

## Statement by South Africa at the CSD 17 – IPM

### Theme: Desertification

#### Introduction

**Chairperson**, the South African delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made by Sudan on behalf of the G77 and China and Senegal on behalf of the African Group.

During the review session at CSD16 and the deliberations of the Seventh Session of the Committee for the Review of the UNCCD (CRIC 7), Parties were unanimous in their observation that desertification is a global issue with serious implications for worldwide eco-safety, poverty eradication, socio-economic stability and sustainable development. Communities living in dryland areas, especially the poor, have to contend with multiple challenges of income loss, food insecurity, weakening health, insecure land tenure systems, access rights to natural resources, and lack of access to markets.

#### Challenges

Developing countries continue to be affected by inadequate research, data collection, analytical and scientific capacity and therefore lack reliable locally relevant scientific and predictive information for policy, planning and decision-making on desertification and land degradation matters. Furthermore, weak institutional and legal structures of the UNCCD as well as limited capacities, poor coordination and collaboration among stakeholders involved in combating desertification impedes effective implementation of focused interventions.

South Africa is concerned that of the three Rio Conventions, the UNCCD remains poorly resourced inspite of the fact that combating desertification serves as an adaptation and mitigation measure against climate change and the potential risks of global warming.

#### Policy Options

**Chairperson**, the UNCCD has entered its second decade with renewed hope and vigour having adopted a 10 Year Strategic Plan and Framework. In order for Country Parties to effectively implement the UNCCD in our collective quest to meet the MDGs, South Africa the following key policy areas for consideration:

- Strengthening synergies among the UNCCD, UNFCCC and the UNCBD at institutional and programmatic levels to derive mutual benefits in preserving dryland ecosystems, conserving wetlands, combating drought, desertification and land degradation.
- Financial assistance to developing countries by development partners should be scaled up. To this end, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Global Mechanism (GM) of the UNCCD should be more active in making available and mobilizing new, additional and predictable financial resources and simplify their processes for accessing funding by developing countries.
- The provision of technical assistance by the international community to support the acquisition and adaptation of appropriate technologies, scientific research, education, data collections, monitoring and capacity building in developing countries. Developed nations should also facilitate the building of technical capacity of developing countries and of affected communities required for the deployment of new appropriate technologies to address challenges associated with desertification and land degradation.
- Support should further be provided for the formulation of land and agrarian reform policies and legislation with special reference to resource mobilization, policy support, capacity building, research, information and communication. Central to such support on reforms should be the facilitation of full participation of communities and civil society groups, equal access to and secure land rights for individuals and communities, particularly women as they play an important role in household livelihoods.
- Key to combating desertification is the sustainable use of the natural resource base. Community based natural resources management and participatory forest management practices serve as empowering tools to local communities to take ownership of activities and resources. These should be supported and used to capacitate communities affected by desertification through a participatory approach. In addition, the sharing of information and the promotion of use of indigenous knowledge systems in combating desertification should form part of our policies.
- Chairperson, political commitment should be increased and ongoing efforts by development partners enhanced on actions to combat desertification and land degradation in the African Region especially through the NEPAD's Environment Programme, the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme and the TerrAfrica initiative.
- South Africa calls for the strengthening of the legislative framework to promote sustainable agricultural practices and institutional capacities for implementation as well as coordination between institutional

and legal structures among stakeholders across the sectors and support extension workers in rural settings of developing countries. In this regard, the role of local government as the implementation and delivery arm of these programmes and interventions should be enhanced.

- We need to adopt multidisciplinary approaches and strengthen partnerships in our efforts directed at addressing the challenges associated with desertification. Enhancing South-South and North-South sustainable development co-operation with co-benefits that are directed at combating desertification and land degradation should therefore be encouraged.

**Chairperson**, South Africa emphasises that the highlighted areas pertaining to issues of technology and financial support, research and capacity development, governance and empowerment as well as regional and global co-operation should be taken into policy considerations in order for the UNCCD to play its rightful role as the 'Convention of livelihoods'.

**I thank you, Madam Chair!**