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# The African Union Commission

Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture

## The Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative

A Concept Note

## **1. Background**

In July 2005, President Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, proposed to the Fifth Ordinary Summit of the African Union (AU) an initiative for the establishment of a “Green Wall for the Sahara”. The objective of the Initiative is to arrest the advance of the Sahara desert south wards and to improve the livelihoods of the inhabitants of the sahelo-sahara zone. Furthermore the Green Wall Initiative would help strengthen the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Africa. Although there was no policy decision on the proposal, the Heads of State supported it and requested the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) to facilitate its formulation and implementation. Following the said Summit, Professor Alpha Oumar Konare, Chairperson of the AUC, convened the first informal consultative meeting of partners at the AUC on 19 July 2005 to brainstorm on the way forward with the Initiative. The said meeting recommended, amongst other things, that the African Union Commission develop a first draft Concept Paper for its consideration. At its second meeting held at the AUC on February 27 and 28, 2006, the informal meeting of the consultative group considered the AUC’s draft concept paper and made recommendations for its improvement. The present document reflects these recommendations.

## **2. Introduction**

The threat of desertification is real and looms large in the African horizons. Africa is one of the most negatively affected continents by the processes and effects of desertification. The number of communities, countries and sub-regions within Africa whose livelihoods are being eroded on a continuous basis by the continuous encroachment of the desert areas and mainly by locally generated land degradation processes is clearly a source of grave concern. Livelihood in these areas is heavily reliant on limited and degrading soil, water and vegetation resources. There is mounting pressure, which is unprecedented in history, on these resources with alarming consequences.

Several causes could be cited for such a state of affairs, but what should be even much disturbing is the fact that only limited and sustained concrete efforts have been made in Africa to counter both the processes as well as the consequences of desertification. In short, the reality could be tersely put as one in which the forces of desertification have been insurmountable in the face of little or inappropriate or inadequate response to prevent or minimize it.

It is true that there have been certain efforts aimed at counteracting desertification through approaches similar to the presently suggested initiative. Few useful examples from national level interventions could be mentioned in this regard. ‘The Green Wall’ initiative launched in 1971 in Algeria had an objective of reforestation of 3 million hectares of land that has a dimension of 1500 kms length by 10-20 kms width. This initiative was later to be the precursor for the formulation of the project known as the ‘Green Belt of Northern African Countries’ in 1978. Similarly, the ‘Green Belt for Nigeria’ initiative that was formulated in response to the threats of desertification and deforestation that was detected using satellite imagery taken between 1976/78 and 1993/95, which in fact led to declaration of these threats as emergency issues, has an objective of planting about 300 million trees on 240, 000 thousand hectares.

Another example which could lend useful lessons for Africa is the Chinese experience. China embarked upon a vast reforestation programme in 2000, which is known as ‘The Great Green Wall’ with a view to increasing the extent of planted forest network by 5 million hectares until 2010. This wasn’t something new but rather a continuation of an initiative that existed since 1978 in response to the massive deforestation that took place during the 1950s triggered by a growing demand for cultivable land – which in fact was the principal consequence of degradation of ecological equilibriums that continued until the end of the 1970s.

Similarly a number of other initiatives could be cited that have been undertaken by a multitude of actors with specific objectives, but based on more integrated approaches. To mention just few, the ‘Land Use and Land Cover Project (LULCC) in the Sahel and West Africa, the Desert Margins Program, etc. could be some of the examples. Of course there could be other useful experiences too that are carried out by different actors.

Some of the defining characteristics of past and existing efforts in Africa are that they have had an initial conceptual bias or fault or have a limited area of coverage, are isolated, not coordinated, and therefore their impact on the fight of desertification could not be commensurate with the needs. It is with a view to building on lessons learnt and promising approaches of the past and existing efforts that the present initiative is taken.

However, the ‘Green Wall for the Sahara’ Initiative should not at all be conceived just as a straight afforestation line running across the continent. Rather it should be conceived as a combination of inter-related set of activities and actions towards resolving the problems of resource degradation and people’s livelihood. Therefore it requires multi-sectoral responses and interventions. It could take several inter-related forms such as: conservation and recovery of existing vegetation; introduction of new plantations; promotion of renewable and alternative sources of energy to reduce direct reliance on biomass for domestic energy; range and water resources management etc. But its cardinal characteristics should be that it is based on clear societal and cultural vision, land use and human needs and sustainable options accepted by interested communities.

