



United Nations  
Environment  
Programme



Distr.  
GENERAL



UNEP/GC.13/7  
22 January 1985

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GOVERNING COUNCIL  
Thirteenth session  
Item 7 of the provisional agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT  
DESERTIFICATION

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report, submitted to the Governing Council in compliance with General Assembly resolution 32/172 of 19 December 1977 and Council decision 12/10 of 28 May 1984, contains a brief review of actions taken by UNEP to implement relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and decisions of the Governing Council, and a report and recommendations on the functions and outputs of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Desertification, as requested by the Council in decision 12/10. These are followed by a brief account of overall progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action, and a set of conclusions.

Suggested Action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

I. Implementation of the Plan of Action to  
Combat Desertification

1. Express serious concern over the fact that desertification continues unabated, and that persistent drought triggering serious desertification in areas not normally seriously affected is reaching levels of disaster and crisis;
2. Express appreciation to the members of the international community for the emergency food assistance offered to countries facing famine;
3. Note the activities undertaken by Governments and international, regional and non-governmental organizations in combating desertification, and urge them to continue communicating information on their actions to UNEP for inclusion in its reports in an endeavour to disseminate information and experience;
4. Call on donor countries, and others in a position to do so, to assist affected countries in their endeavours to curb desertification, thus obviating the need for large-scale disaster relief assistance;
5. Decide to review at its fourteenth session the status and validity of the Special Account created under General Assembly resolution 32/172 of 19 December 1977, on the basis of a report to be prepared by the Executive Director after consultation with Governments;
6. [A paragraph on additional and predictable financing should be added here, to be drafted on the basis of replies yet to be received from Governments];
7. Urge Governments, organizations and bodies within the United Nations system, international inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations and training and research institutions to intensify their efforts to control desertification in the years ahead, and in particular to accord high priority to the actions recommended by the Council in decision 12/10 of 28 May 1984;.

8. Reiterate its invitation (decision 12/10, paragraph 20) to all Governments, and particularly those of donor members, to become more involved in the work of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control as the most viable mechanism for, inter alia, assisting the Executive Director in raising the resources needed for the fight against desertification;

9. Note the action taken by the Executive Director to establish the Desertification Branch as a programme activity centre in compliance with decision 12/10;

10. (a) Approve the measures recommended to enhance the work of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Desertification and endorsed by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, as reflected in the Committee's report (UNEP/GC.13/5, paras. 20-21);

(b) Urge all members of the Inter-Agency Working Group to put those measures into action immediately;

(c) Stress the vital importance of continuity of representation in the Inter-Agency Working Group through designation of one or more representatives in the Group who would also serve as a focal point or points on desertification matters in their respective agencies;

(d) Urge all Governments to promote discussion of the implementation of the Plan of Action in the intergovernmental forums of members of the Inter-Agency Working Group;

(e) Request the Executive Director to take appropriate action to invite international organizations outside the United Nations system to participate in meetings of the Inter-Agency Working Group where the topics under discussion would benefit from their presence;

11. Request the Executive Director to intensify efforts, in consultation with relevant United Nations bodies, to arrive at a concrete cost-effective method for assisting the member States of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference to deal meaningfully with their desertification problems;

II. Implementation of the Plan of Action in the  
Sudano-Sahelian region

1. Note the steps taken by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, on behalf of the Environment Programme, toward the implementation of the Plan of Action in 21 countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region;
2. Authorize the Executive Director to continue support to the Office as a joint venture with the United Nations Development Programme;
3. Urge the Executive Director and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme to consolidate the achievements realized so far by the Office and to intensify efforts to mobilize resources for continued assistance to the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region in combating desertification;
4. Include the United Republic of Tanzania in the list of countries supported by the Office on behalf of the Environment Programme in the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification;
5. Authorize the Executive Director to submit his report on the implementation of the Plan of Action in the Sudano-Sahelian region (UNEP/GC.13/7/Add.1), on behalf of the Governing Council, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its fortieth session.

## INTRODUCTION

1. A year ago, the Governing Council set aside two days during its twelfth session to consider a report prepared by the Executive Director on the general assessment of progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (UNEP/GC.12/9 and Corr.1). Great concern at and interest in the issue of desertification were evinced during the discussion. The outcome was a comprehensive decision (decision 12/10) defining the path of work over several years ahead and scheduling another assessment in 1992.
2. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly in resolution 39/168 of 17 December 1984, took note of the views of the Governing Council on the general assessment (A/39/433, annex I) and noted with great concern that, during the seven years since the United Nations Conference on Desertification in 1977, desertification had continued to spread and intensify in developing countries, particularly in Africa. On 3 and 17 December 1984 respectively, the General Assembly also adopted resolutions 39/29 and 39/208, concerning action to be taken to deal with the critical economic situation in Africa and the problems of countries stricken by desertification and drought.
3. The grim consequences of the persistent drought in Africa hit a total of 36 countries, mainly in the form of shortages of food supplies and famine. Drought swept through the savannahs, drylands and coastlines of all parts of Africa as it ravaged not only the traditional drought-prone areas but also extended to eastern and southern Africa, devastating agricultural economies and leaving more than 150 million people facing starvation in the 27 countries seriously affected. Hundreds of thousands of cattle died from starvation and disease.
4. The prolonged world economic crisis continues to have serious negative effects on the economies of poor nations, particularly in Africa, where development priorities have had to be shifted from internal investment to meeting import bills for food and fuel.
5. This was the picture during 1984 - these were the circumstances which national governments, the international community (United Nations and other organizations), non-governmental organizations and others faced in their efforts to fight desertification, drought, hunger, famine, social dislocation, the plight of refugees and related problems.

### I. ACTION TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND DECISIONS OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF UNEP

#### A. FUNCTIONS AND OUTPUTS OF THE INTER-AGENCY WORKING GROUP ON DESERTIFICATION (IAWGD)

6. The Governing Council, in decision 12/10, requested the Executive Director "to examine and clarify the functions and outputs of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Desertification, and to recommend to the Governing Council at

its thirteenth session appropriate changes for action to ensure full consultation and co-operation between the agencies of the United Nations". In response to this request the Executive Director reviewed the functions and outputs of IAWGD and further requested IAWGD itself to consider the issue fully. IAWGD considered the matter during its eleventh session and presented its views to the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) through the Designated Officials on Environmental Matters.

7. The review of the functions of the Group confirmed the relevance of its terms of reference, which did not require additions or alterations. Of the six functions approved for it by ACC, and reported to the seventh session of the Governing Council (UNEP/GC.7/5, para. 24), four relate to co-ordination and co-operation among the members of the Group in programming and implementing anti-desertification actions.

8. In an appraisal of its activities and outputs during the past six years IAWGD acknowledged that there had been a number of shortcomings in its work:

(a) There had often been a lack of continuity in the representation of various organs and agencies in IAWGD meetings, which was not conducive to prompt implementation and effective follow-up of the Group's recommendations;

(b) The meetings had often been too short to permit in-depth substantive discussions;

(c) The major constraint was limited resources, both human and financial, available to the participating agencies.

9. Notwithstanding its shortcomings, however, IAWGD was found to be a useful forum for consultation within the United Nations family as regards co-ordination of the implementation of the Plan of Action. IAWGD had made substantive inputs to the UNEP medium-term plan for 1982-1983, to the system-wide medium-term environment programme (1984-1989) and to the preparation of projects submitted to the Consultative Group for Desertification Control. Furthermore, members of IAWGD had rendered valuable assistance in the preparation of management and teaching manuals relating to anti-desertification measures, had assisted UNEP in its regular review of the implementation of the Plan of Action, and had been particularly helpful in preparing background documentation for the general assessment of progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action carried out in preparation for the twelfth session of the Governing Council.

10. A number of measures were identified by IAWGD and subsequently endorsed by ACC with a view to enabling the organizations of the United Nations system to discharge their roles more effectively and improve the functioning of the Group. The measures are listed in the report of ACC to the Governing Council (UNEP/GC.13/5, paras. 20-21).

11. In addition, IAWGD believes that international organizations outside the United Nations system should be invited to participate in discussions of topics for which their presence would be useful.

**B. ADDITIONAL MEANS OF FINANCING THE PLAN OF ACTION**

12. At its thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh sessions, in resolutions 36/191 of 17 December 1981 and 37/220 of 20 December 1982, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States on the contents of the third study on additional measures for financing the Plan of Action (A/36/141).

13. At its thirty-eighth session the General Assembly noted from the report of the Secretary-General on the matter (A/38/403) that again very few replies had been received from Governments and that the paucity of responses had made it impossible for the Secretary-General to prepare, in co-operation with the Executive Director, the report requested in resolution 37/220. In resolution 38/163 of 19 December 1983, the Assembly called on Member States which had not yet provided their comments to do so as soon as possible and requested the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the Executive Director, to report to it at its fortieth session.

14. In compliance with the above, the Executive Director, on behalf of the Secretary-General, sent a letter to Governments on 11 April 1984, requesting States that had not yet provided their comments to do so.

15. In decision 12/10, adopted on 28 May 1984, the Governing Council welcomed General Assembly resolution 38/163 and expressed its full support for the Executive Director's intention to gather views from States. In compliance with that decision, the Executive Director sent another letter to governments on 20 August 1984 drawing their attention to decision 12/10 and General Assembly resolution 38/163. To date very few replies have been received. The Executive Director will update this information at the time of the thirteenth session.

**C. STATUS OF THE SPECIAL ACCOUNT**

16. In response to Governing Council decision 12/10, the Executive Director asked member States to make further contributions to the Special Account for assistance to countries suffering from desertification. To date, the Special Account contains a total of \$48,524 contributed by Chile (\$20,000), Mexico (\$5,000), Panama (\$4,000), Sierra Leone (\$9,524) and the Sudan (\$10,000). Pledges by Bangladesh and Brazil for unspecified amounts still remain outstanding. During the year pledges have been made by Greece for \$10,000 and Senegal for \$5,000. The Executive Director feels that the Council should fully review the status and validity of the Special Account at its fourteenth session.

**D. ASSISTANCE TO GOVERNMENTS**

17. A two-volume report on "Promotion of exchange of information and expertise on desertification control and technology in Africa", prepared in pursuance of paragraph 5 of Governing Council decision 10/18 of 31 May 1982, was published and distributed to Governments and institutions for review. A meeting to discuss possible revision of the report is planned for the first half of 1985.

18. During the period 1985-1987 UNEP offered assistance to 37 developing countries in the formulation of national desertification programmes, the conduct of national assessments and monitoring, regional co-operation in research, training and information exchange and the application of proper land use policies.

19. The Executive Director sought the co-operation of the United Nations regional commissions in setting up regional networks of non-governmental organizations active in desertification control, research and training, afforestation and sand dune stabilization. Discussions have also been initiated with the Environment Liaison Centre and leaders of non-governmental organizations concerning the establishment of such networks. UNEP also began preparatory arrangements for the production of educational materials to be made available to non-governmental organizations within their regional and sub-regional networks.

20. Regional training institutions were also requested to identify subjects in which they could offer training and retraining in desertification control techniques.

21. Discussions are under way with UNDP on the possible establishment of very small-scale joint ventures to offer assistance to Governments in other regions in their efforts to combat desertification.

22. Comments and suggestions are also being sought from the regional commissions concerning the upgrading of the regional assessments as well as the possible role of the commissions in operating regional networks for sand dune stabilization, afforestation and research and training along the lines of the WMO Regional Training Centre for Agrometeorology and Operational Hydrology and their Applications (AGRHYMET) in Niamey. A positive response has been received from ECA, which will be followed up during 1985.

#### E. STRENGTHENING OF THE DESERTIFICATION BRANCH AND ITS CONVERSION INTO A PROGRAMME ACTIVITY CENTRE

23. In compliance with Council decision 12/10, the Executive Director requested appropriate United Nations organizations and 24 Governments to provide staff on secondment to the UNEP Desertification Branch. Responses to the request have, on the whole, been negative. UNESCO, UNIDO, FAO, WMO and the World Bank stated that they were unable to provide the required support staff as agreed in 1978 in the Environment Co-ordination Board. Of the 24 governments, only the Federal Republic of Germany has offered the services of a national as a junior professional officer; the secretariat is following up the offer. As directed by the Governing Council, the Executive Director intends to establish the Desertification Branch as a programme activity centre with effect from early 1985.



