

Both ENDS Information Pack Nr. 1

Desertification

Both ENDS offers a wide range of services to **NGOs** in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Newly Independent States who are working in the field of environment, development and social justice.

Our **standard information service** includes Information packs on a wide range of topical environment issues . These packs have been written mainly for Southern NGOs. They are to enable (beginner) environmental organizations to get familiarized with an important environmental subject in a short period of time.

Contents:

- a general overview of the theme
- details of relevant international treaties, guidelines and conventions
- some aspects of the current (international) debates on the topic
- case studies (mainly from Southern countries)
- a listing of useful contacts in North and South
- a list of publications
- a choice of websites

We are making an effort to **regularly update** the information included in these packs. But since people and developments are moving fast, we will inevitably lag behind somewhat. The information presented is meant as an introduction. If you require more specific information, please feel free **to contact us**.

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We welcome any suggestions or comments which help improve this information package.

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CONTENT

• Introduction.....	3
• Desertification.....	3
• Scale of Desertification.....	3
• Causes and Effects.....	4
• Costs of Combating Desertification.....	5
• Convention to Combat Desertification.....	5
• Short summary of several cross-linkages.....	7
• Role of CSOs in the Convention Process.....	8
• The International NGO Network on Desertification “RIOD”.....	9
• The European Network Initiative on Desertification “eniD”.....	9
• Other bodies related to the UNCCD.....	10
• What action CSOs can take.....	10
• Other Useful Addresses	12
• Usefull Links.....	12
• Bibliography.....	13
• UNCCD jargon	15
• Glossary.....	16
• Cases/Boxes:	
• Brazil	4
• Agriculture, Water, Conflicts, Migration	4
• Aral Sea	5
• European Agricultural Policy and Desertification	5
• Zambia	8

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7. Mining
8. Gender, Environment and Development
9. Trade and Environment
10. Local Forest Management
11. Multilateral Financial Institutions
12. Analog Forestry
13. River Management
14. Gene-technology
15. Natural Disaster Management
16. The Cotonou Agreement
17. The Rio Conventions
18. Sustainable production of cut flowers

Desertification

Introduction

Many CSOs are involved in the management of natural resources, which often includes the combating of soil erosion, reforestation and biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture (and food security) and water management (ground and surface). These activities are at first sight not associated with the concept of desertification or with combating desertification. However, everything involving the sustainable management of natural resources in drylands or in sub-humid climates falls under this heading; thus desertification is connected to gender, indigenous peoples, nomadic livelihoods and other examples.

Desertification is often regarded as an issue separate from human intervention and development, especially in Africa. However, the process of land degradation known as desertification is intrinsically related to both the forces of nature and the human face of development.

At UNCED in 1992, it was decided that – given the extent and severity of the problem – desertification warranted an increased and special attention. In May 1993, negotiations for a Convention to Combat Desertification began, resulting in its adoption in June 1994. Three months after the 50th ratification, the Convention entered into force in December 1996. The first Conference of Parties was held in Rome, in October 1997. This Convention to Combat Desertification is unique in the sense that a true effort has been made to provide an international framework to combat desertification in an integrated way with as much participation of local communities as possible. This package contains information about what is understood by the term desertification and what its associated problems are. It also gives information about the Convention to Combat Desertification and measures taken by CSOs to encourage popular participation in the National Action Plans to combat desertification.

Desertification

The phenomenon of desertification can be described as land degradation in (semi-) arid and dry sub-humid areas, resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities. Desertification not only refers to decreasing rainfall or a change in rainfall patterns but it also relates to the degradation of land as a result of drainage, salinization and change of vegetation. Through changes in the physical and chemical composition of soil, the loss of natural vegetation and erosion by wind and water, land loses fertility and desert-like areas appear. These desert-like areas are very different from natural deserts, which are ecosystems with unique features. Desertification is characterised by loss of biological (soil, plants, animals) and cultural (lifestyles, languages, knowledge) diversity.

Scale of desertification

Desertification is a problem in all continents. All land is vulnerable to degradation. If land degradation occurs in dry areas, it is called desertification. About 41% of the total land surface of the world is dryland. Human activities are minimal in real or naturally occurring deserts and therefore deserts are not considered as risk areas. The most at risk area in the world is the Sahel, where 50% of the population is directly affected by land degradation.

