



République d'Haïti

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**THIRD NATIONAL REPORT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF HAITI**



June 2006

Executive Summary

One of the largest Caribbean nations, Haiti has 27,750 square kilometres of land area including four large offshore islands: La Gonave (680 Km²); La Tortue (180 Km²); Ile à Vache (52 Km²) and Ile Cayemite (45 Km²). Approximately 63% of all lands have slopes greater than 20%, and only 29% have slopes of less than 10%. Less than 20% of the land under cultivation is appropriate for agriculture while most of the cultivated areas are very small parcels.

Once covered by forest, the country has been heavily logged and the most arable land is being farmed beyond their carrying capacity. The total area under agricultural production (some 1,300,000ha) is six times greater than the estimated areas suitable for agriculture resulting in significant deterioration of the land.

In 1996, the Government of Haiti ratified the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) and submitted a letter expressing its interest to be included into the LDC/SIDS Initiative. Since then, many attempts have been made to mitigate the process and the impacts of land degradation in the country at various levels. The government's commitment to fulfill its obligations under the UNCCD is consistent with the Haitian National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) elaborated in 1999.

The 3rd national report main objectives are:

- Evaluation of institutional and legal frameworks to carry out obligations under the UNCCD;
- Assessment of current strategies, policies and plans to combat desertification in Haiti;
- Analysis of progress and baseline actions undertaken to implement the UNCCD and in support to the preparation and implementation of the National Action Plan.

Institutional measures to implement the convention

In the past years various governments have expressed growing concerns over the incidence of land degradation and the subsequent serious damage to the country's agricultural potential and capacity to ensure food security. The establishment of the Ministry of Environment (MoE) in the mid 90's was an important step in the country's efforts to protect and manage a very fragile environment. The Government's efforts to combat desertification pre-dates the UNCCD as evidenced by a range of policy initiatives facilitating action programs across the spectrum of areas involved in environmental issues.

Recent measures include:

- ***The newly adopted Decree for Environmental Management*** published in the Official Newspaper "Le Moniteur" on January 26, 2006. The Decree provides framework and structural arrangements for sustainable land management including a Fund for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (*it is expected that this Fund may devote a section to combat desertification*) and the creation of new administrative frameworks such as the Inter-ministerial Council for land use planning and Environment (CIMATE) and the implementation of various technical units within concerned ministries. The new decree also proposes measures and provisions to put an end to the impunity of environmental 'free riders' abusing the country's natural resources, and to the ignorance of property rights.
- ***The Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF) in July 2004, Haiti's interim government presented international donors with a multidimensional development plan known as the Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF). Ten thematic groups were formed to assess current issues and priority needs of which Thematic 4 deals with protection and rehabilitation of the environment. The ICF recognizes that sustainability of economic recovery efforts is threatened by the advanced deterioration of the environment. The strategy is to actively promote the replacement of wood and charcoal, to fight the deterioration of land and natural resources.***
- ***The Inter institutional Steering Committee (CIP)*** it's a coordinating mechanism created with several ministries, Non governmental organizations and International agencies. The CIP serves as an important platform to coordinate sustainable land management interventions for CCD implementation and to support elaboration of the National Action Plan.
- ***The Observatory on Poverty and Social Exclusion*** under the Ministry of Planning with the publication of the Poverty Map confirming uneven repartition of poverty over the territory. More than 82% of rural population falls below USD2 daily income.
- ***The National Observatory for Environment and Vulnerability*** initiated by UNDP aims at addressing information barriers related to the dissemination of adequate and timely information. Much of the information available on land use patterns are incomplete making them outdated or of little utility to be useful as a baseline. Land information systems need to be further developed and used for the challenges of

identifying sustainable land management systems, for planning and monitoring the sustainability of land uses.

- ***The Agreement*** between UNDP – FAO - Global Mechanism (GM)- German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ).and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) design to lead the way to joint activities related to raising awareness, promoting local debates, strengthening the role of civil and also participating in co financing to combat desertification.
- ***The revival of the Mixed Commission Republic of Haiti and Dominican Republic*** A bi-national governance mechanism for the management of shared natural resources created through an agreement between the two governments in 1996. The Mixed Commission is crucial for good relations between the two countries and to monitor transboundary interventions.

