



STATEMENT BY
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*On the occasion of the Ninth Session
of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC*

Milan, Italy 1 - 12 December 2003



President of the COP,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies the Ambassadors,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure for me to have this opportunity to address this meeting, the Ninth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

I would like to sincerely thank my colleague, the Executive Secretary of our sister Convention Secretariat, Ms Joke Waller-Hunter, and her dedicated staff and able for the excellent work that has gone into the preparations of this Conference.

Mr President,

The international community has demonstrated to us that both the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change have common issues to address, particularly in dry and sub-humid areas, and areas affected by drought and desertification.

Indeed the Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD has through various decisions called for closer collaboration among the Rio Conventions and other relevant international organizations and conventions. For instance, at its last session, the COP endorsed the report of its subsidiary body, the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), and expressed its support for the integration of approaches between the UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD, particularly at the local level. The CRIC, has made a number of recommendations for possible action in promoting synergies, and I will highlight only two of them:

- i) Country Parties called for a reorientation of the strategic approaches that have hitherto been pursued by the various interested parties, particularly at the level of individual countries. In this regard they expressed the need to integrate action programmes of environmental conventions with national sustainable development strategies, in particular in such areas as poverty reduction, science and education, agriculture, forestry, energy and water supply;
- ii) They also observed that it is necessary to strengthen synergies with those legal instruments dealing with the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources critical to the survival of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid ecosystems and people living in affected areas. They called for better linkages between the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) under the UNFCCC and National Action Programmes to combat desertification (NAPs) that would increase the benefits of these programmes, especially for affected least developed countries (LDCs);



Mr President,

Two key areas seem to stand out and this Conference of the Parties may wish to provide some elements for the way forward, as country Parties are being requested to identify ways and means to incorporate National Adaptation Programmes of Action for arid, semi-arid, dry and sub-humid regions in the National Action Programmes to combat desertification. Moreover, they are also looking for ways and means for achieving coordination and effective collaboration among local communities in the implementation of relevant aspects of the two Conventions, with a view to avoiding duplication of effort and rationalizing the utilization of available resources.

Allow me to briefly inform this meeting of the outcome of the sixth session of the UNCCD Conference of the Parties, which took place in Havana from 25 August to 5 September 2003, at the kind invitation of the Government of Cuba. We had a very successful meeting, and the COP made significant decisions, among them to accept the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD. This heralds a new beginning for the Parties to the Convention, particularly those among them that are affected by drought and desertification.

With regard to synergy approaches among the environmental conventions, the COP requested the Secretariat to continue its efforts to promote and strengthen relationships with other relevant conventions. In particular, Conference of the Parties requested the Executive Secretary in collaboration with the Coordinator and Head of the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests and with the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity to promote activities with Low Forest Cover Countries, for a joint approach on forests and, *inter alia*, to cooperate with the Teheran process and its secretariat in order to strengthen the capacity of Low Forest Cover Countries to combat desertification, land degradation and deforestation. To this end, the COP invited the GEF, and called upon the UNCCD Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, the UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology and the Global Mechanism to give, in accordance with their respective mandates, due consideration to the special needs and requirements of Low Forest Cover Countries.

As this Conference has already been informed, the three secretariats of CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC continue to reinforce their collaboration through the Joint Liaison Group (JLG).

The UNCCD Secretariat has been involved in the search for and development of synergy with the other conventions, through the development of *inter alia* joint programmes of work; holding of joint workshops and consultative forums; facilitating country level synergy workshops involving the environmental conventions at the local level, at the request of Parties to the convention. Memoranda of Understanding have also been signed with these conventions and the relevant UN and other organizations, identifying areas of possible collaboration. In this context, I would like to express my gratitude to the governments of Italy, the Netherlands and Norway who have generously supported this process.

We have been requested by the UNCCD COP to continue to facilitate the convening of national synergy workshops, and moreover Parties have observed that the number of these



workshops should be increased in order further to enhance decision makers' capacity at country level fully to implement the conventions in a synergistic manner. This is the opportunity for me to inform this COP that a joint workshop will be organized by the CBD and the UNCCD on the identification and promotion of synergies through forests and forest ecosystems to be held in Viterbo, Italy, in March 2004. I would like to express my most sincere thanks to the government of Italy, who is providing a substantial funding to this purpose. We would also like to urge other developed country Parties to join this process.

Mr President,

We in the UNCCD have observed that the old adage that a long journey begins with a single step, holds true in dryland areas. With the generous support from the Government of Italy, the UNCCD Secretariat has been facilitating the testing of pilot initiatives to integrate the Climate Change dimension, in particular carbon sequestration activities, into UNCCD sustainable development projects through afforestation and reforestation schemes. These pilot activities are about to be launched in Argentina, China and Mozambique, and they are promising. This and other initiatives are showing us that the challenge posed by the intricate impact of climate change, loss of biological diversity, drought and desertification on social, economic and environmental conditions in many countries can be concretely addressed if there is political will.

I would like to conclude my remarks by underlining that in order to more concretely address the issue of sustainable development, and to achieve environmental security, there is a need for the various actors to focus more on a broader framework encompassing, *inter alia*, desertification and land management, biological diversity, climate change and socio-economic development, which are currently being addressed by the three Rio Conventions separately.

We at the UNCCD stand ready to collaborate closely with the UNFCCC and other partners in order to ensure that Parties reap the benefit of working together, sharing in the complementarity and taking advantage of the synergy, particularly at the local level.

I wish you a successful Conference and thank you all for your kind attention.

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