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**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 OF AFFECTED
COUNTRY PARTIES OF REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA,
INCLUDING ON THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS, AND ON
EXPERIENCE GAINED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE
PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION
PROGRAMMES**

Note by the secretariat

Addendum

**Synthesis and preliminary analysis of information contained in reports
submitted by affected Latin American and Caribbean country Parties**

SUMMARY

1. As part of the commitments entered into under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), the country Parties must forward to the Conference of the Parties (COP), through its permanent secretariat, reports on measures adopted to implement the Convention (art. 26). With financial support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and from cooperating countries and organizations, and with assistance from the secretariat, the region's country Parties prepared their third national reports for the period 2002-2006 for discussion at the XI Regional Meeting, in July 2006, and subsequent evaluation by the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention at its fifth session (CRIC 5).
2. The information received from 27 countries in the region highlights the drafting and initiation of the Regional Action Programme (RAP 2002-2007), 3 of the 5 Subregional Action Programmes (SRAPs) and more than 26 National Action Programmes (NAPs). Also highlighted are the efforts to secure extensive participation by society in the drafting and validation of the NAPs; progress made in the establishment of national coordinating bodies (NCBs) and participation agreements; the harmonization of legal norms, strategies and national policies in the context of efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought; and the dissemination of information and the creation of awareness among the public.
3. Progress in the region in the implementation of the CCD, the participatory inclusion of grassroots actors and civil society and technical, human and financial capabilities is uneven, and redoubled efforts are needed to support the countries which continue to lag behind. The activities carried out under the SRAPs and the regional thematic programme networks (TPNs) have to date been the most effective means of accomplishing joint action and effective South-South cooperation. However, the SRAPs and TPNs as well as the NAPs still require political commitment both from the countries of the region and from the developed countries and cooperation institutions so that efforts to achieve their objectives can be strengthened and consolidated and appropriate technical and financial assistance is available.
4. Despite major progress in the establishment of machinery for the mobilization of financial resources from GEF and cooperating Governments and organizations, as well as funds from some countries in the region, the main threat to the achievement of the objectives of the RAPs, SRAPs and NAPs remains uncertain access to appropriate, predictable and adequate resources. The broadening and simplification of access for countries to resources earmarked for desertification control and mitigation of the effects of drought constitutes the most urgent challenge for international cooperation and for the affected countries in the region themselves.

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I. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL REPORTS AND EMERGING TRENDS

1. The past four years have seen major progress in the drafting and implementation of National Action Programmes to Combat Desertification and Drought (NAPs) as State policy instruments in the country Parties. In 2000, when the initial reports were submitted, the 33 countries in the region had ratified the Convention and 4 of them had NAPs. In 2002, when the second reports were submitted, 7 countries had finalized their NAPs. This year, 17 countries in the region have officially adopted their NAPs, 9 have final drafts and the remaining 7 have already begun the process of drawing up their programmes.
2. In relation to the initial and second national reports, progress may be observed in the region, particularly in the creation of basic technical approaches and policies established through the NAPs and in the related diagnoses. The strengthening of regional ties and the identification of indicators and benchmarks for monitoring of land degradation are two more areas where efforts have been noteworthy. However, stumbling blocks remain, such as the lack of financial security for project implementation, technical and institutional shortcomings and political instability in a few countries.
3. In Central and South America most of the countries have officially adopted NAP documents and report progress in their implementation. Most of the Caribbean countries have final drafts, although six of them still have none, owing in part to the lack of technical and human resources, the priority given to environmental problems affecting the subregion, and the lack of financial resources.
4. The integration of the NAPs in national strategies and their practical implementation reflect differences between countries. Some have found themselves compelled to address problems of an immediate nature arising from natural disasters, and others are facing periods of political and institutional instability, while a large number find their actions restricted by insufficient technical, financial and economic resources. The lack of economic resources is exacerbated in some cases by the heavy burden of external debt servicing, the rise in the price of oil and terms of access to international markets.
5. Several national reports reveal that the NAPs and their implementation contribute to the general efforts being made by the countries of the region to combat poverty and improve the quality of life of their inhabitants, particularly those most affected by their direct dependence on natural resources and their high level of vulnerability to the effects of drought.
6. The reports also highlight the importance of processes of decentralization in the implementation of measures designed to reduce poverty and the effects of drought. The decentralized institutions at the regional and municipal levels have been two-way channels for participation from the grassroots in the identification of needs and proposals, and from above in the implementation of plans and strategies. However, the reports reveal the need to bolster institutional and individual capabilities in this structure of relations.
7. Almost all the countries have made progress in sustainable agroforestry, prevention of land degradation, rehabilitation of affected areas and integrated management of soil and water resources. Progress has also been made in the drafting of comprehensive plans for the management of basins or mountain regions, or both. It is well known that some countries with a

