

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document is a report produced in compliance with decision 11/COP.1 of the UNCCD with the specific purpose to inform the parties on the progress made towards achieving the objectives of the convention and to enable them to make appropriate recommendations to better pursue these objectives. Nationally this report will act as a guide to the development of the national action plan to combat desertification and land degradation.

Antigua and Barbuda is a twin island nation in the West Indies. When the early settlers arrived in the 17th Century, they were deterred by a scarcity of water though, Antigua was noted as a heavily forested island. This dense vegetation was, however, almost completely removed by the time sugar cane cultivation became the dominant feature of the economy.

Today, the islands are still trying to cope with the effects of poor soil types and soil erosion caused by poor agricultural practices. The frequency of droughts and the economic shift to tourism have further complicated the issues and accelerated the rate of degradation. Additionally, recent early stages of land degradation as a result of the passage of hurricanes since 1995 have compounded the situation.

Although desertification is not considered imminent in Antigua and Barbuda, land degradation is a reality. The development of the Convention to Combat Desertification and Antigua and Barbuda's ratification in 1997 will define a more sustainable path for future development in the country. It is in this spirit that the National Report was compiled.

Section 2 outlines the main factors affecting land degradation in Antigua and Barbuda. These factors relate to natural rainfall patterns and poor land management practices such as soil and sand mining; residential and industrial activities in watersheds; land preparation practices for farming and construction; naturally occurring land and mudslides; degradation of forested areas and other impacts from recent hurricanes.

The national strategies and priorities established within the framework of sustainable development plans; priorities and conventions affecting environment and natural resources are discussed in Section 3. The section defines the National Co-ordinating Mechanism for national environmental action within in which the activities to execute the obligations to the Desertification Convention exists. The process of meeting and reporting as part of this mechanism, serves as a forum to *mainstream* the issues of Desertification and land degradation in other conventions and national environmental action planning.

Section 4 details the institutional measures to implement the Convention to Combat Desertification and land degradation. The discussion in this section covers the

institutional frameworks that exist to execute action and how they have developed. It outlines the approach being taken, and organizational structure.

This section also includes a table that outlines existing and potential stakeholders involved or that will have to become involved in addressing land degradation and their roles and responsibilities in this area. It also defines the current legal and judicial nature of the existing executing mechanism and details the human, material and financial resources available.

The National Action Plan to combat degradation is laid out in section 5. It takes into consideration public opinions on land and water resource use and stewardship. The proposal also recognises the widely held cultural beliefs and abuse of land and watershed resources.

Section 6 addresses the financial mechanism for the implementation of the CCD. Also addresses the constraints to implementing environmental activities in Antigua and Barbuda. Section 8 looks at the benchmarks and indicators for land degradation and the urgent need to address the lack of information on the extent of land degradation.