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Policy issues: State of the environment

**LAND USE MANAGEMENT AND SOIL CONSERVATION POLICY OF UNEP:
STRENGTHENED FUNCTIONAL APPROACH**

Note by the Executive Director

The present note defines the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in land use management and soil conservation under its strengthened functional approach in keeping with Governing Council decision 21/1 of 9 February 2001, paragraph 6. The text of the note has been reproduced without formal editing.

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UNEP'S STRATEGY ON LAND USE MANAGEMENT AND SOIL CONSERVATION

OBJECTIVE

1. The loss and degradation of land resources are to be seen in the context of policy, socio-economic conditions and the environment. Their impact on agriculture and food production, as well as on the ecological and protective functions of natural and managed ecosystems is universally recognised. Recently, the UN Millennium Declaration, the UN Millennium Development Goals and the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) Plan of Implementation recognised the maintained integrity and restoration of land resources as a critical factor in achieving economic and ecological sustainability. To meet these challenges, new and innovative approaches are required.
2. The objective of this document is to define UNEP's role in land use management and soil conservation ^{1/} under its functional approach following Decision 21/1 of the Governing Council. The development and implementation of a strategic approach is focused on the medium-term. This document is to serve as the framework for UNEP's activities in the field of land use management and soil conservation as to be specified UNEP's biennial programmes of work.

BACKGROUND

3. From the outset in 1972, UNEP's land-related activities have focused on medium- to long-term solutions for desertification ^{2/}. UNEP contributed significantly to the implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (UNPACD), which subsequently led to the ratification of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Since then UNEP's role has gradually changed from global co-ordination of UNPACD to supporting the implementation of the UNCCD ^{3/}. This is most visible in UNEP's mandate as the Taskmanager for the Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 and its UNEP-GEF project portfolio in land degradation.
4. In the 1980s, UNEP developed the World Soils Policy which recognised the fact that soil is a finite resource, and that continuously increasing demands are being placed on this resource to feed, clothe, house and provide energy for a growing world population and to provide ecological balance. Governments agreed in the World Soils Policy that the use of soils should be based on the sound principals of resource management in order to enhance soil productivity, to prevent soil erosion and degradation, and to reduce the loss of good farmland to non-farm purposes ^{4/}.
5. In co-operation with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), UNEP contributed to the World Soil Charter and assisted developing countries to formulate their national soil policies. On the international level, those instruments have contributed to raising the profile of soil conservation as a major international environmental issue. Also during the 1980s, UNEP started to examine the integration of climate change impact and of issues related to land management.
6. UNEP, in co-operation with international partners, carried out global and regional assessments in the early 1990s in order to gain fast and reliable data on the global status of human-induced soil degradation. These assessments currently serve as the main reference on the global extent of land degradation ^{5/}.

KEY ISSUES

7. **Land and soil degradation.** In his report to eighth meeting of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) the UN Secretary-General stated that land related issues "are likely to be the most important factor of global change in terrestrial ecosystems over the next few decades" ^{6/}. The UN Millennium Declaration further states that "nearly 2 billion hectares of land, an area about the combined size of Canada and the United States, is affected by human-induced degradation of soils, putting the livelihoods of nearly one billion people at risk. [...] Each year an additional 20 million

hectares of agricultural land either becomes too degraded for crop production, or becomes lost to urban sprawl”^{7/}.