F. THE POSSIBILITY OF INCLUDING THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA AND  
THE MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT  
CO-ORDINATION CONFERENCE (SADCC) WITHIN THE TERMS  
OF REFERENCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
SUDANO-SAHELIAN OFFICE (UNSO)

24. In resolution 39/168, adopted on 17 December 1984, the General Assembly requested the Governing Council to examine the possibility of:

(a) Including the United Republic of Tanzania in the terms of reference of UNSO;

(b) Expanding the scope of the work of UNSO so as to enable it to assist the States members of SADCC \*/ the same footing as the States members of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS).

25. UNSO was established by the Secretary-General in 1973 originally to assist in the rehabilitation of the States members of CILSS in the wake of the 1968-1973 drought in the Sahel. Subsequently, on the recommendation of the Governing Council, the General Assembly, in resolution 33/88 of 15 December 1978, expanded its mandate to include assisting, on behalf of UNEP, countries in the Sudano-Sahelian region to implement the Plan of Action.

26. In view of the success of the UNSO experiment as a UNEP/UNDP joint venture, the Governing Council at its twelfth session approved the Executive Director's recommendation that he should explore the establishment of a joint venture, along the lines of UNSO, to assist the SADCC countries in combating desertification. 1/ Accordingly, the Executive Director initiated discussions with the Administrator of UNDP concerning the possible establishment of a very much smaller (one-man or two-man) UNSO-like joint venture to provide assistance to SADCC countries in combating desertification, the whole idea being to minimize staff costs and maximize the use of available resources for assistance on the ground to Governments in their efforts to combat desertification.

27. The Executive Director feels that the inclusion of the SADCC States within the terms of reference of UNSO might defeat the purpose and aims of the regional joint venture concept, at a time when the Sudano-Sahelian countries are in desperate need for more concerted efforts from UNSO and the international community. Moreover, the additional staff costs entailed by expansion of the scope of UNSO to cover the nine countries belonging to SADCC would place a strain on the limited financial resources of UNEP.

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\*/ The members of SADCC are Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

28. The United Republic of Tanzania falls within a continuation of the Sudano-Sahelian ecological belt, as defined in the World Map of Desertification (A/CONF.74/2) and in the Executive Director's report on measures to be taken for the benefit of the Sudano-Sahelian region (UNEP/GC.6/9/Add.2). The definition was endorsed by the Governing Council in decision 6/11 B of 24 May 1978, and by the General Assembly in resolution 33/88 of 15 December 1978. The United Republic of Tanzania was not included in the desertification control mandate of UNSO because, unlike the rest of the Sudano-Sahelian ecological belt, it lies wholly south of the equator.

## II. REVIEW OF ACTION TAKEN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

### A. VIEWS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON CO-ORDINATION CONCERNING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION

29. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC), in its current report to the Governing Council (UNEP/GC.13/5), states that it shares the great concern expressed by the Governing Council at its twelfth session that desertification has continued to spread and intensify in developing countries, particularly in Africa. The entire second of the ACC report is devoted to co-ordination and follow-up of the Plan of Action.

### B. CONSULTATIVE GROUP FOR DESERTIFICATION CONTROL

30. Preparations for the fifth session of the Consultative Group, which is scheduled to be held in July 1985, have included compilation of project proposals from developing countries and their submission to potential donors for preliminary indications of interest in funding. Responses have been very disappointing; none of the three responses received by the end of 1984 expressed interest in financing any of the proposed projects. Similarly, of the responses received from United Nations agencies none expressed interest in funding any of the project proposals.

