



UNITED  
NATIONS



**Convention to Combat  
Desertification**

Distr.  
GENERAL

ICCD/CRIC(3)/2/Add.1  
14 January 2005

ENGLISH  
Original: FRENCH

---

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION  
Third session  
Bonn, 2-11 May 2005  
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda

**REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AND OF  
ITS INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 22,  
PARAGRAPH 2 (a) AND (b), AND ARTICLE 26 OF THE CONVENTION,  
AS WELL AS DECISION 1/COP.5, PARAGRAPH 10**

**REVIEW OF THE REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION BY  
AFFECTED AFRICAN COUNTRY PARTIES, INCLUDING  
ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON EXPERIENCE  
GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREPARATION  
AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION PROGRAMMES**

**Synthesis and preliminary analysis of information contained in  
reports submitted by affected African country parties**

**Note by the secretariat**

## Summary

The process of preparation of the third series of reports follows a participatory approach. African countries transmitted to the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) 48 national reports on the implementation of the Convention, and particularly on the participatory process, and on experience gained and results achieved in the preparation and implementation of action programmes. They include a large number of documents which are updated versions of reports submitted during the second review in 2002. Three countries have submitted reports for the first time since ratifying the Convention.

At the current stage of implementation of the Convention, 10 years after its adoption, most African countries declare their resolve to pursue desertification control activities with greater vigour. Several of them have devised planning frameworks designed to promote desertification control by placing it in the broader context of sustainable development and linking it to issues of decentralization, democratic governance, food security and poverty alleviation.

The general observation that may be made is that while most of the countries of the region have had national action programmes (NAPs) for several years, meaningful progress has not been made with their operational implementation. It is clear that these countries are encountering difficulties in mobilizing the financial resources needed for the implementation of their NAPs. Moreover, integrating the UNCCD into macroeconomic planning poses a major problem.

In order to enhance the impact of field activities, the capabilities of grass-roots communities must be strengthened, so as to give them a clearer perception of the challenges involved in the rational management of natural resources. Currently, most projects under way strive to involve the people concerned both in the design of activities and in their implementation and evaluation. These options make it possible to prepare the ground for placing the activities initiated under these projects on a permanent footing.

In order to facilitate the mobilization of financial, human and material resources, desertification control activities should be integrated more harmoniously and more systematically in national strategies and programmes of cooperation with development partners. Efforts to enhance the mobilization of domestic financial resources in the countries of the region should be founded on awareness-building campaigns focused on the challenges of desertification control.

## CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. GENERAL .....	1 - 9	4
II. OVERVIEW OF REPORTS AND TRENDS OBSERVED .....	10 - 18	5
III. SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THE REPORTS .....	19 - 84	7
A. Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations .....	19 - 29	7
B. Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements .....	30 - 38	8
C. Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusion of partnership agreements .....	39 - 48	9
D. Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies .....	49 - 56	11
E. Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought .....	57 - 66	12
F. Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment ....	67 - 76	14
G. Access by affected country parties, particularly affected developing country parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how .....	77 - 84	15
IV. LESSONS LEARNED .....	85 - 96	16
A. Lessons learned from the process of preparation and implementation of national action programmes .....	85 - 91	16
B. Lessons learned from the system for the presentation of reports .....	92 - 96	17
V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	97 - 105	18
Annex: List of affected African country parties which have submitted reports .....		20

## I. GENERAL

1. Under article 26 of the UNCCD and the relevant decisions of the Conferences of the Parties (COP), in particular decision 11/COP.1, each country which is a party to the Convention must report on the measures which it has taken for the implementation of the Convention. Article 22, paragraph 2 (a) and (b), of the Convention stipulates that the COP must regularly review implementation and facilitate the exchange of information on measures adopted by the parties.

2. In decision 1/COP.5, the Conference of the Parties recommended the establishment of a committee for the review of the implementation of the Convention (CRIC). The key thematic topics for the review up to and including the seventh session of the COP relate to:

- (i) Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations;
- (ii) Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements;
- (iii) Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusion of partnership agreements;
- (iv) Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies;
- (v) Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought;
- (vi) Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment;
- (vii) Access by affected country parties, particularly affected developing country parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how.

3. Under decision 9/COP.6, the programme of work of the third session of the CRIC must include a review of the reports submitted by affected African country parties. These reports were prepared on the basis of a framework put forward by the Convention secretariat (explanatory note and guide transmitted to countries in December 2003 (ICCD/CRIC(3)/INF.3)).

4. In the light of the guidelines, the countries structured their reports around seven thematic issues. These elements are supplemented by a presentation of data on the biophysical and socio-economic indicators which go to make up each country's profile.

5. The process of preparation of the third series of reports follows a participatory approach. This exercise was financed under a medium-sized Global Environment Facility (GEF) project entitled "Supporting capacity-building for the elaboration of national reports and country profiles by African parties to the UNCCD", which was approved in June 2004 and was financed by the World Bank, the executing agency for the project, and by the countries concerned. The project was implemented by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), with the

assistance of the UNCCD secretariat. The transfer of funds to eligible countries for the first component of the project, covering the preparation of national reports, was started in July 2004, and subsequently phased in keeping with the lenders' disbursement schedule.