8. **Poverty.** Land degradation is both a cause and effect of poverty. The spiral of impoverishment and environmental decline is driven by external factors, namely commercialisation, civil strife, displacement and natural hazards, and internal factors, such as population growth, governance and existing poverty^{8/}. People in marginal lands are especially vulnerable. General perceptions on the impact of environmental degradation on poor people include that: a) poor people are more vulnerable to loss of biological resources, b) extreme environmental stress can force the poorest to migrate, c) inequality reinforces environmental pressure, and that d) global and national policies can create or reinforce a vicious cycle of poverty-environmental degradation^{9/}.
9. **Land tenure and public participation.** Poor caring for land resources, and related poverty, is often directly linked to issues of land tenure and in turn impacts on the use or over-use of these resources. While secured land ownership and rights *per se* do not always provide guarantee for sustainable land use management they are, however, a necessary prerequisite. Unsustainable practices land resource management are directly related to the level of awareness and, consequently, on the level of public participation in decision making on environmental issues. Awareness raising, education and training provide an important but often missing link in mitigation and control of land degradation.
10. **Environmental impact of agriculture.** The main pressure on land resources is caused by the necessity to increase food production for a growing global population^{10/} despite unprecedented growth in agricultural productivity over the past three decades^{11/}. On a global average, the current food production should sufficiently feed the world’s population as many regions face partial overproduction of agricultural commodities through intensified industrial production. However, strong regional differences occur, as other regions rely on a net import of agricultural goods, and require further extension of arable land^{12/}. The intensification of agricultural production lessens the need for reclamation of natural areas, but often requires an increased use of herbicides, pesticides, and fertilisers resulting in a decline of environmental quality and biodiversity^{13/}. The impact of land use and soil management techniques on soil biodiversity and its functioning is of increasing importance. Pesticides may cause health hazards if applied and disposed of inappropriately^{14/}. Unregulated fertiliser input, often subsidised, causes water pollution, biodiversity shifts and health threats. The potential impact of the increasing use of genetically modified plants on biosafety is as yet, largely unknown. The extension of farming into low productive, marginal lands through e.g. the conversion of forests, wetlands, and mountain slopes causes rapid fertility decline featuring erosion and nutrient loss, affects environmental services such as water supply and micro climate, and often creates related hazards such as land slides or desertification.
11. **Water and land use management.** Agriculture is responsible for about 70% of all freshwater withdrawals, of which 70% is wasted. Inefficient irrigation schemes lead to unsustainable water logging and irreparable salinisation and alkalinisation of soils, especially in the case of groundwater withdrawal^{15/}. Estimates of up to 80% of global marine and freshwater pollution is derived from land-based activities such as contamination from municipal and industrial waste and agricultural fertilisers and pesticides. Water erosion and sedimentation further aggravate the situation, as does the loss of productive wetlands and floodplains and the anticipated global changes in climatic and hydrological patterns.
12. **Environmental emergencies and land use.** Unsustainable land use practises, especially on marginally productive lands, or the increasing use of unsuitable and unsafe lands such as steep slopes and river banks, are a major factor in the increasing frequency and severity of disasters such as for example hurricanes, floods, droughts, earthquakes, and land sliding. These can have severe impacts on people and ecosystems.

13. **Urbanisation.** Urbanisation, including infrastructure development, causes an increasing loss of limited natural resources and habitats, soil sealing, slope instability, erosion and river siltation, diffuse and local soil and groundwater contamination through industrial waste, chemicals and air pollutants. Urban agriculture, though an essential aspect of urban life in many developing country economies by providing food and income, causes additional air, water and soil pollution from improper use of fertilisers and pesticides^{16/}. The urban poor, who cannot afford expensive remediation or move to cleaner areas, suffer the most from loss of resources and health threats.
14. **Global Climate Change.** Natural systems can be especially vulnerable to climate change and some of these systems may undergo significant and irreversible damage. Also, many human systems are sensitive to climate change and some are vulnerable^{17/}. Impacts will depend on the adaptive capacity of natural systems and resource availability of societies. For non-irrigated agriculture in drylands, yield declines of as much as 30% are expected during this century. In turn, land use change has direct and significant implications on the global carbon cycle^{18/}. Land use change, mainly deforestation, accounts for approximately 33% of all global anthropogenic carbon emission over the past 150 years^{19/}. As land degradation implies almost always a loss of carbon, much attention is given to land use management options that restore soil organic matter and soil fertility through carbon sequestration.
15. **Trade and environmental externalities.** Trade liberalisation and trade related policies often bring about a tendency to concentrate on the increase of economic returns and may consequently lead to overexploitation of water and nutrient resources and the dismissing of sustainable practices such as fallow periods and crop rotation. However, trade liberalisation and trade related policies may also imply positive effects on the environment by e.g. introducing environmentally friendly technologies or policies^{20/}. Generally, the degradation of land resources involves direct and indirect costs. Environmental externalities and long-term implications of land degradation are often more severe than direct costs of forgone income^{21/}. Inefficient governance and capacity deficiencies in many developing countries are equally important factors contributing to increasing land degradation.