The impact of land degradation is most severe where people are especially dependent on natural resources and are marginalised within the world economy. One third of the earth's surface is degraded, and this has enormous consequences for world food security and biodiversity. About 1/6 of the world population is affected by the implications of land degradation.

Brazil

In the late 60's in Brazil, there was an explosion of super seeds, pesticides, fertilizers and subsidies in the agrarian sector, mostly benefiting large companies. Soy was discovered as a golden export product, sucking both large companies and small-scale farmers in the spiral of soy monocultures. The large agrarian companies easily mechanized the soy production, leaving a large part of the small-scale farmers no other option than to sell their land to the companies. The rural lands slowly got transformed to large monocultures of soy, and the rainforest was not spared in the search for new land for cultivation. Large parts of the Amazon rainforests are being chopped down for soy production, leaving the soil almost bare and vulnerable to the heat in this region. Besides that, the irrigation of the immense soy fields make the water tables drop quickly. Thus, deforestation, burning and the unwise use of water contribute to the current droughts in Brazil, which makes it increasingly difficult for farmers and companies to obtain a good harvest.

Causes and effects

The most well known causes of desertification are overgrazing, population pressures, logging and bushfires. However, the pressure on countries to integrate into the world market has led to development programmes in which monocultures of cash crops are stimulated. These monocultures are very vulnerable to disease and plagues and require a lot of fertilisers and pesticides. The best land is used for these cash crops, leaving marginal land for subsistence farming and pasture. The reduction of the quality and availability of land leads to an extra pressure on remaining resources.

Agriculture, Water, Conflicts, Migration

Irrigated agriculture uses 75% of the world's freshwater. As a result of evaporation and leakages 60% of this water is wasted. A quarter of all irrigated land is already salinated. In Pakistan almost half of the agricultural land is subject to salinization. Most irrigation technology is developed and exported by industrialised countries, often at the expense of sustainable local systems. As water becomes scarce, water conflicts increasingly arise between urban and rural areas, between pastoralists and agriculturalists, between villages and ethnic groups, and even between countries. Rivers flow through several countries. Dams or logging upstream cause scarcity of water downstream. Accordingly, as land becomes less productive and conflicts build up, migration will increase. It is estimated that 10 million people are migrating to other countries for environmental reasons. But also within countries migration in the search for land and water can lead to conflicts.

At the same time, low prices on the world market for raw materials and the high prices demanded for manufactured goods creates a situation of even more frenzied production to pay for imports. In this situation resources rapidly degrade. As land and water continue to become scarce, conflicts within and between communities continue to increase. These conflicts themselves lead to further degradation. For people, land degradation means a very low productivity or even harvest failure. The biomass of pasture decreases, with less food for cattle and less income and food for people. Land degradation also undermines social structures. The division of labour between men and women changes and, in general, the working load for women increases. As traditional knowledge becomes inadequate to sustain a livelihood, the dependency on external means and knowledge increases. Distances to gather fuel and water become longer, at the expense of other activities, for example the cooking of food. Loss of vegetation leads to water and wind erosion and air pollution. Quality of water diminishes through pollution and sedimentation. These are all factors that directly or indirectly threaten health.

Culture is affected as well. Monuments are crumbling, and so are social structures. Traditional fishing communities of the past, for example around the Aral Sea, had to adapt themselves very quickly to agriculture. This process went with the loss of culture (such as rituals pertaining to water) and social structures.

Aral Sea

The intensive, irrigated cultivation of cotton since the sixties around the Aral Sea has caused the drying up of the lake to one third of the surface compared with thirty years ago. The wind blows the highly salinated soil into the air and water. The water is polluted by pesticides. The poisonous wind and rain affect the health of 70-90% of the people. Infant mortality is as high as 1 in 8 and the amount of disabled children is considerable.

Not only locally, but also at the global level, the effects of land degradation are enormous. Productive capacity is decreasing at a rate of 10 billion hectares a year, and at the same time the world population is growing at a rate of 1.67% a year. This severely threatens world food security.

