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COOPERATION WITH RELEVANT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Cross-cutting thematic areas and activities under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Convention on Biological Diversity and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Note by the secretariat

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mandate

1. The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), at its sixteenth session, requested the secretariat, in cooperation with the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) between the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), to prepare a scoping paper to identify cross-cutting thematic areas and activities under the three conventions (FCCC/SBSTA/2002/6, para. 50 (g)).
2. The SBSTA agreed to consider these thematic areas at its seventeenth session, with a view to providing recommendations to the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) on the terms of reference for the workshop, requested in decision 5/CP.7, paragraph 36, on possible synergies and joint action with the other multilateral environmental conventions and agreements (MEAs) under Article 4.8 and 4.9 of the UNFCCC (FCCC/CP/2001/13/Add.1).

B. Scope of the note

3. The purpose of this note is to assist Parties in considering thematic areas and activities under the three conventions. Information has been compiled in consultation with the secretariats of the UNCCD¹ and the CBD and based on documentation from international organizations such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).² The paper offers a broad overview of activities under selected thematic areas and provides an example to illustrate linkages between the conventions. On the basis of this input, and taking into account views submitted by Parties, as contained in document FCCC/SBSTA/2002/MISC.9 and Add.1, the note identifies possible action by the SBSTA.
4. The challenge of this document is to present information from the three conventions in the language typically used in the UNFCCC process. Although every attempt has been made to preserve the original meaning, it is possible that the meaning of some of the language used by other conventions may have been lost. The information contained in this paper is not exhaustive, but aims at providing first insights, which can be deepened at a later stage, if necessary.

C. Possible action by the SBSTA

5. The SBSTA may wish to take note of information contained in this paper, determine which areas could be relevant for the above-mentioned workshop and forward recommendations to the SBI. The SBSTA may also wish to recommend a draft decision, including goals for future work and processes to efficiently undertake and implement, in the most coherent manner, joint activities with other conventions, at the levels of the three secretariats and at the national level, for adoption by the Conference of the Parties (COP) at its eighth session.

¹ During the period 2001–2002, UNCCD organized some national workshops on synergies between conventions. This country-driven exercise brought together stakeholders involved in the respective conventions and has, so far, mostly emphasized the need for capacity-building. Experiences and lessons learnt will be assessed once a critical mass of workshops has been completed.

² For example, the technical paper on the interlinkages between biological diversity and climate change (see www.ipcc.ch/pub/techrep.htm).

II. BACKGROUND

6. The need for improved coordination among the Rio Conventions – the UNFCCC, UNCCD and CBD – has been recognized and noted in the conclusions and decisions of the governing bodies to these conventions. A specific mention for collaboration can be found in Articles 7.2(1) and 8.2(e) of the UNFCCC, Articles 5 and 24(d) of the CBD and Articles 8.1 and 23(d) of the UNCCD, which state that Parties shall encourage the coordination of activities with other relevant international bodies. When collaborating, the different mandates and processes of each convention should be kept in mind. This is recognized by Article 22 of the CBD and Article 8.2 of the UNCCD, which state that the provisions of each convention shall not affect the rights and obligations of any Contracting Party deriving from other international agreements.

7. In practice, the implementation of the conventions require actions at the national level which are often the responsibility of a specific institution (for example, the ministry of the environment) and a national focal point. Given that the responsibility for each convention does not necessarily fall to the same institution and focal point of a country, coordination and collaboration are needed at the national level.

8. It should also be noted that the roles and responsibilities of the secretariats vary. The UNCCD has a mandate for scientific and in-country related work; the UNFCCC and CBD secretariats aim to facilitate the convention process, leaving essentially the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support capacity-building initiatives in countries. For UNFCCC, scientific questions are mostly dealt with by the IPCC, whereas UNCCD relies on the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) and its ad hoc panels, and the CBD on its Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and related ad hoc technical expert groups, to assess the relevant scientific literature and to provide advice.

9. Areas of potential cooperation include activities at the international level (such as sharing and dissemination of information, harmonization of guidelines for reporting, and outreach) and at the national level (such as policy integration, cooperation between national focal points, ministries and agencies, coordination of national strategies and action plans, sharing of data and information systems, and monitoring of land-use changes). Activities by the conventions may conflict if different mandates and measures do not take into account the objectives of other conventions. Such a conflict may arise, for example, if the current discussion on the development of definitions and modalities for including afforestation and reforestation project activities under the clean development mechanism in the first commitment period do not address appropriately implications on the conservation of biological diversity and land degradation.

10. The JLG was established to improve the exchange of information, to explore opportunities for synergistic activities and to increase coordination between the three conventions and their secretariats, for the benefit of their respective Parties. Among other activities, the group has discussed the organization of a joint workshop to further explore opportunities for synergies among the three conventions. A first reflection on possible cross-cutting areas identified forests and forest ecosystems as a topic common to all three conventions that would enable the conventions to fully participate and benefit from the exchanges and findings.³

³ Currently, the JLG is awaiting conclusions from the SBSTA on how to proceed further with the workshop.

III. OVERVIEW OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE CONVENTIONS

11. The objective of the UNFCCC, as stated in Article 2, is the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Work under the Convention has been focusing on activities relating to mitigation and adaptation to climate change. These activities include the agreement on greenhouse gas emission targets, policies and measures for achieving these targets, the development of guidelines for the preparation of greenhouse gas inventories, development and transfer of technology, assessment and mitigation of adverse effects of climate change, research and systematic observation and funding. Recently, work has been concentrating on developing the legal framework for the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol. This legal framework includes such issues as land use, land-use change and forestry, compliance, cooperative mechanisms, reporting and review, and good practices in policies and measures.

12. The objective of the UNCCD, as stated in Article 2, is to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing this phenomenon. The Convention works principally on a regional basis and it is driven by National Action Programmes which aim at identifying the factors contributing to desertification and the practical measures necessary to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. The Convention includes a separate annex for its implementation in each region: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe. Each annex contains specific requirements on commitments, the role of developed and developing Parties, action programmes, financial resources, mechanisms, and other matters.

13. The objectives of the CBD, as stated in Article 1, are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources. Work under the Convention is ecosystem driven, in accordance with the established programmes under the convention bodies. These programmes include agricultural biodiversity, dry and sub-humid lands biodiversity, forest biodiversity, inland water biodiversity and marine and coastal biodiversity. Cross-cutting issues addressed under each of these programmes include access and benefit sharing, climate change and biodiversity, biodiversity and tourism, the ecosystem approach, indicators, protected areas, and sustainable use of biodiversity. In addition, the Convention includes provisions on cross-sectoral integration, technology transfer and cooperation, compliance, cooperation and reporting. Furthermore the COP has identified areas of interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change.

IV. CROSS-CUTTING THEMATIC AREAS AND ACTIVITIES

14. This section provides an insight into activities of the three conventions in six thematic areas:⁴ technology development and transfer; education and outreach; research and systematic observation; capacity-building; reporting; and impacts and adaptation. A short description of the area, examples of activities that are common to all three conventions and specific activities under each convention are provided. Some relevant articles in each convention are indicated.

A. Technology development and transfer

15. Activities in this area generally aim at developing and transferring the knowledge/expertise, technologies and financial support needed to pursue and implement the objectives of the conventions. Activities common to all three conventions relate to dissemination of information, assessment of needs, provision of methodologies and transfer of environmentally sound technologies. The processes and mechanisms for transfer and cooperation are expected to be similar across the conventions, but the technologies themselves can be different.

⁴ Following the suggestions made in the conclusions of the SBSTA16 report (FCCC/SBSTA/2002/6, para. 50 (g)).

16. Article 4 of the UNFCCC identifies the commitments of all Parties. Article 4.1(c) states that Parties shall promote and cooperate in the development, application and diffusion, including transfer, of technologies, practices and processes that control, reduce or prevent anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases. These activities have focused on the synthesis and dissemination of information relating to technology needs assessment and the development of a technology information system. An Expert Group on Technology Transfer has been established to assist with these activities.

17. Under Article 18 of the UNCCD⁵ Parties undertake to promote, finance and/or facilitate the transfer, acquisition, adaptation and development of environmentally sound, economically viable and socially acceptable technologies that are relevant to combating desertification and/or mitigating the effects of drought. Activities have been carried out under national, regional and subregional action programmes and under various Thematic Programme Networks, for example, on inventories of technologies and the promotion of new and renewable energy sources and technologies. The UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology (CST) has been carrying out work on survey and evaluation of existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies with programmes and mandates similar to that of the CST. The CST also undertakes review and implementation of national scientific and technological aspects of national reports.

18. Article 16 of the CBD⁶ establishes a framework for access to, and transfer of, technology, recognizing that this is an essential element for the attainment of the objectives of the Convention. The CBD pursues some activities under thematic programmes of work (e.g. agricultural biodiversity, dry and sub-humid lands, forest biological diversity, inland water ecosystems, and marine and coastal biodiversity) and under cross-cutting issues (e.g. impact assessment, technology transfer, global strategy for plant conservation, and alien species that threaten ecosystems, habitats and species). All these activities relate, for instance, to technological cooperation and outreach activities through a Clearing House Mechanism (CHM). This CHM is one of the instruments that the CBD uses to promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation and transfer of technologies. At the ninth meeting⁷ of the CBD SBSTTA, scheduled in November 2003, and at the seventh meeting of the COP of the CBD, in March 2004, it is expected that the role of the CHM will be increased concerning technical and scientific cooperation and transfer of technologies and that access to and transfer of technologies will be considered in depth. Planned work includes reviewing the status of implementation of COP decisions, carrying out a further inventory of technologies in thematic and cross-cutting issues and assessing their potential impacts on biodiversity, and identifying the requirements for successful application.

B. Education and outreach

19. Activities in this area generally aim at providing information and training to stakeholders, and developing the means to actively involve them in the convention processes. Activities common to all three conventions relate to facilitating access to information, development, management and monitoring of information products and systems, sharing information on good practices and lessons learnt, development of strategies to raise awareness, training, and outreach to constituencies and international organizations.

20. Article 6 of the UNFCCC seeks to promote action at the national, subregional and regional levels to enhance education, training and public awareness needed to understand and address climate change. Presently, Parties to the UNFCCC are developing a five-year work programme on issues relating to Article 6, including the role of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The secretariat contributes to the availability of information, for example,

⁵ See also Articles 3, 10.2(e) and 17 of the UNCCD.

⁶ See also Articles 18 and 20 of the CBD and Article 22 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

⁷ What UNFCCC calls sessions, CBD calls meetings.

through a mobile climate change kiosk at public events, library services and the publication of information on its web site.

21. Article 19 of the UNCCD⁸ states the requirements in relation to capacity-building, education and public awareness, and requests Parties, inter alia, to assess educational needs in affected areas, elaborate appropriate school curricula and expand educational and adult literacy programmes on the identification, conservation and sustainable use and management of the natural resources of affected areas. Examples of UNCCD activities include the launching of various networks for implementing regional action programmes and information networks, the establishment of education centres, the organization of national awareness seminars, and activities related to the World Desertification Day. Information kits have also been developed for various end-users.

22. Article 13 of the CBD⁹ requests Parties to promote and encourage understanding of the importance of, and the measures required for, the conservation of biological diversity. It also requests Parties to cooperate with other governments and international organizations in developing educational and public awareness programmes with respect to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. Activities of the CBD include establishing a Global Biodiversity Information Facility, developing a communication strategy and efforts to promote an international biodiversity day.

