



## Statement Text

### The High Level Segment of the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention for Climate Change 9 December 1997

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 to Combat Desertification and Drought (CCD)**

Mr. President, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honor for me to address the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change here in Kyoto today. I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for making strenuous efforts to make substantial progress on issues which are of fundamental importance for all of us. I do wish that your endeavors will lead to the adoption of concrete steps to reinforce the protection of the global environment. Through you, Mr. President, I would like to thank the Government of Japan, the prefecture and the city governments of Kyoto and their citizens for hosting the COP3 graciously and welcoming us warmly in this beautiful landmark city.

Mr. President,

An area almost equivalent to the size of Hokkaido, a northern island of Japan, is turning from productive arable land into unproductive dryland around the world every year. Over 7% of the Earth's land surface is lifeless desert which is progressively expanding. At present, 230 million people live in desert areas and 850 million people live in degrading land areas. It is neither a secret nor an exaggeration that climate change will exacerbate drought and land degradation. Rise in air temperature will increase potential evapotranspiration rate and dry up land further. Higher evapotranspiration will also cause heavy rainfall and flood in some areas while excessive precipitation and surface runoff will erode and reduce vegetation cover. This will also reduce cloud formation and decrease rainfall which will further expand dry land areas. On the other hand, decrease in vegetation cover caused by drought and desertification will increase the radiation reflected back to the atmosphere called albedo. The decrease in vegetation cover will also reduce the availability of carbon sinks. Mutual interlinkages between climate change and desertification need to be recognized with greater attention.

At present, 115 countries have already ratified the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) which was adopted in June 1994 and came into force in December last year as a growing number of countries have been recognizing the interdisciplinary and complementary nature of combating desertification and drought in protecting the global environment and promoting sustainable development. The First Session of the Conference of the Parties to the CCD took place in Rome, Italy last September attended by an impressive number of high level representatives including two vice president, a deputy prime minister and forty six ministers. Decisions were taken on issues critical for the implementation of the CCD. It was decided to accept the offer of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany to host the CCD Secretariat which will be relocated to Bonn where the Secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change is situated. It was also decided to select the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to house the Global Mechanism which was established to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channeling of substantial financial resources for combating desertification and drought. The budget and the rules of procedures of the COP as well as the terms of reference for the Committee on Science and Technology were also

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agreed upon. The COP and the Secretariat of the CCD have been advancing their work to reinforce national efforts and strengthen regional and international cooperation for helping affected developing countries to combat desertification and drought.

The CCD, however, faces critical challenges. Combating desertification and drought are only becoming gradually an essential and priority item on the policy agenda of affected developing countries. Their national capacities need to be strengthened to facilitate the formulation and implementation of national action strategies and programmes with the full involvement of the civil society.

It cannot be overlooked that most of affected developing countries are short of financial resources, expertise and technology for combating desertification and drought for which international assistance has been sought. Subtle and continuous desertification process cannot be reversed unless the international community collectively strives to tackle these issues. Non-party countries are urged to ratify or accede to the CCD as soon as possible to reinforce our collective international efforts for these purposes. Affected developing countries also continue to advocate that more resources should be allocated to land degradation projects.

The CCD Secretariat was also requested by its COP to collaborate with the secretariats of other sustainable development conventions. In the light of interdisciplinary and cross cutting nature of combating desertification and drought in protecting the global environment and promoting sustainable development, there is a scope for a strong partnership between all the relevant actors.

Mr. President,

Land is a critical basis for the state of the earth and the global environment. Desertification and drought are gradually undermining the foundation of the global environment. Their adverse impact will be tremendous and in many cases, irreversible. On the other hand, combating desertification and drought would generate multiple effects to our efforts for caring for the earth and promoting sustainable development. Indeed, we can achieve cost-effective, win-win solutions: Combating desertification and drought can be a key component of our efforts to improve the living conditions and promote sustainable development in the drylands of our planet. At the same time we will be contributing actively to problems affecting our global environment, including climate change and the protection of the biodiversity of our planet. I wish you successful deliberations.

Thank you, Mr. President.