CHALLENGES

16. The prevention and mitigation of land degradation through the promotion of sustainable land management is a global challenge. To address the identified key issues in land use management and soil conservation within a development oriented approach poses challenges to all stakeholders and requires integrative solutions across the policy, socio-economic, and environment sectors. The relevant framework for tackling these challenges is set in the Agenda 21, the UN Millennium Declaration and the WSSD Plan of Implementation.
17. UNEP in particular, is challenged to address the environmental dimensions of land use management and soil conservation as relevant to the overall objectives of sustainable development and poverty reduction. UNEP is further challenged to support governments and civil society in achieving environmental sustainability of land use. Consequently, UNEP is to further develop and apply environmentally focused and development orientated policy guidance in close co-operation with governments, civil society and fellow UN and international organisations. UNEP must also work with all of these entities to ensure that laws at the international, regional and national level that govern land use management and soil conservation are fully implemented.

GOALS

18. UNEP's ultimate mandate is to contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction by focussing on specific environmental dimensions. Based on the identified key issues and challenges as well as on UNEP's expertise and its renewed mandate as in the Nairobi Declaration,^{22/} UNEP's primary goals with regard to land use management and soil conservation are identified as follows:
 - a) Ecosystem approach for land use management and soil conservation applied and interlinkages and synergies within and across relevant sectors developed;

- b) Global land cover monitoring process and assessment of the state of land resources in partnership with other UN organisations and partners developed and implemented;
 - c) Environment focused and development orientated policies on sustainable land use management and soil conservation developed and implemented through capacity building, information management and public participation, response to environmental emergencies, development of legal instruments, regional co-operation and the development, implementation and execution of GEF projects;
 - d) Co-operation with scientific centres of excellence extended in order to strengthen science-policy interaction and knowledge systems through partnerships with governments and civil society;
 - e) Further support to the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and specific support to Africa in regard to land degradation through the NEPAD Environment Initiative.
19. The identified goals are in line with the action areas in the WSSD-WEHAB Framework of Action on Agriculture, namely to (a) increase agricultural productivity and sustain the natural resource base contributing to efforts to eradicate poverty and ensure environmental sustainability, (b) encourage knowledge generation, (c) establish innovative public-private partnerships to stimulate joint implementation of sustainable agriculture and natural resource conservation, and (d) develop enabling policies, associated institutional reforms and regulatory frameworks. Equally, the identified goals are in line with the WEHAB Frameworks of Action on Water and Biodiversity.

STRATEGIES AND INTENDED ACTION

ECOSYSTEM APPROACH FOR LAND USE MANAGEMENT AND SOIL CONSERVATION

20. The ecosystem approach is focused on the integrated management of land, water and living resources and promotes conservation and sustainable use of resources in an equitable way^{23/}. It is suited to reflect the various aspects of land use management and soil conservation in a functional, cross-sectoral and integrative manner underlining the ecological and socio-economic functioning of land resources^{24/}. Through the ecosystem approach a direct link of environmental land and soil issues to sustainable development and poverty reduction is established. As the ecosystem approach has been developed from an environmental perspective it is important to identify the degree of conformity with other, more productivity orientated concepts^{25/}.
21. Applying the ecosystem approach to environmental land and soil issues requires establishing stronger links to other relevant UNEP focal areas as defined in Governing Council decisions and to strengthen land and soil components in their context:

Environmental land and soil issues as relevant to UNEP's portfolio

22. Many focal areas within UNEP's portfolio relate directly and indirectly to land degradation, land use management and soil conservation. Direct links exist to Governing Council decisions on forest-related issues^{26/}, on chemicals^{27/}, on water^{28/}, on climate change^{29/}, and on trade^{30/}. Land and soil issues are also reflected in UNEP's activities with regard to support to Africa and others^{31/}, environmental emergency prevention^{32/}, International Environmental Governance (IEG)^{33/}, and the work of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF)^{34/}.
23. The majority of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) relate either directly or indirectly to land and soil issues^{35/}. Agreements of direct relevance include *inter alia* the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the ASEAN Agreement on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, and the Alpine Convention Soil Protection Protocol. Both direct and indirect links to land and soil issues are found within the biodiversity related MEAs, including *inter alia* the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands^{36/}, the chemistry related MEAs,

including *inter alia* the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and the atmosphere related MEAs, including *inter alia* the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol and the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution.

24. Identifying such synergies on all levels of UNEP's core elements including environmental assessment, policy development and implementation contributes to the efficient and coherent implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.

