

**Statement by
Mr. Javad Amin-Mansour
Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran**

**on
"Desertification"
before
The 16th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development**

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In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Madam Chair;

At the outset, I would like to thank the panelists for their insightful presentations. I associate myself with the statements made by the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of G-77 and China on the theme "Desertification". Desertification should be considered in an integrated manner with rural development, land, drought and water. I take the opportunity and refer to several gaps and constraints in combating desertification in my country and around the globe:

1. One third of the lands on earth are covered with **deserts** which could lead to more environmental degradation and affect adversely the livelihoods of 250 millions of people across the globe.
2. **Desertification** continues to pose serious threats to the environment and human health.
3. **Sand dune movement and sand storms** continue to hit many villages and small and major cities located in an around deserts. In certain areas, thousand-years-old civilizations and cultural heritage are being threatened and disappeared. The international community should help the affected countries find ways and means for sand dune fixation identification of starting points as well as the paths of sand storms.
4. **Land degradation coupled with water scarcity** makes the living conditions of the people in desert areas more and more difficult and considerably increases their vulnerabilities, poverty, and hunger.
5. Due to the fact that many poor people live in desert areas, any plan, at national, regional or global levels, to alleviate **poverty and hunger** should also address the ways and means to combat desertification.

6. **Insects** particularly large number of **grasshoppers** in desert areas imposes damages on deserts plants, farms, and people living in the area and herewith aggravates the situation. This is a challenge as to how deal with insects in desert areas in a way that does not complicate the situation.
7. **Desertification** hinders regularly the developmental efforts including in the field of agriculture, rural and urban development, land management, industrial development and thus contributes to the increase in internally displace persons and internal and international migration.
8. It is worth mentioning that **movement of the people** from the villages and towns, located in desert areas, will pave the way for intensification of desertification.
9. **Unsustainable agricultural activities, deforestation, overgrazing, and drought** have intensified land degradation and desertification around the cities and in rural areas. Desertification contributes to the loss of biodiversity and thus undermines the efforts for the achievement of **targets set by the CBD** for 2010 to reverse biodiversity loss.
10. **Desertification** expedites deforestation, degradation of the environment and contributes to climate change. It is well-known and recognized that warming up of the globe has prolonged and increased the frequency of **drought cycles** and hence aggravated the living conditions and the environment in many countries.
11. Fortunately, the regional and international major conferences within the United Nations system or those related to the **UN Convention to Combat Desertification** have recognized deserts as fragile ecosystems and desertification as a global challenge. The JPOI adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development presented certain ways and means, including mobilization of adequate and predictable financial resources, transfer of technology, capacity building, development and implementation of national action plans, access to information and improve monitoring and early warning related to desertification and drought.
12. However, the national and regional efforts to meet this global challenge have not yet received adequate attention and support of the international community. There is no adequate **funding** at global level including in GEF to implement national action plans. There is no adequate and tangible support for the local communities who co-exist with deserts hundreds of years by using their invaluable traditional knowledge and practices. Identification of hot spots, including the starting points of sand storms, and establishment of early warning systems in order to warn people about the sand dune movement and dust storms remain vital in desert areas.
13. The current **implementation cycle of CSD** should throw adequate light on the gaps and constraints in combating desertification and reach agreement on the policy options and practical measures which help the international community meet this challenge.
14. The **decision of the 62nd session of the United Nations General** assembly to declare the decade 2010-2020 as the year of desertification brought new hopes and opportunities to the international community to address adequately this important global challenge in the next decade.

I thank you Mme. Chair.