

SUMMARY

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

**National Report of Italy
on the implementation of the UNCCD**

APRIL 2000

The UNCCD has been ratified by the Italian Parliament with the Law n.170 in the 1997.

In September 1997, the Italian President of the Council has instituted the National Committee to combat drought and desertification, the Committee has been working on the implementation and the dissemination of knowledge aimed at combating desertification in Italy. Its most important activity has been the involvement of the institutions and the research organisations to co-ordinate the political action to fight drought and soil degradation and the social, economic, energetic, environmental and cultural aspects of the Mediterranean basin.

In order to implement the UNCCD the Italian Committee has signed several Memorandum of Understanding with different partners: the Food and Agricultural Organisation, the Ente Teatrale Italiano, ANPA and Asinara National Park, Fondo Euro-Mediterraneo, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover the Committee is supporting the activities of two Study Centres in areas that are particularly vulnerable to drought and desertification, Matera (Basilicata) and Porto Torres (Sardinia). In Co-operation with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, the Ministry of Environment has launched a campaign for the enhancement of the sustainable development of the Matera Sassi, that is already included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, and represents a significant and innovative example of rehabilitation of an urban ecosystem, as well as of appropriate use of national resources and harmonious management in a territorial context characterised by long periods of drought and serious processes of erosion and desertification.

The interactions between social and political worlds have been discussed in several meetings, promoted by the National Committee, with national and international experts. We can mention the workshop on the parameters and indicators of Porto Torres (18-20 September 1998), the first and the second meeting of Matera on the European policies to combat desertification (28-29 July 1997, 28-31 October 1998), and finally the meetings that has been organised in Rome last February, the International workshop "Social participation to combat desertification. Assessment, adaptation and design of a pilot implementation scheme for the use or European Awareness Scenario Workshop methodology in the framework of Annex IV countries" (Rome, 16 February 2000), and the workshop "Desertification, climate change, bio-diversity and forest: synergies for an inter-regional agenda between Northern and Southern Mediterranean countries" (Rome, 18 February 2000) that has seen the participation of all the Countries of the Annex IV, France, European Union, all the Countries of the U.M.A. and Egypt.

Some partial but very important answers have started to come, we appreciate the born of a new strategy of co-operation, we have seen the promotion of new rules of soil protection, and the Law n.152/99 on waters, recently approved by the Parliament, includes specific activities to combat desertification and drought.

The environmental policies are strictly linked to the energetic, industrial and scientific and technological politics. In Italy the urbanisation of new areas and the abandonment of the ancient cities and the territorial settlements contribute to increase the susceptibility to the desertification. This is why we had the need to develop the collaboration between governments, scientific organisation, institutions, local communities and the non-governmental organisation to establish common programmes, in particular, in the following fields:

- management of natural resources, soil and water;
- coast protection;
- improvement of compatible agriculture and zoo-technique;
- sustainable tourism;
- environmental education and sustainable use of the resources;
- promotion of innovative technologies and unemployment support.

The National Committee has prepared the “First national communication to combat desertification” submitted and approved by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Economic Planning (CIPE) - deliberation n.154/98 -, the National Committee has approved the “Guidelines for the National Programme” and finally the CIPE has approved the “National action programme to combat drought and desertification in Italy” – deliberation n.229/99.

The Government has played his role in the approval of the CIPE deliberation that clearly underlines the different role that the Government and the Regions play in the fight against desertification and drought and foresees the strategic and operative importance of the Regions in the enforcement of the UNCCD with specific programmes at local level.

National action programme

The national action programme is divided in the following:

- national activities;
- regions and basin authorities' activities;
- northern Mediterranean programme.

National activities

The programme foresees that the involved Ministries locate the financial resources referred to:

- soil protection;
- sustainable management of water resource;
- impact reduction of the productive activities;
- territorial re-balance;
- information, training and research;

in such a way finalised to combat drought and desertification.

The Ministries involved in this activity are the Ministry of Treasury, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry for Agricultural and Forest Policies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Trade.

Between the ministerial activities, an information, training and research programme to combat drought and desertification is developing. The programme is in deep involvement with the Climate Change Research Programme.

Moreover, as the deliberation says, the National Committee and the Foreign Affairs Ministry have constituted a panel to establish the actions to be worth for the financing of project to combat the desertification in the North African Countries. The panel decides which are the strategies of the Italian Co-operation to combat drought and desertification in the developing Countries even those that are connected to Italian initiative toward debt reduction.

Regions and Basin Authorities' activities

The programme foresees policies and measures that the Government, the Regions and the Basin Authorities have to enforce, most of all in the following fields: sustainable management and use of the water resource, the reduction of the industrial impact, and the re-balance of the land.

