

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

Third session

Bonn, 2 – 11 May 2005

**OVERVIEW OF PANEL DISCUSSIONS AND GLOBAL INTERACTIVE DIALOGUES
DURING THE THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION**

Note by the secretariat

Four panel discussions and two global interactive dialogues will be organized during the third session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 3). The present document provides background information in order to facilitate active participation in these meetings. Additional information about members of each panel discussion and dialogue will be provided through the Official Journal of the session.

The tentative schedule for the meetings is presented below.

4 May 2005	Panel on financing
9 May 2005	Panel on sustainable use and management of rangelands
9 May 2005	Panel on launching of reforestation/afforestation programmes and intensification of soil conservation programmes
9 May 2005	Panel on desertification monitoring and assessment
10 May 2005	Global interactive dialogue: Mainstreaming of national action programmes and their contribution to overall poverty eradication
10 May 2005	Global interactive dialogue: Land degradation/desertification and their impact on migration and conflicts

1. Panel on financing

1.1 Concept note

Ten years have passed since the adoption of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The Parties are now ready to move from preparing their national action programmes (NAPs) to actually implementing them, a process that brings in sharper focus the constraints on resources that were highlighted in the comprehensive report of the first session of the CRIC.

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Progress has been made in giving a new impetus to finance for UNCCD implementation from multilateral sources. The creation of a new Global Environment Facility (GEF) focal area on land degradation constitutes a significant development towards this goal. Further clarification of the mutually supportive relationship between the UNCCD and the GEF processes would be welcomed for Parties that may not yet be familiar with the procedures involved.

The Global Mechanism (GM) is developing its niche in promoting mainstreaming and partnership building, and in channelling catalytic funding for further mobilization of resources. Collaboration between the GM Facilitation Committee members has led to projects and initiatives that contribute to achieving the objectives of the UNCCD.

However, the need remains for Parties, multilateral agencies and institutions to step up their efforts to bring about concrete actions leading to observable results and benefits for affected communities. Full implementation of the Convention requires more substantial and better-coordinated support from multiple sources, involving both multilateral and bilateral donors.

1.2 Questions

1. What measures could be developed within the GM Facilitation Committee to improve further the efficiency and effectiveness of its members' actions?
2. How could the coherence and coordination between bilateral and multilateral support be improved at country level and what is the range of support the UNCCD may expect?
3. How could the potential for new and innovative funding sources be brought to support UNCCD implementation better?

2. Panel on sustainable use and management of rangelands

2.1 Concept note

Rangelands are the most common type of land in the world (over 40 per cent of the Earth's land area), and occur mainly in semi-arid areas. They are extremely productive and valuable for biological diversity, agriculture, livestock breeding etc. Sustainable use and management of rangelands in affected country Parties is manifested in different ways around the world. Rangelands are being lost at an alarming rate, in particular due to the conversion of rangelands to croplands or to urbanization. They require a new and different approach to their sustainable management by the removal of policy and capacity obstacles and the strengthening of viable traditional systems. Identifying innovative and practical ways of sustainable drylands management through livestock mobility or alternative activities that are non-agricultural, can make rangelands both viable and attractive. However, mobile pastoralism is facing extinction at a time when science is finding proof of the ecological necessity and economic viability of the mobility of livestock in drylands and rangelands. There are also signs of a resurgence of transhumance in European countries, and increasing donor attention to sustainable pastoralism.

Since livestock is the major consumer of primary production in arid and semi-arid regions, soil degradation has always been attributed to this subsector, but the extent to which other influences are also responsible (exotic species, fuelwood harvesting, wildlife degradation, conversion of rangelands to croplands or human settlements, etc.) has been emphasized. Results of long-term monitoring studies have also challenged the assumption that overgrazing is the most

important factor in soil degradation and have provided evidence that climate, not livestock, could be one of the main determinants of changes in arid and semi-arid environments. The studies also showed that rangelands are resilient and capable of recovery.

The generally low priority assigned to tackling range degradation through improved range management has been associated with a lack of awareness of the main issues on the part of both policy makers and resource users, a lack of legal arrangements for community-based organizations (CBOs), the low level of political influence of pastoral groups, and inappropriate or nonexistent economic and social services and infrastructure. There is an urgent need for rangeland management systems that are productive, environmentally sustainable and socially equitable. It is also important that the process of NAPs includes improvements to rangeland management capability, legal arrangements and legal rights to promote the participation of CBOs, the strengthening of land/resource tenure, especially among marginal groups, special consideration for transboundary approaches and the acceleration of rural development.

