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**Drought and Desertification**

- Like most of the more critical environmental problems, drought and desertification are still global undefeated challenges, with a direct linkage to poverty and migration.
- The *Europe's Environment – Fourth Assessment* shows that the UNECE Region itself is highly affected by drought, floods, land degradation and desertification. However, important efforts are being done at the European level to fight water scarcity and droughts, supported by political and social interests. An example of this is the Communication from the EC to the European Parliament and Council “Addressing the challenge of water scarcity and droughts in the European Union” which includes policy orientations and future action recommendations.
- The EU recognizes that the implementation of the UNCCD programmes is at the core of any action aiming at fighting drought, desertification and land degradation. In this context, the EU member states believe that the 10 Year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance the Implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) adopted in September 2007 brings a new impetus into the UNCCD activity, as well as to the fulfilment of the commitments agreed by the international community in the Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The EU regards the UNCCD as the main body whose authority needs to be respected.
- However, while progress in the scientific, environmental and socio-economic aspects of desertification, land degradation and drought needs to be measurable and comparable in time and space, common national and international benchmarks and indicators, monitoring procedures and access to relevant data is going ahead but more effective application is still needed. Therefore, the EU supports both bilateral and multilateral efforts on strengthening the knowledge base on how to fight and control desertification and land degradation as well as on how to manage drought. In this respect, the EU has already developed report assessments (e.g. water scarcity and drought in-depth assessment), is working on common water scarcity and drought indicators, and has launched research activities and projects (e.g. DeSurvey, LUCINDA, DESIRE, AQUASTRESS, ALERT, XEROCHORE and various INTERREG projects). Additional relevant initiatives include the European drought alert system project by the Joint Research Center and the European networking for global desertification DesertNet. The EU is willing to share information on the outcome of these important projects worldwide.
- Environment is a unique integrated system and cannot be considered part by part. In this context, the EU recognizes the importance of the findings in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment that highlight the social and economic value of ecosystem services. This contributes

to the shift to a new approach, which takes into consideration the “cost of inaction” and the benefits of action in the process of policy-making.

- In this context, the EU favours the synergistic implementation of an ecosystem approach also at smaller scales such as local or river basin level. However, in order to implement programmes and projects at smaller scales, there is the need to develop capacities of local authorities and communities and promote linkages with stakeholders and broader authorities. The EU has actively tried to implement such an integrated approach by adopting different legislative frameworks and policy such as the EU Soil Thematic Strategy, the Water Framework Directive, the EU SDS, the EU Action Plan on climate change and development, the Community strategic guidelines for rural development for the programming period 2007 to 2013, Thematic Strategy on Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Thematic Strategy on Sustainable Use of Pesticides.
- In the light of the IV IPCC Assessment Report, drought, future water crisis and climate change are closely linked to each other. The EU notes that there is a close connection between drought, soil degradation and desertification in terms of the direct impact on the performance of soil functions and stresses the broader impacts of drought in terms of increased risk of forest fires and the consequent significant effects on atmospheric pollution and emissions of greenhouse gases also in terms of loss of CO<sub>2</sub> “sinks”. For the EU it is therefore important to develop Integrated Water Resources Management plans and strategies at national and basin level to combat the drought and land degradation also in the context of adaptation measures for climate change, including the establishment of drought watch, drought adaptation and drought risk management plans.
- Furthermore, the EU believes that this CSD cycle offers the opportunity to contribute to the synergies between climate change, the fight against drought and desertification and biodiversity in particular within the framework of the implementation of the UNCCD 10 Year Strategy.
- Better integration of soil protection into various policies and better harmonization of information across Europe are needed to move to more sustainable use of soil resources which will help to reduce environmentally-induced migration which is likely to be a major issue affecting the UN ECE region in future years. As a matter of priority, the EU believes that it is necessary to reduce impacts of drought, desertification and land degradation as driving forces of migration.
- Drought, desertification, land degradation and migration, induced by them, are cross-border problems requiring joint action. Therefore, the strengthening of trans-boundary, regional and inter-regional cooperation is inevitable. The EU has already started concrete actions on this theme by adopting policies, strategies and programmes such as the European Water Initiative; EU neighbourhood Policy; the EU Security Strategy; the Europe’s Development Strategy and Global Monitoring for the Environment and Security, a European initiative which will provide us with the tools to improve our environment and will help us keeping our planet safe and healthy. Recently, initiatives for the establishment of a Drought Management Centre in South Eastern Europe, and a possible future EU Observatory on drought and desertification have been launched and might serve as examples of regional cooperation.
- Tensions and conflicts can also arise due to natural resources degradation. Peace building, peace enforcing and security at global level can’t be considered independently from environmental protection, social security and economic growth.

- With regard to financial resources, the EU believes that it is important to ensure coherence, complementarity and appropriate financial instruments, including both ODA and bilateral cooperation, EC funds, GEF, GM, WB and regional banks, among themselves and with the principles agreed under the Paris Declaration as well as improve coherence between development and environmental cooperation ensuring mutual supportiveness for an integrated and cross-sectoral sustainable land and water management approach.
- Finally, the involvement of Civil Society in the initiatives to combat drought and desertification must continue to be encouraged. In this effort, special attention should be paid to dry land populations, often socially and politically marginalised.