, of the “human face of desertification. “As a follow up to the 2008 initiative, the IED decided to mount a photo exhibition from the final products. The exhibition was inaugurated at the Galleria Allegretti, an important Modern Art Gallery of Torino, and will remain open for viewing for 10 days, until 27 June. The exhibition sponsors are the UNCCD Secretariat and Cinem Ambiente, the international Environmental Film Festival that takes place every year in Torino. The IED exhibition is expected to be mounted in Portugal in September 2009 with support from the Ministry of Agriculture of Portugal and the UNCCD National Focal Point.

### **ROMANIA**

In observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification on 17 June, the Romanian Academy for Forest and Agricultural Sciences, in cooperation with the Meteorological Service and the Institute for Hydrology and Water Management, organized a conference. Themed “Global climate change and reduction of impacts on agriculture,” discussions emphasized the increasing dependence of agricultural production on climatic hazards, particularly drought, during the plant growth period.

Participants called for the implementation of the revised National Action Programme (2008), including measures concerning rational irrigation, afforestation of degraded lands, establishment of forestry shelterbelts, dry farming and the application of appropriate cultivation practices. The plenary session included presentations on the characteristics of climate and water reserves in recent years, trends and prognoses for the immediate future, the impact, assessment and monitoring of drought on cultivated lands, as well as measures to prevent, combat and reduce the impacts of these phenomena. The event ended with a poster presentation side event, a press conference and discussions, all of which made a significant contribution toward increasing public awareness about desertification, land degradation and drought. The complete agenda of the conference is available at: <http://www.asas.ro/anunturi.html>

### **SENEGAL**

Students, scientists and NGO representatives gathered in the village of Danthiadji in Senegal’s Matam region to observe the World Day to Combat Desertification. Materials were distributed to create awareness of desertification in the region and ways in which to mitigate its effects.

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

The meeting was attended by a large delegation from the Ministry of Environment and a workshop was held in which the local people discussed and asked questions on topics related to desertification, land degradation and drought.

#### **SLOVAKIA**

This year Slovakia celebrated the World Day with an expert exhibition from 17 June to 17 July, held in the exhibition lobby of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Slovak Republic. The exhibition, consisted of ten posters and permanent visual presentation, was opened by Dr. J. Slaby, State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, followed by congratulatory remarks by Dr. M. Okenkova, General Director of Foreign Affairs Section in the Ministry, and by Prof. P. Bielek, Director of Soil Science and Conservation Research Institute in Bratislava and head of the UNCCD NFP in Slovakia. About 50 persons participated in this opening session.

A number of people from the Ministry and visitors enjoyed this instructive exhibition and data presentation on soil and land protection against drought and desertification and other forms of soil degradation. Several newspapers reported about the event. In addition, to commemorate the World Day, a two-day national workshop on "Impacts of climate change on agriculture and rural development" was organized on 14 and 15 July 2009. The workshop was held at Soil Science and Conservation Research Institute in Bratislava under the patronage of V. Becík, Minister of Agriculture. During the workshop, ten comprehensive presentations were made by prominent scientist, including a presentation by Mr. Tomasz Lonc from Regional FAO Office for Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. General conclusions for science and agricultural practice including forest practices were adopted at the end of the workshop.

#### **SRI LANKA**

Saviye Development Foundation: In observance of the 2009 World Day to Combat Desertification, the Saviye Development Foundation, Sri Lanka, organized a number of activities to raise public awareness throughout the region about land degradation. An island-wide competition for poster drawings focusing on the consequences of forest destruction, the importance of forest conservation, the protection of indigenous animal and plant species and the protection of water fountains and natural beauty was organized for junior and senior age groups. The posters entries were exhibited at the municipal council hall in Galle on 17 June and prizes were awarded to the winners.

A large awareness raising campaign was also carried out and attended by 800 people, including representatives of environmental organizations in public and private sectors, school children and politicians. The campaign stressed the WDCD theme of the day "Conserving land and

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

water=Securing our common future” and combating land infertility, and urged community participation to strengthen the implementation of the UNCCD in Sri Lanka. View pictures.

