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**CONSIDERATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RELEVANT TO THE UNITED  
NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION**

Note by the secretariat\*

**SUMMARY**

In its decision 8/COP.5, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the Executive Secretary to continue to participate actively in the preparatory process for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), and in the Summit itself, with a view to ensuring that the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) goals and objectives, particularly those relating to poverty eradication and sustainable development, were duly reflected in its outcome, and to report to the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties accordingly. Consistent with that mandate, the Executive Secretary initiated actions concurrently with the WSSD preparatory process, and the Plan of Implementation of the Summit reflects how the mandate given was carried out.

The purpose of the present document is to provide information on the measures taken to ensure that the Summit paid due attention to the goals and objectives of the UNCCD, and to consider the outcome of the WSSD in the context of implementation of the Convention. The document suggests possible follow-up actions to be considered by the Conference of the Parties.

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\* The submission of this document was delayed in order to provide the Conference of the Parties with the most updated information on the matter, notably on the relevant deliberations of the Council of the Global Environment Facility.

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## **I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1. The WSSD, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, was mandated by the General Assembly of the United Nations through resolution 55/199 to serve as the ten-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), with the objective of reinvigorating the global commitment to sustainable development.
2. The UNCCD was negotiated and adopted pursuant to the recommendation by the UNCED, as expressed in chapter 12 of Agenda 21. Consequently, the review undertaken by the WSSD covered the Convention.
3. In its decision 8/COP.5, the COP requested the Executive Secretary to continue to participate actively in the preparatory process for the WSSD, and in the Summit itself, with a view to ensuring that the goals and objectives of the UNCCD, particularly those relating to poverty eradication and sustainable development, were duly reflected in its outcome, and to report to the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties accordingly.
4. The purpose of the present document is to provide information on the measures taken to ensure that the Summit paid due attention to the goals and objectives of the UNCCD, and to consider the outcome of the WSSD in the context of the implementation of the Convention.

## **II. MEASURES TAKEN TO ENHANCE THE ROLE OF THE UNCCD IN THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ITS PREPARATORY PROCESS**

5. In resolution 55/199, the General Assembly of the United Nations invited relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations, including conventions relating to the UNCED, to participate fully in the ten-year review, including in the preparation of reports for submission to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its tenth session and the WSSD, in order to reflect their experience and lessons learned and to provide ideas and proposals for the way forward for further implementation of Agenda 21 in relevant areas.
6. In response to requests received from the respective Task Managers, the secretariat of the UNCCD contributed to the Secretary-General's cluster report on land and agriculture issues covering chapters 10, 12 and 14 of Agenda 21, to the Secretary-General's report on institutional proceedings in the context of Agenda 21, and to other relevant reports of the Secretary-General to the WSSD and its Preparatory Committee, as feasible.
7. Two ministerial and high-level interactive dialogue sessions, "Addressing the poverty-environment nexus through timely and effective implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification", were held during the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 5).

8. The participants in these sessions identified several key aspects for successful implementation of the UNCCD, which included: the inextricable linkage between poverty and desertification, and thus the importance of integrating the UNCCD objectives into poverty reduction strategies and other sustainable development frameworks, the provision of adequate financing and support for technology transfer as well as the effective use of existing resources, the triggering of resource and income generation for local populations, the development of practical indicators, environmental education, strengthening of the enabling environment, the empowering of local populations, and recognizing the key role of civil society in implementation of the Convention.

9. By decision 8/COP.5, the COP decided to submit to the WSSD for consideration, the Chairman's summary of the Ministerial and High-Level Interactive Dialogue sessions held during COP 5. The COP also invited the Executive Secretary to submit to the WSSD for consideration, decision 3/COP.5, which contained the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group for the in-depth review and analysis of reports submitted at the third and fourth sessions of the COP. The COP in this respect referred in particular to the conclusions and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

10. Furthermore, the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs and the secretariat established, in April 2001, as a joint initiative, an independent high-level body, the Panel of Eminent Personalities, to consider the poverty-environment nexus in the context of the implementation of the UNCCD. The Panel met twice and adopted its report at its second meeting, held in Agadez, Niger, at the end of February 2002. The report of the Panel, entitled *UNCCD: a Useful Tool for Sustainable Development and Poverty Alleviation*, highlights the complex relationship between land degradation and poverty, and suggests that implementation of the UNCCD can have a significant positive impact in rural poverty reduction, forced migration and prevention of conflicts over scarce natural resources.

