

Government of Spain

Intervention during the interactive discussion on Desertification and Drought.

Mr. Chair,

Spain fully supports the statement made by the Slovenian Presidency on behalf of the European Union. As it has been clearly mentioned in the Keynote address made by the Spanish representative, both desertification and drought are two very relevant issues for Spain and our country is severely affected by them.

Mr. Chair,

Thank you for giving us the floor again. In this case we would like to focus on drought issues and share with you some information on recent activities and initiatives, both at European and national levels, aimed at tackling drought phenomena that may be of interest for the pan-European region, and that also responds to some of the questions posed by the Chair to launch the discussions, more specifically the last four questions at the end of the page. For Spain, mitigating water scarcity and droughts effects it is a top priority

At European level, and in the framework of the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) of the Water Framework Directive Spain leads, jointly with France and Italy, the *Water Scarcity and Drought Expert Network*. Spain has coordinated the development of the *Drought Management Plan Report*, complementary to River Basin Management Plans. Currently, this Network continues the works for *identifying and harmonising drought indicators* in the European Union, in addition to establishing drought *risk maps*.

The gravity of drought impacts¹ at the European level, together with the social and political awareness, have been translated into the *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and Council* with the title “*Addressing the challenge of water scarcity and drought in the European Union*” (July 2007). In line with this Communication, Spain supports the development of a Strategy at the international level at medium and long-term to tackle the issue, and the establishment of a *European Drought Observatory*. This observatory could also work on desertification issues. Besides this, we would like to mention that an International Forum on Drought took place in Sevilla in June 2007, and it is intended to be organized every two years. You can find more information at the back of the room.

At our national level, recent achievements include:

-The Development and approval of *Drought Management Plans*: in each River Basin. The main objective of these plans is minimising socio-economic and environmental impacts, by applying progressive measures according to the drought status. Status that is identified according to a national indicator system

-The edition of follow-up reports and drought maps: the Ministry of Environment makes available within its website, *weekly hydrological bulletins*, *monthly drought maps*, and *follow-up reports* on droughts (yearly, quarterly, and monthly).

¹ The Water Scarcity and Droughts In-Depth Assessment, Second Interim Report June 2007 of the European Commission, DG Environment, reflects the severity of the phenomena stating that “Italy, Portugal, Cyprus, Spain and France have registered the highest frequency of droughts from 1976 to nowadays, with 8 to 21 events per country”.

- The publication of an *Emergency public supply Guide*: for developing emergency supply plans under drought episodes
- Finally, the approval of a Royal Decree on September 2006 which allows for urgent measures to minimise drought impacts, including the regulation of a *water market and water rights exchange practices*.

Mr .Chair

Along with land degradation, water scarcity and droughts have emerged as a major challenge, and climate change will worsen its effects. This is a worldwide problem, and the Paneropian region will also be increasingly affected. On the other hand, desertification, water scarcity and droughts are not just a matter for land or water managers. They have a direct impact on citizens and economic sectors such as agriculture, tourism, industry, energy and transport

To finalize, Mr. Chair, we think that now is of utmost importance to introduce drought and desertification impacts and effects on the political agenda promoting also water efficiency and water saving policies.

Thank you Mr. Chair.