



Implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification from a parliamentary point of view

Critical assessment and challenges ahead

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I. Executive summary

1. The assessment of the impact of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), 10 years after its entry into force, is proving to be mixed. Desertification trends show no signs of abatement, and there is a lack of more demonstrable progresses on the ground.
2. The performance of many affected countries in giving high priority to land degradation in their development plans and efforts, of many developed countries in promoting the mobilization of new and additional funding, and of the UNCCD secretariat in facilitating and stimulating implementation activities, has been less than optimal.
3. The role of parliaments in the UNCCD implementation process has been weak. For the coming decade, parliaments should strategically strengthen their role in the fight against desertification and the mitigation of the effects of drought, particularly in Africa. They have to be part of a real political will to tackle the problem of desertification.
4. Implementation of the UNCCD must be embedded into core development-policy frameworks defined at the international as well as regional, national and local levels which should include, but not be limited to, the protection and valorisation of global public goods and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. The implementation should be much better interconnected with efforts to target climate objectives, human security, migration and conflict prevention.
5. The UNCCD deserves greater visibility and more success for the sake of the people living under desertification stress, by raising awareness, sharpening the profile and institutions of the UNCCD, making desertification a cornerstone in the general architecture of global environmental governance, making it a priority on the agenda of decision makers, encouraging governments and parliaments to give more attention to desertification issues, involving all the stakeholders at all levels in the fight against desertification, improving regional cooperation, enhancing institutional and human capacities, pursuing an advocacy and catalytic role in other relevant multilateral processes, and, last but not least, providing the necessary financial means.
6. Some concrete proposals may contribute to bringing forward the fight against desertification, land degradation and soil erosion, such as, the recognition of the topsoil as a global public good, the establishment of an International Panel on Desertification, a UNCCD peer review mechanism, regular 'green accounting' government reports, the holding of Youth Summits, a "Soil Protection Prize", and the transformation of parliaments into real actors of sustainable human development and desertification control.
7. The specific commitments made by parliamentarians at previous UNCCD parliamentary round-table discussions need to be reaffirmed and deserve further follow-up. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) should give this parliamentary forum more structured support. National and regional parliaments are encouraged to create international parliamentary oversight mechanisms and to make better use of the activities of the Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD which itself needs regular funding.

8. Where bad governance and corruption, unfair trade and unregulated capitalism rule, successful development and anti-desertification policy cannot prevail.

II. Critical assessment

A. Background

9. Desertification is one of the world's most alarming global environmental problems. It takes place worldwide in drylands. At least 90 per cent of the inhabitants of drylands live in developing countries and they suffer the poorest economic and social conditions.

10. Drylands occupy 41 per cent of Earth's land area and are home to more than 2 billion people. It has been estimated¹ that some 10–20 per cent of drylands are already degraded, the total area affected by desertification being between 6 and 12 million square kilometres, that about 1–6 per cent of the inhabitants of drylands live in desertified areas, and that a billion people are under threat from further desertification.

11. Forty years ago, the United Nations Conference on Desertification, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 1977, addressed desertification as a worldwide problem for the first time. In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly, as requested by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, called for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification. On 17 June 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was adopted in Paris,² and 17 June became the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. The UNCCD entered into force in December 1996, 90 days after the 50th ratification was received. The Conference of the Parties (COP), which is the Convention's supreme governing body, held its first session in October 1997 in Rome, Italy. Since 1999 the secretariat of the Convention has been located in Bonn, Germany.

12. The UNCCD with its five regional implementation annexes – for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Northern Mediterranean and, since 2000, for Central and Eastern Europe – has made a real difference in the legal international architecture, by bringing forward the issue of desertification as a fully fledged item in the global sustainable development agenda.

13. According to the Convention, desertification “means land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities” (article 1(a)). And combating desertification includes activities which are aimed at: “(i) prevention and/or reduction of land degradation; (ii) rehabilitation of partly degraded land; and (iii) reclamation of desertified land” (article 1(b)).

14. The UNCCD focuses explicitly on the protection of natural resources and the fight against poverty in the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones of the world. It obliges affected developing countries to design strategies against land degradation in so-called “national action programmes” and to reconcile them with existing measures in the fight

¹ The most definitive assessment of the severity of desertification on a global scale was produced by the United Nations 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (see in particular its “Desertification Synthesis”): www.millenniumassessment.org

² The text of the Convention is available at www.unccd.int/convention/menu.php.

against poverty and the safeguarding of food production. For their part, the industrialized nations are required to provide substantial financial contributions as well as scientific and technological support so that the proposed measures can be enacted. The challenge is “to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, through effective action at all levels, supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements, in the framework of an integrated approach, which is consistent with Agenda 21, with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in affected areas” (article 2.1). The great scope and urgency of the challenge led the United Nations General Assembly to proclaim 2006 to be the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD).

B. Overall assessment³

15. By focusing on sustainable development and on the land degradation–poverty nexus, the UNCCD has played a key role for its impressive number of Parties (191) in diverse and key areas.

16. In its first decade, the Convention’s record in fostering the development of effective strategies, programmes and measures, and of the enabling environment necessary to reverse land degradation and mitigate the effects of droughts, is mixed. This can be attributed in part to the suboptimal performance of its governance structure and institutions. Yet the Convention has been plagued by lack of financial and predictable mechanisms to meet fundamental goals and objectives. The Convention lacks teeth and a feasible work plan. Although the Convention has been ratified by more than 190 countries, progress is hard to discern at this stage, and in some countries disillusionment is evident because the expected international support is slow to materialize.

³ If not specifically mentioned, this background document mainly relies on and quotes from the following documents, reviews and papers: UNCCD secretariat. 2004: Preserving our common ground – UNCCD 10 years on. Bonn (www.unccd.int/publicinfo/publications/UNCCD_magazine-eng.pdf); Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations. 2005: Review of the Management, Administration and Activities of the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Geneva; UNCCD secretariat. 2006: Comments and Views of the Executive Secretary on the JIU Report Including the UNCCD Management Response on the Review of the Management, Administration and Activities of the Secretariat of the UNCCD by the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations. Bonn; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (ed.). 2007: The Role of Governance in Combating Desertification. An event to mark the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. Berlin, 7 September 2006 (www2.gtz.de/dokumente/bib/07-0302.pdf); UNCCD secretariat: Assessing the UNCCD process and identifying challenges ahead (1997–2016). Outcome of the Round Table discussion. New York, 1–2 November 2006 (www.unccd.int/convention/NYroundtable/docs/outcome-eng.pdf); Desertification and International Policy Bulletin. 2006: Report on the Joint International Conference Desertification and the International Policy Imperative, 17–19 December 2006 in Algiers, vol. 6, no. 1 (www.iisd.ca/africa/desert/jicd/html/arc0601e.html) - see also www.inweh.unu.edu/inweh/drylands/IYDD_Conference_2006-Abstracts.pdf); CRIC. 2007: Report of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention on its fifth session, held in Buenos Aires from 12 to 21 March 2007; Core Consultancy Team of Unisféra and Integrated Environmental Consultants Namibia. 2007: (Draft) Ten-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance Implementation of the UNCCD (2008–2018) [The Seventh Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-7), held in Nairobi in October, 2005, set up the Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) to develop a draft ten-year strategic plan for CCD implementation.]; U. Holtz. 2003: The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and its Political Dimension. Bonn ([www.unccd.int/parliament/data/bginfo/PDUNCCD\(eng\).pdf](http://www.unccd.int/parliament/data/bginfo/PDUNCCD(eng).pdf)); U. Holtz. 2005: Important Outcomes of the Previous Five Round Tables of Members of Parliament on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Bonn (<http://unccd.int/cop/cop7/docs/report5parl-eng.pdf>).

17. At the beginning of the second UNCCD decade, the Convention and the problems relating to desertification still receive insufficient attention. Whereas it is widely taken for granted that humankind has to protect the ozone layer and biodiversity, the relevance of saving land from degradation and erosion is not adequately recognized. The UNCCD, one of the three Rio Conventions (together with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)), has failed to excite the sort of political and public interest enjoyed by the other two. In the general architecture of global environmental governance, the UNCCD is not a cornerstone.

18. Sustainable human development is about improving the living conditions for all of the Earth's citizens without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The implementation of the UNCCD requires that the four dimensions of sustainable development – environmental, social, economic and, often forgotten, political – be addressed equally.

C. Affected countries

19. During its first years the UNCCD focused on the development of an international governance system designed to assist affected countries, particularly developing ones, in the formulation of policies and programmes to achieve the Convention's objectives. As a result, the Convention has achieved wide political recognition and enjoys an almost universal membership of 191 Parties (190 countries and the European Community). From the very beginning many parliaments were involved in the ratification process. (For comparison 189 countries have joined the UNFCCC, and there are 190 Parties to the CBD. The comparison gives no reason for UNCCD to feel in an inferior position.) Numerous local, national and global awareness raising activities – not only during the IYDD – bear witness to the UNCCD's importance.

20. Ninety-seven national action programmes (NAPs) rank among the achievements. The NAPs are strengthened by subregional action programmes (SRAPs) and regional action programmes (RAPs). To date:

(a) In Africa, 37 countries⁴ have completed their NAPs and four subregions their SRAPs.⁵ Several countries report that they need more time to complete their NAPs;

(b) In Asia, 27 countries⁶ have completed their NAPs, and one SRAP was developed

⁴ Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe. Namibia's Programme to Combat Desertification (Napcod) is regarded as the NAP by the UNCCD.

⁵ Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEDEAO) et Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel (CILSS); Southern African Development Community (SADC), Union du Maghreb Arabe (UMA); Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD – Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda).

⁶ China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Niue, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Yemen.

by the Central Asian countries.⁷ The other Asian countries concerned are at various stages of preparing their NAPs;

(c) In Latin America and the Caribbean, 25 countries⁸ have completed their NAPs, and others are making progress with preparing theirs or need more time. A Latin America and the Caribbean RAP was agreed upon;

(d) In the Northern Mediterranean, only 4 of the 11 affected countries have completed their NAPs;⁹

(e) In Central and Eastern Europe, the affected countries Parties concerned are at various stages of completing their NAPs. Four countries have done so.¹⁰

21. Few of these programmes were successfully realized. In practice many NAPs do not work, because of a lack of appropriate strategic actions in the countries concerned, of adequate financial resources, and of appropriate technology, knowledge, know-how, and connection between policymakers and scientists. Too often, the incorporation and effective integration of regional and subregional policies at the national level remain limited.

22. Despite the supportive policy statements in the UNCCD and among international agencies and governments that understand the importance of a focus on gender equality and gender balance within desertification and dryland projects, women fail to reap significant benefits from most projects and remain neglected in many other project designs.¹¹

23. The lessons to be learned from progress on completion of the NAPs is that they must be drawn up using a method designed to make them more comparable among themselves and to promote the fight against desertification by incorporating it into a broader context harmonizing national development policies and strategies.

24. The NAP process has been criticized for failing to do several things, all of them related: involving key decision makers outside environment ministries, integrating desertification programmes into other development strategies and government policies in affected countries (for example poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs)¹²), and highlighting and justifying funding priorities. As a result of these failures, ministries outside the environment and agriculture ministries (usually the finance ministry) fail to cite desertification as a priority in discussions with donor agencies.

⁷ See the “Tashkent Joint Platform of Action for UNCCD Implementation”, 2003 (www.global-mechanism.org/dynamic/documents/document_file/tashekentjointplatformforaction.pdf).

⁸ Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

⁹ Greece, Italy, Portugal, Turkey.

¹⁰ Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Romania.

¹¹ Cf. IFAD (ed.). 2006: Gender and desertification. Expanding roles for women to restore drylands. Rome (www.ifad.org/pub/gender/desert/gender_desert.pdf).

¹² Cf. U. Holtz. 2003: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Country Strategy Papers and their relationship to the combat against desertification. The role of parliaments. Bonn (www.unccd.int/parliament/data/bginfo/PRS.pdf).

25. In 2005, the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) submitted a report which analysed the national reports and activities undertaken in Africa by the countries in the region and by their main development partners in support of efforts to implement the Convention. The analysis – more or less true for other regions in the world – highlighted a few major lessons, which must certainly be taken into account when considering reform steps required for more effective implementation of the Convention. These lessons include the following:

(a) In many reports, some of the strategic action areas referred to in the Declaration still appear as sectoral projects limited in time by financing agreements which are not guaranteed to last;

(b) Many reports consider the incorporation of strategic action areas within NAPs and the link between the latter and PRSPs to be essential. Nevertheless, few countries have gone as far as integrating their NAPs into their national development strategies in practice;

(c) It also appears that the importance attached to desertification control in the cooperation policies of some developed countries needs reassessing, in view of the priority this matter is given by most African countries;

(d) Joint initiatives are being set up with international organizations, which have the effect of strengthening the networking efforts of specialized agencies and thus facilitating better coordination of assistance to countries, especially from the point of view of mobilizing funds for the implementation of priority projects.

26. Developing country Parties are asked to respect these lessons and, with the support of international organizations, to strengthen the capacities of governments and civil society, and to support agencies in the delivery of services for the formulation, execution and evaluation of participatory local area development programmes under the NAPs, including community/private/public partnerships.

27. Existing possibilities must be better explored and used for UNCCD implementation processes – such as the Private Sector Enabling Environment Facility (PSEEF), a European Union (EU) funded initiative under the Cotonou Agreement and its ACP Business Climate facility.¹³

28. The Convention asks for “effective participation at the local, national and regional levels of non-governmental organizations and local populations, both women and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their representative organizations, in policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of national action programmes” (article 10.2(f)); parliaments and MPs are not mentioned. Increasing the role of all the stakeholders in decision-making processes is critical. The insufficient empowerment of local communities and the presence of perverse economic and policy incentives continue to act as barriers to implementing these strategies. Successful implementation of UNCCD-related strategies, programmes and measures will result from reforming the incentive structure and empowering local communities through the decentralization of land and resource management decision-making.

¹³ See <http://acpbusinessclimate.org>

29. Many developing country Parties have to increase their efforts to integrate the objectives of the Convention into their overall sustainable development strategies. Furthermore they should strengthen national coordinating bodies through budgetary and human resource support and by integrating them into the administrative structure at an appropriate level of authority with a view to effectively influencing policymaking processes in order to deliver coordination and mainstreaming functions. And there is a need to be aware of the fact that people “on the ground,” such as farmers and pastoralists, are often not aware of policies and solutions discussed at government or ministerial level and do not have the tools to apply solutions despite being the most affected individuals.

30. Experiences highlight human solutions to desertification, including the need to: improve livelihoods, employment alternatives, and incentives for better land use and management; to make projects recipient-driven rather than donor-driven (ownership); to include local communities and traditional knowledge; to enhance information and transparency in processes; to address the problem of urbanization; to increase research to advice policy; and to develop more appropriate institutional frameworks.

D. International community and donors

31. Several organs, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), donor countries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are supporting the preparation and implementation of action programmes under the Convention.

32. In 1997, the UNCCD has established a Global Mechanism (GM) in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of existing financial mechanisms. The GM is not an autonomous institution, but rather a brokering process established within the legal framework of the UNCCD and a specialized provider of financial advisory services on mobilizing resources to implement the Convention. The GM is accountable to the COP and its decisions. It works closely with its three founding members (the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (its hosting institution), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank) and the other members of its Facilitation Committee. The GM is considered to have been not as successful as expected.

33. In 2002 the Global Environment Facility (GEF) designated a focal area dedicated to sustainable land management (GEF Operational Program 15) and has since 2003 been a financial mechanism to the UNCCD. During the past four years, USD 250 million have been allocated to initiatives combating land degradation. It is expected that at least USD 1 billion will be invested in sustainable land management over the next four years. Nevertheless, bilateral and multilateral funding for natural resource management activities in areas vulnerable to desertification has not increased significantly. And the complementary roles of the GEF and the GM still need clarification.

34. The dual concern for food security and the conservation of resources is reflected in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Strategic Framework for the period 2000–2015, which includes specific reference to support the environmental conventions, including the UNCCD. FAO has more than 100 ongoing field projects directly relating to the assessment and control of desertification. FAO has regularly offered technical advice to the Financial Information Engine on Land Degradation (FIELD) of the Global

Mechanism (GM) and has assisted the GM in the application of the FIELD system at country level. It has also set up a website on desertification to be used directly by stakeholders involved in the UNCCD.