6. The second component of the project, including the organization of national workshops to validate priorities in relation to sustainable land management on the basis of the conclusions of the national reports, began in early October 2004. The results of these national workshops will be presented at three subregional meetings scheduled to be held in February 2005. The conclusions of these subregional meetings will be presented at the third session of the CRIC.

7. Constraints arising from this schedule led to the postponement of the third session of the CRIC from October 2004 to spring 2005. Consequently, the deadline for the submission of national reports, which was initially set for 31 May 2004, was put back to 31 October 2004.

8. The first overall review of the reports prepared by African affected countries covered 42 documents submitted in 1999 to COP.3 and presented to the Ad Hoc Working Group which met in 2001. The second synthesis of reports prepared by African affected countries and dealing with the implementation of the UNCCD was carried out in 2002, and covered 47 national reports.

9. The present synthesis and preliminary analysis covers 48 national reports submitted to the UNCCD secretariat (annex). Reports received after 13 January 2005 are not included in the present synthesis. However, they are available on the secretariat's Internet site (<http://www.unccd.int>). A compilation of the summaries of all the reports received will appear in document ICCD/CRIC(3)/2/Add.3. These include a large number of documents which are updated versions of reports submitted during the second review (44). Three countries have submitted reports for the first time since ratifying the Convention, and one country submitted an updated version of its first report, dating from 1999. Account has been taken in the current exercise of the main lessons learned from earlier processes (report of the Ad Hoc Working Group submitted to the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties, report of the first session of the CRIC, etc.).

## **II. OVERVIEW OF REPORTS AND TRENDS OBSERVED**

10. At the current stage of implementation of the Convention, 10 years after its adoption, most African countries declare their resolve to pursue desertification control activities with greater vigour. Several of them have devised planning frameworks designed to promote desertification control by placing it in the broader context of sustainable development and linking it to issues of decentralization, democratic governance, food security and poverty alleviation.

11. But the efforts made by the countries of the region have not produced results in keeping with the challenges they face. It is true that a number of desertification control initiatives have been launched on the ground, and have in some cases produced interesting results. Nevertheless, the efforts made in the context of NAP preparation have not always helped to give new impetus to efforts to combat land degradation, despite the high level of mobilization of those involved.

12. In fact, the goals laid down for the NAP process place greater emphasis on the opportunities offered by the UNCCD in terms of expected external support than on the internal changes needed to improve the effectiveness of strategies designed to combat land degradation. Furthermore, the manner in which NAPs are integrated into existing machinery is not always defined on the basis of a logical framework that clearly outlines the links between economic development policy guidelines, the specific goals assigned to NAPs, the priority action areas and the expected outcomes.

13. While most of the countries of the region have had NAPs for several years, meaningful progress has not been made with their operational implementation. It is clear that these countries are encountering difficulties in mobilizing the financial resources needed for the implementation of their NAPs. In such a situation, great hopes are raised by the central role assigned to sustainable management of soils where GEF assistance is concerned.

14. Some countries are working to devise “synergetic” strategies to preserve biological diversity and combat land degradation. In this context, they place great importance on the local programming approach, because it has proved highly appropriate for the drawing up of programmes structured around activities which offer a major but not always perceptible potential for the development of synergies among the various areas targeted by the UNCCD and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

15. Integrating the UNCCD into macroeconomic planning poses a major problem. It should be remembered that under the UNCCD approach, the methodology used to underpin the drafting of NAPs is aimed at encouraging efforts to combat land degradation by placing them in the broader context of the harmonization of sectoral and cross-sectoral policies. Integrating NAPs in the framework of macroeconomic policy and linking them with poverty alleviation strategies, which currently form the backbone of development efforts, are vital elements in guaranteeing the enhanced effectiveness of action on the ground.

16. However, it is clear that in a number of countries, arrangements for coordinating the various sectoral policies are still ineffective. Moreover, there are still no links between the guidance provided by policies at the national level and the goals of actions taken at the local level. An overall view of the activities is also often lacking. This constraint in the pursuit of ongoing programmes and in the control of investment which has been mobilized gives rise to sectoral planning processes which prevent full use of the existing potential.

17. For the first time, most of the countries attached to their reports country profiles containing statistics and maps. The information requested should correspond to the biophysical and socio-economic indicators which make it possible to gauge the impact of desertification on natural resources and on the people living in the affected areas.

18. Where biophysical indicators of desertification and drought are concerned, the data contained in the reports are scanty. Emphasis is mostly placed on describing the various types of land degradation and the factors involved (land clearance associated with expansion of farming or housing, excessive cutting of woody species for firewood, bush fires and overgrazing, etc.).

### III. SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THE REPORTS

#### A. Participatory processes involving civil society, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations

19. NAPs, which constitute a central component of the system proposed by the UNCCD, are designed to analyse processes of land degradation in an overall, multisectoral framework with a view to devising strategies to prevent and/or reverse the negative trends which have been observed. The main text of the Convention recommends that the drafting and implementation of action programmes should be viewed as participatory and iterative processes which embrace all the social partners involved in natural resource management.

