

**NATIONAL REPORT OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN
ON
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION
TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD)
2000**

**FOREST AND RANGE ORGANIZATION
MINISTRY OF CONSTRUCTION JIHAD
(RURAL DEVELOPMENT)
TEHRAN**

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Acronyms

ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
CAP	Community Action Plan
CBO	Community Based Organization
CCD	Convention to Combat Desertification
COP	Conference of Parties
DESCONAP	Desertification Control in Asia and the Pacific
DPO	DESCONAP Programme Office
EC	Executive Committee
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
ESCAP	Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FRO	Forest and Range Organization
NFYDP	National Five-Year Development Plan
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
I.R. Iran	Islamic Republic of Iran
NAP	National Action Programme
NCB	National Coordinating Body
NCCD	National Committee to Combat Desertification
NCSD	National Committee for Sustainable Development
NEAP	National Environment Action Plan
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSC	National Steering Committee
RAP	Regional Action Programme
SRAP	Sub regional Action Programme
TPN	Thematic Programme Network
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNSO	United Nations Office to Combat Desertification

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1. The Strategies and Priorities Established within the Framework of Sustainable Development Plans and/or Policies

The Islamic Republic of Iran (I. R. Iran) is situated in South West Asia, bordering the CIS states in the North, Afghanistan and Pakistan to the East, Iraq and Turkey to the West and the Persian Gulf to the South. The country occupies a total land area of nearly 1,650,000 square kilometers and is the second largest country in the Middle East.

Most of the country is covered by arid and semi-arid lands in which the average annual rainfall is less than 250 mm, which is scattered irregularly both in terms of time and area and potential for evapotranspiration is many times more than precipitation. It amounts to more than 100 times in certain regions in the country. The net result is a lack of opportunity for the vegetation to develop and a decrease in the biological productivity of agricultural lands and natural vegetation. Desertification and drought adversely affects about half of the country's population.

The country's population is about 63 million with an annual average growth rate of about 1.4 per annum. More than 38.7 of the population lives in rural areas where farming and animal herding is the major source of income. Beside the high human population, there is also a large number of livestock which dependent on the land. The pressure on the land has resulted in the increase in utilization of marginal areas for both cropping and grazing. This situation coupled with the natural erodibility of the land and erosive nature of the rainfall in drylands, which comes as flash floods has caused severe soil erosion and general land degradation.

Many geographers and ecologists consider the central plateau of Iran as one of the world's most famous and unique deserts, and the Lut desert, located at the south-eastern part of the plateau, is the most arid and the hottest point on earth.

The particular climatic conditions of Iran contributed, in addition to the formation of more than 3000 years of indigenous knowledge. Furthermore, institutional frameworks have been created and concerted efforts undertaken during the last forty years. On that basis, a broad range of strategies has been developed and programmes implemented to address the many problems associated with desertification and drought before the advent of the CCD. In addition, the regular 5-year Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plans (the third plan under implementation) have paid particular attention to soil, water sustainable management of rangelands and forests. Iran has already been involved in sharing its long experience and expertise in the fields of combating desertification and sand dune fixation with other countries.

The Government of Iran is committed to the concept of sustainable development through linking the environment to the overall development process. Since UNCED, the government has launched various initiatives o promotes and supports the implementation of Agenda 21 and sustainable development. Among these are the efforts to coordinate all

environmental activities in the country by the High-Council on Environment and the formulation of a National Action Plan for the Environment (NEAP) which is now in place. Within this context, there is consensus within the Government that land degradation is a priority environmental problem in the country and that CCD offers a timely and strategic framework within which these issues could be addressed.

In line with its obligations under the convention and as a national priority, the government has already launched the elaboration of the National Action Programme (NAP) to combat desertification. The Government has adopted the framework and guidelines of the NAP. The formulation of NAP will supplement the past and existing initiatives in combating desertification in the country.

2. THE INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE CCD

I.R. Iran is one of the first countries that signed the international convention to combat desertification and has completed the ratification processes in 1996 and thus, became a member of the Convention. Among measures taken by the government are the putting in place of an institutional structure as well as formation of thematic working groups to get the participatory process of NAP formulation under way to spearhead this effort, a National Committee to combat Desertification (NCCD) (National Coordination Body-NCB) has been established under the overall co-ordination of the Minister of Jahad-e-Sazandegi, (Rural Development), who acts as the chairman of the Committee. The NCB comprises various relevant ministries, institutions, academia, local communities and NGOs and international organization representatives. The NCB continues its efforts towards the elaboration of the NAP, in close cooperation with the National Committee for Sustainable Development (NCSD).

An Executive Committee (EC) is already existing and is composed by all relevant technical institutions: researchers and technicians, as well as, well known institutions. The objective of the EC is to provide advice and guidance to the steering committee for all technical and substantive matters related to desertification. The NSC is composed by the existing National Committee and broadened to Representatives of all concerned Ministries, NGOs, Women Groups, Local Municipalities, and private sector. Also, this process is being backstopped by UNDP as well as ESCAP through the DESCONAP Programme Office (DPO) located in Tehran.

The inter-sectoral and multidisciplinary character of the NCB is manifested in the National Steering Committee (NSC). The NSC includes relevant ministries, institutions, academia, local communities and NGOs. The Forest and Rangeland Organization (FRO) has been designated as the focal point for implementing the NAP activities. FRO provides the NCB with necessary requirements such as communication and transport facilities for stakeholder coordination, office space, etc.

The National Focal point (NFP) for CCD has been designated by FRO who is accountable to the NSC and supported by a full-time secretariat.

At the local level, regional centers for planning the and implementation of combating desertification and sand dune fixation programmes and projects, have been constituted by FRO in 12 provinces of the country presenting more than 60% of the country's total area. These centers coordinate the activities in each region in close cooperation and collaboration with the Islamic villages and cities councils (elected directly by the people) and the other relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations in each province.

Women have always played a major role in combating desertification efforts in the country. However, promotion of the role of women at all levels, including at policy and decision-making levels is being paid particular attention.

The UNCCD principles and the NAP guidelines based on the past experiences have already been integrated into the national 5-year development plan under implementation.

At the regional level, the ESCAP DESCONAP Programme Office (DPO) located in Tehran, continues to play its role in the region through holding seminar, workshops, training courses, exchange of information and experiences.

The International Experts Group Meeting on the Preparation of the RAP for Combating Desertification and Drought in Asia was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 10 to 13 November 1998. The Meeting decided that the first stage of the implementation of the RAP should include the development of three specific Thematic programmes Network (TPNs) and adopted their terms of reference (ToR). These include the TPN on Rangeland Management, including Fixation of Sand Dunes, to be hosted by Iran. The Network is scheduled for launching in 2000.

Environmental laws and regulations are also important elements in the management of environmental affairs, and these have been evolving rapidly in Iran since 1971. Although the Environmental Protection Act was ratified in 1974 and enacted the following year since the victory of the Islamic Revolution greater importance has been accorded to environmental laws and regulation; indeed, I. R. Iran is one of the few countries in the world to have a special article in its constitution on environmental protection.

Article 50 of the constitution states that is a public duty to protect the environment in order to assure the well-being of present and future generations. Accordingly, all activities that pollute or irreparably damage the environment are prohibited.