35. The overriding goal of the UNDP is to promote sustainable development, and in particular contribute to the goal of halving poverty by 2015. UNDP is working closely with its programme countries, supporting their poverty reduction efforts, including assisting in the preparation of NAPs and mainstreaming NAPs and sustainable land use issues into national development and planning frameworks.

36. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) continues to implement and develop projects on land degradation for financing through the GEF. Positive sustainable land management projects have begun to provide better models for policymaking.

37. The World Bank's projects have specific funding for sustainable land management components covering the key themes of agriculture, forestry, land and water resources management, which are central to realizing the objectives of the UNCCD. The most important initiative recently launched by the World Bank remains the "TerrAfrica".

38. The support for combating desertification mainly takes the form of numerous bilateral development cooperation projects.¹⁴ With regard to strategic action areas, not enough attention appears to be given to cross-sectoral programmes, renewable energies, the sustainable management of rangelands and the introduction of early warning systems. A necessary consequence should be that typical donor-driven individual UNCCD projects should decline, to the benefit of sectoral and cross-sectoral programme-based financing in the fields of agriculture, poverty reduction, water resources management, etc.

39. The developed countries mostly failed in promoting the mobilization of new and additional funding

40. In future, consultations among donors and affected countries must integrate the implementation of the three Rio Conventions, which has been largely separate until now, and will lead to integrated measures to be carried out at local level within the context of national development strategies.

E. Parliamentary involvement

41. Since 1998 MPs have met in parallel to the COPs. The Parliamentary Round Tables became an integral part of the COP sessions and a platform for exchange of views and interaction between MPs on sustainable development and, more specifically, desertification. Some 275 MPs, 15 per cent of them women, from 70 countries¹⁵ and four regional

¹⁴ For instance Germany, UNCCD's host country, supports some 679 projects worldwide with an overall total commitment of EUR 1.8 billion. See BMZ (ed.). 2006: Report by the Federal Republic of Germany on Measures Taken to Assist Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (www.bmz.de/en/service/infothek/fach/spezial/spezial144/spezial_144.pdf).

¹⁵ Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Botswana, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chile, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Cuba, Egypt, El Salvador, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Peru,



parliaments¹⁶ participated at the previous six Round Tables. These took place in Dakar (1998), Recife (1999), Bonn (2000), Geneva (2001), Havana (2003) and Nairobi (2005).

42. The Round Tables / Forums are organized by the UNCCD secretariat with the support of the host country and the IPU.

43. The declarations adopted after each Round Table constitute the framework of the MPs' intended engagement in support of UNCCD. The declarations are fully integrated into the final report of the COP and MPs commit themselves to undertake concrete actions aimed at enhancing anti-desertification activities and promoting sustainable development.

44. In particular, the Declaration adopted in Havana in 2003 constituted a suitable framework of the MPs' commitment and included a "Parliamentary Action Plan". Furthermore, MPs elected a Steering Committee and called for the establishment of a Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD – under the auspices of the IPU, a network of information, interaction and influence aimed at increasing parliamentary involvement and efficiency in the fields of combating desertification, soil erosion and land degradation. Accordingly, in February 2004 the UNCCD secretariat established on its website <www.unccd.int> a window "Parliaments in action".

45. The Governing Council of the IPU generally endorsed the Round Table outcomes and, in 2003, welcomed the creation of a Steering Committee and of the Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD. However, the IPU should give this parliamentary UNCCD forum more structured support.

46. Although it is rather difficult to evaluate the impact of the previous six Parliamentary Round Tables, the following conclusions can be drawn:

(a) It is of great merit that, with the support of the IPU and the UNCCD secretariat, a parliamentary dimension was added to the UNCCD process;

(b) The Parliamentary Round Tables have become a platform for exchange of views and interaction among parliamentarians on desertification issues. Because of problems inherent with finding out the specific impacts that the Round Tables, declarations or resolutions have had on given policy areas, it is not possible to give details of the extent to which the Round Tables have influenced the anti-desertification policies of countries;

(c) The COP at its second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth sessions took note "with appreciation" of the declarations, adopted by the Round Tables, and decided to include them as annexes to the reports of the COP sessions. However, with respect to the official outcomes of the COPs, the Parliamentary Round Tables were not a "front-runner" in formulating specific demands relating to the desertification cause. Although they were sometimes quite innovative (see for instance the Second Round Table's emphasis on educational, scientific and cultural policies for implementing the Convention), the follow-up was meagre;

Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zambia, Zimbabwe.

¹⁶ ECOWAS, European Parliament, Latin American Parliament, Pan African Parliament.

(d) The IPU, in particular its Committee on Sustainable Development (,Trade and Finances),¹⁷ dealt with the outcomes of the different Parliamentary Round Tables and considered several times the issues of land degradation and desertification;¹⁸

(e) The IPU Council generally endorsed the round table outcomes, recommending that the IPU provides further technical assistance to the UNCCD secretariat for the holding of future parliamentary round tables, and following the findings of its Committee on Sustainable Development. In 2003 the IPU Governing Council approved the creation of a Steering Committee and of the Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD;

(f) Some specific commitments made by the parliamentarians deserve further follow-up, such as the organization of an annual parliamentary event (International Day to Combat Desertification) or the calls for monitoring government action, for strengthening the participative and democratic processes, for specific budget-lines and for consistent integration of the main UNCCD provisions in national policies for sustainable development;

(g) Considering the high political relevance of land degradation and desertification issues in the poverty reduction strategy papers in place,¹⁹ there is, at the national, (sub) regional and international levels, a need for improved parliamentary participation, greater parliamentary involvement, capacity strengthening, and more parliamentary networking;

(h) Parliaments and MPs could do more to realize the various good ideas put forward during the Parliamentary Round Tables and action programmes;

(i) The UNCCD website with its section “Parliaments in action” includes all Parliamentary Round Table declarations, reports, lists of participants and some IPU related documents (normally in English and French). However, the Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD could be much better used by the MPs themselves. It is known that several parliaments undertook initiatives within their respective parliaments or on a (sub)regional level, but these activities were not reported to the UNCCD secretariat. So just the motion “Fighting desertification effectively” adopted by the German Parliament, Bundestag, in 2004 ranks among the “follow-up actions” to be found on the website.

¹⁷ IPU, Reports of the Committee for Sustainable Development: CL/164/13(c)-R.1, 3 March 1999; CL/166/16(d)-R.1, 3 March 2000; CL/168/13(d)-R.1, 14 March 2001; CL/170/13(d)-R.1, 20 March 2002.

¹⁸ See, for example, the parliamentary message to the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, adopted by the IPU Council at its 168th session (Havana, 7 April 2001): “Natural and environmental resources constitute the common inheritance and capital assets of the poor. It is the poor who suffer most from the degradation of land, soil, water and forestry resources which are vital to their food security, their livelihood and their very survival. Multilateral rules and standards, whether they be in trade, investment, intellectual property or the environment, should contribute to the maintenance, regeneration and enhancement of these assets, instead of their erosion.”

¹⁹ Cf. U. Holtz: Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Country Strategy Papers and their relationship to the combat against desertification. The role of parliaments, Bonn 2003 (www.unccd.int/parliament/data/bginfo/PRS.pdf). Desertification has many impacts on food security, natural resources and ecosystems, migration, political stability and sustainable human development as a whole. See U. Holtz, The UNCCD and its Political Dimension, Bonn, May 2003 ([www.unccd.int/parliament/data/bginfo/PDUNCCD\(eng\).pdf](http://www.unccd.int/parliament/data/bginfo/PDUNCCD(eng).pdf)).

F. UNCCD secretariat

47. Despite the dedication and professionalism of their staff and management, the performance of the main two Convention institutions, the secretariat and the GM, has been suboptimal in many respects, for example in facilitating and stimulating implementation activities.

48. Performance has been impeded by the difficulty in clearly delineating the two institutions' respective mandates, resulting in institutional tensions. Conflicting views on the roles and functions of the two organizations has also led to expanding demands by the COP without the provision of corresponding financial and human resources.

49. The Convention lists the functions of its secretariat, confirmed and elaborated in decisions of the COP. The roles of the secretariat are set out in general terms in article 23, paragraph 2, and can be described as service provider, facilitator, catalyst and coordinator. The secretariat is not an implementing agency with concrete anti-desertification projects.

50. The "Review of the Management, Administration and Activities of the Secretariat of the UNCCD" submitted by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of the United Nations found that the secretariat is undertaking all activities required of it under its standing functions, and a large majority of the Parties shares this view.²⁰ However, the Inspectors recommend that the Executive Secretary should ensure that the secretariat focuses on its role in its interactions with the affected country Parties under Article 23, paragraph 2 (c) of the Convention.

51. The Inspectors have concluded that in terms of financial and human resources, the UNCCD is undernourished as compared with the other two Rio Conventions. In terms of the core budgets, the UNCCD lags well behind, its approved budgets from assessed contributions for 2002–2003 (USD 16.2 million) and 2004–2005 (USD 17 million) being about half those of UNFCCC, and also less than those of the CBD. It also receives a lower core budget contribution from the host country than does the UNFCCC. The UNCCD also has less access to voluntary funding than has the UNFCCC, and this can be seen especially in the funding provided for national reporting processes.

52. The programme and budget adopted by the COP at its seventh session for the biennium 2006–2007 has presented a very unfavourable situation, with major negative consequences on the staffing structure of the secretariat and resource requirements for core activities. The Executive Secretary has taken some drastic measures including the freezing of some key posts, in order to operate within the available resources. Of the approved 43 posts in the core budget some 13 posts have been frozen for the biennium. In addition, 7 posts, which would have been financed under programme support have been frozen. Some of these posts relate to administrative services and therefore most of these services have been outsourced.

53. It should, however, be noted that the external auditors had recommended strengthening the administrative functions in order to be able to respond to evolving requirements of the organization. The secretariat also continues to utilize all management tools at hand in order to reduce costs. In this regard, posts which become vacant are not filled and their functions are redeployed to other staff members; consultancy and expert services are reduced; and staff

²⁰ ICCD/COP(7)/4, 12 August 2005.

travel costs to attend important UNCCD related events have also been reduced to nominal amounts. Procurement of office equipment and furniture has been put on hold, staff development programmes have been eliminated and other operational and common premises costs have been reduced. To fully discharge the responsibilities of the tasks assigned by the parties, the secretariat requires a level of both financial and human resources commensurate with the level of expected service delivery. An in-depth analysis of the current situation, particularly on human resource requirements, reveals that the continuing budget reductions which the secretariat has faced as a result of decisions taken at COP 6 for the biennium 2004–2005 and at COP 7 for the biennium 2006–2007 have created increasing difficulties in pursuing the core activities of the secretariat, and also pose a high risk of jeopardizing the quality of services required for the implementation of all decisions taken by the Parties.

III. Challenges ahead

A. Climate change

54. Observations from all continents and in most oceans show that many natural systems are being affected by regional climate changes, particularly temperature increases, caused mainly by human activities. For a large share of the world's people in developing countries climate change projections point to more environmental and land degradation and to less secure livelihoods, greater vulnerability to hunger and poverty, and worsening social inequalities. Climate change threatens not a one-time catastrophe but a slowly unfolding disaster. There are crucial links between desertification and global sustainable development. Combating desertification and adapting to climate change are mutually reinforcing.

55. The theme of the 2007 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought (17 June 2007), "Desertification and Climate Change – One Global Challenge", is a reminder that climate change and desertification interact with each other at a variety of levels. The United Nations Secretary-General rightly asked that desertification and climate change be addressed in a synergetic fashion, as part of an integrated approach to achieving sustainable development for all.

56. In the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, desertification was cited as potentially the most threatening ecosystem change impacting the livelihoods of the poor.²¹ According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),²² Africa is viewed as being most at risk of adverse effects from climate change, with extreme weather causing flooding, droughts and desertification that is already apparent. Agricultural production, including access to food, in many African countries and regions is projected to be severely compromised by climate variability and change.²³

57. By 2020, between 75 and 250 million people are projected to be exposed to an increase of water stress due to climate change. Relationships between water, vegetation cover and rural poverty should be given the most urgent attention, within a land and water

²¹ www.millenniumassessment.org

²² IPCC Working Group II Fourth Assessment Report: Summary for Policymakers, 6 April 2007; IPCC WG III Fourth Assessment Report: Summary for Policymakers, 4 May 2007 (www.ipcc.ch).

²³ The perverse situation is that, globally, Africa contributes the least to climate change but continues to pay the most for the degradation of the environment. Northern countries remain the greatest polluters and should consequently pay the most, if the principle of 'polluter pays' will be applied.

management approach. In this respect, increasing the role of women in decision-making processes is critical, too.

58. Desertification also leads to major macroeconomic losses. FAO estimates that desertification and drought are causing more than USD 42 billion in lost agricultural production every year. The Government of China recently estimated the cost in environmental damage and lost resources at USD 200 billion per year and even suggested that desert expansion could threaten Chinese economic growth in the medium term.²⁴

59. Climate change is projected to impinge on sustainable development of most developing countries of Asia as it compounds the pressures on natural resources and the environment associated with rapid urbanization, industrialization, and economic development. In drier areas of Latin America, climate change is expected to lead to salination and desertification of agricultural land; the productivity of some important crops is projected to decrease and livestock productivity to decline.

60. The IPCC suggests the value of a portfolio or mix of strategies that includes mitigation, adaptation, technological development (to enhance both adaptation and mitigation) and research (on climate science, impacts, adaptation and mitigation). It emphasizes the urgency of effective climate protection; refers to the narrow remaining time horizon of two decades for limiting mean temperature increases to 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels; and shows how known technologies can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Multiple technologies must be applied. These new technologies and instruments include reforestation, carbon emissions rights trading, renewable energy resources such as wind and solar power, electricity generation through biomass, carbon capture and storage, waste composting, landfill gas, and especially improving efficiency in energy use.

61. There is huge potential for using renewable energies in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas. Already, they are used in many cases as traditional domestic fuels, and they would appear to provide ideal solutions for adapting to the damaging effects of desertification.²⁵ However, the more traditional energies (those used by the poor) are used, the more biomass is cut down or collected. The result is that biomass becomes more and more unrenovable and its over-exploitation erodes the ligneous resources and biodiversity, permanently altering the environment. This in turn perpetuates the factors of natural resource degradation and desertification, sealing the devastating cycle of desertification–poverty–excessive use of biomass-fuel (which is free or cheap)–deforestation–desertification. It is vital to effectively combine sustainable development and water access with the deployment of renewable energies, the improvement of energy efficiency and the promotion of income-generating activities.

62. There are multiple mitigation options in the transport sector. Biofuels might play an

²⁴ The evaluation of costs and benefits of combating desertification, including ecosystem services, based on quantifiable targets and estimates of the cost of non-action, would help better defining/fine-tuning strategies for intervention at local, regional and global levels. In this context the following working paper offers interesting findings: Mélanie Requier-Desjardins (French Scientific Committee on Desertification). 2006: Investing in Recovery of Arid Land, Rome, November 2006 (www.csf-desertification.org/catalogue/investing.pdf).

²⁵ See also Environnement et Développement-TM Energy Programmes. 2007. The Contribution of Renewable Energies to the fight against Desertification: Some lessons learned from projects and programmes promoting the use of renewable energy to improve access to water and the sustainable use of biomass in the Sahel. Bonn, June 2004 (www.unccd.int).

important role in addressing greenhouse gas emissions, depending on their production pathway. Brazil, the world's leading producer of renewable fuels, already has of rich experiences in using them. Biofuels used as gasoline and diesel fuel additives/substitutes are projected to grow to meeting 3 per cent of total transport energy demand in the baseline in 2030. This could increase to about 5–10%, depending on future oil and carbon prices, improvements in vehicle efficiency and the success of technologies to utilize cellulose biomass.

63. According to the Government of India, 174 million hectares – more than half of the country's territory – are suffering to a greater or lesser extent from land degradation. As the soil eroded, poverty came. The cultivation of frugal jatropha plants stops soil erosion and can turn wasteland back into agriculturally useful land. That is why DaimlerChrysler joined together with experts and research institutions from India and Germany in January 2003 to launch a pilot project for the cultivation and use of the jatropha plant in a village in the state of Gujarat. The aim is to demonstrate that the vicious circle of erosion, soil deterioration and poverty can be broken.²⁶

B. Conflicts

64. Environmental change can, in combination with other factors, exacerbate existing rivalries and trigger violent conflict by sharpening distinctions among groups. Desertification can be a dangerous phenomenon for the transmission of conflicts.²⁷

65. Environmental refugees mean hardship not only for the people who have to leave their homes to seek a new living, but also for those already living in the regions into which migrants move. Already adept at competing for fertile land, food and other resources in their homelands, the migrants are a major threat to the residents in destination areas. Many of the factors relevant for human well-being are directly or indirectly linked to freshwater resources.²⁸

66. Most of the countries where the freshwater situation is critical today or expected to be critical within the next 20 years belong to the developing world. Their gross national income and employment rates are highly dependent on agricultural production and therefore highly sensitive to climatic change. The agricultural dimension of water security is often a delicate political topic. Agricultural production has been considerably increased in recent years through investment in large-scale irrigation projects. Up to 90 per cent of total water consumption goes to agriculture in many developing countries, but this proportion has decreased to an average of 30 per cent in the industrialized world.

²⁶ Cf. Klaus Sieg. 2006. *Jatropha curcas* – eine genügsame Pflanze für die Biodiesel-Produktion, in: *Entwicklung & ländlicher Raum* 6/2006, p. 25ff; Sustainable biofuels - DaimlerChrysler's pilot project in India www.daimlerchrysler.com/dccom/0-5-7165-1-446313-1-0-0-446301-0-0-135-7165-0-0-0-0-0-0.html

²⁷ Conflict research indicates that ecological degradation often is unlikely to trigger an escalation of violent conflicts in its own right (for an overview see Nils Petter Gleditsch, *Armed conflict and the environment: a critique of the literature*, *Journal of Peace Research* 35 (3) 1998). Quite to the contrary, environmental problems have often led to cooperation, sometimes even between neighbours with otherwise tense relations such as Egypt and Israel. However, growing demands on limited resources will bring about more conflicts of interest.

²⁸ Cf. Annabelle Houdret. 2004. *Water as a security concern – conflict or cooperation?* Presentation at the 5th Pan-European Conference of International Relations. The Hague, 8–11 September 2004 (www.sgir.org/conference2004/papers/Houdret%20-%20Water%20as%20a%20security%20concern.pdf)

67. Water problems could be solved by a reasonable policy and effective infrastructure. Most important of all is the need to avoid pointless waste; a realistic price should be paid for water. For agriculture, alternatives, such as using wastewater, could be explored and crops could be drip-irrigated.

68. Further solutions could be: to examine new corporate responsibility and accountability mechanisms as well as dispute resolution schemes; to develop new environmental liability regimes; to focus on the development of preventive instruments for addressing disputes that arise before harm has occurred; to follow preventive approaches including negotiation, education, capacity-building, etc., combined with judicial instruments; to ensure that international legal instruments more effectively promote environmental security; and to enhance the capacity of multilateral environmental agreements to address environmental degradation in a timely fashion and thus prevent environmental insecurity causing social tensions and (potential) conflicts.

69. The implementation of the UNCCD is important to prevent conflicts both in the migrant's countries of origin and in destinations.

C. Migration

70. There are about 25 million people in the world today who can be categorized as environmentally displaced. By 2050, 150 million people worldwide are expected to have left their homeland because of climate change and soil erosion. Environmental refugees – refugees fleeing desertification – greatly outnumber those fleeing from war, ethnic confrontation and persecution. Growing desertification will only worsen this trend. Most high-risk countries are in Africa, where the shortage of arable land coincides with lack of freshwater and political instability.

71. Migration is a complex international phenomenon. It requires international cooperation, with countries sharing responsibility. Policymakers must not only consider the effects of migration; the causes also deserve attention, as well as the opportunities. Contrary to early theory, persistent circular or seasonal migration within countries or between neighbouring countries is emerging as the migration pattern of the poor. Desertification may be related both to migrations between country areas (towards areas with fertile land or pioneer frontiers) and to the rural exodus; however, migration generally is not the first reaction to increasing consequences of desertification.

72. Implementing the UNCCD is crucial to reducing the risk of migration and conflict in Africa and Asia. The UNCCD is an important convention because it is the first towards recognizing the causal links between environment degradation and migration. More emphasis must be placed on the implementation of its articles. For example, implementation of Convention article 10.3²⁹ on NAPs has so far focused much more on biophysical causes of desertification than on the social or economical consequences.

²⁹ Early warning systems, mechanisms for assisting environmentally displaced persons, food security systems including storage facilities, establishment of alternative livelihood projects, sustainable irrigations programmes etc.

73. Enhanced regional coordination is essential for dealing with such transboundary issues as environmental migration or integrated river basin management.

74. The United Nations system and other major aid organizations should focus on issues relating to environmental refugees/migrants from a sustainable development viewpoint.

D. Good governance

75. Desertification, migration and conflict are closely connected to questions of governance. Bad governance, political repression and corruption in the affected developing countries are hastening desertification; actually, the UNCCD offers an appropriate frame for democratic and participatory actions to combat desertification. Weak governance structures are also to blame for much of the conflict arising from migration.

76. In its “Plan of Implementation”, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD – Johannesburg, South Africa, 2005)³⁰ highlights the essential role good governance plays for sustainable development within each country and at the international level: “At the domestic level, sound environmental, social and economic policies, democratic institutions [...], the rule of law, anti-corruption measures, gender equality and an enabling environment for investments are the basis for sustainable development.” In 2003, IPU MPs stressed that parliaments can contribute decisively to good governance grounded on democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people, anti-corruption measures, gender equality and a favourable atmosphere and environment for investment.³¹

77. There is no explicit mentioning of ‘governance’ in the UNCCD – in contrast to NAPs (for instance Burkina Faso’s NAP, 2000, refers to structures and mechanisms of adequate governance). However, one could say that the Convention is based on the principles of participation, partnership and decentralization – the backbone of good governance. Indeed, governance matters, as is recognized by the Millennium Declaration or the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). One interesting finding of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, regarding desertification, is that much depends on the socio-economic resources available, the policies adopted, and the quality of governance.

78. Governance refers to the rules, processes and behaviour by which interests are articulated, resources are managed, and power is exercised. In theory and practice an improved governance is required bearing in mind that desertification control is a crosscutting task. Governance includes participation, accountability, efficiency, transparency, and coherence, as well as capable public institutions and individuals, a responsible state management and the rule of law. Functioning democracies perform better in fighting desertification. The international community should be more supportive of enhancing governance on land issues.

³⁰ See www.un.org/events/wssd. The political statement made by world leaders was instrumental to reaching the decision of the GEF Council to become a financial mechanism to UNCCD.

³¹ Cf. IPU Resolution Parliaments’ Role in Strengthening Democratic Institutions and Human Development in a Fragmented World, adopted unanimously by the 108th Conference (Santiago de Chile, 11 April 2003).

79. With regard to desertification, governance means above all that public authorities, from local to national levels, may:³²

- (a) Guarantee standards of sustainable land use that impede degradation;
- (b) Seek fulfilment of contracts that include measures to protect soils;
- (c) Guarantee adequate property rights and increase tenure security;
- (d) Deliver and assure inputs such as capital, labour, technology and energy that protect soils from degradation;
- (e) Work for an environmentally sound use of water and wood resources,
- (f) Ensure public allocation of grazing and natural reserve areas and restriction of regional land use;
- (g) Promote informative and procedural rights (access to information, decision-making processes and justice);
- (h) Limit population;
- (i) Pursue coherent and better-coordinated policies in the area of poverty eradication and sustainable human development including desertification combating and the achievement of the MDGs.

80. All relevant actors and institutions have to comply with “good governance” criteria or characteristics: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, strategic vision; clarity of definition, adequate framework conditions and institutions, good management, the use of appropriate fiscal instruments, the responsible handling of funds, the inclusion of civil society, and better training at national and international levels.³³ The call for better governance is addressed to donors, too; they must also assume more responsibility for the way they manage development and for what it actually achieves.³⁴

³² Cf. Solvay Gerke/Uwe Holtz. 2006. Land Degradation and Governance. Presentation on the occasion of the UNCCD and University of Bonn joint workshop “Widening the bridge between research and action”, 28 November 2006.