20. The previous reports prepared by the various countries highlighted the option of calling for participation by civil society in order (i) to benefit from local skills, (ii) to ensure that popular concerns are properly taken into account when action is planned, and (iii) to embark on a joint effort to identify the roles and responsibilities of each category of participant in the implementation of activities to combat land degradation.

21. The third series of reports confirms the value countries attach to participatory approaches which are in most cases based on the creation of a continuous dialogue among the various participants, the exchange of information and the sharing of knowledge, partnership and synergy among efforts undertaken at various levels.

22. It should be underlined that the manner in which these participatory approaches are pursued differs from one country to another, as do the types of organizational framework established (village development committees, focal points of non-governmental organizations, provincial development committees, forums for coordination among civil-society organizations, umbrella structures for rural professional organizations, etc.).

23. The level of involvement by civil-society participants in the drafting and implementation of NAPs largely depends on the quality of their organization and their ability to ensure that their concerns are taken into account. In that regard, the reports record a low level of involvement by certain groups such as pastoralists, women and young people. In contrast, the contribution made by non-governmental organizations is considered significant in several countries. This gap seems to arise from the lack of a critical mass of skills or from internal dysfunctions which detract from the quality of the involvement.

24. Hence the importance the countries attach to capacity-building for non-governmental participants as a vital measure to accompany NAP implementation. In this context, workshops have been organized to raise the level of technical know-how among the public and promote a sense of ownership of action programmes.

25. Most of the reports emphasized the efforts made in the field of public information and awareness, through forums, conferences and workshops at different levels (subregional, national and local). These initiatives, whose impact was enhanced through the use of the media, especially community radio stations, made it possible to give a greater boost to mobilization and awareness of the challenges and implications of the NAPs.

26. The reports show that local involvement in the UNCCD process has been significantly strengthened as a result of information and awareness activities conducted by non-governmental organizations and government agencies working at the local level. In a number of countries, the organizational frameworks set up by rural producers served as conduits for activities in the field of information and awareness creation.

27. The reports provide no precise information on mechanisms which can guarantee not only the quality of involvement by civil-society participants in the processes under way, but also representation which takes legitimacy criteria into account. Nor do they indicate how political and economic decision makers seek to encourage the setting up of linkage mechanisms between participation, accountability and subsidiarity.

28. The reports note scant involvement by the private sector, owing in particular to the fact that arid and semi-arid zones are not perceived as areas of opportunity for investors. However, some countries have made an effort to set up private sector support centres to promote effective private involvement in desertification control initiatives. One country highlights the involvement of forestry and agro-industry companies in the UNCCD implementation process.

29. Few reports mention active participation by the scientific community, though its contribution is viewed as being of crucial importance. Efforts are currently under way to maximize the potential of existing research, by mobilizing research workers. The reports indicate that the scant involvement of research institutions in the NAP process is largely due to their limited technical and financial capabilities.

### **B. Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements**

30. The establishment of national coordinating bodies (NCBs) in all countries in accordance with the provisions of article 9 of the Regional Annex to the Convention dealing with Africa and difficulties in taking on a role of coordination, guidance and leadership in order to break down traditions of sectoral planning shows that the creation of appropriate institutional and legislative frameworks alone cannot guarantee NAP implementation.

31. The task of the NCBs is to ensure supervision and coordination of initiatives undertaken as part of the drafting and implementation of NAPs. These structures constitute forums for coordination which should promote the strengthening of cooperation among the various parties involved and the formalization of partnerships.

32. The NCBs take a variety of forms. In some countries, the NCB is designed as an intersectoral and multidisciplinary structure because of the wide variety of areas to be taken into consideration in any activity involving drought and desertification. In other countries, the NCB is structured around a technical department and is entrusted with coordinating desertification control activities. In most cases, the membership of the NCB is extended to civil-society participants, but rarely to the scientific community. One of the reports indicates that women make up 45 per cent of NCB members.



33. In some reports, mention is made of NCB decentralization to the local level, with the establishment of liaison centres designed to facilitate mobilization of local people and promote interregional integration on the basis of delimitation of areas of cooperation between neighbouring provinces and/or regions.
34. Some countries which have made no arrangements at the financial level to put the NCB on a permanent footing have decided to entrust the task of this body to the ministerial department responsible for the environment. Such mergers cause problems, insofar as they may result in bolstering the pre-eminence of the environment ministry in NAP management.
35. The need to improve the effectiveness of mechanisms for intersectoral coordination is reaffirmed in all the reports, but no clear indication is given concerning the means of moving forward in this direction. More specifically in relation to the NCBs, the reports emphasize the gap between the scale of the tasks entrusted to them (design, coordination and follow-up of all initiatives undertaken in the field of desertification control) and the limited human, technical and financial resources available to them.
36. Almost all the countries in the region are engaged in the implementation of decentralization policies. The purpose of these policies is to democratize the management of public affairs, adapt the tasks and the organization of the State to the need to foster local initiatives and establish a framework for development and spatial organization in keeping with the skills which are transferred to local communities. In the context of the accomplishment of their tasks, decentralized communities draw up and sometimes implement local development plans, integrating concerns relating to land degradation.
37. The reports do not address the issue of the accountability of the agencies responsible for management of natural resources in the current context of decentralization. They also fail to indicate how the transfer of skills to the decentralized communities affects trends in the land sector, by creating new forums which are superimposed on those which existed previously.
38. Several countries have updated their legislation on natural resource management (land laws, forestry codes, rural codes, sectoral legislation specifically relating to pastoralism, etc.). The momentum created by the process of decentralization increasingly leads countries to abandon approaches based on the adoption of national codes designed to be exhaustive, in favour of framework laws setting out general guidelines at the national level. These new approaches require the State to set minimum standards and define guiding principles, while leaving those acting at the local level scope to devise specific regulations which take account of trends and constraints in each area. This enables the guidelines in the framework law or charter to be adapted to local conditions.