The "Development of a Green Economy" initiative announced by the I. R Iran in 1990 illustrates the link that environmental legislation makes between the environment and the economy. The First, Second and Third Development Plans also took this integrated approach. Legislation on environmental impact assessment has also been formulated and also the Deciosn 138 (1995) of the High Council for the Environment requires an "environmental assessment report" on all major developemnt projects to be submitted before they are implemented.

Existing regulations on air, water and noise pollution and waste and sewage disposal have contributed to the creation of a body of legislation for managing the human environment. However, there is still a critical need for additional legislation.

The development and implementation of the National Programme of Action for Environmental Protection reflects the importance accorded to environmental issues in I. R. Iran. The National Committee for Sustainable Development (NCSD), which comprises eight sub-committees including sub-committee on combating desertification, is the lead institution in environmental strategy and policy development. At the same time, the decisions of the National Committee on Combating Desertification (NCCD) under the chairmanship of the Minister of Jihad-e-Sazandegi (rural development) are considered as obligatory to all institutions members of the Committee. FRO is also a member of the High Council of the Environment under the auspices of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Based on Articles 45 and 50 of the National Constitution, the regular five-year development plans, adopted by the National Parliament, also take fully into account the principles of CCD and the experiences of the past. Sectoral laws governing the management of the natural resources including the following: land tenure, forest act, wildlife act, and water act also exist. These laws are regularly reviewed based on the experiences gained from their implementation.

3. PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAP

CCD calls for developing a strategy for concerted efforts and effective participation of key actors involved in defining NAP process and priorities. Some of the policies and activities undertaken by the Government to promote the participatory approach in the combating desertification efforts include:

- Enactment of laws for encouraging the local communities and CBOs to exploit the natural resources in the rangelands in a sustainable manner in accordance with CCD principle and the objectives of sustainable development. In this connection, the ownership of lands has been left to local communities, including farmers and pastoralists, aiming at reclaiming the degraded lands and exploitation of natural resources based on scientific principles. For this purpose, the necessary training and information are provided to the local people;
- Education and extension activities at the local level in order to encourage and promote public participation and awareness raising in the methods for the protection of land resources and the control of land degradation;
- Assisting and encouraging the formation of school students groups (Pooyandegan), as well as other youth, women, students, farmers and pastoralists groups;

- Enactment of laws aiming at reducing the state intervention and instead, increasing the public role in combating desertification efforts;
- A meeting of NGOs and CBOs was helped by the FRO. The objective of the meeting was to identify how better NGOs and CBOs active in combating desertification activities can be involved in the preparation and implementation of the NAP;
- A seminar on Women and Desertification was organized in June 1999 by NGOs which was supported by CCD Secretariat UNSO, UNDP and Iranian FRO provided the necessary facilities;
- A meeting with community elders has been organized by NFP in order to remind the indigenous knowledge and technologies. An inventory of such technologies and knowledge has been prepared and reported to COPI of CCD and reflected in CCD reports to COPs of the Convention;
- A project document on the Development of the National Action Programme has been prepared with UNDP assistance. At the end of which, the following are but some of the results relating to public participation expected to be realized:
 - awareness of public raised and Decision-makers sensitized on desertification issues including local populations;
 - Effective participation of all stakeholders at all levels;
 - Role of women strengthen in the implementation of the CCD;
 - The coordinating unit, Executive committee and representatives of civil society trained.
- Two sub-regional seminars and workshops on NAP development and new technologies for combating desertification were organized by DPO in which countries from South and Central Asia, Western Europe as well as CCD Secretariat, UN organizations and a large number of Iranian NGOs, CBOs and academia actively participated;
- A GEF project entitled “Carbon Sequestration in the Desertified Rangelands of Hossein Abad, South Khorasan, through Community-based Management” is under implementation. The results of this project are also supposed to be used while formulating the NAP in terms of the involvement of local people;
- Upon a contract , the draft Terms of Reference of TPN3 to be hosted by Iran, was prepared by an Iranian NGO;
- The NAP guidelines adopted by Government emphasizes on public awareness at all levels of society and women and public participation, in the decision-natural resources and combating desertification.

Although NGOs concerned with environmental issues are not yet sufficiently developed in Iran, there are signs that they are on the increase. According to the information provided by the Department of the Environment, currently, there are 170 environmental NGOs active in throughout the country. These groups have been engaged primarily in educational and publicity activities and the implementation of some projects on the ground. An inventory of NGOs and CBOs has been prepared by the Department of the Environment. Also a network of environmental NGOs has been created by the said Department.

4. CONSULATATIVE PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAP AND THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH THE DEVELOPED COUNTRY PARTNERS AND OTHER INTERESTED ENTITITES

Iran did not receive a significant support and active participation of international partners in the preparation and implementation of the NAP. GEF project on carbon sequestration, UNDP involvement in all the stages of NAP process, consultations with UNSO, CCD Global Mechanism (GM), IFAD and FAO are some of the efforts to involve the donor community, while Iran did not receive any support from bilateral donors. However, technical and financial support for finalizing the NAP formulation process is the principal need at this stage.

Due to the vitality of the issue for Iran as one the most affected countries by desertification and drought, significant amount of resources have already been devoted to the preparation of NAP and the implementation of combating desertification projects. It is noteworthy to mention that recently a contact has been signed between the FRO, NGOs and University of Tehran for consolidating the scientific approach in the NAP. As a result, national resource mobilization is the main financial support for the NAP process. Therefore, there an urgent need for the donor community to realize the objectives of the Convention through the provision of new and additional funding and mobilizing and channeling the existing resources in support of the most affected regions and countries.

A regional symposium on sustainable development of drylands will be held in the province of Yazd in central Iran with the financial and technical support of UNDP. Representatives from India, China, Pakistan, Central Asian Republics, relevant international organizations, as well as, NGOs, CBOs, women and youth organizations are invited to participate in the Symposium. The outcome would not only contribute to the NAP process in Iran but would also provide a good opportunity for sharing information and experiences with other countries. A new Regional Center on Sustainable Development of Desert Communities is supposed to be established in Yazd. It is also expected that the Symposium would play its role in the mobilization of resources from foreign sources.

5. MEASURES TAKEN OR PLANNED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NAP, INCLUDING MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONEMTN, TO CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES, TO IMPROVE INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION, TO IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE OF DESERTIFICATION AND TO MONITOR AND ASSESS THE EFFECTS OF DROUGHT

Desertification and drought affects the daily lives of a large proportion of the Iranian society. Therefore, the NAP should address economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects of the issue. Based on the long experiences gained during four decades of combating desertification activities, and the diagnoses and evaluation of these activities

and review of the past experiences in Iran, appropriate actions are envisioned in the NAP process. These include, among others, at the macro-level, the following:

- a. integration of environmental considerations in general and combating desertification in particular, into the policies and activities of all relevant national ministries and local institutions;
- b. emphasizing on population control policies and family planning especially in rural areas, in accordance with Islamic values;
- c. according priority to the sustainable land management and institutional coordination for preventing land degradation, as well as desertification control;
- d. promotion of the use of new technologies and techniques relating to combating desertification and the better use of indigenous knowledge and technologies;
- e. enactment of necessary laws and amending the existing rules and regulations in conformity with sustainable development policies and programmes, including combating desertification;
- f. public awareness at all levels of society;
- g. public participation, including NGOs, CBOs, local people, private sector, youth and women, in the decision-making, management and the implementation of the NAP and of projects on natural resources and environment in general and, on water, soil and agriculture in particular;
- h. revitalization of and upgrading the research centers;
- i. capacity building, at various levels.

The Forest and Rangeland Organization (FRO) is an important organization with branches in all provinces in the country. This organization with 40 years history in combating desertification efforts is in charge of the development of policies and projects on combating desertification and sand dune fixation as well as sustainable management of forests, reforestation and afforestation activities. Significant amount of resources are provided to this organization upon its programmes and activities. Policies, activities and institutional framework of FRO are under regular review based on the experiences gained. Several joint projects on sand dune fixation and combating desertification have been defined and/or implemented by FRO in the neighboring and other countries.

Today, several research institutes and faculties on combating desertification exist around the country. One of the objectives of the NAP is to strengthen and improve the work of these institutions. The integration of the results of several ongoing projects, including “the GEF carbon sequestration based on community management”, are proposed to be integrated into the NAP.

The FRO branches play an important role to facilitate liaison between the local and national level through coordination and cooperation with the Islamic Cities and Villages Councils (elected directly by the people), as well as the governors and mayors. This is how the community initiatives are reflected in the policies and strategies at the macro level and into the day to day programmes for combating desertification. However, there is still lack of effective management and lobbying capacities in CBOs and especially with women-folk. Therefore, one of the NAP priorities would be to enhance the effective

participation of NGOs/CBOs and affected grassroots communities. Training is also an important part of this endeavor which has already shown remarkable results.

Drought is also one of the major threats to the Iranian society. In the current year, drought had already unprecedented and devastating effects on 15 provinces in the country comprising about 30% of the population. A remarkable disaster response mechanism exists in the country, including a special committee on natural disasters of the Ministry of Interior, the existing mechanisms in the Red Crescent Society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as the Ministry of Jihad-e-Sazandegi (rural development) and the FRO. Iran's experience and expertise in this field is also known by other countries and the relevant international organizations. As far as the activities for mitigating the effects of drought are concerned, no foreign assistance has been recorded yet.

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

The constant and twin problems of desertification and drought heavily influenced the development planning in Iran over the last decades. The national budget allocated for these activities during the Second Five-Year Development Plan (1995-1999) was 153,469,000,000 Rials (\$51,000,000). At the same time, the private sector and local communities have invested an additional 15,000,000,000 Rials (\$5,000,000). In addition to the environmental and social aspects, the protection of cities, towns and villages, as well as the industrial complexes, roads and railroads networks and ... towards the moving sand dunes has always imposed considerable pressure on the national budget. This is while several Ministries and institutions undertake activities in line with anti-desertification campaign which is in fact coordinated under the national development plans.

The bulk of resources for NAP process in Iran is being provided by the government. However due to the magnitude of the problem and limited resources chances for the NAP success depends, to a large extent, on the donor support.

Financial resources, technical and technological support, access to know how and exchange of experiences and expertise are challenges facing successful NAP process. Iran, while being in need of this shopping list is also prepared to share its experiences with other countries through organizing training courses for experts from affected countries, development and implementation of joint projects, study tours, etc.

7. REVIEW OF THE BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS UTILIZED TO MEASURE PROGRESS AND ASSESSMENT THEREOF

The National Plan of Action for the Protection of Environment prepared by the Department for the Environment analyzes the current environment situation in Iran. In accordance with the sustainability indicators in water, soil, climate, flora and fauna and through a comparative study, the state of Iran's natural environment and natural resources is defined.

These data are accessible to the interested people and organizations but scattered in several organizations. Furthermore, the indicators and standards used are not similar. Recently, the research and study units have endeavored to update these data and make them available through modern software systems. In general, there exists a considerable volume of data relating to environment and natural resources, but the challenge is how to collect and upgrade these data and how to facilitate rapid access of all interested.

During the last few years, efforts have been made in order to harmonize benchmarks and indicators for measuring progress in combating desertification and the assessment models needed. Currently, the Center for Research on Drylands is undertaking case studies in various regions in the country to assess the last thirty years of desertification process and combating desertification in Iran. Also, the faculty of social sciences of the University of Tehran implemented a project on comprehensive assessment of improving methods in the rangeland management in arid and semi-arid areas.

The results of these assessment studies contribute to the regular review of the policies and strategies and their promotion and updating and therefore, more qualified programmes and their successful implementation.

1. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND/OR POLICIES

1.1 Introduction

Iran, with an area of 165 million hectares, is one of the largest countries in Asia, located in an arid belt between 25,40 to 29,40 degrees north latitude and 44 to 63,5 degrees east longitude in the southwest of Asia. Almost 60% of its surface is covered by mountains, whereas desert zones cover one third of the territory. In other words, more than 80 percent of Iran's lands is categorized as arid, semi-arid and dried sub-humid areas. Most of Iranian soil is young, shallow, arid or alkaline and saline.

The high central plateau of Iran is located between two major mountain where the precipitation is low (up to 35 mm), extremely variable, and subject to significant changes according to seasons, months, days, and nights. The average annual precipitation in Iran is only 230 mm, about one third of world average of 860 mm, disproportionately dispersed over the year. Another ecological feature of Iran is the wide range of temperature, sometimes reaching 50 C.

Drought cycles and unsustainable methods of use of soil, water, and plant cover has aggravated the desertification process in Iran. The net result is a lack of opportunity for the vegetation to develop and a decrease in the biological productivity of agricultural lands and natural vegetation. Desertification and drought adversely affects about half of the country's population.

The country's population is about 63 million with an annual average growth rate of about 1.4 per annum. More than 38.7 of the population lives in rural areas where farming and animal herding is the major source of income. Beside the high human population, there is also a large number of livestock which dependent on the land. The pressure on the land has resulted in the increase in utilization of marginal areas for both cropping and grazing. This situation coupled with the natural erodibility of the land and erosive nature of the rainfall in drylands, which comes as flash floods has caused severe soil erosion and general land degradation.

1.2 Pre-UNCCD strategies

Iran has a long tradition of desertification control and sand dune stabilization, and is cooperating with other countries and organizations involved in combating desertification and land degradation. An enabling environment in terms of political and policy guidance backed by a host of institutions have encouraged a wide range of projects and programmes.

Sand dune stabilizing projects and anti-desertification programmes, initiated in 1965, annually cover about one million hectares of degraded land. Measures to stabilize sand dunes include reforestation programmes, the construction of wind-breaks, and the application of mulch. Until now, more than three million hectares of degraded lands have been reclaimed.

The Iranian government has taken various measures to combat desertification and rehabilitate degraded natural resources. A National Plan of Action, launched in 1992, envisages the reclamation and stabilization of 10 million hectares of degraded lands. The planned activities for combating desertification has started in 1959 (1338 Iranian calendar). The first programme for mitigating wind and water erosion in drylands was initiated and the first combating desertification center established in the North East on Iran in 1965. Today, 13 centers exist in 13 provinces while combating desertification efforts are followed in other provinces through mixed projects and/or comprehensive and integrated plans.

The particular climatic conditions of Iran contributed, in addition to the formation of more than 3000 years of indigenous knowledge. Furthermore, institutional frameworks have been created and concerted efforts undertaken during the last forty years. On that basis, a broad range of strategies has been developed and programmes implemented to address the many problems associated with desertification and drought before the advent of the CCD. In addition, the regular 5-year Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plans (the third plan under implementation) have paid particular attention to soil, water sustainable management of rangelands and forests. Iran has already been involved in sharing its long experience and expertise in the fields of combating desertification and sand dune fixation with other countries.

The Forest and Range Organization (FRO) with about 4000 experts and personnel around the country, excellent facilities and a significant annual budget, and the Bureau for combating desertification within FRO have their origins from 1959 when the first center was created for sand-dune fixation. Also, Organization for wild conservation created in 1960s, has been transformed to the Department of the Environment.

At the local level, regional centers for planning the and implementation of combating desertification and sand dune fixation programmes and projects, have been constituted by FRO in 12 provinces of the country presenting more than 60% of the country's total area. These centers coordinate the activities in each region in close cooperation and collaboration with the Islamic villages and cities councils (elected directly by the people) and the other relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations in each province.

The activities of FRO over the period of 1979-1995 include the following:

1. Technical Bureau for Combating Desertification
 - Plantation 1,300,000 ha.
 - Seed sowing 3,300,000 ha.
 - Petroleum mulch spraying 130,000 ha.
 - Establishment of wind breaks 2,000 km.

More than 9,000,000 hectares of shifting sand dunes and desertified lands have been either stabilized or rehabilitated, of which 4,000,000 ha. Are usable hand-planted forest or range.

2. Technical Bureau of Range Management
 - Direct seeding and sowing 1,250,000 ha.
 - Water harvesting 1,500,000 ha.
 - Restoration of pasture 1,100,000 ha.
 - Application of fertilizer 950,000 ha.

In order to encourage pastoralists, nomads and rangeland users to employ rangelands resources wisely and sustainably the government is awarding usage right of natural rangelands to land users on a 30-year lease contract basis. Up to now about 30 million ha. of rangelands has been transferred to users.

3. Technical Bureau of Parks and Afforestation
 - The plantation (government) 326,000 ha.
 - Tree plantation (private sector) 212,000 ha.
 - National park establishment 25,000 ha.
 - Seeding production for use by Public and private sectors 1,000,000,000 seedlings
 - Production, improvement, and treatment of forest seed species at the Caspian Sea center.

Combating desertification policies and programmes in Iran before the advent of UNCCD where primarily focused primarily on reclamation and rehabilitation of degraded lands rather than the preservation and conservation programmes. One of the shortcomings of the policies and programmes has been lack of their comprehensiveness and integrity. However, UNCCD contributed a lot to the use of a more participatory approach in and the complementarity of such policies and programmes.

Examples of programmes and projects related to combating desertification which were implemented during the period before the adoption of UNCCD are as follow:

- Sand dune fixation
- Watershed management
- Water resource management
- Flood control (Kowthar project)
- Establishment of various research centers and faculties on desertification
- Forests with low cover and non-industrial values (Zagros forests)
- A project on taking the livestock out of forests
- A project on balancing livestock with rangelands
- A project for the rehabilitation of 10 million ha. of degraded rangelands
- National Action Programme for disaster preparedness and disaster response at mitigating the effects of drought
- A programme for the creation of a Green Belt around major cities, towns, industrial complexes and infrastructure

Of course, strategies, plans and programmes already exist in the fields of environment, energy conservation, wildlife, water resource management, sustainable agriculture,

research, forestry, rangeland management, land tenure, stakeholder participation, etc. such activities are undertaken by various ministries and institutions and coordinated under the regular National 5-year Development Plans.

The regular National 5-year Development Plans also constitute policy instruments relevant to combating desertification. Since the 1960s, every development plan has recognized the need for environmental management for example.

Furthermore, at the regional level, also, a long history of bilateral and multilateral cooperation exist between Iran and other countries, as well as several international organizations including UN Fund and programmes. In this context, several projects were designed and implemented by FRO in some of the countries on the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, training courses as study tours were organized for experts from North Africa, South, West and Central Asia.

Based on a resolution adopted at a ministerial meeting of ESCAP, a DESCONAP Programme Office (DPO) has been established in April 1994 in Tehran. Since its existence, DPO has undertaken activities at the national and sub-regional levels including several workshops and seminars for the NAP and RAP in Asia.

1.3 Post UNCCD strategies

Despite the existence of the host of strategies and plans to combat desertification highlighted above, land degradation and desertification has accelerated markedly during the last century, particularly over the last 25 years in Iran. The Convention provides the appropriate framework that has critical elements, which were not considered adequately in the sectoral policies i.e. the need for strengthening partnership building, bottom-up-approach and rational utilization of the resources available to all stakeholders.

Iran has been among the first countries that signed and ratified the Convention and actively participated from the very beginning in the process of the elaboration and implementation of the UNCCD. Iran was the vice-chairman of one of the two working groups both during the elaboration process and the interim period before the entry into force of the Convention. Iran also occupied one of the posts of vice-president, as well as chairman of the Committee on Science and Technology in three COPs.

In line with its obligations under the convention and as a national priority, the government has already launched the elaboration of the National Action Programme (NAP) to combat desertification. The Government has adopted the framework and guidelines of the NAP. The formulation of NAP will supplement the past and existing initiatives in combating desertification in the country.

The National Environment Action Plan adopted in 1999, also reflects the consensus within the government that land degradation is a priority environmental problem in the country and that CCD offers a timely and strategic framework within which combating desertification and mitigation of the effects of drought can be addressed.

Undoubtedly, every programme on combating desertification in Iran contributes, in one way or another, to the eradication of poverty. However, the relationship between combating desertification and poverty eradication has also been addressed in the context of the National Programme for the Eradication of Poverty (NPEP).

Once ratified by the Parliament, the provisions of the Convention are evidently considered now as a law and a national commitment. During this period of time, the combating desertification principles in Iran have been made conformed with those of the CCD. The CCD principles have also been integrated into the comprehensive national sustainable development plan including in the fields of human development, NEAP, NPEP and national energy plans.

2. THE INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE CCD

2.1 Introduction

Taking into account the circumstances and requirements specific to each affected country party, NAPs include measures in the priority fields identified as they relate to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought in affected areas. This is a fact recognized by the UNCCD as each region has its own “particular conditions”. A consultative and participatory process which include all relevant components of the government, all stakeholders as well as bilateral and multilateral partners is an integral part of NAP process. To respond to this need, an institutional framework in Iran is still evolving.

2.2 Establishment of a functional National Coordinating Body (NCB)

2.2.1 Legal status

I.R. Iran is one of the first countries that signed the international convention to combat desertification and has completed the ratification processes in 1996 and thus, became a member of the Convention. Some of the measures taken by the government are the putting in place of an institutional structure, as well as, formation of thematic working groups to get the participatory process of NAP formulation under way to spearhead this effort, a National Committee to combat Desertification (NCCD) (National Coordination Body-NCB) has been established under the overall co-ordination of the Minister of Jihad-e-Sazandegi, (Rural Development), who acts as the chairman of the Committee. The NCB comprises various relevant ministries, institutions, academia, local communities and NGOs and international organization representatives. The NCB continues its efforts towards the elaboration of the NAP, in close cooperation with the National Committee for Sustainable Development (NCSA).

