

ALBANIA

NATIONAL REPORT

CONVENTION ON COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

Tirana 30.04.2002

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

In the summary of the Report, that reflects measures taken in our country for the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat desertification, the core of the problems dealt with in each chapter will be presented.

Considering this first presentation of the situation related to desertification in our country important, the description goes beyond the date when Albania adhered to the Convention (April 2000).

Some requirements that could take place at the end of each chapter are not included there, as they have been expressed in the planned projects and activities enclosed in the report.

STRATEGIES AND THE PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED IN THE FRAMEWORK OF PLANS AND/OR POLICIES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

There have been reviewed strategies and plans of areas.

After studying the strategies and plans undertaken in different areas related with issues of land protections and control over degradation and desertification, the following statements can be made:

- These strategies and plans incorporate the concern on land protection and project different actions, but the place this problem occupies and the steps/actions that are planned are different from one strategy/plan to the other.
- There are no detailed plans for actions that need to be undertaken for the future and there is no detailed strategy or action plan.
- The facts/information drawn from the studies materials will be used for the preparation of an efficient National Action Plan avoiding unnecessary duplication and overlapping.

The changes that have taken place after the 90-ies have brought about the need of choosing and adaptation of the until-now- accumulated knowledge/data related to land protection and desertification and what is more important, the drafting of new strategies and action plans, introduction of new concepts (public awareness, participation etc.).

A national Action plan has been adopted for the implementation of the Convention. The planned technical/scientific activity aim at raising the awareness of the society on convention principles as well a sin undertaking concrete actions for land protection and desertification processes control.

In the Institute of earth studies, there has been developed a pilot project on land use. There have been involved in this project Albanian specialist trained in Switzerland and foreign technical assistance was provided through a well-known specialist from GIS. The pilot project has used contemporary program and methods.

One of the components of the project was erosions coefficient change through identifying a structure of agricultural and forest plants that help in protecting the active layers of the

earth and its productivity. On the basis of the recommendations of the plot project (2002) this year a big project will be implemented for land use.

INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION

The Coordinating Board is being established, to coordinate central and local level activities in order to control land desertification. The Board will have an inter-ministerial composition with representatives from the ME, Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF), Ministry of Industry and Energy (MIE), Ministry of Local Governance and Decentralization (MLGD), Agriculture University of Tirana (AUT), NGO-s, as well as representatives from district and prefecture levels, under the chairmanship of the Minister of the Environment.

Other Ministries including ME, as well as several structures that operate in national level such as the Territory Regulation Council of the Republic of Albania, National Water Council etc., directly or indirectly act and extent their control on desertification as a part of the activity, having it as a component of their work.

To summarize, it can be said that in this period the legal framework on land reform is being completed. In the same time the law "On public properties" is being approved and the transfer of the ownership to local governments (2001) has taken place. The legal framework on forestry and pastures is being completed and work has started for the decentralization of forests and pastures (2001). During 2002 the law "On soil protection" is planned to be elaborated, as well as some by-legal acts on administration.

PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES

For the awareness raising process on land protection from degradation and desertification and for the preparation and implementation of the action programme, the participation of as many groups of actors as possible (central and local authorities, NGO-s, local communities etc.) is considered as very important. Thus already established contacts will continue to intensify in the future.

It has been operated in three main directions in order to withdraw the opinion of the above-mentioned actors, as follows:

- through bilateral and multilateral contacts and consultations undertaken with representatives of different institutions/organisations;
- through meetings organised at local level, with representatives of different public administration bodies, to withdraw their opinion on issues related to desertification and efective ways of solutions:
- through a questionnaire that was distributed in some actors (local authorities, NGO-s), in order to get an answer for some important issues on actual and prospective work on land desertification.

Most of the time, the knowledge and awareness of farmers and local communities on land protection issues and desertification phenomenon, have been in function of the activities of the structures that operate in central or local level. The same thing can be said for publications.

Main messages sent out during the meetings and contacts with different actors have been nearly the same, reflecting a general worry expressed by all local communities every time the issues of land degradation is raised.

There are plans to include all of the above-mentioned actors (public administration bodies, foreign organizations and civil society), in the NAP implementation process.

CONSULTATIVE PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES AND PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS WITH DEVELOPED COUNTRY PARTIES AND OTHER INTERESTED ENTITIES

Aiming to ensure a contribute from different partners in the elaboration and later implementation processes of the national action plan, consultations have been organized with interested entities considered as fruitful collaborators during the process of the implementation of the action programme. To be mentioned are UNDP, IFAD, WB and GEF.

Representatives of these organizations are known with planned steps for the preparation and implementation of the National Action Plan. International representatives, knowing the situation of land degradation in the country, evaluate the elaboration and implementation of NAP in Albania as imperative and have expressed their commitment to take part in the implementing process. Those partners are seen from our part as a factor that can generate funds to help the implementation of the Programme. More over two of them WB and IFAD have carried out and are running projects that serve land protection and keeping under control the desertification.

Actually assistance has been assured from IFAD, for the implementation of awareness raising campaigns. In towns where their third project has just started being implemented, in the framework of the awareness raising campaigns of the project, messages on land protection and desertification control will be sent out. These messages are currently being elaborated from the ME staff and IFAD project staff.

Such a cooperation is ensured from the forestry project of the World Bank as well.

PAP/ RAC is seen from our part as a potential partner to contribute in the implementation of the NAP. It operates in Mediterranean level and has contributed in our country caring out a mission on erosion (January 2000).

MEASURES TAKEN OR PLANNED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES, INCLUDING MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT, TO CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES AND PROMOTE THEIR SUSTAINABLE USE, TO IMPROVE

INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION, TO IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE ON DESERTIFICATION AND ITS CONTROL, AND TO MONITOR AND ASSESS DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

Land degradation and desertification in our country have been considered potentially high as the result of climatic and terrestrial factors. But, this kind of degradation becomes more evident from the influence of socio-economic factors. A high scale of land erosion is observed that is the consequence above all, of the deforestation without criteria and destruction of natural meadows and pastures to get soil with agriculture destination, of the cultivation of inclined and very inclined soils with vegetation, cutting without criteria of forests for fuel wood and treatment, over grazing of meadows and pastures up to the extinction of the existing plants, filling and/or getting out of function of ditches of high waters, application of ground irrigation, uncontrolled urbanization, abandonment of land etc.

Using the Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE) values of soil loss from erosion varies between 20-40 ton/hectares/year.

The state of natural resources and the scale of desertification, evaluated up to the moment of NAP compilation, helped in the elaboration of NAP to give recommendations on desertification factors, on priorities that will be followed, as well as measures and investments to be undertaken to combat desertification.

A contribute on land protection and desertification control will give projects that will be carried out in defined fields.

In Albania there are some ongoing projects financially supported by the World Bank (WB), USAID, EU etc., that in a way or another are related with the natural resources management. To be mentioned are: the Project of Irrigation and Drainage Rehabilitation, the Project of Real Estate Registration, the Project of Private Forestry, the Pilot Project for the preparation of GIS in the Institute of Soil Science (ISS) and the Program of Small Grants in the framework of GEF (Global Environmental Facility) of UNDP, three IFAD Projects, the Project of Agricultural Services. All the above mentioned projects have elements that contribute to combat desertification and are elaborated and developed based on principles such as participation and partnership, thus being in line with principles on which UNCCD is set up on.

The preservation of national natural resources is a priority of elaborated action programmes that are to be implemented in our country (Albania) in the framework of the Green Strategy, NEAP 2001, Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, National Strategy of Waters, Energy Action Plan, GPRS etc. In these programmes respective measures related to a sustainable management of natural resources are defined as well.

A direction that is getting the attention of public administration bodies responsible for the natural resources management, is the decentralization.

Actually it is going towards the decentralization of power and delegation of duties to local actors, in a process that has just started.

An increased autonomy of local governance is in process. Competencies are being delegated for the governance on forests and pastures that have passed in the use of local authority units and awareness raising campaigns related to community participation in the governance of forests and pastures in communal use, are organized. Associations of water usage set-up in community level are managing irrigation problems related to the community included on them.

The contribution of Albanian and foreign partners in the elaboration process of the National Action Plan has been present. (In this context meetings and working tables to exchange opinions and contribute in the preparation of NAP have been organized, with representatives from the ministries of agriculture, environment, energy, local governance, scientific agricultural institutions, universities, environmental NGO-s as well as representatives of international organizations that operate in Albania (World Bank, UNDP, IFAD, USAID)).

FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS FROM NATIONAL BUDGETS IN SUPPORT OF IMPLEMENTATION AS WELL AS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION RECEIVED AND NEEDED, IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING REQUIREMENTS

Funds given for land protection from degradation and desertification are generally made up by donations that the government give through MAF, as well as those coming out from ongoing programmes with support/funds mainly from international organizations, mentioned in the previous chapters. These comprise the existing recourses of financing.

Funds in the disposition of local governments from the state budget are generally scarce. The same it can be said for incomes from taxation and other resources, that do not go to protect land from desertification. In this framework, it is understandable to admit that local funds used on issues related to land protection are little and neglectable in comparison with the needs that area have to be protected or rehabilitated.

As the first step the request for the next year's state budget, to allocate more funds that will go on soil protection from degradation and desertification, is foreseen. (Main possibilities for bigger and direct funds for land protection and rehabilitation are from three big projects underway: two funded by WB and one from IFAD).

The financing of NAP from the state budget for the moment seems to be difficult (nevertheless plans are drawn up for the financing of two activities that will be undertaken).

In such regard, funds coming from abroad would be an enormous contribution for the NAP. To this aim, financial assistance is required from GEF, World Bank, UNDP, IFAD, as well as PAP/RAC (as a structure that support projects and activities in the regional framework).

Even though the above-mentioned donors have expressed their readiness and financing possibilities are being examined, there are no concrete plans for projects to be implemented.

With IFAD common awareness raising campaigns are planned to be carried out in the framework of NAP (third ongoing project of IFAD).

REVIEW OF BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS UTILIZED TO MEASURE PROGRESS AND ASSESSMENT THEREOF

The establishment in early '90-s of the Committee of Environment Protection, that was transformed from September 2001 in the Ministry of the Environment, got the premises for the observation, management and monitoring of the environment, as well as set-up the national capacity, for the elaboration and distribution of the gathered information. Environmental observation and monitoring in Albania is carried out, using all national capacities that have in the focus of their activity, environmental issues or specific environmental components.

Actually, data gathered from information systems in all the fields (agriculture, environment, energy, pollution and their treatment, climate changes, biodiversity, etc.) are coordinated and harmonized by the ME, that does the information elaboration, summarizing them in the State of the Environment National Report (published every other year). Work is underway for the data included in this report, to be unified based on the requirements of the European Environment Agency on this issue.

III THE STRATEGIES AND THE PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED IN THE FRAMEWORK OF PLANS AND/OR POLICIES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

I. AVAILABLE NATIONAL STRATEGIES OR PLANS FOR OTHER AREAS

Strategies and development plans have been prepared for various sectors of the Albanian economy. Naturally, not all of them reflect broadly problems related to land, its degradation and desertification phenomenon. This is quite understandable when only issues related to one sector are treated independently. Nevertheless, we should not leave outside our attention the fact that the present developments have made possible such interdependence of factors that is difficult to deal with separate fields or sectors without reciprocal relations with one another.

However, we'll be referring in this material to only those strategies or development plans that have directly or indirectly treated the phenomenon of desertification and its consequences.

The National Development Plan, as the basic act of the country economic and social development is focused upon problems related to land protection from degradation seeing the land as a continuous source of material benefits that needs to be unceasingly maintained and well managed.

The National Environmental Action Plan approved in 1994, covering a period of 5 years, was focused on 10 main directions. Three of them, Erosion and Land Pollution, Management of Natural Resources and Deforestation were directly connected with the land, its protection and deforestation. Despite the efforts made for its implementation, where lack of funds of course played a significant role, some of the planned steps were delayed or have still remained untreated. Thus, for instance, the policies and strategies for land conservation –planned to be realized during a 3-5 year period have started to be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Ministry of Environment beyond the planned schedule, only recently, including in this strategy also the national Action plan which is being prepared for keeping under control desertification.

A new national action plan has been reformulated, responding to the new increasing demands envisaged in the environmental policies. It has been approved in January 2002 and now it is in the implementation stage (this Plan will be introduced below together with directions of work for land protection and deforestation).

Action Plan for Land Protection (PVMT)

Through decision of Council of Ministers no. 463, dated 24.06.1996, "On preparing the action plan for land protection and establishment of the working group for its implementation" it was intended to set up a Working Group for Land Protection, which would function as an inter-ministerial structure at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) (with the participation of one representative from the National Environment

Agency (NEA) presently Ministry of Environment (ME) under the direction of the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

The above mentioned decision of Council of Ministers charged the working group with the task of “coordinating the preparation of the action plan on land protection”, “proposing the institutionalization of the implementation of this plan” etc. This group was convened only in two or three meetings at the beginning and later on its activity was stopped. Therefore its tasks were not accomplished.

The Green Strategy (*Government Strategy for the Development of Agriculture in Albania*), is the official fundamental act of the MAF, approved through decision of Council of Ministers in December 1998. It contains certain policies for agricultural development and in this framework for assessing and fighting erosion and land degradation. The implementation of this strategy will be realized through short-term action plans (two-year) and medium term action plans (three years).

In this document for land protection and keeping under control of erosion, there have been planned several important undertakings such as: drafting appropriate legislation, creation of permanent structures for the management of natural resources, stabilization of a separate budget for agriculture, identification and localization of the most affected areas from erosion, preparation of a strategy for prevention of erosion and policies for protection of non-agricultural lands.

Actually in the framework of this strategy there have been drafted and revised laws such as the law “For the Establishment and Functioning of the Structures for Land Protection”, “On some changes in the law “On the Service of Plants Protection””, etc. and there have been approved some decisions of the Council of Ministers followed by the respective sub legal acts. Other projected issues have been placed under solution, whereas there are some others that still need to be solved in the future such as “*preparation of the strategy for the prevention and giving and end to erosion and policies on protection of non-agricultural lands*”

Strategy and Action Plan on Biodiversity

In October 2000, the Government approved the Strategy and Action Plan on Biodiversity and the establishment of the council of Nature and Biodiversity as an inter-ministerial organ. In January 2001 there were established the Implementation Board of the Strategy and Action Plan on Biodiversity, the Secretariat for the implementation of the Convention on Biodiversity and Ad-Hoc group at NEA (today ME) for implementing the convention of biological diversity. The biggest achievement is the establishment of the Ministry of Environment that has biodiversity as one of its priorities. In the framework of implementing the Strategy and Action Plan on Biodiversity there have been prepared the draft-laws on protected areas and biodiversity.

In this plan, under the subject of agriculture, the actions related to land protection are described as follows:

- Immediate action- development of a national policy for mitigating agricultural land degradation and erosions,
- Short-term action (1-5 years) - Initiation of measures for reducing agricultural land degradation and erosion (e.g. improving practices of land irrigation). Establishment of policies for creating bio-corridors in the agricultural land for setting up the Ecological Network.
- Mid-term action (5-10 years)- Implementation of appropriate encouraging and motivating measures for preserving the ecological integrity of the agricultural land; - Taking measures for the agricultural land near or within protected areas. (Buffering zones)- Transformation of abandoned land into other alternative uses (agriculture, forestry); - Pilot projects for restoring the habitats through transformation of non-productive and rejected land into swamps. Promotion of policies that encourage ecological use of land and agricultural chemicals; Use of advanced technologies in land tillage; - Development of pilot projects for the creation of bio corridors in the agricultural land for establishing ECONET.

The strategy also points out that bad interventions for many years in the agricultural and non-agricultural land (deforestation of 250,000 hectares of forests to be transformed into agricultural land) have led to:

- Huge erosion (several times higher than other European countries);
- Increase of non productive land;
- Abandoned or desert land about 160,000 hectares;
- Biological diversity and degraded and impoverished landscape (some habitats and kinds have been lost and the extension and population of some others have been reduced)

Another statement in the Strategy is related to the use of chemicals and the consequences of population migration.

It is true that Albania does not use high quantities of fertilizers and biocides at national level, but quite often at local level they have been used extensively in high doses affecting gravely the land quality, flora and land fauna composition.

Whereas the phenomenon of population migration in the last 10 years affects the areas abandoned by the population and also the areas where this population gets settled (the abandoned land in the areas they used to live subject to erosion and land degradation; the agricultural land where they settle is greatly damaged).

Analysis of the Situation of Environment and Health in Albania, the National Action Plan on Environment and Health for Albania, prepared by the Ministry of Health in 1998 treats sketchily the problems related to land protection.

In the chapter Agriculture, Pesticides, Forests and Pastures (nature protection) it has been stated that among the main objectives to be realized in the future is the development of forestry not only in their productive function but also in complementing the ecological, land protection, climate, water, landscape, social functions etc.

