

NATIONAL REPORT REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN CONVENTION ON COMBATING DESERTIFICATION

SUMMARY

Strategies and priorities

The Republic of Moldova is situated in the South Eastern part of Europe and occupies a substantial area of the territory among Dniester and Prut rivers and a narrow strip on the Dniester river left bank. It has common borders with Romania at West and with Ukraine at North, East and South. The agricultural sector has a leading role in the national economy of the country, it being at the same time a destabilizing factor for the soil cover. Forest resources of the Republic of Moldova do not exceed 9.6% of its area. Drought is a frequent phenomenon in the republic and has a detrimental influence on the environment. The crossed relief of the landscape in a situation of an almost excessive use of the soil leads to an intensive erosion. One third of agricultural land in the republic is affected by erosion processes.

In view of the above mentioned the Republic of Moldova in 1998 joined the UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD). In year 2000 the Government approved the National Plan of Actions for the desertification control in the republic.

The tasks set up in the Programme are the following:

- Identification of factors leading to desertification and development and implementation of practical measures aimed to ensure desertification control and amelioration of draught consequences;
- Setting up the tasks of the Government, local power administration bodies and land users in this context.

The ultimate goal of the governmental Programme is preservation of soil quality and improvement of soil fertility in the drought affected regions.

The following are the main actions ensuring desertification control in this context:

- Preservation of the soil fertility in the desertification affected areas by the implementation of soil use ecological systems that are socially acceptable and economically feasible;

- Protection of still not degraded land or insignificantly degraded and/or its conservation for the purpose of its natural rehabilitation;
- Improvement of the population living standards in the desertification affected areas, including such measures as public health protection measures, improvement of sanitary conditions and family planning measures.

The Programmes and Activities approved during 2000 through 2002 period of time listed below constitute the most important Programmes and Plans of Actions developed for the environment protection purpose, including the ones aimed to ensure desertification control:

“National Strategy of sustainable development “Moldova – 21” (year 2000). It incorporates all expertise accumulated so far about techniques and consequences of the social economic and environment spheres interaction

“National Concept of the ecological policy” (year 2002). Special attention in the Concept is paid to protection and use of natural resources, as well as to measures ensuring soil preservation.

“National complex Programme of soil fertility improvement during 2001 – 2020 period of time” (year 2001). This programme determines the General strategy of soil policy within the concept of soil protection and improvement and rational use of soil resources

“Comprehensive Plan of Actions and concrete measures ensuring its implementation aiming to diminish the consequences of humidity deficiency in the soil” (year 2001). Recommendations for the rational use and preservation of soil humidity have been developed within the Comprehensive Plan of Actions. Seminars were prepared and held

“Comprehensive Programme for soil protection against erosion and for the improvement of soil fertility in the Gagauz Autonomous Territorial Unit”. (year 2001). The Programme envisages implementation of soil protection projects on the territory of agricultural enterprises. They presuppose plantation of soil protecting forest crops on the degraded soils, plantation of soil protection crops and erosion controlling forest strips as well as plantation of forests along river banks and water reservoirs.

“Data base with information regarding soil quality in the Republic of Moldova” (year 2000). A data base has been created including different characteristics of the erosion processes and soil fertility. Statistical parameters are given regarding composition and qualities of soils in the Republic of Moldova as well as data regarding losses caused by the soil degradation.

“Programme for the liquidation of calamity consequences during 2002 through 2008 period of time”. This document envisages urgent calamity control measures, which are presupposed to be financed with the State Budget resources in the amount of 81 million lei (out of which 51 million lei are earmarked for trees plantation).

The following Programmes are under development at present:

“Programme for the rehabilitation of forest stocks and for the new forest plantations during 2002 through 2020 period of time” , which presupposes implementation of works within a 600 thousand lei budget (32 thousand lei annually) for the rehabilitation and forest plantation on a 96 thousand ha area.

“Comprehensive Programme for the assimilation of new territories and increase of soil fertility during 15 years period of time”, envisaging implementation of measures to increase the forest stocks in the Republic of Moldova up to 523 thousand ha, which will constitute 17% of the forest covered territory (compared to the preset area of 9.6%).

The National Coordination Centre

A working group created in 2002 within the Ministry of Ecology, Construction and Land Development coordinates the implementation of the UNCCD decisions in the Republic of Moldova. During the period of time following the development and presentation of the 1-st National Report (April, 2000) the UNCCD coordination centre undertook certain measures, among them also being the actions listed below:

- The national data base regarding drought, land degradation and water resources has been updated;
- A structure including maps and charts illustrating soil degradation and drought status has been developed;
- A conference dedicated to “Higher level of information dissemination among population concerning degradation of soil in the Republic of Moldova” was held, which was also attended by students, women and young people;
- A seminar with the topic “Social economic development of regions affected by desertification processes” was held (Vadu-lui-Voda town, on September 22-23, year 2000) and also seminars were held and working meetings were made with representatives of farmers and regions leadership in the most drought affected areas of the republic (Comrat, Cahul);
- A scientific publication for wide use “Degradation of soils in the Republic of Moldova” in Romanian and Russian languages was released;
- A video film was made with the title “Desertification problems in the Republic of Moldova”;
- A number of communication were made in mass media, including round table talks dedicated to the International Day of Desertification Combat (2000, 2001);

- Two booklets were worked out the titles of which were: “In attention to pupils” for use during ecology lessons and “Let’s preserve our Land”. Also a poster was developed with the title “Desertification in the Republic of Moldova”.
- The Associations of Non Governmental Organisations “ECO” has been created with the aim to increase the level of the information dissemination among population and to draw attention to desertification problems;
- Meetings were held with representatives of the Hungarian and Romanian Coordination Centres during which proposals were put forward to create a unique information network and to develop a sub-regional Plan of Actions within the context of the UNCCD implementation in the South Eastern part of Europe.