The loss of biodiversity in drylands is extremely severe. Most of the staple foods like wheat, barley, millet, pulses, and cotton stem from drylands, as well as many animals used by people like horses, cows, sheep, goats, camels and lamas. As there are not so many species and genes adapted to dry climates, every loss of genetic material in drylands has an enormous impact. Drylands hang in a precarious ecological balance, which is partly caused by periods of water scarcity. The disturbance of this balance can severely affect the people who depend on these fragile ecosystems.

Costs of combating desertification

In 1991, the United Nations estimated that the on-site or immediate costs of preventive, corrective and rehabilitative measures to combat desertification totalled something between 10 and 22.4 billion US\$ a year. This is almost half of the loss in world income as a result of the damage caused by land degradation (US\$ 42.3 billion a year). If off-site and social costs are included, the figure is 2 to 10 times higher.

In 1980, it was estimated that the costs of failure to combat desertification would be US\$ 520 billion over the following twenty years. In 1990, a similar estimation gave a figure of US\$ 850 billion (at 1990 prices). This fact shows that it is not only important to undertake action to combat desertification, but also to undertake the right action.

European Agricultural Policy and Desertification

In the early 1990s imports of European meat impoverished pastoralists in many West African countries. At regional markets, pastoralists were no longer able to sell their local meat and many pastoralists were forced to compensate their loss of income by breeding more cattle. In this way they were able to compete against lower prices. As a downturn the carrying capacity of the land was seriously disturbed by overgrazing, which led to desertification. Fortunately, in the case of beef in West Africa these practices were stopped by successful campaigning efforts by CSOs. Nevertheless, the European Union is still subsidising its exports posing a threat to livelihoods in developing countries.

Convention to combat desertification

As a follow-up to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in 1992, a Convention to Combat Desertification and to mitigate the effects of Drought (INCD in the negotiation phase, now UNCCD) was started in May 1993 in Nairobi. There have since been five sessions of negotiations. The last session in June 1994 in Paris resulted in the adoption of the Convention and in October 1994 a signing ceremony took

place in Paris. At least fifty countries needed to ratify before the Convention could enter into force.

In the interim period several sessions were held to prepare the implementation of the Convention. Priority was given to Africa and an Urgent Action for Africa has been undertaken. There are regional annexes for Asia, Latin America and Northern Mediterranean as well, providing the outline of actions required in relation to the specific situation in these regions.

By the time that the first Conference of Parties (COP-1) took place in Rome, October 1997, more than one hundred countries had ratified the Convention. At this moment (2006), the number of ratifications has more or less stabilized at 191 countries. The Convention to Combat Desertification is the first international legally binding agreement that is based on the participation of local communities. Therefore its success depends heavily on the active involvement of Non-Governmental Organisations and Community Based Organisations. This Convention can be used as an effective tool to combat desertification by local communities, through their participation in National Action Programmes (NAPs). According to this Convention, these programmes have to be developed through close co-operation between governments and local communities and their organisations.

Important features of this Convention are:

- Participation of local communities in the planning, implementation and review of NAPs;
- Co-operation between all levels of government and local communities and NGOs;
- Co-operation and co-ordination at the sub-regional, regional and global level;
- Recognition that desertification is caused by complex interactions between physical, biological, political, social, cultural and economic factors, and thus requires an integrated approach.

Despite this epoch-making bottom-up approach, ideas and consensus about the extent and quality of participation of local communities had to be developed. Donor countries did not provide new or additional financial resources, which might have frustrated especially the participation process. However, with the decision of the opening of a new window on Land Degradation in the Global Environmental Facility (GEF, window open since 2003), new funding opportunities arisen. At the country level, at times there is a lack of political will or the legal regulations are not favourable. It is obvious that these might be serious constraints in a successful implementation of the UNCCD. The conferences have at least assured that desertification is internationally recognised as a problem with global dimensions. Therefore a co-ordinated worldwide effort to combat desertification might be expected. The involvement of CSOs around the world is needed to ensure that this recognition will be translated into action.

The address of the Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification is:

UNCCD Secretariat
P.O. Box 260129, 53153 Bonn - Germany
Phone: +49-228-815.2800
Fax: +49.228.815.2898/99
E-mail: secretariat@unccd.int
Internet: <http://www.unccd.int>

On this website information can be found on the convention in general, on national Focal Point, on National Action Plans of various countries, and there is a section with a glossary, FAQs and a simple version of the convention text. A small glossary is given at the end of this paper.