long institutional and academic tradition have made progress in identifying benchmarks and indicators for measurement of drought and related biophysical and meteorological factors. Thanks to the activities carried out in the context of the SRAPs and bilateral agreements, these countries have shared the lessons learned.

8. The countries reaffirm their commitment to the processes of participation in the efficient implementation of the Convention. However, the reports reveal two trends which merit emphasis. The first is the widespread reference to participation in their activities by civil society or local actors, or both. This trend is reported to be obscuring the presence or absence of key actors such as women, indigenous peoples and small-scale producers. The second trend is for the reduction or even elimination of participation by these same actors once the NAPs have been drawn up and the NCBs established.

9. In general, the region has advantages in terms of community organization, technical and scientific capability, lessons learned in development activities and horizontal cooperation, as well as the accumulation of traditional and modern know-how as possible elements in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. To date these advantages have been only partially exploited. Many of the initiatives and practical actions carried out under the CCD deserve greater support and commitment from the Governments themselves and the international community.

II. SYNTHESIS OF INFORMATION CONTAINED IN NATIONAL REPORTS

10. This section summarizes the content of the national reports in terms of the seven key thematic topics for the review process agreed on in decision 1/COP.5. It also summarizes the information relating to three of the seven strategic areas identified in the *Bonn Declaration*, which will be addressed during CRIC 5 (items E, F and G).

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

11. Over 70 per cent of the NAPs have been drawn up since 2002. Consequently, in recent years many of the countries have been engaged in an intense process of diagnoses, consultations, training and project design. With very few exceptions, these activities have involved both governmental and non-governmental organizations, universities and grass-roots organizations. Some reports describe participatory processes which have been fragmented in space and time as a response to prevailing political instability, or to natural disasters which caused delays in scheduled activities or even their cancellation.

12. In parallel, and very often as a part of the NAP drafting processes, most of the countries have carried out awareness creation and information dissemination activities. A common means of disseminating information is through governmental and non-governmental electronic portals. Of particular note are the efforts of environmental and educational organizations in various countries to incorporate environmental issues, and especially desertification, in the curricula of schools and universities.

13. Noteworthy where the population as a whole is concerned is the importance of decentralized political and sectoral systems by means of which various countries have succeeded

in providing training workshops, teaching materials and networks of educators and volunteers to a large part of their territory, particularly in rural areas. In many cases, partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has proved crucial owing to their presence and ability to rally support at the local level.

14. Most of the countries have profited from favourable circumstances to publicize the issue of desertification control. The drafting of NAPs, the drafting and validation of the third national reports, the holding of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought and the International Year of Deserts and Desertification offered special opportunities to disseminate information and create synergies as well as to strengthen commitments to combat desertification. The creation of television and radio series, the publication of press articles and even the issue of postage stamps as means of creating awareness in the past four years are noteworthy efforts in a good number of countries in the region.

15. Once the NAP document has been drafted, the countries must be able to sustain broad participation in the implementation of activities. Some countries have opted for diversity in the membership of their technical and advisory bodies, sometimes with participation by non-governmental organizations, universities, private businessmen and businesswomen, parliamentarians and international cooperation agencies. Although these bodies are stable and are in the process of expansion in some countries, in others they still fluctuate between periods of activity and periods in which they barely exist. A smaller number of countries have opted for direct consultations with local governments and communities for project implementation. Few countries follow both approaches for the planning and implementation of activities.

