

SUMMARY OF THE THIRD SPANISH REPORT ON THE NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

The following summary is focussed on the key thematic topics established in decision 1/COP5.

i) Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations;

The previous report described the debate and participatory process attached to the elaboration of the NAP. The end of the process (2000-2001) was followed by the analysis and incorporation of the suggestions and contributions made during and after the meetings and roundtable discussions were held. In order to discuss those themes most linked to the agrarian sector that have been gradually incorporated to the document, a collaboration agreement was established with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The NAP was again under scrutiny by the National Commission for the Protection of the Environment, which is the consultative body for the cooperation between the General State Administration and the Autonomous Communities regarding this topic.

The Spanish actions focussed on the participation, communication of information and public awareness regarding the combating of desertification and mitigation of the effects of drought are gradually gaining prominence. Unlike other environmental problems (i.e. climate change) this problem has a more difficult social perspective and is less well known. However, both desertification and, above all, drought, are being gradually introduced in the campaigns launched by the General State Administration and regional governments. It is also a task included, either fully or at least the majority of its facets and for quite some time now, in many professional (forest and agrarian) and non governmental organisations, and is being reinforced.

The realisation of the desertification problem in our country will be reinforced during 2006 and 2007 due to the Spanish participation in the organisation of two of the most important events of the Convention. That is, first the celebration of the II International Symposium on Desertification and Migration in Almería (Spain), from the 25th to the 27th of October 2006. Secondly, the Seventh Conference of the Parties accepted the offer of the Government of Spain to host the eighth session of the COP (Decision 31/COP7).

ii) Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements;

Previous reports have stated that in Spain the institutional coordination and handling for the implementation of the CCD and NAP leans over the existing structure of mechanisms of institutional coordination and public participation, of which four could be highlighted for their close cooperation with the NAP: the National Commission for the Protection of the Environment, the Sectoral Environmental Conferences, the Advisory Environmental Council and the National Forest Council.

According to the re-wording of the Forest Law 4/2003, 21st of November, included in the modification of the 21st of April 2006 (Law 10/2006): "It is the duty of

the Ministry of the Environment, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the autonomous communities, to complete the elaboration and approval of the National Action Plan for combating Desertification. The implementation and monitoring of the Programme falls, according to a coordination principle, to the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fishery and Food and the autonomous communities, within their own fields”

This coordination principle is mandatory since the Spanish political system represents a highly decentralised State regarding the competences in every field. During the past few years decentralisation has carried on requiring a constant institutional reinforcement for the coordination of the Public Administration. Concerning the implementation of the policies that frame the combating of desertification, that is, sustainable development policies and the policies of integration of the environment within the several sectoral policies, both the forums and the institutional cooperation and agreement bodies have been reinforced. Some examples of these progresses are: the continuous work of the Environmental Authorities Network (REA) in the integration of the environmental preservation within every action funded with the EU funds, the implementation of the Spanish Forest Plan (PFE) by agreements between several institutions and, finally, the reinforcement of coordination in combating forest fires.

Within the legal framework, certain regulations over the sectors most linked with combating desertification have been elaborated or amended in the past few years. An example of many of the most remarkable advances in the agrarian sector quoted in the report is the implementation of “cross compliance”, that is, the compulsory fulfilment of the environmental requirements in receiving the direct payments the CAP grants to agriculture. It should be emphasised that every Administration body linked with combating the desertification participated in the elaboration process of the environmental requirements.

Concerning the legal framework in the forest sector, during this period of time the Forest Law 4/2003, of 21st November was approved and afterwards amended by the Law 10/2006. The implementation of this law meant many progresses regarding the preservation and improvement of the forest and rangelands in Spain, such are, for example: the creation of a new management tool, the Plans for the Management of Forest Resources (PORF), that are gaining consideration as the tools for the forest planning within the land management frame; fostering of the planning of the fight against forest fires, proposing the establishment of danger zones for fires and the compulsory formulation of a defence plan in each danger area; the mandatory restoration of the burnt areas and the prohibition within 30 years of changing the forest use of a burnt land into other use; economic incentives for the sustainable forest management for the private owners and local entities, depending on the existence of management tools. In short, the approval of the new Forest Law meant a strong fostering of the proposals for the amelioration of the institutional and participation tools for the implementation of the actions to combat desertification included in the National Action Programme.

