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COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION  
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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 INFORMATION PROVIDED BY RELEVANT ORGANS, FUNDS AND  
PROGRAMMES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM, AS WELL AS OTHER  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS,  
ON THEIR ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
CONVENTION IN AFFECTED COUNTRY PARTIES OF  
REGIONS OTHER THAN AFRICA**

Note by the secretariat

**Summary**

1. This document reviews reports received as at 31 May 2006 from organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as intergovernmental organizations accredited to the Conference of the Parties, on activities undertaken in support of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in affected country Parties of regions other than Africa, from 2002 to date. The secretariat has endeavoured to take into consideration all 16 reports submitted under this agenda item. All the reports received after the above-mentioned date will be posted on the secretariat website at <<http://www.unccd.int>>.
2. The information provided and reviewed in this document testifies to the active involvement of these organizations, based on their respective fields of expertise, in the implementation process in regions other than Africa.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by its decision 11/COP.1 on procedures for the communication of information and review of implementation, inter alia:

(a) Encouraged relevant organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to provide information, as appropriate, on their activities in support of the preparation and implementation of action programmes under the Convention;

(b) Requested the secretariat to compile the information provided by organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other IGOs and NGOs, on measures taken or planned in support of implementation of the Convention.

2. By decision 1/COP.5, the COP established the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) to assist the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention.

3. The same decision 1/COP.5 states that the review process shall examine, inter alia, reports submitted by the Parties, and information and advice from the Global Mechanism (GM) and the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), as well as reports from relevant organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system and other IGOs and NGOs and such other reports as the COP may call for.

4. Decision 9/COP.7 states that the Committee, at its fifth session, shall review, inter alia, the information provided by relevant organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other IGOs and NGOs, on their activities in support of the implementation of the Convention in affected country Parties of regions other than Africa.

5. In order to comply with the provisions of decisions 11/COP.1, 1/COP.5 and 9/COP.7, the secretariat sent reminders to organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, and to accredited IGOs, inviting them to submit their reports. Based on established practice, the secretariat requested NGOs to submit their contributions directly to their national focal points so as to ensure that the reports would encompass civil society input in keeping with the “bottom-up” approach. Accordingly, most NGOs channelled their reports through their national focal points directly into their respective national reports. The following summaries have been prepared by the secretariat based on contributions received by 31 May 2006.

## **II. ORGANS, FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM**

### **A. Convention on Biological Diversity**

6. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is continuing its support to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) through the ongoing implementation of the joint work programme on the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands and continued participation in the Joint Liaison Group of the Rio Conventions.

7. During its eighth session, in March 2006, the COP to the CBD took a number of decisions in support of the implementation of the UNCCD (see UNEP/CBD/COP/8/31):

(a) Decision VIII/2 encouraged Parties to strengthen synergies between the two conventions and to consider the CBD programme of work on the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands and the CBD–UNCCD joint work programme as bases for developing joint activities at the national level to achieve the objectives of the three Rio conventions;

(b) Decision VIII/2, paragraph 11 (b), requested the Executive Secretary to promote the joint work programme of the CBD and the UNCCD, including the streamlining of national reporting;

(c) Decision VIII/2 paragraph 11 (e), requested the Executive Secretary, drawing on the outcomes of regional synergy workshops organized jointly by the three Rio conventions, to prepare a document for review by the COP, to invite the COP to the UNCCD to do likewise, and to subject the resulting document to review by focal points of the two conventions. This document would:

- (i) Identify priority activities to be implemented by Parties, other Governments and relevant organizations, including supporting actions to be undertaken by the executive secretaries of the CBD and UNCCD to promote the achievement of the 2010 biodiversity targets with respect to dry and sub-humid lands;
- (ii) Identify capacity needs so as to facilitate implementation of the activities referred to in paragraph 7 (c) (i) above;
- (iii) Identify major obstacles that may prevent achievement of the 2010 biodiversity targets with respect to dry and sub-humid lands and further identify ways to overcome these obstacles.

8. On the occasion of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD), the CBD decided to celebrate the International Day for Biological Diversity (22 May 2006) under the theme ‘protecting drylands biodiversity’. The celebration of this day was supported by the CBD through the distribution of material emphasizing the importance of drylands biodiversity and the links between drylands biodiversity and the need to continue efforts to combat desertification.

9. The CBD will also hold a regional synergy workshop in Asia or Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) on strengthening local implementation of the programme of work on the biological diversity of dry and sub-humid lands and agro-biodiversity, in collaboration with UNCCD and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Participants will be expected to develop proposals and guidance on how best to enhance synergy among practitioners at local and national level; to exchange information and experiences on capacity-building for the implementation of the Rio conventions; and to develop examples of related plans of action and specific project proposals to achieve the 2010 targets in dry and sub-humid lands.

B. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

10. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has supported the implementation of the UNCCD in the LAC countries through various projects, publications and workshops.

11. In collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, ECLAC provided the Governments of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru with information systems for indicators to measure socio-economic impacts of desertification. As a result of the project ECLAC published a book entitled *Pobreza, Desertificación y Degradación de los Recursos Naturales*.

12. Additional technical assistance was provided to the Subregional Action Programme for Sustainable Development of the American Puna, particularly in terms of facilitating the validation with Bolivian and Argentinian local communities.

13. ECLAC also organized two meetings to discuss issues relating to UNCCD implementation. On 15 December 2005, with the assistance of several institutions, it organized a seminar on the contribution of mining to sustainable development of the Puna Americana to promote investment to reduce the socio-economic impacts of this activity on land degradation. From 13 to 16 June 2006, it organized a workshop on sustainability and monitoring of processes and impacts to combat desertification with the aim of providing methodologies to harmonize and evaluate the activities to combat desertification.

C. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

14. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has prepared *ESCWA Water Development Report* that, in its first issue, emphasized the vulnerability of the region to drought and raised awareness of the importance of developing regional drought detection, prevention, preparedness and mitigation measures.

15. The ESCWA region is the most water-scarce region in the world, accounting for almost 5 per cent of the world's population, but less than 1 per cent of the world's freshwater resources. The vulnerability of ESCWA member countries to drought has intensified due to the region's demographic and economic growth, increasing water scarcity and water-resource and land-use patterns.

16. Drought in the ESCWA region also assumes an international dimension, as the region's three major waterways cross national boundaries.

17. Case studies were carried out in Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, whose rural/agricultural populations are comparatively high, and whose current access to freshwater resources is limited.

18. Following damaging droughts in recent years, many governments in the ESCWA region have taken steps to develop drought preparedness capacity, but there is still a lack of awareness of drought and its impacts, and of the capacity to mitigate it. The 1999–2001 drought affected each country in the region differently. Regional drought research must therefore examine ways

in which non-climatic factors affect societal vulnerability to drought, and how drought planning and mitigation can help reduce drought vulnerability.

D. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

19. The dual concern for food security and the conservation of resources is reflected in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Strategic Framework for the period 2000–2015, which includes specific reference to support to the environmental conventions, including the UNCCD.

20. A major FAO initiative is the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) which aims to promote national action plans to combat hunger and emphasizes actions at local level. It is encouraging a number of actions of direct relevance to the UNCCD, such as water control, soil protection and rehabilitation, and diversification of farming techniques.

21. In the field of forestry development, many countries affected by desertification launched national planning/programming processes with the support of FAO.

22. FAO has embarked on several large programmes on sustainable land management (SLM) in particular in the framework of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) operational programme 15 (OP 15) on sustainable land management.

23. At the regional and subregional levels, FAO initiated and prepared the Land Degradation Assessment in the Drylands, used to develop tools and methods to assess and quantify the nature, extent and severity of land degradation.

24. A United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/GEF Project Development Facility A (PDF-A) project, implemented by UNEP and executed by FAO between 2000 and 2001, was followed by the PDF-B project document implemented from April 2001 until August 2004. This resulted in the development of a strategy to quantify land degradation on a global and local scale, with approaches tested in three pilot countries (Argentina, China and Senegal). A full project document was subsequently prepared and endorsed by an expanded set of pilot countries during 2005, with additional donor support (FAO, UNEP, World Soil Information (ISRIC), United Nations University (UNU), World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT), Global Land Cover Network (GLCN)). The project started in April 2006 with a budget of more than USD16 million for a period of four years.

25. FAO has regularly offered technical advice to the Financial Information Engine on Land Degradation (FIELD) of the Global Mechanism (GM) and has assisted the GM in the application of the FIELD system at country level. It has also set up a website on desertification to be used directly by stakeholders involved in the UNCCD.

26. FAO supported the United Nations Forum on Forests in its efforts on deforestation and forest degradation, including the Tehran Process or “Low Forest Cover Countries” initiative, which aims to guide countries with low forest cover to establish specific forest policies.

27. Several technical guidelines have been produced covering subjects such as soil conservation, irrigation, pasture and livestock management and forest conservation. More than

100 of these publications are now accessible on CD-ROM and much more information is available on the new FAO desertification website.

