

**SECRETARIAT OF THE
UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD)**

Support to NEPAD

Period of report: May 2003-June 2004

Orientation of work in support of NEPAD

UNCCD is committed to supporting and strengthening sub-regional consultation mechanisms as a vehicle for fostering collaboration and coordination for NEPAD at the regional level, and, developing and implementing joint programmes in support of NEPAD in agriculture and market access, and environment.

Primary focus of activity

Given the multifaceted nature of the actions to combat desertification, the Secretariat supported activities focusing on agriculture, trade, market and environment. Activities were developed or are being developed to strengthen trans-boundary cooperation in the field of natural resource management. These projects relate on main priority themes that reflect the content of the UNCCD regional and sub-regional action programmes for Africa, namely integrated management of water resources, rational management of rangelands and the development of fodder crops, restoration of degraded ecosystems and the improvement of soil fertility, promotion of sustainable agriculture, integrated management of natural resources.

The Secretariat of the UNCCD responded to the invitation of African countries regarding the development of relevant policies and to provide the necessary framework for activities towards combating desertification in the framework of the NEPAD. In this regard, the Secretariat in collaboration with

UNEP facilitated consultative meetings, which provided representatives of African countries and sub regional organizations with an opportunity to review the process for formulation of proposals to combat desertification in the context of NEPAD.

The overall objective of these consultations was to review and finalize the project proposals identified to combat desertification, taking fully into account the sub regional and regional action programmes to combat desertification in Africa. The Secretariat also provided assistance towards the formulation of selected projects on combating desertification given the fact that NEPAD has the potential to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the UNCCD and the MDGs.

With regard to the coordination and collaboration with other organisations, relevant African sub regional organisations, namely SADC, IGAD, UMA, CILSS, ECOWAS, CEMAC, have been actively involved in the cooperation between NEPAD and the UNCCD. These organisations also coordinate the respective sub regional action programmes to combat desertification, and have thus high competence in the related matters. They have taken the necessary measures towards the preparation of their project proposals to combat desertification under the NEPAD.

On the occasion of the Partnership Conference on the NEPAD Environmental Action Plan held in Algiers between 15 and

16 December 2003, the African political authorities and their major cooperating partners reiterated their commitment to work towards a successful launching of action programmes to combat desertification in the framework of the NEPAD process. The Algiers Conference has succeeded in creating a favourable political momentum for mobilising all good will towards an efficient implementation of the priority activities to combat desertification. It is worth mentioning that from the 68 projects, which have been identified and adopted by African countries, 39 are linked to combating land degradation, drought and desertification.

Recommendations for strengthening NEPAD implementation

Main recommendations would include the following:

1. Concerted action between African States and their bilateral and multilateral partners on measures to integrate combating desertification into the framework of other sustainable development policy areas;

2. Involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in the development of priority activities taking into account some guiding principles such as the bottom approach, the participatory dimension in the decision making process; the launching of consultative mechanisms leading to agreements on modalities for the implementation of the action plan of the environment initiative of the NEPAD;

3. Engage in policy advocacy, awareness activities and information exchange with the involvement of all stakeholders at national, sub regional and regional levels.

4. Our major constraint lies on the limited funding resources. It also should be noted the need to encourage integrative programme planning of resource mobilization opportunities in relation to the programming cycles of the development partners. In this regard, African decision-makers should enhance policy measures, which lead to supporting activities to combat desertification in the framework of the action plan of the Environment initiative of the NEPAD.