Institutional framework for the desertification combat.

During the period following the approval by the Government of the National Plan of Actions to combat Desertification a number of measures were taken in the republic to strengthen the institutional framework for the desertification combat. The Coordination Centre has got wider decision making powers. An intensive information exchange continued between ministries and departments. Legal documents were approved with the purpose to encourage the environment protection activities. Measures undertaken in order to strengthen the institutional framework were aligned along the directions below:

Strengthening the environment protection capacity and cooperation among different agencies, which presupposes:

- Application of principles “economy through observation of ecology” and “expenditures – gains”;
- Strengthening the institutional and organisation capacities.

Control over impacts on the environment, environment pollution control and environment recovery which presupposes:

- Environment protection management at enterprises and ecological certificates to enterprises;
- Use of techniques and equipment during agricultural works as well as use of production methods ensuring minimum impact on the environment and introduction of organic agriculture methods;
- Development, with the assistance of other European countries experience, of the national map of degraded soils.

Environment protection techniques

The following are the techniques used in the environment protection area:

Economic techniques:

- Use of natural resources against a payment; fine payment for environment pollution acts; damage compensation (including development of damage evaluation and damage compensation mechanisms), incentives;
- Use of such principles as “the polluter pays” and “the user of natural resources pays”;

Ecological insurance:

Development and efficient implementation of the ecological insurance system, which is supposed to improve environment management at enterprises and which is expected to contribute to the accumulation of additional resources that might be used to avoid pollution of environment;

Implementation of a comprehensive system of activities to reduce the impact of damaging factors on the environment.

Legal Framework

The necessity to observe a single policy in the environment protection area and use of natural resources, and the necessity to meet the ecological requirements during the national economy reform and to accept a political orientation towards integration into Europe determined the need to undertake a review and a development of a new ecological policy in the Republic of Moldova.

The Republic of Moldova became party of many international treaties. Thus, it signed 17 and ratified 15 Conventions dedicated to protection of environment, fact indicating that the republic is actively involved into the international cooperation. This was possible due to radical changes in the society, the new development course towards market economy undertaken by the country and the tendency to integrate into the European society and to extend cooperation within the region and within the Commonwealth of Independent States.

During the period under consideration, through the implementation of two projects, continuous work was done to achieve consistency of the legal framework of the country, these being: “Preparation work to achieve consistency of the legal framework of the Republic of Moldova with the legal framework of the European Commission in comprehensive pollution control and waste management areas” and “Assistance to the Republic of Moldova to implement Aarhus Convention”.

NGOs, along with public agencies, have an important role in the implementation of the Convention stipulations. One may mention that during 2000 – 2002 period of time the NGOs of the republic carried out many activities such as seminars for regional NGOs, soil surveys on a 3000 ha area at South, Centre and North of the Republic of Moldova, development of soft ware

for the soil erosion assessment and control, development of plans of actions for the erosion control in a number of farms at South of the country and other activities.

Actions planned or undertaken at present within the National Programme for Combating Desertification

The National Programme for Combating Desertification (NPCD) is envisaged for a 10 years period of time (up to year 2010). Sector activities constitute the core actions for the NPCD implementation, along with the orientation towards rehabilitation of the ecological balance, especially in the desertification affected areas. Priority actions in this context are the soil erosion combating measures and measures to achieve the ecologically balanced land arrangement. Additionally to this, within the context of market economy relations the ecological techniques aimed to ensure incentives to undertake combating desertification measures appear to be the most acceptable ones. Following the aim to support the agricultural sector, a Programme envisaging credit facilities and subsidies for farmers (30 million lei in 2001 and 30 million lei in 2002) was passed by the Parliament of the country.

Criteria and indicators used to analyse the results of the UNCCD implementation and their evaluation

Ministry of Ecology, Construction and Territory Development includes in its reports data regarding status of environment and its modification tendencies. These kind of data are also found in the population health status and hygiene reports worked out by the Ministry of Health Protection and in other sources.

Additionally to main information sources also periodical reviews concerning the social economic status of the country are developed by the following agencies:

- TACIS Programme of the European Commission (Trends of the social economic development);
- World Bank (Status of the agricultural sector and the Strategy of water resources control);
- UNDP and International Monetary Fund (Status of financial system and macro economical review);
- UN Economic Commission for Europe for the ecological activity survey in the Republic of Moldova, etc.