An Executive Committee (EC) is already existing and is composed by all relevant technical institutions: researchers and technicians, as well as, well known institutions. The objective of the EC is to provide advice and guidance to the steering committee for

all technical and substantive matters related to desertification. The NSC is composed by existing National Committee and broadened to Representatives of all concerned Ministries, NGOs, Women Groups, Local Municipalities, and private sector. Also, this process is being backstopped by UNDP as well as ESCAP through the DESCONAP Programme Office (DPO) located in Tehran.

The National Focal point (NFP) for CCD has been designated by FRO who is accountable to the NSC and supported by a full-time secretariat.

The UNCCD principles and the NAP guidelines based on the past experiences have already been integrated into the national 5-year development plan under implementation.

At the regional level, the ESCAP DESCONAP Programme Office (DPO) located in Tehran, continues to play its role in the region through holding seminar, workshops, training courses, exchange of information and experiences.

The International Experts Group Meeting on the Preparation of the RAP for Combating Desertification and Drought in Asia was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 10 to 13 November 1998. The Meeting decided that the first stage of the implementation of the RAP should include the development of three specific Thematic programmes Network (TPNs) and adopted their terms of reference (ToR). These include the TPN on Rangeland Management, including Fixation of Sand Dunes, to be hosted by Iran. The Network is scheduled for launching in 2000.

Environmental laws and regulations are also important elements in the management of environmental affairs, and these have been evolving rapidly in Iran since 1971. Although the Environmental Protection Act was ratified in 1974 and enacted the following year since the victory of the Islamic Revolution greater importance has been accorded to environmental laws and regulation; indeed, I. R. Iran is one of the few countries in the world to have a special article in its constitution on environmental protection.

Article 50 of the constitution states that is a public duty to protect the environment in order to assure the well-being of present and future generations. Accordingly, all activities that pollute or irreparably damage the environment are prohibited.

The “Development of a Green Economy” initiative announced by the I. R Iran in 1990 illustrates the link that environmental legislation makes between the environment and the economy. The First, Second and Third Development Plans also took this integrated approach. Legislation on environmental impact assessment has also been formulated and also the Decision 138 (1995) of the High Council for the Environment requires an “environmental assessment report” on all major development projects to be submitted before they are implemented.

Existing regulations on air, water and noise pollution and waste and sewage disposal have contributed to the creation of a body of legislation for managing the human environment. However, there is still a critical need for additional legislation.

The development and implementation of the National Programme of Action for Environmental Protection reflects the importance accorded to environmental issues in I. R. Iran. The National Committee for Sustainable Development (NCSD), which comprises eight sub-committees including sub-committee on combating desertification, is the lead institution in environmental strategy and policy development. At the same time, the decisions of the National Committee on Combating Desertification (NCCD) under the chairmanship of the Minister of Jihad-e-Sazandegi (rural development) are considered as obligatory to all institutions members of the Committee. FRO is also a member of the High Council of the Environment under the auspices of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Based on Articles 45 and 50 of the National Constitution, the regular five-year development plans, adopted by the National Parliament, also take fully into account the principles of CCD and the experiences of the past. Sectoral laws governing the management of the natural resources including the following: land tenure, forest act, wildlife act, and water act also exist. These laws are regularly reviewed based on the experiences gained from their implementation.

2.2.2 Resources

Due to the particular climatic conditions of the country, currently 10 ministries members of the NC are involved in developing and financing national combating desertification programmes and projects. However, the FRO is the main responsible for the follow-up and implementation of the policies and programmes adopted by NC. The Office for Combating Desertification within the FRO is in charge of preparing the draft plans and programmes.

The bulk of resources for NAP formulation and implementation process is provided by the government through the national budget. In this context, FRO provide excellent facilities such as secretariat personnel, building, transportation, and computers to NCB. It is worthy to mention that up to now no financial assistance for NAP from donor community has been registered.

2.2.3 Inter-sectoral and multidisciplinary characteristics

The inter-sectoral and multidisciplinary character of the NCB is manifested in the National Steering Committee (NSC). The NSC includes relevant ministries, institutions, academia, local communities and NGOs. FRO has been designated as the focal point for implementing the NAP activities.

Women have always played a major role in combating desertification efforts in the country. However, promotion of the role of women at all levels, including at policy and decision-making levels is being paid particular attention.

2.2.4 Composition and mode of operation

FRO continues to be the dominant organization in combating desertification in Iran while at the same time, based on the CCD principles and requirements, NSC and NCB comprise of the organizations described in previous parts of this report.

CBOs, NGOs, private sector, elderly, academia and individuals in personal capacity are also consulted by the NCB on a regular basis. However, it is proposed to include them in the future. For example, a private research institute is providing consultation for NAP preparation on the basis of a contract with FRO.

The NCB meets at least quarterly. There is also a division of labor among the members of NCB. The communication is facilitated and coordinated by the secretariat of NCB.

Ministries and institutions members of NCB officially and in written form represent their representatives to the NCB. There exists a Terms of reference for the Committee in accordance with the decisions taken in the context of UNCCD. FRO provides financial and other necessary supports o the NCB. NCB reports to the High Council on Environment under the chairmanship of the President of the I.R. Iran.

As to the budgetary questions, financial resources, secretariat support, and other matters refer to the 2.2.2 above. However, it is worthy to mention that financial resources, technical and technological support, access to know how and exchange of experiences and expertise are challenges facing successful NAP process. Iran, while being in need of this shopping list is also prepared to share its experiences with other countries through organizing training courses for experts from affected countries, development and implementation of joint projects, study tours, etc.

2.2.5 Status of information data

Adequate access to information and communication facilities already exist. There is also access to internet. Data on environmental issues are accessible to the interested people and organizations but scattered in several organizations. Therefore, there is an urgent need for installing a database and resource center focusing on combating desertification. Data collection for NCB is also facilitated through some other databases and institutions as follow:

- FRO database
- Information Center of the Ministry of Construction Jihad
- Information Center of the Research center of the Ministry of Construction Jihad
- Information Center on Drylands
- Research Center on Forest and Rangeland
- National Meteorological Organization
- Center for Research on drylands
- 13 Combating Desertification Centers in various provinces around the country

2.3 Institutional framework for coherent and functional desertification control

2.3.1 Measures adopted to adjust or strengthen the institutional framework

2.3.2 Measures adopted to strengthen existing institutions at the local and national level

As it was elaborated on in previous parts of this report, FRO continues to be the dominant organization in combating desertification in Iran while at the same time, based on the CCD principles and requirements, NSC and NCB comprise of the organizations described in previous parts of this report.

At the local level, regional centers for planning the and implementation of combating desertification and sand dune fixation programmes and projects, have been constituted by FRO in 12 provinces of the country presenting more than 60% of the country's total area. These centers coordinate the activities in each region in close cooperation and collaboration with the Islamic Villages and Cities Councils (elected directly by the people) and the other relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations in each province.

FRO is also making every effort to strengthen and support CBOs, NGOs, elderly, women and youth and provides training courses for such groups around the country. The magnitude of desertification in Iran necessitates government intervention and investment on combating desertification and water resource management not only for the protection of environment but also as a development priority.

