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1. SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1.1. THE STRATEGIES AND PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND/OR POLICIES:

The Islamic Republic of Iran (I.R. Iran) is located in South West of Asia with a land area of nearly 1650000 km² . The country's population is about 65 million, of which more than 35.4 (about 23 million) live in rural areas where agriculture and animal husbandry is the main source of subsistence.

Eighty percent of total land area, where half of population resides, has arid and semi-arid climate. Rapid growth of population , inappropriate techniques in exploitation of water and soil resources, sensitivity of new geological formations to erosion, low average precipitation (less than 250 mm), Ospatiotemporal irregular distribution of precipitation, high evaporation rate (more than rainfall rate) and low biomass distribution all have caused severe erosion and high potentiality of land degradation.

The particular climatic conditions of Iran has contributed to the formation of indigenous knowledge with 3000 years of historical background. Iran is considered as one the most active countries in combating desertification. In the last 40 years, it has provided appropriate political, social and policy-making bases for rehabilitation programs and preventive measures through creating structural and legal capacities. In addition, Articles 45 and 50 of the Constitution including Environmental Conservation Act, Forest & Range of Conservation Act, Sectoral Policies on Environment in the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan are some of the existing legal capacities. In this connection, in the Forest and Range Organization (FRO), Department of Environment (DOE), Forest and Range Research Institute, Desert Research Institute, Watershed Management Research Institute and other relevant universities are among those structural capacities forged.

In the past, FRO had formulated and implemented several projects for rehabilitation of degraded lands before the Convention was ratified, however due to lack of comprehensiveness and integrity little success had been gained.

Therefore, the Convention has assisted parties to:

- Promote the participatory approach in inter-sectoral cooperation;
- Create opportunities to increase regional and international bilateral cooperation and exchange information, experiences and technologies of combating desertification;
- Formulate indigenous knowledge and
- Promote early warning systems and desert database.

The I.R. of Iran while incorporating the principles of the Convention in her Third National Five-Year Social & Economic Development Plan and as well as other sectoral programs relating to institutions in the field of combating desertification after the Convention was ratified by the Parliament has simultaneously started the formulation of NAP. The Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan (2000-2004) with emphasis on environmental protection and sustainable utilization of natural resources has opened a new chapter in programs to combat desertification and has set the following priorities:

- Formulation of NAP;
- Active participation at international meetings ;
- Launching TPN3 meeting on Rangeland Management and Sand Dune Fixation, and
- Defining macro-policies to combat desertification and NAP by National Committee to Combat Desertification (NCCD).

In addition to above-mentioned issues, FRO has carried out following projects in line with the Convention:

- Sustainable Management of Land and Water Resources (SMLWR) project designed as pilot participatory program with the aim of enabling local

- executive administrations in elaboration and implementation of participatory projects;
- Identification of Critical and Vulnerable Areas to Wind Erosion, according Executive Priorities;
- The Balancing the Number of Livestock with Rangelands Production Capacity project and
- Replacement of suitable Fuel for Fuel Wood.

Besides, the I.R. of Iran also initiated the formulation of the “National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan” (NBSAP), along side the National Action plan to combat Desertification on participatory basis that both drafts are under examination by the experts in the fields of environment and desertification given the fact that land degradation plays a pivotal role in both programs.

1.2. THE INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION:

The Islamic Republic of Iran as one of the first countries signing the Convention to Combat Desertification completed the ratification process in 1996 and officially became a member of the Convention. After this stage, the Government immediately undertook to establish the institutional framework and thematic working groups to further Strengthen the participatory aspect of the NAP formulation.

The National Coordinating Body (NCB), has been established to further reinforce NCCD that acts directly under the overall jurisdiction of the Minister of Jihad-e-Keshavarzi (Agriculture) as the chairman of the Committee. An Executive Committee (EC) is also formed to provide advice and technical guidance on substantive matters related to combating desertification. the National Steering Committee (NSC). comprised of: NCCD, NGOs, Women Groups, local municipalities, private sector, undertakes the NAP formulation. This process is being Supported by UNDP and ESCAP through DESCONAP

Program Office (DPO) in Tehran. FRO provides the NCB with necessary requirements such as communication and transportation facilities. The National Focal Point (NFP) to the CCD is also designated by FRO who is accountable to the NSC and is supported by a full time secretariat.

The most important duty of NCCD is to formulate macro-policies and executive strategies for the NAP. The most important measures taken by the committee are as follows:

- Integrating sustainable development principles with sectoral programs;
- Rendering priority to preventive programs;
- Allocating financial resources;
- Promoting public awareness and encouraging public participation;
- Amending existing laws and enacting required laws;
- Promoting new technologies for combating desertification, and
- Conducting family planning programs in rural and nomadic communities.

In the meantime, in the draft version of the NAP an special attention is given to the following characteristics:

- Long term executive strategies;
- Ability to reform and adaptability in terms of time and place;
- Modification of policies and institutional arrangements;
- Application of early warning systems;
- Prevention of land degradation rather than rehabilitation of degraded lands;
- Participation of effective groups in combating desertification programs especially NGOs and local communities, and
- In this study, the adjustment programming method has been used for the NAP formulation in which, formulated sectoral programs and macro - policies are assessed and adjusted accordingly.

Four strategies have been defined in NBSAP as follows:

1. Promoting public awareness on biodiversity and public participation;
2. Formating information and researching systems on biodiversity;
3. Sustainable use of biodiversity resources and

4. Integrated conservation of biodiversity.

In this program, the conservation of biodiversity is studied at ecosystem, species and gene level, and the programs proposed including rehabilitation activities in degraded forest, rangeland and deserts ecosystems aimed at conservation of genetic resources verified by are also stipulated by UNCCD, national Action program to combat desertification as well as the sectoral policies of FRO. These policies are incorporated in the Third Five – Year Socio-Economic Development Plan of I.R. Iran as well.

1.3. PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAP:

Over 1700 experts in five specialized groups both from headquarters and provincial units have participated in this program under the supervision of NSC and in the framework of strategies adopted by NCCD, in close cooperation with NCSD and related executive committees. In addition, they have also benefited from the experiences and consultancy of academic institutions, NGOs, local communities and international specialized organizations in preparation phase. The implementation process is evaluated successful in term of involving and managing various groups in the field. Besides, several workshops was held to recognize and prioritize human factors contributing to desertification as follows:

- Ten national participatory workshops represented by Rural Islamic Council, local experts and elites, NGOs, women NGOs and other r volunteer groups. Fourteen provincial participatory workshops desert provinces represented by representatives of Rural Islamic Council, local experts, NGOs, local elits and volunteer use groups and so on.

The obtained results were subsequently analyzed and presented to the headquarters. Since women run nearly 25% of 255 registered NGOs in the field of natural resources and environment, their presence in this process has been very significant. The Constitution of I.R. of Iran asserts the equity of men and

women rights and there is no limit for women's participation in social activities from point of view of religious principles as well.

Some of the measures taken to adjust and strengthen institutional arrangements are as follows:

- Provide facilities for establishing a desert database;
- Organize policy-making, programming and monitoring tasks at headquarters and assign the executive tasks to provincial offices;
- Merge the ministries of Agriculture and Jihad-e-Sazandegi in 2000 and
- Merge the Watershed Management Dept. with FRO in 2001.

Since the number of NGOs has increased radically in the last two years, therefore the Government has incorporated the following priorities in the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan:

- Reinforce and finance the formation of NGOs;
- Provide appropriate conditions to for cooperatives and NSOs in the field of watershed management, water exploitation, environment and natural resources conservation and
- Develop cooperatives and rural / nomadic NGOs, by the assistance of Ministry of Cooperatives.

Apart from that, parts of executive affairs of governmental institutions in provinces have been entrusted to Islamic Councils, local communities and private sectors that shows the special attention of government to improve the subsistence of rural population and promote their participation in combating desertification programs.

At international level, the linkage of between the NAP with Sub-regional and Regional Action Programs (SRAP and RAP) has been established through DESCONAP program Office (DPO) and Thematic Program Network on Rangeland Management and Sand Dune Fixation (TPN3).