11. The Panel also launched an appeal, "The Agadez Call", calling on the international community to acknowledge the UNCCD as a poverty reduction tool and to foster community-based rural area development programmes. The Call further invited the G8 Summit, which took place in Canada in June 2002, to pay particular attention to fighting desertification and to take appropriate measures to strengthen the UNCCD as a primary tool for cooperation with developing affected countries. The report of the Panel was submitted by the Government of Niger for consideration by the WSSD Preparatory Committee, and was further publicized by the members of the Panel during the fourth meeting of the Preparatory Committee and the Summit

12. At the invitation of the Government of Cape Verde, a Forum on the Implementation of the Convention preparatory to the WSSD was held in Praia, Cape Verde, from 5 to 8 March 2002. The forum was attended by ministers and high-level representatives of those developing country Parties to the UNCCD that have adopted their national action programmes, together with their partners to consider ways to strengthen the timely and efficient implementation of the UNCCD. The participants to the forum adopted a ministerial message which underscored the important role of the fight against desertification in poverty reduction strategies, and urged the international community to provide diligently the necessary resources for a timely implementation of the national action programmes.

### **III. OUTCOME OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RELEVANT TO THE UNCCD**

13. In paragraph 7(l) of the Plan of Implementation of the Summit on Sustainable Development adopted by the Summit, the UNCCD is acknowledged as one of the tools for poverty eradication. In this regard, the Plan of Implementation states the need for action at all levels to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought and floods through such measures as improved use of climate and weather information and forecasts, early warning systems, land and natural resource management, agricultural practices and ecosystem conservation, in order to reverse current trends and minimize degradation of land and water resources, including through the provision of adequate and predictable financial resources to implement the UNCCD.

14. Furthermore, paragraph 41 of the Plan of Implementation states the need for action at all levels to “Strengthen the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, to address causes of desertification and land degradation in order to maintain and restore land, and to address poverty resulting from land degradation. This would include actions at all levels to:

(a) Mobilize adequate and predictable financial resources, transfer of technologies and capacity building at all levels;

(b) Formulate national action programmes to ensure timely and effective implementation of the Convention and its related projects, with the support of the international community, including through decentralized projects at the local level;

(c) Encourage the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification to continue exploring and enhancing synergies, with due regard to their respective mandates, in the elaboration and implementation of plans and strategies under the respective Conventions;

(d) Integrate measures to prevent and combat desertification as well as to mitigate the effects of drought through relevant policies and programmes, such as land, water and forest management, agriculture, rural development, early warning systems, the environment, energy, natural resources, health and education, and poverty eradication and sustainable development strategies;

(e) Provide affordable local access to information to improve monitoring and early warning relating to desertification and drought;

(f) Call on the Second Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to take action on the recommendations of the GEF Council concerning the designation of land degradation (desertification and deforestation) as a focal area of GEF as a means of GEF support for the successful implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification; and consequently, consider making GEF a financial mechanism of the Convention, taking into account the prerogatives and decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, while recognizing the complementary roles of GEF and the Global Mechanism of the Convention in providing and mobilizing resources for the elaboration and implementation of action programmes;

(g) Improve the sustainability of grassland resources through strengthening management and law enforcement and providing financial and technical support by the international community to developing countries.”

15. In addition, several other paragraphs of the Plan of Implementation, in particular paragraph 40 relating to sustainable agriculture, rural development and food security, and paragraph 62 relating to sustainable development for Africa, contain provisions that are closely linked with the implementation of the UNCCD.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

16. The COP may wish to express its appreciation to the World Leaders for their decision to strengthen support for the implementation of the UNCCD in addressing the issue of the availability of substantial and predictable financial resources. This was sought through the recommendation for GEF to become a financial mechanism of the Convention.

17. Parties may also wish to concur with the Johannesburg Summit strategic vision in labelling the UNCCD as a tool at the disposal of the international community for the eradication of poverty. Since one of the Millennium Development Goals is to halve by 2015 the number of people living in abject poverty, the COP may equally wish to consider the UNCCD as an important framework for achieving that objective.

18. Pursuant to Article 1 of the UNCCD, the Plan of Implementation adopted by the WSSD calls for a strengthening of the prevention and/or reduction of land degradation, the rehabilitation of partly degraded land, and the reclamation of desertified land, in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, in order to maintain and restore land and to address poverty resulting from land degradation.

19. Furthermore, pursuant to Article 9 of the Convention, the Plan of Implementation calls for strengthening the preparation, making public and implementing action programmes at the national, subregional and regional levels, as the central elements of the strategy to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

20. In implementing the outcome of the WSSD, the Parties may consider:

- Recognizing the specific fragility and vulnerability of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas and the consequent challenges to achieving sustainable development and the eradication of poverty;
- Resolving to strengthen the provision of financial resources, appropriate technologies and capacity building for the sustainable development of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, and in particular for the formulation and implementation of national, subregional and regional action programmes as the main tools for implementation of the UNCCD;
- Promoting the access of local communities and community-based and non-governmental organizations to financial resources, appropriate technologies and capacity building in order to combat efficiently desertification and mitigate the effects of drought at the local level;
- Inviting affected developing countries which have not yet adopted their national action programmes to accelerate the process of formulation and adoption of their action programmes with a view to finalizing them no later than the end of 2005;
- Emphasizing the primary importance of supporting sustainable development in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas in policies, programmes and strategies relating to rural development and natural resource management.

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