

Summary of the National Report of Egypt

1. Basic concepts

Egypt with its lands extending over one million square kilometers , under arid and hyperarid climatic conditions is endowed with varied agro-ecological zones with varied attributes of resource base, climatic features , terrain and geomorphic characteristics , land use patterns and socio-economic implications. To formulate a meaningful NAP for Egypt it was be appropriate to formulate a plan comprised of sub-components, each of which is geared to address the specific attributes of desertification in processes each agro-ecological zone distinguished in Egypt. Such zones could be identified as follows :

- 1- North Coastal Belts : including North West Coastal Areas and North Coastal Areas of Sinai.
- 2- The Nile Valley : Encompassing the fertile alluvial lands of Upper Egypt and the Delta and the reclaimed desert areas in the fringes of the Nile Valley.
- 3- The Inland Sinai and the Eastern Desert with its elevated southern areas.
- 4- The Western Desert, Oases and Southern Remote Areas: including East Owenat Tock and Drab El Arabian Areas and Oases of the Western Desert.

2. Institutional and legislative Aspects :

2.1. Institutional Aspects.

To ensure the success and achievement of NAP's objectives a National Coordination committee in Egypt was established to replace the previously established Steering Committee for Combating Desertification. The newly established National Committee according to the Ministerial Decree No. 2356 for the year 2001 is headed by the Deputy Prime Minister , Minister of Agriculture and land Reclamation , as high level decision making authority, with high level representatives of eight ministries including; Agriculture and Land Reclamation, Water Resources and Irrigation, Foreign Affairs , Local Development, Higher Education and Scientific Research, Environmental Affairs, Planning and International Cooperation, in addition to a group of high level experts. The newly formulated Committee is intrusted with ; (a) The formulation of general policies in accordance with the commitments of Egypt towards the implementation of the UNCCD, (b) Endorsement of local , regional and international agreements and projects, (c) Coordination among ministries, authorities, NGOs and varied stakeholders concerned with combating desertification.

A Scientific Committee was established to be affiliated to the National Coordinating Committee for Combating Desertification (NCCCD). The Scientific Committee is headed by the president of the Desert Research Center (Dr. Abdel Moniem Hegazi) who is the National Focal Point for UNCCD. The other members of the Scientific Committee are high level experts from varied institutions of previous and recognized expertise in the fields of combating desertification. The Scientific Committee is entrusted with the following :

- (a) Survey, compile and analyse previous and ongoing activities to combat desertification .
- (b) Assessment and monitoring of processes of desertification .
- (c) Coordination of activities with the various stakeholders.
- (d) Follow up on the implementation of commitments of Egypt towards the implementation of UNCCD .
- (e) Follow up on implementation of the NAP and assessment of the impacts of its activities.

2.2 . *Legislations:*

Through the last few decades especially within the last twenty years Egypt gave ample considerations to formulate legislations concerned with the conservation of the natural resources base, among these legislation.

- Legislations were passed in the years 1983 and again in 1985 imposing serious penalties for scrapping of the top soil material for manufacturing of red bricks. This caused virtual halting of such practices.
- Urban encroachment on fertile lands prohibited and city limits were marked. However, urban encroachment still continues (at a much lower rate). Recent surveys from (1992-1995) showed urban encroachment to have impacted around 20,000 feddans of fertile areas. This is attributed to expansion of the existing rural villages and towns in contradiction to the formulated law.
- In the early stages of desert soils reclamation in the fringes of the Nile Valley , surface irrigation was practiced widely in the newly reclaimed areas which caused water logging and salinization even in coarse textured soils over a period of 15-20 years. Such conditions led to uprooting of fruit trees at their prime productivity with serious economic losses. Hence forth, a legislation was formulated prohibiting the adoption of surface irrigation practices in newly reclaimed desert areas. Such action was very beneficial in restoring the productivity of these areas, saving sizable water resources through the application of modern irrigation techniques , as well as , enhanced the income levels of the local farmers.
- Within the last five years several environmental laws were passed concerning pollution of land, water and air in addition to the environmental impact assessment for all developmental activities.
- In general adequate legislations were passed , however , appropriate mechanisms to improve and enhance the adherence to these legislation are needed.

3. *Participatory Process:*

The strategy for combating desertification in Egypt is based on the following premises :

3.1. Formulation of activities of the NAP are based on adoption of the integrated approach to address the main factors of desertification involved. In addition to securing and adoption of the participatory approach of the pertinent stakeholders in the varied stages of execution including planning , initiation and implementation with possible financial contributions of the beneficiaries.

3.2. To successfully achieve the objectives of the previous item, activities for combating desertification are based on the objectives to be achieved within each of the agro-ecological zones . This is based on the interrelationship of the factors and processes of desertification within a given agro-ecological zone.

3.3. To set priorities for the future action plans to combat desertification for the short, medium and long term based on the definition of hotspots, significance of adverse impacts on productivity of resource base, economic losses and social implication especially with respect to alleviation of poverty .

3.4. Integration of the endorsed activities of the various priority categories of the NAP in the appropriate developmental plans through the efforts of the National Coordination Committee for Combating Desertification and its contacts with the decision makers at the highest level.

3.5. Integration and meaningful coordination of efforts to combat desertification among the governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, local stakeholders and local authorities .