The Third Thematic Program Network was launched in May 2001 in Yazd-I.R. Iran and its secretariat is located in Tehran. The goals of TPN3 include: obtain, gather and exchange information, capacity-building for the reuse of sustainable systems of rangeland management and livestock production in the member countries through regional cooperation. FRO has established a permanent secretariat for fulfilling the duties of the network, recruiting staff and also running a national and regional internet web site in order to facilitate the network obligations in cooperation with the other member states. A complete database is going to be established, covering the following areas:

1.4. CONSULTATIVE PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NAP AND PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND OTHER INTERESTED ENTITIES:

FRO has participated in a number of regional and international events since 2000 as follows:

- Third Asian Forum on Combating Desertification in Bangkok, Thailand, 7-10 November 2000.
- Fourth Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification (COP 4), Bonn, Germany.
- Ad Hoc Working Group in Bonn, Germany, 19 March to 6 April 2001.
- The Launching Meeting of the Thematic Program Network on Rangeland Management and sand dune Fixation (TPN3) Yazd-Islamic Republic of Iran. 7-9 May 2001.
- Workshop on GIS & Database Management of Caspian Environment Program, Baku, Azerbaijan 30 April – 5 May, 2001.
- Preparatory Meeting for the Ministerial Meeting on sustainable Investment in Rainfed Areas of West Asia and North Africa (WANA), Cairo, Egypt, 13-14 May.
- Fourth Asian Forum on Combating Desertification in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, 21-25 June 2001.
- Ministerial Meeting on Opportunities for Sustainable Investment in Rainfed Areas of West Asia and North Africa (WANA), Rabat, Morocco, June 25-26, 2001

- Fifth Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification (COP5), Geneva, Switzerland, 1-12 October 2001.

In addition, FRO has conducted the following joint projects with international specialized organizations such as UNDP, FAO and GEF:

- Sustainable Management of Land and Water Resources (SMLWR) project;
- Carbon Sequestration Project and
- Caspian Sea Environmental Program (CEP).

1.5. MEASURES TAKEN OR PLANNED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NAP, INCLUDING MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT, TO IMPROVE INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION, TO IMPROVE KNOWLEDGE OF DESERTIFICATION AND TO MONITOR AND ASSESS THE EFFECTS OF DROUGHT:

The activities so far taken include:

- Promotion of capacity-building at local and national levels through formulation of the NAP;
- Merger of Ministries of Agriculture and Jihad-e-Sazandegi;
- Amendments of present laws and enacting required rules;
- Merger of the Watershed Management Dept. of ex-ministry of Jihad-e-Sazandegi into FRO ;
- Expansion of the relevant training center and universities;
- Development of applied research ;
- Increasing provincial and local authorities managerial powers;
- Promotion of Public awareness ;
- Creation of local NGOs and CBOs;
- Entrusting part of executive activities to local communities;
- Expansion of education and health;
- Extension of TV and radio channels at local and national levels and
- Implementation of Comprehensive Social Security Plan from 2002.

Nowadays, 2500 research projects are conducted in the fields of natural resources and watershed management every year, the results of which are handed down to executive and training sectors.

In the last two decades, the rate of literacy has risen up to 80% in which the proportion of female students at primary and secondary levels increased to 48% and 45% respectively even in the most deprived regions, the numbers of school age children attending schools have reached to the unprecedented record of 94% because of introducing compulsory education. In the same period, the proportion of female university students has risen 3.5 times and poverty has declined from 31% to 18%. The growth of these indicators has been improving unabated in the last two years. At the moment, the courses on desert disciplines are offered in 8 state university centers, and more than 10 private university centers as well as 11 Applied & science University centers throughout the country.

Rural people access to health care has increased by 90% through establishing 1234 new Rural Health Centers which has risen the life expectancy rate to 70 years. In this way, due to access of 55% of rural population to new contraceptive methods, the population growth rate has fallen to less than 1.4%.

Despite severe droughts in two recent years, the rate of agricultural production growth is estimated to 2.2%. In this period, the construction of 79 water supply development plans, 43 drainage and irrigation plans as well as 55 water canal plans have been executed, as the result of which, over 9 billions cubic meters of water have been added to total volume of reserves meaning that 280,000 hectares of new arable lands as well as 89000 hectares of old agricultural lands can be irrigated.

In the area of renewable energy sources. two wind turbines and two solar power plants with production capacity of 1.86 megawatt are designed and constructed to utilize new forms of energy.

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

In the Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan, the government of I.R. Iran has given a top priority to financial and bank facilities, for the development of agriculture and natural resources sectors, up to the ceiling of 25% of the total allocations and has ratified tax exemption laws in this sector in order to promote investment in rural regions. In order to supply part of budget required for carrying out major projects such as construction of dams, agricultural and, fishery projects, the government has also offered billions of Rials of bonds guaranteed by the Central Bank of I.R. Iran. Moreover, in order to absorb private sector investment, the Bureau of Sand Dune Fixation of FRO has transferred 33000 hectares of land parcels to land users on the basis of Para. 5 of Article 34 also the technical office of low cover forests of FRO has transferred 61000 hectares of lands parcels from Tuba Plan to applicants. FRO has planned to transfer several hectares of fertile land parcels to university graduates from rural areas.

Within the last two years, the government, after severe droughts in the country, has allocated and paid 7810 billion Rials (equal to 1 billion dollar) in form of bank facility to land users to compensate the damages incurred.

The I.R. of Iran has also spent millions of dollars on the following programs:

- Formulation of NAP	\$ 191250
- Direct government investment in combating wind and water erosion	\$ 77000000
- Launching TPN3 meeting	\$ 330500
- SMLWR project	\$ 4689000

- Carbon Sequestration activities \$ 1093800

On the other hand, the Global Mechanism (GM) has allocated \$ 100000 to Iran's NAP which is under process at the moment. An amount of \$350000 has also been undertaken by GEF and UNDP for formulation of NBCAP, Besides, an amount of 85000 dollars have been allotted by the GM and the government Japan for launching TPN3 meeting so far UNDP has made available 380000 \$ for SMLWR project (not paid completely) and finally GEF has set aside \$ 746939 for Carbon Sequestration project (after finalizing documentation).

The current budget of the Bureau of Sand Dune Fixation of FRO (2002-2003) shows an increase of 300% compared with the budget of previous year (2001-2002).

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

The indicators and benchmarks varies in different organizations including Dept. of Environment (DOE). In order to coordinate desertification indicators and benchmarks, FRO in consultation with the Natural Resources Faculty of Tehran University has prepared the draft proposal of a project. According to this project the criteria and indicators of desert, desertification, potential and velocity of desertification are determined on the basis of results obtained from domestic and foreign sources, taking into account the economic, social, biological and physical indicators.

2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND POLICIES:

2.1. PRE-UNCCD STRATEGIES

The I.R. of Iran had carried out many projects in the field of combating desertification and sand dune fixation before the ratification of the UNCCD

and had cooperated with some of the Persian Gulf littoral states and International Specialized Organizations in field of combating desertification and soil erosion.

In the last forty years, the I.R. of Iran has undertaken several activities including:

- Preparation, and ratification of laws in the field of sustainable exploitation of natural resources and land tenure;
- Formulation of institutional, research and educational frameworks and capacities;
- Rehabilitation of degraded lands.

Forest & Range Organization (FRO), that is responsible for the NAP formulation, was established in 1949 and has branches in all provinces with 5200 personnels. FRO institutional organization consists of three following Technical Departments that are directly supervised by the Head of the Organization who acts also as Deputy of Minister of Jihad-e- Keshavarzi (Agriculture):

- Department of North (Caspian) Forests;
- Department of Watershed Management and
- Department of Rangeland, Soil and Low Cover Forests.

The above Departments have the responsibility of policy-making and programming in the field of rangeland and prevention of wind and water erosion.

In addition to Rangeland Technical Office, Sand Dune Fixation Office and Low Cover Forests Office under the Department of Rangeland, soil and Low Cover Forests, there are a number offices including:

- Extension and People Participation Office;
- Conservation and Preservation Office;
- Land Tenure and Surveying Office;
- International Affairs and Public Relations Office.

This shows the FRO potential capacity for performing its institutional mandates and depicts FRO attention to:

- Legislation process;
- Information dissemination;;
- Public awareness;
- Public participation ;
- NGOs promotion, and
- Inter-sectoral coordination and bilateral sub-regional and regional cooperation.

The lack of integration in programming can be accounted as the major deficiency of FRO policies before ratifying the Convention.

The BSDFCD was established in 1955. This Bureau that is responsible for sand dune fixation and combating wind erosion, has branch offices and local stations in fourteen provinces, covering 60% of the land area of the country.

“Shekarbani Organization” (Wild Animal Protection) was established in 1966 and today is called Department of Environment. This Department has just formulated the NBSAP.

“Forest & Range Research Institute” was established in 1969 with branch offices in provinces and has several research departments including Forest, Rangeland, Desert, Botany, Herbs, Wood Industry, Horticulture and Genetics.