³³ Cf. Gita Welch/Zarah Nuru (lead eds.). 2006: Governance for the Future. Democracy and Development in the Least Developed Countries (UN-OHRLS, UNDP) (www.un.org/special-rep/ohrls/ldc/Governancereport.pdf). See also UNDP. 2002: Human Development Report 2002: Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World (<http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2002/en>). An official definition of good governance may be found in article 9,3 of the ACP–EU Partnership Agreement (2000): “In the context of a political and institutional environment that upholds human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law, good governance is the transparent and accountable management of human, natural, economic and financial resources for the purposes of equitable and sustainable development.”

³⁴ The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD) is about coherent and better-coordinated programmes in developing countries, the effective and efficient use of financial resources, improved outputs, a partnership approach and mutual accountability (www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en_2649_3236398_35401554_1_1_1_1,00.html).

81. The COP should introduce a UNCCD peer review mechanism to help improve governance, to ensure compliance and to facilitate the availability and accessibility of technologies and funding to those who need them and for alternative livelihoods of dryland communities. Governments and other stakeholders need to show their willingness to address internal factors causing desertification when asking for financial resources.

E. Financial issues

82. The financial resources made available so far to the UNCCD cannot be described as substantial; neither can they be considered adequate, timely or predictable. There is a financing gap.³⁵

83. There is a lack of a clear and stable financial commitment to the UNCCD by the developed country Parties. The consequence is that this, in turn, may contribute to a deficient UNCCD prioritization in affected country Parties, which see little incentive in integrating UNCCD objectives into overall national development plans. The overriding priority of mobilizing political will for the Convention, also in developed country Parties, has been rightly identified as the enabling condition for progress. The Intergovernmental Intersessional Working Group (IIWG) found that an updated consideration of the global interactions of desertification would help.

84. As for biodiversity, the CBD at the 2002 WSSD got a strategic plan for full implementation by 2010. And President Jacques Chirac himself took charge of a major international conference in France in 2005 on the science and governance of biodiversity. The UNCCD should be given the same opportunity.

85. A key task of the GM is to convince the World Bank, the regional development banks and other donor organizations to invest in NAPs. Admittedly, the quality of many currently existing NAPs needs to be improved. There is also a need for a clearer definition of the UNCCD's actual objectives, not only for all its 191 Parties but also, in greater detail, for each of the Convention's regional annexes. Specific strategic areas for action include those identified by the "Bonn Declaration" (December 2000), namely: sustainable use and management of rangelands; development of sustainable agricultural and livestock production systems; integrated land and water management; development of renewable energy sources; launching of reforestation/afforestation programmes and intensification of soil conservation programmes; development of early warning systems for food security, drought forecasting, and desertification monitoring; and micro-credit for drylands communities.

86. The private sector can be a partner in innovative solutions for the financing of climate protection and adaptation. Global carbon emissions trading is a good starting point. Developing countries take part in these markets via the clean development mechanism (CDM) under the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC, which gives them access to up-to-date

³⁵ The JIU suggests three reasons for this financing gap. First, developed country Parties have not made a clear commitment to provide stable resources to UNCCD implementation. Second, developing country Parties have experienced mixed success in mainstreaming UNCCD objectives into national development plans and in mobilizing national resources. Third, development partners have failed to mainstream UNCCD programmes and activities into their programmes and projects.

technologies.³⁶ UNDP recently launched a Carbon Facility financed by the banking and insurance giant Fortis with the intention to help developing countries design projects aimed at reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. The Facility will operate within CDM framework. By expanding the CDM's presence into countries and regions previously considered inaccessible to carbon finance (particularly Africa), UNDP expects to help people in these areas acquire the resources and knowledge to take greater control over their future environment and development paths.

87. Most rich-country governments want to give the GEF the assignment of managing the Adaptation Fund, provided for in the Kyoto Protocol.³⁷ This Adaptation Fund – with potential relevance for the UNCCD, too – will fund tangible adaptation measures in developing countries, and will be financed through a levy on the trade in emission certificates under the CDM. By the end of 2012, the Adaptation Fund should command USD 270–600 million according to World Bank estimates.

88. Although aid was on an upward trend through 2005 as members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), non-DAC donors, and non-traditional donors expanded assistance to developing countries, in 2006 the level of real aid from DAC members fell. After reaching a record level in 2005, total aid from DAC members fell by about 5 per cent to about just below USD 104 billion in 2006. These trends suggest that real aid delivery is falling well short of donor commitments. Doubling of aid to Africa by 2010 looks increasingly unlikely. There has also been a continuing concentration of aid in a small number of countries, leaving the majority of countries with little or no real increase.³⁸ These negative trends should be reversed. It is expected that commitments made by industrialized countries under the Paris

³⁶ It is therefore crucial that the EU emissions trading scheme be expanded and linked to other trading schemes, such as those in the United States of America and Canada. For many years, German development cooperation has been working on capacity-building in partner countries to manage CDM projects and is committed to having more CDM projects launched in Africa. After years of promising a way to help Africa tackle climate change, the EU has joined with the World Bank to attract foreign direct investment to the continent and help save the planet at the same time. The new open-ended Carbon Fund for Europe (CFE), a joint venture between the World Bank and the European Investment Bank (EIB), aims to make it easier for African countries to participate in the CDM. Although the CFE's EUR 50 million budget is minor compared to the World Bank's USD 2 billion currently invested in nine other carbon funds, the CFE is a first step towards developing an international agreement which looks beyond the end of the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period in 2012. The CDM allows polluters in a developed country to buy "carbon credits" from projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a developing country. Because global warming is a worldwide phenomenon, it does not matter where the reductions actually occur. Many of the world's existing CDM projects are direct investments by companies or governments in developed countries, in turn creating economic development in those communities on top of just creating carbon credits. The CFE will purchase up to 40 per cent of the carbon credits created through CDM projects after 2012. With a guaranteed buyer for the carbon credits, developing countries can better leverage financing to get environmentally friendly projects off the ground.

³⁷ Controversial issues were how the Adaptation Fund will be governed and which institution will handle this job. Important decisions were postponed to the next COP of the UNFCCC in December 2007 because of resistance from poor countries. Poor-country governments point out that the Adaptation Fund will not be funded by donor contributions, but through the CDM, a market mechanism. Two other funds for adaptation under the UNFCCC – namely the Least Developed Countries Fund and the Special Climate Change Fund – became operational under the UNFCCC Marrakesh Accords, and were given to the GEF to manage.

³⁸ Yet, the role of development cooperation in the field of poverty eradication and desertification control should not be overestimated; the efforts of the countries concerned, good governance, the international framework of trade, investment and finance etc. are more important. It is well known that ODA projects and programmes can produce positive, mixed or negative results. And, generally speaking, ODA may undermine self-confidence as well as own commitments and reform strategies (hence the 'do no harm' formula), or enhance them.



Declaration (2005) would lead to increased aid effectiveness and harmonized policy for development and cooperation.

89. Further innovative financing instruments are to be explored or extended such as debt for nature swaps, air ticket taxes, the Forest Carbon Partnership-Initiative of the World Bank and drought insurances.

F. Greater visibility and higher ranking on the political agenda

90. It is of paramount importance to ensure much greater visibility to the desertification cause – by sharpening UNCCD’s profile, making desertification a priority on the agenda of decision-makers, underscoring the relevance of desertification control for MDG attainment, and playing an advocacy and mediating role in other processes of relevance to UNCCD concerns (for example the World Trade Organization).

91. One could emulate the example of the “Davos meetings” and part of it could be turned into a form of “market” place where UNCCD projects can be showcased and partnerships forged between different actors and donors. Such Davos-like meeting could be organized in the margin of sessions of the CRIC.

92. Greater visibility could be assured by going on YouTube, which hosts user-generated videos. People who had never heard about the UNCCD will then talk about it.

93. The UNCCD logo must appear on all documents (press releases, brochures, reports, leaflets etc.) with more prominence than that/those of the beneficiary institution(s). Contractors and/or implementing partners are responsible for giving adequate publicity to the projects or programmes that they are implementing and to the support from UNCCD related activities. The communication strategy must be defined in the corresponding contract/agreement or developed during its implementation.