16. The inclusion of women, indigenous groups, small-scale producers and others in activities involving diagnoses, consultations, training and implementation is not referred to in most of the reports. The role played by networks of non-governmental organizations in processes of desertification control and mitigation of the effects of drought is not expressly mentioned, which might be wrongly interpreted as indicating a low level of participation.

B. Legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements

17. The most frequent strategy has been for countries to set up their focal points within the government bodies responsible for the environment in general and soil, water and forests in particular. Various countries have changed the position of their focal points in the government structure, with the aim of adapting to internal reorganization, or to achieve greater efficiency.

18. In order to support the work of the focal points and promote the implementation of the Convention, most of the country Parties have set up their NCBs by executive order. The membership, modes of operation and functions of these bodies (committees, technical groups, working groups and so on) vary markedly. Their responsibilities range from proposing government policies, via inter-agency coordination, advisory services or the organization of individual activities, to technical supervision. Some countries have succeeded in decentralizing the work of these bodies to the regional and local levels.

19. The reports suggest that inter-agency coordination activities offer substantial advantages such as greater influence on government policy and the efforts of other environment-related bodies. In countries where no coordination bodies have been set up, efforts to combat desertification tend to be fragmented into compartmentalized administrative areas.

20. The reports highlight significant progress in establishing legislative frameworks conducive to efforts to combat desertification. In recent years, many of the countries have initiated or updated environmental legislation, particularly in relation to mining, the establishment of protected areas and regulation of resource use and ownership (land, forests and water).

21. The few countries which have officially incorporated their NAPs into environmental laws and regulations and poverty reduction strategies (PRSs) have succeeded in making desertification control one of the starting points, or even a guiding element, in the review, updating and adaptation of national legislation and policies. In most cases, integration of the issue of drought and desertification in general, and the NAP in particular, into domestic legislative frameworks is still pending. To this end, a few countries are adapting their legislation, or are considering the possibility of updating their NAPs in the light of the new environmental rules and regulations.

22. The most recent progress made in the field of legislation and institutions in the region includes various of the Convention's environmental, economic and social principles. The main progress is reflected in policies of employment and rural credit to combat poverty, and hence activities aimed at reducing pressure on land and raising capacity to absorb investment. Institutional mechanisms pursuing these objectives include national and regional economic development agencies and public participation in rural, agricultural and forestry development.

23. The commitment of Governments to maintain and strengthen the institutional base, particularly in times of change, is highlighted in various reports as a critical factor for progress in the implementation of the CCD. Continuous change, institutional shortcomings and the absence of links to promote intergovernmental coordination continue to hold back the drafting and initiation of some NAPs, their incorporation in the legislative and institutional context and the successful management of human, technical and financial resources.

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

24. Article 3 (b) of the Convention sets out the principle whereby a call is made for solidarity and international joint participation for improved subregional, regional and international cooperation and coordination and for better use of financial, human, technical and organizational resources. Article 21 establishes the Global Mechanism (GM) as a mechanism to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources to affected developing country Parties for the implementation of the CCD. In addition, in 2003, decision 6/COP.6 welcomed the step taken by the GEF Council in establishing a new operational programme on sustainable land management, and accepted GEF as a financial mechanism of the Convention.

25. The countries of the region are parties to a series of joint participation agreements with countries and institutions which provide funding and technical advisory services. Their resource management activities have been crucial to the initiation of activities agreed under the NAPs. The projects carried out under the NAPs have benefited from technical and economic support from Governments as well as international cooperation agencies, with very tangible results, though these are not quantified in the reports. For the drafting of the third national reports, most of the countries received resources from GEF and other contributors. Other countries obtained funding thanks to bilateral cooperation and their own resources.

26. In recent years, some countries have increased the level of domestic resources destined for sustainable development activities, with emphasis on forestry and water and soil management and conservation. Most of the countries, however, have not succeeded in translating the importance attached to desertification control and the mitigation of the effects of drought into budget allocations commensurate with the challenges they face. With the exception of the resources reported for environmental services and ecotourism, no new strategies have been devised to enable countries to generate their own resources.