### **3. Goals and Objectives**

The goal of this particular initiative is to bring together relevant actors and stakeholders within a framework of a noble cause to fighting desertification and environmental degradation through undertaking a series of inter-related and coordinated set of activities, actions and outcomes.

The project will have a number of objectives principal amongst which are:

1. To enhance environmental sustainability;
2. To control land degradation;
3. To promote integrated natural resources management;
4. To arrest the advance of the Sahara Desert;
5. To conserve biological diversity; and
6. To contribute to Poverty Reduction

### **4. Justifications**

The 'Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative' could be justified in a number of ways. The consequences of desertification and the attendant processes of resource degradation on livelihood processes are well known. Processes of desertification and resource degradation erode livelihood processes through narrowing down range of people's choices and exacerbating various types of insecurities. In this sense, the fight against desertification could be conceived as the struggle to bring about sustainable development and improve the lots of the human beings.

Land degradation in arid areas have put under threat the livelihood of millions of people around the world; 10 million hectares of arable land is being degraded per annum; of the 130 million hectares of land seriously affected, 50% is in Africa. In view of the enormous economic importance of the phenomenon of desertification and its threat to sustainable development in the continent, African countries at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, urged the world community to address the issue. The resulting "United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Seriously Drought and/or Desertification. Particularly in Africa", recognizes this fact and therefore particularizes Africa. The Convention also has a detailed Annex for Africa as regard the implementation in the Continent. The Green Wall Initiative will constitute one very significant step towards the regional implementation of the Convention.

The Environment Initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Sirte Declaration on Agriculture and Water, both adopted by the African Union Summit in 2001 and 2004 respectively, have a comprehensive environment protection and management focus in which the control of land degradation and desertification is central. Furthermore international environment and sustainable development policy documents, such as the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, placed land degradation and desertification control amongst the priority interventions that need to be undertaken in Africa if the continent would achieve sustainable economic, social and environmental development. In view of the foregoing, implementation of the Green Wall Initiative in one of the hardest hit areas of Africa, as regards drought, land degradation and desertification, could be seen as one of Africa's comprehensive approaches to tackle the phenomena in the framework of the said regional and international environmental development policies and to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) for poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

The implementation of the Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative will enhance capacity development in Africa for land degradation and desertification control through the exchange of experiences on good and bad practices in the framework of a south-south dialogue. Considerable amount of local knowledge exist in the different countries in Africa, which the Initiative could help to unlock for the benefit of Governments, practitioners, educational establishments and local communities.

The fight against desertification and resource degradation should not arise out of a wishful thinking. Rather it is a question of converting desirability into possibility. There already exist a body of technical and scientific solutions to avert desertification and resource degradation. Hence, it is not something impossible. It is something desirable, but it is also something that is technically possible as well as politically achievable.

As mentioned above, already there also exist good and rich experiences to draw important lessons from. There is neither a need nor a place for re-inventing the wheel. The institutional and intellectual resources could be mobilized and put to use for the purpose of realizing the project. In fact, it also creates an opportunity to mobilize and utilize an existent spare capacity for achieving developmental purposes. This for example may take the form of mobilizing more active segments of the society for meeting the labor demand for the project.

The initiative could also be considered from the point of view of the imperative to transform a formidable threat into a vast opportunity. The resource being degraded, which is vast, could actually be converted into productive and beneficial use with ultimate positive impact on livelihood process. Such benefits could be intergenerational, and transcend narrow economic and immediate benefits.

There exist the necessary political commitment at all levels– which when matched with the available technical and scientific solutions would maximize the chance of success of the Initiative. That this initiative was endorsed by African Heads of State and Governments at their Summit in Sirte, in 2005, demonstrates their political commitment to it. It is also worth noting that the United Nations General Assembly declared 2006 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification

## **5. Challenges**

The sheer size of the area to be ‘greened’ under the Green Wall Initiative is itself a challenge to realize within the medium term given the population dynamics in the Sahel-Sahara areas. The situation is likely to be complicated by the transhumance activities of the livestock herders, which may interfere with reforestation, and rehabilitation/development activities in the rangelands. The development, implementation and maintenance of a good public relations strategy would be needed.

Climate change and variability and the frequent incidence of locust invasion may pose a serious threat to the success of the programme requiring huge financial investment in protection and irrigation of planted materials. A sustainable and well-coordinated effort especially against locust would be required. Recent experiences have indicated limited coordination and rapid response capacity in Africa to counter such eventualities. Deliberate and consistent conscious efforts would therefore be needed to address the threats. The successful implementation of the Initiative would therefore require the development of coping mechanisms to the climate variability and change phenomena and therefore the need for a well thought out integrated approach. For the very dry areas, there may be need for conclusion of water transfer agreements between the water-rich and poor countries, which requires genuine political commitment to economic development in the other country.