The Strategy for the Development of Forests and Pastures in Albania was drafted in April- May '98. Problems related to land protection do not occupy a separate space in it. The strategy mentions that the stabilization of the barrages/dams and art works in mountainous terrain has special importance as a preventing element of land erosion and floods, phenomena that have become quite frequent during the recent years.

The national environmental action plan 2001 is the basic document that displays the state policies in the field of environment. It is planned to be extended over a five year period.

The plan was approved at the beginning of this year and it supports activities in the following fundamental fields:

- Development of policies and programmes
- Improvement and completion of legal framework
- Institutional strengthening and capacity building
- Priority investments
- Public information and awareness

In the policies and programmes in the short term and mid term stages there has been identified as a priority the drafting of the *Strategy And Action Plan For Protecting Land From Erosion*, naming also the responsible institutions- the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. For realizing this action a fund of 0.4 million USD is needed and it has not yet been committed. Donors and Albanian government will be approached for this financing.

The actions that will be made part of this strategy and action plan for the protecting land from erosion will be: analysis of the current situation, identification of priority actions, completion of legal framework, strengthening of monitoring systems, drafting of the action plan on priority zones.

In the process of improving and completing the legal and regulatory framework there have been identified as steps to be completed in the short and mid term stage the adoption of the Law on Land Protection (with responsible institutions the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Food, with a financing demand of 0.03 million USD) and the Law on Land Discharge Norms. In both cases this fund will be demanded from various donors and from the Albanian Government.

Even in the three other components,

- Institutional strengthening and capacity building
- Priority investments

- Public information and awareness

there have been planned some actions to be implemented during the implementation stage of NEAP 2001.

In the published draft of NEAP 2001 there have been revealed some conclusions drawn from several years experience in territory use and land management.

Inappropriate utilization of land for a period of several decades has led to its environmental degradation coming from erosion, salinity, abandonment, pollution from urban and industrial discharges.

The responsibility for the land use and administration belongs to some ministries. The responsibilities of some institutions are overlapping and the tasks of each institution are not so clear. The highest decision making organ at national level for land use and territory planning is the Council of Territory Regulation of the Republic, and at local level the Region Councils and Municipality Councils. There have been made some master plans on urban planning in the coastal area and all of them do not pay proper consideration to environment protection. Practically there is no integrated policy on land use.

The main problematic issues in the area of land management in NEAP –2001 have been identified as follows:

- Land degradation (erosion, lowering of land yield, salinity)
- Land pollution (urban and industrial)
- Slides and floods
- Unsustainable use of land
- Lack of plans for integrated use of land
- Unclear competencies of responsible institutions
- Incomplete legislation and weak law enforcement
- Uncontrolled urbanization

Further treatment of these issues has not been made.

Decision of Council of Ministers no. 541 dated 25.09.1995, on Monitoring. The monitoring program that is being implemented in line with the above-mentioned government decree provides opportunities to use the data obtained from the Institute of Earth Studies (under contract with the Ministry of Environment) to identify in a more complete way the situation of land degradation and pollution in our country. The monitoring program aims at extending year after year over a larger agricultural land area. The recent monitoring decision of Council of Ministers, April 2002 (which superseded the above-mentioned decision) improves monitoring processes by introducing more monitoring elements.

Environmental Assessment in Albania after the Conflict, UNEP, 2000.

Despite the fact that it is not included into strategies and action plans, the above-mentioned study prepared/financed by UNEP after the Kosovo crisis, is presented here to introduce land protection problems from a different viewpoint.

It has pointed out that erosion is a serious concern in Albania. Though the mountainous topography and climate types in the country favor erosive processes, the human activity (digging up riverbeds to obtain construction materials, cutting of trees, uncontrolled grazing of animals) is deteriorating the situation and bringing about severe consequences. The poor lands are reducing the agricultural yield and agriculture is being pushed in unsuitable habitats. The rivers dynamic is changing negatively affecting the water quality and flow regimen. Important elements of infrastructure such as bridges, roads etc., are being damaged due to earth slides. The Ministry of Agriculture is actually preparing the legislation on land protection and administration.

This material emphasizes that financing is needed for preparing a strategy on land protection.

The study provides some recommendations for the hot spots, including recommendations for actions to be taken for protection and rehabilitation of polluted land, underground water, etc.

Studying other strategies or programmes such as:

Water strategy,

Strategy on Poverty Alleviation,

The study on Management of Coastal Area, etc.,

We could say that they treat in a concise and summarizing form the issues related to land protection and control over degradation and desertification. They do not provide any more information than what is mentioned above.

After studying the strategies and plans undertaken in different areas related with issues of land protections and control over degradation and desertification, the following statements can be made:

- These strategies and plans incorporate the concern on land protection and project different actions, but the place this problem occupies and the steps/actions that are planned are different from one strategy/plan to the other.
- There are not plans for actions that need to be undertaken for the future and there is no detailed strategy or action plan.
- The facts/information drawn from the studies materials will be used for the preparation of an efficient National Action Plan avoiding unnecessary duplication and overlapping. (see respective chapter iv)

2. AVAILABLE STRATEGIES OR NATIONAL PLANS FOR COMBATING DESERTIFICATION BEFORE UNCCD

Before 90-ies, there was adopted (and it is still effective) a law on land protection (law no. 5686 dated 21.02.1978 “On land protection”), which does no longer respond to the new conditions when economy functions on the basis of decentralization and land ownership and land management have changed totally. As it was also shown above, a new law for the protection of land and strategies and action plans for its protection is planned to be realized.

Besides this (the law), in a programmed way there have been carried out the monitoring of the chemical and physical land indicators, respectively every 10 and 4 years. (agrochemical and pedological studies at national level).

In the programmes of economic development of the country there were planned investments for improvement of the irrigation and drainage systems, land protection etc. Specific works were carried out in a planned way for rehabilitating the low-yield lands, (saline, magnezial, and acid land). There used to exist a strategy for utilization of all water resources for irrigation purposes; there were conducted studies for defining the evapo-transpiration, there has been made a classification of the territory according to potential evapo-transpiration, there were also realized studies on absorption, freatic waters, pollution of land and water from industry, etc.

Though land degradation has been part of strategies, plans, studies as mentioned above and there actually exists a kind of data base, it should be mentioned that the changes in the concept of agricultural development, the needs to respond to new contemporary studies, introduction of new concepts in the management of natural resources have brought about the need of choosing and adaptation of the until-now-accumulated knowledge/data, introduction of new concepts (public awareness, participation) in the preparation of different strategies and plans.

3. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES ON DESERTIFICATION CONTROL

In the National Action Plan there are planned a series of scientific and technical activities that are related to desertification control and mitigation of drought effects.

In the group of scientific activities there have been planned:

- Studies and research on erosion effects, land yield, land with limited production factors, effects and ways of land tillage, irrigation, drainage, organic agriculture etc.
- Organization of symposiums, conferences, workshops. In the NEP there are planned to be organized symposiums on land degradation in Albania and protection from degradation (such a symposium was planned to be held in October of the present year by the Institute of Earth Study with international participation.
- Scientific activities in the districts on land, water problems, management of forests and pastures

- Publications in the scientific periodicals of the results of research scientific work related to erosion problems, land and water pollution, land yield and test, irrigation, drainage, bio-diversity, etc.

The group of technical activities includes:

- Continuous monitoring of parameters that assesses erosion, pollution, yield and quality of water used for irrigation.
- Qualified counseling service for land protection from degradation, techniques of plants irrigation, recommendations on fertilizers, improvement of land productivity in the lands with limited productivity factors.
- The services of the libraries of scientific institutions in the districts will be improved and they will be supplied with scientific periodical publications that reflect experience and policies in land degradation issues, its causes and effects, combat against desertification
- Direct investments for building mountainous dams, construction and rehabilitation of high water, rehabilitation of infrastructure, repairing of the damaged parts of quay walls and river barrages as well as of irrigation reservoirs dams, reforestation, etc.
- Placing under working conditions of GIS at the Institute of Soil Study and preparation of topographic maps.
- There will be preserved and implemented the traditional technologies and methods for plant cultivation, land protection, fertilization, irrigation, etc.

These activities will be organized on the basis of the principle of participation and partnership.

The representatives of the scientific and technical community are part of NAP through their direct participation in the drafting of NAP but also through their contribution in proposals and studies, research work on desertification issues and combat against it

Nevertheless, until the official approval these components, activities will be subject to revisions and comments by the ministries.

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

In our country, in the Institute of earth studies, there has been developed a pilot project on land use. There have been involved in these project Albanian specialists trained in Switzerland and foreign technical assistance was provided through a well-known specialist from GIS. The pilot project has used contemporary program and methods.