Short summary of several cross-linkages

Land degradation is certainly not a stand-alone issue. The UNCCD therefore touches upon many adjacent fields of work. As an illustration, several cross-linkages are given an example of below. See also the bibliography for more literature on various themes.

- *Land degradation and poverty*

Poverty eradication through mitigating the effects of drought is an important focus of the UNCCD. It is estimated that there are close to one billion poor rural people living in drylands. The UNCCD NAPs need to be interwoven with other national development planning, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). However, PRSPs' focus at the moment is on economic growth, not on sustainability. Non-sustainable development in the fragile drylands leads to even more land degradation and thus poverty. One role for CSOs could be to promote enhanced synergy of NAPs and PRSPs, so that poverty eradication is reached through sustainable development.

- *Land degradation and gender*

In drylands, men and women often have different roles and expertise in the management and use of natural resources. Women for example are more often responsible for water and fuel collection, and have finely tuned adaptive strategies to cope with the environmental constraints. Men and women most of the time have different rights and access to land and resources. Men tend to migrate to cities in times of scarcity. Recognising the differences, and adapting anti-desertification measures, policies and projects to these differences leads to many benefits such as increased investments in drought-management and labour availability.

- *Land degradation and biodiversity*

The drylands of the world contain a large number of species. The unique diversity of these drylands lies mainly in flora and fauna adapting ingeniously to the various dryland habitats and harsh conditions. Herders in Africa graze no less than 150 varieties of cattle, 60 different strains of sheep, and 50 different goats on drylands. Also large amounts of seed varieties are found in drylands, as well as many endemic species. Drylands are characterised by fluctuations in dry and wet periods. The variety of species is the key to ecological sustainability in drylands, and disturbance of this balance between species is often irreversible.

- *Land degradation, food security and food sovereignty*

Agriculture, food security and drylands are closely interlinked. Droughts directly threaten food production, and unsustainable agricultural practices can lead to further degradation of the soil. The shift from traditional small-scale agriculture to intensified large-scale production of export crops has put a severe pressure on the already fragile drylands, and threatens the subsistence agriculture of the inhabitants themselves. According to some, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) can be a possible alternative to assure worldwide food security. However, massive introduction of GMOs would not be without significant health and environmental impacts, e.g. the threat to agro-biodiversity (see paragraph above). GMOs also threaten the crowding out of traditional seed systems and local knowledge, which are both of high importance in drylands.

Zambia

Sub-Saharan Africa used to have a rich variety in local seed systems. Seed was grown by part of the local farmers and supplied to the other farmers of the communities. Despite their low yields, these local seeds were adapted to local circumstances. In order to modernise their agriculture most African governments provided their farmers with Green revolution inputs, such as high yielding seed varieties. This was especially true for governments with huge export revenues, like Zambia. From the sixties Zambian farmers received hybrid maize seed and chemical fertilisers from government controlled co-operatives (parastatals). Their top down approach, however, resulted in the invalidation of local initiatives, especially local seed systems. Farmers became dependent on the government.

This situation proved very harmful in the nineties when Zambia suffered severe droughts. The new maize varieties could not be adapted to the drought conditions and the farmers had lost their ability to produce appropriate seeds themselves. The result was a devastating shortage of food. In October 2002 Zambia, suspecting genetic modification, decided to reject donated corn from the US. Since the country still suffers from the earlier modernization, rejecting the corn caused indignant reactions from some parts of the world, as if the Zambian government, all alone, let its own people starve.

The local seed systems proved valid but could not counter the droughts of 2002. Many regions in Zambia proved marginal, with hardly any markets for agricultural products. The liberalisation, which already started in the nineties, left this countryside without much needed services on supply of inputs, agricultural extension services and market outlets for agricultural surpluses. This results in continuing impoverishment and land degradation.

