

UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

First Session

18-29 November 2002

REPORT BY FINLAND

I. DEVELOPMENTS OF FINNISH POLICY ON DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

During recent years there has been important development in the Finnish policy of development cooperation. This development has strong links to the combating desertification.

Policy development during 1990s

Finland's development cooperation is guided in particular by Government decisions "Finland's Policy on Relations with Developing Countries" (1998), and "Decision-in-Principle on Finland's Development Cooperation" (1996). According to the latter, the goals of Finnish development cooperation are:

- alleviation of widespread poverty
- prevention of global environmental threats
- promotion of equality, democracy and human rights.

"Finland's Policy on Relations with Developing Countries" answers the challenges of globalisation. It aims to reconcile the objectives of Finland's foreign and security policy, trade policy and international development cooperation. The policy paper covers a wide selection of possible tools: political and economic dialogue focusing, *inter alia*, on open and good governance and on economic growth grounded on the principles of market economy; development cooperation; commercial and economic tools; cultural cooperation; capacity building; and influencing public opinion. In addition to the goals laid down in the Decision-in-Principle, the policy draws attention to the following two objectives in the relations between Finland and developing countries:

- increasing global security
- increasing economic interaction.

In the Programme of the current Government headed by Prime Minister Lipponen, international development cooperation has been defined in the following terms: "The Government's aim in development cooperation policy will be to strengthen preparedness in developing countries to prevent conflicts and to improve security and well-being. The Government is committed to a comprehensive policy of reducing poverty, combating global threats to the environment and promoting equality, democracy and human rights in the developing countries. Finland participates in the resolution of the debt problem of the world's poorest countries. The Government will increase its appropriations for development cooperation and aims to reach the level recommended by the United Nations when the economic situation so permits."

Recent development of the policy

According to the recent Government Decision (2001) on the "Operationalisation of Development Policy Objectives in Finland's International Development Co-operation" the partner countries for bilateral development cooperation fall into two categories: (i) long-term partner countries; and (ii) other

partnerships. Some of the partner countries may be in the process of transition from one category to the other.

Bilateral cooperation in the form of projects and programmes is limited to selected long-term partner countries where Finland can exercise continuing, active presence and dialogue that this instrument requires. For other countries, a suitable range of instruments is tailored, making use of other alternatives. This categorisation allows flexibility but, at the same time, a clear setting of boundaries. The aim is to improve the management of flexibility. The criteria applied in the selection of long-term partner countries are: Country's need for assistance to alleviate poverty (an LCD country or a low-income country) and its commitment to development. The country systematically harnesses available resources to poverty reduction by promoting economic growth based on the principles of market economy, by expanding universal access to basic services, such as primary health care and education, and by promoting equal distribution of income. The country's economic policy should provide an enabling environment for development cooperation and the country makes determined efforts to advance democracy and equality and to reduce corruption. Also the government of the country should be committed to improving the human rights situation and the country invests in sustainable use of natural resources and in the protection of the environment. It is expected that the country endeavours to be integrated into the world economy and international trade systems in order to promote its own development agenda. The country should promote peaceful development in its region. Finland should have a diplomatic mission in the country. Also Finnish actors should have experience of cooperation with the country and possess expertise that the country needs. Conflicts, or the threat of acute or imminent conflicts, should not hamper cooperation. Also the administrative capacity of the country should be at a level which allows effective use of the resources made available through the cooperation and experience of the effectiveness of cooperation with the country should be positive.

In its bilateral development cooperation, Finland concentrates on fewer partner countries and larger country programmes. The majority of bilateral grant assistance is channelled to long-term partner countries. The main objective of the cooperation is to reduce poverty. To attain this objective, the promotion of gender equality must be accorded a central role in all cooperation.

Finland's long-term partner countries are Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Peru, Zambia, Tanzania and Vietnam. Cooperation programmes can be significantly expanded in those poorest countries which show increasing commitment to development and where the prerequisites for effective development cooperation improve. Such partner countries include Mozambique and Vietnam. In the course of the next three to seven years, long-term bilateral grant assistance in the form of projects will be phased out in middle-income countries such as Egypt, Namibia and Peru, and mainly other cooperation instruments will be taken into use. In Kenya, Nicaragua and Zambia, compliance with the criteria of cooperation based on bilateral grant assistance will be actively monitored. Finland has launched pilot projects and programmes with Burkina Faso and Honduras, and, if these prove to be successful, the countries may become partners of long-term cooperation.