### **C. Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusion of partnership agreements**

39. Countries which have completed the process of NAP preparation have embarked actively on the development of partnerships and the search for financial resources from aid partners. Have these efforts led to greater account being taken of the prospects for the implementation of the UNCCD in cooperation systems? Without providing an explicit response to this question, the reports emphasize that most aid agencies give preference to the projects and programmes

they help to draw up, rather than subscribing to an approach involving support for the initiatives advocated in the NAP. Yet these projects and programmes often fall within the field of natural resource management (agroforestry, reforestation, soil regeneration, forestry development, water resources management, efforts to combat bush fires, environmental education, etc.).

40. Furthermore, in several countries, machinery has been established for coordination between the aid partners, with the aim of encouraging internalization of the NAP priorities in the cooperation systems. The reports point out that this machinery, which is generally directed by a lender designated as the “lead agency”, has not yet succeeded in making significant improvements in prospects for the integration of the UNCCD in cooperation systems.

41. The support provided by the Global Mechanism (GM) is mentioned in almost half the reports. Basically it involves assistance in mobilizing financial resources. The GM also provides support for the NAP preparation process, by organizing public consultation, popularizing the Convention and assessing experience in the field in order to draw lessons which can guide future activities.

42. GEF looms larger in the current series of reports than in previous ones. It should be remembered that since October 2002, soil degradation has been identified as an area for GEF action, principally because of desertification and deforestation. This makes sustainable soil management one of the focuses of GEF assistance in achieving environmental objectives of global significance, while fostering sustainable development at the country level.

43. As a part of the new GEF Operational Programme (OP 15), most countries have drawn up projects and programmes relating to sustainable land management. Apart from support to a dozen countries which have yet to finalize their NAPs, GEF has approved pilot projects to combat land degradation. It has also approved large-scale projects designed to promote partnerships with various agencies working in the field of soil management and with land users.

44. Despite this overall momentum, some countries are still experiencing difficulties in gaining access to external funding for a variety of reasons (political instability, crisis in relations with aid partners, delays in the NAP preparation process, etc.).

45. Other countries place stress on their resolve to enhance the effectiveness of machinery for financing activities relating to natural resources management and local development (rural credit, village investment funds, tax rebates, taxes on natural resource exploitation, etc.). In this context, they are planning to establish national funds to combat desertification (NFDs), which should make it possible not only to allocate the funds mobilized on the basis of the priorities identified by national partners, but also to adopt simpler financing procedures. The prospect of the establishment of such NFDs was mentioned by several countries in the reports drawn up in 2002. The progress made since then cannot be gauged from the information contained in the current series of reports.

46. Some countries have translated their political commitment to support NAP implementation into budgetary provisions, by taking on part of the operating costs of NCBs, financing operational activities to combat land degradation on the ground, etc. For the countries

concerned, the challenge for the future is to strengthen domestic financial efforts for desertification control while taking into account the fact that natural resources constitute the major underpinning for the development potential of the vast majority of African countries.

47. Over half the reports refer to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and indicate that any activity must incorporate the logic and the objectives of NEPAD, insofar as it constitutes the strategic reference framework for African States and aid partners. There is a need to give the NAPs a real profile in the process of NEPAD implementation, on the understanding that these dynamics should converge towards policies which promote synergy and are structured around reducing the socio-economic vulnerability of population groups and controlling the environmental hazards linked to land degradation.

48. Some reports mention the need to define principles which will allow an effective linkage between the plan of action of the NEPAD environment initiative and the subregional action programmes for desertification control. One country points out that complementarity between desertification control initiatives at the different levels could be strengthened through the implementation of the projects identified under NEPAD.

#### **D. Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies**

49. Currently, several experiments in desertification control have been initiated on the ground and cover a relatively broad field of action, incorporating environmental protection activities in rural and urban areas as well as initiatives designed to manage the productive potential. They relate to the sectors of agriculture, livestock raising, water resources, sanitation, land management, forest protection, energy, etc. The activities cover such areas as information, awareness creation, reforestation, water and soil conservation, regeneration of rangeland, ecotourism and promotion of renewable energies.