The drought-emergency have to be faced. And to face the emergency we must monitor, study distinguishing climatic and anthropic causes, master dynamics and specific events.

The action programme is dedicated to the Regions and to the Basin Authorities that are called to characterise the vulnerable areas and the measures to apply.

The Action Programme is devoted, in part, to the Regions that are affected by drought. The Regions have to play a national role to combat drought and desertification.

The fields of intervention are referred to local programmes and the Government will play a role to support and to co-ordinate the Regions. The priority fields are:

- soil protection;
- sustainable management;
- impact reduction of the productive activities;
- land re-balance.

Annex IV programme

A stress has been given to the co-ordinated activity that Italy will play to prepare the Action Programme for the Northern Mediterranean Region. Following the document "Terms of Reference" that Annex IV Countries have prepared and approved during the last COP, Annex IV Countries will prepare a regional action programme.

List of the Italian initiatives and activities to combat drought and desertification

Resuming here you have all the Italian activities to implement the UNCCD:

- 4 June 1997 - Ratification by the Parliament of the UNCCD, Law n.170
- 4 June 1997 - First national workshop on desertification, held in Rome
- 17 June 1997 – World Day against desertification, celebration in Rome and Sassari
- 28-29 July 1997 – First international forum on the European politic to combat desertification, held in Matera
- 26 September 1997 – Institution of the National committee to combat desertification
- 3-4 October 1997 – First international forum of the Mayors on the desertification and urbanisation, held in Rome
- 16 June 1998 – Memorandum of Understanding between Ministry of Environment and Food and Agriculture Organisation on the implementation of the UNCCD
- 17 June 1998 – World Day against desertification, celebration in Rome
- 28-29 July 1997 – First International Forum on the European Politic to combat desertification, held in Matera
- 18-20 September 1998 – International workshop on the indicators of desertification, held in Porto Torres
- 29 September-3 October 1998 – Regional workshop on a network to reach an integrated management of international rivers, lakes and hydro-geographic basins in Africa, held in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)
- 28 -31 October 1998 – Second international forum on the European politic to combat desertification, held in Matera
- 9-13 November 1998 – Regional workshop on the information systems for planning in Mediterranean basin, held in Marrakech (Morocco)
- 25 February 1999 – Memorandum of Understanding between the Italian Committee to Combat desertification and Ente Teatrale Italiano
- 28 April 1999 – National campaign for the enhancement of the sustainable development of the Matera Sassi
- 16 June 1999 – Second International Forum of the Majors on desertification and urbanisation, held in Bonn (Germany)
- 17 June 1999 – Meeting of the Annex IV Countries under the Italian presidency, on the occasion of the celebration of the World Day against desertification, held in Lisbon (Portugal)

- 18 June 1999 – Meeting of the Annex IV experts to prepare the Regional Action Programme, held in Lisbon (Portugal)
- 15-18 July 1999 – Panel ad hoc Meeting on local and traditional knowledge to combat desertification, held in Matera (Italy)
- 22 July 1999 – approval of the guidelines of the National Programme to combat desertification
- 13-14 September 1999 – Meeting of the Annex IV Focal Points and preparation of the document Terms of Reference of the Regional Action Programme
- 18-19 October 1999 – Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference on local water management, held in Turin (Italy)
- October 1999 – Start of the activities of the National Observatory on desertification, placed in Asinara National Park
- 29 October 1999 – Meeting on “The fight to drought and desertification: the water resource government and the soil degradation. The rule of the Regions and the Basin Authorities”, held in Palermo (Italy)
- November 1999 – Start of the activities of the Study Centre of Matera (Italy) on local and traditional knowledge
- 9 November 1999 – Round table: “Environmental refugees. Poverty, migration, foreign debt, co-operation: fight to drought and desertification and challenges for a sustainable development, held in Rome (Italy)
- 22 November 1999 – Memorandum of Understanding between the Italian Ministry of the Environment, ANPA and Asinara National Park
- 21 December 1999 – Adoption of the National Action Programme to fight drought and desertification by the Italian Government (CIPE deliberation n. 299)
- 16 February 2000 – International Workshop “Social participation to combat desertification”, held in Rome (Italy)
- 17 February 2000 - Presentation of the National Action Programme and Ministerial Meeting of the Annex IV Countries
- 18 February 2000 – International Workshop “Desertification, climate change, bio-diversity and forest: synergies for an inter-regional agenda between Northern and Southern Mediterranean Countries”, held in Rome (Italy)
- 9 March 2000 - Memorandum of Understanding between the Italian Committee to combat drought and desertification and Fondo EuroMediterraneo per lo sviluppo socio-culturale (FEM)
- 15 March 2000 - Memorandum of Understanding between the Italian Committee to combat drought and desertification and the General Direction for the Co-operation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs