

ecc



Eco has been published by Non-Governmental Groups at major international conferences since the Stockholm Environment Conference in 1972. This issue is produced co-operatively by groups attending the UNCCD COP 8 in Madrid, September 2007



A Convention without Action Causes Desertification

Statement of the NGOs present in the UNCCD COP 8

Mr. President:

Mr. President, the non-governmental organizations present in the 8th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification takes this opportunity to express our gratitude to the government and the citizen of Spain for the hospitality and warm welcome accorded to us since we arrived in this beautiful city of Madrid. We are also thankful to the Secretariat of UNCCD and other partner institutions for their support and generous input that has enabled us attend and

interact with our parties for the spirit of the implementation of UNCCD. We wish to welcome the newly appointed Executive Secretary of the UNCCD to his position and reiterate our support and commitment to assisting him for the implementation phase of UNCCD with involvement of all stakeholders including community based organization and native people.

The non-governmental organizations present in the 8th Conference of Parties in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification reiterate the need to deliver a committed and

Il faut revoir la Convention

Thierno Bal Seck, chargé de projets de ENDA TM nous a expliqué ce matin son point de vue sur la COP8 et sur la Convention de désertification.

ENDA TM, est un NGO du Sénégal, et LEAD de l'Afrique francophone, participante à toutes les COP et un point focal de négociation et ratification de la Convention.

Quand on lui demande sur les buts de cette COP, Thierno est clair

- Il faut recommencer sur de nouvelles bases- dit Thierno-. La Convention existe depuis plus de 10 ans, hélas, la désertification et perte...

[p. 7]

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 A Convention without Action Causes Desertification
- 3 Regional Interests of Latin America
- 4 The Need to Link Alternative Livelihoods to Prevention and Control of Desertification
- 5 A Turning Point: COP8 has to Agree on.
- 7 Il faut revoir la Convention

significant boost in the implementation process of the policies in favour of the sustainable development in the dry areas of the world, for the benefit of our countries and specially of those affected communities.

The Convention to Combat Desertification moves towards the eleven year since its coming into force, and in each meeting it is requested to go into action. However, the negative to invest new and additional resources is still an ever-present theme, in addition to the failure to comply with the commitments of the Parties and bodies of the Convention.

This situation causes our disappointment and frustration due to the scene of the soils degradation that is affecting food security, increasing poverty and triggering the international migrations, the interregional conflicts and the social instability on a large scale, the gender inequality and put at risk health and welfare of 1200 million of people in more than 100 countries. All this keep us more away from reaching the millennium goals.

Furthermore, in the present context of climatic change, is very likely that the effects of desertification will increase on a short term, so it would be necessary to create synergies with the Convention of Climatic Change.

A development model based on non-sustainable production and consumer patterns have as a consequence the degradation of the soil and the impoverishment worldwide.

Finally, the own developed countries have to pay a very high environmental, economic and social price of which only they are responsible. And Europe is an excellent

example, severe degradation and loss of fertile soil is taking place, witnessing the destabilizing consequences of the same phenomenon that can be found everywhere: forced migration.

Nevertheless, we are specially waiting for the process that will lead to the approval of the Framework and the Strategic Ten-Year Plan, hoping it will mean the beginning of a new phase in the application of the Convention, being maybe the last chance to eliminate the frustration of those who suffer the consequences of desertification and also of those who work for the fulfilment of the Convention goals.

Even so we are deeply worried by the low level of commitment that many countries have shown in this process, their recurrent fear to set up specific goals and assume measurable commitments.

We believe more political decision is needed from the affected country parties, the developed countries and the

international organizations if we want to have as a political priority the effective implementation of the Convention, and to be able to count on the new and additional financial resources which will allow to reach specific goals on a local, regional and national level.

We need to be optimistic with regard to this potential new phase for the Convention, and hope that as a consequence of the process created around the Framework and the Strategic Ten-Year Plan the subsidiary bodies of the Convention will be truly improved including the civil society with an official status in the different negotiation processes of the Convention. The Science & Technological Committee should be more connected to the local realities; it should involve the local stakeholders and be directly turned into actions on the field.

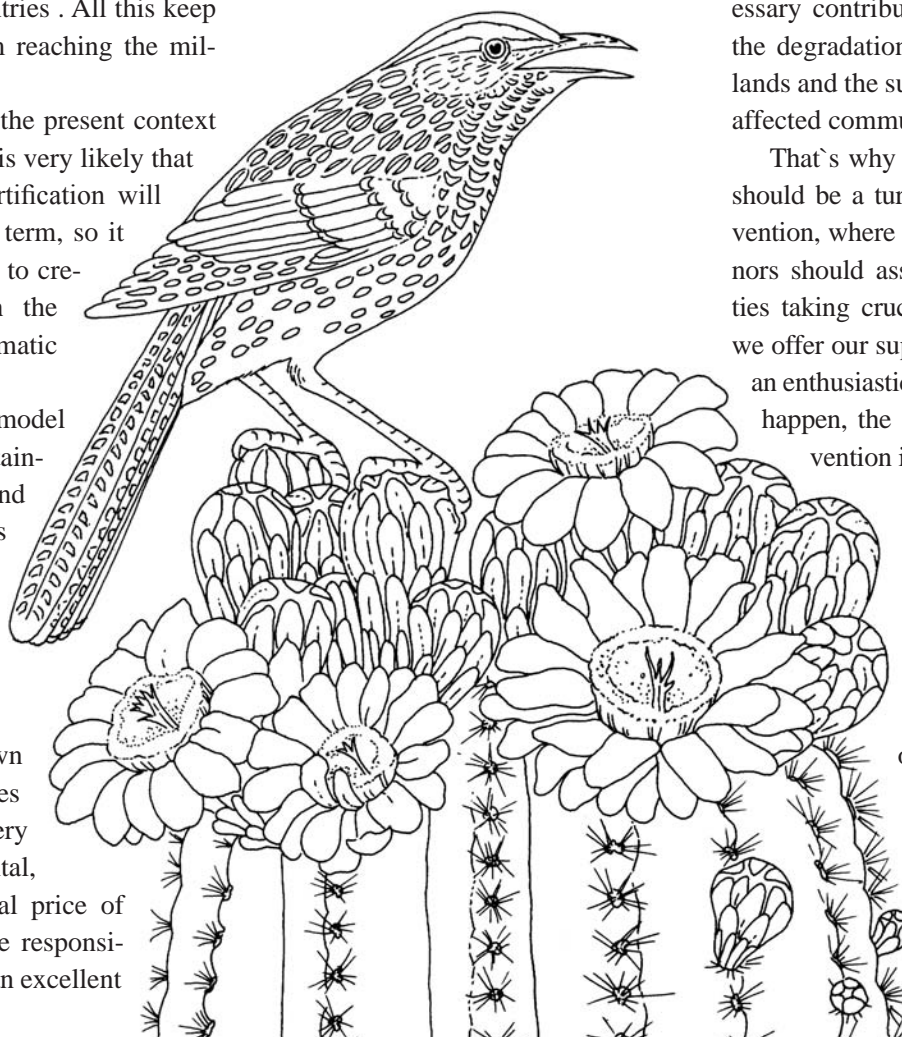
Therefore, the excuses should end for the countries Party to do the necessary contributions in order to revert the degradation processes of the arid lands and the subsequent poverty of the affected communities.

That's why we urge this conference should be a turning point for the Convention, where the stakeholders and donors should assume their responsibilities taking crucial decisions for which we offer our support and capabilities on an enthusiastic manner. If this does not happen, the silent death of the Convention is imminent.

