

**The Third National Report for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia about the
Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat
Desertification
(UNCCD)
Executive Summary**

Prior to this report, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had submitted two reports on 2000 and 2002 regarding the progress that made in the implementation of UNCCD. The first report was about the efforts made at the national level in the fields of combating desertification, rehabilitation of deteriorated resources and for the formulation of the strategy and National Action Program (NAP). The Ministry of Agriculture was appointed as the coordinating body for implementation both at the National and International levels. The second report comprises the efforts made by the National committee for the formulation of the strategy and the National Action Program (NAP) for combating desertification that completed with a technical help from the United Nations Environmental Program for West Asia, the report included a review of related plans and strategies and a number of adopted means concerning the conservation of natural resources .A committee was formed for proposing effective mechanisms to face the natural disasters such as drought and to add the early warning system to the proposed activities and programs for the evaluation and monitoring of desertification.

This third report focuses on the monitoring of the implementation of the convention. It is prepared according to the guidelines document No.ICCD/CRIC(3)/INF.3 comprising the following:

1- The Background:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia lies between latitudes 17 – 32 N and longitudes 35 – 56 E, most of its area is categorized as arid land except the Empty Quarter which lies in the areas of hyper arid ; the Sarawat mountains lies in the semi-arid areas.

1-1 The Natural Resources:

1-1-1 Water Resources:

The water resources in the Kingdom are divided into surface water ,which is collected due to rainfall and estimated to be about 2045 million cubic meters per year , and under ground water in the area of the basement rocks that is also relied on rainfall, also there is another deep ground water in the area of the crystalline rocks estimated to be about 1.5 million cubic meters, the thickness of these rocks is about 500 meters. The production of the desalinated water reaches 740, 52 million American Gallons daily. The quantities of treated sewage water reached 1.5 million cubic meters per day, and the treated agricultural waste water estimated to be about 32 million cubic meters per day.

1-1-2 Agricultural Resources:

The area of the suitable agricultural lands is estimated to be about 29 million hectares representing 14.5% of the total area of the Kingdom, while the area to be reformed is about 3.4 million hectares representing 1.7% of the total area of the Kingdom; the actual planted areas reaches about 4.4 million hectares.

1-1-3 Natural Vegetation Cover:

Large diversity exists in the constituents of the natural plant cover , about 2300 plant species exist in the Kingdom distributed between six main ecological plants, the forests occupy about 2.7 million hectares representing 1.35% of the total area of the Kingdom while the natural rangelands occupy about 171 million hectares.

1-1-4 Renewable Energy:

The energy resulted from desalination amounted to 144.7 billion kilowatt/ hour per day. There are many projects for producing solar energy to be used in desalinization of water, drying of dates, and to secure electricity for remote areas, lighting of tunnels, hydrogen production and also there are many other projects to use solar energy in telephone communications and the protection of oil pipelines from rust.

1-2 Human Resources:

1-2-1 Population:

The present population of the Kingdom is about 22.6 million with an annual increase of 2.5%, females representing 49.5%. Women have an effective role in rural development in the Kingdom. The Government gave priority for women education in order to enforce their productive efforts to achieve sustainable development through awareness raising. In rural areas, women still participate in range and agricultural activities.

1-2-2 Human pressures on the resources:

There are 13 administrative regions in the Kingdom, presently the local communities are practicing agricultural and range activities, this constitutes a pressure on the resources due to agricultural expansion at the expense of forests and rangelands. The recent mechanical means of moving herds quickly from one area to another resulted in severe grazing as well as tree cutting for charcoal production, all contributed in resource degradation.

1-2-3 Economic Pressures on the Resources:

Due to the increase of the average personal income, most of the population spend their holidays in local eco-tourism, the local tourism mainly directed towards the forests in the highlands in summer time, and in winter towards the rangelands and coastal areas. Negative effects resulted from this eco-tourism due to the large number of people visiting a limited area.

2- Activities implemented for Combating Desertification in the Kingdom during the period 2002 – 2005:

2-1 Capacity Building:

The Kingdom is, fostering and implementing a number of activities concerned about artisans and the cultural inheritance of local communities in

order to support and implement the convention at the national level. A fund for human resources development is secured. A number of the staff concerned with desertification control were trained as well as a number of researches were carried out about sand dune fixation and planting of trees with low water requirements .