One of the components of the project was erosions coefficient change through identifying a structure of agricultural and forest plants that help in protecting the active layers of the earth and its productivity.

During the pilot project co-operation was extended also to Hidrometeorological Institute. The schemes used for the pilot projects took into consideration the information of the Convention on Biological diversity.

On the basis of the recommendations of the pilot project (2002) this year a big project will be implemented for land use.

As relates to future problems, we should reinforce the need for assistance in land management problems. Besides technical assistance, support will be needed for the offices (computer equipment) and staff training.

IV. INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION

1. Established and functional national coordinating body (NCB)

The Coordinating Board is being set-up, to coordinate of central and local level activities in order to control soil desertification. The Board will have an inter ministerial composition with representatives from the ME, Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF), Ministry of Industry and Energy, Ministry of Local Governance and Decentralization, Agriculture University of Tirana, NGO-s, as well as representatives from district and prefecture levels, under the chairmanship of the Minister of the Environment.

CMD project to set up the board has taken its approval by respective ministries and is ready to go to the Prime Minister's office for the final approval.

The Coordinating Board will have the following duties:

- a) To coordinate activities of different bodies of central government related to soil desertification control with that of local governance.
- b) To withdraw and elaborate the opinion of local governments, communities and damaged areas, as well as NGO-s, on factors that lead to land desertification and rehabilitation measures.
- c) To initiate the establishment and proper functioning of the national information system where the following topics have to be registered:
 - i) the complexity of factors that lead to desertification;
 - ii) desertified areas coming from human activity or natural factors;
 - iii) measures to be undertaken for the rehabilitation of desertified areas;
- d) To coordinate the work for the CCD implementation.

The framework of the Board's activity will be completed, through by-legal acts that will succeed the CMD for the establishment of the Board, reflecting in the same time the requirements for a better fulfillment of the Convention obligations.

2. Institutional framework for coherent and functional desertification control, regulations

The operating institutional framework in Albania to control desertification consists in the activity of several bodies. The main body that elaborates policies on land protection, its management and administration, is the MAF, (Land Directorate in this Ministry takes the weight of the Ministry activities on this issue), whilst ME through its environmental policies, deals with the inter-dependence of factors that lead to degradation and possible rehabilitative measures.

Depending from the Minister of Agriculture and Food, there is an important body that deals with degradation issues, the General Directorate of Forestry and Pastures. In the same time under the MAF there is ISS directly related to desertification.

Other Ministries including ME, as well as several structures that operate in national level such as the Territory Regulation Council of the Republic of Albania, National Water Council etc., directly or indirectly act and extend their control on desertification as a part of the activity, having it as a component of their work.

The exercise of competencies from these bodies has directly or indirectly a positive impact on land protection towards degradation and desertification. (To be mentioned is the decision of the National Water Council prohibiting the exploration of the riversides for inert materials, with direct consequences to avoid degradation on land and riversides).

Structures that operate in local level are mostly dependent on MAF. To be mentioned are: Agriculture Directorate, Waters Directorate, Offices of Real Estate Registration, General Directorate of Forestry and Pastures, Land Administration Sectors (that have as main duty gathering of the information on the soil damages risk and the control of project implementation on land protection), etc. Their functional duties have a direct significant impact on desertification.

The review of structural functions in local level is done on the basis of presented problems to be resolved in the framework of the legislative changes towards the decentralization of power (So, it can said that as the result of new conditions of the last decade, structures have been reviewed in central and local level as well as their functions. Examples to be given are as follows: Establishment of the National Environmental Agency and later Ministry of the Environment; Soil Directorate in the MAF took over the administration functions - after 1998; offices of land administration districts were set up - in 2001, etc.).

Capacity building in national and local level through the appointment of professionals, their qualification, equipment with contemporary technology (setting-up laboratories etc.), has been a clear objective.

The completion of the legal framework remains a tool that leads to capacity strengthening. The analyze of the existing institutional capacities underlines the need of the establishment of some other bodies, as well as the strengthening of the existing ones. By two CMD expected to be approved in the coming days, a new body will be established in the context of efforts to control desertification (the Coordinating Board). In the same time the legal framework related to the structures of land administration will be completed.

NCB is an inter-ministerial body that will operate in national level, having as the core mission the coordination of actions, mainly awareness raising ones as well as the establishment of a national data system on desertification.

By a CMD a mechanisms on desertification control has just been changed. The new CMD has added elements to be observed giving so more chances to control degradation and desertification.

As a request for the future, the training of technical and decision-making staff is necessary, given the fact that local and central bodies are newly established.

3. NAP as a part of the national economic and social development plans

A common analysis of the existing plans and strategies in different field is carried out, in order to conclude on how much and in which way problems related with desertification are being treated. From this analysis, presented in chapter III as well, it can be said that although those plans and strategies give a place to nature protection in general and land in particular, degradation and desertification issues (although mentioned) are handled not in depth and with no foreseen solutions in terms of plans/programs (a better attention is given to this issue in the Green Strategy and lately in the NEAP-2001, but even there the approach is not complete/ does not have a solution). From this point of view, the elaboration and implementation of a National Action Program is well motivated, clarifying that the platform on which it is based does not overlap with previous training, but instead is an effort to include experiences and achievements of the past (e.g. moments /steps of 1996, in the framework of the Action Plan on land protection, quoted in previous chapters have been used - note: the work for this plan started, but ceased again in the same year).

The platform on which the National Action Plan is based, aims to be in coherence with principles of the Convention, having as an important approach participation, awareness raising partnership, methods of programation etc. The above-mentioned principles especially participation and partnership are being included in plans and bodies established lately e.g. in NEAP-2001.

The National Action Plan is being prepared to serve as a framework for the future activities to keep desertification under control. To achieve this objective the final Nap draft will have to go for comments and approval in all line ministries related to the desertification issues. After this step the NAP will get the final official approval and will be ready for implementation. Regarding the financing for the Plan, it has to be said that the financial support from the Government for all of its components will be difficult, therefore different donors are being contacted looking for potential funds to support the implementation of the Program.

4. Coherent and functional legal and regulatory framework, regulations

A description of the situation related to the legal and regulatory framework on land protection and desertification was given above.

Land protection and desertification have a place in a number of laws and by-legal acts, elaborated mainly in the last decade. There are laws and acts where other fields of application (e.g. in the law “On Environmental Protection”, “On Policy and Forestry Service”, “On meadows and pastures” and by-legal accompanying acts - all of them elaborated in 2000) problems related to land protection are shortly treated, comprising particular aspects of these acts. Whilst, in the law “For the establishment and functioning

of the administrative bodies for land protection” (march 2001), issues related to land protection and the description of the institutional framework are widely dealt with. This law is soon expected to be followed by a decision of CM, reflecting in detail actions that will be carried out by bodies to be established.

In this period the legal framework for the land reform is being completed. In the same time the law on public properties is approved and the transfer of the ownership to local governments (2001) has taken place. The legal framework on forestry and pastures is being completed and work has started for the decentralization of forests and pastures (2001). During 2002 the law “On soil protection” is planned to be elaborated, as well as some by-legal acts on administration.

The establishment of structures in local level, above all aims to ensure the public information and public participation in the decision-making process.

In the by-legal acts for administration, public participation is foreseen in decision-making. Firstly, projects will be approved from bodies composed by elected people. Secondly, projects will be discussed with local communities where they will be implemented, prior to their approval.

5. Linkages and synergy with other environmental Conventions and, where it is necessary, with national strategies of the development

Besides CCD, Albania has adhered and is a Party to several other environmental conventions. Between them, the UN convention on Climate Change and the Biological Diversity Convention are seen as the potential ones to which the CCD has a link and synergy.

Even though Albania has adhered since 1993 in the Climate Change Convention (CCC), and since 1994 in Biological Diversity Convention (BDC), common actions with CCD have not been undertaken yet.

But, there are existing premises for a potential collaboration and synergy of actions between them. All of the three above-mentioned conventions operate under the coordination of the ME. The Minister of Environment is the focal point for the BDC, while the deputy minister is the focal point for the CCC and CCD. The Natural Resources Management & Biodiversity Directorate (ME) coordinate activities for the two of the Conventions.

Actually, there is an ongoing project in the framework of the UN - CCC.

Needs for the future:

As a requirement of importance for the future, considering the fact that structures in central and local level are newly established, the training of the technical and decision-making staff is necessary.

Public participation in the decision-making process is quite wide and related to the scale of decentralization in our country. The help and assistance in the improvement of the legal framework and expert and decision-makers training, in our opinion is necessary.

Assistance during the functioning period of the NCB will be required as well, to discuss and implement in Albania, possible directions of work learnt by the experience of other countries Party to the Convention.

V. PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES

1. Effective participation of actors in defining National Action Plan priorities, participation process involving civile society, NGO-s and community based associations.

The participation of different groups (local authorities, NGO-s, local communities etc.) in the awareness raising processes on soil protection from degradation and desertification and preparation and implementation of the action programm is being considered very important. Thus, already established contacts with those actors, will continue to become more intensive in the future.

In order to withdraw the opinion of the above-mentioned actors, it has been operated in three main directions:

- through bilateral and multilateral contacts and consultations undertaken with representatives of different institutions/organizations;
- through meetings organized at local level, with representatives of different public administration bodies, to withdraw their opinion about problems related to soil desertification and effective ways of solutions;
- through a questionnaire that was distributed in some actors (local authorities, NGO-s) to give an answer for some important issues on actual and prospective work on soil desertification.

Most of the time, the sensibilization and awareness raising process of farmers and local communities on land protection issues and desertification phenomenon, has been in function of the activities of structures that operate in central or local level. The same thing can be said for publications.

This process is planned to be developed in a programmed and disciplined way. It has been conceived as an important and permanent component of NAP.

Main messages sent out during the meetings and contacts with different actors have been nearly the same, reflecting a general worry expressed by all local communities every time the issue of land degradation is raised. Naturally, specific moments depending on problems for each prefecture/commune have been underlined as well.

Even though, an index to evaluate the scale of assimilation from communities does not exist, the growing interest for those issues, is in itself an index of the necessity to go ahead this way to get the profit.

Referring to participation of two genders, even though the number of females taking part in different activities is increased, the rate is in favour of males. Such a rate is foreseen from the NCB (seven males, two females). Meantime an increased participation of

females in some other sub-structures that operate in support of the NCB is planned. Apart from a low rate participation of females in different processes or structures, the fact that the state does not put any obstacles for an equal and free representation of the two genders is evident.

Already established contacts with two women NGO-s, will be used during the implementation process of the NAP, in order to extend in local communities a bigger contribution of the female gender.

To ensure a quicker propaganda in wider communities, in the above-mentioned meetings several informative and adopted materials (translated), related to the CDD and land desertification, are distributed. Of course needs for such materials are great, therefore this process will continue in the future, to profit as many people as possible in order to reach the most isolated communities.

As for the exchange of information, it must be said that it is free to circulate and to be exchanged on institutional level. There are no laws or guidelines to prevent the circulation and use of the information, so that information is disponible for all actors.

The setting-up and functioning of the property registration offices in every town and of the land administration offices in district, town and commune level, makes possible the permanent information for the farmers. Those structures, together with other existing structures in towns, such as agriculture directorates, forestry directorates etc., as a part of their job will serve the community for information related to every parcel as well as with measures and effective manners for their protection.

VI. CONSULTATIVE PROCESS SUPPORT OF PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES AND PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS WITH DEVELOPED COUNTRY PARTIES AND OTHER INTERESTED ENTITIES

1. Effective support from international partners for cooperation

Aiming to ensure a contribute from different partners for the process of elaboration and later implementation of the national action plan, consultations are organized with interested entities, considered as fruitful collaborators during the process of the implementation of the action program.

Representatives of these organizations are known with planned steps for the preparation and implementation of the National Action Plan. International representatives, knowing the situation of land degradation in the country, evaluate as necessary the elaboration and implementation of NAP in Albania and have expressed their commitment to take part in the implementing process. Those partners are seen from our part as a factor that can generate funds to help the implementation of this Program (Financial contribution from one of these structures, IFAD, is actually present in Albania, with three projects for the development of rural areas. Two of them have finished, whilst the third one is going on. The same thing can be said for the World Bank as well.)

The Ministry of the Environment considering the collaboration with those organizations, as necessary will maintain regular contacts informing them about NAP, based on a long-term and multilateral collaboration program.

In the same time a permanent structure (committee), with representatives from the Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, UNDP, World Bank, and IFAD will serve as a permanent coordinating/operating unit for giving-receiving information mutually as well as with other local and central structures, including the NCB.

Although efforts will be made to harmonize contributions from these organizations during the collaboration process, the role and specific duties of each of them will be certainly reflected in the assistance they will give.

So far assistance has been assured from IFAD, for the implementation of awareness raising campaigns. In towns where their third project has just started being implemented, in the framework of the awareness raising campaigns of the project, messages for soil protection and desertification control will be sent out. These messages are currently being elaborated from the ME staff and IFAD project staff.

Such a cooperation is ensured from the forestry project of the World Bank as well. Besides awareness raising component, the planting campaign in forests is foreseen to be interlaced with projects in the framework of NAP.

PAP/ RAC as a partner that has contributed in the country through the implementation of a mission on erosion, is seen from our part as a structure that can address in the future its technical and more over financial assistance in support of NAP to combat desertification. For that reason, we have been requesting from them in the near future to present their possibilities to fund different projects in the framework of NAP. Their answer will conduct their prospective commitments and ours as well.

Needs for the future: Appreciating the support given from the Convention e.g. in the Meeting of Prague, 3-4 September 2001 as well as COP5, we think that a direct assistance from the Convention, in the near future for the implementation of NAP would be more than welcomed and valuable for our country.

VII. MEASURES TAKEN OR PLANNED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES, INCLUDING MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT, TO CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES AND PROMOTE THEIR SUSTAINABLE USE, TO IMPROVE INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION, TO IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE ON DESERTIFICATION AND ITS CONTROL, AND TO MONITOR AND ASSESS DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

1. ADEQUATE DIAGNOSIS OF PAST EXPERIENCE

Soil degradation and desertification in our country have been considered potentially high as the result of climatic and terrestrial factors. But, this kind of degradation becomes more evident from the influence of socio-economic factors. A high scale of soil erosion observed, is the consequence above all, of deforestation without criteria and destruction of natural meadows and pastures to get soil with agriculture destination, of the cultivation of inclined and very inclined soils with vegetation, cutting without criteria of forests for fuel wood and treatment, over grazing of meadows and pastures up to the extinction of the existing plants, filling and/or getting out of function of ditches of high waters, application of surface irrigation, uncontrolled urbanization, abandonment of land etc.

Albanian research institutes such as the Institute of Earth Studies, Institute of Hydro-meteorology and Agriculture University have been conducting evaluation of the erosion level in our country through methods of sediments suspension in water for main rivers, as well as the calculation of soil loss from the erosion using the Universal Soil Loss Equation (U.S.L.E). Used methods show approximate values of soil loss from erosion between 20 - 40 ton/hector depending on zones.

In the same time, damaged forest areas, damaged pasture zones and damaged works for soil and water protection have been identified from Directorates of Forestry Services, as well as from Pasture Enterprises and Agriculture Directorates in towns.

The situation is known and made present in directing levels of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, therefore data and information are taken from this ministry.

The evaluation of natural resources state is a good base in NAP, considering it as a contribute in future steps for the definition of degraded areas, dry land, non irrigated land, erosive land and scale of erosion, deforestation, damages on plant coverage etc.

The state of natural resources and the scale of desertification, evaluated up to the moment of compilation of NAP, helped that in the elaboration of NAP to give recommendations

on desertification factors, on priorities to be followed, as well as measures and investments to be undertaken to combat desertification.

2. **ESTABLISHED TECHNICAL PROGRAMMES AND FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATED PROJECTS TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION**

In Albania there are some ongoing projects financially supported by the World Bank (WB), USAID, EU etc., that in a way or another are related with the natural resources management. To be mentioned are: the Project of Irrigation and Drainage Rehabilitation, the Project of Real Estate Registration, the Project of Private Forestry, the Pilot Project for the preparation of GIS in the ISS and the Programme of Small Grants in the framework of GEF (Global Environmental Facility) of UNDP, three IFAD Projects, the Project of Agricultural Services. All the above mentioned projects have elements that contribute to combat desertification and are elaborated and developed based on principles such as participation and partnership, thus being in line with principles on which UNCCD is set up on.

For the ongoing projects proposals are made to integrate them into the NAP process. Above (in the previous page) plans to integrate the IFAD project in the NAP process is given; the same is planned for the Project of Private Forestry (funded by WB), that will influence through the stimulation of afforestation in the areas with an advanced scale of degradation.

The second project of Irrigation Rehabilitation (also funded by EU) will also influence to soothe the drought through the increase of the irrigation capacities, creating so the conditions for the application of contemporary techniques of irrigation and for the improvement of vegetation. Common plans for rehabilitation and functioning of works for soil protection (ditches, defending works etc.) will take place.