50. Despite the many approaches adopted for these activities (community management of natural resources, village land management, holistic management of natural resources, etc.), the current initiatives are based on shared concerns related to the development of actions and conditions seeking to preserve the productive heritage and combat its degradation. Enhancing the impact of these activities presupposes harmonization of activities carried out at the local level by several types of institutional machinery which are supposed to be complementary, but which generally prove to be competing (State departments, projects, local communities, non-governmental organizations, socio-professional organizations, etc.).

51. The quest for greater consistency is not confined to the level of field activities, but also relates to national policies. Integrating the NAP into macroeconomic policy is an essential element in enhancing the effectiveness of programmes to combat land degradation. Several reports emphasize this requirement, but do not describe the methods and means used to establish a close link between the NAPs and the other sectoral and cross-sectoral policies.

52. Some reports mention that the NAPs have made it possible to establish a common framework of action which can encourage long-term mobilization of those involved. They highlight the linkage between the NAPs and the environmental action plans which seek to

promote efforts to combat desertification by inserting them into the broader context of sustainable development and linking them with the issues of decentralization, equitable access to natural resources and poverty alleviation.

53. The need to encourage a linkage between the NAPs and the poverty alleviation strategies (as defined in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)) is frequently mentioned in the reports. This is all the more important as these strategies will henceforth form the cornerstones of development policies. In order to reverse the current adverse trends, the PSRPs have set objectives focused on the enhancement of natural capital and improvement of the living environment. The poverty reduction strategies and desertification thus relate to a shared field of action.

54. Despite this shared concern, the linkage between the two strategies has remained purely formal up to the present and has not taken concrete form on the ground. It is true that the PSRPs incorporate specific strategic guidelines for environmental management, but they do not expressly propose mechanisms for taking these guidelines into account at the different levels of action.

55. Several reports emphasize that the UNCCD and the two other Rio conventions (on climate change and biological diversity) are closely linked, and that their concerted implementation is vital to ensure that a genuine prospect of sustainable development emerges. This recognition prompts emphasis on actions to combat desertification which are likely to have a beneficial impact on the conservation of biological diversity and the moderation of climate change to the same degree or other degrees. The provision of information and the creation of awareness constitute the starting point for the concerted implementation of these three conventions. The seminars and forums which are being organized in this framework seek to promote a shared vision of the environmental challenges and to foster consensus on the lines of convergence of the strategies for the implementation of these three conventions.

56. These meetings are all the more important as the steps taken to date have tended to lock the planning processes into a logic of operation in a vacuum. In several countries, the strategies for the implementation of the Rio conventions were drawn up in isolation from each other.

#### **E. Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and for early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought**

57. The drafting of NAPs enabled some countries to embark on building up knowledge about natural resources by combining several viewpoints and different parameters of analysis. This exercise led to the identification of the major problems arising in the various ecogeographical zones and made it possible to measure their severity and propose appropriate solutions.

58. The initiatives aimed at restoring degraded land are principally structured around regeneration of the natural environment, management of water resources, promotion of renewable energies, strengthening of food security and awareness creation.

59. Various activities are being carried out under the policy for the regeneration of the natural environment. The most important initiatives include reforestation, reclamation of degraded lands, protection of lowlands, the cutting of firebreaks and the development of forest stands with a view to the sustainable management of natural resources.
60. In response to the scarcity of water resources, several African countries, particularly those situated in arid and semi-arid zones, have drawn up strategies for the preservation of underground water, which is subject to heavy demand resulting from rapid urbanization and the expansion of farming.
61. Considerable efforts are being made to promote renewable and/or alternative energies. In this context, emphasis is placed on the development of solar energy and the distribution of improved stoves, so as to reduce pressure on forest resources, which constitute the main domestic energy source for the greater part of the population of the region.
62. It is clear from the reports that the environmental crisis hits the region all the harder since the level of development is highly dependent on natural resources. In a context of rapid population growth, the acceleration of the process of deterioration of ecosystems is accompanied by a steady rise in the pressure on natural resources. Over the region as a whole, the food deficit underlies the accentuation of food insecurity as well as the exacerbation of conflicts linked to access to natural resources, particularly land, which is a critical resource. In order to remedy this situation, countries are starting up activities in the areas of market gardening, agroforestry, the establishment of cereal banks, and the promotion of non-traditional agriculture. They are also working to develop agricultural research in order to give a new boost to farming.
63. As a result of the political instability prevailing in some countries, more closely targeted initiatives are being pursued in a variety of fields relating mainly to the rehabilitation of areas which have become degraded owing to population movements, improvement of the standard of living of refugees and displaced persons and the promotion of innovations by peasants.
64. Awareness of the importance of environmental education is growing as a result of several series of initiatives launched by various organizations and centred around information and training in various fields (energy savings, forestry techniques, rangeland management, etc.). Interesting experiments are currently under way in the formal and informal education sectors, and in capacity-building.
65. Projects and programmes in the area of rehabilitation of degraded land do not always provide for mechanisms for evaluating the impact of their activities and determining the area of the rehabilitated land. Less than a quarter of the reports give quantified information on the area of land rehabilitated. Several countries point out that they have no statistics or that the available data are not reliable. Reforestation efforts appear to benefit from more systematic and regular evaluations.
66. With a few exceptions, very little effort has been devoted to setting up early warning systems in the various countries.