- **Land degradation and Multilateral Financial Institutions (MFIs)**
MFIs such as the World Bank and the IMF have a large influence on the economy, ecology and social structure of countries they lend their money to. Often the loans come with certain conditions and demands for reforms, in which the specific conditions of the drylands are often discounted. The previously mentioned cash crops could be an example of a government trapped between the rock of reserving land for national subsistence agriculture and the hard place of using this land to produce export goods that bring in money to pay off the debts of the country. Another example is the undermining of the exchange relationship between nomadic and sedentary economies, characterised by money transactions as well as traditional barter, but threatened now by MFI-imposed economic reforms. At the same time, the World Bank is recognising the importance of drylands and the need to invest in drylands. Through a new programme called TerrAfrica, World Bank and partners try to mobilise resources for sustainable land management in Africa. However, the way CSOs are involved in the management and implementation of TerrAfrica is still weak – so that CSOs cannot benefit from extra resources for their work, and governments cannot benefit from the work done at the reality of the local level. Hopefully this top-down programme will become more participative in the future. See the literature section for reading/information suggestions on TerrAfrica.

Role of CSOs in the Convention Process

CSOs are playing an important role in the implementation of the Convention to ensure effective participation of local communities in the National Action Programmes. Often, the work CSOs do at local level already contributes to the objectives of the UNCCD and the NAP. CSOs are able to reach out to the communities in rural and remote areas, where the problem of land degradation is often biggest. Because of their strong link to the local level, CSOs are also very knowledgeable on locally possible solutions and know who is capable to be involved in what role.

With every session of the negotiations for a UNCCD convention, the participating CSOs organised themselves better, and definitely had an important impact on the negotiations. They were able to successfully lobby for participation, for an integrated basic approach of the Convention, and for the creation of some financial mechanisms in which CSOs can participate.

Since the first Conference of the Parties, CSOs have been able to put their own priorities on the official agenda: two half-day sessions on the agenda are organised by CSOs, the Open Dialogue Sessions. The issue of participation has been addressed several times to develop consensus about at least the basic quality and quantity of participation in the NAPs. Gender is another issue that has been addressed in several Open Dialogue Sessions, as have issues such as pastoralist issues, financing for CSO work, or crisis management in drylands.

The international NGO network on desertification "RIOD"

(Réseau International d'ONG sur la Désertification)

CSOs have been actively combating desertification long before negotiations on the Convention started. Their activities do not depend on whether their governments have ratified the UNCCD or not. However, those CSOs that were involved in the negotiation process of the UNCCD, believed that the Convention could strengthen the CSOs in their efforts to combat desertification. They have been searching for ways to inform people about the UNCCD, to explain how they can make use of the provisions of the Convention and to foster communication among CSOs globally on combating desertification.

In November 1994, CSOs formally established an international network on desertification, called RIOD. The mission of RIOD was to promote and enhance the participation of civil society in the implementation of the UNCCD at all levels, especially in the National Action Programmes (NAPs). RIOD promoted the active participation of women and encouraged gender-balanced representation at all levels.

This global network had focal points at the national and (sub-)regional levels. The overall strategic management of the network was done under the responsibility of a Global Coordinating Committee, in which 15 regions were represented. One organisation hosted the facilitation unit of the RIOD network.

At the moment, the global RIOD network is not functioning well. There is no facilitation unit, and communication within the network is weak. However, some of the regional RIOD networks such as RIOD Latin America/Caribbean still function well. In other regions, other networks and forms of cooperation have come up, formal and informal, to cooperate on input towards the UNCCD processes.

The European network initiative on Desertification (eniD)

The European Networking Initiative on Desertification (eniD) was created in June 2001 by European CSOs involved in the implementation of the UNCCD. At the moment this working group counts six organisations and networks, which are operational in the field of drylands development.

EniD is dedicated to the UNCCD process in general and to the participatory approach of the convention in particular – considering both to be essential steps on the way to sustainable development. The initiative seeks to improve the co-operation between CSOs at the European level in order to enhance support to civil society partners in affected countries, particularly in view of their active involvement in the decision making, implementation and assessment processes of the UNCCD.

EniD's activities involve:

- Increasing outreach and understanding of the UNCCD, particularly in the civil society and public sector in Europe;
- Furthering cooperation and partnerships between CSOs and other actors that focus on active and competent participation of CSOs and local populations in the socio-economic development processes in drylands, particularly in the context of the UNCCD;

- Providing substantial and procedural input to regional and international discussions and decision-making processes that steer the implementation of the convention as well as other related processes that relate to the mitigation of the effects of Desertification and the elimination of its causes;
- Maintaining the political dialogue with the concerned national, regional and international institutions.