28. FAO continues to support several global and regional networks on degraded and problem soils, in cooperation with some 40 participating institutions/countries, including the Asia Soil Conservation Network for the Humid Tropics, WOCAT, the Asia-Pacific Agroforestry Network (APAN) and the Participatory Watershed Management in Asia Network.

29. FAO has more than 100 ongoing field projects directly relating to the assessment and control of desertification. It also participated, where possible, in the elaboration of national action programmes (NAPs) and subregional action programmes (SRAPs) and was instrumental in the preparation of those of China, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Iran, Lebanon, and Yemen, and played a role in many others.

30. Interregional activities can be illustrated by the Interregional Project for Participatory Upland Conservation and Development in Bolivia, Burundi, Nepal, Pakistan and Tunisia, carried out by FAO and financed by Italy.

31. During recent years, many regional meetings relevant to desertification control were organized by the Regional Office for the Near East and the Subregional Office for North Africa, in collaboration with regional organizations.

32. In 2005 in Asia, FAO assisted in more than 20 national projects on management of natural resources, farming systems, soil and water conservation and support to the APAN and to soil conservation in 17 countries (see FAO Assessment of the status of human-induced soil degradation in South and Southeast Asia and Conservation of Lands in Asia and the Pacific).

33. In Latin America, FAO has been involved in activities of direct support to the UNCCD at national and regional level, and there are about 30 ongoing regional FAO field projects dealing with sustainable rural development in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones.

34. In February 2004, a workshop on land degradation in the Caribbean was held in Trinidad, Trinidad and Tobago, which resulted in the establishment of the Partnership Initiative on Sustainable Land Management (PISLM). This PISLM is now recognized by all agencies as the umbrella under which all initiatives relating to SLM the Caribbean should be implemented.

35. In December 2005, FAO participated as member of the project steering committee of the GEF/PDF-B project entitled "Preventing land degradation in small island ecosystems in the Caribbean through sustainable land management". It is also the cooperating agency in the PDF-B project entitled "Integrated management of the artibonite international watershed", being implemented in the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

36. FAO is also involved in the project "Promoting the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)/Caribbean Forum (CARIFORM) food security", implemented in 13 Caribbean countries from 2003 to 2007.

37. FAO's SPFS projects in several countries in the LAC region, particularly Central America, Mexico and Venezuela, promote land resources management practices to combat land

degradation and increase the availability of water resources for crop production and land conservation at local level.

38. FAO believes there is a need for stronger commitment by the main national actors concerned by desertification, as well as additional efforts at international level to carry out well-targeted actions in most affected areas.

39. FAO is determined to do all it can to achieve the objectives of the Convention within the limits of its resources, and will continue to develop its regular activities, giving highest priority to support for food security within a framework of sustainable agricultural and rural development.

#### E. International Fund for Agricultural Development

40. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is dedicated to reducing rural poverty through empowerment of rural people, with current emphasis on soil and water conservation. As executing agency of the GEF land degradation linked to the GM, IFAD can match land degradation to poverty reduction and development concerns.

41. Initiatives at the global level include raising awareness of the role of rural women in combating desertification. IFAD is also involved in a number of projects focusing on gender issues, including projects to reduce the workloads of indigenous women in China, enhancing women's indigenous knowledge in India, and a South Asia initiative to empower women farmers through community exchange and training programmes.

42. A USD 1.1 million IFAD/GEF project aims to contribute to the development of capacities for strategic planning on sustainable land management and will also enhance the capacities of 55 countries to prepare their third national reports to CRIC 5 and COP 8.

43. The Asia and Pacific region is working closely with the GM and the GEF to develop and implement programmes to combat land degradation. Implementation support will be provided to IFAD-funded projects in upland and rainfed areas through research on technical and institutional innovations in agriculture and agroforestry.

44. In South Asia, the IFAD/GEF OP 15 aims to rehabilitate tsunami-affected ecosystems in Sri Lanka in order to provide full ecosystem services, including adaptation against extreme climatic events. Other projects in the region include one on livelihood security for earthquake-affected rural households in Gujarat, India, area development projects in the North-West Frontier Province and southern tribal areas of Pakistan, and a leasehold forestry and livestock programme in Nepal.

45. In South-East Asia, an IFAD/GEF regional project aims to achieve sustainable development while rehabilitating degraded forest and countering peatland degradation. Projects involving rural poverty reduction, rural income diversification and resource management are being implemented in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines and Viet Nam.



46. In East Asia, the IFAD/GEF drylands ecological conservation and rehabilitation in China project seeks to promote the adoption of an integrated ecosystem approach into China's major land degradation programmes. IFAD's contribution focuses on building agricultural and social services infrastructure, developing human resources capacity and establishing a micro-finance scheme to beneficiaries. It is also implementing a number of rural poverty reduction programmes in the country.

