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UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION

TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

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Synergies and Cooperation with Other Conventions

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CCD



Chair of SBI,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure to be invited by the sister Convention to come and share with you our experiences on this topic of synergy.

We have observed that the challenge posed by the intricate impact of climate change, loss of biological diversity, drought and desertification on social, economic and environmental conditions in many countries has been exemplified in recent times. It has also been demonstrated that there is a clear convergence of objectives among the multilateral environmental conventions, and that there is a need for a reorientation of the strategic approaches that have hitherto been pursued by the various interested parties, particularly at the level of individual countries.

In particular, in order more concretely to address the issue of sustainable development, and to achieve environmental security, there is a need for the various actors to focus more on a broader framework encompassing, inter alia, desertification and land management, biological diversity, climate change and socio-economic development, which have been addressed by the three Rio conventions separately.

Article 8 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) explicitly addresses its relationship with other Rio conventions, in particular with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Parties are encouraged to coordinate their activities under other relevant international agreements, particularly the UNFCCC and the CBD, in order to derive maximum benefit from activities under each agreement while avoiding duplication of effort.

The need for a synergistic approach has been repeatedly recognized at the level of Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the conventions. The governing bodies of the conventions have taken relevant decisions in urging countries and secretariats of the three conventions to take advantage of, and build upon, the existing links among them and thereby to add value to their individual implementation processes.

The COP to the UNCCD has through various decisions called for closer collaboration among the Rio conventions and other relevant international organizations and conventions. For instance, at its fifth session, the COP endorsed the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group and expressed its support for the integration of approaches between the UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD. The COP5 also requested the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) to include in its programme of work consideration of land and soil degradation and its linkages to other environmental conventions.

In addition, the COP 5 requested the CST to enhance cooperation with the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) of the CBD and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of the UNFCCC. The COP also encouraged relevant international organizations, institutions and agencies to



promote synergies in their mobilization of resources in support of the objectives of the UNCCD.

The UNCCD Secretariat has been involved in the search for and development of synergy with the other conventions, through the development of inter alia;

- joint programmes of work,
- holding of joint workshops and consultative forums,
- facilitating country level synergy workshops involving the environmental conventions at the local level, at the request of Parties to the convention,
- Memoranda of Understanding have been signed with these conventions and the relevant UN and other organisations,
- Outlining/identifying areas of possible collaboration.

Moreover, the three Rio Convention Secretariats have established a Joint Liaison Group to assist in fostering closer collaboration among them (current status report has already been provided).

Representation and active participation of the UNCCD secretariat in the relevant meetings of these other conventions and organisations, including those of their subsidiary bodies has been undertaken to as far as possible also enhance collaboration.

These initiatives have been undertaken with the overarching goal to:

- avoid duplication of effort,
- take advantage of the complementarity,
- identify convergence of objectives existing among these legal treaties.

National Level Synergy Workshops Programme

On the national level, at the request of a number of Parties, the UNCCD secretariat has been facilitating the organization of national workshops in selected developing countries in order to stimulate the discussion of modalities of collaboration by various stakeholders in the implementation of the three conventions. The main rationale behind this exercise is to integrate the UNCCD process into national development strategies through linkages between existing relevant sustainable development policies.

Generally, the objectives of the national workshops are:



- To strengthen current coordination at local level, including the exchange of information, in order to achieve an optimal use of domestically available resources;
- To facilitate policy dialogue with the various partners, in order to attract financial resources towards concrete agendas for effectively addressing common objectives of the sustainable development conventions;

The workshops also serve to assist the conventions' secretariats in preparing and/or updating joint work plans to meet the expectations of countries, particularly in capacity building, information systems and innovative options for cooperation and assistance.

The workshops are organized in close cooperation with the national focal points for the UNCCD and their counterparts for the CBD and the UNFCCC. The other stakeholders at the national level, including relevant government ministries (such as those for agriculture, forestry, water management, the environment, economic development and finance) and non-governmental organizations, have also been involved in the exercise. The involvement of local experts has also been encouraged.

The national synergy workshop programme was launched in late 2000. Workshops have been held in Algeria, Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cuba, El Salvador, Kenya, Mali, Mongolia, Tanzania, Uganda and Venezuela. Additional national workshops are under preparation in Argentina, Colombia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia, Nicaragua, Niger, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Yemen. Sub-regional level workshops are also part and parcel, and one was held for the Arab Maghreb Union in Marrakech, Morocco, while another one is planned for Meso-America - Latin America and the Caribbean region.