For more information on eniD:
Drylands Coordination Group Secretariat
Grensen 9b, 0159 Oslo - Norway
Phone +47-23-109.490
Fax +47-23-109.494
E-mail: info@drylands-group.org
Internet: www.drylands-group.org

Other bodies related to the UNCCD

The Convention consists of several institutions that support its implementation. They are summarised below.

The Committee on Science and Technology (CST): The CST a subsidiary body of the Convention whose function is to advise the Conference of the Parties on scientific and technical matters regarding the combat of desertification. Information at COPs is transmitted through ad hoc panels. Each ad hoc panel appointed by the COP is composed of experts whose names are taken from the roster of independent experts. At CoP-1 it was decided that the roster of experts will be open to CSOs as well.

Global Mechanism (GM): This is in charge of promoting actions to mobilise financial resources, including the transfer of technology. The Global Mechanism is hosted in Rome by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and functions under the authority and guidance of the Conference of the Parties. Find out more about the GM and it's function in channelling funds at <http://www.gm-unccd.org>.

Global Environment Facility (GEF): The GEF was established by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in 1990. It operates as the financial mechanism of both the Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Biodiversity (UNCBD) Conventions, and since COP-6 (2003) also of the UNCCD. The GEF was created to provide grants and concessional funds to developing countries to finance incremental costs for programmes, projects, and activities to protect the world's environment.

Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC): Established by COP 5 in 2001 as a subsidiary body of the Convention, which reviews and analyses national reports that submitted by the parties. The goal of the committee is to improve the coherence, impact and effectiveness of policies and programmes that are aimed at the restoration of the agro-ecological balance in the drylands. Its first meeting was in Rome in November 2002, and it will meet on an annual basis.

Committee of the Whole (COW): A working group set up by the Conference of the Parties to facilitate discussions on specific issues. When the Committee finishes its work it turns the resulting texts over to the COP to finalise and adopt them during a plenary session.

What actions CSOs can take...

Although the Convention is an international agreement, it could create an enabling environment for the local level. Very much depends on the actions CSOs undertake to use this opportunity for sustainable development. Before the Convention can be used as an instrument in any country, the government should have ratified it. CSOs have to

make sure that this will happen. CSOs are also the actors to build the bridge between the local, national and international levels, by ensuring public participation. Therefore mechanisms have to be put in place for the planning, implementation and review of National Action Programmes.

For the first time in UN history, CSOs organised a half-day formal session at COP-1. As part of the official working agenda, CSOs and delegates exchanged views and information on key issues regarding partnerships. Partnerships between different stakeholders and at all levels are considered essential for the successful implementation of the Convention. This initiative, taken by CSOs, was very much valued and it was decided that at future COPs CSOs will have the opportunity to organise two ½ day formal sessions, called the Open Dialogue Sessions. These ODS sessions lack in the CRIC conferences.

These examples are part of creating an enabling environment at the international level. Most work is done at the local and national level. This is also the area where CSOs can be most influential.

CSOs can undertake the following actions:

Inquire whether your government has ratified the Convention:

- Try to find out what the official position is regarding key issues;
- Ask for information on how to become nominated for the roster of experts on the CST;
- If your country is Party to the Convention, request involvement in the drafting and implementation of the National Action Programme.

Inform other CSOs about the Convention and the opportunities for CSOs:

- Inform CSOs in your area about the existence of the Convention and where to find information;
- Organise a forum with CSOs at the national level to raise awareness, possibly in collaboration with your (sub-)regional UNCCD Focal Point and other national stakeholders.
- Establish a national CSO co-ordinating committee on desertification. Try to engage CSOs in dialogues with the government on policies related to the UNCCD and other such frameworks, strategise with other CSOs on how to get influence on the positions relating to the UNCCD of your government;
- Organise awareness raising activities on the impact of desertification in collaboration with other CSOs.