2.2 Questions

1. What practical investment measures relating to infrastructure are deemed most effective toward the sustainable use and management of rangelands? Who should be responsible for them and how can they be implemented?
2. How can raising the awareness of national policy and economic decision makers be ensured, especially awareness of the importance of a community-based approach to rangeland management?
3. What elements (policy, legislation, incentives, services, etc.) relating to ensuring sustainable rangeland management should be integrated into the NAP process?
4. How is the question of mobility of livestock perceived within the framework of the sustainable use and management of rangelands?

3. Panel on launching of reforestation/afforestation programmes and intensification of soil conservation programmes

3.1 Concept note

Decision 12/COP.6 states that relevant conventions, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), agencies and institutions, including the GEF, are encouraged to explore appropriate opportunities of promoting synergistic approaches and initiatives and to foster collaboration with the UNCCD, thus facilitating project proposals, liaisons with partners concerned and organization of joint workshops on forestry and forest ecosystems. As a result, the UNCCD secretariat organized in Viterbo, Italy, an international forest and forestry workshop to promote synergies and to highlight potential constraints in the development of a synergistic platform among the Rio conventions, as well as other multilateral environmental agreements, focusing on sustainable forest management.

Moreover, decision 1/COP.6, paragraphs 8 and 29, on further steps for UNCCD implementation, calls on all Parties, as well as bilateral and multilateral agencies, to promote and facilitate implementation of regional thematic programme networks (TPNs) relevant to the rehabilitation of degraded lands. Accordingly, TPNs have been launched in affected regions, promoting, among other things, agroforestry and sustainable agricultural and farming systems.

The use of new approaches aimed at reversing land degradation trends is fundamental; through sustainable forest management, forest ecosystems are considered a substantive element of environmental planning. This aspect should take into account the wide range of environmental services provided by forests, including, *inter alia*, biodiversity conservation, watershed protection and carbon sequestration, as well as those market-based mechanisms that provide new and additional sources of income for rural communities in charge of forest management and contribute to fighting rural poverty.

Within the regional action programmes (RAPs), these TPNs promote the core principles and purpose of the UNCCD. Their main objective is to promote changes in approach, from research-and-development to research-for-development, in stakeholders and institutions involved in the development, use and dissemination of technologies and innovations in affected areas. Their aim is also to facilitate the exchange of data and local information, experience and best practices, knowledge, know-how and skills. The use of integrated information systems would ensure coherence and consistency for more effective and participatory implementation of national/subregional/regional actions to combat desertification and eradicate poverty.

3.2 Questions

1. How could countries achieve synergies in afforestation/reforestation initiatives by formulating projects addressing the principles and objectives of the three Rio conventions?
2. How can those projects contribute to mobilizing technical and financial assistance, encouraging, among other things, involvement of the business community and the private sector?
3. How could TPNs in agroforestry and sustainable agricultural farming systems be able better to address stakeholders' demands (e.g.: through enhancing exchanges among users, or designing a portfolio of mechanisms for participation, mobilization and concrete action)?
4. What kind of synergies instrumental to UNCCD implementation could be created when using biomass as renewable energy, promoting water-harvesting systems for dry land reforestation, endorsing sound technologies for soil conservation, carbon sequestration, etc., and what would be their relationship to TPN implementation?

4. Panel on desertification monitoring and assessment

4.1 Concept note

The areas of monitoring, assessment and early warning systems (EWS) have been identified as the integral components of the holistic approach to understanding the casual factors and spatio-temporal characteristics of drought and desertification processes. The data on terrestrial conditions must be amalgamated with those related to the climatic, hydrological and oceanographic conditions. Such comprehensive biophysical monitoring data collection and analysis is vital to developing and implementing effective EWS for desertification and drought.

Country Parties belonging to regional implementation annexes of the UNCCD are moving ahead in their implementation of the pertinent provisions of the Convention. One of the important activities within the context of regional cooperation is the development of TPNs that constitute the core elements of the RAPs in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). TPN 4 of the Africa's RAP was launched in 2002, aimed at improving desertification monitoring and assessment (DMA), and eventually establishing an EWS for desertification and

drought at the regional level. The LAC region launched its TPN 2 in 2003, and formulated benchmarks and indicators which include socio-economic and biophysical indicators for DMA. This work represents an essential step for conducting future DMA activities. The Asia region TPN 1 member countries have unified benchmarks and indicators for DMA and desertification mapping, and have recently completed the first map for the Asia and the Pacific Region (not yet with ground data).

The current knowledge and understanding of the trends of desertification processes and drought dynamics in the regions is a product of the development and application of space technology, climatology, and satellite communication for environment and disaster monitoring. The rationale of the regional DMA networks lies in the sharing and exchange of validated results from both scientific and policy studies generated by member countries, as well as coordinated institutional strengthening and capacity building. The DMA activities undertaken within the context of UNCCD implementation annexes will provide more up-to-date and quantifiable information on desertification processes in the respective regions, thereby assisting policy and decision makers in finding mechanisms for responding to natural disasters such as drought events, as well as policy tools for sustainable land management.