Intended action (paragraphs 22-24)

- i) To strengthen the coherent integration of land and soil issues within and across relevant focal areas and MEAs on all levels of UNEP's core activities,
- ii) To support governments and civil society in strengthening the integration of land and soil issues within and across the implementation of MEAs.

Relating land and soil issues to other environmental focal areas

A complementary UNEP land and water policy

25. Integrated land and water management is a key principle of successful water management. This is due to the many interactions between land use and water management. Environmentally sustainable land use management and soil conservation is essential for achieving environmentally sustainable water use in both quantity and quality terms. Effective frameworks such as Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) already exist and need to be built upon^{37/}.
26. Activities for the implementation of UNEP's Water Policy and Strategy are highly relevant to land-related issues^{38/}. It is therefore necessary that complementary land and water activities be developed and implemented, particularly in relation to the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, to freshwater management and to relevant regional processes^{39/}.

Intended action (paragraphs 25-26)

- iii) To develop practical policy and management guidance on integrated land and water management following existing approaches such as IWRM,
- iv) To develop joint land-water initiatives for integrated and coherent national and transboundary assessment, policy development and implementation on land use and water management.

Land use management, biodiversity and forests

27. The integration of the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity is among the most prominent challenges for biodiversity policies and the land use sector^{40/}. This is particularly true for drylands, which are well known for their genetic diversity within species, rather than for species variation or "species richness". Improved interlinkages between biodiversity management and the prevention and mitigation of land degradation may include improved reporting, coherent scientific and technical advisory processes and capacity building across and within the CBD and UNCCD^{41/}.
28. The various functions of agriculture including income generation, food and fibre production, and environmental benefits such as provision of biodiversity, water, landscaping, recreation and so forth, require the further identification and development of policies and instruments that support an integrated approach across such functions^{42/}. The links between biodiversity and alternative management options such as organic agriculture is of interest in this context.
29. Land use includes forests. UNEP's policy action on forest-related issues includes *inter alia* the relationship between forest management, deforestation and biodiversity^{43/}, the promotion of protected forest areas, the promotion of common issues and needs of low forest cover countries, trade and

environment in relation to forest products and services, and trade-offs between forest production and environmental services ^{44/}.

Intended action (paragraphs 27-29)

- v) To promote integrated management of and equitable access to biodiversity, and to sustain biological diversity in agriculture and drylands by developing policy guidance and in support of its implementation as based on relevant decisions by CBD, UNCCD and other multilateral environmental agreements,
- vi) To support the implementation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) proposals for action on sustainable forest management and to strengthen UNEP's role in the implementation of the UN Forum on Forest (UNFF) and the Collaborative Partnership of Forests (CPF) in the context of the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

Land use management and climate change

30. The implementation of the UNFCCC and the climate change related sections in the WEHAB Framework of Action ^{45/} requires the development of concepts which identify, evaluate and interrelate vulnerability, adaptation and mitigation measures in natural resource management. Vulnerability assessments and related capacity building, especially in regions and sectors most likely to be affected, are prerequisites for effective adaptation measures. The efficient mainstreaming of adaptation concepts into sectoral planning processes requires a focus on the identification of no-regret options and synergies with objectives of sustainable development and poverty reduction ^{46/}.
31. Terrestrial carbon sequestration is one option for the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions ^{47/}. The implementation of land use, land use change and forestry related (LULUCF) activities in the context of the Kyoto Protocol provides both challenges and opportunities. A strong enabling context at the national and international level will be required to implement environmentally sound and socially equitable climate change mitigation projects in the land use and forestry sectors ^{48/}. Also, synergies between mitigation and adaptation measures in the land use and forestry sectors are likely to provide opportunities for improved concepts in addressing the anticipated impacts of global climate change

Intended action (paragraphs 30-31)

- vii) To assess the vulnerability of land resources in relation to climate change and climate variability and to develop and support the implementation of effective adaptation measures in the context of sectoral national and international planning processes ^{49/},
- viii) To develop and support the implementation of frameworks for environmentally integrated, economically viable and socially equitable carbon sequestration concepts by strengthening links to objectives in for example dryland management, biodiversity conservation, forest landscape restoration, water use management and rural livelihood development.

Land and soils as impacted by chemicals, industrial waste and urbanisation

32. Increasingly, a significant proportion of the decline in land resource quality is caused by industrial waste, mining, diffuse and spot contamination involving heavy metals, acids, pesticides, herbicides et al. as well as soil sealing through urban sprawl ^{50/}. Additionally, the environmental impacts from the agri-food production and consumption cycle require international and national assessment and response. UNEP is well positioned to encourage technologies, practises and behaviour that are less polluting and make more efficient use of natural resources.

Intended action

- ix) To assess the environmental impacts throughout the agri-food chain including the trade of agricultural products and to develop responses to key issues through MEAs, information exchange, policy guidance on and implementation of remedy options.

Land use policy, trade and poverty reduction

33. Assessments of the static and dynamic interlinkage between different economic sectors, different economic agents and the environment are important in order to identify the impact of trade liberalisation and trade-related policies on the environment. The integrated treatment of policies underpinning economic development may do much to enhance the viability of policies directed towards the environmental and social aspects of sustainable development. Measures identified to alleviate environmental, economic and social problems include a mix of sector-specific policies, broader macro-economic policies and environmental policies.
34. Land resources provide various services for human wellbeing, which exceed its role as a mere commodity. The ecosystem services that are provided by land resources include (a) provision of the production base for food, fibre etc, (b) regulation of the fluxes of water, nutrients and other substances and (c) enrichment by providing cultural and religious services^{51/}. While all people depend on these services, poor people are more heavily dependent on them. The environmental integrity of land use management and soil conservation can only be ensured if these services of land resources are balanced. However, as these functions often represent the non-market sector, they are as yet underestimated and undervalued in their importance for poverty reduction.

Intended action (paragraphs 33-34)

- x) To explore positive and pro-active commitments between trade and sustainable land resource management,
- xi) To identify, evaluate and integrate the ecosystem services of land resources in the UNEP poverty-environment nexus.

GLOBAL LAND COVER MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

35. A reliable assessment of the status and trends of global land cover is a prerequisite for adequate environmental policy development and implementation. It requires a scientifically qualified global land cover monitoring process in co-operation with competent partners including FAO and others. Identified key issues are to be integrated into environment assessment and early warning processes, in particular UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (GEO).
36. UNEP's assessment strategy supports the development and strengthening of regional and national capacities for collection, harmonisation, analysis and reporting of land and soil data as a base for a coherent global assessment system. The strategy further includes development of an improved access to land assessment products and information, for example through the land/soil portal of UNEP.Net.
37. Integrated land and soil assessments require further development of cross-sectoral, science-based indicators^{52/}, especially as growing evidence shows that current concepts are partly misleading, resulting in ineffective remedy policy concepts^{53/}.

Intended action (paragraphs 35-37)

- xii) To develop and implement a global decadal land cover monitoring process focusing on environmentally sensitive areas and to strengthen national and regional capacities for environmental assessment data and information management.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

38. Policy development and guidance to prevent and mitigate the environmental and social impacts of land degradation requires: (a) the identification of constraints and barriers in policy, administration and culture, (b) creation of an enabling environment, including capacity building and institutional arrangements for participatory public-private partnerships, (c) creation and access to public information

systems and (d) the provision of technical support to governments and civil society for decision-making and (e) to mainstream land and soil related issues into development policies ^{54/}.

39. Supporting national and regional legal processes and structures for the integration of the environmental dimension of land use management and soil conservation is a key component of policy development. UNEP's third Montevideo Programme sets its objective to support governments in improving the conservation, rehabilitation and sustainable use of soils by promoting the development and implementation of laws and policies for enhancing the conservation, sustainable use and, where appropriate, the rehabilitation of soils ^{55/}.
40. Policy implementation focuses on various levels including: (a) pilot project development, (b) capacity building in co-operation with governments and civil society, (c) response to environmental emergencies through preparedness, prevention, mitigation and response, and (d) cause analysis and identification of possible policy implications at national and global level, (e) development of tools and guidelines, and (f) awareness raising, education and training through for example UNEP's Best Practices and Success Stories Global Network (BSGN).
41. Regional co-operation is an essential task for relating policy development and implementation into governmental and intergovernmental dialogues. Additionally, regional co-operation links priorities with respect to land and soil issues within regional ministerial fora, existing regional networks and centres of excellence. Regional and sub-regional co-operation will further enhance the need for trans-boundary land resource management and emergency strategies. It will catalyse support for the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), namely the UNCCD.
42. The GEF operational programme for the prevention and control of land degradation aims to mitigate the root causes and negative impacts of land degradation on terrestrial and aquatic ecological systems through sustainable land management ^{56/}. Key elements of UNEP's GEF strategy on land degradation include: a) assessments of land degradation to better evaluate the interlinkages between land degradation and other GEF focal areas, b) development of tools and methodologies for sustainable land management ^{57/}, c) targeted research focusing on developing models for the sustainable use of ecosystems within the managed landscape, d) management of transboundary land and water resources including the implementation of UNCCD Regional and Subregional Action Programmes and other regional frameworks, and e) development of capacity for natural disaster preparedness focusing on mitigation of land degradation caused by drought and flooding.