47. IFAD's programme in the Pacific region aims to support sustainable livelihood opportunities, especially for youth and women, in remote rural communities in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

48. In Central Asia, IFAD will continue to focus on livestock farmers and will become involved in participatory rangeland management. IFAD has also been closely engaged in the Central Asian Initiative for Land Management (CACILM) and will continue to work with all the partners concerned in its support.

49. In West Asia, IFAD is supporting research on: crop varieties that are resistant to drought, salinity and poor soil conditions; the feasibility of changing from crops requiring large quantities of water to high-value crops requiring less water; and technology for improving water-use efficiency. Projects for the sustainable use of land and water resources are under way in Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

50. An innovative financing mechanism, "Reward the Upland Poor of Asia for Environment Services" (RUPES) has been developed to reward IFAD target groups for the environmental services they provide.

51. In LAC, IFAD continues its efforts to help the rural poor, with particular emphasis on strengthening the organizational and technical capacity of local communities and securing their rights to manage resources on their own lands.

52. Poverty reduction efforts in North/Central America include a sustainable development project for rural and indigenous communities of the semi-arid north-west of Mexico and a rural development project for the eastern region of El Salvador.

53. In South America, an IFAD/GEF project on sustainable land management in the semi-arid north-east of Brazil is coherent with national priorities for poverty reduction, sustainable development and environmental protection and is, according to the Ministry of Environment, one of the most concrete support activities for the implementation of the NAP.

54. Rural development projects are also under way in Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela, and projects on livelihood desertification and management of natural resources are being implemented in Bolivia and Peru respectively.

55. IFAD's Latin America and the Caribbean Division executed the programme to strengthen gender mainstreaming, whose achievements include gender sensitization among key staff in IFAD projects and concrete actions to achieve gender equity in investment activities. Projects in several drought-affected countries now require that new and existing water user committees take in women members.

56. IFAD projects in Eastern Europe aim to arrest further water and land contamination and soil erosion in the region. They include rural development programmes for mountainous and highland areas of Azerbaijan and Georgia.

57. IFAD will continue to focus on reducing extreme poverty and hunger among the poorest rural people. It will further raise global awareness through international and regional events, while tackling the root causes of desertification at the very local level.

#### F. United Nations Development Programme

58. The overriding goal of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is to promote sustainable development, and in particular contribute to the global goal of halving poverty by 2015.

59. UNDP is working closely with its programme countries, supporting their poverty reduction efforts, including assisting in the preparation of NAPs and mainstreaming NAPs and sustainable land management issues into national development and planning frameworks. Support to affected countries in 2004–2005 has mainly focused on policy development and capacity-building and programme formulation and implementation.

60. Forty-two UNDP country offices in the LAC, Asia and Europe regions have allocated resources as an integral part of the country programme to implement sustainable land management activities.

61. The Drylands Development Centre through the Integrated Drylands Development Programme is supporting programmes in Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen for the implementation of the UNCCD.

62. UNDP–GEF has assisted 66 countries in the LAC, Asia and Pacific, and Europe regions to develop GEF-eligible projects that address land degradation and desertification. UNDP has leveraged funding to assist 35 least developed countries (LDCs)/small island developing States (SIDSs) in preparing their third national reports to the UNCCD.

63. The GEF Small Grants Programme has funded more than 750 projects worldwide since its launch in 1992 and is currently operational in 46 countries.

64. The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) promotes a decentralized, participatory approach to the management of natural resources. It supports poverty reduction through local development programmes, given to and managed by local governments. UNCDF is providing support to Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Viet Nam and Yemen.

65. The Community Water Initiative is a funding mechanism for community-based water supply, sanitation and watershed management and has supported countries in Latin America to develop various water-related programmes.

66. The Poverty and Environment Initiative is a capacity development programme jointly led by UNDP and UNEP to help countries integrate the environment and livelihood concerns for poor and vulnerable groups into national policy and planning.

67. In 2005, as part of the Global Drylands Imperative, UNDP spearheaded the development of a challenge paper on achieving the MDGs in drylands. The information and opinions generated by an e-forum subsequently held in April 2006 are being fed into an Action Plan proposing concrete steps for poverty reduction in the drylands of the world.

68. UNDP has emphasized the development of appropriate partnerships in LAC, Asia and Pacific and Europe. It has assisted the Government of Cuba in developing a GEF country partnership programme (CPP) and has been an active partner with the Asian Development Bank in the CACILM sustainable land management project in Central Asia. It has also assisted Pacific countries to develop an over-arching partnership on sustainable land management with regional organizations (especially the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme) and FAO. Similar efforts are under way in the Caribbean with the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute and CARICOM. UNDP has participated in developing a new CPP for India (with the World Bank) and led a similar process for Egypt and Indonesia.