27. Most of the countries report that they have secured substantial resources from international cooperation agencies for the implementation of national strategies and policies, such as economic recovery programmes (ERPs), or for the regional development of a vulnerable basin or area. CCD-related actions are funded in this framework; however, it is difficult to distinguish the amounts destined solely towards achieving Convention targets from those with global aims - for example, efforts to combat poverty or achieve the Millennium Goals. Despite this substantial support, few countries mention the participation of their financial partners in monitoring or validating results, or both.

28. Few reports refer to access for local actors to resources and technologies for the implementation of actions under the CCD. However, they cite remarkable experiments, such as the establishment of national programmes to provide access for small-scale producers and landowners to debt forgiveness funds, the sale of shares in national businesses or the introduction of systems of payment for environmental services.

29. Most of the reports highlight the strengthening and broadening of links with national and international technical and scientific institutions in response to the need to monitor climate change and secure greater access for countries to modern technologies and know-how. In this regard, various reports single out the participation of countries in international fire and drought warning systems.

30. Various reports bring out the importance of partnerships at the subregional level for the joint management of funding in contacts with the international community. In particular, the comparative advantage displayed in the experience of various countries which contribute jointly, in terms both of funding and of human resources, offers scope for projects on a bigger scale, from which a greater impact is expected.

31. Thanks to the modest increase in domestic funds and their management by decentralized bodies with the support of international cooperation agencies, various countries have broadened

their coverage, in terms of both population and acreage, through actions under the CCD. However, the predictable and timely availability of adequate financial resources remains a serious problem for the region.

D. Linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and with national development strategies

32. The need to achieve synergies among the three instruments which emerged from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development has been acknowledged by the country Parties since the first session of the COP, and successively in decisions 7/COP.5, 12/COP.6 and 12/COP.7. In this context, mention should be made of the 2004 workshop on "Forests and forest ecosystems: Promoting synergy in the implementation of the Rio conventions" organized by the secretariats of the three Rio instruments, which approved recommendations on cross-cutting aspects of these three instruments in terms of standard obligations, implementation measures and the need for capacity-building.

33. A major effort in the search for synergies at the national level is the project for self-assessment of national capacity for the management of the world environment (NCSA) set up by UNDP and GEF at the beginning of 2000. Almost all the reports analysed for this synthesis describe participation in this initiative in the form of an assessment of countries' individual, institutional and systemic capacities from the standpoint of the priority issues common to the Rio instruments and elements working for and against the conduct of synergistic actions. Three countries also mention the fact that the NCSA project included the Wetlands Convention (Ramsar, 1971).

34. Notable among the regional efforts mentioned in the reports is a binational development plan which seeks to identify, design, negotiate and implement local projects involving payment for environmental services which encourage the application of the three conventions. At the national level, at least two countries are adopting measures of adaptation to climate change in dry zones.

35. A large number of countries have established joint focal points to promote fulfilment of national commitments related to the conventions. According to the reports, this makes it possible to draw on human and economic resources in the implementation of specific activities for the joint achievement of objectives in more than one of these instruments. Two reports state, however, that the officials in charge are not fully trained in the content of the conventions and the commitments arising from them. The secretariat has also noted a rise in the work which this triple responsibility imposes on officials.

36. Aside from the efforts mentioned in the promotion of synergies among the Rio conventions, over 95 per cent of the countries report major progress in the harmonious implementation of activities under the CCD and their national development strategies. Although few countries have diagnostic machinery or plans for the integration of their NAPs and their national strategies, in practice at least three areas of joint action are reported. The first falls within the framework of the ERPs; the second in the strategies for the development of the rural sector through promotion of the restoration and sustainable management of soils and, first and foremost, afforestation and reforestation activities. The third includes community development

through programmes for the promotion of the rights of the population and, in particular, those of indigenous peoples and local communities in the management of their resources and the creation of local capabilities for this same purpose.

