

**Agreed Minutes
between
the Directorate General for Development Co-operation
and
the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention
to Combat Desertification**

The Director General for Development Co-operation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification met in Rome on 15 February 2000 and held discussions on a collaborative framework of joint activities to combat desertification and drought in affected developing countries. They recalled the following:

Whereas:

Desertification is one of the most serious environmental emergencies; it is particularly dramatic in Africa as well as in the Mediterranean basin where large areas are threatened by drought and land degradation processes;

Drought and desertification lead to poverty, conflicts and migrations – especially in Africa – with substantial consequences also in Italy and in other Mediterranean countries, which are often the final destination of migratory fluxes of so-called environmental refugees;

The Italian Government has repeatedly highlighted the need to further elaborate and strengthen its co-operation policy in particular with African and Mediterranean countries, aimed at combating land degradation and poverty in these areas;

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) foresees that Northern Mediterranean country Parties should develop and implement common programmes to combat desertification; in this framework, Italy cannot but promote concrete initiatives in co-ordination with the policies adopted by the European Union for sustainable development in affected areas;

As an affected developed country Party to the UNCCD, Italy would not only play the role of financial donor in the implementation of the Convention and related initiatives and programmes, but it would also share its direct experience and expertise on environmental crisis and problems linked to drought and desertification;

Considering that:

The objectives of the Italian development co-operation (by Law number 49/87) include the conservation of the environment, and support to local processes of economic, social and cultural development in developing countries, through, inter alia, participation in activities of international organizations;

The Italian Government on 4th June 1997 (by Law number 170/97) ratified the UNCCD;

In accordance with obligations of the Convention, a National Committee to Combat Drought and Desertification was established on 26 September 1997 (by Presidential Decree of the Council of Ministers of Italy), and is chaired and co-ordinated by the Ministry of Environment with the participation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

The Memorandum of Understanding, between the Italian Ministry of Environment and the Secretariat signed on May 1999 provides a framework for co-operation in particular in the Mediterranean basin;

The Italian Government assigns particular relevance to the goals and principles contained in the UNCCD, and it has organised and/or supported through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environment, in co-ordination and collaboration with the UNCCD Secretariat, the following initiative related to the implementation of the Convention:

- Hosting of the first session of the Conference of the Parties in Rome (1997);
- Offering a voluntary contribution to the Secretariat in 1998 and 1999, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

- Offering a voluntary contribution to the Secretariat in 1999, through the Ministry of Environment;
- Providing the Secretariat with two junior professional officers (1996 and 1999);
- Contributing to the organization of technical meetings related to the implementation of the UNCCD in Abidjan (1998), Marrakech (1998), Matera (1999) and Niamey (1999);
- Providing support to the pilot activities in transboundary areas in the Member States of the Comité Inter-états de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel (CILSS) and the Union du Maghreb Arabe (UMA) in Africa (1999).

The UNCCD, inter alia, gives priority to affected African country Parties; calls for the mobilization of substantial financial resources from developed country Parties and the promotion of mobilization of new and additional resources; encourages the transfer of technology, knowledge and know-how through international co-operation; promotes all forms of regional and interregional co-operation to promote the implementation of the Convention.

The Parties agreed on the following:

(1) Objectives. The Parties agreed to define a framework for the development of a solid and co-ordinated co-operation between the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate General for Development Co-operation, and the UNCCD Secretariat for the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

The efforts of the two Parties will focus on the fight against desertification and the mitigation of the effects of drought, the promotion of sustainable development and the reduction of poverty, in particular in affected developing countries of Africa and the Mediterranean basin.

The following main areas of co-operation are identified as priority issues:

- the support to the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, in particular the Committee on Science and Technology;
- the development of technologies, procedures, instruments and systems to improve the knowledge of processes of desertification and to assess and monitor the status of land degradation in severely affected areas;
- the development and proposal of strategies and policies to combat desertification and to mitigate the effects of drought, through the conduct of joint research programmes between Italian and other national and international institutions;
- the elaboration and implementation of National Action Programmes, Sub-Regional Action Programmes and Regional Action Programmes to combat desertification;
- the support of interregional co-operation and initiatives between country Parties of Annex I and IV of the Convention, meeting the specific provisions of Article 10 of Annex IV to the UNCCD;
- the promotion of cultural, technical and scientific exchange, as well as awareness raising, information and training activities through the involvement of research institutions, other specialized bodies, associations and non-governmental organizations.

(2) Implementation of joint activities and general obligations. The Parties will agree on operational protocols that will set up a tentative yearly programming of joint activities and the related financial implications. Further arrangements for the implementation of each specific initiative will be agreed, if necessary.

The Directorate General for Development Co-operation can make available the necessary financial resources for the implementation of these protocols through the establishment of a trust fund. This trust fund can be replenished on a yearly basis and in accordance with the provision of the National Budgetary Law and of regulations and procedures of the Directorate General for Development Co-operation.

The CCD Secretariat will assist the Directorate General for Development Co-operation in:

- making available and facilitating the exchange of information on desertification and related issues;
- interpreting needs for assistance and facilitating contacts and arrangements with developing country Parties in the implementation of the Convention;

- facilitate contacts and agreements with other donors and financial institutions, international and intergovernmental organizations for the establishment of joint programmes and initiatives;

- facilitate the consultation process for the formulation of action programmes and common initiatives between the Northern Mediterranean countries and the African Region.

The UNCCD Secretariat will also make all the necessary arrangements to facilitate the implementation of the activities mentioned in the operative protocols.

As the technical and scientific body of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Istituto Agronomico per l'Oltremare (IAO), can be associated with joint activities, as appropriate to its mandate that encompasses, inter alia, identification, formulation, implementation and evaluation of development projects in the environmental, forestry and agrozootechnical sectors.

The Parties agreed on the establishment of a monitoring mechanism for the review of the implementation of the yearly operational protocols. It will be composed of representatives of the Directorate General for Development Co-operation and the UNCCD Secretariat.

(3) Settlement of disputes. Any dispute or claim arising out of, or relating to the present agreement, unless it is settled by direct negotiations within four months following notification of the claim from one party to the other, shall be settled by arbitration.

Done in Rome in two originals, on 15 February 2000.

For the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Vincenzo Petrone
*the Director General of Development Co-
operation*

For the Secretariat of the UNCCD
Hama Arba Diallo
the Executive Secretary