4.2 Questions

1. Assessment procedures have so far been largely empirical and focused on the symptoms of desertification rather than on the underlying drivers and processes. There is a lack of integration between human and climate drivers as well as spatial and temporal scale that affects desertification.
2. Temporal data analysis remains scarce despite its importance in understanding the dynamics and intensity of desertification and land degradation.
3. There are still no commonly used, and accepted, indicators nor a data format system for both DMA and EWS.
4. No baseline exists for monitoring desertification at global level.
5. Data accessibility is still subject to several constraints. There is a need for the use of metadata ensuring data reliability and compatibility among scales of analysis.

5. Global interactive dialogue: Mainstreaming of national action programmes and their contribution to overall poverty eradication

5.1 Concept note

The Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD has on several occasions emphasized the importance of integrating the NAPs into other national development programmes and relevant policy areas, most notably into poverty reduction strategies (see, for example, decisions 5/COP.3, 8/COP.4, and 1/COP.6). Many country Parties which have adopted their NAPs have indicated that they have taken steps towards this direction.

The basic objective of the NAPs is to identify factors that contribute to degradation and desertification, and to identify measures to combat and/or mitigate the effects of drought. They are thus to provide baseline information upon which to formulate strategy, frameworks for action, policies and programmes. Policy and programme recommendations to Governments are

an integral component of NAPs as well as identification of the need for technical support and definition of the investments required.

Poverty reduction strategies in many countries culminate in the World Bank geared Poverty Reduction Strategies Papers (PRSPs). PRSPs are seen as a means of promoting poverty reduction, sustainable development and strategic planning. They build on the organizing framework of the “sustainable livelihoods” approach and cover human, natural, financial, knowledge and social capital assets, as well as options for risk management. The PRSP process is intended to be country driven with widespread cross-sectoral participation in its generation.

Mainstreaming these two processes would benefit efforts to meet the interlinked challenges of poverty reduction and sustainable natural resource management. Such mainstreaming would affect sectoral strategies, upscale the UNCCD advocated approaches and allow for a stronger focus on the environment/poverty nexus. It could materialize in sharper development of pro-poor investment in most affected rural areas, thus resulting in environmental sustainability and improved economic well-being.

5.2 Questions

1. How should the NAP and PRSP processes develop in order to allow for improved mainstreaming into the PRSP?
2. How can the PRSP process become more UNCCD sensitive?
3. What is the role of donor countries and agencies in the mainstreaming process?

6. Global interactive dialogue: Land degradation/desertification and their impact on migration and conflicts

6.1 Concept note

While migrations are a fact of life, forced migrations can lead to unwanted impacts. Massive displacement of people as refugees in the drylands puts severe pressures on the scarce natural resources of these regions and neighbouring ecosystems. Lower income groups often get too few opportunities to break the vicious circle that forces them to mismanage land or to leave.

In the context of climate change and growing water scarcity, such trends are expected to worsen in many vulnerable dryland regions of the world. The ecological marginalization of poverty often leads to rural exodus to urban areas, and from there, to transcontinental migration. The relationship between desertification, migration and population can be tackled only when the push and pull factors of migration are better understood and are addressed in a coherent manner.

The number of migrants increases by three million every year. The issue of environmental refugees with their *in* and *ex situ* impact on national/regional/global economies, the local environment, socio-political problems and related security issues have become a cause of concern for international conferences and organizations dealing with humanitarian assistance and migration flows. It is estimated that over 135 million people may be at risk of being displaced as a consequence of severe desertification. At the same time, competition for scarce natural resources breeds conflicts and competition for scarce natural resources may contribute to low-level violence, but no agreement exists on how many armed conflicts currently in progress have been caused, triggered or influenced by environmental factors.

Integrated assistance strategies should link relief programmes with environmental protection and local development schemes focused on poverty alleviation. Targeted programmes linked to the UNCCD NAPs can facilitate such necessary linkages in vulnerable regions.

The Government of Spain and the UNCCD secretariat organized an international symposium on desertification and migrations in Almeria, Spain, from 9-11 February 1994. This symposium concluded that the corollary of the recognized right to freedom of movement is the right to remain. The freedom of people to stay at home, on their land and in their own culture, deserves to be supported by the international community.

6.2 Questions

1. Hunger, food security poverty and migration: can the NAP support human rights?
2. Ecology and the politics of survival: minimizing conflicts over natural resources.
3. Prospective analysis on desertification and migrations: how to bridge the uncertainty gap.
