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Syria

ير الوطني السوري لمتابعة حالة تنفيذ اتفاقية  
الأمم المتحدة لمكافحة التصحر

## Syrian National Report On UNCCD Implementation

April /2002

## تقديم

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## **SUMMARY**

### **1-INTRODUCTION:**

Syrian Arab Republic is located in the Eastern Mediterranean zone, whose area is 180179.71 Km<sup>2</sup> with a population density estimated with 93.4 /Km<sup>2</sup>. The territories in which the rain average is less than 200 mm/year compose about 55% of its area. This makes its soil fragile possible to be exposed to quick collapse. Due to the increasing pressures on the natural resources in the past few decades among of which is the soil, the phenomena of desertification and the lands deterioration appeared in different forms such as: The wind erosion in AL-Badia and water erosion in the areas of high averages as a result of the collapse of the plant cover and salinity of lands as a result of the use of the traditional irrigation methods as the area of the degraded lands in Syria reaches to 18% of the total area.

In support of the hard and continuous efforts to stop the degradation of lands and to put an end for the phenomena of desertification and to avoid their negative effects and depending on the principle of participation and cooperation with the international society, Syria certified the International Convention to Combat Desertification in 1997 and it works to execute its obligation for that.

What will be presented in this report which was prepared by the Directorate of Lands at the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs (MSEA), and in cooperation with the concerned Ministries, Institutions, popular organizations and vocational syndicates and in support from the Secretariat of the International Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), is a summarized brief for the efforts paid and the arrangements taken to execute the Convention in addition to the stages of its progress.

## **2- PLANS, STRATEGIES AND POLICIES OF THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONCERNING COMBAT DESERTIFICATION**

- The National Plans and Strategies:

### **Plans of Development:**

The programs of combat desertification and environment conservation were included in the plans of economical and social development for the periods of (1991-1995) – (1996-2000) and the ninth development plan of (2001 – 2005) which is now under discussion in the Prime Ministers Council. The primary aim concentrated by this plan is to get out of the traditional view of irrigation for composing a full program for developing AL-Badia, administration of pastures and increasing the services availed to the population communities, re-classifying the forestry zones and their environmental divisions to invest them economically, to support the governmental systems and to fight fires.

The plan concentrated on the consolidation of the current projects in addition to composing and execution of several new projects aiming to combat desertification and improving the living level of the rural societies. One the most important of these projects is: AL-Badia Development Project that includes several activities among of which are:

- Performing the environmental surveys for the natural resources.
- Biodiversity Conservation.
- Reclamation the lands effected by salinity.
- Construction of a network for the aerial meteorology stations.
- Establishing a permanent environmental meteorology station in the different Syrian regions.

### **A- THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL WORK:**

The primary frame for a National Environmental Strategy was prepared in 1995 and it included the national environmental plan in addition to the programs of environment on the level of the water basins in the country. Currently, this strategy is under modernization

to present it to the National Environment Conference suggested to be held during 2002 in Damascus. Among the environmental national directions included in the plan are:

- Stopping land degradation and combat desertification.
- To rationalize the use of the water resources quantitatively and qualitatively.
- To improve the environmental specific characteristics in the rural regions.
- To decrease the harmful effects of the pollution phenomena on the public health.
- To preserve the cultural and natural resources.

### **C- THE NATIONAL AGENDA OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY (SCHEDULE OF WORKS OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY):**

A mechanism was prepared to execute and follow up the program of the agenda (21) by the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs. The total aim of the mechanism is to encourage and improve the integration between the environmental and developmental affairs on a national range with the goal of realizing the sustainable development.

### **D- CONVENTION OF BIO-DIVERSITY COSERVATION:**

Syria certified the convention in 1995 and established a unit for the bio-diversity at the Ministry of Environment being the focal point for the convention .A national study for the bio-diversity was prepared in 2000. Currently, a national strategy for the bio-diversity is under preparation.

### **E- THE AGRICULTURAL POLICIES:**

It aims to conserve the natural resources and invest them in a way leading to improve the economical and social development. The most important objective of it is to stop soil degradation and combat desertification for the sustainable development.

### **F- PROGRAM OF NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION:**

The program was prepared in 1995 by a mutual effort between the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs and the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) and in

cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform and all concerned departments to combat desertification. The objectives of the program included the application of what was agreed upon in the International Convention to Combat Desertification. The program included 33 urgent, medium and long-term projects.

### **3- THE INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE CONVENTION: (THE LEGISLATIVE OR INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS OR ARRANGEMENTS COP5)**

Several ministries and institutions work directly or indirectly in combat desertification and draught mitigation. They are:

#### **\* MINISTRY OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS:**

- It works to coordinate the efforts in all issues concerning environment protection including combat desertification.
- To put an integrated policy to combat desertification, protecting it and drought mitigation.
- To include the concept of environment preservation and combat desertification in the teaching courses on the different levels.
- To raise the awareness towards combat desertification.

The Directorate of Lands at the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs plays the role of the National Coordination body in all affairs connected with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification including the project of the National Plan to Combat Desertification.

#### **\* MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRARIAN REFORM:**

It is the main department which executes several projects related to combat desertification and natural resources conservation as soil, plant cover, establishment of protected areas, pasture plantation and providing water for the inhabitants of AL-Badia and their cattle.

#### **\* MINISTRY OF IRRIGATION:**

- It performs several activities in the field of combat desertification as to study the water resources, follow up their level, develop them, protect them and to prohibit their pollution.
- To put the plans, duties and programs concerning water according to the priorities imposed and executing them.
- Lands Reclamation.
- It hosts the TPN4 of the convention.

**\* MINISTRY OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION:**

The followings are among its activities:

- To establish the green bands around cities and villages.
- To prohibit the pollution of the water resources and controlling them.
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**\* MINISTRY OF HOUSING:**

It plans the projects of housing as it takes into consideration the perseverance of the fertile agricultural lands. It prepared a legislative text to amend the law No. 44 for 1960 concerning the stopping of the creeping of the random building expansion against the agricultural lands and to expand in re-using the sewerage water after their treatment.

**\* MINISTRY OF INFORMATION:**

The Ministry of Information plays a great role in the promotion of awareness of the importance of combat desertification and to avoid the disasters of drought through means of media programs and the information bulletins.

**\* THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND RESEARCH CENTERS:**

They include universities, higher and intermediate institutes and scientific research centers. All of them are participating in the duties of:

- Preparation of qualified technical cadres to work in the issues connected with the environment protection in general.
- Planning, execution and administration of the scientific researches specialized in the environment protection and combat desertification.
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- Inclusion the environmental concepts and natural resources conservation especially the soil in the educational courses beginning from the elementary stage till the university stage.

**\* THE POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS:**

- **PEASANTS UNION:**

It is a large non-governmental organization working in the field of combat desertification through implementing several activities such as awareness days, protection of AL-Badia region and plantation of the shrubs and pasture seeds.

- **YOUTH UNION:**

It is an organization working vastly in the field of environment protection, combat desertification and expansion the area of the green zone.

- **WOMEN'S UNION:**

It is a popular organization interested in the woman issues and strengthening her active role in environment protection and combat desertification. The union organized awareness days for women in several counties of Syria about the importance of application and execution of the International Convention for Combat Desertification.

#### **4- THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN SUPPORT OF THE PREPERATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PROGRAMME. (PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES INVOLVING CIVIL SOCIETY NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITY- BASED ORGANIZATIONS COP5):**

**-On the national level:** the Ministries and concerned departments participate in the committees specialized with the combat desertification such as the National Committee for Combat Desertification and both Technical and Steering Committees for the project of the National Action Program to Combat Desertification in Syria in addition to include the concept of the environmental dimension in the policies of several ministries in the government especially in the programs of education in its different stages .

**-On the Arabic level:** Syria is considered an active member in the Steering Committee of Combat Desertification Program, increasing the area of green zone and the environmental support of AL-Badia related to the Arab League .It cooperates with the Arab Organizations concerned with the problems of desertification, soil degradation and agricultural development such as the Arabic Center

for the Studies in Arid Zones and dry Lands (ACSAD) and the Arabic Organization for Agricultural Development.

- **On the sub- regional level:** Syria hosted the first regional meeting for Western Asia which resulted to accredit the water resources network for Western Asia as the International Center for Agricultural Researches in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), to facilitate and run their matters and the network of the Administration of the Plant Cover for the Western Asia countries which matters are coordinated by ACSAD, with the understanding that the centers of both ACSAD and ICARDA are located in the Syrian Arab Republic .
- **On the regional level:** Syria hosted and supported the fourth Asian Thematic Network for Water Resources Management for Agricultural Purposes in the arid and semi-arid Zones TPN4. It is decided that it will be launched in July 2002. Syria participated in the other Asian networks. Currently, the arrangements to host the Asian meeting for the coordinators of the United Nations Convention for Combat of Desertification in Asia in Damascus are under preparation.
- **On the international level:** Syria is committed to the application of the articles of UNCCD through the execution of several projects specially in combat desertification and it performed the National Plan to Combat Desertification, in addition to its cooperation with the International organizations and participation in the international conferences related to combat desertification and their committees.

