

**Statement by the Delegation of Canada to the Sixteenth Session
of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development**

**Thursday, May 8, 10:00 am – Linkages among Climate Change, Drought,
Desertification and Biodiversity Loss**

Mr./Madame Chairperson, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentleman:

Since the birth of the three Rio Conventions at the United Nations Conference on Environment (UNCED) in 1992, recognition of the mutually reinforcing nature and interdependence between desertification, climate change and biodiversity loss has become increasingly apparent. Desertification, exacerbated by climatic variability, is directly associated with biodiversity loss and also contributes to accelerated global climate change through loss of the soil's carbon sequestration capacity. Carbon sequestration in drylands plays a major role in mitigating climate change and providing sustainable livelihoods for drylands people while simultaneously combating desertification. Biodiversity is a key resource supporting most services provided by dryland ecosystems and is therefore adversely affected by desertification. In spite of international efforts to define, and respond to, these phenomena as discrete and separate issues, a holistic approach that acknowledges the strong interrelationships between desertification, climate change and biodiversity loss is paramount for effective long-term environmental sustainability.

The *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation*, adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002, called on the three Rio Conventions to continue exploring and enhancing complementarities, commonalities and synergies, with due regard to each of their mandates, in the elaboration and implementation of plans and strategies under each Convention. Recognizing that ongoing challenges remain in this area, Canada continues to support collaborative efforts between the three Rio Conventions in trying to address the family of environmental challenges. In addition to encouraging ongoing cooperation and collaboration at the national level among the convention focal points, Canada supports developing joint programmes and activities that utilize existing financial resources under the three conventions. Parties are encouraged to support capacity-building at the national level to design climate change programmes that recognize synergy between national adaptation programmes (NAPs) and national adaptation programmes of action (NAPAs), including knowledge of the requirements for tapping into various adaptation funds established under the UNFCCC. Canada also wishes to stress the need for more coordinated efforts under the United Nations system in encouraging wider application of the Ecosystem Approach as part of sustainable development actions. The Ecosystem Approach, a key framework for action under the Convention for Biological Diversity, entails the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.

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Canada was pleased to co-sponsor the Joint International Conference on “Desertification and the International Policy Imperative” in Algeria in December 2006. The UN Policy Brief that followed highlighted numerous salient recommendations of relevance to participants of this 16th session of CSD. Key among these are the need for:

- more work on enhancing understanding and appreciation of the interlinkages and interdependencies between desertification, climate change and biodiversity; and
- more pro-active, cross-linked environmental management among the Rio Conventions to directly engage in broader problem-solving to reduce poverty.

Canada, through the International Development Research Centre, is proud to be a partner of the *African Highlands Initiative*---a consortium of Eastern African and international research organizations that work with local communities, local governments and development partners to improve livelihoods and reverse natural resource degradation in the intensively cultivated highlands of East and Central Africa. A model of successful integrated natural resource management, the African Highlands Initiative targets the densely populated highlands of Eastern Africa, which are under pressure from water shortages, deforestation, soil erosion, unreliable rainfall, and increased incidences of disease and poverty.

In moving forward, Canada encourages all three Rio Convention secretariats, and Parties at the national level, to continue working towards more mainstreamed and holistic approaches to addressing desertification, climate change and biodiversity loss as part of broader efforts to promote environmental sustainability and poverty reduction.

Thank you.