69. UNDP will actively pursue innovative programming in support of the UNCCD, for example in the areas of preservation of soil productivity, sustainable forest management land tenure security, sustainable pastoralism, drought mitigation and integrated land and water governance.

70. UNDP will step up efforts to leverage additional financing for implementation of the Convention, while continuing to assist countries in meeting their obligations to the Convention and in mainstreaming SLM and other convention policies into national development frameworks.

#### G. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

71. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) has hosted the Asia Regional Coordinating Unit since 2001 and provides office space and administrative support for its operation. UNESCAP also provides secretariat support for the North-East Asia Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) giving the opportunity for the country members to explore joint actions on combating desertification in the subregion. In this framework, UNESCAP, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank, the UNCCD secretariat and UNEP, developed the regional master plan for the prevention and control of dust and sandstorms (DSS) in North-East Asia. The regional master plan has two major components: the establishment of a regional monitoring and early warning system (the assessment focuses on institutional mechanisms, technologies and processes related to DSS monitoring); and the establishment of an investment strategy for the prevention and control of DSS which aims at developing guidance for partners to participate in demonstration projects.

72. Additionally, and in cooperation with UNEP, the State Forestry Administration of China and the Ministry of Nature and Environment of Mongolia, UNESCAP has developed a medium-

sized GEF project entitled “Joint Demonstration Project for Preventing and Controlling Dust and Sandstorms Originating in Erlianhot (China) – Zamin Uud (Mongolia) source areas”

#### H. United Nations Environment Programme

73. UNEP has undertaken a number of activities to commemorate the IYDD. In collaboration with selected expert agencies and individuals, it prepared the “Global Deserts Outlook” report, launched on World Environment Day, June 2006. It co-organized the “Future of Drylands” conference, held in Tunisia in June 2006, and is participating in the organization of an international conference on desertification and the international policy imperative to be held in Algeria in December 2006.

74. During COP 7, UNEP participated in the special segment on economic opportunities in the drylands and held a side event on managing drylands environments for sustainable development. It is also a partner in the New Alliance to Combat Land Degradation in Africa (TerrAfrica), launched during COP 7.

75. UNEP convened a high-level brainstorming workshop for multilateral environment agreements on mainstreaming environment beyond Millennium Development Goal 7 (July 2005, Nairobi, Kenya). The meeting agreed on short-, medium- and long-term activities to ensure that the objectives of the environment and development communities mutually support each other.

76. UNEP continued to implement and develop projects on land degradation for financing through the GEF.

77. A UNEP–GEF project on Land Degradation Assessment in the Drylands (LADA) was developed and subsequently approved by the GEF in November 2004. LADA will provide a policy tool for the implementation of NAPs and SRAPS of the UNCCD.

78. A joint World Bank, UNEP, FAO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNDP, World Health Organization (WHO) project on International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development was developed in 2002–2004, with partial funding from the GEF. Implementation started in January 2005 and the project will be completed in 2007.

79. A series of nine regional training workshops on the GEF sustainable land management approach has been conducted as a result of the UNEP/GEF medium-sized project on global support to facilitate early development and implementation of land degradation projects under GEF OP 15. The nine workshops were attended by about 400 participants from 130 countries.

80. The global GEF project on biological diversity with relevance to land degradation, entitled “People, Land Management and Environmental Change” (PLEC), implemented in several countries from 1998 to 2002, has created the potential for expanding sustainable and productive relationships between scientists and farmers. It has also produced a series of outputs including analyses, books and electronic material as well as policy recommendations. PLEC has developed a number of follow-up national and international projects, conducted training courses and produced several publications.

81. Projects at international level include an MSP project on sustainable land management in mountain regions in Thailand, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and China (Yunnan Province); the MSP project on community based rehabilitation of degraded land in Balkan countries (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Turkey); the full-sized project "Sustainable Land Management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains – an Integrated and Transboundary Initiative in Central Asia" (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan).

82. UNEP is on the Executive Board and the consortia of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, which assessed and developed response measures for multi-scale ecosystem approaches relevant to drylands.

83. The MSP on Assessment of Soil Organic Carbon Stocks and Change at National Scale developed and demonstrated generic tools which quantify the impact of land management and climate scenarios on carbon sequestration in soils.

84. UNEP has been working to promote collaboration among Multilateral Environmental Agreements and is working to identify ways of harmonizing reporting requirements at international level and assisting in the establishment of coordinated reporting mechanisms at national level. UNEP has finalized a project on streamlined national reporting under biodiversity-related conventions.