Considering that most of the implementation will be done at the local and community levels, there would be need for extensive investment in capacity building and development as well as in adaptation of proven technologies to local conditions. In addition to financial resources, this would require core trained human resources, time and patience, which, given the pressure under which the Governments are to improve the lots of their populations, would pose a challenge.

Most of the populations in the sahel-sahara zone depend on wood fuel for domestic energy, yet the zone is ill endowed with these resources. To enhance the successful implementation of the Initiative, there would be need to introduce alternative sources of energy and sustainable land use systems to reduce dependence on wood fuel and to give chance for the recovery of the vegetation cover. Furthermore some age-old deleterious farming and cultural practices would need to be addressed with the view to changing them, while more appropriate ones are introduced or promoted where they exist. Given earlier experiences of unsuccessful attempts at attaining these changes due to deep-rooted customs and the need for attitudinal change, which has long-term perspective, innovative ways would need to be sought for the speedy implementation of the Initiative. The practice of transhumance, which is a livelihood system for many communities in the desert fringes, would need also to be cautiously addressed especially in areas of intensive implementation. Care needs to be taken not to unnecessarily disrupt livelihood systems in the name of 'project implementation'.

Overall there would be need for policy change towards the integration of environmental protection in development policy of the countries concerned with the implementation of the Initiative. These policy changes would need to be backed up with strong data and information base.

The coordination of policies between countries with respect to certain actions such as community involvement, synchronization of actions with respect to implementation of common actions such as rehabilitation of cross-border ecosystems as well as the coordination of the activities of the Initiative and those of development partners would pose a challenge. For this reason strong and functional coordination bodies would be required at national and subregional levels to ensure smooth implementation.

Africa would need to ensuring sufficient and predictable financial and human resources for the successful implementation of the Initiative The Participating countries, supported by other Member States of the African Union, would need to establish reliable financial and human resource mobilization mechanisms for the purpose..

While many African countries recognize the need to tackle environmental challenges in order to attain sustainable economic and social development, this recognition has yet to be matched with sufficient political, financial and policy commitment to the effect. The Green Wall Initiative would need to overcome this and ensure sustained engagement of the political machinery of the countries involved.

## **6. Scope of the Initiative**

The Initiative will be implemented in the countries of the Sahara and Sahel zones of Africa.

## **7. Dimensions of the Initiative**

The initiative has several dimensions and it is important that it is conceived from such a multi-dimensional point of view.

From the scientific and technical aspects, there will be need to identify and strengthen the scientific and technical capacities (the need to mobilize, enhance and strengthen the existing

knowledge and capacity as relates to the project). In this relation, there is also the important aspect of the indigenous knowledge, often disregarded in the African context in favor of 'imported' knowledge which at times falls short of properly and adequately addressing the issues.

The whole area of environmental degradation and ecological recovery – including issues of bio-diversity, resource mapping (water demand and supply, soil nature and characteristics, availability of plant species including local species, etc) would need to be given adequate attention in the general context of an ecosystem approach.

The issue of information supply and management cannot be overemphasized – information on the ecosystems and the concerned communities, mechanisms of data collection, analysis and information dissemination and utilization, etc., will need to be taken into account.

Often neglected in approaches that are bent on mere technical solutions is the socio-economic dimension of the problem. Ultimately, the success or failure of the initiative squarely hinges on whether or not it musters enough support from the communities at grass-root levels. The question of who makes the choice on what and how is crucial in such kind of interventions – and the level and quality of communities' participation goes without saying. At the center of it all is the livelihood systems of the people that are going to be affected by the intervention. Therefore for its success and sustainability the initiative needs to adopt approaches even beyond livelihood processes, which is an integral aspect of the socio-economic dimension. In other words, it should be linked with possibilities of commercialization with a view to making the whole project a meaningfully sustainable and beneficial economic activity to those involved.

The Initiative has economic dimensions. It provides economic opportunities for the local communities for income generation and poverty reduction through the promotion of and establishment of private wood fuel plantations, fruit orchards, vegetables gardening and marketing, opportunities for intensive livestock rearing and product processing, and promotion and development of needed artisanal skills to reduce pressure on the land.