The NGOs do not want to be associated with this indifference in relation to the desertification of our planet, so we will feel obliged to act regardless of the means of this Convention.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. □

*Madrid, 2nd
September 2007*



Regional Interests of Latin America

It was previously agreed that the main reason for desertification worldwide was an unsustainable economic system based on unequal relations: rich minority decides what to produce, privatizing resources and seizing traditional usages...

The core of discussion was to face directly against this unsustainable scenario. Notwithstanding, conventions have been criticised as a bunch of good intentions not reaching to the commitment level. NGOs are not really paid attention to, neither women who are hard at work on her daily life. CST information is not spread; technologic solutions are imposed from above without taking into account traditional knowledge or local necessities.

In Latin America, desertification is a social phenomenon which acts on society and environment due to an economic schedule imposed by rich countries on involvement with local rich political class against rights and necessities of the majority of population, and to the detriment of rights and resources of future generations.

It brings as well deterioration of people due to migrations and diseases. The most serious case of emigration is taking place from Haiti to Dominican Republic as it may provoke a war.

General List of problems:

1. There is no economical support, just big human potential and good intentions. Rich countries should not make "donations", but solidarity compensations on account of all the richness taken from the developing countries. The word "donation" on these contents would be a fallacy as the South subsidizes the North.
2. Lack of commitment and action by politicians and serious lack of knowledge by the population in general. There is no internal organization and local groups are ignored.
3. Lack of international cooperation.



Each country cares for their own necessities without knowing how are the rest, to achieve anything else than local actions.

4. Biofuels (they called them agrofuels) and dependence upon a single crop (they call it afforestation) stands as an attack to biodiversity and agrodiversity. An Haiti citizen commented that "in lots of areas imperialism develops sugar cane to prepare biofuels on areas it was already removed"

5. The profit of general usages by communities who develops them.

Considering the above priority was given to:

1. Lack of financial resources
 2. Cooperation agendas imposed are weak on this issue or simply absent of
 3. Public politics are deficient in:
 - i. Migration conflicts
 - ii. Food security
 - iii. Monocultures, mining, etc
 4. Weakness on civil society:
 - i. Lack of organization between social actors
 - ii. Lack of conscience and knowledge of the issue
 5. Climate change
- To enter into agreement on possible

solutions they had more difficulties but they finally agreed on the following:

1. Respect to development agendas of each country

To pass from assistance projects to development ones

To strengthen social representation networks

2. Funds to promote Strategic plan of RIOD, CLD and struggle against exploitation on developed countries.

3. Assessment and monitoring of organizations' participation on civil society and CLD

4. To strengthen the arrangement on efficient public politics aimed to LCD:

- i. Migrations
- ii. Food and health security
- iii. Afforestation (monoculture). For example, the ones aimed to agrofuels that attacks bio diversity
- iv. Mining

5. Against climate change Brazil proposed, in accordance with the rest, that we should have politics against it which modified consumers' guidelines together with developing more sustainable uses such as usage of bicycles. □

The Need to Link Alternative Livelihoods to Prevention and Control of Desertification

The rate at which our forest and water resources are being depleted coupled with land erosion is so worrisome. The deteriorating state of our forest has ecological linkages with micro and macro climates, water and soil resources, biodiversity, food production as well as food security. Thus forests with their associated resources are very important components of the economic and socio-cultural environment of rural communities and the nation as a whole.

In recent times, Ghana's forest and its associated resources are under human pressure and perpetual threat, undergoing unprecedented deterioration both in quality and quantity, thus depriving societies of its full benefits.

The northern sector of Ghana has been a primary combatant of bushfires and thus catalyzing the rapid degradation of its natural resources. This usually occurs between November and March each passing year.

