



Desertification and International Policy Bulletin

A summary report of the Joint International Conference
 “Desertification and the International Policy Imperative”
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JOINT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE “DESERTIFICATION AND THE INTERNATIONAL POLICY IMPERATIVE”: 17-19 DECEMBER 2006

INTRODUCTION

The Joint International Conference “Desertification and the International Policy Imperative” took place from 17 to 19 December 2006 in Algiers, Algeria, and focused on policies needed for successful dryland management. Organized under the framework of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD), this conference gathered over 250 representatives from governments, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It built on outcomes from other IYDD events and addressed the following topics: improved policy focus on desertification; mobilization of resources and capacity; new initiatives to mainstream desertification issues into national and international policy processes; improved knowledge management initiatives; improved political viability, design and implementation of national-level initiatives; and interlinkages between desertification, climate change, biodiversity and other global environmental issues.

The conference was organized into six sessions of expert presentations that were followed by brief panel discussions. On Sunday, Cherif Rahmani, Algerian Minister of Land Management and Environment, opened the proceedings. Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and a panel of distinguished representatives then gave opening remarks. The first two sessions, on policy challenges and mainstreaming desertification policies, followed. On Monday, participants heard panel presentations on national case studies, strategies for monitoring and evaluation, and sub-regional case studies. On Tuesday, sessions included discussion on knowledge management and the interlinkages between desertification, climate change and other global environmental issues. Each of the session Chairs then gave a brief summary of findings, which was followed by a final high-level panel discussion. The conference closed with ceremonies that included an address by Cherif Rahmani and two signing ceremonies. In the first signing ceremony, high-level representatives endorsed a proposal

initiated by Algeria and Arab ministers requesting that 2010-2020 be named as a decade of deserts and desertification at the next session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. The second ceremony, signed by six partner research institutes, reflected their commitment to support an international master’s degree programme for drylands at the United Nations University (UNU).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DESERTIFICATION ISSUES

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CCD AND THE IYDD: The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) is the centerpiece in the international community’s efforts to combat desertification and land degradation. The CCD was adopted on 17 June 1994, entered into force on 26 December 1996, and currently has 191 parties. The CCD recognizes the physical, biological and socioeconomic aspects of desertification, the importance of redirecting technology transfer so that it is demand-driven, and the involvement of local communities in

IN THIS ISSUE

A Brief History of Desertification Issues	1
Report of the Conference	5
Opening Remarks	5
Session 1	6
Session 2	7
Session 3 - Part I	7
Session 3 - Part II	8
Session 4	9
Session 5	10
Session 6	11
Chairs’ Review of Conference Presentations and Discussions	12
High-Level Panel Discussion	13
Closing Ceremony	13
Upcoming Meetings	14
Glossary	14

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combating desertification and land degradation. The core of the CCD is the development of national, sub-regional and regional action programmes by national governments, in cooperation with donors, local communities and NGOs.

NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION: In 1992, the UN General Assembly, as requested by the UN Conference on Environment and Development, adopted Resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa (INCD). The INCD met five times between May 1993 and June 1994 and drafted the CCD and four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean. A fifth annex, for Central and Eastern Europe, was elaborated and adopted during the fourth Conference of the Parties (COP-4) in December 2000.

Pending the CCD's entry into force, the INCD met six times between January 1995 and August 1997 to hear progress reports on urgent action for Africa and interim measures in other regions, and to prepare for COP-1. The preparations included discussion of the Secretariat's programme and budget, the functions of, and administrative arrangements for, the financial mechanism under the CCD – the Global Mechanism (GM) – and the establishment of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).

COP-1: The first Conference of the Parties (COP-1) met in Rome, Italy, from 29 September to 10 October 1997. The CST held its first session concurrently from 2-3 October. The COP-1 and CST-1 agendas consisted primarily of organizational matters. Delegates selected Bonn, Germany, as the location for the CCD's Permanent Secretariat and the International Fund for Agricultural Development as the organization to administer the GM. At the CST's recommendation, the COP established an *ad hoc* panel to oversee the continuation of the process of surveying benchmarks and indicators, and decided that CST-2 should consider linkages between traditional and modern knowledge. One plenary meeting was devoted to a dialogue between NGOs and delegates. Delegates subsequently adopted a proposal that plenary meetings at future COPs be devoted to similar NGO dialogues.

COP-2: COP-2 met in Dakar, Senegal, from 3 November to 11 December 1998. The CST met in parallel with the COP from 1-4 December. Delegates approved arrangements for the institutional linkage between the CCD and the UN Secretariat and the headquarters agreement with the German Government. The Secretariat moved to Bonn in early 1999. The COP approved adjustments to its budget and adopted the outstanding rules of procedure concerning Bureau members, but retained bracketed language regarding rule 47 on majority voting in the absence of consensus. Central and Eastern European countries were invited to submit to COP-3 a draft regional implementation annex. The CST established an *ad hoc* panel to follow up its discussion on linkages between traditional and modern knowledge. Delegates considered but deferred to COP-3 decisions on: the Secretariat's medium-term strategy, adoption of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the COP and International Fund

for Agricultural Development regarding the GM, and the Group of 77/China proposal to establish a Committee on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC).

COP-3: Parties met for COP-3 in Recife, Brazil, from 15-26 November 1999, with the CST meeting in parallel to the COP from 16-19 November. The COP approved the long-negotiated MoU regarding the GM. It decided to establish an *ad hoc* working group to review and analyze in depth the reports on national, sub-regional and regional action programmes and to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the CCD. Delegates also agreed to continue consultations on the additional draft regional implementation annex for Central and Eastern Europe, with a view to adopting it at COP-4. In addition, the COP appointed an *ad hoc* panel on traditional knowledge and an *ad hoc* panel on early warning systems.

COP-4: COP-4 convened from 11-22 December 2000, in Bonn, Germany. The CST met from 12-15 December. COP-4's notable achievements were the adoption of the fifth regional Annex for Central and Eastern Europe, commencement of work by the *ad hoc* working group to review CCD implementation, initiation of the consideration of modalities for the establishment of the CRIC, submission of proposals to improve the work of the CST, and the adoption of a decision on the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Council initiative to explore the best options for GEF support to the CCD's implementation.

COP-5: COP-5 met from 1-13 October 2001, in Geneva, Switzerland, and the CST met in parallel from 2-5 October. The COP focused on setting the modalities of work for the two-year interval before COP-6. Progress was made in a number of areas, most notably in the establishment of the CRIC, identification of modalities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST, and in the enhancement of the CCD's financial base following strong support for a proposal by the GEF to designate land degradation as another focal area for funding.

CRIC-1: The first meeting of the CRIC was held at the Food and Agriculture Organization headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 11-22 November 2002. The CRIC was established in accordance with Decision 1/COP.5 to regularly review the implementation of the CCD, draw conclusions, and propose concrete recommendations to the COP on further implementation steps. CRIC-1 considered presentations from the five CCD regions and addressed the seven thematic issues under review: participatory processes; legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements; linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies; measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land, drought and desertification monitoring and assessment; early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought; access by affected country parties to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how; and resource mobilization and coordination. The meeting also considered information on financial mechanisms in support of the CCD's implementation, advice provided by the CST and the GM, and the Secretariat's report on actions aimed at strengthening the relationships with other relevant conventions and organizations.

COP-6/CRIC-2: COP-6 met from 25 August - 6 September 2003, in Havana, Cuba and marked the CCD's transition from awareness raising to implementation. Among the issues marking this transition were the designation of the GEF as a financial mechanism of the CCD and identification of criteria for the COP-7 review of CRIC. Progress was made on a number of other issues as well, including: activities for the promotion and strengthening of relationships with other relevant conventions and international organizations, institutions and agencies; enhancing the effectiveness of the CST; and follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The COP adopted 31 decisions, eight of which were developed in the CST and six in the CRIC.