94. Every year, on 17 June – the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought – good practice projects or activities should be rewarded (“Soil Protection Prize”).³⁹

95. The interests of all generations present and future should receive full consideration. Every COP should be accompanied by a Youth Summit.⁴⁰

96. The unique potential of the Convention must be better explored and brought to the attention of a broad public in the world. The UNCCD is unique in several ways:

³⁹ See for instance “The Equator Prize“, an international award that recognizes outstanding local efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. (www.undp.org/equatorinitiative)

⁴⁰ Cf. the International Conference on Youth and Desertification, in Bamako, Mali from 4 to 6 September 2006, took place in the framework of the 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 UNCCD 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.

(a) It is the only global treaty that focuses on developing countries, specifically in Africa, and on improving living conditions for rural dryland populations, who represent an important proportion of the world's poor and undernourished;

(b) Through its impact on land and water resources, biodiversity and climate change, it addresses global issues and generates global benefits;

(c) It is the only international instrument that focuses on sustainable land use and management, an issue traditionally addressed within the strict scope of national policies;

(d) It is an instrument of choice for the sustainable development of drylands and the attainment of the MDGs in the affected regions;

(e) It is committed to an integrated approach recognizing that desertification is caused by complex interactions among physical, biological, political, social, cultural and economic factors, and to a holistic approach of sustainable human development which incorporates the interdependent and mutually reinforcing dimensions of economic development (poverty eradication and an enabling international economic environment), environmental protection (sustainable management of natural resources), effective political participation (at the local, national and regional levels), and the social dimension (interrelationship of desertification and social problems).

97. The very nature of soil conservation makes it hard to present as an appealing and popular topic. However, land and particularly the topsoil are the skin of planet Earth. The skin is suffering from “cancer” – from land degradation and soil erosion. Because desertification is linked to many other problems such as poverty and hunger, environmental destruction, conflict and migration, greater public awareness and political will are required to tackle this kind of cancer. Topsoil is painfully slow to form, but can be destroyed terrifyingly fast. An estimated 24 billion tonnes are blown or washed away each year, meaning it is being lost at least 16 times faster than it can be replaced. These are the messages to be put more clearly to a broad public.

98. Topsoil should be recognized as a global public good – as one of the prerequisites for our common survival. The concept of global public goods is useful in describing as well as in analysing and responding to global challenges.⁴¹ Global “bads” seem to be more public than global goods. The UNCCD agenda is often just on reducing bads (soil erosion, land degradation) rather than producing goods (cultivable and arable land, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability). The management of global public goods implies global agreements and actions and the transfer into national/regional pertinent activities. The development of a stronger sense of mutual interest in global and regional public goods is to be developed through continuous interaction and communication, focused attention to concrete goals and the clear articulation of priorities.

⁴¹ Cf. Inge Kaul/Isabelle Grunberg/Marc A. Stern (eds.). 1999. *Global Public Goods. International Cooperation in the 21st Century*. New York/Oxford. In the concluding chapter, the editors propose three classes and types of global public goods: (i) natural global commons (ozone layer, atmosphere); (ii) human-made global commons (universal norms and principles, knowledge, Internet); (iii) global conditions (peace, health, financial stability, free trade, freedom of poverty, environmental sustainability, equity and justice. Corresponding global bads are listed, too, such as global warming, inequality, war, or unbalanced ecosystems. [Unfortunately, desertification is not directly taken into account.]

99. To be effective, international agreements, including the UNCCD, have to be attractive to all participants, because participation cannot be enforced, at least not in the way compliance with domestic laws can be enforced.⁴² Here, the law-making function of parliaments plays a predominant role.

100. Integration of the UNCCD within the new architecture of international cooperation is a key parameter determining the success of UNCCD implementation.

101. Whereas the overall action objective would really define what the Convention seeks to change on the ground, the policy goal of positioning the Convention as a thought-leader would be about defining what the Convention offers to decision makers and to actors on the ground. For its part, the CBD has proclaimed itself the standard setter for the global biodiversity agenda. In the same way, one could elaborate on the IIWG's discussion of a mission statement at its last meeting, with wording along these lines: "The Convention is the global authority on policies and measures to reverse and prevent desertification and land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought through scientific excellence, standard-setting and advocacy." Defining this as a policy goal could boost fund-raising, raise public awareness and help galvanize action to implement the Convention.

102. It may be appropriate to emphasize the Convention's interrelations with other processes enjoying a higher international profile. An "Intergovernmental Panel on Desertification" could play a catalytic role in this.⁴³

G. The role of parliaments

103. Globally assessed, the role of parliaments in the UNCCD implementation process has been rather weak. Parliaments and MPs must do their utmost in strengthening the political will, which is essential for the successful implementation of the UNCCD and for the achievement of the MDGs. They can push the boundaries of what can be achieved politically as well as develop new ideas without the constraints of formal government negotiating positions.⁴⁴ The specific commitments made by the parliamentarians of the previous

⁴² The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer has been effective because it is in the interests of all key players, and was carefully crafted to be so. The Kyoto Protocol is another example.

⁴³ Cf. International Symposium on Desertification and Migration, Almería, 25-27 October 2006: "We should promote the International Expert Panel to Fight against Desertification in order to acquire existing global knowledge and design self-managing strategies, governmental policies, measures and good practice to lessen desertification effects..." (www.sidym2006.org/imagenes/pdf/eng_conclusiones.pdf). By assessing the science and knowledge work under the Convention in the past 10 years, some strengths and weaknesses of the UNCCD science bodies can be identified. In comparison to the UNFCCC and the CBD, the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) of the UNCCD has delivered relatively few concrete outcomes, mainly because the CST evolved into a forum where Parties "negotiate" science and technology information rather than providing independent views. Furthermore, to date, the CST has not been mandated to provide concrete scientific advice using scientific methods. Despite efforts to reform the CST, it continues to face mandate-related challenges.

⁴⁴ See also GLOBE (Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment – www.globeinternational.org). As the environment attracts greater political attention there is a particular need for legislators to work together outside formal international negotiations. GLOBE International was founded in 1989 as an inter-parliamentary group between the United States Congress and the European Parliament. Its purpose is to facilitate high level dialogues among legislators on key environmental issues. Following the success of the Legislators Forum held in London in advance of the United Kingdom's Summit in Gleneagles in 2005, GLOBE launched the three year G8+5 Climate Change Dialogue. A two-day forum in the German Parliament, Bundestag, was organized by GLOBE International shortly before the G8 Summit in Germany. Some 100 legislators from the G8 countries –Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United

Parliamentary Round Tables need to be reaffirmed and deserve further follow-up.

104. To make the UNCCD effective, it has to be “domesticated” by national law.⁴⁵ Parliaments are the ones who domesticate the law and approve the budgets. They have to make the trade-offs on how and where they allocate the resources. And parliaments are the ones with oversight responsibility.

105. Most parliaments fulfil six key functions that are also central to the UNCCD, its implementation and monitoring/evaluation:⁴⁶

(a) **Representative.** Parliamentarians consult with their constituents in order to be able to present their views (power of representation and discourse). Democratic representation requires pluralist, well-functioning political parties;

(b) **Legislative.** Parliaments make laws, review bills and ratify international agreements (legislative power);

(c) **Financial.** Parliamentarians take decisions on the budget and on raising taxes (power of the purse) and insure that resource allocation is consistent with the country’s development objectives;

(d) **Oversight.** Parliaments and/or parliamentary committees hold governments accountable, exercise control of executive activities, scrutinize government revenues and expenditures (including loans and credits from donor countries or institutions), monitor and evaluate national development programmes, and identify financial dishonesty and irregularity (power of parliamentary oversight);

(e) **Elective.** Parliaments elect (parts of) the executive and their officers (elective power).

(f) **International.** Parliaments influence foreign policy and international relations (treaty and war power, power of mediation between the public and international organizations and institutions);

Kingdom and the United States – were hoping against hope that an historic breakthrough on climate change would be achieved at the Heiligendamm summit. The expectation was shared by MPs from the five emerging economies: Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa. In a statement on 4 June, the MPs lent unequivocal support to German Chancellor Ms. Angela Merkel’s stance on global warming: “It is critical that the G8, at Heiligendamm, demonstrates leadership [...] to convey a vision for a post-2012 UN framework.” At the summit outcome the G8 and the 5 jointly declared: We face serious challenges in tackling climate change and achieving sustainable development globally. We reaffirm our commitment to the UNFCCC and to its objective through both mitigation and adaptation in accordance with our common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. On this basis and taking into account the scientific knowledge as represented in the recent IPCC reports, we remain committed to contribute our fair share to tackle climate change in order to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

⁴⁵ Domesticating the UNCCD is especially difficult in a weak or failed State with rampant corruption and no proper legal system.

