

**Decision 21/COP.4**

Report on the Third Round Table of Parliamentarians

*The Conference of the Parties,*

*Having heard the presentation of the Declaration of Members of Parliament regarding the process of implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, made by Mr. Joachim Tappe reporting on the outcome of the Third Round Table of Parliamentarians, which took place at Bonn on 12 and 13 December 2000, and in which 34 parliamentarians from 20 countries participated,*

1. *Takes note with appreciation of the Declaration;*
2. *Decides to include the Declaration as an annex to the report of the Conference of the Parties on its fourth session.*

*12th Plenary  
22 December 2000*

Annex

**Declaration by Members of Parliament**

***Third Round Table of Members of Parliament  
Bonn, from 12 to 13 December 2000 in parallel with the UNCCD-COP IV***

**The support of members of parliament for the strengthening of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the identification of domestic revenue-neutral funding sources and the enhancement of technical and financial assistance to the countries most affected by desertification is expressed below.**

I. We, the members of parliament meeting at Bonn, Germany, from 12 to 13 December 2000, for the third Round Table at the invitation of the Convention secretariat and the German Federal Bundestag, with the full support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in the context of the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa,

reiterate the declaration we adopted at Dakar, Senegal, and at Recife, Brazil, on our role as members of parliaments in the implementation of the Convention, and being greatly concerned with the lack of progress in combating of desertification worldwide,

We declare that:

1. We are conscious that approximately 15 per cent of the world's population and 25 per cent of the total land area of the Earth are directly affected by land degradation and desertification processes. We share fully the founding premise of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, according to which sustainable development cannot be attained unless: (a) it is clearly oriented towards people, addresses the interests of affected populations and has as one of its main objectives the alleviation of poverty; (b) it fully involves affected populations and local communities in the decision-making process as well as in the implementation of measures to protect the environment, to improve the management of land and water resources and to overcome the main causes of land degradation and desertification;
2. We are greatly concerned that losses of productivity implied by desertification processes severely undermine sustainable economic growth, threaten food security and exacerbate susceptibility to famine, which are often accompanied by large-scale movements of displaced people. The failure of marginally productive land to cope with population pressures, together with increasingly variable climates, including recurrent drought, may already have displaced as many as 25 million people worldwide from their land and constituted a source of

inter-communal conflict in many parts of the world. Additionally, we are equally concerned that women and children, the socially and economically weak, tend to be hit hardest by the serious consequences of desertification;

3. We are deeply concerned with the gravity of the situation in different regions of the world, such as in Africa, a continent where deserts or arid zones constitute two thirds of the total land area and where 73 per cent of the arid land is already seriously or moderately degraded; in Asia where approximately 71 per cent of the Continent's arid lands are severely degraded; in Latin America and the Caribbean, where nearly three quarters of the arid land, representing almost one fourth of the region, is moderately or severely degraded; the Mediterranean, where almost two thirds of the arid land is severely degraded, and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where from 40 to 80 per cent of the arid land is severely degraded.

II. Conscious of the economic losses that result from decreasing the productive capacity of land resources and convinced that preventing further land degradation and desertification is more cost effective than remedying its environmental, social and economic consequences, we as members of parliament acknowledge that such consequences fall hardest on developing countries, that remediation programmes compete for scant financial resources and that, at the same time, these countries in fulfilling their international agreements have to divert considerable resources for debt repayment and servicing. We, therefore:

1. Urge the international community to seriously consider the ordeal and marginalization of heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and urge it to implement appropriate relief measures, particularly in those countries seriously affected by drought and desertification;
2. Reaffirm the importance of ensuring access to appropriate financial resources, including new and additional ones, for affected developing countries in order to allow them to fully deliver the obligation contracted under the UNCCD;
3. Welcome in this regard the decision taken by the Council of the Global Environmental facility (GEF) during its meeting held in Washington D.C. from 1 to 3 November 2000, by which it requested the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the GEF to explore the best options to strengthen the support of the GEF to affected developing countries, particularly in Africa, in their process of implementation of UNCCD;
4. Urge the international community, and particularly the executive branches of Parties to take all necessary measures for the establishment of a new window within the GEF for the specific purpose of financing the incremental costs of the UNCCD implementation;
5. Call for a concerted effort by bodies of the UN System, regional development banks, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to enhance desertification monitoring systems as a support for sustainable agricultural policies, better water resource and forest management, land use planning, as well as urban planning;

6. Invite executive branches of government in developing countries to consider the formulation of revenue-neutral national policies to counter further land degradation and desertification. These policies should be justified on the basis of avoidance of future costs resulting from biodiversity loss, adverse effects of climate change, further encroachment of deserts into arable land areas, increased displacement of people and refugee flows, and amplified potential for conflicts within poor countries and between neighbouring countries;
7. Urge international organizations and developed countries to increase assistance to developing countries in the implementation of their own domestic policies in combating desertification. These policies should fully integrate the adverse consequences of land degradation and desertification into economic, social, agricultural and land planning; and
8. Fully support all initiatives of agencies, donor countries and civil society to mobilise new and additional financial resources to implement the Convention to Combat Desertification as a concrete tool for ensuring the promotion of sustainable development in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid ecosystems.