With other partner countries, Finland will focus on thematic programmes which reinforce the capacities needed for successful national and internationally supported developmental activities. This cooperation will also be guided by the goals set for Finland's international development policy but, as a rule, other instruments than government-to-government cooperation projects and programmes will be used.

Regional cooperation will be used to support development processes in which several partner countries participate simultaneously. This cooperation is carried out in collaboration with regional cooperating institutions, which are responsible for the planning and implementation of the development processes. Regional cooperation is intended to address problems which cannot be solved by means of national development programmes only. Special attention is given to support for regional integration and security. Finland supports regional cooperation in the SADC area, Central America, the Mekong area and Central Asia.

The cooperation is based on political dialogue and consultations on cooperation with the partner countries. The countries' political, economic and cultural relations and their development cooperation are discussed extensively in the political dialogue. This dialogue is premised upon the criteria within which Finland has established the partnership, including commitment of the partner country's government to poverty reduction and promotion of democracy, equality, human rights and good governance, as well as the economic policy pursued by the partner country and environmental issues. Finland encourages the partner countries to engage in genuine dialogue and to call attention to their own priorities.

In close cooperation with other international actors, Finland supports the long-term partner countries' own development efforts. Finland will participate in the formulation and implementation of sectoral programmes and poverty-reduction strategies in cases where the policies expressed in them converge with the goals Finland has set for its international development policy and provided that the partner country is considered to possess adequate capacity and be committed to good governance. In countries where direct sectoral or general budgetary support is not yet possible, Finland supports projects which are in line with the partner country's set priorities. Those responsible for project administration try, as far as possible, to build on and further develop the partner country's own administrative structures and procedures.

Programme and project cooperation is complemented by a variety of other instruments of cooperation, such as funds for local cooperation and cooperation with non-governmental organisations. Cooperation with non-governmental organisations is seen as a way to help bring up the points of view of the civil society in all development processes supported by Finland. In addition, the know-how of established non-governmental organisations must be seen as an increasingly significant source of potential in government-to-government development cooperation. Where the criteria of government-to-government cooperation are not met, non-governmental organisations play a key role as an alternative channel of cooperation.

Finland's goal in bilateral, multilateral and EC cooperation is increased coherence and complementarity. The purpose of international coordination is to reinforce the notion that the partner country is in charge of the delineation and leadership of its own development processes. The coordination provides Finland with essential information about the roles and contribution of national and international partners, and Finland determines its own contribution on the basis of the added value that our participation in the processes entails.

To enhance the impact and effectiveness of the cooperation, Finland will focus on fewer and larger efforts. In each long-term partner country, cooperation in the form of projects and programmes of cooperation between the governments will be focused on no more than three sectors or three development programmes. The sectors or programmes of cooperation will be chosen through dialogue with the partner country. The choice of programmes and sectors will be based on the priorities set in the poverty-reduction strategy adopted by the partner country, on the one hand, and on the Decision-in-principle on Finland's Development Cooperation and Finland's Policy on Relations with Developing Countries, on the other. The final decisions will be made on the basis of an analysis about the added value that may be obtained from Finland's participation in the development processes.

Finland takes an active part in the development of sectoral programmes and poverty-reduction strategies and supports their implementation. New forms of cooperation require that the systems related to management, decision-making and administration be further developed. It is also necessary to make further analyses of, and establish operational strategies for, the ways in which the different sectors and themes of cooperation contribute to the attainment of the objectives of development cooperation. In these analyses, attention must be paid not only to the traditional sectors and themes but especially to issues that have become highly topical in the development discussions of recent years, such as

HIV/AIDS, globalisation, trade and development, support to the development of partner countries' private sectors, and information and communications technology.

In order to better harness the potential of civil society, new ways of development cooperation will be developed in cooperation with non-governmental organisations. Actors in the local administration are also encouraged to take an increasingly active part in this cooperation. Attention is devoted to transparent and accountable administration in both the public sector and civil society participation.

In the multilateral cooperation and the EC's development cooperation the international environmental policy regime is largely based on international environmental agreements. The implementation of these agreements in the developing countries is supported through special funds, international organisations, development financing institutions and bilateral development cooperation. Finnish support is channelled via all these mediums. The role of the Global Environment Fund (GEF) as a main financing mechanism for global environmental benefits is becoming stronger. As concerns projects carried out by the partner countries, the GEF can finance the share which corresponds to the global environmental benefits. According to the Government Decision-in-Principle (2001) Finland supports the clarification of the system of multilateral development financing. The goal is a clear division of labour between the various actors, taking into account the strengths and expertise of each organisation. We endeavour to respond to the challenge of being able to exert increasingly coherent influence on all forums. Finland continues to give balanced support to the UN agencies and to the development financing organisations.