In the context of the climate change and variability phenomena, the Initiative would have to promote climate observation for the region and link this to global climate observatory systems as well as mainstream climate information and environmental dimensions in policy formulation and analysis.

Another dimension of the equation is the issue of certification of forest products; i.e., generation and expansion of market demand for forest products obtained from forests managed in an environmentally friendly manner.

Then there is the institutional infrastructure (land use, rights, policies, legal framework, etc.) aspect of it. These should be explored in detail and addressed in an appropriate manner.

Finally, the issue of resource availability – not just financial resources but also in particular labor availability.

## **8. Implementation Approaches**

### **8.1 *Review of experiences and development of a Master Plan***

The Green Wall for the Sahara is an initiative with multi-generational impact, but which must be started now! The approach needs to take such perspectives into account and therefore it should not opt for 'quick-fixes'. It should consider past and present experiences and build upon these. Therefore, to start with, there is a need for a comprehensive review of past and existing efforts, interventions and practices and a thorough analysis of their approaches, strengths, and weaknesses as well as identification of important lessons to be drawn for this particular initiative. Specific country cases need to be reviewed where efforts exist to address it within their development strategies (e.g., particularly in PRSP documents). The existence of other similar initiatives suggests for avoidance of reinventing the wheel. An institutional survey should be conducted to identify the institutions with various capabilities to work on the different dimensions/aspects of the project.

Following the study, a grand master-plan would need to be laid out – addressing in detail the specific features of the Project and needs of each eco-subsystem as well as specifying the type and level of intervention and the approaches to be adopted accordingly. The master plan should enable clarification and articulation of the synchronized set of necessary actions, identification of alternative options for an optimal resource allocation, and setting out alternative possibilities for ensuring sustainability. The fact that the initiative is multi-dimensional means that it should adopt a multi-sectoral approach actively involving multi-actors. It is also necessary for integration and coordination with other processes (e.g., UNCCD, TerrAfrica Initiative, NEPAD, GEF OP15, etc.). Clearly, the ultimate ownership and responsibility lies within nation states (and specific communities), but collaborative efforts should lead to enhanced possibilities of bringing about the desired change. It would also allow synergies and optimal utilization of resources (scientific, financial, human, material, etc.) which would otherwise be difficult for each country.

The issue needs to be addressed in a comprehensive manner, for instance including reflections on alternative sources of energy, climate change, global phenomenon, etc.

### **8.2 Land resource management and development**

The Green Wall of the Sahara is a rallying motto encompassing massive, interrelated and coordinated activities which goes far beyond the simplistic reforestation/afforestation approach. While forestry and other tree planting interventions will constitute an important part of the programme, especially as regard the stabilization and recovery of denuded/degraded landscapes, a comprehensive implementation approach, addressing other land resources (except mineral resources) and in particular the appropriate mobilization and use of water is required. Given the fact that the project has the objective to arrest land degradation/desertification in vulnerable areas and to reduce poverty through, amongst other things soil and water conservation, the stabilization of shifting sands, etc., the programme would need to be implemented in an integrated manner taking into account all the key issues and involving all the key stakeholders at the national and regional/sub-regional levels. In view of this the following elements should be considered:

- Soil and water conservation measures at both farm and public lands levels;

- Rangelands management and development, enriched with fodder crops and the provision of cattle watering facilities;
- Community-based and public-level *natural forest* management and development as well as woodlots establishment, for production of wood for domestic energy and construction in order to reduce pressure on the fragile arid land forest ecosystems. Emphasis therefore needs to be placed on indigenous highly adapted fast growing (and if possible, commercially valuable) local plant species supplemented with adaptable exotic species;
- Private forestry at domestic (e.g. Woodlots) and commercial levels;
- Joint and integrated management of transboundary waters (lakes, rivers, underground aquifers and wetlands) for enhanced livelihoods systems and for irrigation;
- Implementation of inter-basin water transfer programmes, requiring cooperation agreements that the programme could facilitate, which would support the greening of hyper-arid ecosystems and areas without sufficient water.
- Promotion of rainwater harvesting and water distribution techniques.
- Sand dune stabilization and re-vegetation – using grass seeds and tree plantings;
- Saline soil reforestation with salt tolerant grass and ligneous species;
- Etc.;

### **8.3 Programme Implementation Approach.**

Except where transboundary issues are concerned, much of the programmes would have to be implemented independently at the level of individual countries bearing in mind the need for synergy of actions in order to complete specific interventions within a given time frame. The use therefore of local and indigenous knowledge, the development of local manpower capacity and the promotion of synergistic actions of local, bilateral and multilateral interventions needs to be addressed.

