

## **Norwegian Statement on Desertification 7 May**

Thank you Chairman,

For Norway supporting the fight against desertification and the work for sustainable land management is central to our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We acknowledge the importance of this work for food security, for reduced vulnerability in general and not least for climate change adaptation. For this reason we have been a supporter of the work of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification since its beginning, and continue to be so especially in light of the new 10 year strategic plan for the implementation of the convention. In order to be brief I will only touch quickly on these issues here but refer to further information that we will pass to the secretariat for posting on the CSD's web page.

It is important for us to address the linkage between climate change and vulnerability to humanitarian disasters, such as famine. Drylands are particularly prone to desertification and drought and consequently to land degradation. This has led to humanitarian disasters in the past.

Climate change is expected to impact drylands particularly hard and it is therefore important to adopt measures for climate change adaptation quickly in order to avoid the negative spiral that follows increased land degradation.

Governments need to mainstream an integrated approach to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction into national policies, such as agriculture, energy, urban development and natural resource management policies. The primary objective should be to improve the situation of the poor and the most vulnerable groups, including children and women, and to maintain the long term ability of ecosystems to offer the essential goods and services upon which peoples and societies rely. It is important to focus on capacity development and empowerment of local people with a strong role for civil society, including community-based organisations.

Governments and other partners at all levels must explore and adopt innovative financing mechanisms, such as market-based solutions and public-private partnerships, to ensure consistent support for longer-term programming and to draw effectively on private sector and other resources.

I would like to finally mention the linkage between environmental degradation and conflict, due to the increasing resource scarcity following environmental degradation in already vulnerable areas. We are of the opinion that combating desertification and working for sustainable land management in drylands contributes to decreasing conflict potential and therefore decreases the vulnerability of drylands populations also in this way.

Thank you Chairman

### **Annex: Desertification and drought**

The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the main international forum addressing these topics. The UNCCD addresses these topics within the wider framework of land degradation in drylands, which makes it relevant to many more areas than the desert margins. The convention consequently defines affected countries in all parts of the world and 30% of total land area is considered as drylands. The emphasis of the convention is however on Africa.

Land degradation, desertification and drought have serious implications on food security, and even more so as 90% of people who depend on drylands resources live in developing countries with no or limited social safety nets. This vulnerability is exacerbated in conflict areas like in Sudan and Tchad where major humanitarian disasters are happening. Another factor exacerbating vulnerability in drylands areas is climate change, which can amplify land degradation processes and drought.

Norway is not affected by desertification or drought and our role in these issues is therefore to provide funding for measures in developing countries.

### **Norway's positions on desertification and drought**

Norway has always supported the UNCCD in working towards its goal to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. This follows from a traditional focus on Africa in development cooperation and from realising that drylands populations are particularly vulnerable to drought and hunger caused by environmental change.

It is central to us that it is the affected countries themselves who are best placed to identify measures to combat desertification and mitigate effects of drought. Our funding for such measures will therefore always be based on national priorities, as in all development cooperation.

Sustainable land management is the key to combating desertification and mitigating effects of drought. Such management will provide more resilient drylands ecosystems that will be a basis for food production and water provision thereby laying a foundation for social and economic, as well as environmentally sound, development.

There is a strong link between environmental degradation and conflict, and conflict over scarce resources of amongst others land, water and timber has been shown by UNEP to play a role in conflict in Sudan. Sustainable land management therefore plays a role in reducing conflict potential in drylands areas by alleviating resource scarcity.

The role of civil society and local communities in sustainable land management is central, as they are the real resource managers. They must be involved in processes and measures to combat desertification and mitigate effects of drought.