#### **5- THE MEASURES TAKEN OR PLANNED IN THE FRAME OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAM (MEASURES FOR REHABILITATION OF DEGRADED LAND AND FOR EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS FOR MITIGATION THE EFFECTS OF DROUGHT COP5):**

Several arrangements were taken in the frame of the national work. The primary concern all of them was combat desertification such as application of legislations (laws of forestry – law of prohibition of cultivation – law of prohibition of wild hunting).

Several projects were executed and some of them are still under execution in order to stop land degradation and to drought mitigation as the project of AL-Badia development which includes in some of its activities: the construction of the pasture nurseries and making protected zones, the project of sand dune fixation and the project of forestry trees plantation, in addition to the projects of agricultural development in the different zones. This is from the agricultural aspect.

- In the aspect of irrigation, the country was divided into seven water basins in which the water resources were identified and the necessary plans were put in them to rationalize consummation of water as to keep it from exhaustion and pollution.

Among the projects executed are the projects of Integrated Management of Water, the project of Management of Demand for the non-traditional water resources in addition to the activities of erecting the dams and lands reclamation.

Environmentally, preparation was made for the National Plan to Combat Desertification in Syria.

Among the other procedures are to save (40) Billion Syrian Pounds to convert the traditional irrigation methods into the modern irrigation ones, construction of AL-Badia and combat desertification institutes and including all environmental concepts, among of which are the combat desertification and lands degradation, into the education courses.

The legislative and executive procedures all aiming to preserve the natural resources and investing them in a way realizing the principle of the sustainable development.

#### **6- FINANCIAL ALLOCATIONS:(RESOURCES OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FINANCING AND COOPERATION INCLUDING THE AGREEMENTS OF PARTNERSHIP COP5) :**

The government indicated to its obligation to provide the financial support to the projects directed to combat desertification and development of the sustainable existence, exploitation and management of the natural resources. It contributed in the performance of the objects of these projects through the full national financing with large amounts indicated to in the in the report and by the joint financing with the UNDP program or by loans from other financing resources.

By that, we see the range of the interest paid government from the side of financing the projects nationally and the value of the efforts paid for desertification combat despite of the various difficulties, which are necessary to overcome such as: Shortage of the financial resources and the low level of the public awareness towards the issues of desertification with the need to develop the national experiences.

**7- A REVIEW OF THE BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS UTILIZED TO MEASURE PROGRESS AND AN ASSESSMENT THEREOF; (ACCESS THE AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES, PARTICULARLY AFFECTED DEVELOPING COUNTRY PARTIES APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY, KNOWLEDGE AND KNOW-HOW COP5)**

The extinction of many wild settling animals and birds or their rarity and the abatement of some green areas, all these form indications on the spreading of the phenomena of desertification.

This matter obliged the government to execute a number of activities special with the desertification combat such as re-qualifying the pasture lands and establishment of a protected areas for the wild life in the Syrian AL-Badia and others of the activities which composed in their total signs and indicators for evaluation in general and particularly to observe the phenomena of desertification.

We must get benefit from the results of the experiments and procedures executed for obtaining indicators assisting in the definition and diagnosis of the phenomena of desertification as accrediting the modern techniques of irrigation, the crop rotation, decrease of the ratio of the burned areas of the forests as a result of the projects of protection of the forests and consequently the decrease of the ratio of the lands deterioration.

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- تعمل المنظمة على نحو أمية المرأة ورفع مستوى الوعي الصحي والبيئي والثقافي لديها من خلال الدورات والندوات المستمرة التي تقيمها.
- رفع مستوى الدخل لديها عبر المشاريع التنموية الصغيرة المدرة للدخل والتي تديرها النساء ومنها مشروع إرشاد المرأة الريفية ومشروع تربية النحل.
- اهتمت المنظمة بقضايا البيئة ووجهت مزيداً من جهودها تجاه توعية المرأة والأسرة للاهتمام بالبيئة من خلال:
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مع احتفاظ المنظمة بعضوية العديد من اللجان البيئية واللجان الأخرى في الجهات الحكومية ذات الصلة بتنمية المرأة والبيئة. كما تم تنفيذ وقد نظم مجموعة من النشاطات الخاصة بمكافحة التصحر من خلال مشروع خطة العمل الوطني الذي تنفذه وزارة الدولة لشؤون البيئة. UNCCD (الاتحاد محاضرات حول اتفاقية الأمم المتحدة لمكافحة التصحر )

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