Legal framework

There is a very significant number of written rules and norms dealing with land management issues. However, despite all efforts, the legal framework is outdated and needs to be revised. State agencies are unable to ensure enforcement of regulations and policies, especially in rural areas. Additionally, some rules and norms are confusing and contradictory, while others are mainly restrictive and don't offer any alternatives.

There is a need to revisit the legislative frameworks and create more appropriate ones, as well as to foster adequate enforcement of policies and legislation with a view to ensure coherence with sustainable land management principles and requirements. The new Decree for Environmental Management and the newly elected Parliament are significant steps towards the implementation of legal provisions in lines with the country's tremendous efforts to combat desertification and drought.

Synergies with other International Environmental Agreements (IEA)

Multiple efforts are underway to avoid duplication and to facilitate better coordination of interventions. Synergies are being developed to assess the impacts of land degradation process with other issues such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, depletion of the ozone layer and the use of persistent organic pollutants. Through the development of the National Capacity Self Assessment (NCSA) with the support of GEF and UNEP, Haiti is currently evaluating

mainstreaming needs and priorities to strengthen national and local capacities to address global environmental problems in an orderly planned and coherent manner. The NCSA process aims at:

- Defining integrated strategies to ensure effective implementation of the IEA, especially the UNCCC, UNCCD and UNCBD;
- Contributing on the long run to the development of an holistic approach for capacity development at systemic, institutional and individual levels;
- Formulating an Action Plan and a mechanism framework for monitoring and evaluation of gaps to satisfy needs and priorities.

The participatory process

The Minister of Environment is responsible for the implementation, fulfillment of actions and commitments under the UNCCD. It has put forward several means to mobilize all the sectors of the population.

The 3rd report's preparation relied heavily on the participation of major stakeholders; governments bodies, academic and scientific, private sector, civil society and nongovernmental associations. The consultative framework includes the following:

- ***Strengthening dialogue with international, regional and bi national partners*** The international community recognizes that desertification can be a serious to Haiti's sustainable development. Haiti has signed and ratified various international agreements, conventions and protocols related to land management, including the UN Convention on Climate Change and protection of the Ozone layer. With the CARICOM/CARIFORUM, the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO have elaborated a National Mid-term Investment Plan for three (3) major projects to combat desertification *a)* support to marine and continental fishing activities; *b)* funding of hydraulic interventions for agriculture; and *c)* management of natural resources in mountainous areas. At the bi-national level, Haiti and the Dominican Republic are working together; to develop a coherent bi-national action plan and dialogue process for the border region; to establish national coordination mechanisms and to mobilize multi-lateral donor support.
- ***Extensive consultations for Interagency coordination*** There are increasing efforts carried out by international development agencies and non-governmental organizations to address sustainable management of natural resources. A wide range of initiatives are being undertaken particularly in the border region. Since 1998, two important bi-lateral conferences were held resulting in high level dialogue and multi-lateral donor mobilization for selected on-the-ground investments. The CIP as a

coordination mechanism is responsible to secure interagency cooperation and has conducted various interagency meetings.

- ***Realization of national, regional and local workshops, seminars and meetings*** Responsibilities for land management practices and related issues lie with a number of agencies, often without any coordination mechanism. There is growing effort to develop joint policies and activities for better implementation of CCD. The government has also initiated ample participation of major stakeholders through national and regional workshops and seminars attended by scientific community, local government, farmers, local and community based organizations. National campaigns have also been held for public awareness, education and dissemination of information.

Assessment of strategies, policies, plans and progress to combat desertification in Haiti;

Although a National Action Plan (NAP) to Combat Desertification has not been yet formulated, the Government has nonetheless, elaborated a set of policy documents that address desertification issues. These include the national water policy, population policy, sectoral policy of the Ministry of Agriculture for watershed management, disaster and hazards management national plan and an Interim Poverty Reduction Paper. Nonetheless, the absence of a formal institutional coordinating framework results in overlapping jurisdictions and occasionally, conflicting efforts.

There are serious concerns over alarming consequences of land degradation process on the country's capacity for sustainable development. There is a general consensus on the necessity to have a strategy aimed to the prevention and mitigation of desertification and drought.