“Watershed Management Research Center”,(WMRC) with more than a decade of academic activity has carried out many research projects for prevention of water erosion, identification of social and economic problems in soil erosion in basins. WMRC emphasizes the human factors as well as identification and elimination of socio – economic problems of land -users aiming at:

- Encouraging their participation ;
- Improving the development of communities for the purpose of optimal conservation, rehabilitation, development and exploitation of water and soil resources.

Among other achievements of the center is a feasibility study conducted on the traditional run-off control methods, that the results of which is presented in the form of research, extension and training projects.

“Desert and Dry land Research Center” affiliated to Tehran University has scientific exchanges with Faculties of Natural Resources and Azad University .

Beside the above scientific aspect, there are many legal capacities in term of legislation in natural resources and environment sector in the I.R. Iran . The Act on Forest Conservation was first ratified in 1924. Articles 45 and 50 of the Constitution and Act on Conservation of Environment (1974) provided an appropriate basis for policy-making, planning, and implementing preventive measures and rehabilitation programs. There are also many more free capacity in this sectors for combating desertification. Environmental laws are integral to environmental movements, evolving since 1971 especially after the Islamic Revolution.

The Convention has helped develop a participatory approach in inter-sectoral cooperation. which was incorporated in the Second and Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plans of the I.R. of Iran in such a way that all social and economical indicators were emphasized in compliance with the goals of the Convention .The Third Five - Year Socio- Economic Development Plan has emphasized the importance of conservation of the environment and sustainable exploitation of natural resource through implementing projects such as “Balancing the Number of Livestock with Rangeland Production Capacity”, “Forage and Fuel Supply for Forest land-user ”, “Conservation of Natural and Genetic Resources”, “Management of Resources”, “Institutionalization of Public Participation in Programming, Decision-making and Implementation Process”. In the period of 1978-1996 more than 9 million hectares of degraded lands and shifting sand dunes in deserts, rangelands, forests have been rehabilitated.

2.2. POST UNCCD STRATEGIES

The I.R. of Iran is the third country signed the international Convention to Combat Desertification and completed the process of its ratification in 1996, and consequently incorporated the same in her national programs and prevented the implementation of programs, accelerating desertification trend especially in her national inter-sectoral plans including combating desertification, NBSAP, national employment plans, sanitation, education, social security and water supply. The principles of the Convention underlie the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan as follows:

- Preventing degradation of natural resources;
- Bottom-up programming;
- Attracting public participation including women and the youth in decision making, programming, implementing and monitoring processes;
- Capacity-building and utilizing national and local capacities;
- Collecting and formulating indigenous knowledge;
- Establishing database;
- Collecting and analyzing data;
- Developing research in the field of natural resources;
- Developing combating desertification technology;
- Improving livelihood of residents in affected areas;
- Ensuring food security and eradication of poverty;
- Intensifying regional, sub-regional and international cooperation;
- Enhancing public awareness;
- Reinforcing laws;
- Employing "Early Warning Systems" in an appropriate way;
- Increasing access to water and
- Reforming administrative structures;

In addition, the I.R. of Iran has carried out her commitments to the Convention as follows:

- Formulation of the NAP in combating desertification;
- Active participation in international communities;
- Launching TPN3 (thematic Program Network on Rangeland Management and Sand Dune Fixation) and

- Holding NCCD meeting in order to adopt macro-policies for combating desertification.

Moreover, FRO has adopted the following sectoral programs in the framework of forestry, and rangeland management ,combating desertification and watershed management projects:

- Combating wind and water erosion;
- Run-off control and
- Flood control and rehabilitation of degraded lands.

Iran's Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan, that started in March 2000, focused on economic and legal legislation rather than financial governmental resources . Inspired by the First and Second Development Plans , the Third Development Plan has evolved programming system and has paid due attention to social, legal, and cultural aspects of development parallel to enhancing executive capacity.

2.3. TECHNICAL AND SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES OF COMBATING DESERTIFICATION

The formulation of the National Action program (NAP), paved the way for materializing the goals of the Convention, and after the completion of scientific and technical phases FRO started executive activities to combat desertification.

Consultation with researchers and academics, private sectors and NGOs in the projects executed has also led to the qualitative and quantitative achievements of the programs.

The "SMLWR" project was carried out in cooperation with UNDP for the following goals:

- To empower local executive institutions to formulate and implement projects;
- To organize training courses on management of production systems to landusers and interested groups and

- To organize training courses to advise participatory method for collection of information related to the management of soil and water resources appropriate scientific patterns in order to complete and develop the NAP from 1999.

The project on “The Identification of Critical and Vulnerable Regions to Wind Erosion and Defining Executive Priorities”, in desert provinces started from the beginning of 2000. In this project, the latest scientific and technological findings in combating desertification such as GIS and RS have been employed to identify and prioritize regions affected by wind erosion where sand dune movements incur economic and social damages to installations, residential areas, arable lands, roads and the like.

The project on “Balancing the Number of Livestock with the Production Capacity of Rangelands” started in 2001 as one of FRO fundamental projects with the goal to eliminate 30 million of animal units surplus to national rangeland capacity in a ten-year program.

“The Carbon Sequestration” project which is one of the most important projects of Sand Dune Fixation Bureau will be soon finalized .The objectives of this project can be summarized as:

- Sequestering organic carbon in soil and vegetation biomass;
- Increasing vegetation in dry lands and affected areas and
- Developing sustainable community-based management of rangelands.

“The project on Replacement Suitable Fuel for Fuel Wood” was prepared and formulated in coordination with the Environment Dept. of Ministry of Petroleum and several other executive bodies. In this program, critical areas were studied in terms of cutting trees and bushes as fuel wood that on the basis of which new projects such as establishing fuel stations, supplying fossil fuel for villagers and nomads, and constructing local bakeries were defined. The objectives of the program are:

- To eliminate current involving inappropriate utilization of trees and bushes;
- To change traditional patterns of fuel wood consumption;
- To create jobs;

- To enhance inter-sectoral coordination and
- To mobilize the active participation of local population and land users in natural resources conservation.

FRO has also several national plans such as “Fire Prevention Plan”, “Protection Plan” and “Pest Control Plan”.

Moreover, in the last two years, FRO has started rehabilitation projects and soil conservation projects in some 3161000 hectares throughout the country as well.

2.4. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISIONS OF THE COMMITTEE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (CST)

The I.R. of Iran has made a remarkable endeavor in CST and has been the chairman of the committee in two COPs.

Having thousands years of coexisting with harsh desert conditions , the I.R. of Iran has gained rich indigenous knowledge in combating desertification . The remains of five old dams with more than 700 years of age, construction of canat networks as a unique system appropriate for sustainable exploitation of under ground water, traditional flood water spreading techniques, traditional soil and water conservation techniques and water catchments systems as well as indigenous knowledge in the field of animal husbandry, plant science, agriculture and soil classification and other relevant concepts are invaluable assets that revival of them are on the agenda of infra-sectoral policies of FRO.

The collection and completion of indigenous knowledge is one of the decision adopted by the COP4.

The draft version of project on the “Identification of Indigenous Knowledge for Combating Desertification” has been recently prepared in two phases. The first phase deals with collection of printed materials and the second stage concentrates on knowledge and experiences of local elites that is gathered through interview.

In the process of the NAP formulation, twenty three programs were presented to the Synthesis Sub-Group under Indigenous Knowledge and Applied Research Committee including establishment a center for “Indigenous Knowledge and Sustainable Development Studies. That dramatizes a bright perspective for experts, researchers, policy-makers and local communities.

Expansion of meteorological and hydrometric stations throughout the country and equipping them with modern instruments for collection and study of climatologically characteristics and creating early warning systems are high on the agenda.

In this connection, AVHR data of NOAA satellite are being utilized due to special abilities for daily monitoring of moisture condition with vegetation characteristics, and therefore it is possible now to make short-term and seasonal predictions in the country.

Changes related to the number meteorological stations in 2000 and 2002 are as follows:

<u>Type of Station</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2002</u>
Synoptic Station	145	169
Main Climatology Station	35	44
Ordinary Climatology Station	256	268
Rain Gauge Station	4770	4955
Agriculture Meteorological Station	21	24
Evaporation Recording Station	448	563
Snow Survey Station	113	289

3. THE INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE C.C.D.

3.1. ESTABLISHMENT OF A FUNCTIONAL NATIONAL COORDINATING BODY (NCB)

3.1.1. LEGAL STATUS:

Formation of institutional structures and thematic working groups for participatory process of the NAP formulation are integral part of the I.R. of Iran's activities undertaken after joining the Convention in 1996. The National Committee to Combat Desertification (NCCD) – the National Coordinating Body (NCB) - was established presided over by minister Jihad-e-Keshavarzi (Agriculture).