C. Research and systematic observation

23. Activities in this area aim at synthesizing scientific information relating to the conventions. Activities common to all three conventions relate to the elaboration and identification of indicators, scientific assessments, development of methodologies, analysis of data sets, and monitoring of processes and systems. The types of indicators, or what is assessed, may differ across the conventions.

24. Article 5(b) of the UNFCCC calls for Parties to support international and intergovernmental efforts to strengthen systematic observation and national scientific and technical research capacities and capabilities relating to climate change. A key dimension to the implementation of this Article has been cooperation with the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and with other agencies participating in the WMO Climate Agenda. Activities relate, for example, to the improvement of networks to monitor global climate observing systems. In this area, the UNFCCC also benefits greatly from the activities of the IPCC, which provides scientific assessments and information on relevant methodologies.

25. Research and development are identified in Article 17 of the UNCCD, which states that Parties shall promote technical and scientific cooperation in the fields of combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. Article 17.1(a) requests Parties to contribute to increasing knowledge of the processes leading to desertification and drought and the impact of, and distinction between, causal factors, both natural and human. In Article 16 of the UNCCD,¹⁰ Parties are requested to integrate and coordinate the collection, analysis and exchange of data and information to ensure systematic observation of land degradation in affected areas. Under the UNCCD, work is carried out under Thematic Programme Networks. For example, in Asia, such work covers monitoring of desertification, sand storm control and remote sensing; in Africa, a network on ecological monitoring, natural resource mapping, remote sensing and early warning systems will be launched in October 2002; and early warning systems are also being strengthened through collaborative ventures between Asia and Africa, as well as between Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.

⁸ See also Articles 5, 6, 8, 16, 18, 22.2 (i), 23.2(d), 24 and 26 of the UNCCD.

⁹ See also Articles 12 and 17 of the CBD and Article 23 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

¹⁰ See also Articles 8 and 19 of the UNCCD.

26. Research and systematic observation in the context of the CBD relate to monitoring; relevant elements can be found in Articles 7, 12 and 17.¹¹ In particular, Article 7(b) requests Parties to monitor, through sampling and other techniques, the components of biological diversity, paying particular attention to those requiring urgent conservation measures and those which offer the greatest potential for sustainable use. Annex 1 specifies three levels for monitoring activities: (1) ecosystems and habitats containing high diversity, and large numbers of endemic or threatened species; (2) species and communities which are threatened, wild relatives of domesticated or cultivated species, and medicinal, agricultural or other species with important economic, social, scientific and cultural values; and (3) described genomes and genes of social, scientific or economic importance. Activities under the CBD relate, for example, to the assessment of the status and trends of biodiversity in thematic areas, development of indicators for national monitoring programmes, and development of models to quantify impacts, causes and effects of forest fires and the impact of harvesting non-timber forest resources. The CBD has also initiated an interagency committee to coordinate activities on the assessment of interlinkages between biodiversity and climate change.

D. Capacity-building

27. Activities in this area generally aim at building and enhancing the capacity of institutions, groups and individuals involved in the convention processes. Activities common to all three conventions relate to strengthening the capacities of countries with specific needs (least developed countries, small island developing states), improving capacities of institutions, training specific groups such as negotiators, and strengthening the capacities of farmers and indigenous and local communities.

28. In the context of the UNFCCC, frameworks for capacity-building for developing countries and countries with economies in transition have been established. Article 9 of the Convention requests the SBSTA to provide advice on ways and means of supporting endogenous capacity-building in developing countries. Capacity-building activities have been undertaken by United Nations organizations such as UNEP and UNDP, in conjunction with the GEF,¹² in areas such as vulnerability and adaptation, research and systematic observation and preparation of national communications, including the preparation of greenhouse gas inventories.