Ask accreditation for your organisation to the UNCCD:

- You are only allowed to participate in the Conference Of Parties of the UNCCD if you are accredited;
- On request, the secretariat will provide you with information on matters related to the Convention;
- Official documents, announcements of meetings, and relevant issues are available from the website: www.unccd.int, or on request from the secretariat. Accreditation also can be arranged through the secretariat:
UNCCD - External Relations and Public Information
Contact person: Marcos Montoiro, NGO liaison officer
Address: Haus Carstanjen, Martin Luther Kingstr. 8, 53175 Bonn - Germany
Phone: +49-228-815.28.02
E-mail: mmontoiro@unccd.int

Exchange experiences through CSO networks on desertification:

- Get to know more about CSO networks, the Convention text, the names of delegates from your country, the national focal point in your country, the activities and meetings in your region, participating CSOs in your country or region, the positions of your country, the status of the NAP, etc.;
- Share experience in combating desertification; your experiences are important for others and also for lobbying;

- Exchange information and ideas through networks: e.g. if you have ideas about raising awareness at the local level; if you have ideas and/or materials that might be useful to raise awareness about the global dimensions of desertification (such as world food security, biodiversity, trade, migration); if you are looking for partners for campaigning, lobbying, etc.

Other useful addresses

The Global Mechanism of the UNCCD
Address: Via del Serafico 107, 00142 Rome - Italy
Phone: +39-06-5459.2146
Fax: +39-06-5459.2135
Internet: www.gm-unccd.org

UNDP Drylands Development Centre (formerly UNSO)
Address: United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, P.O. Box 30552, 00100, Nairobi - Kenya
Phone: +254-20-624.640 / 42
Fax: +254-20-624.648
E-mail: ddc@undp.org
Internet: www.undp.org/drylands

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
Division of Policy Development and Law
Civil Society and Gender Unit
Programme Officer: Ms. Meryem Amar-Samnotra
Address: P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi - Kenya
Phone: +254-20-623.680
Fax: (254-20) 623 679
E-mail: Meryem.Amar@unep.org
Internet: www.unep.org/dpdl/cso/

GEF Small Grants Programme
Contact person: Mr. Uygur Özesmi
Land Degradation Programme Officer
Address: 304 East 45th Street, FF-908, New York, NY, 10017 – United States
Phone: +1-212-906.51.19
Fax: +1-212-906.65.68
E-mail: uygur.ozesmi@undp.org
Internet: <http://sgp.undp.org>

Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS)
Address: Boulevard du Leader Yasser Arafat, B.P 31 1080 Tunis Cedex - Tunisia
Phone: +216-71-206.633 / 34
Fax: +216-71-206.636
Internet: http://www.unesco.org/oss/v_uk/presentationang.htm
Liaison Bureau at UNESCO, Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel
Address: c/o UNESCO, 1 rue Miollis, 75015 Paris - France
Phone: +33-1-4568.2876
E-mail: oss@unesco.org

Usefull Links

International Arid Lands Consortium (IALC): The IALC is a research institute on arid and semi-arid lands.
Internet: <http://ag.arizona.edu/OALS/IALC/Home.html>

IISD – Desertsites

A portal regarding sites about deserts with a lot of useful links.

Internet: www.iisd.ca/desert/desertsites.html

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) - Drylands Programme.

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UNCCD jargon

Affected countries/areas – According to 1992 United Nations estimates, over 110 countries in all continents are affected by desertification, which is defined as land degradation in arid, semi-arid and/or dry sub-humid areas.

Bureau - Structure responsible for directing the work of the COP. Its members are delegates elected by each of the five regional groups. The Bureau is composed of the President, 9 Vice Presidents, and the Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology.

CSO - Civil Society Organisation – all non-governmental organisations, ranging from grassroots and local community-based organisations to international CSOs.

COP - Conference of the Parties - The governing body and supreme decision-making authority for the Parties to the Convention.

Focal Point - A representative from each country serves as the focal point for the Convention to liaise with the Secretariat and to assist in the work in between the meetings.

NAP - National Action Programme – National Action Programmes are at the heart of the Convention and constitute the conceptual and legal framework for implementing it at the national and local levels. Their purpose is to identify the factors contributing to desertification and the practical measures necessary to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. The Convention indicates that affected countries shall elaborate and implement them with the full participation of local communities and all interested stakeholders. Furthermore, they should be fully integrated with other development programmes.