2.4 NAP as part of the national economic and social development plan

2.4.1 Making the NAP coherent with other environmental strategies and planning frameworks

Land and natural resources management has been addressed as a priority issue in the regular national 5-year development plans as well as in the new NEAP developed by DOE with assistance from international organizations.

The NSC comprising various relevant ministries, institutions, academia, local communities and NGOs, under the Chairmanship of the FRO continues its efforts towards the elaboration of the NAP, in close cooperation with the National Committee for Sustainable Development. As a result, the framework and principles has been elaborated and adopted at the national level. Recently, a contract has been signed between FRO and the Research Institute of the University of Tehran for the development of the NAP. It is expected that in the first quarter of the year 2001 the final text of the NAP will be ready for adoption. Undoubtedly, NAP is being considered as a strategic framework for action in the national context which is under development and which will be complementary to the larger development frameworks.

The principles adopted by CCD including bottom-up approach and partnership Programme planning and implementation are acknowledged and integrated in most new strategies in the country.

2.4.2 Linkages of NAP with national, inter-regional and local approaches

It should be noted that land degradation and combating desertification continue to be considered as a priority issue in the national development plans. National Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plans are developed every 5 years. The present one in which the basic principles of the NAP are fully addressed is now under implementation.

2.4.3 Linkages of NAP with SRAP and RAP

Linkages with SRAP and RAP will be realized including through DESCONAP Programme Office (DPO) which is located in Tehran, as well as the Thematic Programme Network (TPN) for Asia on Rangeland Management including the Fixation of Sands to be established in Tehran in the context of the Asian Action Programme.

2.4.4 Government's agreement/commitment

The Government fully supports the development of the NAP. It is expected that the NAP will be adopted in the first to second quarters of 2001. Meanwhile, the NAP framework and objectives at the macro-level has already been adopted by the Government. The government has provided necessary funds for rangeland management, water and soil mitigation, fixation of sands, reforestation and afforestation, public participation, etc. in addition, the Government makes efforts to control the damages caused by desertification and drought, particularly to local communities, through insurance and banking systems.

2.5 Development of a coherent functional legal and regulatory framework

2.5.1 Assessment of the analysis of legislation on environmental related fields

Several sectoral laws governing land, water, forests and wildlife exist. The institutional framework for addressing environmental issues is under serious review in order to be adjusted to meet the environmental and developmental challenges facing the country and the world in the new millennium. In this connection, the High Council on Environment under the chairmanship of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran adopted a number of regulations on environment. Also, NEAP contains a number of regulations and obligations on environment. Furthermore, the national 5-year development plans adopted by the Parliament constitute laws that also address environment, land degradation and natural resources management. There is also a suggestion for streamlining all institutions and organizations working on environment under a new Ministry on Environment.

Two categories of legislation currently exist:

- Laws and regulations on sustainable management of natural resources and combating land degradation including through plant cover preservation, water resource management, soil preservation, conservation of biological diversity as well as wildlife.
- Legislation to promote the sustainable use of natural resources in the drylands by the local communities in line with the objectives of UNCCD. This include Article 34 of the land tenure bill providing the ownership of lands to the local people in order to promote the sustainable use and rehabilitation.

2.5.2 Measure to adapt current legislation or introduce new enactment

The Government is making every effort to decreasing its level of intervention and increase its coordination and supervision role instead. In this context, the third 5-year national development plan emphasizes on this principle and provides a number of guidelines to realize it. On this basis, relevant legislative, institutional and financial issues are directed and streamlined. By the establishment of Islamic City and Village Councils in 1998 throughout the country, the ground is now prepared for the participation of local populations in the decision making processes of policies and development of projects on combating desertification at the local level.

In the context of the last two 5-year development plans a large part of the country's rangelands have been left to the ownership of local communities and pastoralists through the comprehensive and integrated plans of rangeland management and sustainable use of natural resources.

3. PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAP

3.1 Introduction

The positive results of 4 decades of anti-desertification and sand fixation programmes has created an excellent environment in the country, both people and the Government, for supporting such programmes by all means. Therefore, public awareness and exchange of information at all levels have always been an integral part of combating desertification strategies and policies in Iran.

3.2 The participatory approach for effective involvement of all actors in defining the NAP process priorities

3.2.1 Methods of participation of various actors

A strategy on communication and public awareness exists in the context of the NAP framework and NAP macro-policies developed by NCB and adopted by the Government. For that purpose, all existing means and ways are being used in a systematic manner, including radio and television, news papers, journals, etc. Celebration of the world day on

combating desertification, issuing several journals on natural resources and environment, distribution of posters and printed materials, organizing workshops, seminars and meetings at the local, national and international levels, celebration of national week of natural resources, film festival at the international level and world prize winning movies are but some of the activities for awareness raising.

A large volume of relevant information documents about UNCCD have been translated and made available to the people in Persian (Farsi).

3.2.2 Gender balances of actors involved in defining NAP priorities

Attention has also been given to gender issues in environment and development policies in Iran. Women have always played a particular role in combating desertification in Iran. For instance, Mrs. Ebtekar is the Vice-president and Head of the Department of Environment. A Seminar on the role of women in combating desertification was been organized by NGOs which was supported by FRO and the CCD Secretariat.

However, it is obvious that there is gender imbalance in the representation of the stakeholders that are involved in defining the priorities. This is due to lack of a defined mechanism for adequate presentation but first and foremost as a result of lack of sufficient number of expert women. However, there is a strong and key presentation of women at the implementation level. Efforts are being made to enable women to effectively articulate their views.

3.2.3 Representation of various actors in national priority identification process at local and national forums

3.2.4 Nature and scope of information, education and communication actions

3.2.5 Extent of uptake of local concerns at the national level and results of the national consultations at the local level

Some of the policies and activities undertaken by the Government to promote the participatory approach in the combating desertification efforts include:

- Enactment of laws for encouraging the local communities and CBOs to exploit the natural resources in the rangelands in a sustainable manner in accordance with CCD principle and the objectives of sustainable development. In this connection, the ownership of lands has been left to local communities, including farmers and pastoralists, aiming at reclaiming the degraded lands and exploitation of natural resources based on scientific principles. For this purpose, the necessary training and information are provided to the local people;
- Education and extension activities at the local level in order to encourage and promote public participation and awareness raising in the methods for the protection of land resources and the control of land degradation;