3.6. Enhancement of the role of women and youth and their participation in the coordinated efforts to combat desertification .

3.7. Coordinate and complement the activities of the several national institutions having the capabilities, equipments and expertise to carry out the badly needed efforts for proper assessment and monitoring of desertification processes in the four agro-ecological zones in Egypt.

3.8. Sponsoring well organized public campaigns targetting the decision makers, public officials NGOs , women, youth and local stakeholders. Elaborate specific programmes for extension and dissemination of information channelled to address the problems of each of the agro -ecological zones.

3.9. Integrate the basic concept of desertification and its adverse impacts in the various levels of public education, as well as, higher educational institutions and universities .

4. Resource Mobilization and Coordination :

Resource mobilization and coordination could be presently illustrated in the following :

4.1. allocating adequate national fund for the activities of the National coordination Committee and the affiliated Scientific Committee.

4.2. In continuation of the ongoing activities to combat desertification the second 5 years development plan (2003-2007) allocated 392 million L.E. (Equivalent to 85million dollars) in direct support with similar amount for indirect support including research , education , social benefits for citizens of limited income ...etc.

4.3. Sizable international funds (millions of dollars) were donated to NGO's for activities related to combating desertification.

4.4. Till the present time (could be due to the delay of NAP initiation)Egypt did not receive contributions from donor agents for the NAP and its

activities. However, very positive responses were received from several donors which will be followed upon in the following weeks.

5. *Linkages and Synergies with other Environmental Conventions and National Development Strategies:*

Present efforts include the coordination among the three national committees of the major conventions including Biodiversity, Climate Change and Combating Desertification. Such coordination led to specific bilateral and trilateral linkages and activities which are ongoing in Egypt. Among these activities are the erosion of coastal line of the Mediterranean sea, cleaning up of the northern lakes, conservation of biodiversity and ecological system of representative islands (Over 150 islands) in the River Nile of Egypt and lately the combined programmes for capacity building and training for the three major conventions.

As to synergies with the national development strategies, it is of significance to point out that among the main function of the National Coordination Committee, after its reformulation with the leadership of high executive authorities, is to incorporate where appropriate, the various activities for combating desertification in the national development five years plans on the short, medium and long term basis.

6. *Measures for the Rehabilitation of Degraded lands :*

Egypt is endowed with a multitude of academic and research institutions, as well as, centralized and local governmental institutions and authorities. It would have been very wasteful not to benefit from the previous studies, plans, data, research outcomes and reports. Each of the agro-ecological zones referred to in the NAP above has had its fair share of previous studies, applied technologies and field investigations. Such studies might not have been set according to integrated plans; however, efforts to process and compile these previous activities were very useful as a database relevant to each zone, such that previous efforts are not wasted, real gaps are identified and appropriate follow-ups are planned.

The required basic and thematic maps, aerial photographs, satellite imageries, GIS facilities and interpretation expertise are available in various institutions, ministries and research centers.

Basic tools for planning, analysis and deriving lessons were acquired or jointly used from the various sources and institutions after proper collaboration plans and suitable incentives were assigned. Ample consideration is given to the documentation and compilation of indigenous knowledge and experiences which are a wealth in itself in addition to its great value for appropriate planning of NAP's activities.

7. *Desertification and drought Monitoring and Assessment :*

The need to use the present status as a base line and use the means to assess and monitor the magnitude and direction of desertification and rehabilitation processes were imperative. It was disappointing to find out that Egypt has four institutions with very modern facilities of areal photography, remote sensing geographic information systems ...etc. yet because of varied affiliations, coordination, complementarily and integration were totally lacking.

Coordination and integration of efforts of these institutions are among the urgent concerns of the National Coordination Committee.

In addition, contacts and plans are undergoing to benefit from the sub-regional and regional efforts and activities of early warning systems especially those in North African sub-regional including OSS and other , as well as, drought early warning systems in the East African sub-region and other relevant International systems.

8. *Access to Appropriate Technology, Knowledge and Know – how:*

The task of reviewing the previous and ongoing activities to combat the factors of desertification and rehabilitate the degraded areas under rangelands , rained agriculture, irrigation from varied sources with varied qualities took considerable efforts when we consider that over 57 macro-projects, in addition to, field studies, hundreds of research investigations carried out by over 18 research institutions and 14 universities with the support of practically all the main donor agencies , UN organizations , Arab and regional organization . The result is a wealth of lessons learned , applied and tested technologies , success and failure experiences , major factors of sustainability.

It was very interesting and very useful to integrate these activities in terms of time , location and scale . Analysis and lessons learned derived from such matrix identified the hotspots and pointed out the gaps to be covered by future activities .

In addition to the wealth of knowledge, information , know-how and technologies compiled, Egypt looks forward to benefit from the exchange of such knowledge and expertise with the countries of Africa , developed countries, regional and international organizations through the appropriate means derived by CST of the convention . All in all the compiled knowledge, Know –how and information from various sources are to the formulated into appropriate and simplified specific programs which target the various stakeholders at the different levels to address the constraints , factors of desertification and rehabilitation efforts for degraded lands in each of the agro-ecological zones in Egypt. The Ultimate goals being ; combating desertification , securing sustainable development and alleviating poverty.

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