## **F. Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment**

67. One of the major objectives of the NAPs is the identification of procedures for taking into account changes affecting the natural environment and the socio-economic context, by means of continuous adjustments based on regular evaluations. For this reason the NAPs contain monitoring and evaluation components designed to make it possible to check the consistency of desertification control activities as a whole, to assess their impact and to draw up measures which will rectify current trends and/or consolidate what has been achieved. These monitoring and evaluation systems also focus on the dynamic of desertification.

68. All the countries which have drawn up NAPs are supposed to have set up systems for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of desertification control programmes. However, in reality, the degree of progress made in setting up such systems varies greatly. Similarly, the outcomes vary from one country to another, because of differences of approach and characteristics specific to the contexts in which the countries are evolving. In some of them, there are no effective systems for evaluating drought and desertification. But other countries have set up independent and permanent monitoring and evaluation machinery by upgrading the existing arrangements.

69. It should be pointed out that some reports do not address the issue of desertification evaluation and monitoring. One report clearly states that land degradation is not monitored or evaluated owing to a shortage of human and financial resources. Such constraints are frequently referred to in the reports, and seem to explain the poor performance of the monitoring and evaluation systems which have been set up.

70. The approaches adopted to monitoring and evaluation vary from one country to another. Some countries have set up national information systems which collect data on the state of the environment in general, and more particularly on the state of natural resources. Others have not set up systems devoted specifically to desertification monitoring. They process the data obtained from monitoring poverty and famine, as well as information supplied by weather centres or other research agencies. In these cases, problems generally arise with regard to coordination and harmonization of activities.

71. Only a few reports mention the existence of desertification information systems (DISs). These tools for use in supporting NAP implementation make it possible to circulate selected information, validated and presented in accessible formats, for all those involved in desertification control. In addition to the circulation of information, the role of these systems is: (i) to make existing data accessible; (ii) to facilitate monitoring of desertification and environmental degradation phenomena; (iii) to evaluate the impact of desertification control projects and programmes; and (iv) to predict and measure the impact of drought-related disasters.

72. Two reports describe the activities carried out in the framework of DISs and provide details of the institutional and legislative arrangements (commission for drought prevention, handbook of evaluation procedures, decree on environmental impact assessment, etc.). Some countries favour the use of satellite data and geographical information systems (GIS). They are also working to construct a reference base which they can use to monitor desertification processes, gauge the impact of activities carried out and assess future trends.

73. Four reports emphasize the involvement of local people in monitoring and evaluation of initiatives to combat land degradation. However, they provide no details of the ways in which the monitoring mechanism is used by local people (how do they manage to make use of the data emanating from monitoring and evaluation in order to initiate a dialogue with decision makers on the results of the programmes, natural resource management options, the distribution of tasks in the pursuit of these options?).

74. Land degradation is sometimes monitored under regional programmes or in cooperation with international agencies. The national networks of long-term environmental monitoring observatories launched at the initiative of the Sahara and Sahel Observatory have enabled a dozen observatories in 11 countries to operate and gather high-quality information on the evolution of natural resources and the effectiveness of management systems.

75. Some reports mention that the involvement of the scientific community is vital to improve knowledge of the mechanisms, causes and consequences of desertification. At the technical level, the most important task is to harmonize methods of environmental monitoring and consolidate knowledge acquired.

76. Currently a mass of information is available, often very substantial, but many constraints stand in the way of progress towards integrated frameworks for environmental assessment: poor quantification of phenomena of natural resource degradation, scattered location of data, difficulties in obtaining access to existing information, use of a variety of terms and scales, compartmentalization of agencies which possess information, etc.

#### **G. Access by affected country parties, particularly affected developing country parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how**

77. The emphasis placed on issues relating to access to technology varies from one report to another. Very little mention is made of this problem in some reports, while others provide relatively detailed information on the technology issue.

78. Several countries in the region consider that access to technologies will be facilitated by the expansion of cooperative links with regional and international institutions. In two reports, the networks of long-term environmental monitoring observatories are described as an appropriate framework for cooperation. Along the same lines, the encouragement of partnership with institutions and centres of excellence in the North is perceived as a mechanism which can facilitate capacity-building in the region (exchange of experience, implementation of joint projects, training, etc.).

79. A number of reports record progress in improving agricultural techniques. Research efforts are aimed not only at raising the productivity of cropping systems, but also at ensuring the sustainability of agriculture. In this context, special attention is paid to irrigation and soil reclamation. Some countries are also working to develop horticulture and agroforestry. Others are experimenting with efforts to raise productivity and quality in the field of forest products.

80. Efforts in the field of genetic research are focused on the development of cereal, tree and other varieties which are suited to drought and the specific conditions found in arid and semi-arid zones.

81. In the energy sector, the reports emphasize achievements in the promotion of renewable energies (development of photovoltaic systems and alternatives to petroleum) and improved stoves, which help to reduce consumption of woody fuels.

