

## **UN CSD 17 IPM**

### **Statement from the NGO major group on desertification**

**February 26, 2009**

We appreciate the further insights that have been shared by the panellists from the FAO and UNCCD.

The importance of drylands in economic, environmental, social, cultural and political terms should be recognized, and the rights of livestock keepers and pastoralists should be respected. They have a lot to teach us about risk management and adaptation. In these landscapes, livestock keeping remains a most appropriate strategy for securing livelihoods, promoting wildlife conservation, honoring cultural values and traditions, and of course conserving ecosystem services including building sequestered carbon in soil and vegetation. Countries should include in national policies the recognition of the importance of pastoralism for the national economy and enable pastoralists to use so-called 'marginal areas' for their grazing needs. Land tenure and user rights are critical for sustainable land management.

#### **Monitoring and Grazing Strategies.**

The extent of land degradation should be monitored, and awareness raised on the root causes and effects of desertification. While animal numbers and overgrazing continue to be blamed for desertification, research shows that grasslands can support larger herds through grazing strategies that allow for proper regeneration of plants after grazing. Participatory research in rangeland management, enhancement of grasslands and reclamation of vast areas of semi-arid and arid areas is warranted.

#### **Multiple Costs, Migration, and Conflict.**

The multiple costs of inaction related to the preventing degradation in the drylands, such as loss of soil, social coherence and GDP must be evaluated. For example, there are far-reaching effects of outmigration stemming from long term environmental degradation. And, conflict over scarce resources will continue - calling for good governance that puts environment health as a priority.

#### **Coping Strategies.**

Local coping strategies for dryland people particularly in light of the immediate threats of climate change must be identified, developed and further supported. Collaboration should be increased among all actors involved in development projects in drylands, combined with increased investment.

#### **Knowledge and Know How.**

Investments should be made in scaling up local knowledge and promising practices for combating desertification; enhancing knowledge through collaborative participatory action research and enabling knowledge exchange of South-South

information, success stories and coping strategies. The World Initiative on Sustainable Pastoralism and IFAD's recent launching of a Community of Practice on Pro-Poor Livestock are examples of increasing collaboration which should be supported and expanded as mechanisms for strengthening capacity of stakeholders to respond to the challenges to be faced.

### **The Convention to Combat Desertification.**

It is essential to promote the UNCCD as the main international instrument to address land degradation, drought and desertification, through its current 10-year strategic plan.

Further to what other several governments have said, it is recommended that:

- The UNCCD is also recognized as an important convention in terms of mitigating and adapting to climate change. The National Action Programs (NAPs) should define their priorities of action accordingly and work for coherence with National Adaptation Programmes of Action from UNFCCC. It is also hoped that countries will carry messages and policy options coming out of the CSD to others forums within the UN System.
- The initiative to increase the scientific relevance and strength of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) when organizing a scientific conference in 2009 is commended and should include a broad contribution of civil society organizations including farmers and pastoralists. This scientific conference should discuss clear links between successful technologies, approaches, and findings with national policies.
- Lastly, with reference to the CCD. While Biochar, an inorganic non-reactive carbon, appears to hold promise, it should not be viewed as the C sequestering silver bullet. We need other processes going on in the soil to get the co-benefits to work. Technological solutions cannot address structural problems. The CCD is encouraged to continue to support agroecological practices for sustainable land management and be more holistic in its approach to carbon dynamics and land health.

Thank you.