E. Use and sustainable management of land, including water, soils and vegetation

37. At the regional level, the most notable progress in terms of the use and sustainable management of land occurred in the proliferation of studies on the vulnerability and productive capacity of ecosystems, in which catchment basins are generally the unit of analysis. The reports mention studies on salinity, nutrient content and carrying capacity of soils; water balance of ecosystems; water quality and availability; and, where vegetation is concerned, plant cover and strategies for improvement of grazing land.

38. Some countries whose economies are partially based on the mining industry have embarked on action to control soil and water pollution caused by their extractive activities. The effort to eliminate sources of pollution of water resources has also extended to other countries, in the form of studies and actions for the integrated management of solid wastes.

39. Another practical action which is frequently mentioned by the countries is rainwater harvesting for domestic use, irrigation and, in some cases, fish farming. Irrigation projects, particularly on a small scale, fall under both the NAP and development projects which form part of other institutional initiatives. The large-scale application of natural fertilizers, compost, humus and manure at the national level is mentioned by one country. Another country specifically mentions projects for the conservation and management of land in indigenous communities.

40. The activities mentioned, however, are not carried out in all countries, but only in some areas of some of them. Many of the reports do not reflect the results of monitoring of these activities, either in the framework of the NAP or in the national development projects, and in addition, most of these activities lack any clear institutional linkage. Nor is any mention made of the potential achieved or the activities carried out in the third Thematic Programme Network on water (TPN3) to make progress in this area. Consequently, it is still not possible to speak of a critical mass of activities directed towards the use and sustainable management of land, although there are countless national and local efforts and initiatives.

F. Development of sustainable agriculture and ranching production systems

41. The reports reveal that farming and stock-raising activity in several countries is increasingly focused on trade in products with market advantages. In this transformation, some countries refer to the application of principles of agroforestry, organic farming and forestry. The conversion of production in some countries is supported by means of measures of land use planning for the sustainable management of farmland, the conversion of agro-industry and processes of agrarian reform to make use of uncultivated land, relieve the pressure on over-exploited land and confer on land a more effective social and economic function. Two countries mention incentives for raising productivity in stock-raising through an increase in the availability of feed per unit of area and the adoption of organic certification.

42. Emphasis is placed on efforts directed towards in situ conservation of local varieties in Andean and Caribbean countries, and the development of urban farming initiatives, especially in Central America and the Caribbean. Sustainable crop and stock-raising development activities fall within the framework of CCD activities to a lesser extent, and greater integration of the principles of the Convention in this area has yet to occur.

G. Development of new and renewable energy sources

43. Around half of the countries have no data on production or consumption of energy from renewable sources. However, the data provided reveal two trends. The first reflects the small share of renewable energy sources in countries' overall energy supply. The second is the importance of hydro energy, followed by biomass energy, as principal sources. Consumption of renewable energies occurs mainly in the residential sector, followed by industry, and lastly by farming. Only two countries report higher industrial than residential use.

44. Three countries in the region are pioneers in the development and use of renewable energies, and one of them has passed on its experience to other countries. The reports do not reveal progress in the development of renewable energy sources, but do highlight the proliferation of development projects which include the use of photovoltaic panels and the efficient use of biomass. Most of these projects do not form part of the NAPs, but of rural development programmes. Generally speaking, the reports supply scant information on progress in relation to new and renewable energies in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. The information available, taken together with subsequent reports, would constitute a fundamental starting point for the future launching and initiation of TPN6 on renewable energies.

H. Measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land and early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought

45. Almost all the countries have devised and/or are pursuing measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land. All the countries began by preparing diagnostic studies, in many cases with a view to NAP formulation, as a basis for planning. A number of countries have succeeded in identifying areas affected by desertification and drought, as well as the specific measures called for, the resources needed and even the institutional linkages which action requires.

46. In contrast to previous reports, a large number of countries mention afforestation and reforestation activities as a key measure for the rehabilitation of degraded land. Although they are few in number, actions to mitigate and prevent the effects of soil degradation, and especially a tripartite effort by Central American countries, also stand out. Moreover, and further to the efforts already described in earlier reports, various countries mention the introduction, expansion and enhancement of management of protected areas for the recovery and joint protection of soils and plant and animal species and the sustainable management of grazing land.