82. Experiments in water management relate to the development of water-harvesting techniques, promotion of desalination plants and dam construction.

83. Few reports mention the integration of the private sector in technology promotion programmes. Some countries have adopted specific measures to remedy the situation (tax deductions, removal of customs duties, etc.).

84. Some reports note the promotion of traditional knowledge, especially in the area of medicinal drugs and medicinal plants. Other reports emphasize that traditional techniques for combating land degradation are taken into account. In this regard it should be noted that traditional knowledge, or rather the application of these techniques to the various environments in order to exploit their resources, is not enough in itself to tackle the current land degradation problems. It is vital to strengthen this knowledge by drawing on the achievements of modern science and technology.

#### **IV. LESSONS LEARNED**

##### **A. Lessons learned from the process of preparation and implementation of national action programmes**

85. Involvement in NAP drafting and implementation is organized in various ways. Above and beyond this variety, it should be underlined that these processes have generally objected to the former forms of involvement based on technocratic and centralized approaches which tend to restrict civil-society participants to marginal status to the benefit of State institutions.

86. This gesture of transparency directed towards civil-society participants is emphasized in almost all the reports. A methodological option of this kind is centred on the key challenge of ensuring the quality of the involvement of civil-society participants in the process. In some countries it is found that the strategy for securing this involvement still comes up against constraints related in particular to the manner in which the NCBs operate. In addition, the national coordinating bodies do not yet make sufficient use of the scientific community. This situation could account in part for the shortcomings noted in the countries of the region in the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on Science and Technology relating to early warning and the harnessing of local knowledge in activities to combat land degradation.

87. The processes initiated as part of UNCCD implementation have made it possible to give a strong boost to awareness creation and mobilization of all those involved in desertification control. The establishment of specific institutional arrangements has sometimes been accompanied by legislative reforms designed to improve the legal framework.

88. This important progress must not, however, obscure the difficulties encountered in the implementation of strategies for the mobilization of financial resources. The development partners seem reluctant to support the new projects and programmes set out in the NAPs. The round tables organized by some countries to facilitate NAP financing have not produced the



expected results. In this context, the countries of the region face a dual challenge: they must both succeed in mobilizing substantial domestic resources, and also prompt the developed countries to provide effective support to UNCCD implementation initiatives in the affected countries. In this way the funding expected from GEF would supplement the efforts made at those two levels.

89. Resource mobilization strategies should contain more explicit provision for capacity-building programmes at the national and local levels. This capacity-building could enhance interest in desertification issues and thus help to speed up the process of NAP implementation.

90. Compartmentalization among government agencies and some foundations does not militate in favour of the development of the necessary synergy between policies and programmes which are directly or indirectly linked to desertification control. Support for government agencies in building their skills should therefore go hand in hand with a review of their working methods and procedures. The principal need is to help these agencies to acquire the same methodological tools for planning, strategic analysis and evaluation of programmes.

91. In countries where the decentralization process is under way, a sense of ownership of NAPs resulting from effective participation by all those concerned should be reflected in the assumption of responsibility by local and grass-roots communities. However, they will be able to play their roles properly only if steps are taken at the same time to strengthen their capabilities. For this purpose, the programmes should take into account the low level of literacy among the people.

#### **B. Lessons learned from the system for the presentation of reports**

92. In accordance with the proposed analytical matrix, the countries of the region have provided information on progress in UNCCD implementation at the local, national and subregional levels. The use of a single framework based on the same topics by all the countries facilitates the processing of the reports and the evaluation of the results achieved.

93. The reports seek to enumerate all the initiatives which contribute to desertification control. But they do not bring out clearly the specific dynamics fostered by NAP implementation and those stemming from projects which predate the NAPs. In most cases these projects have not been reoriented in the light of the strategic approach of the NAPs.

94. For the first time, most of the countries have supplied statistics (biophysical and socio-economic indicators) to enable the COP to gauge the impact of desertification on the natural environment and on the living conditions of the people living in the affected areas.

95. Careful reading of the profiles reveals that the data supplied are of uneven value. Generally speaking, the countries have relatively good mastery of the socio-economic statistics. Some of them have even provided data relating to several years, making it possible to identify trends and prospects. On the other hand, most of the reports contain no quantified indications of the scale of the processes of land degradation, or of actual achievements (areas regenerated or developed, structures built, etc.).

96. Generally speaking, the national reports are very descriptive and insufficiently analytical. Rather than focusing on progress made in NAP implementation during the period under review, as recommended in the guide prepared by the UNCCD secretariat, the reports emphasize the description of activities carried out. The nature of the information provided does not always make it possible to appreciate the ongoing trends and the factors involved.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

97. Success in the implementation of the NAPs presupposes genuine commitment by the people and ownership of the projects and programmes defined. If this participation is to be effective, countries will have to rely more on existing structures and machinery, rather than seeking to set up new arrangements. In countries where such arrangements do not exist, priority should be given to establishing mechanisms which will facilitate and coordinate action.