An Executive Committee (EC) was setup, consisted of experienced experts from ministries and organizations involved in to combating desertification in order to provide counseling to NCCD.

The National Steering Committee (NSC) comprised of NCB members and representatives from NGOs , Women Groups, Municipalities and Private Sectors has the responsibility of formulating the NAP on the basis of macro-policies adopted by NCCD (NCB).

The National Focal Point (NFP) to UNCCD designated by FRO, is accountable to the NSC and is supported by a full time secretariat. This framework is also supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) through DESCONAP Program Office (DPO).

As a result of coordination attempts of this committee and in close cooperation with NCS, the draft version of the NAP is going to be finalized. In this

process, some 1700 experts both from headquarters and provincial levels and five specialized groups cooperated with NSC and consequently the programs were reviewed and finalized by Synthesis Committee which is one of the most important institutional bodies .

The main characteristics of the NAP of I.R. Iran can be summarized as follows:

- It is coordinated with long-term executive strategies for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. It has also the ability to integrate with other developmental policies;
- It is adaptable to various economic and social conditions and has the flexibility and ability to be rectified;
- It pays due attention to preventive measures on soil conservation and in areas apt to degradation or erosion ;
- It promotes national meteorological, climatologically and hydrological capacities and early warning systems;
- It reinforces policies, and legal and institutional arrangements which leads to development of cooperation and coordination among donors and governments at all levels. It also facilitates access to information and technologies at local and national level and
- It provides necessary facilities for efficient participation of NGOs and local communities with policy-making, decision-making, programming and implementation of plans.

The most important duty of NCCD is to adopt macro-policies and executive approaches of the NAP including :

- 1- Incorporation of principles of sustainable development into programs of ministries and bodies related to combating desertification;
- 2- Continuation of family planning policies especially in rural and nomadic regions;
- 3- Prioritization of preventive activities in combating desertification and necessity to implement rehabilitation operations;
- 4- Promotion of technologies related to combating desertification and expansion of relevant research programs;

- 5- Reviewing current laws and regulations as well as passing necessary laws;
- 6- Increasing public awareness and paving the ground for public participation in programming, managing and implementing relevant projects and
- 7- Providing financial resources.

NCCD can also introduce bills to the High Council of Environment and in this way collaborate with the Members of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament). Meanwhile the bills approved by Parliament in the form of plans and programs will be financed by Management and planning Organization of the I. R. of Iran. The NCCD decisions under the auspices of the Minister of Jihad-e-Keshavarzi (Agriculture) will be obligatory for the members.

The formulation and implementation of the NBSAP is indicative of the fact that the I.R. of Iran has paid great attention to environmental issues and is committed to the Convention. The National Committee on Sustainable Development (NCSD) which comprises of eight sub-committees including NCCD, is considered as the steering body for formulation of environmental strategies and policy-making.

The NBSAP started in cooperation with UNDP, GEF and IUCN in 1999 under the supervision of the NCSD and as the result of which a draft was prepared in the aftermath of government annexation to the Convention.

The first stage of formulation of this program includes recognition of biodiversity resources, that terminated in 2001 with the cooperation of national and International consultants producing 28 volumes of reports that was separately assessed by the Steering Committee.

NCSD has set four strategies on biological conservation for I.R. Iran as follows:

- Promotion of public awareness on biodiversity and public participation;
- Formatting information and research systems on biodiversity;
- Sustainable use of biodiversity resources and
- Integrated conservation of biodiversity.

In this program, conservation of biodiversity is viewed at ecosystem, species and gene level, it contains programs and actions that is also stipulated in the National Action Program to Combat Desertification in degraded forest, rangeland and desert ecosystems, providing conventional and non-conventional trainings, boosting public awareness of decision makers, CBOs and NGOs and integrating public participation.

3.1.2. RESOURCES: NCD ACCESS TO HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCE :

FRO is charged with the follow-up and implementation of policies and programs adopted by NCB. The secretariat of NCB is based in the Bureau of Combating Desertification of FRO, equipped with excellent facilities such as office equipments, overhead, meeting rooms, transportation facilities, computer site, internet, software and hardware and highly skilled personnels in relevant disciplines in combating desertification such as pedology, geology, botany, agronomy, horticulture, watershed management, range management, forestry, remote sensing, climatology and hydrology. FRO also uses excellent consultants ,experienced academics and experts of other relevant organizations.

3.1.3. INTER-SECTORAL AND MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Multi-dimensional and inter-sectoral are incorporated in NCB and NSC. FRO has been designated as the focal point for the NAP the preparation. The NSC is comprised of representative from ministries of Jihad-e-Keshavarzi (Agriculture), Energy, Interior, Science Research and Technology, Health and Medical Education, Petroleum,, Foreign Affairs and organizations including Management and Planning, Meteorology, Geology, DOE, NGOs, Local communities representatives, women groups, private sectors and Municipalities .

3.1.4. COMPOSITION AND MODE OF OPERATION :

FRO is a specialized organization which is engaged in combating desertification in Iran. It has formed the NSC and NCB on the basis of

principles of Convention EC. A part from that, NCB consults with experts, representatives of local communities, NGOs, private sectors, and academics continuously. NCB has, so far, held eight sessions in the last four years.

Secretariat facilitates and coordinates relevant communications, ministries and institutions member to the NCB, to introduce their representatives officially in writing. These representatives are responsible to follow up the approvals of NCB in their organizations. Terms of Reference (TOR) of the committee is formulated in accordance with the decisions the Convention. The committee also supervises the NAP after its formulation .

FRO provides financial and logistical support to this committee. NCB will report to the High Council of Environment presided over by the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The NAP formulation is faced with the following challenges :

- Budget and financial issues;
- Technical and financial support;
- Access to technical know - how and
- Exchange of experiences and expertise.

3.1.5. STATUS OF INFORMATION DATA

NCB has appropriate access to databases as well as the Internet and has engaged in upgrading and classifying data with the assistance of relevant sectors.

In this connection, an agreement is concluded on “Facilitation of Information Exchange” between the Ministry of Jihad-e-Keshavarzi (Agriculture) and Meteorological Organization. However, the information in this field is scattered and there is a need that a central data bank to be established. At present , following databases exist :

- FRO databank;
- Information Center of Ministry of Jihad-e-Keshavarzi (Agriculture);

- Information Center of Training and Research Dept. in Ministry of Jihad-e-Keshavarzi (Agriculture);
- Information Center for Dry lands;
- Database of Meteorological Organization;
- Secretariat of Combating Natural Disasters databanks.

The secretariat of the NAP and TPN3 Web site provide relevant information regarding regional and international activities for NCB, local communities, international specialized agencies.

Meanwhile, the establishment of a database has been taken into account for TPN3 including the NAP of other member countries, their rangeland and desert ecological, biophysical, social, and economic conditions.

3.2. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR COHERENT AND FUNCTIONAL DESERTIFICATION CONTROL:

3.2.1. Measures Adopted To Adjust Or Strengthen The Institutional Framework :

Policy-making, programming and monitoring are the important duties of headquarters. Therefore, FRO has concentrated on its internal activities on the basis of financial and technical support and monitoring projects in following stages :

1. Feasibility study of projects based on TOR;
2. Monitoring during implementation and
3. Assessing the efficiency of implemented activities and their results.

Before ratifying the Convention, the Government and the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament) used to deal with approval of development plans and thematic programs underlying the inter-sectoral affairs . Unfortunately, this caused inefficiency and lack of coordination in inter-sectoral policies. The process of inter-sectoral coordination, however, was reinforced after ratification of the Convention by the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament), through:

- Integrating principles emphasized by the Convention in the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan;
- Establishing the NCCD and EC and
- Holding participatory workshops for experts of relevant ministries.

Merger of the Ministries of Agriculture and Jihad-e-Sazandegi and affiliation of the Watershed Management Dept. to FRO in 2001 had been carried out in order to:

- Provide ways and means of sustainable development for agriculture and natural resources;
- Combat wind and water erosion and
- Integrate programs and policies.

3.2.2. Measures Adopted To Strengthen Existing Institutions At The Local And National Levels:

Despite the formation of NCCD , FRO has the sole responsibility for implementing the Convention throughout the country. However, the formation of NCSD and NCCD, and the support rendered by the Government and Parliament to the programs and strategies of FRO and DOE as well as all efforts made at decision makers level, has reinforced the position of natural resources and environment at national level:

At provincial level, FRO has taken the following steps:

- Separation of executive duties from headquarters, aiming to focus on policy-making, programming and monitoring and
- Transferring executive affairs to provincial and local offices.