### C. INTER-AGENCY WORKING GROUP ON DESERTIFICATION

31. The tenth and eleventh meetings of IAWGD were held in Geneva in March and September 1984 respectively. The Group discussed the co-ordination of international activities designed to provide assistance in the preparation of national plans of action to combat desertification and national conservation strategies, and a strategy for co-operation in training and retraining 600 nationals from developing countries, and in establishing regional networks for sand dune stabilization, afforestation and research and training. Plans for 1986-1987 and other actions arising from Council decision 12/10 were also discussed, and agencies provided comments on and contributions to the draft programme budget for 1986-1987 (UNEP/GC.13/8).

D. ACTION BY UNEP AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

32. UNEP launched a public information campaign on the occasion of the general assessment of progress in the implementation of the Plan of Action with the objective of publicizing the findings of the assessment and mobilizing public awareness in both affected and donor countries of the urgent need to combat desertification. The principal outputs and activities of the campaign included:

(a) A multi-projector slide show with commentary on the causes and consequences of desertification, and solutions to it;

(b) A documentary film, Seeds of Despair, on the famine in Ethiopia, which has been the subject of great media attention.

33. Desertification was also the theme for World Environment Day in 1984, on the occasion of which a film entitled Stopping Desertification in Rajasthan was transmitted by over 60 television networks all over the world. Several interviews with desertification experts were broadcast in many countries. A briefing on the assessment and its findings organized by the Desertification Branch led to articles in many newspapers in various languages around the world. Over 25 articles on the findings of the assessment were prepared and published in various environmental journals and United Nations magazines. In addition, a group of journalists from Africa and Europe visited drought-stricken parts of Ethiopia and then attended a press seminar on desertification organized by Earthscan in Nairobi on the eve of the twelfth session of the Governing Council. A special issue of Desertification Control reporting on the assessment was prepared and distributed on the occasion of the twelfth session. Subsequently, a supplement was published covering the outcome of the Council's debate on the assessment. In a related activity, UNEP is supporting Earthscan's proposed publication of success stories in desertification control for distribution in 1985 to concerned countries and institutions.

34. During 1984, governments were not forthcoming with requests for assistance from UNEP in the preparation of national plans for combating desertification. Only two Governments requested assistance: Tunisia, for which planning missions started work in 1984, and Paraguay, for which a mission is planned for 1985. A joint UNEP/FAO mission was sent to Zambia to carry out a study of drought with a view to assisting the Government to formulate a request for international assistance to cope with recurrent droughts. UNEP continued its support in 1984 for the North African Green Belt project and the Transnational Project on Management of Regional Aquifers in north-east Africa. It also provided support in the form of equipment, experts and fellowships to a project for combating desertification through integrated agricultural development in Democratic Yemen.

35. Various United Nations bodies and specialized agencies as well as other intergovernmental bodies continued to support and implement activities which contributed to the implementation of the Plan of Action. During 1984 the following training-related activities were carried out with UNEP support in co-operation with other United Nations agencies or governments:

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(a) Regional Research, Training and Communication Programme on Desertification Control in the Arab States of West Asia - First phase;

(b) A joint UNEP/UNESCO mission visited selected SADCC States in April/May 1984 to identify the main desertification problems and advise on a suitable training programme. It is envisaged that the training programme will be launched in 1985;

(c) An international desertification training seminar was held at the Institute of the Desert of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Lanzhou, China, from 10 to 30 June 1984. The seminar was attended by 17 participants from eight developing countries;

(d) UNEP and ESCAP, in co-operation with the USSR Commission for UNEP, organized a study tour on desertification control in Soviet central Asia from 29 October to 11 November 1984, attended by 16 participants from 9 countries;

(e) An international workshop on "Desertification and an integrated approach to its solution" was held in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in October 1984. The workshop was attended by 15 participants from 12 developing countries;

(f) Two training seminars, one on analysis of data and the other offering an introduction to the use of satellite imagery for combating desertification, were held in May and November 1984, respectively, at the Arid Zones Institute in Médenine, Tunisia.

36. Activities by UNSO are reported on separately (see UNEP/GC.13/7/Add.1).

37. The United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development has continued activities geared towards the efficient use and increased supplies of ground water in arid lands. It currently has about 30 ground-water projects in 18 countries in Africa and Asia which are considered arid or which are subject to saline intrusion into surface and ground-water.

