

Input from the second Regional Meeting for Northern Mediterranean, Central and Eastern European and other affected countries in preparation of the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties - 10-11 July 2003, Geneva, Switzerland

1. The participants to the regional meeting took note with satisfaction of the current global membership of 187 Parties to the UNCCD, of the expanded membership of Central and Eastern Europe and of the progress made by the Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European affected countries towards preparing and implementing their national action programmes, as well as promoting regional collaboration.
2. The participants underlined the importance of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation that recognises the UNCCD as one of the tools for poverty eradication; and welcomed the decision taken by the Second Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), as called for by the WSSD, to designate land degradation (deforestation and desertification) as a new focal area and recognize the importance of these developments for the decision making process of the affected countries.
3. Furthermore, they welcomed the decision of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, at its eleventh session, to place the topic of desertification among the main issues to be discussed for the years 2008-2009, in accordance with the Multi-year Programme of Work of the Commission.
4. The participants to the meeting noted that, in spite of intervening measures, land degradation, caused by soil loss by erosion, and decline of organic matter content, in Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe, is increasing.
5. They emphasized the importance of approaching the questions related to land resources in an integrated manner, through coordinated action and cooperation at all levels, and highlighted the need for integrating the measures already taken, particularly in the context of the European Union, into the Convention process, and contemplating to scale them up at national level through the national action programmes.
6. The wish was expressed to strengthen and clarify the linkages between the European Soil Strategy and the UNCCD, both at the levels of scientific exchanges (CST) and of action programming process.
7. The participants, while recalling the comprehensive assessment of the UNCCD process conducted by the Parties during the first session of the Committee on the review of implementation of the Convention, recognized the considerable potential of the UNCCD for promoting the coherence of policies and measures relating to the sustainable use, planning and management of land resources, and resolved to better actualize this potential.
8. The participants welcomed the substantive report of their representative on the bureau of the CRIC, Mr F Micieli de Biase, establishing linkages between the CRIC 1 report and the

follow-up process to draft COP 6 decisions, and focusing on possible elements that could be included in the draft decisions. They requested the secretariat to forward this communication to the chair of the CRIC for his consideration and appropriate action.

9. The necessity to strengthen linkages between the implementation and scientific processes under the Convention was emphasized. This would include ongoing contacts between the officers of the respective subsidiary organs, an increased involvement of the scientific community in implementation oriented activities, the enhanced possibility for the Thematic Programme Networks, through a bottom up approach, to expand the outreach of measures advocated under the CST and the sustained contribution of the CST for synergies development among the Rio Conventions.
10. The participants noted the need to promote, in coordination with relevant international scientific agencies and programmes, activities to improve the existing level of scientific knowledge on desertification and land degradation and ways and means to apply this knowledge.
11. The CST should promote scientific cooperation and ensure that the scientific results would be made available to provide support to decision-makers at all levels and to establish appropriate linkages with the ongoing implementation processes. The importance of access to technologies and know-how, particularly those addressing land degradation / desertification monitoring and early warning systems was emphasized.
12. The participants supported the newly established Group of Experts, recognizing the important role the Group could play. They noted that in order to ensure that the Group fully fulfills its role, appropriate means should be allocated to it.
13. The participants recommended the enhancement of competent NGO participation in the work of the CST, in order for this body to fully harness the wealth of knowledge gathered by civil society in the UNCCD implementation, and to add more socio-economic data to its reports.
14. Synergies between the Rio Conventions must be pursued at national, regional and international levels. Parties and international financing instruments, in particular GEF, should support synergy-oriented programs and projects, notably in the field of agro-forestry and soil conservation. At the national level, coordination and collaboration among responsible institutions for the implementation of the Rio Conventions should be encouraged.
15. To-date, seven European countries have prepared the national action programmes (NAPs) and, taking into account the Recife Initiative and the Bonn Declaration, efforts must be intensified in the remaining affected countries as called for by the decision 8/COP.4 of the Conference of the Parties to complete all NAPs by 2005.
16. In view of the decision of the GEF Assembly regarding the possibility for the GEF to become a financial mechanism of the UNCCD, the Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European countries invite the country Parties to the UNCCD to take the necessary

steps during COP 6 for the GEF to respond to the need of the UNCCD for more predictable programming and funding identified during the first session of the CRIC.

17. The participants also supported targeted GEF assistance to cover capacity-building activities, including funding to assist affected country Parties to fulfill their obligations under the Convention and to support the UNCCD process under the newly adopted GEF Operational Programme on Sustainable Land Management.
18. The GM should continue to support affected country Parties to mainstream the NAPs into national development frameworks, especially PRSPs, where applicable. The participants reiterated the importance of the GM for facilitating resource mobilization in complement with the GEF. They called for more concerted support from member institutions of the Facilitation Committee of the GM, as well as other relevant members of the donor community such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to respond to the urgent needs of the eligible European country Parties in implementing the Convention.
19. The participants noted that the scope of the GM partnership with the Annex IV and V countries would include the following: a) sharing of information on sources of funds and approaches to partnership building and resource mobilization for UNCCD implementation; and b) promotion of technical and financial cooperation.
20. The participants noted the launching of cooperation between the GM and countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and invited the GM, in a joint effort with the secretariat, to further enhance its support to affected country Parties under Annex V in preparing and implementing their NAPs through setting up a country-driven consultative mechanism for predictable partnership building. Political will of affected countries and committed participation of bilateral and multilateral donors to this process are key to its success.
21. The participants welcomed the information presented by the Regional Environment Center on its activities related to public participation and its role in the UNCCD process.
22. NGO cooperation with the national UNCCD focal points is key to the improved performance of these two major stakeholders, and to the production of high quality national reports, encompassing more of the social dimension of implementation. The participants therefore call on the Parties to take appropriate steps, and development partners to provide assistance, for ensuring enhanced cooperation between NGOs and national UNCCD focal points.
23. The representatives of the Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern European countries requested the UNCCD secretariat to continue to facilitate regional and subregional/transboundary cooperation in Europe in order to complement the NAP process.