FRO also tries to give support to local communities and NGOs. encouraging them to participate in decision-making, and programming process by transferring some of executive responsibilities to Rural Islamic Councils and local institutions or private sector that and is indicative of government attention to the improvement of subsistence of rural communities.

3.3. NAP As Part Of The National Economic And Social Development And Environment Protection:

3.3.1. Making The NAP Coherent With Other Environmental Strategies And Planning Frameworks

As mentioned before, the drafts of NBSAP and the NAP to Combating Desertification are prepared and presented to related experts and researchers for commentation: DOE is one of the active members of NCCD which has a close cooperation with NSC in the NAP formulation.

Besides, several mechanisms are propounded in NBASP sreinforce rehabilitation activities in forest, rangeland and desert ecosystems and conserve the existing genetic resources in accordance with the objectives drawn by the UNCCD and the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan of I.R. Iran.

The emphasized principles of the UNCCD includes:

- Mobilizing social institutions
- Bottom-up management approach
- Participatory programming and implementation (accepted as a strategy by DOE), aimed to promote public awareness and participation that underlies both programs.

3.3.2. Linkages Of NAP With National, Inter-Regional And Local Approaches :

Sustainable development, prevention of land degradation, and soil erosion as well as combating desertification have been dealt with as priority areas in the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan, parallel to conservation and expansion of vegetation which is emphasized in our cultural and religious teachings. The strategies related to sectors of desertification has been prepared in accordance of principles of the NAP and designed to promote human indicators.

- Article 1: Decentralization and Increasing provincial administrative power;
- Article 2: Promote the bases for public participation and administration.
- Article 103: Provide facilities for easy access to domestic and foreign information;
- Article 104: **A)** Conservation of environment and sustainable exploitation of natural resources through carrying out projects such as “Balancing the Number of Livestock with Production Capacity of Rangelands”, “Removal & Withdrawal of Livestock from Forests”, “Providing Forage and Fuel for Forest Landusers, nomads and rural people” and also “Conservation of Natural and Genetic Resources”;
- B)** Rendering financial support to NGOs proponent of environmental and natural resources ;
- Article 105: The necessity to observe the resolutions of High Council of DOE in preparing and implementing major projects issues;
- Article 106: Promote government and banks financial support aimed at increasing investment in agriculture and natural resources sector (forestry, range management , combating desertification and watershed management);
- Article 107: Establish cooperatives in the field of water and soil exploitation as stipulated in the economic policies;
- Article 108: **A)** Employ specialized manpower in water and agriculture sectors and giving priority to rural population by granting land parcels and bank facilities;
- B)** Assign parcel of lands to nomads and herdsmen aiming to improve their livelihood over the poverty line;
- Article 109: **A)** Supply agricultural implements while giving priority to execution of projects in water supply and irrigation systems;
- B)** Organize nomads and carryout an integrated management in livestock sector;
- Article 137: **A)** Execute policies to accelerate rural development and improve subsistence of rural communities.

B)Transfer part of executive activities of governmental sectors to Urban and Rural to Islamic Rural Councils, local NGO, institutions and non- governmental companies.

Article 143: Provide equal opportunity for education in urban and rural regions and continue family planning policies .

Article 192: Expand Rural Health Network by providing free health care services through operating a Social Security System for eradicating poverty.

Article 197: Institutionalizing food security aimed at self-sufficiency in food production.

Therefore, every efforts have been made by the Government and Parliament to incorporate the CCD approaches into the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan and executive strategies of I. R. Iran.

3.3.3. Linkages Of NAP With Regional AND Subregional Action

Programs (SRAP And RAP):

The NAP has made a linkage with Regional Action Program (RAP) through DPO and Sub-Regional Action Program (SRAP) through TPN3.

TPN3 was launched in Yazd in May 2001, and its secretariat is now located in Tehran. According to decision made by participants, the overall objectives of TPN3 include creation, and circulation of information, building up capacity to assist participating countries in reestablishing sustainable system for running range and livestock production on a regional basis.

The specific objectives of TPN3 shall be to:

- Expand appropriate rangeland management methods through participatory research and extension and to monitor a sustainable and reasonable utilization of rangelands in Asia;
- Standardize database and optimize methods for rangeland management, sand dune fixation and combating desertification as well as to collect, manage and

- exchange information including indigenous knowledge and the best exploitation methods; and
- Direct traditional knowledge to participatory research in order to expand rangeland sustainable systems.

TPN3, as a flexible network, consists of institutions or agencies that collaborate voluntarily with the network. The network is run through linking focal institution with active institutions in the field of rangeland management and sand dune fixation.. FRO, on behalf of the I.R. Iran , shoulders the responsibility both as National focal Point and the chairman of TPN3 secretariat that was established in 2001. The secretariat has just started capacity-building programs for the secretariat staffs, and constructing a web site with cooperation of all NFPs. Another ongoing program includes the establishment of a databank on the basis of the NAP of member countries, their rangeland and desert ecological information and their biophysical and socioeconomic features .

3.3.4. Governments Agreement:

The draft of the NAP is formulated with the full support of the Government of the I.R. of Iran and will be presented to the Convention secretariat in the near future. As mentioned in 2-3-4 section, the objectives of NAP at macro level incorporated by the Government into the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan, depicts the Government support to the Convention. Besides, it has allocated \$191250 for the NAP formulation and also provided necessary financial resources for rangeland management, combating wind and water erosion, sand dune fixation, forestry and public participation. According to the provisions of the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan, allocation of financial facilities in agriculture and natural resources sectors up to 25% of total annual budget is allowed.

In the last two years, the Government has made endeavors to mitigate the effects of drought by paying indemnity fund to local communities through banking system and insurance funds as follows :

- Granting financial facilities for prevention and compensation of damages: 312.5 million USD;
- Granting financial facilities to the damaged individuals: 375 million USD;
- Granting relief aid to the damaged individuals: 100 million USD;
- Allocating national and provincial development credits for combating drought : 188.75USD
- Assisting insurance funds :12.5 million USD.

3.4. COHERENT AND FUNCTIONAL LEGAL AND PARTICIPATORY FRAMEWORK:

3.4.1. Legislation On Environment And Related Fields:

As mentioned before, the ratification of rules related to forest, range and environment in Iran dates back to a century. At present, there is an appropriate legal and institutional capacity in all sectors related to environment and natural resources. However, the institutional framework in environmental issues is being revised in order to address the challenges of development and environment of many countries of the world including I. R. Iran in the new millennium. The Third Five–Year Social and Economic Development Plan and the Act on Establishment Ministry of Jihad-e-Keshavarzi (Agriculture) were ratified in accordance with the government structural reforms in order to:

- Ensure sustainable development in agriculture and natural resources sectors;
- Improve quality and quantity of agricultural products in order to ensure food security;
- Increase investment and development growth in rural regions and
- Integrate programs and policies.

In addition, the ratification of directives of the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan stipulating transfer of land parcels to skilled applicants especially rural people and giving financial support to NGOs, all together serves the purposes of the above structural reform.

3.4.2. Measure To Adapt Current Legislation Or Introduce New

Enactments:

In previous sections, a few remarks were made about the policies of the Government in transferring part of executive duties to NGOs, private sectors and Urban and Rural Islamic Councils, and thus increasing the power of provincial administrations as well as transfer of land parcels to rural and nomadic communities. It was, indeed, after the formation of Rural and Urban Islamic Councils in 1999 that the Government could pave the ground for public participation of local people in formulation of anti-desertification policies and projects.

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

4.1. THE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH FOR EFFECTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF ALL ACTORS IN DEFINING THE NAP PROCESS PRIORITIES:

Communication, extension and public awareness are incorporated in the NAP and its macro policies as three important approaches by NCB that are also approved by the Government. In doing so, all existing ways and means including radio, TV, newspapers, magazines and the like have systematically been utilized.

Here are some of activities undertaken to increase public awareness :

- Observing the World Day to Combat Desertification ;
- Observing the World Day of Environment;
- Observing Natural Resources Week, and Tree Plantation Day;
- Publishing magazines and periodicals in the field of natural resources and environment;
- Distributing posters and pamphlets on substantive issues of FRO and
- Holding training workshops and extensional meetings attended by representatives from Islamic Councils, volunteer forest guards, NGOs, academics, land-users and extensionists.

In this connection, Department for Extension and Public Participation of the Ministry of Jihad-e-Keshavarzi (Agriculture), BSDFC, International Affairs and Public Relations of FRO as well as DOE have contributed, to this process. The bulk of documents and information related to the Convention have been translated into persian language and distributed among the Members of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament) especially to MPs from desert regions and manager, academics, NGOs and local communities in line with the three above-mentioned approaches.

In view of the importance of participation as a main theme in the NAP formulation, an independent committee was established in order to formulate public participation programs and promote NGOs involvement in combating desertification issues. For this purpose, twenty-four participatory workshops were held represented by members of Rural Islamic Councils, local experts, NGOs representatives including women and the youth. The themes of these workshops revolved mainly around the issues of identification and prioritization of factors affecting desertification and the results of which complemented the participatory process of the NAP formulation. Since Over 25% of all existing NGOs in the field (66 groups) are run by women, therefore their role in this process , along side volunteer forces including volunteer youth groups have been prominent in the rehabilitation of degraded lands. It is noteworthy that Tarbiyat Modares University has been the consultant of the National Action Program.

Also the seminars of Governors of desert provinces and also Representatives of Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament) from desert regions, were two important events at decision – making level held in 2001 in which the implementation of the Convention, the NAP formulation and prevention of the factors speeding up desertification. Trend were emphasized. They also gave their support to the valuable achievements of FRO during last forty years .

So far, over sixteen TV channels are operated in various provinces throughout the country that is also considered as an important factor in increasing public awareness .Over one-third of the programs of these channels have are allocated to cultural issues including the extension of culture of nature conservation.

4.2. REPRESENTATION OF VARIOUS ACTORS IN NATIONAL PRIORITY IDENTIFICATION PROCESS (LOCAL FORUMS, NATIONAL FORUMS):

Consultative workshops were held to identify and prioritize factors affecting or desertification trends within the NAP formulation with the participation of elites, experts and other relevant groups.

4.3. NATURE AND SCOPE OF INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION:

Nowadays, seminars, workshops, study tours and field visits are accounted as the most important types of exchange. To this end, the secretariat of NCCD based in Bureau of Sand Dune Fixation of FRO facilitates people's access to information, and has the construction of a database on the internet on agenda.

4.4. EXTENT OF UPTAKE OF LOCAL CONCERNS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AND RESULTS OF NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL:

In general, the Islamic Revolution of Iran is considered as a cultural evolution based on national and religious beliefs of the Iranian nation that occurred with the will of people and therefore, owes its existence to people's participation in all social and political arenas. Normally, all authorities including Leader, President, Representatives of Parliaments and Islamic Councils (MPs), Mayors etc. elected directly or indirectly by the people. Therefore, it reflects the type of decision-making process and bottom-up programming which is accepted for policy-making and has been incorporated in the Third Development Plan as well.

Attention to public participation in environmental and natural resources issues started in with Iran the formation of the first NGO in 1973 and then accelerated from 1993. Expansion and dissemination of public awareness at decision makers and local population level coupled with, decentralization and promotion of social roles of the youth and women are among strategies that government has been using in order to increase public participation. Today, over 255 NGOs and community organization in the field of environment and natural resources have been registered throughout the country, 25% of which are being run by women.

In 1999, the number of community organizations was only 170 Units. Besides, in the last two years some 19 new NGOs were registered in the form of

cooperatives and watershed manager societies. These NGOs help facilitate the links among governmental organizations and local communities, an example of which is the Rural Women Beekeeping Project formed with commercial purposes under SMLWR project. Moreover, nomadic and rural cooperatives supervised by Ministry of Cooperatives are among NGOs involving in commercial activities.

5. CONSULTATIVE PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF THE PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS WITH DEVELOPED COUNTRY PARTIES AND OTHER INTERESTED ENTITIES

5.1. DEGREE OF PARTICIPATION FROM INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS:

The history of the bilateral cooperation of the I.R. of Iran with neighboring countries dates back to forty years ago in sand dune fixation including holding training courses for Yemeni and Omani experts and overseas projects in the field of combating desertification.

The I.R. of Iran has played a significant role as a partner with ESCAP in the field of combating desertification and recently mobilized DPO in launching TPN3 meeting in Yazd in 2001.

In two recent years, Forest and Range Organization has been represented in thirteen joint economic commissions and has concluded four exclusive protocols on technical matters in the field of combating desertification as well as formulation of several international projects including SMLWR project in cooperation with UNDP, Carbon Sequestration project that in Khorasan Province in cooperation with GEF and the Caspian Sea Environmental Program (CEP). SMLWR Project that started in 1998 is still underway and Carbon Sequestration Project is passing the final stages of approval.

Forest and Range Organization and the BSDFCO have attended the following regional and international meetings:

- Third Asian Forum on Combating Desertification in Bangkok, Thailand, 7-10 November 2000.
- Fourth Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification (COP 4), Bonn, Germany.

- Ad Hoc Working Group in Bonn, Germany, 19 March to 6 April 2001.
- The Launching Meeting of the Thematic Program Network on Rangeland Management and Sand Dune Fixation (TPN3) Yazd-Islamic Republic of Iran. 7-9 May 2001.
- Workshop on GIS & Database Management of Caspian Environment Program, Baku, Azerbaijan 30 April – 5 May, 2001.
- Preparatory Meeting for the Ministerial Meeting on Sustainable Investment in Rainfed Areas of West Asia and North Africa (WANA), Cairo, Egypt, 13-14 May.
- Fourth Asian Forum on Combating Desertification in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, 21-25 June 2001.
- Ministerial Meeting on Opportunities for Sustainable Investment in Rained Areas of West Asia and North Africa (WANA), Rabat, Morocco, June 25-26, 2001
- Fifth Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification (COP5), Geneva, Switzerland, 1-12 October 2001.

5.2. EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FROM INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS FOR COOPERATION

The I.R. of Iran expects to utilize the experiences of other countries through exchange of information and knowledge. To this aim FRO has invited a number of experts from CCD Secretariat, UNDP, Specialized Organizations and International NGOs to visit Iran, to advise local technical workshops and provide consultancy service. In the conclusion of TPN3 launching meeting held in Yazd- I.R. Iran in May 2001, the participants emphasized the followings:

- Establishing a powerful databank, taking into consideration the NAPs of participating countries, the main range/desert ecological zones in these countries, biophysical and Socio-Economic features of these zones and sustainable range management and sand dune fixation systems.

It is noteworthy that TPN3 was launched with the financial support of the GM.

6. MEASURES TAKEN OR PLANNED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMS, INCLUDING MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT, TO CONSERVE NATURAL RESOURCES AND PROMOTE THEIR SUSTAINABLE USE, TO IMPROVE INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION, TO ENHANCE KNOWLEDGE ON DESERTIFICATION AND ITS CONTROL AND TO MONITOR AND ASSESS DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

6.1. ADEQUATE DIAGNOSIS OF PAST EXPERIENCES.

National desertification projects and programs are annually assessed by relevant “universities, research centers and relevant institutes, and ministries, recently Desert Research Institute affiliated to Tehran University has conducted a case study on the 30 year experiences of Kerman province on controlling desertification with the participation of local people.

The results of these annual assessments show the necessity of public participation in affected areas as well as precedence of preventive measures to rehabilitation operations, the choice of commercial species in afforestation, and due attention to the effect of poverty and immigration on the programs contents that are accounted as the factors in merger of ministries of Agriculture and Jihad-e- Sazandegi in 2000.

6.2. ESTABLISHED TECHNICAL AND FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATED PROGRAMS TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

6.2.1. Inventory , Adaptation And Integrating Of Projects Underway Within The NAP Process:

As mentioned, immediately after ratification of the Convention in I.R. Iran, the principles of the Convention were incorporated in the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan. Likewise, all provincial programming committees and relevant ministries in the field of water resource management, vegetation and environment, were instructed to coordinate their policies and activities through NSC.

6.2.2. Identification Of New Actions And Planned Measures:

Activities undertaken to integrate ongoing projects with the NAP are as follows:

- Identification of dry and semi-dry areas in the country;
- Determination of desertification factors and their role in this process;
- Expansion of Applied Sciences University;
- Expansion of public awareness;
- Promotion of local community organization in afforestation, water exploitation, watershed management and cottage industry;
- Transfer of lands tenure to local people and nomads in form of long-term lease
- Collection of indigenous knowledge in the field of combating desertification for applied and participatory plans;
- Identification of hotspots vulnerable to wind and water erosion ;
- Pest control and fire prevention;
- Participatory monitoring and assessment;
- Expansion of research in the field of combating desertification and
- Promotion of early warning systems.