29. Article 19 of the UNCCD¹³ requests Parties to promote capacity-building to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought, including institution building, training and development of relevant local and national capacities. The promotion of capacity-building shall be focused, for example, on strengthening training and research capacity at the national level, and on transfer of technologies. Article 19.2 notes that affected developing country Parties shall conduct, in cooperation with other Parties and competent IGOs and NGOs, an interdisciplinary review of available capacity and facilities at the local and national levels, and the potential for strengthening them. Capacity strengthening is considered to be a cross-cutting theme for all Thematic Programme Networks. Activities relate, for example, to strengthening capacities for drought management and desertification control, for assistance for the implementation of an integrated Local Area Development Programme initiative, and for monitoring and assessments of drought effects in Asia. These activities will be launched in 2002. In Africa, efforts have focused on the rational use of rangelands and production of fodder crops.

30. Elements for capacity-building under the CBD can be found in Articles 12 (Research and training), 16 (Access to and transfer of technology), 18 (Technical and scientific cooperation), 20 (Financial resources) and 21 (Financial mechanism). Article 22 of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

¹¹ See also Article 8 of the CBD.

¹² The GEF undertook several studies for different regions. A synthesis report can be found at http://gefweb.org/Documents/Enabling_Activity_Projects/CDI/cdi.html

¹³ See also Article 17 of the UNCCD.

requests Parties to cooperate in the development and/or strengthening of human resources and institutional capacities in biosafety for the purpose of the effective implementation of the Protocol. Under the Protocol, actions relating to biosafety include scientific and technical training in the proper and safe management of biotechnology, risk assessment and risk management, and the enhancement of technological and institutional capacities. Capacity-building is undertaken to implement conservation and sustainable use programmes, develop action plans, disseminate information, transfer technologies and improve access and benefit sharing. Capacity-building has been developed as a key action to implement the Global Taxonomy Initiative and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Regarding the latter, a pilot phase of a voluntary trust fund for the roster of experts has been established and an indicative framework for capacity-building under the Cartagena Protocol has been prepared. Capacity-building is a key factor in implementing priority actions in the national biodiversity strategy and action plans (NBSAP) (decision VI/27, paragraphs 8, 10 and 11). Article 8(j) and related provisions on indigenous and local communities have a multi-convention approach, which promotes capacity-building for various thematic and cross-cutting issues related to the livelihood of these communities.¹⁴

E. Reporting

31. Activities in this area generally aim at exchanging and assessing information on the implementation of the conventions at the national level, while improving transparency and consistency of information provided. Activities common to all three conventions include data collection, storage and analysis, preparation of reporting guidelines, and development of national communications and profiles.

32. Articles 4 and 12 of the UNFCCC relate to communication of information on the implementation of the Convention.¹⁵ Reporting includes elements such as greenhouse gas inventories, policies and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other relevant information related to the commitments under Article 4. Developed countries prepare and report national communications on a periodic basis (every 3 to 4 years) and national greenhouse gas inventories on an annual basis. Twenty-seven Annex I Parties have already submitted their third national communications. National communications and national greenhouse gas inventories are subject to reviews by teams of experts coordinated by the secretariat. A Consultative Group of Experts has been established to consider and review guidelines for the national communications by non-Annex I Parties, which may be adopted by the COP at its eighth session. Recently, a process to develop national adaptation plans of action (NAPAs) has been established to facilitate reporting by the least developed countries of their urgent and immediate adaptation needs. A Least Developed Countries Expert Group has been established to support the process of NAPA preparation.

33. Article 26.1 of the UNCCD¹⁶ requests Parties to report to the COP on the measures which have been undertaken for the implementation of the Convention, including the strategies, priorities and policies to combat desertification. Developed countries shall further report on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes, including information on the financial resources provided. Under the UNCCD, national reports, and reports on the implementation of subregional and regional action programmes and national action programmes (NAPs), are prepared. The

¹⁴ In paragraph 25 of decision VI/10, the CBD COP “requests the Executive Secretary to consult with the secretariats of relevant environmental conventions and programmes, such as the UNCCD, UNFCCC... and to explore the possibility of cooperating in order to facilitate collaboration among the different conventions with regard to the participation and involvement of indigenous and local communities in discussions related to the maintenance and application of traditional knowledge relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.”