38. The efforts of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) relating to the climatic situation and drought in Africa in 1984 culminated with the adoption by the ECA Conference of Ministers of a Regional Plan of Action to Combat the Impacts of Drought in Africa, and a decision to explore the feasibility of establishing an advanced centre for meteorology in Africa.

39. During 1984 UNIDO continued its anti-desertification activities geared to the harsh natural conditions of arid and semi-arid regions; assistance was provided in the development of hand pumps, wind pumps, agricultural tools and animal-drawn equipment for selected countries in the Sudano-Sahelian region. Under its programme of applied research and experimental development of desert plants for industrial production, UNIDO carried out a project to review jojoba production and processing operations. UNIDO has also established simple technologies for processing the fruit of Balanites aegyptiaca (the lalobe or heglie tree), including production of de-bittered kernels for direct human consumption and production of ethanol. Study tours in Mexico were arranged in 1984 to enable technicians from the Sudano-Sahelian countries to gain experience in the utilization of these desert plants.

40. During 1984 FAO initiated several projects directly related to desertification control, on such subjects as sand dune mapping and stabilization, afforestation, soil and water conservation, development of rangelands and livestock, forage plant development and seed multiplication, and rehabilitation of rural water reservoirs in Africa, south-west Asia, south-east Asia and Latin America. FAO also assisted in preparations for a ministerial conference on desertification convened in Dakar from 17 to 26 July. Also in Africa FAO is working towards strengthening institutional machinery in the members of CILSS and SADCC. In co-operation with ECWA and the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, FAO is working on a Near East range management programme which is developing fodder plants in dryland environments.

41. A joint FAO/UNEP expert consultation held at FAO headquarters in December 1984 recommended that a national desertification assessment and mapping project should be undertaken, initially in one country, to test the applicability of the methodologies developed to date. The experts further recommended that national desertification data bases be established within the framework of the GEMS Global Resource Information Data Base, making use of geographical information systems technology, and that UNEP, in close consultation with FAO, UNESCO and WMO and appropriate national bodies, should take the lead in the development of a thematic atlas on desertification. Discussions have been initiated with the relevant organizations concerning the implementation of these recommendations.

42. UNESCO has continued its training programme for integrated pastoral management in the Sahelian region and, in addition, initiated in early 1984 annual training courses for technicians. Kenya, the Federal Republic of Germany and the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere programme have agreed to establish a Kenya Arid Lands Research Station in Marsabit, northern Kenya.

43. WMO sponsored two missions to eastern and southern Africa during 1984 to study the feasibility of establishing an AGRHYMET-like centre for that region.

#### E. ACTION BY GOVERNMENTS

##### Canada

44. Assistance in the field of desertification control provided by the Canadian Government exceeds \$Can 2.5 million annually.

##### China

45. An extensive integrated system of forest belts, woodlands and networks of forests, combining the protection of natural vegetation with utilization of natural resources, is currently being implemented in the north of the country. To date 12 per cent of the desertified land in northern China has been rehabilitated, and desertification has been checked in a further 10 per cent.

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

46. In 1984 the Government announced that reclamation of 3 million hectares of desert had so far been completed under a sand dune fixation project. Experience with sand dune fixation has been shared with Abu Dhabi, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Yemen. In an effort to contain migration towards large cities, the Government has devised programmes to meet the agricultural, economic, health and educational needs of desert inhabitants. These programmes have produced such practical results as the revival of the subterranean canals (ghanavat) used for irrigation in the villages.

Norway

47. In 1984 the Government donated nearly \$7 million to UNSO.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

48. In Botswana the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) supported during 1984 three projects on the control of soil erosion resulting from overgrazing and inappropriate agricultural techniques. In Kenya, Nepal and Oman ODA supported forestry and soil and water conservation projects. In Lesotho it financed the establishment of woodlots to provide fuel, building material and saplings for water and soil conservation purposes. In 1984/1985 ODA is financing, together with the International Development Association, the Abu Dhabi Fund for Economic Development, and the Saudi Fund for Development, the Western Savannah Development Project in Sudan to introduce better varieties and cultural practices in order to maintain soil structure and fertility. In 1983/1984, ODA provided technical assistance to Yemen for training farmers in the adoption of irrigation methods. In Zimbabwe it is contributing £20 million over four to five years to a resettlement programme aimed at relieving pressure in the communal areas and reducing the serious overgrazing problems there; some 18,000 families are to be settled on approximately 1.1 million hectares of land.