CRIC-2 convened from 26-29 August 2003, and addressed the review of the implementation of the CCD and of its institutional arrangements, and review of information on the financing of CCD implementation by multilateral agencies and institutions.

IYDD: At its 58th session, in Resolution A/RES/58/211 of 23 December 2003, the UN General Assembly declared 2006 the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD). In doing so, the General Assembly underlined its deep concern for the exacerbation of desertification and noted its far-reaching implications for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which must be met by 2015.

CRIC-3: The third meeting of the CRIC was held from 2-11 May 2005, in Bonn, Germany. It reviewed the implementation of the Convention in Africa, considered issues relating to Convention implementation at the global level, shared experiences, and made concrete recommendations for future work of the Convention. CRIC-3 concluded its work by adopting its report, containing recommendations on the implementation of the Convention both in Africa and at the global level, for consideration and decisions at COP-7.

COP-7: COP-7 took place at the UN Office at Nairobi, Kenya, from 17-28 October 2005. Nearly 1000 participants gathered to review the implementation of the Convention, develop a MoU between the CCD and the GEF, adopt the programme and budget for the 2006-2007 biennium, and review the recommendations in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit of the UN, among other agenda items. Parties' discussions on the proposal to include an additional agenda item on the procedure for the selection of an Executive Secretary and regarding regional coordination units ended without the adoption of a decision. Parties reported that the COP's outcomes did not meet their expectations, and therefore the meeting was not deemed successful in moving forward the Convention's implementation.

The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) preparatory meeting for COP-7 was held at the same venue on 22 October 2005. Delegates formulated an African common position on issues of relevance to Africa on COP-7's agenda. In the common position, delegates, *inter alia*: called for a substantial increase in the allocation of funds to the GEF; urged that COP-7 take a decision to place regional coordination units on the core budget of the Convention; expressed concern over

the inability of the Secretariat to undertake its full responsibilities because of inadequate funding; and welcomed the designation of 2006 as the IYDD.

IYDD EVENTS

PROMOTING DECENTRALIZED COOPERATION AND THE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CCD: This conference was the first official event launched in the framework of the celebrations for the IYDD and took place from 19-20 January 2006, in Rome, Italy. The conference aimed to identify concrete patterns of actions in combating desertification at national and local levels and highlighted the global nature of dryland issues on the international agenda.

STANDING ON SOLID GROUND: TACKLING DEGRADED LANDS TO ENSURE FUTURE FOOD PRODUCTION: This session of the World Bank's Rural Days took place at the World Bank Headquarters, in Washington, DC, the US, on 27 February 2006, within the framework of the IYDD. This session gave an overview of the land degradation problems in the various regions in which the Bank works and reviewed some of the strategies and methods used by local and regional initiatives to mitigate and rehabilitate degraded lands. Presentations included experiences from the sub-Saharan Africa, Middle-East and North Africa regions and highlighted the Africa Action Plan for sustainable land management as an effective strategy or tool to combat land degradation.

SEMINAR ON DESERTIFICATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY: CONSEQUENCES AND PREVENTION: This seminar, which took place from 9-11 March 2006 in Madrid, Spain in celebration of the IYDD, aimed to contribute information on the fight against desertification and its social implications.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON DESERTIFICATION, HUNGER AND POVERTY: This two-day meeting, which convened from 11-12 April 2006 in Geneva, Switzerland, took place within the framework of the 2006 IYDD and was organized by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in partnership with the CCD Secretariat. Delegates considered political frameworks, agricultural development and livelihoods and coping strategies in drylands.

14TH CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOIL CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION: This conference took place in Marrakech, Morocco, from 14-19 May, 2006, within the framework of the IYDD, and was organized under the theme Management and Soil Conservation in Semi-Arid Environments. The event highlighted recent research on water management and soil conservation. Delegates heard presentations on research results, development actions and collaborative efforts that addressed the issue of global water management and soil conservation in water-stressed environments.

11TH SESSION OF THE AMCEN: The ministerial segment of the conference, which took place in Brazzaville, from 22-26 May 2006, adopted the Brazzaville Declaration on the Environment for Development. In the Declaration, delegates, *inter alia*: call upon countries that have not ratified the three Rio

conventions to do so, and urge Africa's development partners to assist and support African countries in their implementation; commit themselves to further strengthen implementation of the CCD and ensure achievement of the relevant MDGs; support the IYDD in Africa 2006 and urge governments and civil society to promote and implement related activities; and request UNEP, other UN agencies, and others to cooperate with the Commission of the African Union (AU) and to report to the next regular session of the AMCEN on progress made in the facilitation of the implementation of the Green Wall for the Sahara initiative. In addition, delegates addressed the status of implementation of the action plan for the environment initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and reviewed priority projects facilitated by the CCD Secretariat.

BEIJING INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND DESERTIFICATION: This conference took place from 29 May – 1 June 2006, and was organized by the CCD Secretariat and the governments of Algeria, China and Italy, in celebration of the IYDD. Participants discussed challenges and opportunities for women in drylands and the Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women, among other agenda items. Delegates adopted the Beijing Statement, which addresses: institutional issues, including ways to use the intersessional intergovernmental working group and *Ad Hoc* Working Group to follow-up on the Beijing discussions; main priorities for action, including water and resource management, energy, food security, health and education; funding mechanisms; monitoring; and implementation mechanisms. Participants also recommended that the Beijing Statement be placed on the CCD COP-8 agenda and that a follow-up meeting be organized in two years.

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM: DESERTIFICATION AND GLOBAL CHANGE: Participants to this symposium, which took place on 31 May 2006 in Bern, Switzerland under the framework of the IYDD, exchanged experiences from development and research, addressed innovative management of scarce resources in semi-arid areas, and identified challenges for a better future.

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON DESERTIFICATION AND DRYLANDS RESEARCH: This conference took place from 19-21 June 2006, in Tunis, Tunisia, and was organized by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in celebration of the IYDD. Participants adopted a Tunis Declaration, which identifies a number of research priorities for dryland areas, including: the interdependence and conservation of cultural and biological diversity; integrated management of water resources in the context of a looming water crisis; assessing and forecasting dryland ecosystem dynamics to formulate adaptation strategies in the context of global change and to alleviate poverty so as to achieve the MDGs; agriculture and pastoralism as opportunities for sustainable land use; management of natural and man-made disasters; formulating and implementing scenarios and policy options for good governance in the context of global change; identifying viable dryland livelihoods and policy options for the benefit of dryland dwellers (such as ecotourism); education

for sustainable development and knowledge sharing; reversing environmental degradation and promoting rehabilitation; costs related to *inaction* [emphasis in original] in the field of land degradation; renewable energies suitable for dryland development; and evaluation of dryland ecosystem services and their trade-offs.

DRYLANDS' HIDDEN WEALTH – INTEGRATING DRYLAND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES INTO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING: This conference, which took place on 26 and 27 June 2006 in Amman, Jordan under the framework of the IYDD, aimed to provide both economic planners and policy- and decision-makers with the needed evidence of the role and values of dryland ecosystem services for national economies. Participants examined the role and values of dryland ecosystem services for livelihood security and national economies based on case studies, advanced guidance on practical tools for valuation, designing economic incentives, and developing policy guidelines for sustainable dryland management, and identified priorities for further action and research.

FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT: SUSTAINABLE LAND MANAGEMENT, COMBATING ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND REVIVING ECOSYSTEM PRODUCTIVITY: This event took place on 28 August 2006 in Cape Town, South Africa, and was organized by the GEF within the framework of the IYDD. Participants received an update on progress by the GEF, its partners, and member countries towards sustainable land management in drylands, humid and sub-humid zones, and transboundary water systems. Participants focused on the role of science and community knowledge and action in the process of knowledge management for sustainable land management; addressed the role of partnerships, institutional development, resource mobilization, and investments in land management; and discussed the role of sustainable land management in enhancing the natural resource base and combating rural poverty.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON YOUTH AND DESERTIFICATION: The International Conference on Youth and Desertification, which met in Bamako, Mali from 4-6 September 2006, took place in the framework of the 2006 IYDD, and attracted 150 delegates from 45 countries. Participants at this meeting approved the "Bamako Statement," which calls on governments to ensure that young people are involved in the management of natural resources and decision-making processes, and to give priority to creating youth employment as a matter of national urgency. They further agreed to establish a CCD Youth Partnership Network to facilitate the exchange of information among young people and ensure that their concerns are brought to the attention of decision makers.

FROM DESERT TO OASIS: A SYMPOSIUM/ WORKSHOP ON THE ROLE OF SCIENCE AND RESEARCH IN COMBATING DESERTIFICATION IN SEMI-ARID SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: This event took place from 23-25 September 2006, in Niamey, Niger, and was organized in celebration of the IYDD. Participants heard presentations on experiences in rehabilitation of degraded lands and discussed ways of up-scaling successes and technologies

across drylands. Delegates also developed a Niamey Declaration, which described a positive vision for the future and calls for increased action, and endorsed the new 'Oasis' international research-for-development initiative that seeks to build scientific momentum and awareness in support of the goals of the CCD.

DESERTS AND DESERTIFICATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: This conference took place from 6-9 November, 2006, at the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel, in the framework of the IYDD. Participants considered the effectiveness of different initiatives employed to combat desertification and shared a variety of opportunities available for ensuring the quality of life and sustainable livelihoods in drylands. In addition, participants, including international experts and practitioners, debated recent findings on a range of issues and controversies associated with desertification. The event also included a field trip to sites of local efforts to combat desertification as well as a broad menu of agricultural and economic development initiatives in the local semi-arid and arid regions.

INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON DRYLANDS ECOLOGY AND HUMAN SECURITY PERSPECTIVES, POLICY RESPONSES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION - CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: This symposium was held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, from 4-7 December 2006, in celebration of the IYDD, and aimed to create an ongoing dialogue between researchers and policy makers from the Arab world with the global scientific community, and to reposition the ongoing desertification debate within the context of human security. Participants focused on the progressive land degradation and its social consequences in the Middle East and North Africa.

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

OPENING REMARKS

Cherif Rahmani, Algerian Minister of Land Management and Environment, opened the conference, welcomed participants, and thanked Algerian President Abderrahme Bouteflika for prioritizing desertification and attending the opening session.

Hans van Ginkel, Rector, UNU, stressed desertification remains a key global threat and that its environmental effects are closely tied to socio-political impacts, particularly human migration. He highlighted the importance of linking research and policy making processes and of putting monitoring and assessment at the top of the policy agenda. Noting that achieving a cohesive and integrated policy approach at both the national and international levels is a central challenge, van Ginkel emphasized that land management policies can be improved by creating viable livelihood strategies for local populations.

President Bouteflika thanked conference organizers for choosing Algiers as the venue. He stressed the political and environmental threats of desertification and noted its negative implications for development, especially for food security and migration, and the inter-relatedness of poverty and environmental degradation. He underscored the impacts of desertification on Africa and identified the importance of NEPAD in combating

it. Highlighting that wealthy nations contribute significantly to global pollution, President Bouteflika stressed the importance of international solidarity in supporting NEPAD. He also noted Algeria's commitment to combating desertification through the AU and NEPAD. At the international level, Bouteflika stressed the urgency of implementing the Rio conventions: the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and the CCD. He ended his address with a call to combine efforts for progress on all these issues.

Cherif Rahmani thanked all IYYD organizing institutions for choosing this conference to close the IYDD and stressed the need for a strategy and vision to give new impetus to the CCD ten years after signing and ratifying it. He highlighted the different forms of knowledge available to help advance progress in combating desertification and stressed the role of women in this challenge. Rahmani discussed the positive and negative effects of globalization on arid areas, gave recognition to the 'people of the deserts' participating in the conference, and noted Algeria's leadership role in combating desertification.

Hans van Ginkel observed that this conference re-affirmed international interest in the issue of desertification. Noting that complex answers can be expressed in simple words, he stressed the harmonization of different global and intersectoral actions, the links between desertification and climate change at the global level, and the prioritization of local and regional people in these actions.

Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary, CCD, said this meeting crowns a series of meetings and initiatives that started earlier this year and thanked Algerian President Bouteflika and Environment Minister Rahmani for advocating desertification discussions in Africa. He stressed that these discussions are still removed from key decision makers and that global and regional efforts need to focus on: arid and semi-arid land degradation; the relationship between poverty and desertification; and conflict and migration. He noted the need to promote technology transfer to arid and semi-arid areas, and for political leaders to support the voice of the poor.

Highlighting the value of biodiversity in arid areas, Ahmed Djoghla, Executive Secretary, CBD, applauded the IYDD's endeavor to internationalize the crosscutting issues of desertification, biodiversity loss and climate change. He underscored that the production and consumption patterns of globalization impact both the biodiversity of arid areas as well as human heritage and cultural values.

Youba Sokona, Executive Secretary, Sahara and Sahel Observatory, noted the challenges of desertification and said actions to control it have been identified but that scientific and organizational solutions to the phenomenon still need to be enhanced.

Mahmoud Solh, Director General, International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Syria, said that ICARDA believes desertification can be prevented and reversed for future generations and emphasized that prevention is far more effective than rehabilitation of degraded land. He drew attention to the need to break the vicious cycle of poverty

and desertification, particularly in southern developing countries, highlighted the necessity of integrating social and biophysical scientific research on desertification, and said bottlenecks in policy arenas had hindered progress.

Christian Mersmann, Managing Director, Global Mechanism, said the most positive aspect of the CCD is that it brings the international community together to fight desertification but cautioned that desertification is not afforded the same priority by all actors. Mersmann emphasized the economic aspects of desertification and natural resources, and argued that closer relations with macroeconomists in the finance and development arenas are needed to raise the priority of desertification.

Thomas Schaaf, UNESCO, re-affirmed UNESCO's commitment to bringing scientific research into policy making and to overcoming the challenges therein of communication and education.

Discussing sustainable land management, Maryam Niamir-Fuller, UNDP-GEF, stressed the importance of securing legal rights to land for the poor. She said the rights of pastoralists are often undermined and not taken into account in national policy making. Niamir-Fuller noted the degrading effects of using traditional biomass fuels and the need for policies that take climate change into account. She ended by urging participants to focus their attention on action for policy change.

Gemma Shepherd, UNEP, said desertification is a threat to both human development and the environment and underlined that more than one billion people depend on drylands. She presented the findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, noting that the persistent trend of desertification requires proactive land use management policies that include action by both global leaders and local communities.

SESSION 1: POLICY CHALLENGES IN COMBATING DESERTIFICATION

Co-chaired by Maryam Niamir-Fuller, UNDP-GEF, and Mohammed El-Mourid, ICARDA, the first session focused on: the interaction between desertification, poverty and sustainable development; the cost of inaction; and the evaluation and scale of land degradation.

Thomas Schaaf, UNESCO, discussed the outcomes of the International Scientific Conference on Desertification and Drylands Research held in Tunisia in June 2006, which focused on the role of the scientific community in dryland research for sustainable development. The conference resulted in the Tunis Declaration, in which scientists committed to increase dryland research and make their work more accessible to policy makers.

In his address, Habib Ben Yahia, Secretary General, Arab Maghreb Union, noted that the international community welcomed Algeria's efforts to tackle desertification and its adverse effects. He said that efficiency and progress on this issue requires numerous international conventions and instruments. He also outlined the efforts of Maghreb region countries to rehabilitate land and respond to the imperatives of food security, and emphasized the need to maintain scientific research and prevent brain drain in the research community.