¹⁵ Articles 5, 7 and 8 of the Kyoto Protocol relate to methodological issues, communication and review of additional information, specific to the implementation of the Protocol.

¹⁶ See also Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the UNCCD.

first reports were prepared in 1999 for affected African countries, in 2000 for other affected countries and in 1999/2000 for countries unaffected by desertification. In 2002, reports were prepared for all regions. In the future, unaffected countries will report to every ordinary COP session (2003, 2005, 2007), and affected countries to every other session, alternating between African countries and countries in other regions. Reports have also been prepared for the UNCCD Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), which will hold its first session in November 2002.

34. Article 26 of the CBD¹⁷ requests Parties to report on measures which have been taken for the implementation of the Convention. Under CBD, the national reporting guidelines and format are adopted by the COP. Reporting has been established in accordance with the thematic areas to be discussed by each meeting of COP. By August 2002, about 120 first national reports and 90 second national reports had been submitted to the secretariat. The synthesis and assessment of the information contained in these reports have been discussed at the fourth and sixth meetings of COP. The format for the third national report will be presented to the seventh meeting of COP in 2004 for discussion and adoption. The third national report will be due by the middle of 2005 according to the cycle of national reporting adopted at COP 5. In addition, about 90 Parties and a few regions have submitted their national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs). As required by COP decision VI/25, the Parties will include in their third national report information on progress and constraints in the implementation of their NBSAPs.

F. Impacts and adaptation

35. Activities in this area generally deal with adverse impacts on the environment. Activities common to all three conventions relate to predicting and monitoring impacts, and developing assessments and response measures, for example, methodologies, early warning systems and adaptation strategies.

36. Elements relating to impacts and adaptation can be found in Article 4 of the UNFCCC. In particular, Article 4.1(b) requests Parties to formulate, implement, publish and regularly update measures to facilitate adequate adaptation to climate change. Specific activities relating to vulnerability and adaptation have been elaborated by relevant decisions of the COP. Activities include the role of insurance and risk assessment, supporting the needs of the least developed countries, the operationalization of an adaptation fund, and the dissemination of methods and tools to assess vulnerability and adaptation.

37. The adverse effects from drought play a central role in the UNCCD. Article 10 of the Convention¹⁸ requests that national action programmes identify measures to monitor and assess the effects of drought and develop strategies to prevent or minimize its negative effects. Activities under the UNCCD relate to work carried out under Thematic Programme Networks; for example, in Asia, such work covers desertification monitoring and assessments, land degradation and training courses on early warning systems. The work of the CST on benchmarks and indicators, as well as on traditional knowledge dealing with coping and adaptation mechanisms, is also relevant in this context.

38. Impact assessment and minimizing adverse impacts are covered in Article 14 of the CBD.¹⁹ Adverse impacts are mainly those relating to activities that can affect biodiversity, including proposed projects and national programmes and policies. Current CBD work relates, for example, to biodiversity indicators, resilience of freshwater ecosystems, a work plan to address the destruction of coral reefs, assessment of impacts of invasive alien species, and developing guidelines for incorporating

¹⁷ See also Article 6 of the CBD.

¹⁸ See also Articles 16 and 18 of the UNCCD.

¹⁹ See also Articles 7 and 8 of the CBD.

biodiversity-related issues into impact assessment procedures and legislation. To provide advice to the SBSTTA, the CBD has established an ad hoc technical expert group (AHTEG) on climate change and biodiversity which focuses on: (1) the impact of climate change (as well as its adaptation and mitigation options) on biodiversity, including forest biodiversity and coral reefs;²⁰ and (2) the integration of biodiversity considerations in the implementation of the UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol. UNFCCC and UNCCD have been invited to participate in meetings of the AHTEG.