For the above purpose there would be need to link the project activities with those of multilateral and bilateral agencies, particularly those of: the Permanent Inter-State Committee for the Control of Drought in the Sahel (CILSS); the Environment Initiative of NEPAD; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification; The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); the RAMSAR Convention; The Global Environment Facility Operational Programme 15; the TerrAfrica Initiative and IFAD's LADA programmes. The coordination of the activities of these agencies could be achieved through their membership in the Technical Committee proposed herein.

#### **8.4 Partnership building**

Partnership with the private sector, civil society organizations; and non-governmental organizations to benefit from their experiences and knowledge would need to be promoted. Furthermore the use of the United Nations Country Team for the coordination of activities may be considered.

#### **8.5 Food for work approach.**

The local communities would do much of the work for the establishment of the Green Wall. While the various projects may have financial remunerations for their workers, some self-help projects could be encouraged through the 'food for work' approach that the World Food Programme has used in many similar situations. For this reason it would be necessary to

closely associate the WFP with the conceptualization, planning and implementation of interventions through its membership in the Technical Committee.

#### **8.6 Workshops and study tours for knowledge sharing on best practices.**

A lot of knowledge, know-how and experiences exist at local and institutional levels in Africa regarding soil and water conservation, drought mitigation, shifting sand control and the development and promotion of other alternative livelihood systems. However much of these experiences still remain to be widely disseminated. The Project should consider regular workshops/training at country level to continuously share these experiences and know-how for the speedy implementation of interventions. For this purpose a study and compilation of existing knowledge base would be needed.

#### **8.7 Funding Arrangements**

The biggest challenge that the Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative is likely to face is acquiring sufficient funding for its projects in order to maintain momentum. The implementation of the Initiative cannot, for sustainability, depend entirely on annual budgetary allocations of participating Member States and the occasional donor funding. There would be need for a reliable funding mechanism for its implementation. Since many of the countries that are likely to fall within, and benefit from, the Green Wall Programme are 'rich' in mineral resources which they exploit for economic development, the creation of a 'Dedicated Trust Fund', to which each could contribute either voluntarily or by assessed contributed, could be considered. The resources from this fund, complemented by external development assistance, would ensure the un-interrupted implementation of the programme. The Initiative may also wish to explore public-private partnership for resource mobilization

#### **8.8 Benchmarking.**

The implementation of the Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative will be a sophisticated and therefore challenging engagement given the variety of issues involved related to livelihood systems, technical, operational and ecosystems considerations. The Programme is an ambitious one and would require careful benchmarking as far its implementation is concerned. It would therefore be necessary to phase its implementation. The following phasing may be considered.

##### *Phase I: Studies and Consultations.*

This phase may last for two years. During this first phase, all the necessary studies and consultations such as experts meetings on types of projects and their development could be addressed. The study and consultation phase could be accompanied with pilot implementation activities where deemed necessary.

##### *Phase II: Implementation*

The implementation phase should be spread over a longer period of sub-phases of ten years with provision for mid-term and end of phase reviews of progress on implementation. Every succeeding phase could build on the outcome of the review and develop activities for the next ten years. Overall the completion of the Programme could be targeted for 30 years assuming

that simultaneous actions would be possible in all countries within the belt. The activities of the phase would include (on-going) action research

An inbuilt mechanism for monitoring and evaluation (possibly including a kind of peer review mechanism) would be needed. A reporting mechanism will be needed.

## **9. Policy Issues.**

Being a transboundary Programme, the implementation of the Green Wall Initiative would require some degree of policy harmonization for the implementation of issues such as transboundary range and water management and as well as joint afforestation programmes. More importantly the participating countries would need to review their relevant policies and legislation to accommodate community involvement in environmental resources management and ownership of the benefits therefrom. This would constitute an important pillar of implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) at country level, as it would enhance economic empowerment of the local communities and their sustained involvement in the implementation. The policy review processes could benefit from inter-country consultations and exchange of experiences.

The programme would need to encourage, as far as possible, the harmonization and implementation of carefully crafted land use policies for those countries falling within similar ecological zones, for the protection of the very fragile ecosystems and the establishment of vegetative land covers. The policies have to be considerate of the needs of the local communities in the 'project' areas. To this end they have to ensure participatory implementation approaches, encouragement of private actors and investment, promote strong partnership between the public, private and community stakeholders and promote environmentally sound cultivation amongst the agrarian populations.