David Mouat, Chair, CCD Group of Experts, Desert Research, presented on the effects of human behavior on both the causes and solutions of desertification. Mouat stressed that policy intervention should be directed towards empowering people and identifying challenges before they become too serious to resolve. He also demonstrated the use of geographic information systems to model alternative futures.

Gogo Banel Ndiaye Macina, Senegal's Minister for Youth, Environment and Public Health, presented on the scale and complexity of desertification in Senegal, noting its negative impact on migration, food production and economic recovery policies. She highlighted the link between poverty and desertification, and their combined effect of instability. She also said government, civil society and private sector efforts have fallen short of combating desertification and suggested that a more holistic approach may be necessary.

Janos Bogardi, UNU-Institute for Environment and Human Security, spoke about the causal relationship between environmental factors, specifically land degradation and forced migration. He outlined the ongoing scientific debates over the concept of environmental forced migration, and over the definition of "refugee". He noted the argument of some that concerns about desertification are exaggerated, saying that the precautionary principle should nevertheless apply in policy making. He ended by emphasizing that policy answers be sought for the global problem of environmental migrants, including in terms of scientific research, awareness raising, legislation, humanitarian aid and institutional development.

Youba Sokona, Sahara and Sahel Observatory, noted the difficulty of distinguishing the causes and consequences of desertification. He stressed that desertification is at the core of development challenges for arid areas and that its concerns must be mainstreamed into all levels of decision making. He also underscored that local level experience needs to inform national and international decision makers.

Noting the role of civil society organizations in combating desertification, Nora Ourabah, International Federation of Agricultural Producers, France, said that the Montpellier Forum was created in 2001 to link civil society organizations in Europe and Africa. She highlighted the Forum's objectives, which are: to give drylands a more prominent position in national and international policy making; to explore innovative economic potential in drylands; and to build strategies to increase the role of civil society organizations in the policy making process.

Jos Lubbers, GEF, discussed the outcomes of IYDD-GEF supported activities that are related to land degradation and desertification. Stressing the importance of knowledge management, he outlined measures that the GEF is taking to combat desertification, such as the removal of policy, technical, capacity and financial barriers to sustainable land management.

During a brief panel discussion, participants raised questions about the extent and destination of GEF funds and the degree to which land degradation will be incorporated into GEF programmes. Lubbers responded by saying that, while needs exceeded the limited funds available, GEF hoped its actions would stimulate additional activities and funding. He confirmed

that half the total amount of GEF funding earmarked for the land degradation focal point would be allocated to Africa. Co-Chair Niamir-Fuller summarized the discussions, highlighting that the holistic landscape approach, the issue of environmental refugees, and the issue of definitions and terminology merit more detailed discussion. She noted, however, that adopting the holistic landscape approach would require major changes in policy making and implementation. She also drew attention to the isolated nature of many conventions and frameworks, calling for the need for crosscutting measures. Both the Co-Chair and David Mouat reiterated that people “on the ground,” such as farmers and pastoralists, are often not aware of policies and solutions discussed at the government or ministerial level and do not have the tools to apply solutions despite being the most affected parties.

SESSION 2: NEW POLICY DIRECTIONS TO MAINSTREAM DESERTIFICATION POLICIES

The second session was co-chaired by Pamela Chasek, International Institute for Sustainable Development, and Foday Bojang, AU. Co-Chair Chasek introduced the four goals of the session: to identify new financing and development options; to enable alternative livelihoods; to explore the potential role of the private sector; and to specify new policies to combat desertification and improve drought preparedness.

Slimane Bedrani, Centre of Research in Economic Applications for Development, Algeria, discussed causes of desertification and more effective policies for preventing it. He stressed the need for policies and scientific research to address the impacts of profit maximizing livestock entrepreneurs on the sustainable use of public land.

Youssef Brahim, Global Mechanism (GM), gave a presentation on the efficiency of development aid and the global strategy in the development aid framework. He highlighted the changing nature of the architecture of financial development aid, and noted South-South cooperation programmes such as those between Brazil and Portuguese-speaking African countries. He concluded that the strategy of the GM includes: an increase in financial resources; a diversification of approaches; the inclusion of new stakeholders such as local authorities; and integrating desertification into the international debate on financial development aid.

Taoufiq Bennouna, TerrAfrica, highlighted the lack of sustainable land management practices, knowledge sharing, and monitoring and evaluation programmes. He outlined how the programmes and activities of TerrAfrica, such as the TerrAfrica fund and its knowledge management initiatives, may mitigate these issues.

Jonathan Davies, World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism, Kenya, noted that while the economic viability of pastoralism is undermined in many countries, the future of drylands lies in pastoralists' hands. He stressed that the role of pastoralists can be enhanced through the development of human capital, sharing of technology, introduction of market incentives, tenure systems, and the participation of pastoralists in policy development.

In her presentation, Celine Dutilly-Diane, ICARDA, highlighted that rangelands and their livestock systems, if well managed, provide substantial environmental services and that, based on this finding, payments to those who produce such services could be an effective means to combat land degradation. Possible objectives for payment for environmental services programmes include: prevention of unsustainable land use change; promoting better grazing management; and rehabilitation of degraded land. She said new forms of rangeland management thus embody positive potential but noted that a number of questions still need to be answered about this proposed approach.

José Félix Lafaurie Rivera, Colombia Cattle Producer Federation, spoke about the role of the private cattle sector in reducing land degradation in Colombia. He noted the significant extent of poverty in this country, highlighting the gap between the urban and rural poor, and pointed out that cattle sector employs over one million people. He described the cattle sector's proposals to fund environmental projects, such as restoring large areas of degraded land, and thus contribute to counteracting desertification.

A brief panel discussion concluded the session. Participants noted that dialogue about land degradation should factor in the consumption patterns and involvement of all stakeholders, including the industrial sector and the rich. Other discussants emphasized the need for a “balance sheet” to account for the progress made by the CCD, ten years after its ratification, and referred to lack of support at the international level that hampers national-level policies. Respondents agreed to the idea of a balance sheet being prepared, and commented that sustainable drylands management needs to be a cross sectoral issue. Summarizing the session's discussions, Co-Chair Chasek highlighted human solutions to desertification, including the need to: improve livelihoods, employment alternatives, and incentives for better land use and management; make projects recipient-driven rather than donor-driven; enhance transparency in processes; increase research to advise policy; and develop more appropriate institutional frameworks.

SESSION 3 - PART I: NATIONAL CASE STUDIES

After a welcome from Co-Chair Wang Tao, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Co-Chair Friedrike Knabe, Unisfera International Centre, Canada, introduced the three major issues to be considered in this session: the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders in desertification policy formulation; the mainstreaming of attempts to combat desertification in national development strategies; and the issue of policy disconnect and contributions from isolated sectors.

Ouirago Bertrand Zida, Secretary General, Ministry of the Environment, Burkina Faso, highlighted that 30% of Burkina Faso's land is being degraded and underscored that 4% is already degraded. Discussing causes of land degradation, he noted population growth, the use of wood as an energy source, and increased livestock numbers as the main factors. He said measures taken by Burkina Faso to combat land degradation

include: the adoption of a National Action Programme (NAP); improvement of water conservation techniques; and promotion of public and private investment.

Mellouhi Mohamed Seghir, Director General of Forests, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Algeria, discussed Algeria's response to the challenges of reforestation and desertification. He outlined actions taken by Algeria since independence and gave a detailed timeline of Algeria's implementation of the CCD. Using examples, he highlighted: learning from past lessons; promotion of rural economic development; innovative reforestation schemes; and participation of stakeholders in rural areas.