6.2.3. Specific Actions To Strengthen The National Capacity To Combat Desertification. In Particular At The Local Level:

The national capacity for combating desertification can be studied at local and national level. At national level, decisions adopted by NCCD and NSC in collaboration with DOE and international agencies for promotion of combating desertification programs and formulation of the NAP has created an appropriate capacity through:

- Amending existing rules;
- Merging the Ministry of Agriculture with the Ministry of Jihad-e-Sazandegi in order to intensify cooperation for sustainable development;
- Merging the Department of Watershed Management with FRO;
- Promoting universities capacities especially Natural Resources Colleges for offering desertification courses;
- Reinforcing research centers and
- Upgrading the quality and quantity of relevant research projects.

At Present, the Applied Sciences Universities that offer technical and applied courses have opened new branches and 400 students in 11 colleges are now studying courses related to natural resources including rehabilitation and exploitation of deserts.

At local level, following measures have been taken:

- Decentralization with a view to increasing the administrative authority of provinces
- Raising public awareness;
- Establishing local community organizations and cooperatives;
- Transferring considerable part of executive affairs to local people;
- Improving the subsistence of local people by creating new job opportunities ;
- Expansion of education and health ;
- Transferring land parcels and rangelands to qualified applicants;
- Holding training workshops and
- Expansion of Radio and TV channels.

6.3. ACTION PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED IN COMPLIANCE WITH PRIORITY FIELDS SET OUT IN THE CONVENTION:

A number of Action Programs will be compiled on the basis of the draft NAP of I.R. Iran and in accordance with the principles of the UNCCD that will come into force in a near future. In the previous sections, FRO sectoral programs including sand dune fixation and combating desertification were elaborated. In this section, a reference is made to activities undertaken in other sectors, in the past and outcomes gained as follows:

Integrated Social Security Plan: This plan will start in 2002 in order to provide general insurance cover for all strata of people in the country and its budget and requirements has been made in the annual budget of the country. It is noteworthy that the most important achievements the Government in human development had been the reduction of poverty rate from 31% to 18 % in the last decade.

Promotion and Expansion of Research: Investment on research studies in the field of combating desertification has led to a higher quality and quantity of plans and capacities. On the average, annually around 2500 research projects are being conducted in the field of natural resources and watershed management that the results of which is passed on to training and executive centers.

Policies on Development of Education: Educational progress is one of essential elements in human development which not only directly contributes to diversity options before individuals but also improves livelihood through providing access to more job opportunities and, by extension raises health standards.

In the I.R. of Iran ,the rate of literacy has been on a rise in 1988, 1996 and 2001 from 57%, 74.5% and 80% respectively. During this period, the rate of enrolments in all educational levels have reached from 56.6% to 75%. On the one hand, Meanwhile, the gross rate of enrolments at university level has risen from 6.89% to 18.7% and on the other hand, the literacy rate in women has gone up to 67%. and, the rate of female university students has also been tripled. Creating equal opportunities in terms of sex or locality is one of the strategies of government in education sector. However, the success of the programs also depend on public awareness and cultural improvements in certain regions.

At present, female students, at high school and primary school level, constitute 45% and 48% of total students respectively. Above all, after introducing compulsory primary education for children ranging 6-10 years of age some 94% of school age children in the poorest region of the country are enjoying free education.

Expansion of Higher Education: establishment and expansion of the Applied Science University has led to an increase of 4% in enrolments in natural

resources courses in general and enrolling 75 students in desert rehabilitation course in particular within the last two years. At present, courses related to natural resources are offered in 8 branches of governmental universities and over 10 branches of Azad university that many of them are located in the remote and deprived areas of the country .

Improvement and Expansion of Health and Family Planning Network: The Government of I.R. Iran has followed up the policy of expansion and improvement of health network all over the country. Statistics show that the percentage of rural people's access to health services have been increased from 85% in 1996 to 90% in 2001. and the remaining 10 % of rural population are being supported by mobile medical services. In the last three years, some 1234 rural health centers have been established .The population growth rate has fallen to 3.2%, 1.5% and 1.4% in 1986, 1996 and 2001 respectively and life expectancy rate has improved from 61.6 to 70 years in the same period.

Employment: In order to prevent the upward trend of unemployment rate and the pressure exerted on natural resources, the Third Five - Year Socio-Economic Development Plan has focused on followings:

- Expanding family planning methods;
- Raising Public awareness;
- Encouraging self employment;
- Providing jobs for excess rural manpower;
- Supporting the participation of private sector in economic activities and
- Expanding social security services .

The country also witnessed an economic growth rate of 5% last year

Agriculture . This sector, in addition to its remarkable share in food security, has an important role in the welfare of rural population and consequently restricting immigration. The growth of agricultural products has been fluctuating about 5%, within the last decade, however due to severe drought it has dropped to 2.2% in the last two years. Nevertheless, there are perspectives for a higher growth through providing financial support, carrying out major water supply and irrigation projects, and insurance cover at guaranteed price

for agricultural products by the Government. It has sold billion of rials of bonds to people for agricultural majors plans such as agriculture and fishery projects guaranteed by the Central Bank of Iran. Beside ratification of law for electrification of agricultural water pumps, provisions have been made for required subsidies by the Government, in order to reduce the production costs in agriculture sector.

Water Supply And Irrigation Projects Of Ministry Of Energy: Ministry of Energy, in order to create a new momentum in the agriculture sector, has actively participated in implementing 79 development projects for water reservation as well as 43 irrigation and drainage network projects and 55 water supply projects. The ministry has allow completed the construction of several dams and in this way has added over 9 billion m³ of water to total existing capacity of water reserves and thus has paved the ground for expansion of agriculture in 280000 hectares of irrigated arable lands as well as improvement of 89000 hectares of old irrigated lands .

The ministry is also active in the field of renewable sources of energy and has designed and constructed two wind turbines and two solar power plants with 1.860 megawatt production capacity.

Broadcasting media (radio /TV) And Specialized Publications : Radio and TV have a unique role in raising public awareness and improving the culture of the society towards environmental issues. The establishment of more than 16 local and provincial radio and TV channels has been unprecedented in the last two years. Moreover, during the same period, the number of specialized and semi-specialized publications has risen up to 23 and 11 titles respectively.

Promotion of Early Warning Systems: (see section 3.2).

Ministry of Petroleum: Ministry of Petroleum, in the framework of development of natural gas network has carried out projects in more than 384 cities and estimates that the scheme can be extended to another 88 cities as

well. However the network can only be extended to more 300 villages in the neighborhood. Despite the existing constraints, all villages in the vicinity of main gas pipes (5 km) can be connected to the network, on the basis of cost sharing as stipulated in the second Five- Year Socio-Economic Development Plan. In addition, according to project on “Replacement Appropriate Fuel for Fuel Wood” undertaken by FRO and Dept. of Environment of Ministry of Petroleum in collaboration with other organizations, has just started the constructions of gas stations in all remote areas.

6.4. LINKAGE ACHIEVED WITH REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMS (SRAP AND RAP)

The Islamic Republic of Iran has linked with regional and sub-regional action programs through TPNs, especially, TPN3 and DPO. During this period, Iran has played an important role in creating the linkage between the regional and sub regional countries through establishing TPN3 and attending the NFP meetings.

6.5. EFFICIENCY OF MEASURES IN LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING

Forest and Range Organization has taken the following measures to capture public participation through:

- The Seminar of Governors and Members of Islamic Consultative Assembly (Parliament) of desert provinces in support of the principles of the Convention and the NAP formulation in ... in 2000 and 2001;
- Active participation of members of NCCD and NSC ;
- Investment of private sector in the projects relating to combating desertification;
- Expansion of NGOs involving in environment and combating desertification activities;
- Recruitment of two millions youth volunteers to take part in anti-desertification plans;
- Attraction of public participation in afforestation plans in the form of financial and manpower support and

- increasing the role of volunteer forest and range guards.

6.6. PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS APPLIES.

FRO carries out projects through employing experienced national or international consultants both in preparation and implementation phases in the field of forestry, range management, combating desertification and watershed management as follows:

- Recognition of Hotspots Vulnerable to Wind Erosion and Executive Priorities;
- Balancing the Number of Livestock and the Production Capacity of Rangelands;
- Replacing the Fuel Wood with Renewable Sources of Energy, etc.;
- Formulation of the NAP and
- Assessment of 30-year Activities related to Combating Desertification in Kerman Province

As mentioned before, following projects are undertaken in cooperation with international agencies:

- SMLWR project and
- Carbon Sequestration project.

7. FINANCIAL ALLOCATION FROM NATIONAL BUDGETS IN SUPPORT OF IMPLEMENTATION AS WELL AS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION INCLUDING THEIR INFLOWS. PROCESSES TO IDENTIFY THEIR REQUIREMENTS, AREAS OF FUNDING AND SETTING PRIORITIES.

