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

Note by the secretariat

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

By its decision 2/COP.6, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to continue to participate in the follow-up to the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), including through relevant sessions of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), and to report accordingly. Consistent with that decision, the Executive Secretary pursued his participation and follow-up activities in the context of the Summit outcome at intergovernmental levels, particularly the General Assembly of the United Nations, the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the CSD and other intergovernmental forums.

The present note has been prepared by the secretariat to assist the COP at its seventh session to review activities undertaken by the Executive Secretary with respect to the follow-up to the WSSD since the sixth session of the COP.

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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 outcomes of the WSSD relevant to the UNCCD were presented by the Executive Secretary to the sixth session of the COP in document ICCD/COP(6)/5. These outcomes included acknowledgement of the UNCCD as one of the tools for poverty eradication, and recognition of the need to carry out action at all levels to strengthen implementation of the UNCCD through, *inter alia*, the mobilization of adequate and predictable financial resources, transfer of technologies and capacity building, formulation of national action programmes, exploration and enhancement of synergies between the three Rio conventions, integration of measures to prevent and combat desertification as well as to mitigate the effects of drought through relevant policies and programmes, provision of affordable local access to information to improve monitoring and early warning relating to desertification and drought, and improvement of the sustainability of grassland resources through strengthening management and law enforcement.

3. At its sixth session, the COP considered the document mentioned above. By its decision 2/COP.6, it *inter alia* welcomed the recognition by the WSSD of the UNCCD as one of the tools for poverty eradication, underlined the importance of the implementation of the Convention for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), urged all development partners, including United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, to make use of the Convention in their strategies to achieve them, welcomed also the call made by the WSSD to strengthen the implementation of the UNCCD to address poverty and resolved, in line with the outcome of the WSSD and with the objectives and obligations as outlined in the general provisions of the UNCCD, to strengthen the implementation of the Convention.

## II. ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN AS A FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOME OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4. In paragraph 7(1) of the Plan of Implementation 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 and 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.

5. At the sixth session of the COP, the Parties welcomed that recognition, underlined the importance of the implementation of the Convention for meeting the MDGs, and urged all development partners to make use of the Convention in their strategies to achieve these goals.

Parties were also encouraged to ensure good linkages between the WSSD follow-up, in particular the CSD process, and the UNCCD.

A. Consideration of the Convention as a poverty eradication tool by the United Nations General Assembly

1. Fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly

6. On 20 October 2003, the Executive Secretary addressed the Second Committee of the General Assembly. In his statement before the Committee, he reported on major developments which had occurred in the process of the Convention with respect to three major intergovernmental conferences, namely the WSSD, the Second Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the sixth session of the COP.

7. The United Nations General Assembly, upon its review of the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Convention, adopted Resolution 58/242 which recognized the strong commitment of the international community, demonstrated at the WSSD and the Second Assembly of the GEF, to make the Facility available as a financial mechanism of the Convention, pursuant to article 21 of the Convention.

8. Reaffirming that the Convention was an important tool for poverty eradication, particularly in Africa, and recognizing the importance of its implementation for meeting the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, the General Assembly urged the United Nations funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions, the donor countries and other development agencies to integrate actions in support of the Convention into their strategies to support the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

2. Fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly

9. The Executive Secretary addressed the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly on 18 October 2004. In introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Convention, the Executive Secretary underscored progress achieved so far, in particular in the aftermath of the WSSD.

10. In Resolution 59/325, the General Assembly reaffirmed that desertification constituted a serious obstacle to sustainable development and contributed to food insecurity, famine and poverty, which are factors that can give rise to social, economic and political tensions including forced migrations and conflicts, and that the Convention was an important tool for poverty eradication.

11. Noting that timely and effective implementation of the Convention would help to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the General Assembly invited all stakeholders, in particular developing countries, to take concrete measures aimed at implementing the Convention as an instrument to achieve objectives of sustainable development. Further urging the United Nations funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions, the donor countries and other development

agencies to integrate actions in support of the Convention into their strategies to support the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, the General Assembly invited the donor community to increase its support to the Convention with a view to bringing greater international attention to bear on the issue of land degradation and desertification.

### 3. Preparation for the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly

12. From 14 to 16 September 2005, the General Assembly will hold a high-level plenary meeting to review progress made in fulfilment of commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. In its resolution 59/235, the General Assembly has invited the Secretary-General to give due consideration to the role and place of the Convention in ongoing work in the context of the preparations for that meeting, including the report of the Millennium Project. As the General Assembly was preparing for the high-level session to review the Millennium Summit for the review of the MDGs, the secretariat of the Convention endeavoured to ensure that the role of this Convention as identified by the WSSD was duly reflected in the preparatory work and the outcome of the General Assembly. In this regard, the General Assembly reiterated the importance of a timely implementation of the Convention which would contribute to meeting MDGs.

#### B. Twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development

13. The secretariat of the Convention participated in the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the CSD held in New York from 19 to 30 April 2004 and from 11 to 22 April 2005 respectively.