The Project of Real Estate Rehabilitation through the registration will give a full picture of land ownership with respective characteristics, which will be used to complete the information system on soil degradation.

The Project for the establishment of the Terrestrial Information System (LIS) will serve to monitor the evolution of different kinds of soil degradation and soil use, whilst the Project of Agricultural Services has a component of soil consolidation in which the actual fragmentation of land in different owners will be monitored. Through a pilot project the idea and application of soil consolidation joining pieces of land that is fragmented in groups of farmers aiming the sustainable management of those terrestrial resources.

In the framework of UNDP, the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) exercises its activity having the Small Grants Project (SGP) as a component. A link of this component is the conservation of biological diversity that has its positive impact to combat degradation and soften the drought. Measures of land protection and rehabilitation are foreseen to be implemented in the frame of grants that will be given.

All the above described proposals are reflected in the steps to be undertaken in the implementation of NAP.

New actions proposed to combat desertification can be given in main directions as follows:

- Inventory of dry lands, semi dry lands and non irrigated lands, eroded lands and the scale of erosion, deforestation and damaged vegetation :
- Identification of areas where the erosion is high, without vegetation, deforested etc.
- Awareness raising and facilitation the participation of local communities to combat desertification;
- Elaboration of new legislation;
- Capacity building;
- Scientific research and technology transfer programmes;
- Partnership between different actors;
- Funding of projects that combat desertification.

Planned measures in NAP include:

- Evidence of the existing legislation that operates in the soil and environment protection field, its improvement and preparation of the new legislation where a legal vacuum exist on those issues;
- Measures of erosion control as well as the control of other forms of degradation;
- Extension of the research work towards the study of methods to combat ulterior desertification and to soften the effects of drought in our country, through programmes of research and development funded by the Albanian Government;
- Detailed work plan for the awareness raising of public opinion on soil degradation and on environment, on knowing the destructive effects of degradation in our country, its evidence and how to combat it;
- Information of population to be made through e series of seminars and radio-TV seminars;
- Proper functioning of the existing GIS in the ISS.

Scientific actions aiming capacity building, especially in local level to combat desertification, have been undertaken. In this regard medium-term Research and Development Programmes are elaborated, that foreseeing estimation of technical and scientific parameters in the field of land protection from the degradation, erosion, pollution, irrigation problems, drainage, bio-technology and environment. In such programmes all research, scientific and education institutes of the country through the participation on the study of technical-scientific parameters according to their specifics, are included.

In the same time experts of MAF and soil scientists & experts are trained abroad in different countries (e.g. USA, Sweden, Spain, and other European countries) on problems related to erosion control, land use and pollution.

To be mentioned is the fact that in the framework of institutional strengthening funded by IFDC and Albanian government the Analytical Laboratory of ISS is reconstructed and completed with contemporary equipment.

With regard to capacity building, besides the strengthening of national capacities, priority has been given to capacity strengthening in local level. Several seminars are organized in local level coordinated by the MAF, ISS and Agriculture Directorates (in towns: Fieri, Korça, Tirana, Lezha, etc.)

Training courses with chairmen and representatives of Post Graduated Schools of towns are organized periodically at the Agricultural University of Tirana, with duration of one month. In these course lectures from lecturers and scientific researchers on problems of irrigation technicality, waters management, soil protection from the erosion, as well as measures to ease degradation of lands is given. Participants in these courses have been appraised for the knowledge taken and at the end of the courses have been certified.

3. ACTION PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED IN COMPLIANCE WITH PRIORITY FIELDS SET OUT IN THE CONVENTION

The preservation of national natural resources is a priority of elaborated action programmes that are to be implemented in Albania in the framework of the Green Strategy, NEAP 2001, Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, National Strategy of Waters, Energy Action Plan, GPRS etc. In these programmes respective measures related to a sustainable management of natural resources, are set out.

Important in this direction are structures/boards that are established and function in the framework of the BSAP implementation and the management of communal forests., etc. in order to improve the institutional organization with the Law, No.8752, dated 26.03.2002, besides the Soils Directorate and Waters Directorate at the MAF, Directorates of Agriculture, Waters, Forests and Regional Environmental Agencies in towns, Sectors of Soil Administration operate as well, gathering the information on soil degradation in respective areas.

A set of measures dealing with the widening of knowledge on desertification and its control has been undertaken. These measures consist on withdrawing contemporary information through contacts and exchange of visits of our scientists abroad, through common projects, participation on international meetings, equipment of scientific libraries with recent periodicals and different training.

Environmental Monitoring and, in this framework the degradation from erosion monitoring, is carried out by the ISS and other institutions (based on CMD No. 541, dated 25.09.1995). ISS through its specific programmes has been monitoring soil degradation from erosion, pollution, fertility limitation and water quality that is used on irrigation. From this point of view annual soil loss from erosion is estimated in specific areas using five experimental points that operate according to the USLE method. Soil loss as the result of erosion from rivers for main rivers of the country, have been estimated as well.

To improve the monitoring system in Albania as by a new CMD on monitoring, the number of research institutions that will carry out monitoring as well as the specter of indexes to be monitored is increased.

4. LINKAGE ACHIEVED WITH SUB-REGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES

In the National Action Programme, common projects of Mediterranean countries on erosion control, are foreseen. We have been in touch with PAP/RAC, seen it as a organization that can contribute on erosion issues in the Mediterranean countries. Scientific researchers from ISS have participated in scientific activities and in training on erosion control organized by PAP/RAC in Spain and Malta.

(ISS has presented a common project with PAP/RAC on erosion control in coastal areas of Albania three years ago, in the framework of a regional action, but unfortunately this project could not ensure financing from LIFE Programme).

In the same time from ISS, MAF and other national institutions, scientific projects in collaboration with Italians and Greeks on issues of soil protection from degradation, its control, land and water pollution etc. have been presented. Funding of these projects will be with the contribution of the Italian and Greek Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

5. EFFECTIVENNES OF MEASURES IN LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Public administration structures in local level responsible for the management of natural resources are Sectors of Land Administration, Agriculture Directorates, Forestry Directorates, Waters Directorates and REA-s.

Structures of local government in local communities starting from communes have some responsibility as well.

Actually it is going towards the decentralization of power and delegation of duties to (in)local actors, in a process that has just started. An increased autonomy of local governance is in process. Commences are being delegated for the governance on forests and pastures that have passed in the use of local authority units and awareness raising campaigns related to community participation in the governance of forests and pastures in communal use, are organized. Associations of water usage set-up in community level are managing irrigation problems related to the community included on them.

Even though legally the delegation of competencies for the administration of natural resources has started, local communities are in need of a better support (training, funds, etc.).

The monitoring and evaluation of indexes that characterize natural resources is on the right way. Responsible institutions for monitoring must better include in the process all

local actors, starting from local public administration (structures of local governance, communes, representatives of the community and local NGO-s).

6. **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS APPLIED**

The contribution of Albanian partners in the process of elaboration of National Action Plan has been present. In this process representatives of Ministries and several institutions related to the problems of desertification, Tirana University and environmental NGO-s (that operate contacting representatives from local communities or different representing groups of women, youth etc.) were invited to take part.

Consultations and a constant collaboration took part for the elaboration of the National Action Programme. In this context meetings and working tables to exchange opinions and contribute in the preparation of NAP have been organized, with representatives from the ministries of agriculture, environment, energy, local governance, scientific agricultural institutions, universities, environmental NGO-s as well as representatives of international organizations that operate in Albania (World Bank, UNDP, IFAD, USAID).

During the consultation process, being always active, those organizations have been presented as potential supporters in the implementation of the National Action Programme, funding projects that will directly or indirectly contribute to combat desertification. GEF, UNDP, World Bank and IFAD have offered such possibilities in supporting such activities.

In the same time the setting up of the National Cooperation Board with representation and participation of all of the above-mentioned partners, that will serve as a organism that will cooperate and harmonize activities to control desertification in local and national level, is already being ideated.

To help the preparation of NAP, the opinion on desertification problems and of NAP through questionnaires elaborated for this purpose, is withdrawn.

6. **MEASURES TAKEN FOR THE RAHABILITATION OF THE DEGRADED LAND AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS FOR THE SOFTENING OF THE DROUGHT EFFECTS**

Direct measures undertaken for the rehabilitation of degraded areas are mainly related with investments done in the framework of projects funded by the WB, the forestry project and the rehabilitation of the irrigation and drainage works project.

In the framework of the forestry project within a two year period (200-2001) about 850 hectares have been reforested, about 2000 m³ are carried out of works for the construction of mountainous ambuscades to protect from the erosion and 250 hectares of pastures have been improved.