Within the sector of the water resources management and after the deep overhaul resulting of the Water Law improvement in the year 2001, in 2003 the Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Union establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy was incorporated within the Spanish law. According to the

directive, the revision of the Basin Hydrological Plans (approved since 1998) is mandatory. This is a great opportunity to count on management tools that could and should integrate actions related with the protection of the environment, the spatial development and the management and protection of coast and water. Such revision will go through an important public participation process.

iii) Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements;

The National Action Programme, as stated in the previous Report and asseverate in this document too, is the integration tool of a certain set of measures most of which are the main object of already existing policies, programmes and plans. This is the reason why no specific budget is proposed. The funds for the implementation of the NAP come from the several financing lines linked with the actions included in the Programme that are already open. The NAP's duty is to promote the increase of the financial support given to the most interesting measures and to foster the allocation of funds to the most affected zones.

The Report comprises the investments envisaged for this period in the most important programmes and measures either linked with combating desertification or specifically devoted to desertification. The average annual investment regarding desertification actions for the period 2002-2006 has been increased in comparison to former periods.

iv) Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies;

The Ministry of the Environment has been now and then developing most of the national planning in those key thematic topics most compelling for combating desertification in Spain. The tools are the several plans, programmes and strategies worked out in collaboration with the appropriate Ministries or the Autonomous Communities in order to observe the current environmental legislation, the agreements between the several Institutions and Public Administrations and the international environmental conventions. Other connected plans are developed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Ministry of Education and Science.

Former reports established the links and synergies and the high degree of consistency existing between the principles and actions fostered by the NAP and the other strategic and planning frameworks also involved in combating desertification. This reports highlights the actions or events that has taken place regarding the aforementioned plans as well as the progresses concerning the NAP application. The most prominent examples follow:

In 2004, a new programme for the establishment of improving strategies for the sustainable development in Spain started, giving more importance to the collaboration, cooperation and the participation of the remain Public Administrations, Autonomous Communities and Local Administrations. In 2005 the Sustainable Observatory in Spain was created.

In February 2004, the National Climate Council approves the Spanish Strategy of Fight against Weather Change. This document is the starting point for the development of the action plans for fighting against the causes and effects of the climate change. It includes some encouraging actions focussed on the increase of forest area and preventing forest fires.

In July 2002 the Spanish Forest Plan (PFE) was approved. Many of the comprised actions follow completely the measures for combating desertification in the forest sector proposed by the NAP. Among other actions, the PFE proposes the reforestation of 3,8 million hectares, which will also mean the sequestration of over 60 million tons of Carbon along the 30 years of implementation envisaged (2002-2032).

The water management policy has tighten its links with the fight against desertification and drought and is now clearly oriented towards the rationalisation of demand against the increase of the supply capacity. Spain is now changing the concept of drought, which for the time being was considered as a cyclical or sporadic problem resulting from the irregular climate being the emergency solutions the only possible answer. Currently, drought is treated as a structural problem to be combated via management based strategies, mainly consisting in the integrated planning of all these scenes.

v) Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought;

The 6th epigraph comprises a synopsis of the measures taken within the sectors most related with desertification, that is, the rural development and agrarian sector and the forest and water resources management fields. Obviously such measures are integrated within the specific set of measures and lines of action proposed by the National Action Programme, a summary of which follows:

- *Integration of the environmental considerations in the price and market policies*, on the coordinated elaboration between several State Bodies of the regulation for the setting of the agri-environmental requirements for granting PAC aid (cross-compliance). Nowadays Spain has a complete set of requirements and practices, most of which are claimed as preventive measures of the desertification triggering processes.
- Strengthening of the *agri-environmental measures programme*, considered one of the most effective tools in combating desertification within the agrarian sector. Most of this programme's measures are actions focussed directly on the prevention and mitigation of land degradation processes, such as the "Combat against desertification in fragile ecosystems", which comprises many of the practices of the so called "Conservation Agriculture". The agro-environmental measures programme covers more than 2 million hectares.
- *Afforestation of agricultural land Programme*, obtained extremely positive results due to the incentives offered, especially in the following cases: afforestation of fallow land, the possible reforestation of two rather frequent Mediterranean situations such as marginal zones unsuitable for agriculture or ligneous crops in step slope areas and, finally, the forestation of those scarce vegetation areas classified as "waste lands or pastures", which are sometimes the object of shifting cultivations.