II. NEW PLAN OF OPERATION (2002) FOR THE SUPPORT TO IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS THROUGH DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

Among other implications, the above mentioned Government Decisions (1996, 1998, 2001) mean a number of aspects which are important for the combating of desertification:

- priority to poverty reduction
- fewer long term partner countries
- concentration on limited number of sectors or thematic foci
- more focussed criteria for decision-making regarding Finnish support
- clearer focus on UN system and multilateral organizations
- need to strengthen complementarity and synergies and division of work between the various actors among the UN system, the MEAs and development financing institutions.

Against this background, there was a need to devise a new plan of operation with regard to Finnish support to the implementation of international environmental agreements or conventions through development co-operation. The new plan was approved by the Department of International Development Cooperation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 2002.

Among the key criteria applied in prioritising the support for conventions and agreements, were the following:

- development orientation
- Finnish national priorities and interests in strengthening implementation by developing countries
- state of the implementation
- acuteness of action
- commitment by developing countries for implementation.

It was concluded in the new operational plan that the following agreements/conventions and related processes individually and collectively stand out as such that would warrant strongest support by development co-operation mechanisms (in alphabetical order):

- UNCBD
- UNCCD
- UNFCCC
- UNFF

Also other international instruments may well support common goals shared between the above mentioned agreements and thus, this listing is not meant to be exclusive.

With a view to the international priority given to poverty reduction (PRSPs etc), it becomes apparent that actors and practitioners would need to devise approaches and strategies for:

- defining complementarities and synergies between the key agreements' implementation at various levels
- identifying effective ways of integrating these into national priority settings
- ensuring mainstreaming related objectives and actions in internationally supported poverty reduction strategies and programmes.

On the basis of initial analysis carried out by Finland, a "menu" of mutually supportive means could be used to implement e.g. the UNCCD (within the frameworks of national SDS's, PRSPs or other relevant frameworks currently applied in programming national and international actions for implementing sustainable development, environmental or other commitments). These include:

- policy dialogue between partners, prioritisation
- joint programmes between governments (incl. sub-regional level)
- integration of UNCCD NAPs into broader land-based schemes
- mainstreaming NAPs into poverty reduction strategies (social, educational, institutional, economic, or cultural)
- bringing multilateral actors on board at the national level through the respective governing bodies (such as regional economic integration bodies, environmental funds, secretariats of MEAs, relevant UN organizations and specialized agencies)
- cooperation and liaison with international financing institutions
- applying various credit facilities and industrial/ technology cooperation bodies and programmes to support UNCCD implementation
- enhancement of contributions by NGOs
- supporting affected countries in participating in decision-making at international level
- technical and scientific cooperation incl. exchange of specialists.

With regard to the third replenishment of the GEF, designation of land degradation and deforestation as a new focal area is envisaged to accelerate the implementation of the UNCCD substantially.

III. THE CRIC REVIEW PROCESS

i) Strategic support through the UNCCD Secretariat

Along the lines of the above described directions, Finland continued to provide focussed strategic voluntary support to the implementation of the UNCCD through the Secretariat. In 2001, Finland made available 1.9 Million FIM (290, 926 USD) to support the following actions:

- support to the organization of ACP-EU meetings with the objectives of mainstreaming UNCCD implementation into mechanisms for international cooperation
- support to Thematic Networks Programmes on Agroforestry and Rangelands in Africa
- support to participation to COP 5.

In 2002, Finland continues to support the UNCCD implementation at the global level through the Secretariat, in the following areas of work:

- support to the CRIC process 150 000 €
- contribution to the UNCCD's WSSD process 41 000 €
- support to reporting for CRIC 200 000 €
- organization of national seminars on synergies between MEAs 50 000 €
- mainstreaming UNCCD implementation in the PRSP and CDF frameworks through national round table in cooperation with UNDP 50 000 €

Tentatively, and subject to parliamentary approval, Finland considers continuing such strategic support through the Secretariat during 2003-2005.