It has been acted in the same way through the rehabilitation of irrigation-drainage project.

The first rehabilitation project was extended in 7 districts and the second one has started and is ongoing (extended in 13 other districts). Through this project besides the rehabilitation of the existing of the drainage-irrigation system, several other interventions that influence the rehabilitation of degraded land, are carried out, such as the construction of ambuscades on gathering rain pools, protective work with cement on river beds, mountainous ambuscades on small rivers, the construction of different works of art etc.

7. THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

The estimation of desertification and drought has been and will be a part of the general evaluation carried out in our country for land degradation as the result of the erosion action. Annual losses of land from the erosion, as it is said above, vary from 20-40 ton/hectares/year (estimated using methods of the Universal Soil Loss Equation -USLE, and of sediments of main river waters).

Immediate needs for the future would be the technical assistance and support with equipment for the application of contemporary technologies for the evaluation of land degradation from drought and desertification, as well as financial support for rehabilitative interventions in projects represented in NAP.

VIII. FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS FROM NATIONAL BUDGETS IN SUPPORT OF IMPLEMENTATION AS WELL AS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION RECEIVED AND NEEDED, IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING REQUIREMENTS

1. Adopted financial mechanisms

Funds given for land protection from degradation and desertification are generally made up by donations that the government give through MAF, as well as those coming out from ongoing programmes with support/funds mainly from international organizations, mentioned in the previous chapters. These comprise the existing recourses of financing.

Funds allocated for this purpose by MAF go to the protection and systematization of land. But, compared to the needs, funds given from the government are not sufficient. It is worth mentioning that direct investments planned by MAF in the last decade, on land protection and rehabilitation from degradation, through different agronomic and art works (mountainous ditches, etc.) are lower in comparison with the years prior to the last decade. This fact has been noticed in several official documents.

In the same time funds are allocated by the Ministry of Industry and Energy for the damages coming from the oil sector, but these funds mainly go to rehabilitate financial consequences caused to farmers as the result of pollution effects on land from the utilization of oil-wells. No funds are given for the rehabilitation of the polluted land, even though polluted areas and financial needs for a part of these areas are identified in the framework of a PHARE project.

Funds allocated to local governments from the state budget are generally little. The same it can be said for taxation or other incomes, that do not almost go in the direction of land protection from desertification. In this framework it is understandable that local funds addressing problems related to land and its protection are scarce and neglectable in comparison to the needs that areas have to be protected or rehabilitated.

To be mentioned is the support of the local community through associations of communal forests and pastures users with a financial contribution up to 20 % of investments in this field.

The setting-up of the re-investments fund in units of local governance to be used in the rehabilitation and improvement of communal forests and pastures will constitute another financing direction/possibility in the hands of local actors.

A movement of local NGO-s seen as a possibility to operate in the above -mentioned direction, through funds ensured from other sources, does exist as well. But, local NGO-s has been mainly focused on awareness raising issues more than in applicative ones. It is an obligation, ideated in NAP, for the NGO-s activity, to be addressed in operations of rehabilitative and protective character.

From all of the above-mentioned facts, it results for the calculated soil loss in our country to be 20 - 40 t/her/year, that is an index of high degradation effects. At the other this fact underlines the great financial needs.

As the first step the request for the next year's state budget, to allocate more funds that will go on soil protection from degradation and desertification, is foreseen.

A further step will be the setting up from the state budget of a national fund for desertification. The setting up and functioning of structures such as NCB, that will forward in the data system, all the problems and awareness raising of the actors including decision-making bodies, are ways that will help in the decision to set up such a fund.

In the same time for the Industry and Energy Ministry, the obligation to ensure funds for the rehabilitation of the damaged land will be planned. These types of land in the future, as the result of the non utilization, have all the chances to be transformed in degraded and totally unproductive pieces of land.

Most of the funds that go directly for the rehabilitation and protection of land come from three ongoing projects. Two of them are funded by the World Bank (project of rehabilitation of the irrigation-drainage system, forestry project) and another one funded by IFAD (rural development). Having as a component of their work the forestation and forest condition improvement, as well as the rehabilitation of irrigating and draining network and the regulation of the hydric balance on land for the incorporation of contemporary technologies, these projects almost directly influence in the improvement of chemical and physical characteristics of soil, that finally contribute to soften and minimize the desertification effect. Whilst, following the Pilot project carried out in the framework of GIS/LIS (described above in this chapter) preparation are underway to start, funded by the PHARE Programme, a big project components of which will include in line/methodology, effective planning of land fund with contemporary methods.

A part of funds in the last 3-4 years is being assured through funds of the state budget earmarked for projects of rehabilitative and protective character. Even though these funds are not significative, they have been useful to get an experience to be used in the future and that will be addressed on interventions and rehabilitation.

2. NAP Financing

As mentioned before, funds from the state budget that actually go to land rehabilitation and protection is little. In the table of contents for activities and projects planned to be undertaken in the framework of NAP, funds to support these activities are required.

For the elaboration of two draft-laws, On Soil Protection and On Normative for discharges on land, through the National Environmental Action Plan - 2001 the request for a fund from the state budget (or other donors) is foreseen. Thus, in the National Action Programme financial support for the elaboration of the draft-law On Land Protection (for desertification) is foreseen as well. (It must be said that the majority of projects and programmes planned in NEAP-2001 have not ensured their financing yet).

In such regard, funds coming from abroad would be a enormous contribution for the NAP. To this aim, financial assistance is required from GEF, World Bank, UNDP, IFAD, as well as PAP/RAC (as a structure that supports projects and activities in the regional framework).

Even though the above-mentioned donors have expressed their readiness and financing possibilities are being examined, there are no concrete plans for projects to be implemented.

With IFAD common awareness raising campaigns are planned to be carried out in the framework of NAP (third ongoing project of IFAD).

GEF contribution is actually present in our country with two ongoing projects, one on climate change and the other one for the preservation of the Karavasta Lagoon.

3. Technical cooperation developed

Research and scientific institutions, academic and scientific circles as well as other institutions in the country, leaded by the Ministry of the Environment, have constantly given their contribution from the technical point of view on problems related to the well maintenance of land and to soothe desertification phenomenon.

But, nowadays the evolution in the point of view on which problems related to nature protection and in this regard soil as well are seen, focusing on sustainable development and on requirements to introduce technologies and methods in regional level being effective not only on structures in the country, but in regional level and even broader.

In planned activities and projects that will be implemented in the framework of NAP, the above-mentioned components will be included, but the financial support is not ensured yet (is yet to be found).

IX. REVIEW OF BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS UTILIZED TO MEASURE PROGRESS AND AN ASSESSMENT THEREOF

1. Operational mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation

The establishment in early '90-s of the Committee of Environment Protection, that was transformed from September 2001 in the Ministry of the Environment, got the premises for the observation, management and monitoring of the environment, as well as set-up the national capacity, for the elaboration and distribution of the gathered information. Environmental observation and monitoring in Albania is carried out, using all national capacities that have in the focus of their activity, environmental issues or specific environmental components.

The approval of the basic law "On Environmental Protection" in 1993, amended in 1995, and the CMD "For the environmental monitoring" create the possibilities for a systematic and permanent monitoring of the environment and three of its components: land, water and air in Albania. Even though funds for this purpose are limited and were allocated for the first time in 2000, a system of data is available to go on further in this direction. The monitoring is financially supported by the state budget.

The information on desertification in national level is mainly withdrawn by the institutions that directly or indirectly deal with soil problems and water management. ISS is the institution that constantly ensures monitoring and observing data on desertification. Through its specific annual programmes it follows and estimates parameters on erosion evaluation, river erosion, land pollution and its fertility. To evaluate this indexes experimental sites are set-up and function to determine soil loss from erosion (five of them in the country), as well as bastion sites where erosion from bad administration of the riverbeds is monitored.

Indirectly Forestry and Pastoral Research Institute and HMI that get the data through their programme ensure data on specific indexes.

The above mentioned CMD "On monitoring", states for the majority of the research institutes and universities of the country, to follow besides the research work, the monitoring of the environmental parameters belonging to their field of application as well. In this network of institutes ISS, HMI, Institute of Veterinary Research, Institute of Public Health, ICTS, Geological Service and universities are included.

Every year the above mentioned institutions elaborate detailed reports on evaluation of the monitoring indexes after results are widely discussed and consulted with the staff and scientific councils of the institutions.

The reports are analyzed and reviewed from technical directorates of the ME and finally they are included in the State of the Environment - National Reports.

Besides data gathered through the monitoring process, ministries (through the system of the institutions depending on them) use other environmental data, that are the object of their work.