National Coordinating Body (NCB) – Affected country Parties can establish a UNCCD National Coordinating Body with a multidisciplinary steering committee. Its role is to coordinate the formulation and implementation of the National Action Programmes and to mobilize national and international resources.

National Delegation - One or more officials empowered to represent and negotiate on behalf of their government.

Observers - A state (or regional economic integration organisation) that has not yet become a Party to the Convention. United Nations agencies and non-governmental and

community-based organisations may also participate as observers, subject to the Rule of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties.

Party - A state or regional economic integration organization (such as the EC) that agrees to be bound by the Convention and for which the UNCCD has entered into force.

Plenary - An open meeting of the entire Conference of the Parties where all formal decisions are taken.

Ratification - After signing a treaty, a country must ratify it, often with the approval of its parliament or other legislature. Such process implies not only an expression of interest as indicated by the signature, but the transformation of the treaty's principles and obligations into national law.

Reports – Each country Party communicates to the Conference of the Parties for consideration at its ordinary sessions reports on the measures it has taken for the implementation of the Convention. Affected country Parties provide a description of the strategies established, and other relevant information. Developed country Parties report on measures taken to assist in the preparation and implementation of action programmes.

Secretariat of the UNCCD - The Executive Secretary and his staff are responsible for servicing the COP, including the preparation of documents and meeting arrangements. The UNCCD Secretariat is institutionally linked to the United Nations.

Source: Combating Desertification. A Glossary. UNCCD secretariat, <http://www.unccd.int/knowledge/glossary.php>

See also:

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Glossary

Biological Diversity:

The diversity of living organisms from all kind of origins, including, amongst others, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part; this includes also the diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

Convention:

A contract, agreement or treaty between or among states for the regulation of matters affecting them.

Desertification:

Land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities. Desertification is a primarily socio-economic process by which natural resources are degraded through unsustainable land use practices and population pressures - a process that can lead eventually to the creation of newly desertified areas, or areas where the diversity of life is destroyed.

Drought:

Natural hazards of dry climates that occur when water or moisture is so scarce, relative to demand, that the ecology of a region becomes severely unbalanced. Drought can last for one season or for many years and can affect, or be affected by, the course of desertification.

Drylands:

Areas characterised by aridity or a lack of moisture in average climatic conditions.

Drylands are classified as hyper-arid, arid, semi-arid or dry sub-humid. The world's drylands total 41% of the total global land area (6.15 billion hectares). Of this total, 5.15 billion hectares are being used agriculturally. More than two-thirds (3.56 billion ha) of the agriculturally used drylands are considered to be at least mildly degraded.

Ecosystem:

A dynamic complex of communities of plants, animals and micro-organisms and their not-living surroundings that form a functional unity in their relative interaction.

Land degradation:

The progressive weakening of the physical, biological and economic potential of the land. It is a serious threat to overall productivity and therefore to the livelihoods of people who live on the land. Land degradation erodes the diversity of plant and animal life. As it forces people to move and change their lifestyles, it also erodes the diversity of the people who live in degrading areas, their cultures, languages and knowledge.

Monoculture:

The cultivation of a crop of the same type for successive years to the exclusion of all other crop types. Monoculture cash cropping is the planting of one such crop type for export. Monocultures are more susceptible to pest and disease and therefore require more fertilisers and pesticides.

Salinization:

The accumulation of soluble mineral salts near the soil surface, usually caused by the flow of water from saline ground water. Where the rate of surface evaporation is high, irrigation can exacerbate the problem by moistening the soil and causing water to be drawn from deeper levels as water evaporates from the surface. The evaporation of pure water leaves the salts behind, allowing them to accumulate, and they can reach concentrations that are toxic to plants, thus sterilising the land.

Structural Adjustment Programme:

Structural adjustment loans are given by the multilateral development banks (such as the World Bank) with the objective of bringing about economy-wide reforms within recipient countries. The latter are known as structural adjustment programs and the reforms usually include reductions in import restrictions and the introduction or promotion of "free-market" policies, together with a relaxation of state controls on the economy. To qualify for the loans, many countries cut social services, privatise public industry, and occasionally devalue local currencies.

Source: Desertification, A backgrounder for journalists, IDRC, Canada, 1994. p. 24: sources of definitions.