Andres Arnalds, Soil Conservation Service, Iceland, shared lessons from Iceland in the arena of improving land health and rural development. This case study, based on experience from one of the world's oldest soil conservation bodies, showed that desertification is not restricted to arid regions. Arnalds described how land management in Iceland was historically characterized by top-down government approaches but that, since 1990, management approaches changed to increase local participation. He said the main goals of recent projects were to: halt ecosystem degradation; restore lost resources through revegetation; and ensure sustainable land use. Arnalds outlined a number of Iceland's policy lessons learned, some of which were adopted from Australia's experience, including: the need to link agricultural and land use policy to the goals of sustainability; the development of knowledge management; the need to build capacity at all levels through advice, education and encouragement; development of new financial incentives; and tying conservation to climate change. Finally, in the context of "healing the land," he noted the importance of linking all those goals together.

Mary Seely, Desert Research Foundation, Namibia, spoke about Namibia's efforts to mainstream desertification policy. She reviewed relevant national policies, stressing that, while many policies contain development buzzwords, few specify the involvement of local communities in resource management, with the exception of water and wildlife management policies. Seely stressed that the future of drylands depends on action at the grassroots level, in which key elements are collaborative planning, implementation, monitoring and interventions led by community based organizations such as farmers' associations and water management committees. She said Namibian experience shows that community-driven environmental monitoring can be used for decision making at both local and national levels. She further stressed the importance of community organizing and the need for mechanisms for communities to engage with policy makers. She also endorsed the need for platforms for information sharing between communities, service providers, scientists, researchers and policy makers.

Elena Abraham, Argentine Institute for Arid Land Research and Development, presented the current status of combating desertification in Argentina. Noting that the problem affects 70% of Argentina's territory, she discussed the lessons learned in developing the country's NAP to tackle desertification at the national and local levels. For the case of the Lavalle

desert in Mendoza province of Argentina, she stressed the importance of: land tenure and land use policies; participatory governance; development of indicators; and participation of scientists as paramount in land degradation management. In order to implement lessons learned, Abraham underlined the need to prioritize the following key concepts: planning before investments; research before actions; dignity before people; and equity before development.

Jia Xiaoxia, State Forestry Administration, China, outlined trends in China's increasing desertification over the last 50 years but noted achievements between 1999-2001 with regard to the reduction of the total area of dryland degradation. Highlighting population pressure and unsustainable natural resource use as the two main causes of desertification, she discussed China's history of combating desertification in three phases: in the 1950s-1960s China implemented mitigating measures such as wind breaks; in the late 1970s China implemented tree planting and the greening of rural areas such as the Green Great Wall Programme; and from the early 1990s China accepted and integrated the international community's sustainable development concept. Noting that China ratified the CCD in 1996, she said China has been creating key national programmes and a relevant legal framework for combating desertification.

During the panel discussion, participants raised questions about: the linkages between different national ministries implementing anti-desertification strategies in China; the issue of incentives offered to people to encourage rehabilitation of degraded land; balance sheets for deforestation and reforestation in Algeria; and how to integrate community-level environmental assessments into national and regional policies in the case of Namibia. Panelists noted that these issues were also relevant to other countries. Seghir stressed Algeria's commitment to ongoing assessment of the implementation and outcomes of the CCD, and Andres Arnalds noted that national and popular will in achieving reforestation holds more weight than legislation. Lastly, Mary Seely responded that integration of local level and national assessment is hindered by lack of capacity, despite the relevant structures being in place.

SESSION 3 - PART II: STRATEGIES FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION CASE STUDIES

The session was co-chaired by Richard Thomas, ICARDA, and Wafa Essahli, Sahara and the Sahel Observatory (OSS), Tunisia. Co-Chair Thomas urged the presenters to focus on: the level of stakeholder engagement in national case studies; best practice in terms of mainstreaming anti-desertification into government policies; and identification of policy disconnections.

Mohamed Ghanam, High Commission for Water and Forests and to Combat Desertification, Morocco, provided an overview of Morocco's NAP to combat desertification that included intersectoral approaches, participation and partnerships. He described Morocco's approach to monitoring and assessment and outlined the different indicators employed therein. Morocco recently extended its national-level approach to the regional and local levels, which is based on existing experience in combating desertification, including data on natural resource management,

and on the dynamism of civil society and scientific research in this region. Ghanam noted that Morocco's three-tier scheme has enabled planning and decision making at all levels.

Dirk Pretorius, Department of Agriculture, South Africa, presented on the history and current status of land degradation in South Africa, noting that 80% of South African soil is classified as having moderate to low potential. He outlined legislation in South Africa that is relevant to land degradation such as the National Environmental Management Act and the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act. Pretorius identified measures undertaken in South Africa to improve the state of information on land degradation, including: the 1997 participatory land degradation assessment; a recently initiated Natural Resources Fixed Site Monitoring System; and a draft Soil Protection Strategy.

Hedi Hamrouni, Ministry for Agriculture and Water Resources, Tunisia, presented on mainstreaming policies to combat desertification in Tunisia. He outlined the structural nature of drought in Tunisia and the resulting constraints and pressures on both natural resources and people. Adopted in 1998, Tunisia's NAP includes consolidating participatory approaches and fostering cooperation and partnerships between different stakeholders and actors. Hamrouni stressed the need to move from a classical to an integrated natural resource management approach and the importance of strengthening civil society. Highlighting the new aspects of this approach, he described: implementation at the regional level; multi-sectoral initiatives; and the involvement of numerous stakeholders, including NGOs. He summarized the progress achieved thus far, noting institutional development to improve interventions at the local level, and identified Tunisia's similarities with Algeria in terms of partner organizations and assessment approaches.

Abderrazak Khadraoui, Director General, River Basin District Agency of Sahara, Algeria, presented on hydro-agricultural constraints and development perspectives in the northeast Algerian Sahara. He discussed three representative areas in the Algerian Sahara, noting their physical characteristics and problems associated with water resources such as drainage and salinity. Highlighting the impacts on environmental and public health, he recommended the need to conduct research into modern techniques to improve water quality in human zones, and advocated measures to preserve foggaras.

Iwao Kobori, UNU, presented the results of field surveys that focus on the evolution of oases with foggara, a traditional irrigation system, in Tidikelt, Algeria from 1962-2005. He outlined that in the 1960s and 1970s, after independence, the activities of the Algerian government in the southern region were limited due to prevailing political and economic conditions. Kobori highlighted the development and evolution of a national plan for the South and linkages between local communities and central authorities. He underscored that the sustainable future of oases could be enhanced through: the harmonization of central, regional and local activities; the development of more tools for local populations, such as information communication technologies; and capacity building to discourage rural-urban migration.

The panel discussion that followed generated a brief discussion about: the extent of the impact of oil platforms on desert areas; the inclusion of social as well as biophysical issues when combating desertification; the role of civil society in policy making; the role of scientific research in assessments of policy implementation; and the operations of coordinating bodies. Co-Chair Thomas summarized the presentations and discussions, saying that they provided evidence that the CCD, the only convention that operates at the local level, is being mainstreamed through government actions. He noted, however, the continued challenge of linking local, regional and national level processes, and supported Seely's identification of the need for "boundary organizations" to develop necessary interfaces. He also encouraged panelists to include references to relevant organization websites to enhance information sharing.

SESSION 4: SUB-REGIONAL CASE STUDIES

Co-Chairs Gemma Shepherd, UNEP, and Donald Gabriels, University of Ghent, Belgium, facilitated the session and introduced its three themes: the extent to which stakeholders have been involved in formulation of regional and sub-regional plans; mainstreaming of desertification into regional development strategies; and isolating the sectors or levels where policy disconnects occur. Denis Avilés Irahola, Center for Research Development, Germany, highlighted that degradation impacts 75% of drylands and outlined the resulting legislative, institutional and financial measures taken by Latin American governments. She noted that there has been success in the formulation of environmental legislation and institutional bodies to implement the NAPs. However, she said assessment of financial measures reflects that there have been limited efforts in transferring financial initiatives by the governments and in securing external cooperation. She outlined land tenure, natural resource management and use of traditional knowledge as the pending policy challenges.