III. In affirming our commitment, as members of parliaments, to contribute fully to the implementation of the Convention, we agree to initiate or continue serious efforts in the national parliaments of developed countries to strengthen technical and financial assistance to combat desertification in the most affected and poorest countries, attaching central importance to support for their own self-help efforts. We also commit ourselves:

1. To convene an annual special event, the "International Day to Combat Desertification", in our parliaments on 17 June to raise awareness on the implementation of the Convention and to support such initiatives as commemorative postal stamps, among others;
2. To strengthen national initiatives to enhance the fight against desertification;
3. To advocate increased financial and technical support from national budgets to combat desertification and land degradation;
4. To submit, where necessary, to the executive branches of governments a proposal for the inclusion in school curricula of disciplines focusing on the protection of the environment and of natural resources, particularly land and water resources, so as to make combating erosion and desertification a priority for our countries, as well as for our regional and subregional organizations;

IV. We note those countries that have ratified the Convention and urge those that have not yet ratified it to do so as soon as possible as a concrete step towards a concerted effort to combat desertification.

1. Moreover, we support the active participation of all parliaments in the implementation of the Convention including, where necessary, the introduction, strengthening and implementation of legislation relating

to the fight against desertification and the protection and preservation of ecosystems in countries affected;

2. In doing so, we urge Parliaments and the international community to address desertification not only as a serious environmental and/or ecological problem, but also as a serious hindrance to development with severe long-term global economic, social and political consequences.

V. In highlighting the fundamental role that technical assistance, enhanced environmental monitoring and capacity building play in the challenge to achieve sustainable development, we members of parliament, urge donor agencies and countries to consider strengthening their support for the following measures, building upon self-help efforts to be made by developing countries:

1. Awareness raising on production and consumption patterns and their impact on the land;
2. Water and river basin management;
3. Improvement of technical land and water management skills;
4. Sustainable use of scarce natural resources including renewable sources of energy;
5. Promotion of specific research on the causes and negative effects of desertification;
6. Transfer and adaptation of environmentally sound technologies for better land and natural resource management, and the effective use of modern and safe bio-technologies to disseminate drought-resistant species;
7. Use of state-of-the-art information technologies such as geographic information systems, the rational and integrated management of river basins, and the protection, promotion and utilization of traditional and site-specific technological knowledge and practices;
8. Reforestation and forest conservation to combat desertification caused by drought as well as by deforestation due to population increase, overgrazing, illegal and excessive logging, bush and forest fires, etc;
9. Agricultural development, for example, by establishing sustainable irrigation facilities to secure stable water supplies;
10. Capacity building such as training sessions and despatch of experts to enhance the scientific and technical capacity, taking into consideration the special role of women, for combating desertification;
11. Promotion of deeper dialogue with and the active participation of the local community so that aid programmes can be tailored to local conditions;
12. Closer collaboration with non-governmental and community-based organizations and the civil society, which carry out grassroots aid activities and play an important role in combating desertification.

VI. We commit to establish an effective follow-up mechanism for the purpose of overseeing and ensuring the systematic monitoring of the implementation of the decisions we have taken and decide:

1. To underline the importance of operationalizing a viable inter-sessional mechanism through an open-ended high-level forum of members of parliaments composed of a chairperson, a rapporteur and five vice-chairpersons, with at least one coming from each of the following regional groups: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Eastern Europe and North America.
2. To request, in this regard, the Convention secretariat, in consultation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union to prepare a concrete proposal for the functioning of the high-level forum and to circulate it among members of parliament involved in previous round tables, for response not later than 31 May 2001, with a view of approving it before the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention.
3. To solicit the Convention secretariat to post and update information on round table discussions on the UNCCD Web site;
4. To request all presiding officers to take steps to publicise the present declaration by placing it on the agenda of their national parliaments or by bringing it to the attention of all members of their parliament in some other appropriate way.

VII. We, members of parliament, reiterate our urgent appeal:

1. To all participants in civil society, such as financial institutions, experts in the fields of finance, industry, commerce, sports, the media and the arts, to support the mobilisation of financial resources for the fight against desertification, in particular in those developing countries most seriously affected by desertification, erosion and drought;
2. To academic institutions, the scientific community and research centres for their support in the various tasks of implementing the Convention in the affected countries with particular regard to the needs of developing countries;
3. To the Inter-Parliamentary Union to give the widest possible publicity to this Declaration and, particularly, to ensure that it be transmitted to all national parliaments for their attention and implementation.

VIII. Finally, we request the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, with the assistance of the Inter-Parliamentary Union:

1. To provide technical support to the high-level forum of members of parliament in its role of monitoring action carried out by governments, and to mobilise additional resources for the servicing of the high-level forum;

2. To organize the next round table of members of parliaments in conjunction with the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention;
3. To take follow-up action on the decisions of the present round table and to develop strategies in order to achieve universal awareness of the declarations and progress reports of the high-level forum of members of parliament.