⁴⁶ See U. Holtz. 2005: Important Outcomes of the Previous Five Round Tables of Members of Parliament on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Bonn (<http://unccd.int/cop/cop7/docs/report5parl-eng.pdf>), and cf. Taies Nezam. 2007: Parliaments and Poverty Reduction Strategies. A Background Note, Paris (<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTPARLIAMENTARIANS/Resources/BACKGROUND.pdf>).

106. Parliaments are stronger or weaker in accomplishing the “parliamentary hexagon”.⁴⁷ And policymaking is a result of complicated political, social and institutional processes.⁴⁸

107. A stronger parliamentary involvement may issue from the main functions and tasks of democratically elected and functioning – often bicameral – parliaments as described and analysed in the IPU’s *Universal Declaration on Democracy* (1997).⁴⁹ Strong parliaments represent the basis for good governance. It is encouraging to see donors underlining the importance of parliaments and promoting their capacities. The involvement of the legislative branch is also a central component of forging global partnerships for development (MDG 8).

108. The IPU’s Resolution on *Parliaments’ Role in Strengthening Democratic Institutions and Human Development in a Fragmented World* (2003)⁵⁰ propagates sustainable human development as an overall political objective; at the same time, it expresses concern that efforts to build strong democratic institutions in ensuring successful long-term human development encounter numerous challenges, such as poverty, corruption, globalization, lack of resources, discrimination, transnational crime, civil strife, environmental degradation and population dynamics.

109. The real causes of poverty are inappropriate own efforts, unsustainable national and international environments, and imbalances in the current international economic order (trade barriers, subsidies etc.) as well as – on the one side – unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and – on the other – the lack of industrialization. In the times of globalization, orientations and framework-conditions are the paradigm of sustainable, human development, the principles set out in “Universal Declaration of Democracy”, and an international social and ecological market economy able to counter the predatory capitalism.⁵¹

⁴⁷ In many countries parliaments are in the hands of powerful government machines and dominated by the executive branch. The legislature often plays a limited role in policymaking for example, with budgets discussed only at their final stage. Often parliaments simply lack technical capacity and the required equipment, office space and access to information. Democratic decentralization requires more than just decentralizing and devolving power. It also requires widening participation especially by people who are often marginalized, such as women, minorities and the poor and increasing the accountability of public officials at local levels.

⁴⁸ In theory, policymaking is a problem-solving process which is rational, linear, balanced, objective and analytical. However, very often, the whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes. Practice teaches that policy implementation is an ongoing, non-linear process that must be managed. It requires consensus building, participation of key stakeholders, conflict resolution, compromise, contingency planning, resource mobilization and adaptation. New policies often reconfigure roles, structures, and incentives, thus changing the array of costs and benefits to implementers, direct beneficiaries, and other stakeholders. As a result, policy implementation is often very difficult. Experience has shown that an inwardly focused, ‘business as usual’ approach will fall short of achieving intended results. Cf. Rebecca Sutton, *The Policy Process: An Overview Working Paper 118*, (Overseas Development Institute), London, August 1999 (www.odi.org.uk/publications/wp118.pdf).

⁴⁹ The Declaration was adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council at its 161st session (Cairo, 16 September 1997); available at www.ipu.org/cnl-e/161-dem.htm.

⁵⁰ Resolution adopted unanimously by the 108th Conference (Santiago de Chile, 11 April 2003); available at www.ipu.org/conf-e/108-1.htm. See also United Nations Resolution on “Promoting and consolidating Democracy” adopted by the General Assembly A/RES.55/95, 28 February 2001.

⁵¹ Much would happen in this sense, if the private sector – in partnership with other social actors – would comply with the principles of the United Nations Global Compact and its vision of a more sustainable and inclusive global economy. The Global Compact’s 10 principles (www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/index.html) in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption enjoy universal consensus and are derived from: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The International Labour Organization’s Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, The United Nations Convention Against Corruption. With regard to environment, businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental

110. If we take the “parliamentary hexagon” and relate it to the UNCCD, parliaments and MPs should:

(a) Undertake in their respective parliaments the strengthening of national legislation and its harmonization with the provisions of the UNCCD, and the streamlining of desertification in PRSPs, development and country programmes supported by the donor community;

(b) Work for the pursuit of coherent and better-coordinated policies in the area of anti-poverty and sustainable human development strategies, including anti-desertification, the enhancement of synergy among the Rio Conventions and the building up of a culture of coordination of the NAPs with other national development priorities;

(c) Monitor executive actions and control of whether desertification issues are included in overall government agendas (by means of oral and written questions to ministers, motions, committee hearings and so on);

(d) Ask for the submission of regular ‘green accounting’ reports on the state of combating poverty, on land and natural resource degradation and on the progress achieved, thus providing citizens with the information needed to hold governments accountable and ensuring an effective process within parliaments for reviewing progress with regard to the economic, social, environmental and political aspects of sustainable development at the national level, but also in order to monitor the international agenda for sustainable development;

(e) Create specific budget lines for combating land degradation and the observance of consistent budget strategies appropriately integrating foreign assistance into a country’s own development plans;

(f) Elect a Parliamentary or Government Commissioner for Future Generations;

(g) Mobilize public opinion and raise awareness on sustainable human development and desertification issues through campaigns, annual events (World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought on 17 June), special parliamentary debates, environmental education, the involvement of schools, academics and artists, and commemorative postage stamps;

(h) Build partnerships between policymakers, the academic community, the business sector, NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs);

(i) Advocate towards the launching of special initiatives to combat desertification at regional levels (Africa, Asia, Latin America and Caribbean),

challenges; undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies. With regard to values and objectives, MPs are recommended to rely on the “Millennium Declaration”, adopted in 2000 by the United Nations General Assembly and reaffirmed by the World Summit of 2005.

(j) Promote forms of international, regional and subregional cooperation favourable to improving relations between the relevant IGOs and NGOs and actors, including, if necessary, parliamentary diplomatic activities. Parliamentary oversight mechanisms could be created (vis-à-vis the GEF and regional development banks).

111. Parliaments should, inter alia, request their governments:

(a) To take active steps to support national and regional action programmes to combat desertification that aim at sustainable management of natural resources, at reforestation, and at sustainable management of water resources;

(b) To provide the UNCCD with clearer objectives and with more financial means;⁵²

(c) To strive for better coordination and synergy between three Rio Conventions;

(d) To work for using financial resources more efficiently.

112. Parliaments in the industrialized countries must do their utmost to increase the official development assistance of their countries, particularly of those countries that did not yet reach the 0.7 per cent target.

113. The Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD must be better used and its Steering Committee should give better inputs and monitor the work of parliamentarians under the UNCCD.⁵³ Both should: provide the members of the network with a platform for knowledge sharing, interaction and coordinated proactive measures; help increase parliamentary involvement in monitoring national and international anti-desertification activities; facilitate awareness-raising, timely consultative processes and the exchange of information, experience and good practices; support resource mobilization; encourage coalition-building and partnerships between parliamentarians and policymakers, the academic community, the business sector NGOs, and CBOs; promote forms of international, regional and subregional cooperation, favourable to improving relations between the relevant intergovernmental organizations, including, if necessary, parliamentary diplomacy activities; and support the parliamentary round tables, and cooperate with already existing subregional parliamentary networks.

⁵² Clear, legally binding targets for UNCCD implementation should be identified. Such targets should be supported by appropriate operative arrangements, building upon interrelations between physical/environmental, social and economical indicators and stating quantifiable objectives, time frames and innovative mechanisms for raising financial resources for achieving the implementation of the Convention.

⁵³ Unfortunately there is so far no regular funding for the Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD as it is the case for the Parliamentary Network of the World Bank. The UNCCD secretariat could be incited to assist the Steering Committee in this area.