Submission by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

**on Decision 6/CP.17**

containing views on elements to be potentially included as future areas of work of the Nairobi Work Programme (NWP):

# The role of the UNCCD convention (Parties and secretariat) in holistically addressing the issues of Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and the implications of recurrent droughts to the long term objectives of the NWP

**********

***Linkages between the NWP and the UNCCD long term objective***

The overall objectives of the Nairobi Work Programme (NWP) are intimately linked with the long-terms objectives of the UNCCD. The first can be summarized as follows:

1. The NWP is called to first assist all UNFCCC Parties, including developing countries, the least developed countries and small island developing States, to improve their understanding and assessment of impacts, vulnerability and adaptation; and second, to assist all UNFCCC Parties to make informed decisions on practical adaptation actions and measures to respond to climate change on a sound scientific, technical and socio-economic basis, taking into account current and future climate change and variability.
2. The UNCCD strategic objective relates with the vision of the 10-Year Strategy adopted by the UNCCD parties in 2007: To forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

***The role of land and soil in the implementation of the NWP***

With the overall objectives of the Nairobi Work Programme (NWP) in mind, the UNCCD secretariat considers the political momentum of Rio+20 with respect the sustainable development target to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) through a target of Zero Net Land Degradation (ZNLD) for 2030.

Currently, human activity is the major cause of global change, including climate change, desertification and drought. There are clear evidences of the increasingly rates of growth of the carbon in the atmosphere, on the degradation of water resources, on biodiversity loss and on the risks of not protecting soil productivity. The predominant economic development models tend to degrade land, biodiversity, water resources, and the atmosphere; to act on these it is required a forward-looking and holistic approach focusing on the nexus that food, water and energy have.

***Increase in demand for food, for energy and for water***

There are several pressures exerted to land:  increasing population growth, the concomitant demand for food (expected to increase by 50% when compared with the current levels) and for energy and water (increasing similarly by 40%) the physical needs for additional land to produce the resources and materials needed for these growing demands would require to add to production some 1.2 million square kilometers by 2030.

Pressure on land comes also from competing uses for agriculture (food and biofuels) forestry, pasture, urbanization and raw materials.

***These pressures create Land Degradation***

The main causes of land degradation and desertification is the unsustainable use of land, often exacerbated by policy failures. Climatic variations, such as recurrent droughts may also worse land degradation.

***Dryland, a special case***

Dryland because of aridity and water scarcity are particularly fragile to unsustainable land management practices that ultimately could lead to land degradation and desertification. Drylands are home to more than one third of the global population, and make up around 44% of all the world's cultivated systems and account for 50% of its livestock.

***Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN): A Sustainable Development Goal on Land Management***

The focus for a LDN goal could be included into the NWP in degraded and non-degraded areas. In the latter the aim could be to avoid land degradation. In the former, policies and measures aiming at protect soil organic matter, preserve water and nutrient resources, and maintain vegetative cover and conserve biodiversity should be at the core of the adaptation programmes. One such adaptation programme that is proposed is the Zero Net Land Degradation (ZNLD) over a given period of time, for non-degraded land to remain intrinsically healthy and for already degraded-land to be restored.

***The underlying targets of the NWP should be formulated with ZNLD in consideration***

Land is one building blocks to adaptation to climate change. Sustaining soil and restoring degraded land can ensure improved livelihoods and more resilient ecosystems: food security, rural poverty alleviation, reduction of hunger and resilience building to environmental challenges.

The NWP can be part of a more coordinated international framework, addressing land degradation reduction rates. The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the only legally-binding instrument, linking environment and sustainable development to SLM and drought management. SLM practices have the potential to simultaneously deliver environmental benefits and improved livelihoods.

This target-setting initiative can be complemented by assessing the cost of not acting under the NWP on land and drought issues.

***On drought management and mitigation***

Drought is a natural and recurring part of the normal climate cycle and it is also a devastating threat to livelihood, subsistence and vulnerability of poor and rich communities, but especially put at greater risk sectors of the rural world, resulting in negative impact in developing countries (especially LDCs and SIDs).

Even though drought occurs globally with different intensity and frequency, the impacts can depend on the different degrees of social, economic and environmental vulnerability. Africa and Asia are the most drought prone regions of the world. Latin America and the Caribbean suffer droughts that put at risk their food, water and energy production.

Addressing drought requires, then, proper knowledge on the social and economic conditions of each country of each region of the developing world, linked with the status and availability of their natural resources, their socio-political vulnerability, and the disposal of financial resources. The level of drought preparedness and commitment to drought risk management can be made more coherent and consistent with the impacts caused by climate change, impacting on the frequency and intensity of droughts.

***Drought and land***

Drought is a complex occurrence comprised by temperature and rainfall. The relative water availability (or scarcity) on the surface and in soil, as well as their retention capacity play a key role on droughts and their duration and extent. Population growth is as well an issue for drought mitigation and in vulnerable areas of intensive agriculture (for food or biofuel) intended to supply the urban consumption and exports.

***UNCCD proposal of some agenda items for governance, poverty and sustainable land management, accounting for conservation of land and soils as needed natural capital under the future programme of work of the NWP***

- Work towards an internationally agreed set of sustainable development goals that are feasible and achievable. The target on zero net land degradation must be at the core of such SD goals.

- Assist governments in creating enabling environments for SLM by improving local decision-making, infrastructure and education; harmonizing natural resource strategies and policies; and supporting appropriate investment policies for natural resource conservation

- Promote the concept of value chains, by working with the private sector and public-private entities to develop tools (such as eco-labeling) that encourage sustainable land management, sustainable production and consumption

- Encourage diversification of income streams and livelihoods, with a focus first on drylands and on local communities of other degraded ecosystems, to reduce land-use pressures with food security as priority issue

- Encourage the intensification of water-efficient agriculture for food security and of renewable energy options, by adopting sustainable land management practices

- Work towards reducing transaction costs for investments in SLM, for example by promoting risk management and climate-aware technologies (focusing as well in drylands)

- Support public and private investments in drylands and other areas under land degradation processes by among others, matching them with carbon sequestration, integrated water management and renewable energy goals

- Support social protection, for example by using scenario modeling to forecast winners and losers, or virtuous and vicious outcomes, of adopting certain investment proposals, taking into consideration impacts related to gender and age.

- A permanent dialogue on drought is called upon, in which advancement on the implementation of the NWP is a must.

***ZNLD can be a crucial element of the NWP***

- Rising up collective awareness, of women and men, indigenous and local communities, through programmatic information, education and capacity development, on governance and natural resource management and adaptation, starting with SLM.

- Improving scientific and technical knowledge and research, in particular with respect to impact on ecosystems geography, technical adaptation responses and migratory flows.

- Developing institutions, administrations, public-private initiatives and support to civil society organizations with proper managerial and planning capabilities at the local level, accounting for action on food-energy-water needs that women and men in local communities in conservation areas set forth as priorities.

- Fostering technology transfer and research for SLM as the basis for food security, water and energy production; i.e., adapting agriculture / using SLM according to climate variability conditions.

**********