85. In 2006, UNEP sponsored production of the Earth Action Kits for the IYDD.

86. In Asia and the Pacific, UNEP/Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) is developing a regional strategy on land degradation to identify priority activities to address land degradation in the region.

87. UNEP is implementing "Support to the Implementation of the Regional Environmental Action Plan in Central Asia", a GEF MSP which contributes to GEF's strategic priority of sustainable land management (SLM-1) on targeted capacity- building.

88. UNEP has become a member of the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) for implementation of the UNCCD in the Central Asia subregion and is involved in developing CACILM GEF-Asian Development Bank project, whose goal is to combat land degradation and improve rural livelihoods in Central Asia.

89. UNEP is involved in the joint effort with the Asian Development Bank, UNESCAP, UNCCD and governments in north-east Asia to address the issue of dust and sandstorms within the overall context of promoting sustainable development in the region.

90. UNEP/ROAP, in consultation with the Government of Mongolia, is developing "Community-Based Integrated Management of Pasture, Drylands Biodiversity of Mongolia and Ground Water" in Mongolia for GEF support.

91. UNEP/GEF is developing "Regional Combating Desertification in South Asia: The Agriculture-Environment Nexus", which addresses the root causes of human-induced land degradation, including community, policy and institutional dimensions.

92. UNEP/Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific in cooperation with several regional partners, established the Environmental Knowledge Hub for Asia and the Pacific, a decentralized information network that can be considered the “environmental yellow pages” for the environmental sector in Asia and the Pacific.

93. In West Asia, UNEP/Regional Office for West Asia coordinates the UNCCD SRAP and has carried out a number of activities in this regard, including start-up pilot projects on “Integrated Natural Resources Management to Combat Desertification in West Asia” for mountainous and rangeland rehabilitation in four West Asian countries.

94. UNEP celebrated World Environment Day 2006 with the slogan “Don’t Desert Drylands” and is working with the Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) on a documentary and book on the Arabian deserts, to be released mid-2006. It also participated in a number of conferences, workshops and technical presentations throughout 2005.

95. In LAC, progress was made on several UNEP–GEF projects on sustainable land management. These include a PDF-B project on sustainable land management in the transboundary Gran Chaco Ecosystem in South America (Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay). UNEP is also participating in an agroforestry environmental training network and has helped create the Caribbean partnership on land degradation.

#### I. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

96. As many refugee camps and settlements are in arid lands, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is especially conscious of the impact of refugee and related operations. Key activities being undertaken to address such impacts include the introduction of improved agricultural techniques, agroforestry, reforestation and improved management of existing forests and woodlands, water and soil conservation practices, and the promotion of fuel-efficient stoves, as well as alternative sources of energy. All these activities are actively managed and supported with a programme on environmental awareness-raising and community participation.

97. Several countries are benefiting from such interventions, including Bangladesh, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal, Sudan and Zambia.

98. In Nepal, refugees have been provided with kerosene for use in cooking since 1992. More than 100,000 refugees receive kerosene on a monthly basis together with their food rations, thus reducing pressure on the forests. UNHCR, in collaboration with the Lutheran World Foundation, is also experimenting with the use of briquette, biogas and solar energy to supplement expensive kerosene. Efforts to mitigate environmental degradation in Bangladesh include community tree planting in and around the refugee camps and control of soil erosion.

99. In addition to a broad range of practical interventions that benefit refugees as well as local communities, UNHCR also works closely with national and local authorities to find practical and appropriate responses to environmental issues.

## J. United Nations University

100. Key issues addressed by the United Nations University (UNU) over the past decade in support of the UNCCD include improving environmental governance, better understanding of traditional water management technologies in drylands, and strengthening land management, particularly in marginalized areas.

101. UNU is implementing the four-year project on sustainable management of marginal drylands in eight countries (China, Egypt, Iran (the Islamic Republic of), Jordan, Pakistan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Uzbekistan) in cooperation with UNESCO and the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, as a coordinated effort for capacity-building and developing policy–science links. Related to this effort is a policy-oriented publication on the application of traditional technologies in drylands, to be published in 2006.

102. UNU also contributed to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and co-authored a global drylands assessment.

103. The project “Sustainable Land Management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains – an Integrated and Transboundary Initiative in Central Asia,” a joint initiative by UNU, UNEP and the GEF, addresses the interlinked problems of land degradation and poverty within one of Central Asia’s critical mountain “water towers” and biodiversity hotspots. Project activities included preparing a funding proposal and conducting training in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

104. Proposals were submitted for inclusion in the GEF June 2006 work programme and funding is pending review of the project by the GEF Council. Meanwhile, a project on community-based rehabilitation of degraded land in Balkan countries received GEF PDF-A funding in 2006.