47. Mention is made in the reports of three subregional programmes in the framework of the CCD whose application helps to strengthen measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land: the first is the Subregional Action Programme for sustainable development of the Puna Americana, which includes a sustainable land development project with an estimated duration of 12 months starting in 2006. Three of the nine components of the project are directly aimed at the recovery

of degraded soils, while five others relate to sustainable land management and the last covers systems for support, monitoring and early warning. The second is the Subregional Action Programme for Hispaniola, which has principally involved local capacity-building activities. The third is the Subregional Action Programme for sustainable development in the Gran Chaco Americano, under which a project is being developed to reduce social, economic and environmental degradation of the Chaco Americano, and which includes another sustainable land management project in the cross-border ecosystem.

48. The introduction of early warning systems has been a priority for the countries affected by severe flooding and hurricanes, drought and forest fires in recent years. Various countries have modernized and expanded their systems for recording climatic and cartographic data. This has contributed to forecasting, communication and mitigation of the effects of drought. However, only two countries speak of having strengthened early warning systems for drought.

49. On both issues, rehabilitation of degraded land and early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought, only initial steps have been taken. As in other areas, the most notable shortcoming is the lack of systematic data in the framework of the CCD. In addition, the activities and potentialities of TPN4 in relation to agroforestry are missing from almost all the reports. Independently of this, it is a matter of concern that some subregions, and especially some countries, continue to lag behind in adopting measures in both respects.

I. Drought and desertification monitoring and assessment

50. The most appropriate starting point for drought and desertification monitoring and assessment in the region is the diagnoses prepared in the framework of the NAPs. Added to them are new regional and/or thematic diagnoses, and the inclusion of social and economic indicators which have been adopted to different extents by the countries.

51. During the period covered by this document, the countries of the Caribbean and Central America took two substantial steps forward in identifying indicators and benchmarks for desertification and land degradation. The first step was the holding of workshops which recognized the limitations on and opportunities for the development of indicators and the conditions for subregional cooperation and identified qualitative and quantitative indicators of interest from the standpoint of the Convention. The background to these workshops was the workshop held in Mendoza in 2002 and a tri-national project implemented in 2000-2003, whose most tangible outcome was the dissemination of the MONITOR software. The second step forward was the drafting of a document on the role of non-governmental organizations and grass-roots communities in devising systems for monitoring land degradation using indicators and benchmarks.

52. Many of the countries in the region make use of systems for monitoring biophysical, hydrological and meteorological resources and plant cover in at least part of their territory. These form part of systems of indicators of poverty, food security, progress towards the Millennium Goals and so on, and are complemented by social and economic indicators. Various countries point out the link between these benchmarks and indicators and monitoring of processes of land degradation. At least three countries record progress in the strengthening of systems for monitoring land degradation, in association with academic institutions and intergovernmental and bilateral cooperation agencies.

53. Since September 2002, six Southern Cone countries have been involved in a programme to combat desertification which includes the development of a computerized monitoring system. One country reports that it already possesses a drylands classification system. Another country has made significant progress in the use of three indicators of public investment, area covered and number of users in projects for desertification control and mitigation of the effects of drought. Monitoring of and publicity for all these initiatives falls under TPN1, coordinated by one country in the region. It should be mentioned that two countries participated in the “Land degradation assessment in drylands” (LADA) project in 2003-2005.

54. The above reveals major efforts to identify benchmarks for drought and desertification monitoring and assessment. At the regional level, however, it has not been possible to reach a consensus which would allow comparable and applicable benchmarks, even of a generic nature, to be recommended and used in all countries. Also pending is the assessment of countries which have indicators and benchmarks to measure land degradation but report that they do not apply them in the management of this process.

J. Access by affected country Parties to technologies and technical and specialized know-how

55. Few reports refer to access by countries to technologies and specialized technical know-how. However, it is possible to infer from these a substantial improvement in data computation technologies and in monitoring of environmental processes; for example, the number and quality of earth stations and satellites for monitoring of plant cover, or the composition of agricultural and other crops.