2-2 Conservation of renewable Natural Resources(soils, water, plant cover and animal resources, domestic and wild):

During the period mentioned, a number of forest sites and rangelands and some of the vulnerable ecosystems were protected, also regular maintenance were carried out for forest sites as well as complementary pest control and alien plants in forest and range areas. Seed production for local range plants was carried out as well as the establishment of a number of nurseries for production of local plants. A vegetation map was produced, and an establishment of four new National Parks were started, a project for forest and range inventory was carried out using remote sensing techniques and field measurements.

Government departments encourage multiple use of water, a special project was carried out for an evaluation of quantities and qualities of ground water in some of the Kingdom vallies, and currently a plan made to manage the water resources. A new twenty seven (27) dams are under construction (their capacities reach about 1690 million cubic meters). Special measures made for the sustainable use of lands in the areas of mining in order to decrease the dust and to rehabilitate these sites.

2-3 Rehabilitation of Ecosystems and the Deteriorated Habitats:

In this field, a number of deteriorated forest and range sites rehabilitated through protection, and seed broadcasting and by stepping up of the abilities of seed production centers distributing seeds and seedlings to the farmers. Rehabilitation also is done to the windbreaks of the sand dune fixation project in Al Ahsa and fixation of sand creeping in a number of different sites. A study was carried out about the effects of urban expansion towards the forests in Asir and Najran areas. Rehabilitation of some deteriorated sites of mangrove was carried out as well as establishment of a number of public gardens. A project for rehabilitation of Wadi Hanifah in Riyadh area started, now.

In addition, a project was formulated to specify the deteriorated agricultural lands comprising production of a general soil and land resources maps. Green belts were established in mining sites. Two projects were started to evaluate and manage the municipal dump sites.

2-4 Revision, evaluation and Updating of systems and Legislations Concerning the Renewable Natural Resources:

The updated Legislation for forest and Range and the Strategy and the National Forest Program was approved. Land use and main road network demarcations taken into consideration will lead to protection of forest, range and the important ecosystems. Measures were made for ecological

assessments in ecotourism development sites, the Council of Ministers issued a decision approving the treated sewage water system and its reuse and the regulations for this system were formulated. In addition, the regulations for wastes and the municipal dumping sites were approved. The owners of marble and small mines should produce environmental impact assessment for their projects .

2-5 Monitoring and Evaluation of Drought and Desertification:

The natural range in the northern areas were monitored, soil maps produced to show deteriorated sites and the causes, and currently a manual for evaluation of deteriorated areas is under preparation at a national level. In addition, a project is underway to monitor the specifications and quantities of soil lost by wind erosion in Riyadh area, while a project implemented to monitor the degree of desertification and causes in the southwest area of the Kingdom; 300 monitor wells established for monitoring ground water.

2-6 Synergies and ways of cooperation with the International related treaties and Conventions for evaluation and desert control:

A study for forestry outlook was prepared and currently a project started for monitoring and rehabilitation of Junipers forests in cooperation with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations.(FAO).

Also the first national report for climate change in the Kingdom was prepared, strategies for biological diversity, forage strategy, a draft for agricultural strategy and the national plan for water were formulated.

2-7 Environmental Awareness Raising towards Desertification Control:

A number of articles published in the Agricultural Magazine. A number of leaflets were issued by the Ministry of Agriculture concerning subjects such as combating desertification, sand dunes fixation, the international day for combating desertification , deteriorating of rangelands in the north, forestry encouraging tourism, land deteriorations, tree planting weeks, afforestation of dry lands, roadside tree planting, raising some of the important plants in Al Gassim, looking after trees ..etc. Also television and radio broadcasting programs were carried out concerning desertification control and environmental conservation, the yearly tree planting week, and the international program called (Do not leave a footprint) which aimed to make awareness among tourists in the natural sites. A number of directive signs erected in the forest and range areas, the Kingdom prepared a unified program to celebrate the international year for deserts and combating desertification in 2006, seminars, workshops will be carried out, stickers and a postal stamp for this occasion will be issued.

3- Desertification Indicators:

The report produced describes the way followed in the Kingdom to specify the indicators, objectives, effective levels, the main issues and the indicators for every issue.