7.1. ADOPTED FINANCIAL MECHANISMS

7.1.1. Measures To Facilitate The Access Of Local Actors To Existing

Sources Of Funding:

Decentralization and allocation of budgets to local and provincial projects have increased the availability of funds to the provincial plans. As a rule, all programs and plans must be sent to the headquarters by the provinces annually. The programs, in turn, will be forwarded to Management and Planning

Organization (MPO) for incorporating in the Generalized National Budget. Moreover, headquarters is responsible for National programs.

In the last three years, the Government has allocated nearly 1 billion dollars in aid, bank facilities and insurance cover for development projects in provincial and local administrations in order to make for the damages incurred due to severe droughts, also has extended insurance cover to rangelands plus offering guaranteed prices for agricultural products.

7.1.2. Prepare A List Of Methods To Mobilize Internal And External

Resources:

The Government of the I.R. of Iran, as mentioned earlier, has given top priority to agriculture and natural resources sectors by allocating up to 25% of the total facilities stipulated in the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan and in this way has paved the ground for investment in this sectors through structural and legal reforms and amendments. Moreover, it has also paid great attention to signing MOUs and protocols in the fields of natural resources and environmental issues including combating desertification with other countries especially the developed ones. The Bureau of Sand Dune Fixation had been successful in absorbing financial support through international specialized agencies for anti- desertification projects. However, these international financial aid forms a very small portion of funds available compared with the domestic resources.

7.1.3. Assessment Of INVESTMENT IN Development Of Dry AREA:

The Government of the I.R. of Iran aims at absorbing appropriate financial resources and directing it to arid regions in order to create proper infrastructures, exempt taxes, promote local structures, enhance public participation, mobilize private sector and finally improve bank facilities. Moreover, it has made investment in infra-structural development plans, expansion of health care centers, education, water, energy and road networks and has adopted the

following strategies for employment and improving the subsistence of landusers and their economic status:

- Carrying out feasibility study and construction phases of water resources development plans including construction of reservoir dams, discovery of new water resources, water supply and artificial charging of underground aquifers;
- Promoting and expanding cottage industry;
- Preparing and executing rangeland management plans through providing technical and financial support.

Moreover, the Government, on the one hand, has made provisions for effective implementation of programs through optimum use of resources and empty capacities parallel to sustainable increase of investments in order to promote human indicators in these regions, on the other hands, it has offered national bonds to finance part of Rial requirements of projects such as big dams, agriculture and aquaculture projects and has absorbed billions of Rials required for these programs through public participation .

7.2. NAP FINANCING

The Government of the I.R. of Iran has allocated large amount of budgets for plans formulated in the framework of the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan in accordance with the principles of the Convention.

It has also given top priority to agriculture and natural resources by allocating 25% of total fund available in banking system aiming at ensuring food security and economic well-being in rural regions. This, in turn, has led to absorption of private sector investments for activities related to rehabilitation of natural resources in general, and rehabilitation of desert degraded lands and anti-desertification projects in particular. In this connection, Bureau of Desertification Sand Dune Fixation as well as Technical Office of Low Cover Forests of FRO has transferred the title deeds of 33,000 and 61000 hectares of land parcels to the land-users respectively. The Technical Office of Range land has allocated the exploitation rights of three million hectares of rangelands to

land-users on the basis of thirty -year lease contracts according of the Directives to the Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan, Moreover, as the result of the recent droughts the Government has allocated one billion dollars in aid, financial facilities, and insurance cover to compensate for the damages incurred and thus has formulated several projects in the field of run-off control and diversifying animal feed resources in order to mitigate the effects of drought. Besides, it has also allocated billions of rials in aid to make up for the damages resulting from flood.

In this connection, Ministry of Petroleum, National Railway Company, Industrial Complexes, Ministry of Road and Transportation and a number of private and governmental organizations have also invested a lot in preserving installations and roads against shifting sand dunes.

The total government spending on the NAP formulation amounts to \$191250. The Global Mechanism(GM) has allocated \$100,000 to assist the formulation of the I.R. Iran's NAP that some \$380000 for SMLWR project and amount of \$85000 for launching TPN3 have been received from UNDP and GM and government of Japan respectively. GEF has also allocated \$350000 for assisting NBSAP.

This year, the allocated budget for the Bureau of Sand Dune Fixation has increased by 300% compared with 2001. The total direct investment allocated by the Government to combat wind and water erosion has amounted to 77 million dollars in 2001 and 2002 .

The I.R. of Iran has allocated \$330500 for launching of TPN3. The total budget secured for SMLWR project totals to \$4689000. If Carbon Sequestration Project become finalized, this year the Government's share and UNDP/GEF share will be \$1093800 and \$750000 respectively, it is also expected that the GM would secure new financial resources for projects received from member states endorsed by the Technical Committee.

Allocations made by the Government to the ministries and state- owned organization related to desertification control activities including (1)Ministry of Education and Ministry of Science, Research and Technology for reduction of illiteracy rate and training skilled manpower as well as capacity building, (2)Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Training for expansion of general health and family planning network, (3) Meteorological Organization and TAMAB company (Water Resource Research Center) for expansion of meteorological stations and promotion of drought early warning systems, (4)Ministry of Energy for water supply, irrigation and charging underground water tables, (5)Ministry of Jihad-e-Keshavazi (Agriculture) for irrigation systems, (6)Committee to Combat Natural Disasters for quality and quantity improvement of measures taken for mitigating drought effects, (7)Radio and Television Broadcasting Organization (IRIB) for boosting public awareness, and finally (8)Ministry of Petroleum for supplying fuel to rural and tribal regions, show the commitment of I.R. of Iran to the cause of combating desertification.

Therefore, it is necessary that, at this juncture, donors countries and international agencies mobilize their financial resources for the affected countries including I.R. of Iran and pave the ground for attaining to the goals of the UNCCD.

7.3. TECHNICAL COOPERATION DEVELOPED

The I.R. of Iran has announced her readiness to exchange experiences with other countries. In the last two year, technical cooperation has mainly revolved around executing joint projects and workshops with specialized organizations .

The I.R. of Iran is interested to utilize experiences of other countries in the following areas :

- Formulation of indigenous knowledge and policies related to combating desertification;
- Mobilization of financial resources;

- Determination of indicators and benchmarks of desertification;
- Creation and promotion of early warning systems;
- Promotion of NGOs and community organizations and
- Preparation and implementation of joint technical projects.

It is noteworthy that the Islamic Republic of Iran has found new opportunities to expand its regional cooperation after launching TPN3 in Yazd in 2001 .

8. A Review Of The Benchmarks And Indicators Utilized To Measure Program And Assessment Thereof:

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) prepared by DOE, has analyzed the general status of environment in Iran through a comparative research on the sustainability Indicators water, soil, climate, plant and animal species .

The research results are available to organizations and interested individuals for information. Previously, the indicators and benchmarks utilized in research studies were not unified however several attempts had been made before made to standardize indicators and benchmarks in order to enable researcher to measure the progress made in combating desertification and monitoring patterns required. In this way, the first stage of a case study on combating desertification in Kerman province was carried out by the Desert Research Institute, the results gained will be used in formulation of future projects. The Faculty of Social Science of Tehran University has also carried out a comprehensive assessment project on Rangeland Management Challenges in Dry and Semi-dry Regions.

Recently, the draft of project “called Identification of Indicators and Benchmarks of Desertification” has been presented by Faculty of Natural Resources of Tehran University. In this project, indicators of desertification, desertification potential and the progress of desertification is assessed through physical, biological, social and economic indicators using domestic and foreign financial resources .

9. Acronyms

BSDFC	Bureau of Sand Dune Fixation and Combating Desertification
CBO	Community Based Organization
CCD	Convention to Combat Desertification
COP	Conference of Parties
DOE	Department of Environment
DPO	DESCONAP Program Office
DRI	Desert Research Institute
EC	Executive Committee
ESCAP	Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FRO	Forest and Range Organization
TFYSEDP	Third Five-Year Socio-Economic Plan
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IUCN	International Union to Conserve Nature
IR. Of Iran	Islamic Republic of Iran
MPO	Management and Planning Organization
NAP	National Action Program
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NCB	National Coordinating body
NCCD	National Committee to Combat Desertification
NCSD	National Committee for Sustainable Development
NSC	National Steering Committee
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RAP	Regional Action Program
RTO	Rangeland Technical Office
SRAP	Sub regional Action Program
SMLWR	Sustainable Management of Land and Water Resources
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
TPN	Thematic Program Network
UNDP	United Nations Development Program