

ICCD/COP(5)/CRP.2
4 October 2001

ENGLISH ONLY

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Fifth session
Geneva, 1-12 October 2001

SPECIAL SEGMENT OF THE COP 5

**INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON REDUCING POVERTY THROUGH TIMELY
AND EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD)**

**EU CONTRIBUTION FOR THE INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE
MONDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2001, 13.00 - 15.00 h**

DESERTIFICATION AND LAND USE

Note by the secretariat

Attached herewith, at the request of the Presidency of the European Union, is a document on the above-mentioned subject, which is reproduced in the language in which it was received by the Convention secretariat.

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DESERTIFICATION AND LAND USE

The Challenge

Eradication of poverty and sustainable land use

The desertification convention is poverty eradication oriented. It seeks sustainable development. The role of land use is decisive as a resource base for food security.

The issue of land use has lead to a situation with constant uncertainty about land rights for dryland inhabitants. The challenge for sustainability is to find land use forms that build on existing knowledge and secured long-term user rights.

Key issues for discussion

1. *How can equitable access to drylands be achieved and sustained?* For instance: What constraints can be (need to be) placed on settlement in, and use of, drylands? How are the interests of various stakeholders accounted for? Can customary use rights be balanced with modern patterns of tenure legislation? Is good governance capable of balancing interests in a sustainable manner?

2. *What kind of developing country policies are needed to achieve equitable and sustainable management of drylands?* For instance: What use rights can be associated with land rights in pasture, water, wildlife, landscape/tourism, timber and firewood, energy, mining? When is a principle of subsidiarity applicable? Are corporate land use forms compatible with society's needs for economic security for loans and investment? What are the constraints and capacity of community-based use? What collaborative mechanisms are needed to be promoted among poor people in order to generate reasonable productivity?

3. *How can long-term reliability be secured for vulnerable social groups?* For instance: Can the general association between poverty and life in drylands be scrutinised? How can the situation of socially vulnerable categories (women, children, poor strata) be improved through policy formation? In what way can environmental conventions and processes work together to improve conditions for these categories?

4. *What should the international community do to create and enhance policy framework?* How could donors support efforts of affected countries in their policies on sustainable land management?

Good governance

Desertification and land degradation impact profoundly upon the livelihoods of many millions of poor and vulnerable households living in affected areas. It has multiple and interrelated causes, including policy, legal and institutional arrangements which exacerbate the unsustainable use of fragile environments. Addressing this problem—a problem which global climate change will only aggravate—requires a focus on implementing measures which provide an enabling framework for sustainable and equitable land use.

Uncertain ownership conditions cause rapid deterioration of lands when the occupier tries to squeeze out a maximum during a short period. This observation is valid also for drylands, although being complicated where extensive livestock management is practised. Resource care under range conditions becomes oriented towards livestock and not towards land. In contrast to farmers, pastoralists hold the view that land access is not the sole basis for food security in drylands. Their security perspective is connected with the family enterprise of pastoral production. It involves balancing land use, livestock production and local social institutions.

The challenge is to place land use into its socio-political frame. Openness and long-term solutions are in the interest of sustainable development also when implications are major changes in land use. Conflicting interests should be recognised and resolved in order to allow for long-term planning. Short-term destructive land use becomes more prevalent. Connections between land use practices and desertification are complex:

1. Desertification is in part a symptom of mal-functioning land use systems. Good governance is required for balancing the interests of different stakeholders, all the way from community level to national level.
2. Customary land use does not have the capacity to meet growing pressures on land in the form of more people, more claims and less availability. Existing local institutions for land use need to be reinforced or supplemented.
3. Political boundaries cut through drylands, calling for regional approaches and international cooperation.
4. Expanding alternative land use patterns, particularly farming, into drylands has brought increased vulnerability into livestock production.
5. Loan security is tied to land and not to livestock. In drylands private investment is commonly made in livestock while pasture access is seen as a public good. New security forms are needed that are not entirely land use based.

Policy formation on land use needs to be pro-active towards sustainable resource use practices, not merely conserving drylands but rather encouraging sustainable systems change. Good governance is called for in order to balance stakeholder interests. Broad ecological awareness-raising and empowerment of civil society in policy-making is important. Planning includes the involvement in market economies and globalisation. Issues that are dryland specific must be taken into consideration in order to launch pro-active policy. Application of the twelve principles of ecosystem approach adopted by COP-6 CBD provide good means to identify above-mentioned problems.