105. In cooperation with national partners in the region, as well as Japan, UNU has developed the project on sustainable land management in mountain regions: China (Yunnan Province), the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Thailand. The goal is to create new knowledge and alternative options for incorporating local knowledge with positive impact on natural resources into relevant policies. UNEP/GEF approved a PDF-A grant for a four-year targeted UNU research effort under this project.

106. UNU is executing a GEF-funded knowledge management project called Knowledge for the Land (KM: Land) to contribute to sustainable land management. Working in close cooperation with an interagency group (GEF, UNDP, UNU, UNEP, FAO, World Bank and IFAD), UNU has developed a framework for monitoring and knowledge management. While helping GEF evaluate the impact of its sustainable development land management project, the project also supports the work of CST of the UNCCD relating to benchmarks and indicators.

107. A new master’s degree programme in integrated land management in dry areas is to be completed in June 2006 with five international students (from China, Egypt, India, Sudan and Tunisia).

#### K. World Bank

108. The Bank's portfolio of activities outside Africa includes 14 projects in 12 countries in LAC, Europe and Central Asia (ECA), East Asia and the Pacific (EAP) and the Middle East and North Africa (MNA). This portfolio of investments amounts to USD 593.35 million, of which USD 541.53 million is direct World Bank lending, and the GEF contribution is USD 51.82 million. The projects focus on natural resources management, community participation, capacity-building and poverty reduction.

109. The projects cover conservation of natural resources in Albania, Azerbaijan, Brazil and the Lao People's Democratic Republic; integrated ecosystem management in Brazil, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Uruguay; sustainable forestry in Brazil and Viet Nam; local governance reform and development support in Indonesia; mine closure and environmental regeneration in Poland and Romania; payment for environmental services in El Salvador and environmental monitoring in the Russian Federation.

110. The majority of the funding went to ECA (USD 325 million) followed by MNA with USD 120 million, EAP with USD 82.04 million and LAC with USD 66.31 million. These projects have specific funding for sustainable land management components covering the key themes of forestry and land and water resources management, which are central to realizing the objectives of the UNCCD.

111. The World Bank looks forward to continued collaboration and partnership on this important agenda.

#### L. World Health Organization

112. The World Health Organization (WHO) has worked with UNEP on a country project of the Health and Environment Linkages Initiative in Jordan. This carried out a cost-benefit analysis of the linked health, environmental and economic benefits of enhanced water efficiency. The assessment resulted in a strong consensus statement from all the relevant national ministries that each dollar invested in strong measures to reduce water wastage would result in a minimum of about two dollars of overall benefits. The analysis is therefore being used to strengthen the general case for ecological protection, water conservation and prevention of desertification in Jordan and countries with similar ecological conditions.

113. WHO is working with UNDP on a new project, supported by the GEF, on piloting health adaptation to climate change. This is scheduled to run over about four years, with a total budget request to the GEF of about USD 6 million. The project is in the design phase and includes work in three countries with substantial desert areas (China, Jordan and Uzbekistan). The project will work to protect human health under a range of climate-related threats, including those associated with increased water stress and desertification.

114. At the international level, WHO is producing a report on health as an integrating issue of the three Rio conventions. The report documents the multiple health threats that arise from failure to manage these global environmental changes, from diarrhoeal and other diseases associated with water stress, to the potential for emergence and spread of new infectious



diseases. This synthesis of evidence further strengthens the case for national actions to combat desertification.

### **III. OTHER INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

#### **A. Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands**

115. The Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) continued with the implementation of the activities of the SRAP in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. In this regard, ACSAD, in cooperation with Syrian authorities, rehabilitated 100 ha of Syrian steppe in Tholithliate area, implemented contour ridges for planting seedlings, prepared a hydrological study to determine the location of agricultural ponds, carried out research on rain water harvesting (diamond and crescent shapes) and organized a workshop for the pilot area to discuss the project. In Yemen, ACSAD completed the water harvesting measures for the rehabilitation of degraded terraces in farmers' fields.

116. ACSAD experts assisted the Government of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in the preparation of the NAP as well as the soil map of the country and a soil database. Its experts also support the vegetative cover survey in the Jordan steppe (in Sopha, Sobhia and Sora).

117. ACSAD started the rehabilitation of degraded land in Kordfan province by undertaking soil survey studies, establishing mechanical barriers and planting vegetation to fix sand dunes. ACSAD also carried out a survey for rangelands vegetation cover in the Syrian steppe.