Boshra Salem, University of Alexandria, Egypt, presented a report on policies to combat desertification in the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region. She noted that the region's 13 countries comprise 96.7% of the total area in ESCWA that is either desertified or vulnerable to desertification. The report's review of 13 NAPs reveals that a low percentage of these plans are successfully implemented and that there is a disconnect between policy makers and scientists. She suggested that these two groups should communicate and meet in the middle, and stressed that NAPs should be addressing the problem of urbanization.

Rosebud Kurjiwila, AU, stressed that the AU takes the issue of desertification very seriously and has thus included it in strategic planning. Furthermore, she noted that this conference is timely given the forthcoming AU Summit where heads of state will make decisions on climate change and desertification.

Foday Bojang, AU, provided a brief overview and history of the policy orientations of the African continent with respect to addressing desertification and land degradation and highlighted their negative effects on biodiversity, food security and tourism. He said African governments recognize the link between land

degradation and poverty, and the need to break this nexus, resulting in policy initiatives at the continental level such as the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme and NEPAD's Environmental Action Plan. Bojang described the newly launched Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative, including its goals and objectives, approaches to be followed and institutional arrangements. He said the initiative aims to counteract both degradation and poverty and employs a multi-disciplinary approach, involving multiple actors at different levels, that will build on past experience and be integrated with other initiatives and activities. Lastly, Bojang referred to key constraints facing the initiative that include: inadequate human and financial resources; insufficient capacity; insufficient partnerships with public and civil society; the need for alternative livelihoods; and project-based short term interventions.

Kamel Shideed, ICARDA, presented on enhancing the uptake of natural resource management technologies in drylands crop-livestock systems in order to increase production capacity and improve livelihoods. He noted that local populations have not taken up new technologies to overcome problems of unstable production and land degradation, because of major institutional constraints. Shideed outlined ICARDA's efforts to: understand alley cropping systems; assess impacts associated with natural resource management technologies; and assess the effectiveness of subsidies as the enabling policy environment for technology adoption. He concluded that the uptake of technologies is correlated to larger farm and flock size and to policy subsidy. Based on case studies from Morocco and Tunisia, he said modeling shows that environmental benefits of alley cropping are greater than subsidies provided, thus justifying investments in these systems. He noted alley cropping may also provide additional economic and livelihood benefits. In closing, Shideed stressed the need for incentives to facilitate the uptake of such systems.

Following the presentations, Co-Chair Shepherd briefly summarized the session, highlighting the cases from Latin America, the ESCWA region, and Africa. Co-Chair Gabriels then moderated the panel discussion, which generated a number of questions around the following themes: comparisons between the evolution of governance structures in Latin America and Africa; South-South resource and information exchange; the lack of communication between scientific and policy communities; capacity development and training in the ESCWA; the incorporation of civil society into AU work; and concerns about the impacts of introduced species on local biodiversity.

Responding to the questions, Avilés Irahola noted that Latin America lacks overarching policies to combat desertification such as those found in Africa, and that there are many examples of shared initiatives and financial collaboration between Southern countries. Salem emphasized that the role of NGOs is to bridge the gap between scientific and policy communities through bottom up approaches, and underscored that although ESCWA and other institutions implement much capacity building regionally, these efforts are mostly on a small scale. She recommended that capacity building be addressed at the national level. Raising the issue of defining "desertification,"

Co-Chair Gabriels stressed the need to distinguish between land degradation and desertification. Bojang noted the AU's civil society engagement strategy and, responding to a question about the AU's role in CCD network development, stressed the AU's mandate of coordination as opposed to implementation. In response to questions about introducing new species, Shideed reassured participants that ICARDA pursues research into competition between cacti and other species in order to mitigate land degradation.

SESSION 5: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR ACTION ON DESERTIFICATION

The session was Co-chaired by Sayyed Ahang Kowsar, Fars Research Center for Natural Resources and Animal Husbandry, Iran, and Boshra Salem, University of Alexandria, Egypt. The session aimed to address the following themes: gaps in scientific knowledge and exchange of experience; approaches for effective knowledge management and links to policy formation; policies and support for the role of traditional knowledge and adaptive management; and approaches to improve communication with policy makers.

Maryam Niamir-Fuller, UNDP-GEF, presented on how knowledge management can affect policy changes. She noted that there have been limited efforts to translate knowledge into policy change and convince investors of the benefits of investing in dryland activities. She outlined the technical, financial, political and institutional barriers to closing this gap, and cited the experience of Senegal and Bulgaria as examples of best practice of translating knowledge into policy action.

David Niemeijer, Niemeijer Consulting, the Netherlands, noted that desertification has increased despite global efforts, and underlined the lack of monitoring and evaluation systems as the cause of this contradiction. He also highlighted knowledge and adaptive management as approaches for measuring the impact of desertification interventions.

Riccardo Biancalani, Food and Agriculture Organization, Italy, outlined the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands project that has been endorsed by six pilot countries and operates in collaboration with other programme projects. He highlighted the project's aim to establish a set of relationships for drivers, direct pressures, impacts and responses related to desertification, and their respective indicators. After providing a definition of land degradation, Biancalani summarized the project's objectives to develop strategies, methods and tools to assess and analyze land degradation and to build national, regional and global assessment capacities to enable the planning and implementation of interventions and establish sustainable land use and management practices. He said the project has a multi-scale, participatory approach, stresses capacity building, and includes the use of geographic information technologies and spatial analysis. He concluded by stating that outcomes will include both assessments and a global action plan.

Describing a Chinese case study, Hong Wang, People's Republic of China-GEF Partnership on Land Degradation in Dryland Ecosystems, China, presented on knowledge management and policy for combating desertification, in which

the goals are to: reduce land degradation; alleviate poverty; and restore drylands ecosystems. She identified the objectives of knowledge management for policy making, and stated the relevance of the MDGs and international conventions for these objectives. Wang stressed the importance of involving policy makers in knowledge management systems and capacity building and noted the latter activities include developing legal and policy frameworks and formulating strategy and action plans to combat land degradation. She said other actions include: incorporating experience from other countries; establishing provincial task forces; incorporating project approaches within Five Year Plans; and increasing dialogue between different agencies.

Dalila Nedjraoui, University of Algiers, discussed the contribution of scientists to understanding the causes and consequences of desertification. He noted the difficulties of implementing scientific research, including: time constraints; disconnects between policy makers and scientists; sidelining of heritage concerns by scientists; and lack of common methodology at the regional and sub-regional levels. To integrate scientific research into decision making, he recommended a proactive role for national scientific councils on desertification and for national ecosystem monitoring programmes to set up early warning, ecosystem indicator and communication systems. He concluded by emphasizing the need for co-financing to supplement national funding for scientific research.

Gaoming Jiang, Chinese Academy of Sciences, discussed whether grassland degradation was a natural or human induced phenomenon. In the context of China's rapid industrial development, he illustrated multiple examples of grasslands degradation in the Inner Mongolia grassland, where the success of tree planting is limited by availability of water and extreme temperatures. He noted successful examples of ecological restoration through natural processes, such as a local reforestation project. He concluded by demonstrating how research findings can impact policy through strategic use of media outlets, lectures, presentations to decision makers, and field demonstrations with high-level officials. He stressed that the participation of local governments and herdsman is of vital importance.

Assétou Kanouté, Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme, Mali, presented an overview of the integrated "agricultural research for development" approach within the Programme. She noted that this approach seeks to close the research to development gap in Sub-Saharan Africa, and has developed a research agenda that encompasses natural resource management, production systems, agricultural markets, and policies.

