

Remarks by the Representative of the Japan Delegation

Thematic Discussion on Drought and Desertification

8 May, 2008

First of all, I would like to join previous delegations in thanking the CSD bureau members as well as the chairman for organizing these discussions. I hope the meetings and events taking place during these two weeks will lead to progress being made on issues that we all take very seriously. The Government of Japan is encouraged that a number of best practices on “drought” and “desertification” are being introduced during the discussion, and we welcome positive actions by relevant countries. The Government of Japan has been implementing the UNCCD mainly through bilateral Official Development Aid (ODA) to support countries suffering from desertification in the following areas–

- (1) Conservation of water resources
- (2) Conservation of forests and reforestation
- (3) Capacity development and education, as well as
- (4) Research on desertification

There are a number of successful cases; however, successes are often due to the facts that appropriate approaches and measures were implemented in those particular areas. Hence, applying the same approaches and measures to other areas is not always appropriate. On the other hand, past mistakes and lessons learnt from them are useful, as they tend to be applicable to other programs. The Government of Japan, therefore, would like to share with you the following lessons that we drew from our past mistakes:

Today, we placed leaflets titles “Technical Assistance of Traditional Knowledge and Local Technology Transfer – Lessons learned and suggestions from Japanese experience of projects combating desertification” at the entrance of the meeting room. We would be happy if they could be of use for your reference. From 1995 to 2002 Japan constructed an underground dam to utilize groundwater in an arid area of Burkina Faso, and this properly provided local people with 2,700m³ of water annually. Unfortunately, the solar panels that provide electricity to the pump to draw groundwater were damaged and have not been functioning well.

As this case illustrates, when transferring technology developed in advanced countries to less-developed countries, there may be a possibility of problems occurring in operation, maintenance and application. For this reason, we recognize that utilization of expansive traditional knowledge as well as existing technology is very important for operation/maintenance,

procurement of materials and application to other areas. Hence, we would like to point out the importance of resolution 1, “Strengthening of implementation in Africa” and Resolution 16, “Traditional knowledge,” adopted at the COP7 to the UNCCD.

With that resolution in mind, The Government of Japan has been implementing pilot projects to examine different approaches for technology transfer that utilizes traditional knowledge. When implementing pilot projects, through site surveys and workshops, we tried to facilitate the process by which villagers make their own decisions as to how traditional knowledge should be transferred and obtained. In our lessons we point out the following four points when transferring technology that utilizes traditional knowledge.

- (1) In terms of **securing ownership**, it is important to encourage local residents to identify and select technology for their own use through traditional decision-making processes. When necessary, complementary methods should be introduced in order to make traditional decision-making **fully participatory**, especially for woman
- (2) **Review and evaluation of activities conducted by a trial group is important.** When good results have been achieved, it is important that they are reported widely, to expand the activity. However the group that applied the technology in advance is likely to exclude newcomers. Therefore, a mechanism is needed to prevent one particular group from monopolizing technology and profiting exclusively from it.
- (3) Some **adaptation/ improvement** is necessary to make the technology being introduced suitable to the local geography, or to physical and socio-economic conditions in the target area. It is also important to advertise various possibilities of methods and how to improve or adapt them.
- (4) In order to make technology transfer sustainable, it is important that the project be established as a **part of national/local government policy**, that the activities/ training be **systemized** and that a **cooperative partnership** is also established with other aid institutions and NGOs working in the area.

The Government of Japan wishes that the above mentioned lessons would be drawn upon in the implementation of future projects.