

**SECRETARY-GENERAL, IN MESSAGE ON WORLD DAY TO COMBAT
DESERTIFICATION, WARNS LIVELIHOOD OF 1 BILLION PEOPLE IN
110 COUNTRIES THREATENED**

Following is the message of Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, which is observed 17 June:

Drought and desertification threaten the livelihood of over 1 billion people in more than 110 countries around the world. Last year alone, hundreds of thousands of people in eastern Africa had to abandon their lands when drought rendered farming unsustainable. In the Americas and southern Europe, forest fires devastated millions of acres of land, and massive sandstorms ravaged vast areas of North East Asia.

To address the serious consequences of drought and desertification, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted seven years ago, today. The Convention is a global tool to fight desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. These are both massive undertakings, and many developing countries have adopted National Action Programmes to coordinate their efforts.

Nevertheless, mobilizing the necessary financial resources to combat drought and desertification remains a significant hurdle for many developing countries. I am pleased to see that there is a growing consensus among Member States on the need to provide a reliable financial mechanism to help these countries implement the Convention in a comprehensive and efficient manner. It is also reassuring to note that the Governing Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has expressed strong support for strengthening programmes to combat land degradation, including desertification and deforestation.

Let us seize this occasion to recommit ourselves to the goals of the Convention to Combat Desertification, and to overcoming the obstacles to sustainable development for all.

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