The principal problems underlying the desertification process and drought are:

- (i) *Conversion of forests*, recovering secondary forest, grasslands and shade coffee to other land uses. Using forest cover as an indicator of ecosystem stability, the country's forested areas have been reduced to about 1.4%, down from 60% eighty years ago.;
- (ii) *Inappropriate farming and grazing methods* on steep lands (burning, hillside tillage, and weeding);
- (iii) *Use of fuel wood as the primary source of energy* in rural settlements. For more than 70% of the population, the main source of energy is fuel wood/charcoal (yearly use between 4.5 and 6 million m³);

- (iv) *Unplanned settlement patterns;*
- (v) *Limited access of farmers to appropriate technologies* and insufficient awareness at all levels of sustainable land management processes;
- (vi) *High poverty* leading to a dependency on natural resource extraction and unsustainable activities for survival.

In response, the government has elaborated and reinforced various initiatives, including:

- Realization of income generating activities and access to primary socioeconomic services;
- Access and management of water resources;
- Rehabilitation of degraded watersheds;
- Definition of linkages between risks, disaster management and local development;
- Development of educational, informational materials and finding alternatives to take information to the most far-off communities;
- Implementation of an early warning system using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Remote Sensing tools;
- Execution of a National Information Territorial Program for sustainable development (*Programme d'informations Territoriales pour le Développement Durable –PITD*) that will provide necessary tools for integrated approach to territorial management, risk and disaster prevention and management; and prospective analyses.
- Creation of a National Center for Geospatial Information (CNIGS)
- Strengthening of existing observatories including the National Observatory Food Security - the Observatory for land properties and tenure systems (GREF) - the Observatory for Agricultural Exchanges between Haiti and Dominican Republic (LAREHDO) - and the Observatory for the Development of New technology for Information and Communication in Haiti (OPTCIH).

Financial resources to tackle land degradation issues

One of the major constraints to the implementation of the UNCCD in Haiti is financial resources. Different institutions have an extensive range of programs and projects that are not focused on fighting desertification, but indirectly do so when encouraging sustainable development of natural resources.

Some of the actions in fulfillment with UNCCD commitments are:

- The UNDP PAGE Program to support environmental management, institutional strengthening and systematisation of environmental information;
- The IDB five year project for institutional strengthening of the Ministry of Environment;
- The Canadian International Development Agency 7 year CAD\$10 million project to contribute to the rehabilitation of the Artibonite watershed;
- The GTZ 9 year phased project which started in 2004. The first phase for 3 years is worth 1.5 million euros;
- Two UNDP-GEF projects: Capacity Building for sustainable Land Management" under LDC-SIDS portfolio and the bi national PBF-B initiative *Integrated Management of the Artibonite International Watershed* aiming at capacity development at the local level, promotion of sustainable land use models;
- The GEF/UNDP-Small Grants Program (SGP) to promote small projects and capacity building for local development initiatives;

Conclusion and Recommendations

Institutional fragmentation characterizes for the most part the execution of land management in Haiti. The government is however trying to mainstream sustainable development principles into national policies and programmes in order to reduce existing threats to the environment and sustainable land management. Not having a NAP has subsequently provoked a lack of coordination and strategic vision.

In fact, the policy frame presents non-integrated, sectoral approach, in the fight to combat desertification. There is an ample legal frame that assures the preservation and sustainability of natural resources, but there is difficulty in its application, having duplicity of functions between institutions and a legal system that does not favor concrete and timely actions.

It is necessary to encourage the synergy between Conventions, through integration processes between programs and projects to achieve grater impact in natural resource conservation and to make the most of the opportunities of each convention. In doing so, the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification and Drought will consider:

- Development of Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems for land use potential;
- Implementation of an appropriate management framework and capacities for integrated cross-sectoral approaches to foster sustainable land management

- Identification and clarification of links with new priorities and provide a framework for the integration of environmental considerations into the planning and decision making process for social and economic development in the implementation of national strategies such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG)
- Definition a national strategy for concerted actions for effective implementation of UNCCC;
- Integration of gender considerations into all national, regional and local plans and programs to improve the economic wellbeing, preserve natural resources and follow-up and assessment of desertification and drought effects; and
- Elaboration of an investment plan and identification and mobilization of all potential sources of funding.