V. AN EXAMPLE RELATING TO ECOSYSTEMS: FORESTS AND FOREST ECOSYSTEMS

39. According to the Global Forest Resources Assessment 2000,²¹ forests currently cover about 30 per cent of the world's land area. Forest ecosystems offer a wide range of goods and services that support human activity. For example, they provide a habitat for biodiversity, contribute to the regulation of the hydrological cycle and sequester important amounts of carbon. Current trends of deforestation indicate that about 14.6 million hectares are lost each year, most of this loss occurring in the tropics.

40. In the context of the UNFCCC, activities relating to forestry and forests have been included as part of the mitigation options which aim to reduce the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Forests are both a sink and a source of carbon dioxide and, therefore, actions directed at reducing deforestation and increasing the forest cover contribute to mitigation strategies. Forests are vulnerable to climate change, and so affect the people who depend on their use. The UNFCCC has also recognized the need for developing adaptive strategies to minimize the adverse effects of climate change on forests. Some activities in the forestry sector could also be used as effective adaptation strategies to address impacts of climate change, such as floods and droughts. General activities under the Kyoto Protocol relate to defining afforestation, deforestation and reforestation, forest/cropland/grazing land management and revegetation, the development of good practice guidance and other information for land use, land-use change and forestry, and definitions and modalities for including afforestation and reforestation activities under Article 12 of the Kyoto Protocol.

41. Forests harbour a large proportion of biodiversity, and the CBD considers forest fragmentation as one of the major causes of the current biodiversity loss. The CBD programme of work on forest biodiversity, adopted at COP 6, has three elements: conservation, sustainable use and benefit-sharing, including activities on restoration, protected areas, and avoiding deforestation; institutional and socio-economic enabling environment; and assessments and monitoring. The CBD also undertakes other programmes of work of particular relevance to forests and forest ecosystems, desertification and climate change, for example, on protected areas, dry and sub-humid lands, the Global Taxonomy Initiative and the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation with its 16 outcome targets. Recognizing the linkages between biodiversity and climate change, the CBD COP requested the secretariats of relevant conventions to collaborate in preparing a proposal for the development of a mechanism to coordinate activities in these areas, and for linking and ensuring integration of NBSAPs under the CBD with NAPs under the UNCCD.

42. In addition, the CBD COP invited the Executive Secretary of the CBD to strengthen cooperation with UNFCCC, including the Kyoto Protocol, and UNCCD, especially on issues relevant to forest biodiversity, taking into account the role of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), and urged UNFCCC to insure that their activities are consistent with and supportive of the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. COP 6 further developed the requests for cooperation with and synergy between UNFCCC, UNCCD and UNFF on specific issues, welcomed the establishment of the

²⁰ Marine coastal ecosystems including coral reefs, and inland water and dry and sub-humid land ecosystems, considered to be relevant areas of linkages between the three conventions, were considered and discussed at the two meeting of the CBD AHTEG on biodiversity and climate change that were held in Helsinki and Montreal in 2002.

²¹ Produced by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

JLG and encouraged the activities of the group in promoting complementarity and synergies in their activities on forests and forest ecosystems. COP 6 also invited the UNFCCC, the IPCC and others to enhance collaboration in research and monitoring activities on forest biodiversity and climate change, and to explore possibilities of establishing an international network to monitor and assess the impact of climate change on forest biodiversity.

43. Forests also play a central role under the UNCCD because deforestation and land conversion and degradation are important drivers of desertification. Within the NAPs, forest conservation measures are included as a means of fulfilling the objectives of the convention. Afforestation and reforestation/revegetation are important activities that are also called for in the Convention. A need for these activities has also been emphasized by the regional and national action programmes (SRAPs and NAPs) and by the national reports prepared by Parties. Sustainable forestry practices are also included in the thematic issues that Parties should consider when developing strategies for action programmes to combat desertification.