More than 550,000 ha. were forested since the programme started, 160,000 ha. of which were reforested between 2000 and 2004

- *Restoration of vegetation cover and increase of the wooded area*, using tools such as the National Soil Erosion Inventory and the implementation of the “National Plan of Priority Actions related to Forest-Hydrological Restoration, erosion control and defence against desertification”
- *Sustainable forest management*, through the fostering of forest management projects and forest improvement oriented silviculture as well as the creation of a new planning tool, the Plans for the Management of Forest Resources.
- *The fight against forest fires*, through the increasing resource endowments for the prevention and extinction of forest fires by means of preventive silviculture, awareness-raising campaigns and increment of the ground and aerial resources for extinction and monitoring.
- *Forest defence and protection*: against pests, diseases and damage resulting from adverse weather events, such as drought.
- The so called National Basin Bodies developed the *Special Action Plans for danger situations and possible drought* and an early warning global system of hydrological indicators.
- Creation of the *National Drought Observatory (ONS)* at both the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food’s request, in order to comprise every Spanish water administration for setting up a Centre of knowledge, early warning, mitigation and monitoring of the drought’s national effects.
- Integration of the *groundwater management and protection* as a key point within the hydrological planning. Consequently, the elaboration of a Groundwater Action Plan is stipulated for every basin, in order to allow the sustainable use of the resources and include programmes focussed on the improvement of the hydrogeological knowledge and the management and protection of aquifers and groundwater.
- Developing actions included in the *National Irrigation Plans (PNR)* framed within some guidelines that incorporate the environmental requirements in land and water management in order to avoid their degradation, the recovery of aquifers and the reduction of desertification processes. An Environmental Monitoring Programme of the irrigation has also been designed including a plan for surveying the effects on the environment of the actions planned in the PNR as well as the adaptation of the implemented corrective measures.

vi) Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment;

Several Spanish tools are aimed at the inventory, evaluation and monitoring of the areas affected by desertification. The General Directorate for Biodiversity is developing the following which, among others, are included in the Monitoring System proposed by the NAP.

- *National Soil Erosion Inventory (INES) 2002-2012*. These have already been published for 15 out of the 50 Spanish provinces and 8 more are currently being implemented in coordination with the National Forest Inventory.
- *Soil Maps of the LUCDEME Project (Combating Desertification in the Mediterranean)* 70,500 km² are already mapped (13.93% of the national territory) and the objective is to cover all the Spanish provinces affected by

desertification. A digital edition of the Soil Map is already running. Several Universities and the Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC) are involved in this Project.

- *Experimental Stations Network for the Assessment and Monitoring of the Erosion and Desertification (Red RESEL)* The Network started in 1995 and integrates over 40 stations. The RESEL network obtains long term information on desertification systematically in the most representative places of the desertification landscapes mainly in the Mediterranean basin. In 2005 the organisation and homogenisation of the obtained data and results begun, meaning to make them suitable to be used in the works on monitoring, assessment and control of the erosion and degradation of soil, as well as in the planning and implementation of the forest-hydrological restoration works.
- *Setting up a desertification indicators system in Spain.* In 2002 the General Directorate for Biodiversity started the so-called “Identification of desertification indicators in Spain”. The main objective of this initiative was the beginning of the implementation of the set of desertification indicators identified as useful for fulfilling the necessities identified in the framework of the several ongoing national and international work strands.

In addition, Spanish Researchers lead the European Project DeSurvey (A surveillance system for assessing and monitoring desertification) a meaningful international initiative on the assessment and monitoring of desertification.

vii) Access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how;

The Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECI) promotes the scientific and technical training among many of the actions developed by its Araucaria Programme. Within this framework and in collaboration with the General Directorate for Biodiversity of the Ministry of the Environment, the “International Course on Forest – Hydrological Restoration, Erosion Control and defence against desertification” has been organised in Spain annually. This course, which was held in 2006 for the thirteenth occasion, is aimed at Latin American professionals (20 granted participants is the average of attendance) practising management and forest-hydrological restoration of basins works. A related initiative started in 2001, consisting of organising such courses in Latin America, in the AECI’s Iberoamerican Training Centres, and so the “Interactive Course on combating densification” has already been held on several occasions. Furthermore, in 2003 the “Workshop on the Forest role as a Defence against Desertification and Biodiversity Reserve” was launched with the objective to monitor the results of this technology transfer initiative and counting on the attendance of the previous courses participants for an interchange of the obtained results after putting into practice the acquired knowledge.