

## **Statement by Australia**

**CSD-16, Desertification thematic discussion, 7 May 2008**

Mr Chairman

To begin, I would like to commend the members of the panel for their comments this afternoon.

Australia is a strong supporter of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification 10-year strategic plan. Desertification and its related problems affect some of the world's most marginalised people and Australia regards the 10-year strategic plan as an important mechanism to forge the international cooperation and the partnership arrangements needed to address this important issue.

The strategic plan provides a framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention. It provides clear direction and a focus for prioritising effective and integrated actions that will tackle land degradation, mitigate the effects of drought and promote sustainable land management.

*I should emphasise in making these comments, however, additional financial support to implement these actions will only be effective in building sustainable land and water management systems if there is a complementary national commitment to institutional, policy and cultural change by government and civil society to support, enhance and maintain these systems.*

In this context, I would like to take the opportunity to draw to your attention some Australian approaches. These and other experiences are important inputs to the consideration of desertification as an important element of this cycle's CSD themes, and are described in further detail in a series of fact sheets on practical Australian experiences for pursuing sustainable development. These fact sheets are available on the tables at the back of the room.

Australian approaches to combat desertification have focussed on strengthening institutional and legal structures and promoting coordination and collaboration among stakeholders. An Australian case study that showcases this approach is the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement. The agreement addresses sustainable management of water and other natural resources associated with river systems in the Lake Eyre Basin. These river systems cross state and territory borders. As such the agreement has involved governments, community, industry and scientific stakeholders.

It has enabled cross border consultation on the development of water resource plans and the collation of scientific information on the lakes hydrology.

Australia supports the conservation of dryland vegetation using technology, traditional knowledge and information and capacity building. An example of this is the Indigenous Protected Areas program, where traditional owners have entered into an agreement with the Australian Government to promote biodiversity and cultural resource conservation in an area of Indigenous-owned land or sea.

The program provides funding to enable traditional owners to consult their communities on the Indigenous Protected Areas concept and develop management plans and partnerships with other organisations and declare their land as an Indigenous Protected Area. Ongoing support enables implementation through annual work programmes based on their plan of management.

Thank you Mr Chair for the opportunity to make these comments and share these practical solutions.