**F. ACTION TAKEN BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

49. In 1984, the Youth Hostels Association of India initiated a national pilot project to educate 1,500 children in afforestation techniques using the People's Nurseries which the Association has successfully established in the country under its "Millions of Trees Clubs". It intends to involve children from 10 schools drawn from 10 villages in planting 1 million trees. In some of its village-level afforestation activities the "Millions of Trees Clubs" have trained labour brigades which have demonstrated that it is possible to plant more than 500,000 trees in any human settlement to produce enough fuelwood and timber to meet the needs of the inhabitants.

50. In 1984 Kenya Energy Non-Governmental Organizations, an umbrella organization, initiated a project to collect botanical, economic and agroforestry data on indigenous trees of Kenya which it plans to publish in a

series of booklets for each of the major agroclimatic zones for use by its member organizations. By 1984, the National Council of Women of Kenya had planted more than 500,000 trees and established over 400 "green belts" with the help of 60 women's groups involving thousands of people in hundreds of community groups throughout the country. The movement has also focused on the establishment of community tree nurseries using seeds of indigenous trees found in the surrounding areas.

### III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

51. The impact of the widespread droughts of 1983 took its most devastating toll during 1984 in many parts of the world, although the situation was somewhat eased in North and South America, Asia, Australia and the USSR.

52. The Sudano-Sahelian region was once again the worst-hit, with appalling scenes of starvation, death and destruction which in some countries were worse than those of the 1968-1973 drought. The overall assessment at the close of 1984 was that, since food-growing conditions during the summer in the northern hemisphere had been worse than the previous year, the possibility of continuing severe food shortages in 1985 across much of the Sahel zone, parts of Sudan and Ethiopia remained high.

53. In general terms, the response of both the developed and developing countries to the growing threat of desertification remained totally inadequate. A disappointingly low priority appears to prevail in responses to project proposals circulated for consideration at the fifth session of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control.

54. However, encouraging efforts to implement the Plan of Action at the regional level were evident during 1984. A conference of ministers from 21 countries, held in Dakar in July 1984 to draw up a joint policy to combat desertification in the CILSS, ECOWAS and Maghreb countries and in Egypt and the Sudan, adopted principles and policies to improve strategies and plans for combating desertification at the national and regional levels 2/. The Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Environment, convened by UNEP and IPU in November-December 1984, highlighted regional co-operation as "a valuable means for implementing programmes for monitoring and for combating desertification."

55. Another success area is the growing response from non-governmental organizations in mobilizing local communities through small-scale projects focused on local problems - an approach which has proved particularly effective in social afforestation, sand dune stabilization and soil conservation.

56. The Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Environment also underscored in its recommendations the need for Governments whose territories are prone to desertification to give priority to the establishment of national machinery and national plans for combating desertification. The need for effective programmes of information exchange to foster the transfer of technology at the national, regional and international levels has also been reiterated.

57. Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations have responded to the urgent and immediate problems arising from desertification and drought, and particularly the crisis provoked by severe famine and starvation in Africa. But, as has been repeatedly stated, short-term emergency responses cannot prevent disaster, and much more fundamental measures are required than contingency planning for emergencies. The crisis is rooted in desertification, which is responsible for the long-term deterioration of the food production capacities of the developing countries. The Executive Director firmly believes that a lasting solution demands the urgent planning and implementation of long-term activities as provided for in the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and in the guidance given by the Governing Council in its decision 12/10.

Notes

1/ See Governing Council decision 12/10, paragraph 21, and UNEP/GC.12/9, chapter VII, section D, paragraph 1 (a).

2/ The text of the final resolution of the conference appears in the annex to a letter dated 26 September 1984 from the Permanent Representative of Senegal addressed to the Secretary General, which was circulated as an official document of the General Assembly (A/39/530).

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