- Assisting and encouraging the formation of school students groups (Pooyandegan), as well as other youth, women, students, farmers and pastoralists groups;
- Enactment of laws aiming at reducing the state intervention and instead, increasing the public role in combating desertification efforts;
- A meeting of NGOs and CBOs was helped by the FRO. The objective of the meeting was to identify how better NGOs and CBOs active in combating desertification activities can be involved in the preparation and implementation of the NAP;
- A seminar on Women and Desertification was organized in June 1999 by NGOs which was supported by CCD Secretariat UNSO, UNDP and Iranian FRO provided the necessary facilities;
- A meeting with community elders has been organized by NFP in order to remind the indigenous knowledge and technologies. An inventory of such technologies and knowledge has been prepared and reported to COPI of CCD and reflected in CCD reports to COPs of the Convention;
- A project document on the Development of the National Action Programme has been prepared with UNDP assistance. At the end of which, the following are but some of the results relating to public participation expected to be realized:
 - awareness of public raised and Decision-makers sensitized on desertification issues including local populations;
 - Effective participation of all stakeholders at all levels;
 - Role of women strengthen in the implementation of the CCD;
 - The coordinating unit, Executive committee and representatives of civil society trained.
- Two sub-regional seminars and workshops on NAP development and new technologies for combating desertification were organized by DPO in which countries from South and Central Asia, Western Europe as well as CCD Secretariat, UN organizations and a large number of Iranian NGOs, CBOs and academia actively participated;
- A GEF project entitled “Carbon Sequestration in the Desertified Rangelands of Hossein Abad, South Khorasan, through Community-based Management” is under implementation. The results of this project are also supposed to be used while formulating the NAP in terms of the involvement of local people;
- Upon a contract , the draft Terms of Reference of TPN3 to be hosted by Iran, was prepared by an Iranian NGO;
- The NAP guidelines adopted by Government emphasizes on public awareness at all levels of society and women and public participation, in the decision-natural resources and combating desertification.

Although NGOs concerned with environmental issues are not yet sufficiently developed in Iran, there are signs that they are on the increase. According to the information provided by the Department of the Environment, currently, there are 170 environmental NGOs active in throughout the country. These groups have been engaged primarily in educational and publicity activities and the implementation of some projects on the

ground. An inventory of NGOs and CBOs has been prepared by the Department of the Environment. Also a network of environmental NGOs has been created by the said Department.

4. CONSULTATIVE PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAP AND THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH THE COUNTRY PARTNERS AND OTHER INTERESTED ENTITIES

4.1 Effective support from international partners for cooperation: degree of participation of international parties

The history of Iran's bilateral cooperation, particularly with its 15 neighboring countries goes back to forty years ago it means since the very beginning of its organized activities for sand dunes fixation and combating desertification. Such cooperation includes development and implementation of several joint projects in and/or organizing training courses and field visits for experts from countries of North Africa, South Asia and Central Asia.

Iran has always played an active role in ESCAP activities and policies on desertification. According to an ESCAP resolution, the DESCONAP Programme Office (DPO) has been established in Tehran. Some of the activities of DPO include:

- Research on benchmarks and indicators
- Organizing a sub-regional workshop on Capacity-building for Implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification from 5 to 7 October 1998
- Organizing a regional seminar on combating desertification techniques and technologies, with assistance from UNCCD Secretariat in October 1998

Several projects have been developed and implemented with the financial and/or technical support from UN Funds and Programmes, particularly UNDP, UNEP and FAO, as well as, the GEF.

Iran was deeply involved in both the elaboration and implementation of CCD. Iran was Vice-chairman of INCD, Vice-president of COP1 and Chairman of the Committee on Science and Technology of COP2.

4.2 Effective support from international partners for cooperation

The degree of support received for NAP process has been very low and not considerable. In many cases, Iran has participated in bilateral and multi lateral cooperation as a donor. Iran expects to benefit from the experiences of others and also to share its experiences and knowledge with them. Experts from UNCCD Secretariat and UNEP and from other countries are regularly visiting Iran and assisting the Iranian experts through technical

workshops and consultations. A plan for preparing the NAP has been prepared with the assistance of an expert mission of FAO, IFAD and UNEP.

In the context of Asian Regional Action Programme, the Asian Group decided to establish a Thematic Programme Network (TPN) on Rangeland Management including the Fixation of Sands in Tehran. The CCD Global Mechanism has shown willingness to support the launching of TPN by providing some relatively small funds. Consultations with GM are underway. The Terms of References of DPO and TPN are adopted by the ESCAP and by the Asian Group.

FRO, NFP, NSC, DPO and TPN provide mechanisms for communicating information between all partners and stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels.

5 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 ORGANIZATIONS, TO ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE ON DESERTIFICATION AND ITS CONTROL TO MONITOR AND ASSESS DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

5.1 Adequacy of the diagnosis of past experience

In the past forty to fifty years, a large number of projects on combating desertification, sand stabilization and mitigating the effects of drought have been implemented. These activities have led to a number of experiences and innovative techniques and mechanisms that can be shared with other affected countries. During the last decade, many of these projects and experiences have been diagnosed and evaluated. Universities, research and training institutions, and relevant ministries have been involved in this evaluation work. A case study on 30 years of combating desertification in the province of Kerman is being undertaken by the Drylands Studies Center of the University of Tehran. Local people are also participating in this project.

The result of the evaluation and diagnosis of the past experiences and activities has considerably contributed to ameliorating the methods used and ensuring the successfulness of future policies and activities. The need for effective involvement of affected communities in the project cycle, the urgency of integrating the environmental considerations in the management of drylands, the need for developing cost effective strategies and giving priority to preserving the existing plant cover rather than rehabilitating the degraded lands constitute some of the results of this evaluation study.

5.2 Establishment of technical programmes and functional integrated projects to combat desertification

5.2.1 Inventory, adaptation and integration of projects underway within the NAP process

Before the advent of CCD, sectoral projects on various aspects of land degradation have been implemented which also included such as water and wind erosion, sand fixation, protection of forests in the drylands, and etc. Recently, based on the principles and objectives of the CCD, efforts have been made to coordinate these projects on one hand, and to integrate the UNCCD principles in them on the other. To achieve this, a committee for technical evaluation and approval of projects has been established. This committee is composed of experts in soil conservation, watershed management, rangeland management, as well as the representative of the High Council on Forests and executive director of combating desertification programmes. This Committee has been created in the context of the natural resources Bill and its decisions are legally binding. The Committee must bring the programmes and projects for combating desertification in line with UNCCD principles and objectives.

Within two regular 5-year development plans, a project on combating desertification in ten million ha. of desertified lands has been designed. The project pays particular attention to research, training and extension elements.

As it was mentioned previously, the NAP is being developed, but in order to ensure the orientation of projects towards the objectives of NAP, the provincial programming committees and relevant ministries in water resource management, plant cover and environment coordinate their activities and policies through NSC.

5.2.2 Identification of new actions and planned measures

A number of activities have been made to integrate ongoing projects into the NAP process. These include:

- Identification of arid and semi-arid areas;
- A new study on the causes of land degradation and the share of each of them in this process;
- Indigenous knowledge and traditional systems for adaptation with the natural environment in the drylands and analysis of these mechanisms;
- Identification of resistant plant species towards salinization and drought and research programmes for the possibility of the massive use of these plants;
- Research on ecological system of natural resources in the drylands;
- Designing the structure of programmes and projects for combating desertification;
- Public awareness and deepening knowledge of programmers and sensitization of decision makers on various aspects of desertification and most importantly on the need for coordinating all policies and activities of relevant institutions and ministries on sustainable water and soil management and the integration of the sustainable development principles in projects, as well as a holistic and

integrated approach in the use of resources in the drylands and prioritizing the preservation methods;

- Establishment and strengthening the early warning systems on drought;
- Establishment a national committee for mitigating the effects of natural disasters and the effects of the cyclic reduction in the biological production.