## **10. Institutional arrangements.**

Various institutional arrangements would be required at regional, subregional and national levels to guide the implementation of the Programme. The institutional framework has also to provide for partnership arrangements with related actors such as the African Energy Commission.

### ***10.1 Steering Committee.***

A Steering Committee of Ministers, designated by Member States directly concerned with the establishment of the Green Wall as well as select Ministers from other Regions of Africa could be set up at the regional level to monitor the implementation of the project and to report to relevant Policy Organs of the AU for policy and other implementation directives as well as to keep the projects under the radar in the development programmes of the concerned countries. Furthermore the Steering Committee would be directly concerned with partnership building amongst the actors in the Initiative and to support the resource mobilization efforts of the Technical Committee for the sustained implementation of the Initiative.

The Steering Committee may meet once per year to consider annual reports of the technical committee and to follow up on policy issues.

## ***10.2 Technical Committee.***

A Technical Committee comprising the following Member States and international and inter-governmental organizations is proposed:

Algeria; Burkina Faso; Cape verde; Chad; Djibouti; Egypt; Ethiopia; Eritrea; Guinea Bissau; Libya; Mali; Mauritania; Niger; Nigeria; Saharawi Arab Republic; Senegal; Somalia; Sudan; The Gambia; and Tunisia.

The African Union Commission (AUC); Economic Commissions of West African States (ECOWAS); Community of Sahel and Saharan States (CEN-SAD); Arab Maghreb Union (UMA); Permanent Inter-state Committee for the Control of Drought in the Sahel (CILSS); Sahara Observatory (OSS); Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD); New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Secretariat; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); World Food Programme (WFP); United Nations Environment Programme – Global Environment Facility (UNEP/GEF); UNEP Regional Office for Africa (UNEP/ROA); United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); African Development Bank (ADB); United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); African Academy of Sciences (AAS); African Forestry Research Network (AFORNET); AGRHYMET Centre; Institute of Sahel (INSAH); African Centre for Meteorological Applications to Development (ACMAD);. Other members may be added as the need arises.

At the regional level, the Regional Economic Communities may wish to create or use relevant existing committees for regional level activities. Experts from the countries in which the project will be implemented would need to support the activities of the Technical Committee in thinking out the areas and modes of intervention.

The Technical Committee would be responsible for the mobilization of the political organs towards the coherent implementation of the project, resources mobilization, regional planning; definition of the borders of the wall; and coordination of activities etc.

The Technical Committee could meet quarterly for the first three years of planning and implementation and half-yearly thereafter, to guide the programme. A sub-set of the Technical Community of representatives in Addis Ababa may be constituted for a closer and more frequent follow-up of project implementation with the AU Commission.

Monitoring, follow-up and review mechanisms would have to be decided by the various committees. However this may involve periodic reporting by the identified actors to the meetings of the Committees.

## ***10.3 National Committees***

The activities of the projects of the Initiative within the confines of any political boundary would have to be implemented under the aegis of the appropriate national authorities. Given the integrated nature of the project, a multidisciplinary "National Environment Working

Group” may be established, where it does not exist, to advise the integrated implementation of project activities.

The membership of this national body could include services such as: Forestry; Soils; water; Geology; Livestock/Range management; Agriculture; relevant Research institutions; Environment; Surveys, energy, education/training and Land use Planning.

The National Environment Working Group would provide guidance on types of interventions per (agro)ecological system as well as the technical guidelines for appropriate intervention, where these exist, based on the existing body of knowledge of the local terrains and land resources. Their recommendations could feed into the work plan of the Technical Committee and provide the latter with information for the organization of meetings and workshops, as the case may be, to exchange experiences and share knowledge on best practices to inform activities in other parts of the green wall/belt with similar ecosystems. The National Committees may consider creating local committees for the purpose of ownership and effective implementation.

## **11. Expected Output**

An integrated programme of the nature of the Green Wall for the Sahara Initiative, when properly executed, could yield many benefit both in the short- and long-term.

In the short-term, the Initiative could:

- Enhance policy harmonization;
- Create awareness and thus get the wider public involved in a sustainable manner;
- Create alternative livelihood systems for the populations affected and create wealth;

In the long-term, it could:

- Arrest soil degradation;
- Slow the advance of the desert frontier;
- Reduce poverty amongst the participating populations;
- Ameliorate climatic conditions within the Wall;
- Contribute to climate change adaptation;
- Conserve biodiversity;
- Produce a publication on lessons learnt.
- Increase land productivity and food production;