56. Differences in institutional research capabilities and applied sciences in the countries are reflected in different degrees of access to modern technologies and in the creation of a critical mass of national technicians and experts. However, the efforts made by two countries to transmit their knowledge and experience to other countries in the region and the world are noteworthy.

57. Access to modern technologies seems to be limited to specialist governmental institutions and the private sector, as in that regard there is no reference to other parties. The great interest which the countries previously displayed in traditional know-how in efforts to combat land degradation demonstrates that these remain the principal elements on which action in the field is based. It is not possible to draw significant conclusions from the meagre references to the integration of traditional know-how and modern knowledge.

III. LESSONS LEARNED

A. Lessons from national action programme formulation and the implementation process

58. In the past four years over 70 per cent of the region’s 26 NAPs have been approved and formally presented. Their drafting and initiation have followed very different processes in each country, dictated in large part by the existing institutions and capabilities, the priority attached by

Governments to environmental issues in general and the severity of drought and desertification processes in each country. Despite the variations from one country to another, it is possible to outline a series of lessons and identify some elements common to the region.

59. The drafting of the NAPs marked a special period of creation and dissemination of information for awareness creation and the establishment of partnerships and government commitments. It was also a special period for participation by stakeholders directly affected by land degradation, and by the international community. The lessons learned from this process in general are not reflected in the NAPs, and consequently tend to melt away as progress is made in the implementation of the projects established.

60. In both NAP drafting and implementation, the limiting factor remains the availability of predictable and adequate financial resources that are sustainable over time, which depends both on the political will of Governments and on their ability to negotiate with possible contributors and other environment-related instruments and machinery. The possible sources of funding for the NAPs are able to cover only part of the requirements reflected in them. In addition, various reports agree that bureaucratic processes are long and complex and do not always result in allocation of the resources sought. In this process, many of those involved, particularly at the local level, lose interest, and their willingness to act diminishes.

61. The ability to create synergies with other countries and form a common front with greater comparative advantages has grown, but there remains, for example, a lack of project implementation skills in the smallest countries, as well as an inability to prepare detailed projects, underpin them or identify their possible impacts.

62. The drafting of NAPs, particularly those which contain specialized diagnostic studies on the impact of drought and desertification, is a starting point for assessment of progress in the framework of the CCD and a planning tool for Governments. However, as is shown by various diagnostic studies subsequently incorporated by some countries, they are imperfect instruments. This applies not only to diagnoses and technical proposals, but also to the related policy and institutional proposals.

B. Lessons from the reporting system

63. Most of the countries' third reports were late or incomplete, or both. This situation marks a backsliding compared with 2000 and 2002, respectively. The process will not be complete without an evaluation of the types of financial arrangements which led to delays, and the forecasts of the countries regarding access to funds and efficient use of them. This evaluation must be carried out in the light of the political will of Governments, the international commitment to support the countries in the drafting of their reports, the level of awareness of the CCD and the agencies responsible for its implementation, and other factors.

64. Some countries provide information which is precise, quantitatively and qualitatively. Others, however, despite the fact that they now have a NAP, remain vague in their descriptions. The main problem observed is lack of clarity in communicating the practical progress made since the last report. Nor is it possible to distinguish clearly between programmes and projects which are under way and ideal situations in the future. This makes it difficult to distinguish between what is being done and what would be desirable.

65. Almost all the countries have adjusted to the format and recommendations set out in the Help guide for the preparation of reports, but major differences between them still remain both in length and in the points discussed. The Help guide available in 2002 did not correspond to the most recent decisions of the Conference of the Parties, and this explains in part the difference in the content of the reports compared with the guidelines in the *Bonn Declaration* and the recommendations of the Committee on Science and Technology. There exists an updated guide which takes into account the latest recommendations and decisions and allows both flexibility in drafting the reports and scope for comparing them one with another.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

66. The 27 countries which sent information for the preparation of this analytical synthesis confirm major progress in fulfilment of the commitments assumed by Governments when ratifying the CCD. The most notable progress has been the drafting and official presentation of 19 NAPs, joining the 7 which have been in existence since 2002. Currently, three more countries have advanced versions.