In his presentation, Pietro Laureano, Research Centre on Traditional and Local Knowledge to Combat Desertification, Italy, advocated the use of traditional knowledge for combating desertification in the Euro-Mediterranean. He emphasized "using the past for the future", noted the strengths of incorporating traditional knowledge and technologies into modern policy formulations and proposed solutions in order to address key contemporary challenges. Laureano highlighted the need to

make inventories of traditional knowledge through collaboration with knowledge-holders and to protect knowledge and cultural heritage.

Launching the morning's panel discussion, Co-Chair Salem briefly summarized the themes that emerged during the presentations. These included: the development of frameworks for assessment of land degradation and guidelines for implementing related projects; building synergies between institutions and agencies; the relevance of knowledge management for policy change; and the bridging of gaps between scientific research, policy makers and practitioners. The latter issue provoked considerable discussion among participants who noted: the importance of participation and trust among researchers, authorities and local people; the challenge of conveying research findings to the poor; and the need for practitioners to incorporate traditional knowledge of desert-dwellers into contemporary projects and technology. During the discussions, Fuller stressed that solutions to bridging the gap between researchers and the poor will be context-specific and that the relevance of certain knowledge has to be defined by poor people themselves. Biancalani clarified the objectives and future outputs of the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands project and pointed to the relevance of knowledge management and sharing for ensuring the sustainability of actions to combat desertification. He also noted that European governments have enacted laws to protect traditional knowledge systems.

SESSION 6: INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN DESERTIFICATION, CLIMATE CHANGE AND OTHER GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The session was co-chaired by Christopher Braeuel, Canadian International Development Agency, and Slimane Bedrani, Center of Research in Applied Economy and Development, Algeria. Introducing the session, Co-Chair Braeuel highlighted the existence of interlinkages at multiple points, including at the institutional and sectoral levels.

Pamela Chasek, International Institute for Sustainable Development, presented on the CCD's challenge to bridge the environment-development divide. Noting that the CCD is known as the sustainable development convention, she highlighted that it is well positioned to build synergies between the three Rio Conventions: the CCD; UNFCCC; and the CBD. However, she emphasized numerous challenges, including: the differential prioritization of environment and development issues; short-sighted political objectives; the varied roles and responsibilities of Secretariats; the disconnect between the institutional homes of the three Rio Conventions; and the dispersion of focal points among government ministries and agencies. Chasek said a review showed that only 21 out of the 53 African countries list the same ministry as its focal point for all three conventions. Using concrete examples, she outlined a number of recommendations, including: increase the operationalization of sustainable development as a crosscutting concept to improve coordination between ministries, treaties and development planning; improve synergies between donors and recipients; and streamline reporting requirements for countries.

Wafa Essahli, OSS, Tunisia, discussed combating desertification and adaptation to climate change. She demonstrated the fragility of both the environment and economy of Saharan and Sahelian countries and stressed that the Rio Conventions present an opportunity for these countries to revisit the paradigms of development by putting the sustainability of natural resources at its core. She noted, however, that, in practice, environment and development approaches are sectoral and operate vertically with little communication. Clarifying that adaptation to the impacts of climate change is crucial for the vulnerable communities of the Sahara and Sahel, particularly with regards to food and water resources, Essahli stressed the critical linkages between vulnerability and the impacts of climate change within the context of desertification. Noting a lack of relevant information and strategies to implement adaptation strategies, she recommended: the development of indicators; linking different levels of decision making to overcome institutional obstacles; and taking into account all the costs of climate change. She also pointed out the need for intersectoral processes to build synergies between the three Rio Conventions.

David Thomas, Oxford University, United Kingdom, spoke about the interface between global warming and desertification, including challenges such as the negative implications of global warming for anti-desertification efforts and the difficulties of mobilizing political support for these issues. He noted that the uncertainties of science have been used to marginalize the importance of scientific predictions. Thomas said climate modeling suggests significant rises in global temperatures and highlighted the potentially dramatic impact of climate change for Africa and West Asia, which are at high risk due to their dependence on rural economies. He said that modeling of climate-based change in Africa predicts considerable impacts on human livelihoods. Thomas stressed that people will have to adapt dramatically or migrate, and that policy makers need to anticipate this in order to avoid compromising society's ability to adapt to climate change. He said climate change preparedness needs to be assimilated with activities to counter desertification.

Mostefa Kara, National Agency on Climate Change, Algeria, highlighted that global warming poses a genuine threat, noting fragile soil loss and population growth. Kara discussed environmental conservation measures that are being undertaken by the Algerian government, particularly its solar energy efforts and plans to transport water to Algeria from equatorial Africa.

Stressing soil conservation strategies, Rattan Lal, Ohio State University, the US, noted that the challenge of climate change and desertification is an inter-generational issue and that policy responses depend on the actions of the present generation. Lal highlighted that the main causes of desertification are the interaction between poverty and environment and natural resource exploitation. He noted that measures to mitigate desertification include: erosion control; afforestation; reclamation of salt-affected soils; and the creation of positive nutrient balances.

In his presentation about synergy in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, Hillary Masundire, IUCN, Botswana, asked why so little synergy has been achieved despite much discussion about its necessity. He defined synergy as the

cooperation of agents or organizations working towards common goals to produce a new or enhanced effect, and noted its lack among African ministries. He reiterated that policy implementers are unlikely to achieve sustainable development without an integrated intersectoral approach. Masundire noted that local communities are often the victims of poor synergy and are tired of repeatedly being asked the same questions. At higher levels, he said the consequences of non-synergy include competition for dwindling resources. Masundire stressed that participants need to rethink approaches for building synergistic collaboration based on the past fifteen years of experience.

Co-Chair Braeuel reminded participants of the overarching theme of interlinkages at the local, national and international levels. Participants and panelists then briefly discussed questions raised during the afternoon presentations, including: how research institutions can help policy makers to address the uncertainty of scientific modeling; the effects of erosion on carbon sequestration; and the willingness of Secretariats to pursue synergies. Essahli re-affirmed the role of OSS to enhance data collection mechanisms, and Chasek noted that, despite Secretariats' will for synergy, there are constitutional limitations given their different mandates and perceptions about the limited returns of synergistic projects. Lal confirmed that soil erosion has negative effects for carbon sequestration. Co-Chair Braeuel concluded by noting the presentations had addressed desertification issues at both the macro and micro-level and demonstrated their complexity and interlinkages.

CHAIRS' REVIEW OF CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Session 1: Regarding policy challenges in combating desertification, Co-Chair Niamir-Fuller noted the following issues: community empowerment; southern versus northern NGO policy influence; the role of conflicts in exacerbating natural resource degradation; and the accessibility of scientific research. She also highlighted fresh ways of looking at old problems, including: applying the concept of tipping point to livelihood systems; understanding environmental refugees from a sustainable development angle not just a humanitarian angle; employing a landscape approach to consider broader factors in land degradation; and to consider causality beyond project boundaries.

Session 2: Summarizing discussions on new policy directions to mainstream desertification policies, Co-Chair Chasek noted that: governments need to cooperate with all stakeholders; south-south cooperation should increase; pastoralists can help to combat desertification but are not always consulted in policy; and scientists do not always play a strong role in public policy. She highlighted obstacles such as: institutional weaknesses; lack of synergies with other development and environment projects; creating job opportunities for pastoralists; information sharing to facilitate the harmonization of actions and policies; managing grazing externalities; and exploring payment for environmental services to combat desertification.

Session 3 - Part I: Co-Chair Knabe discussed the main themes and obstacles revealed by national case studies, noting that: there are a large variety of legislative approaches; most

approaches were sectoral and top down; interventions need to be designed that can be understood by local communities; there is a need to educate and build capacity; long term instead of short term approaches are required; issues of land ownership were recognized by several countries; and that local knowledge should be disseminated to policy processes via “boundary organizations”.