The UNCCD secretariat has undertaken an assessment of the first phase of the programme. One of the most frequent observations has been that more effort is needed to develop the tools for an assessment of problems involved in joint implementation of the conventions, including possibilities for synergistic programming. The most recurrent proposals for improvements in the synergistic implementation of the conventions include the following:

- The need to strengthen local capacities for synergistic programme development was often mentioned as one of the main challenges to reaching synergies at the local level. In order to develop the tools to strengthen coordination among the key actors at national level, particularly the National Coordinating Bodies (NCBs) for the three conventions, the capacity to manage an evolving inter-ministerial and interdepartmental system of coordination needs to be developed where none exists, and to be strengthened where necessary. Ascertaining the key elements for effective coordination and programme development, and creating the possibility for each actor to play its role in the process, are crucial for this kind of endeavour;
- Overall strong political commitment to combating desertification and sustainable development in general at the national and international level is required, but also a continuous effort in dissemination of information and awareness raising, involving all stakeholders at all levels, and in particular at the local level, involving the use of traditional knowledge wherever possible. The necessity for concrete action plans to



overcome the nexus between land degradation and poverty, especially in Africa, has often been emphasized;

- Elaboration of guidelines on methodological issues, on information systems and on reporting and reviewing has also been perceived as a pressing need. This has generally been formulated as a recommendation to the secretariats of the Rio conventions and to their subsidiary bodies on science and technology.

The UNCCD secretariat plans to continue to support the organization of national synergy workshops.

Recommendations from the the First Session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)

The process of reporting on progress made in the implementation of national action programmes (NAPs), as well as regional meetings organized by the UNCCD secretariat preparatory to the first session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), provided the opportunity for country Parties to present their views on successes and shortcomings in the achievement of synergies among the conventions and to express their needs in this respect.

In this context, a number of recommendations for possible action in promoting synergies were put forward by country Parties:

- a) There is a need to integrate action programmes of environmental conventions with national sustainable development strategies, in particular in such areas as poverty reduction, science and education, agriculture, forestry, energy and water supply;
- b) It is also necessary to strengthen synergies with those legal instruments dealing with the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources critical to the survival of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid ecosystems and people living in affected areas. Better linkages between the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) under the UNFCCC and NAPs to combat desertification would increase the benefits of these programmes, especially for affected least developed countries (LDCs);
- c) The UNCCD and Global Environment Facility (GEF) national focal points should liaise more closely among themselves and with the focal points of the CBD, UNFCCC and Ramsar Convention on Wetlands for a more integrated management of programmes and projects;
- d) The private sector, which is expected to contribute financially to the implementation of environmental and sustainable development conventions, should be better informed about the benefits of synergies among them;
- e) The search for synergies at country level should be supported by appropriate incentive systems, institutional arrangements for coordination and responsiveness by the respective COPs of the conventions and their secretariats;



- f) The CST and its Group of Experts should work closely with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, as well as with other initiatives, such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, to take advantage of outcomes from these bodies;
- g) Technical and financial strategic alliances should be built to foster and strengthen effective regional and international cooperation and partnership, including in its South-South dimension;
- h) The number of national synergy workshops should be increased in order further to enhance decision makers' capacity at country level fully to implement the conventions in a synergistic manner. Developed country Parties should provide the secretariat with voluntary funding to this effect.

Strategy adopted by the UNCCD Secretariat towards Promotion and Strengthening of Synergies

In response to these challenges, the strategy adopted by the UNCCD secretariat towards promotion and strengthening of synergies among the conventions relies on four main pillars:

- a) Strengthening institutional linkages. To this effect, partnership and cooperation agreements have been concluded with the secretariats of the other environmental conventions;
- b) Testing operational options, including capacity building initiatives, as a part of the joint work programmes;
- c) Developing common policies and strategies. A Joint Liaison Group (mentioned above) at the secretariats' Executive Direction and Management level has been established, in order to promote synergistic cooperation among secretariats, to avoid duplication of effort and to utilize the available resources efficiently, while guaranteeing their integrity at the environmental level;
- d) Supporting country-driven initiatives: in this regard, a programme of national workshops on synergies was launched at the end of 2000 and is being implemented.

The UNCCD Secretariat looks forward to advancing the cooperation already started with the environmental conventions, for the benefit of their respective Parties, laying particular emphasis on local level action, as has been underscored by the various stakeholders.

Thank you.