Actually, observation systems and data gathered in all the fields (agriculture, environment, energy, pollution and their treatment, climate changes, biodiversity, etc.) are coordinated and harmonized by the ME, that does the information elaboration, summarizing them in the State of the Environment National Report (published every other year). Work is underway for the data included in this report, to be unified based on the requirements of the European Environment Agency on this issue.

ANNEX I

Summarizing information

(a) On the 27 April 2000 Albania adhered in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

(b) The National Coordinating Board will be established to coordinate the activities of central and local government on desertification control. It will have an inter-ministerial composition, with representatives from ME, MAF, MIE, MLGD, AUT, and NGO-s as well as representatives from District/Prefecture level, under the chairmanship of the Minister of the Environment. CMD Project for the establishment of the Board has taken the approval of the line ministries and is ready to be forwarded to the Prime Minister's office for the final approval.

The address to refer to the Board will be: Ministry of the Environment, Rruga e Durrësit, No. 27, Tirana, Albania.

(c) The National Focal Point for the UNCCD is Dr. Tatiana HEMA, Deputy Minister of the Environment Ministry; Address: Rruga e Durrësit, No,27, Tirana, Albania; Phone. + 355 4 270 625; Fax/phone: + 355 4 270 627; E-mail: <albnea@albn.net>

(d) Meeting of the Working Group (plus other actors) 18.02.2002

Consultative meetings in different towns of the country.

Working group meetings with representatives from different ministries, representatives of foreign organizations/institutions that operate in Albania, NGO-s, AU, Academy of Sciences, etc.

Inter-ministerial meetings (with the participation of the working group) 16.04.2002 and 24.04.2002

Seminar for the discussion/presentation of the draft NAP and actions to be undertaken in the framework of its implementation (04.05.2002).

Used documents in these activities consists on:

- informative materials on UNCCD;
- the situation related to desertification in Albania;
- the platform for the elaboration of NAP to control desertification;
- possible project-proposals to be undertaken;
- other materials.

A copy of these materials in Albanian is available from ME (Directorate of Natural Resources Management Biodiversity).

(e) The main objective stated in the NAP is :

To reflect the situation on land degradation/desertification in Albania, to ideate and represent working for to keep under control and to improve the situation related to desertification, through effective actions in all levels, aiming a sustainable development, especially in damaged areas.

Foreseen policies and measures are:

- Inventory of dry, semi-dry non irrigated areas, eroded areas and the scale of erosion, deforestation, and damaged vegetation;
- Inventory of areas with high erosion, without vegetation, deforested etc.
- Development of necessary legislation;
- Capacity building;
- Scientific research and technology transfer programmes;
- Financing of projects that combat desertification.

Measures that are foreseen in the NAP include:

- Evidence of the existing legislation that operates in the environmental and land protection field, its improvement and compilation of the new legislation where a legal vacuum related to these problems is noticed;
- Measures to control erosion and other forms of degradation;
- Extension of the scientific work in the direction of the study methods to combat further desertification and to soften the drought effects in our country through programmes for research and development funded by the Albanian government;
- Organizing of a detailed work for the awareness raising of the public opinion on land degradation and environment, for the knowledge destructive effects of degradation in our country, its evidence and how to combat it.
- Information of the population through a series and radio-television emissions
- Proper functioning of the existing GIS in the ISS.

List of projects and activities

No	Designation	Responsible institution(s)	Source of funds	Status of Fund
1	Institutional Strengthening			
a	Setting-up and functioning of the National Coordinating Board (NCB) for the coordination and control of the campaign to combat desertification	Council of Ministers, ME MAF	Government , Donors	To be ensured
b	Capacity building for awareness raising of public in local level	ME, NGO, REC	Donors, Government	To be ensured
2	Completion of the legal framework			

a	Law “On land Protection and administration”	MAF, ME	Donors, Government	To be ensured
b	Completion with by-legal acts of the NCB functioning	ME, MAF	Donors, Government	To be ensured
c	Completion of the legal framework with all necessary acts.	MAF, ME	Government , Donors	To be ensured
3	Awareness raising of local communities and its participation to combat desertification.	ME, MAF, NGO.	Donors	To be ensured
4.	Support with equipment and scientific technology			
a	Purchase and running of the mini-station for of permanent sites for the erosion monitoring	ME, ISS	Government	6 000 USD Ensured
b	Extension in districts with equipment.	MAF, ISS, MLGD	Government , Donors	To be ensured
5	Planification of the scientific and research work on desertification and protection issues	ME, AUT, AUK, MAF, ISS, IFPR etc.	Donors, Government	To be ensured
6	Qualified advisory service to help farmers on the issues of land protection and land use.	MAF, ISS	Government , Donors	Planned
7	Strengthening of the monitoring system of land degradation/desertification from erosion, pollution,	ME, MAF, ISS etc.	Donors, Government	
8	Action Plan for the Administration of river-beds.	MAF, ME and MTPT	Government , Donor	To be ensured
9	Action Plan for the vegetation of deserted areas and vegetation improvement in areas with degradation risk.	MAF, GDFFP, IFPR, IST	WB, Government	To be ensured
10	Action Plan for the State and Irrigating capacity of the deposits	MAF, ISS, NWC,	Donors, Government	To be ensured
11	Widening of the irrigation capacities in other areas of the country	MAF, PMU	World Bank	To be ensured
12	Methodological unification according to FAO guidelines for the estimation of land loss from	ME, MAF ISS	Donors, Government	To be ensured

	the erosion			
13	Projects for the proper functioning of GIS/LIS	MAF, ME, ISS	PHARE	800 000 USD ensured
14	Projects of protective and rehabilitative character	ME, MAF	Donors, Government	To be ensured

Potential donor agencies for the funding of the projects and activities are: IFAD, GEF, WB, UNDP, PAP/RAC, USAID, SNV.

(f) This is the first national report. It has been approved from the Minister of the Environment on 30/04/2002. The report is electronically available by e-mail in the address <z_dedej@hotmail.com>. The next report will be elaborated until December 2004, by an inter-ministerial working group.

(g) Different organizations as follows:

Ministries and different institutions: ME, MAF, MLGD, MIE, MH, MES, ISS, GDFF, IFPR, INSTAT, HMI, CGS.

Structures of local government: Municipality Councils, Communal Councils, District Councils, Territory Planning Councils of Municipalities, Territory Planning Councils of Districts.

Academic Institutions: MES, Academy of Sciences, AUT, and AUK.

NGO-s: REC, Association of Land Science, Media and Environment Association, Environment on Focus Association, Protection and Preservation of the Natural Environment Association, etc.

Up to now, the establishment and functioning of the Coordinating Board that will have in composition (after being approved in the Council of Ministers will have its final picture):

Minister of the Environment	chairman
Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Food Ministry	vice-chairman
Director of Directorate in ME	secretary
Director of the ISS	member
Representative of the AUT	member
Representative of MIE	member
Representative of MLGD	member
Representative of environmental NGO-s	member
Representative of district (or prefecture)	member

(h) There are similar structures: in the biodiversity field (Minister of the Environment is the National Focal Point), climate change (deputy minister of the environment is the

National Focal Point), coastal zone management (Minister of the Environment is the National Focal Point), European Environmental Agency (Director of Environmental Policies and Project Implementation Directorate is the National Focal Point).

Technical Directorates of the ME according to their fields of application, are operational focal points.

(i) There are two systems of GIS one in the ISS and the other in the CGS.

(j) There are no proper national training institutions. But, some institutions established in recent years include in their work directions some training as well.

ANNEX II

Abbreviations

CM	Council of Ministers
ME	Ministry of the Environment
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Food
MLGD	Ministry of Local Government and Decentralization
MIE	Ministry of Industry and Energy
MH	Ministry of Health
MTPT	Ministry of Territory Planning and Tourism
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
NAP	National Action Programme (to control desertification)
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics
ARCTP	Albanian Republic Council of Territory Planning
NWC	National Water Council
ISS	Institute of Soil Science
FPRI	Forestry and Pastures Research Institute
GDFP	General Directorate Of Forestry and Pastures
HMI	Hydro-meteorological Institute
CGS	Center for Geographical Studies
AUT	Agricultural University of Tirana
AUK	Agricultural University of Korca
REA	Regional Environmental Agency
AD	Agricultural Directorate (in towns)
FSD	Forestry Services Directorates (in towns)
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
REC	Regional Environmental Center
TPC	Territory Planning Council
BDC	Biological Diversity Convention
CCC	Climate Change Convention
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture and Development
WB	World Bank
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
PAP/RAC	Priority Action Programme/Regional Activity Center