Due to Iran's vulnerability to desertification, according to some estimations, more than 150,000 of fertile soil are lost annually to erosion, causing extensive land degradation and flooding, seriously threatening long-term sustainable agriculture. The second and third 5-year development plans emphasize an integrated approach to planning and managing land and water resources and combating desertification. Through projects in the areas of desertification, watershed management and irrigation, UNDP is assisting in formulation a NAP.

5.2.3 Specific actions to strengthen the national capacity to combat desertification in particular at the local level

Capacity building priorities have been set at two levels including local and national levels. At the national level, NSC and NCB have been created and the coordination and cooperation with the Department of the Environment as well as international institutions ha been strengthened

At the local level, the involvement of stakeholders and local communities in programming and local capacity building process has been encouraged. Decentralization, integration of local social and economic elements in combating desertification programmes, facilitating people participation and leaving the ownership of lands to interested people, mainstream gender issues into the NAP, research and training, organizing workshops and seminars are some of the policies implemented at the local level.

5.3 Action programmes implemented in compliance with priority areas set out in the CCD

Measures taken in compliance with the priority areas set out in CCD, including the Annex for Asia, were adequately addressed in previous parts of this report. However, appropriate bodies responsible for the preparation, coordination and implementation of their action programmes have been created. Experts in the fields of natural resources, environment and economic and social development are participating in these national forums.

The local views and initiatives are reflected in the policies and programmes through the provincial centers and offices for combating desertification, and through Islamic City and Villages Councils. The priority areas for action has been determined and coordinated with other development and environment programmes. This programme covers six million ha. degraded lands until the end of the year 2000.

Policies and programmes are coordinated through various councils for sectoral issues existing in the country. These councils consisting of all relevant institutions and stakeholders contribute to the integration of natural resource management and combating desertification into the other national policies and plans.

5.4 Linkage achieved with SRAP and RAP

Linkages are being established with various sub regional organizations in Central, South and West Asia, for instance the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) comprising ten countries in Central and South Asia and the three combating desertification organizations in West Asia.

The International Experts group Meeting on the Preparation of the RAP for Combating Desertification and Drought in Asia was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 10 to 13 November 1998. The Meeting decided that the first stage of the implementation of the RAP should include the development of three specific Thematic Programmes Networks (TPNs) and adopted their terms of references. These include the TPN on Rangeland Management, including Fixation of Sands, to be hosted by Iran. The Network is scheduled for launching in the year 2000.

5.5 Effectiveness of measures in local capacity building

The sense of responsibility at the local level has considerably increased, partly because of the policies of the Government for decentralization of decision making, increased knowledge of land users, the promotion of civil society and the creation of more opportunities for local participation. The mass media has played an important role in this process, particularly during the last few years. In their 5-year development plan a smaller and more effective public administration is emphasized.

Although women have always played a decisive role in combating desertification efforts in Iran, however, their lobbying capacities are low. Gender sensitiveness and women participation is recognized as one of the essential principles and priorities of the NAP framework and guidelines adopted by the Government.

A seminar on Women and desertification was organized in June 1999 in Tehran by women NGOs which was supported by UNCCD Secretariat, UNSO, UNDP and FRO provided the necessary facilities. The private sector is increasingly important in Iran's economy. The private sector involvement in combating desertification is encouraged by a Tooba project.

5.6 Partnership agreement signed

The partnership agreements existed in one way or another in the context of the implementation of various projects on combating desertification. Some of these agreements were related to designing and programming. Partnership and coordination with high education centers for human resource development has been emphasized.

Furthermore, councils for research programming contribute to promoting the scientific approach in the projects and programmes.

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

Iran did not receive a significant support and active participation of international partners in the preparation and implementation of the NAP. GEF project on carbon sequestration, UNDP involvement in all the stages of NAP process, consultations with UNSO, CCD Global Mechanism (GM), IFAD and FAO are some of the efforts to involve the donor community, while Iran did not receive any support from bilateral donors. However, technical and financial support for finalizing the NAP formulation process is the principal need at this stage.

Due to the vitality of the issue for Iran as one the most affected countries by desertification and drought, significant amount of resources have already been devoted to the preparation of NAP and the implementation of combating desertification projects. It is noteworthy to mention that recently a contract has been signed between the FRO, NGOs and University of Tehran for consolidating the scientific approach in the NAP. As a result, national resource mobilization is the main financial support for the NAP process. Therefore, there an urgent need for the donor community to realize the objectives of the Convention through the provision of new and additional funding and mobilizing and channeling the existing resources in support of the most affected regions and countries.

A regional symposium on sustainable development of drylands will be held in the province of Yazd in central Iran with the financial and technical support of UNDP. Representatives from India, China, Pakistan, Central Asian Republics, relevant international organizations, as well as, NGOs, CBOs, women and youth organizations are invited to participate in the Symposium. The outcome would not only contribute to the NAP process in Iran but would also provide a good opportunity for sharing information and experiences with other countries. A new Regional Center on Sustainable Development of Desert Communities is supposed to be established in Yazd. It is also expected that the Symposium would play its role in the mobilization of resources from foreign sources.

The constant and twin problems of desertification and drought heavily influenced the development planning in Iran over the last decades. The national budget allocated for these activities during the Second Five-Year Development Plan (1995-1999) was 153,469,000,000 Rials (\$51,000,000). At the same time, the private sector and local communities have invested and additional 15,000,000,000 Rials (\$5,000,000). In addition to the environmental and social aspects, the protection of cities, towns and villages, as well as the industrial complexes, roads and railroads networks and ... towards the moving sand dunes has always imposed considerable pressure on the national budget. This is

while several Ministries and institutions undertake activities in line with anti-desertification campaign which is in fact coordinated under the national development plans.

The bulk of resources for NAP process in Iran is being provided by the government. However due to the magnitude of the problem and limited resources chances for the NAP success depends, to a large extent, on the donor support.

Financial resources, technical and technological support, access to know how and exchange of experiences and expertise are challenges facing successful NAP process. Iran, while being in need of this shopping list is also prepared to share its experiences with other countries through organizing training courses for experts from affected countries, development and implementation of joint projects, study tours, etc.

7. REVIEW OF THE BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS UTILIZED TO MEASURE PROGRESS AND ASSESMENT TEHREOF

The National Plan of Action for the Protection of Environment prepared by the Department for the Environment analyzes the current environment situation in Iran. In accordance with the sustainability indicators in water, soil, climate, flora and fauna and through a comparative study, the state of Iran's natural environment and natural resources is defined.

These data are accessible to the interested people and organizations but scattered in several organizations. Furthermore, the indicators and standards used are not similar. Recently, the research and study units have endeavored to updates these data and make them available through modern software systems. In general, there exists a considerable volume of data relating to environment and natural resources, but the challenge is how to collect and upgrade these data and how to facilitate rapid access of all interested.

During the last few years, efforts have been made in order to harmonize benchmarks and indicators for measuring progress in combating desertification and the assessment models needed. Currently, the Center for Research on Drylands is undertaking case studies in various regions in the country to assess the last thirty years of desertification process and combating desertification in Iran. Also, the faculty of social sciences of the University of Tehran implemented a project on comprehensive assessment of improving methods in the rangeland management in arid and semi-arid areas.

The results of these assessment studies contribute to the regular review of the policies and strategies and their promotion and updating and therefore, more qualified programmes and their successful implementation.