However, it should be borne in mind that the envisaged establishment of land degradation and deforestation as a new focal area for the GEF, affected countries will in the future benefit from funding through the GEF for certain enabling activities, which are within the purpose of the GEF. Therefore, there is now a need for the CRIC also to look into the efficiency and effectiveness of channelling funding through the Secretariat for certain activities aimed at supporting national and sub-regional action. Such assessment by the CRIC should be carried out in an transparent manner and facilitated by information to be made available by the Secretariat.

ii) Improvement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Global Mechanism

In 2001, Finland made an agreement with IFAD/ GM by which Finland made available 1.0 Million FIM (about 168,188 €) for two purposes:

- support to affected countries parties to the UNCCD at national and sub-regional levels to identify and enter into the pipeline potential projects for financing by the GEF. Such projects will be identified on the basis of national and sub-regional action programmes (FIM 500 000)
- support the development and implementation of NAPs within the member countries of the Inter-Governmental Agency for Development (IGAD) (FIM 500 000).

In 2002, Finland will contribute an amount of 350 000 € through the Global Mechanism for purposes to be agreed upon in due course.

Tentatively, Finland considers continuing its support through the Global Mechanism in the coming years, with a view to enhancing UNCCD implementation at the international level in a manner complementary to Finland's bilateral relations with affected countries, and with the purpose of identifying and programming projects eligible for GEF and other funding.

In this regard, the CRIC could consider re-assessing the coordination and cooperation elements within the mandates of various bodies and structures within the Convention, in particular the Secretariat, the Global Mechanism, the Committee of Science and Technology and its Group of Experts, with a view to strengthening their respective roles and areas of comparative strength in supporting national and regional processes and mobilizing resources for implementation.

In this context, the CRIC may wish to apply, as appropriate, the "menu" approach as a tool of identifying areas of intervention for the various UNCCD bodies and structures, with a view to enhancing their effectiveness in regard to their work.

iii) National Report by Regions

AFRICA

A) Core Report: Activities concerning the implementation of the Convention

1) Summary

In Burkina Faso Finland supports "Forest Fire Control Programme" to strengthen the institutional management capacity of the organisations working against forest fires.

In Namibia Finland support to National Programme to Combat Desertification to produce a report on the present situation of bush encroachment and to make an action plan on bush encroachment for monitoring, research and control purposes.

During the year 2001 about 250.000 € has been spent to these programmes.

In Namibia Finland also supports "Information and Communication Service for Sustainable Development" to develop information and communication service for environment to promote sustainable development (2001 about 60.000 €).

2) The consultative processes and partnership agreements in which Finland is involved

3) Measures taken to support the preparation and implementation of action programmes at all levels, including information on the financial resources provided (bilateral and multilateral)

B) Any other activities relating to combating desertification

ASIA

A) Core Report: Activities concerning the implementation of the Convention

1) Summary

In Middle East Finland is currently financing a project aimed at improving the capacity of six Arab countries to implement the UNCCD, covering Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Yemen, and Palestinian Authority. This three year started in January 2000 and it is implemented by the countries involved and technical assistance is facilitated by UNDP/UNSO. The funding, total of USD 1.5 million is channelled through UNSO. The project includes support to national action programmes in four Asian countries and is expected to have a positive impact on the consequent consultative processes and partnership arrangements. Subregional action plan activities facilitated by this project will involve each country in west Asia region.

The objectives of the project are:

1. Launching NAP processes and preparation and implementation of the plans, including arranging national forums.
2. Cost-effective mechanism to advance subregional co-operation and integration of NAPs at the sub-regional level established through supporting a subregional co-ordinating unit affiliated to the Western Asia Sub-Regional Action Programme Steering Committee
3. Strategies for resource mobilisation in place at the national and regional levels and mechanisms for channelling resources to the local level established

In India Finland funds two NGO projects to rise the awareness about the desertification and develop sustainable cultivation methods.

2) The consultative processes and partnership agreements in which Finland is involved

3) Measures taken to support the preparation and implementation of action programmes at all levels, including information on the financial resources provided (bilateral and multilateral)

B) Any other activities relating to combating desertification

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

A) Core Report: Activities concerning the implementation of the Convention

1) Summary

Finland is currently financing the development of the metrological systems in the Caribbean region to promote sustainable economic development and to improve planning and operational decisions in all weather-related socio-economic sectors by providing advanced meteorological services. Funding in year 2001 was about 250.000 €.

- 2) The consultative processes and partnership agreements in which Finland is involved
 - 3) Measures taken to support the preparation and implementation of action programmes at all levels, including information on the financial resources provided (bilateral and multilateral)
- B) Any other activities relating to combating desertification

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Finland does not have any ongoing projects to combat desertification in Central and Eastern Europe.