67. In the same way as the drafting and presentation of the NAPs reflected the particular dynamic in each country, their implementation took on different characteristics. Many countries are experiencing fragmented processes, both in time and in space, with regard to the implementation of the NAPs. Rather than progress in stages, one can see that the will of Governments, the priorities set, the support from international cooperation agencies, the institutional and financial capabilities in place, the economic conditions and external factors such as natural disasters have combined in a variety of scenarios. In this way, the implementation of the CCD in each country constitutes an exception in itself.

68. In some countries, the NAPs form part of national strategies and policies. In others, however, they remain as spin-offs from environmental management policies. There is a need to support the stakeholders which are committed in their efforts to raise the legal, political and institutional status of their NAPs, and particularly the countries most affected by poverty stemming from land degradation and risks of drought.

69. In the processes of implementation, some countries are pursuing specific projects in the framework of the NAP while others include them in the framework of projects in the field of agricultural, stock-raising and/or forestry development. Here it is necessary to highlight the importance of differentiating between development projects in general and those which contribute specifically to CCD implementation. This distinction has not always been clear in the reports, and there is a risk of endorsing projects which are unsustainable or high risk, such as the construction of large dams or indiscriminate fertilization of soils. The country Parties could include this topic in their discussions during their future meetings.

70. The countries have backed with actions their commitment to the participatory processes for NAP formulation and to events central to this process. Numerous and often innovative means have been used for diagnosis, information, dissemination and training. The synergies between governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, national and international organizations and interested persons are at their greatest during these events. Accordingly, it is

recommended that mechanisms for information, dissemination and training which are sustained over time, low-cost and large-scale should be explored. The successful experience of various countries in the region during the drafting of their NAPs should be harnessed to this end.

71. Some countries generally report major progress in achieving critical mass in research and technological innovation for monitoring of processes of land degradation. The potential for learning from one's experience lies principally in the subregional partnerships within the framework of the CCD and other existing bilateral and multilateral links in the region. Although the value of this assertion has already been demonstrated in the form of advice given by some countries to their counterparts, the task of replicating this experience and following it up has yet to be accomplished.

72. One of the greatest advances in the four-year period has been the identification of benchmarks and indicators to measure processes of land degradation and their impact. Much of the region has reached a point where it is possible and advisable to seek consensus through evaluation of the application of the existing indicators and its results.

73. The references and information supplied by the reports in relation to progress with the TPNs are very meagre, with the exception of TPN1 on "Benchmarks and indicators". For example, various national and international activities have been carried out in the framework of TPN4 and TPN5 on "Agroforestry" and "Traditional knowledge" respectively. The number and scale of these activities merit a regional assessment as of now. At the same time, there is a need to evaluate the establishment of focal points for the TPNs in the light of the institutional advantages and the interest displayed by the countries.

74. The region has taken strategic steps in the implementation of the CCD during the period 2002-2006. The country Parties can address the future challenges, with the political will of their Governments and the help of the international community. These challenges can be defined in three areas. The first is the consolidation of the progress made and the comparative advantages of the region, such as its wealth in terms of community organization, its technical and scientific capabilities, the ability of the countries to cooperate among themselves and with other countries in the world, the lessons learned in development activities, and the accumulation of traditional and modern knowledge. This experience and these advantages are focused in large part on the priorities of the NAPs and the SRAPs and on the TPNs. Strengthening the latter could furnish a strategic tool for progress in the region as a whole in the implementation of the CCD.

75. The second area of challenges for the region is the establishment of funding machinery which is sustainable over time. If this is not achieved, there will be a risk that the implementation of the NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs will be restricted and even halted. The third area relates to the need for the region as a whole to strengthen its capacity to ensure that its interests are included in the international agenda. To date, the lack of such a capacity has prevented it from influencing and efficiently benefiting from the international machinery and instruments to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.
