

Abu Dhabi Initiative for Implementation of the Priority Activities for the Regional Action Programme in 2003 – 2008

The Abu Dhabi initiative for the implementation of the priority activities of national, subregional and regional significance for selected thematic areas within the framework of the RAP in 2003 – 2008 is proposed to promote combating desertification. This initiative is to be implemented by project-based funding taking into account the following considerations and the annex:

Stressing the importance of implementing the commitments set out in the UNCCD through the Regional Action Programme (RAP) on the basis of a common concept defined by the first Asian regional meeting held in New Delhi, India, in 1996, and the First Asian Ministerial Conference on UNCCD held in Beijing, China, in 1997;

Taking into account the regional initiatives and platform for Asia and the Pacific which were highlighted in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), adopted in 2002;

Referring to subregional action programmes in West Asia, Central Asia, North East Asia, South East Asia, South Asia and the Pacific;

Being aware that the implementation of RAP, since its inception in 1997, is progressing slowly, yet positively and sometimes substantially;

Referring to the Abu Dhabi Declaration on the Future of Arab Environmental Action (2001), the Arab Declaration on Sustainable Development (2002) and the Arab Sustainable Development Initiative (2002), endorsed by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), and tabled at the WSSD;

Observing the positive developments in the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for combating desertification and land degradation that should be supplemented by the Global Mechanism's activities concerning the financing of the Convention;

Taking account of the development witnessed by academic and research institutions in countries of the region in the field of land degradation and water resources deterioration;

The representatives at the Second Asian Ministerial Conference on UNCCD Implementation decided to promote actions:

- (i) To prepare project proposals in the priority areas with the close involvement of the participating country Parties, giving the cost estimates and identifying components for multi-donor involvement;
- (ii) To give priority to the implementation of the RAP in the light of the high importance attached to the issues of land degradation and water scarcity, particularly for:
 - (a) Integrated management of water resources,
 - (b) Land degradation and combating desertification;

- (iii) To make use of expertise and experience of country Parties in the region in the field of land degradation control and integrated water resources management through exchange of expertise among country Parties of the region,
- (iv) To provide required support to research and academic institutions to contribute to devising mechanisms and suitable solutions for tackling water stress and land degradation,
- (v) To develop capabilities in country Parties of the region in the field of meteorology and to build early warning systems to contribute to prevention or mitigation of emergency drought cases,
- (vi) To disseminate technology available in the area of remote sensing for monitoring land degradation and vegetation cover in terms of quality and coverage,
- (vii) To explore the possibility of financial support from bilateral and multilateral sources, as well as the private sector;
- (viii) To invite the GEF implementing agencies (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank) and executing agencies with expanded responsibilities (such as Asian Development Bank (ADB), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)) to assist the developing country Parties in formulating and preparing GEF project proposals relating to land degradation and desertification as provided for in Operational Programme 12 on Integrated Ecosystem Management and Operational Programme 15 on Sustainable Land Management;
- (ix) To promote coordination of the project implementation through currently established mechanisms, such as the national focal points (NFPs), national coordinating bodies (NCBs), TPNs and subregional bodies, in the light of the underlying responsibility of the country Parties, with advice to be provided by the international organizations including the UNCCD secretariat, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNEP, UNDP, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), as well as other GEF implementing and executing agencies with expanded responsibilities.
- (x) To urge the national governments of the country Parties participating in the projects to establish steering committees under the coordination of the focal points;
- (xi) To invite organizations of the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations to join as partners in the implementation of the projects;
- (xii) To encourage the Asian country Parties to participate in the implementation of projects in order to promote South-South cooperation, particularly Asia-Africa

cooperation through measures such as launching the Asia-Africa Research, Development and Training Centre for Combating Desertification (RDTC);

- (xiii) To request the host country of the Conference, the United Arab Emirates, in line with the success in their national efforts in combating desertification, to provide support to this initiative in the spirit of South-South cooperation.

Annex

1. Context

Desertification and land degradation feature in different forms in the Asian region, as would any measures for combating these phenomena. Aridity is a severe problem in the dry areas, particularly during the dry season in most of Asia. The scarcity of water and unsustainable land management with resulting loss of vegetation covers rank high in the list of priorities. Agroforestry offers a good potential for fighting land degradation in Asia. Sustainable management of rangeland and prevention and control of dust and sandstorms are priorities considering their economic and health impacts. The projects for the pilot initiative should be developed bearing in mind these priorities for implementation as catalytic activities at the national, subregional and regional levels. Desertification monitoring and assessment and the establishment of a network for information sharing are important tools for diagnosing the root causes of desertification and finding proper controlling measures.

2. Objectives

The objectives are:

- (i) To demonstrate the successful development of measures for combating desertification and land degradation and to promote the replication of successful case studies;
- (ii) To enhance active involvement of youth, women and other active groups of civil society in participating in combating desertification and land degradation through pilot field projects; and
- (iii) To facilitate the optimum development of the regional network on desertification monitoring and assessment using advanced technologies.

3. Project concept areas

The project concept areas that are in line with TPNs and thematic networks (TNs) are as follows:

- (i) Development and application of common desertification monitoring and assessment indicators and standardization of the database on the extent of desertification and its socio-economic impacts in Asia;
- (ii) Promotion of revegetation, agroforestry and soil conservation at the field level;

- (iii) Community level water resources management techniques, recycling of waste water for plantation and agriculture;
- (iv) Pilot demonstration projects for rangeland management, control of sand dunes and management of coastal land;
- (v) Prevention and control of dust and sandstorms;
- (vi) Reducing the impacts of drought in Asia, including El Niño-induced drought in the Pacific islands through the establishment of early warning systems and the development of appropriate policy for drought preparedness and risk management; and
- (vii) Assisting rural farmers of affected developing countries in better marketing their produce and products at the local, national and international levels as an incentive for promoting sustainable land management and increasing income generating opportunities as part of efforts for eradicating poverty.

- - - - -