#### **SPAIN**

Fundación IPADE:In observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification, the Madrid based organization Fundación IPADE hosted a video forum and screened the documentary Tukki la huella ambiental, (Tukki, the environmental footprint). Directed by Guillermo García-Ramos, the film highlights international conventions working on sustainability in the context of desertification, biodiversity and climate change. Among the participants were student and NGO representatives and experts on desertification.

#### **THE PHILIPPINES**

Bureau of Soils and Water Management’s (BSWM): A five-day celebration is being held on 15-19 June 2009 at the Bureau of Soils and Water Management’s (BSWM) in Quezon City, The Philippines, as a demonstration of the BSWM’s commitment to support the principle and framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), land degradation, drought and poverty. The event includes a photo exhibition, under the theme “Conserving Land and Water = Securing Our Common Future,” which was opened on 17June at the Bureau’s Soil Museum. The exhibit aims to remind visitors that the threats to soil security unleashed by desertification, land degradation and drought are a peril to securing our common future.

The Bureau has also organized a presentation and initial consultation on the country’s National Action Plan (NAP) with participation by representatives from the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources, Agrarian Reform, Science and Technology, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and State colleges and Universities. This one-day event included the presentation of the first draft of the Revised Philippines National Action Plan (NAP) 2008-2018. A workshop on the development and implementation of the NAPs was held the same afternoon.

#### **TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

The Town and Country Planning Division (TCPD) of the Ministry of Planning, Housing and the Environment of Trinidad and Tobago held public exhibitions at two malls in different areas of the country in observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification. They produced educational posters and brochures and organized games and activities to attract various members of the public, especially children. The exhibitions aimed to raise awareness of

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

desertification, land degradation and drought in the general public and to sensitize shoppers to the messages behind the World Day to Combat Desertification.

#### **UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME**

Given that drought and desertification affect 70 per cent of drylands (and 25 per cent of the earth's surface is drylands), tackling the effects of desertification, land degradation and drought is central to much of the work of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). Thus, UNEP recognises the importance of the World Day to Combat Desertification and is planning a range of activities for 17 June. The activities, aiming to raise awareness on the importance of sustainable land and water management, will include a dedicated web page featuring UNEP posters, press, publications and projects on the day's theme.

#### **UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), located in Washington D.C., is planning an observance event for the Day, focusing on land degradation in Latin America and the Caribbean, where a great amount of land is vulnerable to desertification or yet degraded by now. IDB is concerned about the problems for humanity resulting from land degradation and desertification and supports the international framework provided by the UNCCD.

#### **UNIVERSITY OF CALABRIA**

In the framework of the activities of the World Day to Combat Desertification, the Department of Ecology at the University of Calabria will host a conference on "Mitigation of the desertification process in Calabria in the areas of high vulnerability." The purpose of the meeting is to present a case study on the problems of desertification, land degradation and drought in the region and evaluate the status of the mitigation process in the area. The agenda for the conference is available at <http://geografia.ecologia.unical.it/>.

#### **WORLD VISION AUSTRALIA, WEST AFRICA**

The World Vision Australia's project in Niger, Farmer Managed Regeneration (FMNR), has sent a message of solidarity with the cause behind the World Day to Combat Desertification. The message states those 26 years ago, a small development team from World Vision Australia started experimenting and promoting Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) in Niger. This tree-planting project was born out of the frustration from failures to combat desertification in Niger's harsh environment.

## **WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2009**

### **Events around the world**

FMNR expects rapid reforestation of degraded areas to improve the efficiency of water retention and encourage soil fertility and thus, increase productivity. The practice is based on the premise of that some tree species can sprout from stumps and roots after they are cut down. The project team educates farmers on how to promote regeneration of tree stumps and promotes a flexible community based approach allowing farmers to choose the extent to which they adopt the process when they received guidelines.

The adoption and spread of FMNR has been high. For example: in Niger alone, farmers are practicing FMNR to one degree or another on an estimated 5-6 million hectares and the practice is spreading to other West African countries.