14. During the twelfth session of the Commission, on 30 April 2004, the UNCCD, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, the GEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Bank, organized a side-event on the interlinkages between drought, desertification and water. The event was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Luc-Marie Gnacadja, Minister of Environment, Housing and Urban Development of Benin, and Mr. Olav Kjørven, State Secretary of International Development of Norway. The discussion covered various issues, such as Convention synergies, drought management, governance, rural land-use practices, and the integration of drought mitigation into investment planning and science and technology for drought mitigation.

15. At the thirteenth session of the Commission, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD addressed the meeting highlighting water as a subject which should be at the heart of efforts to fight desertification. Among the important actions undertaken in the context of the Convention and consistent with paragraph 40 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the Executive Secretary mentioned the promotion of the integrated management of water resources. He indicated that at the regional level, African, Asian and Latin American and Caribbean countries affected by desertification had named water as one of the six priority areas in their respective regional action programmes and that thematic programme networks on water management had been launched.

C. Follow-up to the WSSD outcome relevant to the Convention in other intergovernmental forums

16. The secretariat of the Convention pursued its mandate to ensure that other major intergovernmental forums integrate desertification, as appropriate, into their activities as they relate to the results of the WSSD.

1. Participation in the International Meeting on Small Island Developing States

17. The UNCCD secretariat participated in the International Meeting on Small Island Developing States held in Mauritius from 10 to 14 January 2005. As a result, the International Meeting agreed that most small island developing States face serious challenges of land degradation due, *inter alia*, to inappropriate land use and poor irrigation management systems. The meeting stated that since the main objective of the Convention was to address land degradation, and considering the designation of the GEF as a financial mechanism of the Convention, small island developing States should fully utilize available GEF resources to develop and implement projects to address land degradation through sustainable land management. In this respect, participants in the Mauritius meeting resolved that every effort had to be made to ensure the full implementation of the Convention.

2. Participation in the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

18. The secretariat also participated in the fifth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) held in New York from 16 to 27 May 2005. Addressing the high-level segment of the Forum, the Executive Secretary underlined the importance of the Convention by acknowledging that its timely and effective implementation would help to achieve the MDG on poverty and hunger.

19. The Executive Secretary stressed that any policy on sustainable forest management must aim at preserving existing forests and ensure that reforestation and afforestation policies were addressed and promoted. He highlighted the nexus between poverty and desertification by mentioning that poverty forces people of the drylands to extract as much as they can from the forest for their survival and livelihoods which ultimately leads to desertification. The Executive Secretary concluded his comments to the Forum by saying that without addressing poverty, which in many instances constitutes the underlying cause of forest loss, all efforts made in sustainable forest management can not yield concrete results.

3. Participation in the Second South Summit of the Group of 77

20. The Second South Summit of the Group of 77, held in Doha, Qatar from 12 to 16 June 2005, also constituted an avenue for reaffirming the importance of the Convention in the WSSD follow-up. The Doha Declaration and the Doha Plan of Action adopted by Heads of State and Government attending the Summit underlined the importance of the Convention and emphasized that it constituted an important tool for hunger and poverty eradication and a means for contributing to attaining the internationally agreed development goals including the MDGs. The Summit urged the international community to make use of the Convention in addressing land degradation and as a tool to assist in addressing, *inter alia*, poverty and hunger.

21. In this regard, the Second South Summit supported the diversification of sources of financing as well as enhanced funding for the implementation of the Convention through the GEF and the Global Mechanism and other possible sources, including the Sustainable Development Foundation. The Summit also encouraged implementation of the platforms for action adopted at the Second Africa/Asia Forum (Niamey, Niger, 1998), and at the second Africa/Latin America and the Caribbean Forum (Bamako, Mali, 2000) in furtherance of the implementation of the Convention.

### **III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

22. The WSSD has advanced the Convention process very significantly. By recognizing that the Convention constitutes an important tool for addressing poverty, the international community resolved to use it to contribute to achieving the MDGs. In this respect, the COP may wish to reiterate its call to the international community in urging development partners to take concrete measures to make use of the Convention in their strategies to achieve the MDGs and to report as appropriate on how they are carrying out that mandate.

23. Furthermore, it may be recalled that at its eleventh session the CSD decided that its multi-year programme of work beyond 2003 would be organized on the basis of seven two-year cycles, with each cycle focusing on selected thematic clusters of issues. For the biennium 2008-2009, it was decided that CSD sessions should focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification. This thematic cluster addresses the core of the Convention. The COP may wish to give preliminary guidance to the secretariat on how to prepare for that major event in the process of the Convention.

24. Likewise, since the next session of the CSD will focus on thematic clusters including energy for sustainable development, the COP may wish to request the secretariat to follow actively deliberations of the Commission with a view to demonstrating that an effective implementation of the Convention constitutes an energy-saving endeavour, particularly in that afforestation and reforestation activities are major components of action programmes.

25. Furthermore, should the international community decide to review the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in 2007, the COP may wish to guide the secretariat on activities preparatory to that event.

26. Finally, since 2006 has been proclaimed by the General Assembly as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, celebration activities should offer avenues by which to emphasize the nexus between desertification and poverty. The COP may wish to invite all stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Convention, and in particular the donor community, to increase their support to the Convention with a view to bringing greater international attention to bear on the inextricable linkage between land degradation, desertification and poverty.

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