Intended action (paragraph 38-42)

- xiii) To prevent and mitigate the environmental and social impacts of land degradation through policy guidance, capacity building, response to environmental emergencies and regional co-operation,
- xiv) To support the development and implementation of legal instruments for national and multilateral integration of environmental aspects of land use management and soil protection,
- xv) To support governments and partners in the development, implementation and execution of GEF projects, in particular with reference to the GEF operational programme for the prevention and mitigation of land degradation and other related GEF operational programmes and in reflection of internal expertise.

IMPROVED SCIENCE-POLICY INTERACTION AND KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

43. Given its specific mandate and expertise, UNEP, as the global environmental body of the UN, has a complementary role within the UN system in addressing the environmental aspects of land and soil policies in relation to sustainable development ^{58/}. Existing processes including the Environment Management Group (EMG) and UNEP's IEG process provide appropriate channels to ensure efficient and coherent strategies in co-operation with governments and fellow UN organisations.

44. Improved science-policy interaction is required in order to strengthen and extend knowledge systems as outlined in the WSSD Plan of Implementation and WEHAB framework for action ^{59/}. UNEP can achieve this by strengthening and extending its partnerships with scientific centres of excellence in the area of land use management and soil conservation. Continued compilation and dissemination of information on best practises in land use management, including the development of databases, is another important component in supporting policy implementation.
45. Also, strengthening co-operation with civil society and enhancing public-private partnerships are required. UNEP's strategy on enhancing civil society engagement in its work stresses the importance of close co-operation with civil society for substantive input into, and ownership and implementation of environmental policy ^{60/}. Modalities for the input of civil society would require an enabling dialogue and capacity building on key issues including land use management, environmental services and poverty reduction.

Intended action (paragraphs 43-45)

- xvi) To strengthen the co-operation with scientific centres of excellence and governments on the environmental aspects of land use management and soil conservation,
- xvii) To develop partnerships with civil society in order to enable dialogues and capacity building in relation to environmental aspects of land and soil policy development and implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND SUPPORT TO AFRICA

46. The UNCCD highlights the fact that “desertification is both a primary cause and a consequence in the environment-poverty nexus”. The UNCCD recognises that the “harmonisation of multilateral environmental agreements and their effective inclusion into poverty reduction strategies” is required for successfully integrating policies ^{61/}. In this context UNEP supports the implementation of the UNCCD on a global, regional and sub-regional level ^{62/}, in particular in relation to: a) major assessment processes ^{63/}; b) survey and evaluation of existing networks, institutions, agencies and bodies for information on and implementation of the UNCCD ^{64/}; c) implementation of UNCCD regional and subregional action plans ^{65/}; d) linkages between scientific and technical advisory processes of conventions and other MEAs for improved information management also within the UNEP-led process on IEG ^{66/}.
47. Support to Africa is one of UNEP's five areas of intervention. Therefore, UNEP strongly supports the Environment Initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) ^{67/}. An identified first priority area for intervention of the NEPAD Environment Initiative is to combat desertification and land degradation ^{68/}. Based on existing initiatives and existing efforts, activities required by the NEPAD Environment Initiative include (a) the establishment of a regional network of centres of excellence, (b) the dissemination of information on best practices, (c) strengthening and the mobilisation of scientific, technical and institutional capacity building for integrated sustainable land management and (d) development of regional land use guidelines and policy frameworks.

Intended action (paragraphs 46-47)

- xviii) To continue in the support for the implementation of the UNCCD, in particular in relation to assessment, national and regional action plans, information networking and best practises, and scientific and technical linkages to the CBD, UNFCCC and other MEAs,
- xix) To assist African governments in developing and implementing stated priorities within the NEPAD Environment Initiative, with particular reference to combating desertification and addressing land degradation issues.

MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND RESOURCES

48. Under its functional approach and within its institutional structure, UNEP has already embarked on enhancing its cross-divisional co-operation. Mechanisms for a cross-divisional and functional implementation of the land and soil strategy require internal identification, development and evaluation of flexible, efficient and effective structures and processes. Additionally, regular reviews on progress toward the stated goals are required as an integral part of the implementation mechanism.
49. The mobilisation of additional financial, institutional and human resources is crucial for the implementation of UNEP's land and soil strategy. This is particularly in view of the overall contribution to the WSSD Plan of Implementation and the WEHAB Framework for Action on Agriculture, Water and Biodiversity. UNEP's functional approach can ensure a more cost-efficient development and implementation of policies. The integration of sponsoring governments and, increasingly, the private sector in early stages of programme and project development through improved information exchange is crucial. The WSSD Plan of Implementation and WEHAB Framework of Action underline the importance of resource mobilisation to achieve jointly agreed goals.

Intended action (paragraphs 48-49)

- xx) To strengthen cross-divisional coherence on land and soil issues for efficient implementation of the strategy within UNEP's institutional structure,
- xxi) To mobilise additional resources for the implementation of UNEP's land and soil strategy through specific partnerships with governments and the private sector.

CONCLUSIONS

50. The key environmental issues as related to land use management and soil conservation are complex. They range from land use change and unsustainable management to industrial pollutants, and from decreasing agricultural productivity to contamination of marine ecosystems and health threats. Each of these issues has a strong policy, socio-economic and environment component.
51. UNEP is challenged to relate environmental aspects of land use management and soil conservation to the objectives of sustainable development, in particular poverty reduction. UNEP's expertise in environmental assessment, policy guidance and implementation is key for an improved integration of environmental land and soil aspects across other environmental focal areas and in international, regional and national development processes, in particular the UN Millennium Development Goals and the WSSD Plan of Implementation.
52. UNEP's strategy on land use management and soil conservation requires a close co-operation with governments, civil society and fellow UN and international organisations in order to ensure a broadly acceptable and efficient implementation as well as the necessary support of UNEP in the required additional financial, institutional and human resources.

ENDNOTES

- ^{1/} The terms 'land' and 'soil' are used complementarily to each other. Soil degradation inevitably causes land degradation while *vice versa* land degradation, for example a change in the biota, does not necessarily result in soil degradation. Land and land resources are normally defined as a physical entity in terms of its topography and spatial nature; a broader integrative view also includes natural resources: the soils, minerals, water and biota that the land comprises (e.g. chapter 10, Agenda 21, A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1). Soils can be defined as the matrix of mineral and organic material, forming the physical and chemical base for plant growth, water retention, soil fauna, and so forth.
- ^{2/} General Assembly resolution 28/3054 of 17 October 1973 and General Assembly resolution 29/3337 of 17 December 1974, which vested primary responsibility for the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Desertification (UNCOD) to UNEP.
- ^{3/} Report on UNEP's Support for the Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, submitted to UNCCD Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) in April 2002.
- ^{4/} Governing Council decision 10/14, 31 May 1982.
- ^{5/} UNEP in co-operation with the International Soil Reference and Information Centre (ISRIC) carried out the Global Assessment of Soil Degradation project (GLASOD) and co-initiated the World Soils and Terrain Digital Database (SOTER) project.
- ^{6/} United Nations Secretary-General in his report on integrated planning and management of land resources to the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. E/CN.17/2000/6, section II, paragraph 5.
- ^{7/} We, the Peoples: the role of the United Nations in the Twenty-first Century, A/54/2000, 'Defending the Soil', paragraphs 283-284.
- ^{8/} Poverty and environmental degradation - Challenges within the global economy. A. Maboganje, Environment, Vol. 44 (1), 2002.
- ^{9/} Poverty and Environment: Evidence of Links and Integration into the Country Assistance Strategy Process. A. Ekbom and J. Bojö, The World Bank, Environment Group, African Region, 1999.
- ^{10/} By 2050, the total population is estimated to range between 8 to 11 billion people. World Populations Prospects: The 2000 Revision. United Nations Population Division, 2001
- ^{11/} Global Environment Outlook 3. United Nations Environment Programme, 2002.
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