98. In order to enhance the impact of field activities, the capabilities of grass-roots communities should be strengthened so as to give them a better perception of the challenges involved in the rational management of natural resources. Currently, most projects under way make an effort to involve local people both in the design of activities and in their implementation and evaluation. These options make it possible to prepare the ground for placing the activities initiated under these projects on a permanent footing.

99. There is a need to educate the public and stimulate discussion about sustainable development of resources in arid and semi-arid zones, so as to prompt greater awareness on the part of those involved and secure their commitment to efforts to rehabilitate degraded land. In order to encourage greater involvement by non-governmental organizations in the preparation and implementation of desertification control projects, their organizational, technical and financial capacities will need to be strengthened. This support will be one contribution to improving activities in the field. With the process of decentralization under way in many countries, local communities constitute a category of participant that can be relied on to implement the activities scheduled in the NAPs.

100. Some countries in the region often face political instability and conflicts which sometimes lead to serious consequences (displacement of population, destruction of infrastructure, violation of the rights of women and children, destruction of natural resources, etc.). This nullifies the development efforts made in the countries which are facing conflicts and also hampers NAP implementation. In order to remedy the situation, the region should draw up and implement coherent and effective strategies for conflict prevention, management and settlement, highlighting African cultural practices.

101. Cooperation between the various partners constitutes an effective means of improving all of the actions involved in desertification control. It also enables all available skills to be drawn on. In a context marked by fragmented efforts, the mobilization of financial resources could become more effective through the strengthening of existing mechanisms for the collection and coordination of the various contributions. This prospect would appear more promising than that of setting up NDFs, insofar as the countries are encountering difficulties in making such mechanisms genuinely operational.

102. In order to facilitate the mobilization of financial, human and material resources, desertification control activities should be integrated more harmoniously and systematically in national strategies and programmes of cooperation with development partners. Efforts to raise the level of mobilization of domestic financial resources in the countries of the region should be based on awareness-raising campaigns articulated around the challenges of desertification control. This approach should also include raising the level of investment in the sectors concerned by desertification control. In this context, the promotion of activities which are financially profitable in the short or medium term might offer incentives for domestic private operators.

103. NEPAD and the UNCCD are striving to emphasize the interrelations between the process of land degradation and impoverishment, as well as the cumulative factors at work and the consequences they generate. That is what makes it possible to define targeted strategies and appropriate mechanisms for the involvement of the various parties concerned in the implementation of the planned measures. The UNCCD takes on the bulk of the concerns of the countries of the region in relation to economic development and efforts to combat land degradation. The implementation of the NAPs and the subregional action programmes (SRAPs) can therefore help to create conditions conducive to the success of NEPAD, if it takes the form of an improvement of the methods of pursuing natural resource development and management policies.

104. The linkage between the NAPs and the PSRPs constitutes a major challenge. Several reports include paragraphs indicating that the NAP is perfectly linked with the strategic framework for poverty alleviation. In fact, they do not always demonstrate the existing coherence in terms of the purpose, the objectives and implementation actions, even if the NAPs and the PSRPs relate to common concerns. The countries of the region and their partners will need to devote greater attention to ensuring the overall consistency of these strategic frameworks, and link them to a long-term view offering possibilities of preventive action in the field of poverty reduction and land degradation.

105. In short, the information contained in the reports confirms that the effective implementation of further steps in the framework of the Convention (decision 1/COP.6) would help to invigorate the process of implementation of the Convention in Africa.

**Annex**

**LIST OF AFFECTED AFRICAN COUNTRY PARTIES WHICH  
HAVE SUBMITTED REPORTS**

- |                                      |                                 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Algeria                           | 25. Lesotho                     |
| 2. Benin                             | 26. Libyan Arab Jamahiriya      |
| 3. Botswana                          | 27. Madagascar                  |
| 4. Burkina Faso                      | 28. Malawi                      |
| 5. Burundi                           | 29. Mali                        |
| 6. Cameroon                          | 30. Mauritania                  |
| 7. Cape Verde                        | 31. Mauritius*                  |
| 8. Central African Republic          | 32. Morocco                     |
| 9. Chad                              | 33. Mozambique                  |
| 10. Comoros                          | 34. Namibia                     |
| 11. Congo                            | 35. Niger                       |
| 12. Côte d'Ivoire                    | 36. Nigeria                     |
| 13. Democratic Republic of the Congo | 37. Rwanda                      |
| 14. Djibouti                         | 38. Sao Tome and Principe       |
| 15. Egypt                            | 39. Senegal                     |
| 16. Equatorial Guinea*               | 40. Seychelles*                 |
| 17. Eritrea                          | 41. Sierra Leone                |
| 18. Ethiopia                         | 42. Sudan                       |
| 19. Gabon                            | 43. Swaziland                   |
| 20. Gambia                           | 44. Togo                        |
| 21. Ghana                            | 45. Tunisia                     |
| 22. Guinea                           | 46. Uganda                      |
| 23. Guinea-Bissau                    | 47. United Republic of Tanzania |
| 24. Kenya                            | 48. Zimbabwe                    |

---

\* Submitted a report for the first time.

-----