118. In the framework of the IYDD, ACSAD organized a workshop on the state and prospects of the Arab deserts from 14 to 16 May 2006.

119. ACSAD organized several training courses for Arab engineers on management of arid and semi-arid zones, combating desertification, water harvesting measures, rangeland management, protection of biodiversity and land degradation monitoring systems.

#### **B. Arab Organization for Agricultural Development**

120. At regional level, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development carried out a wide range of studies on a variety of issues, including forest management, land and water resources management, irrigation and medicinal and aromatic plants.

121. There have also been a number of training programmes, seminars and workshops on subjects ranging from rangeland conservation and use of geographic information systems (GIS) to assess desertification, to environmental protection in cultivated areas and protection of land and water resources.

122. Technical assistance at regional level has been in the form of development of indigenous techniques for combating desertification in Arab countries and a contribution to developing benchmarks and indicators for assessing desertification in Arab countries in the context of the UNCCD.

123. Several studies have also been carried out at national level. These have dealt with such topics as strengthening the role of rural communities in rangeland and forest protection, improving water resources management, techniques to improve productivity of irrigated lands and integration of environment principles in agricultural education.

124. Training, seminars and workshops at national level have dealt with the management of sandy soil, rangeland management, combating forest fires and increasing awareness about sustainable development and environmental protection.

125. Technical assistance at national level has included the provision of forest plant seeds to Iraq, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, assistance in the preparation of NAPs in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, and financial assistance to participants from Arab countries to attend various subregional, regional and international meetings.

### C. European Space Agency

126. Following COP 6, the European Space Agency (ESA) launched the DesertWatch project in collaboration with the national committees to combat desertification of Italy, Greece and Turkey. The project aims to develop a standardized, commonly accepted and operational information system based on Earth observation technology to support national and regional authorities of Annex IV countries in reporting to the UNCCD and assessing and monitoring desertification and its trends over time.

127. In the long-term, this project aims to foster the operational use of Earth observation within the UNCCD user community, particularly in the north Mediterranean region. The contractor will promote the concept of the DesertWatch system within the user community by implementing a user-oriented promotion plan and by producing a dedicated user handbook with guidelines on the use of Earth observation data within the context of the UNCCD.

128. From a methodological viewpoint, the project will exploit the scientific results derived from the research and application projects funded by the European Community, ESA and the research and development national programmes in recent years (Treaty Enforcement Services Using Earth Observation (TESEO)-Desertification, Desertification Information System for the Mediterranean (DISMED), Land degradation assessment in Mediterranean Europe (LADAMER), Combating Desertification in Mediterranean Europe: Linking Science with Stakeholders (DESERTLINKS), Mediterranean Desertification and Land Use (MEDALUS), Desertification Monitoring (DEMON), RIAD, Concerted Action to Support the Northern Mediterranean regional action programme to combat desertification (MEDRAP) etc). The project therefore aims to bridge the gap between this extensive research work and the operational needs of the community.

129. The design phase was carried out in close consultation with the user community. The project is now entering its second phase, where a sizable demonstration and validation will be carried out.

D. Organization of the Islamic Conference

130. The Islamic Summits and the Islamic Conferences of Foreign Ministers have thoroughly discussed and treated the issue of desertification and drought during recent years. Particular emphasis was given to support those member States stricken by drought and natural calamities (see resolution no. 12/32-E, 32<sup>nd</sup> Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, Yemen, June 2005). In this regard, some member States extended economic and humanitarian assistance to affected countries, particularly Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) African member States.

131. The Third Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Summit Conference held in Saudi Arabia on 7 and 8 December 2005 adopted the OIC Ten-Year Programme of Action which stipulates the enhancement of solidarity and economic cooperation among OIC member States. It also urges that assistance be rendered to affected member States stricken by drought and natural calamities.

**IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

132. This third reporting process on the implementation of the UNCCD in regions other than Africa has proved to be fruitful in terms of both the quantity and the quality of reports received from organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system as well as from other IGOs. In this regard, participants at CRIC 5 and COP 8 may wish to stress the importance for affected country Parties as well as for their partners of taking advantage of the work undertaken by the above-mentioned institutions.

133. Furthermore, the CRIC and the COP may also consider continuing to encourage those organizations actively involved in the implementation of the UNCCD worldwide to report to the Parties on their activities in support of the implementation of the Convention and advise, as appropriate, on the content and format of such reports.

134. The CRIC and the COP may wish to stress the need for governments to continue considering and duly including in their policy formulation processes the information provided by NGOs on their activities in support of the implementation of the Convention.

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