Session 3 - Part II: Co-Chair Thomas discussed the findings of monitoring and evaluation case studies, highlighting positive examples of: mainstreaming into policy and inter-ministerial cooperation; substantial involvement of stakeholders using participatory approaches; and development of information flows. On the issue of disconnects, he noted the need to: strengthen integration with global level activities; establish knowledge management structures; harmonize tools and methods through more training; better organize stakeholders and research in relation to monitoring and evaluation systems; and develop tools at the local level.

Session 4: Regarding sub-regional case studies, Co-Chair Shepherd noted that much progress has been made in Latin America but that effectiveness of actions and financial means are still lacking. She also underlined the policy challenges of land tenure and incorporating traditional knowledge. On the ESCWA region, Shepherd highlighted progress in activities to promote economic and social development through regional cooperation and the need to better integrate land degradation concerns into national development policies. On Africa, she noted the AU’s progress in building desertification control into policy frameworks but recognized the need for better policy harmonization across countries. For all of the regions, Shepherd emphasized the need for greater human and financial resources.

Session 5: Noting the similarities with discussions from Session 3 Part I, Co-Chair Salem summarized the main findings of sub-regional case studies: that mainstreaming of combating desertification is still lagging behind; that financing is not commensurate with perceived needs; that inclusion of local communities and traditional knowledge in policy making is essential; and that information and knowledge should be enhanced to reverse land degradation. Outstanding challenges include the difficulty of measuring the impact and effectiveness of interventions

Session 6: Co-Chair Braeuel summarized the themes of interlinkages between desertification, climate change and other global environmental issues. He noted the need to: improve vertical and horizontal communication between Secretariats, government institutions and civil society; improve analyses of the linkages between climate change, desertification and poverty; and translate scientific and traditional knowledge into policy change.

HIGH-LEVEL PANEL DISCUSSION

The last session of the conference was a high-level panel discussion, moderated by Zafar Adeel, UNU. During this discussion, participants raised comments and questions about the lack of policies that promote generation of knowledge at the international level and the role of the UNU in ameliorating this; the issue of weak implementation capacity at national level; and the role of the GEF in supporting anti-desertification activities.

In his statement, Habib Ben Yahia, Secretary General, Arab Maghreb Union, stressed the formulation of interregional partnerships that go beyond the UN to find solutions to desertification, as well as mobilization of resources and wider awareness raising.

David Mouat, Chair, CCD Group of Experts, Desert Research, noted that plans, policies and actions undertaken at global and local levels will have varying impacts on combating desertification. He urged participants to consider the future and how to translate the results of this conference into action.

In light of the many conferences, debates and exchanges of the last decade, Youba Sokona, Executive Secretary, OSS, also stressed the need for action, including the reconsideration of policies and measures at the national level. He called for institutional innovation and synergy at different levels and for the efficient use of funds for development.

Monique Barbut, Chief Executive Officer and Chairperson, GEF, cautioned against pessimism and urged participants to build on progress already made. She commented that existing institutions are already diverse and stressed the need for interlinkages and cooperation between them. Finally, she underlined that funding for activities is sufficient but needs to be guided more efficiently.

Hans van Ginkel, Rector, UNU, stressed the importance of raising the profile of desertification and demonstrating that progress has been made. He also called for early incorporation of policy makers into fact finding and decision making. Lastly, he stressed that answers to desertification are context-dependent.

CLOSING CEREMONY

Cherif Rahmani, Algeria’s Minister of Land Management and Environment, addressed the panel and participants and confirmed the resolute commitment by Arab ministers to support the mainstreaming of efforts to combat desertification. Rahmani emphasized that the struggle against desertification will continue, emphasizing the role of NGOs and participation of citizens and local communities for achieving policy aims and sustainability.

Following Minister Rahmani’s address, Monique Barbut noted the necessity of securing politicians’ participation in actions to counteract land degradation, and Hans van Ginkel stated the need to enhance existing capacity through cooperation. Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP, referred to the central role that UNEP played in the emergence of the CCD, pledged UNEP’s commitment to work with all actors to combat desertification, and called for concerted effort on behalf of all stakeholders. He congratulated Minister Rahmani for his untiring efforts, and awarded him UNEP’s prestigious Champions of the Earth award.

Ahmed Djoghlaif, Executive Secretary, CBD, expressed hopes to bridge the gap between research and policy making, highlighting the role of the UNU in achieving this.

High-level panelists and representatives then conducted two brief signing ceremonies. In the first signing ceremony, high-level representatives endorsed a proposal initiated by Algeria and Arab ministers requesting that 2010-2020 be named as a decade of deserts and desertification at the next session of the UN General



Assembly. The second ceremony, signed by six partner research institutes, reflected their commitment to support an international master's degree program for drylands at UNU.

Zafar Adeel closed the conference after van Ginkel thanked the organizers, hosts, donors and all other partners for their efforts.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION IN DRYLAND

AFRICA: This conference will take place in Accra, Ghana, from 22-24 January 2007, and will explore the key drivers of successful agricultural innovation in dryland Africa. The expected outcomes of the conference are: shared experience on best practices for sustainable agricultural development in dryland Africa; shared experience on monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for interventions aimed at improving rural livelihoods; identification of knowledge gaps and development research needs; and increased awareness of policy makers and donors about successes in African dryland agriculture. For more information, contact: FARA Secretariat, Marie Gbolie, email: mgbolie@fara-africa.org; Internet: http://inco-aida.cirad.fr/news_conference

EIGHTH AU SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE AND

GOVERNMENT: This meeting is scheduled for 29-30 January 2007, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Delegates will consider issues related to the Summit theme of "Science, Technology and Research for Africa's Development." For more information, contact: African Union Commission, Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology; tel: +251-1-51-75-23; fax: +2511-551-7844 or 2511-550-5928; e-mail: hambanim@africa-union.org or hamdya@africa-union.org; internet: <http://www.africa-union.org>

GLOBAL FORUM: BUILDING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND POVERTY REDUCTION:

This World Bank-sponsored meeting will take place from 13-15 February 2007, in Washington, D.C, the US. The forum will seek to understand the lessons of previous and ongoing STI capacity building experiences and to map out new and more effective ways to apply STI capacity building in low and middle income countries. For more information, contact: Alfred Watkins; tel: +1-202-473-7277; fax: +1-202-522-3233; e-mail: awatkins@worldbank.org; internet: <http://www.worldbank.org/STIGlobalForum>

FIFTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT

DESERTIFICATION (CRIC-5): This meeting will be held from 12-21 March 2007 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. CRIC-5 will consider the following agenda items: review of the implementation of the Convention and its institutional arrangements; consideration of necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and implementation of action programmes; review of available information regarding mobilization and use of financial resources; consideration of ways and means to promote know-how and technology transfer; and improvement of procedures for communication of information. For more

information contact: UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.int; Internet: <http://www.unccd.int>

EIGHTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (COP-8): COP-8 for the CCD will convene in the fall of 2007 in Spain to consider the following agenda items: programme and budget for the biennium 2008-2009; review of the implementation of the Convention; review of the report of the Committee on Science and Technology; review of activities for promotion of relationships with other relevant organizations; follow-up to the WSSD; Regional Coordination Units (RCUs); and review of the 2006 International Year of Deserts and Desertification activities. For more information contact: UNCCD Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-2800; fax: +49-228-815-2898; e-mail: secretariat@unccd.int; Internet: <http://www.unccd.int>

For more upcoming meetings, please visit: <http://www.iisd.ca/upcoming/linkagesmeetings.asp?id=6>

GLOSSARY

AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
AU	African Union
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCD	Convention to Combat Desertification
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRIC	Committee on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention for CCD
CST	Committee on Science and Technology
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
ICARDA	International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas
INCD	Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to Combat Desertification
IYDD	International Year of Deserts and Desertification
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	National Action Programme
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OSS	Sahara and Sahel Observatory
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNU	United Nations University
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development