Deforestation has been a bane in the Upper East Region. Most rural communities (Both men and women), depend largely on the natural vegetation for fuel – for both domestic and commercial purposes. This has resulted in a high rate of tree felling as sources of energy and income. Thus, indiscriminate felling of trees, bush burning, pollution of water bodies and over-grazing have all resulted in fuel wood shortages, poor soils, erratic rainfall patterns, siltation of rivers and dams etc, paving the way for desertification in the region. The primary result of these actions are destruction of the natural vegetative cover, leading to poor watershed management, high run offs and soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, poor soil fertility and pollution of water bodies. The consequences of these conditions are low food production, food insecurity, increased hunger gaps, poor nutrition

leading to poor health, loss of productive labour force, low income levels and prevalent poverty.

A sober reflection is needed on the way we exploit our natural resources and how we can sustainably manage the environment and natural resources. In our developmental process, there is the need to link alternative livelihoods activities to natural resources conservation efforts, since in Africa, especially in West Africa 85% of the population depend largely on the natural environment to meet their energy, food, medicinal and other livelihood needs. It is a known fact that ignorance, poverty and



lack of alternative livelihoods are also the main causes of the people depending largely on the natural environment. It is therefore right to say that human pressure on the natural environment is great, resulting to a fast degradation of the natural environment, resulting in desertification and global warming.

The need to link poverty and alternative livelihoods in combating desertification and reducing global warming cannot therefore be over emphasized.

Gia/Nabio Agro forestry Development Organization (GNADO) has therefore, initiated programmes such as Micro Credit for small scale enterprises development (the use of Non Timber Forest Products), Fruit Orchards, Woodlots and Community Managed Wildlife production as alternative means of diverting the rural populations from the environment and natural resources, to reduce the human pressure and subsequently protect and conserve the environment and natural resources. This in the long term will help reduce poverty, global warming and combat desertification.

GNADO therefore, proposes the use of alternative income generation activities to motivate and encourage rural farm/hunter families to undertake the establishment of small scale enterprises using Non Timber Forest Products, Fruit orchards, Woodlots and Community Managed Wildlife production as a sustainable approach to solve the problems of desertification, global warming and poverty. □

Daniel Alban Luguzuri (GM)
Gia/Nabio Agro forestry Development Organisation (GNADO)
P. O. Box 55, Navrongo (GHANA)
Email: gnado2@yahoo.com
Website: www.gnado.info
Tel: 0023374222621 - 00233244523504

A Turning Point. COP8 has to Agree on:

1. Local Action Starting Now!

Local and immediate actions are crucial to reach the objectives of the UNCCD. It is imperative that the UNCCD is made into a useful tool suitable for application at the local level with actions that combat land degradation and promote sustainable livelihoods. These local actions should be linked both to the Convention and to National Action Programs (NAPs). To this end, supporting the work of local NGOs and CSOs can in turn bring detailed knowledge of the local environment to the table for planners, as well as provide timely information on gaps emerging between policy and implementation. CSOs represent the needs of specific interest groups and local stakeholders who are often under-represented, or incapable of being involved in policy processes. This level of involvement offers a complementary form of consultation, in addition to the traditional model between state actors, that finds its roots in local considerations and is thus in turn the premier instance for discussion, motivation and mobilization.

A clear and detailed timetable, along with adequate means for action at the local level is needed right now to guide and concretize the implementation of the Convention.

2. An Official and Recognized Status for Civil Society

Promoting Civil Society participation cannot be fully achieved only through conferences and documents. Giving Civil Society an official status in the



Convention will enable them to take on their full responsibilities and become a valuable partner in realizing the UNCCD objectives. The formal role of CSOs in relation to the CRIC and CST processes and sessions should be defined, including the possibilities for CSOs to share experiences on traditional knowledge, scientific research needed in the field, success stories and lessons learned. Involvement should extend to allowing CSOs access to relevant negotiations, and ensuring that proper means are available for them to prepare, negotiate and follow up their input, just like other stakeholders. An official status for CSOs would strengthen their participation, in turn reinforcing institutional and procedural aspects of the Convention, which are generally perceived as weak. All Parties should make an effort to include CSOs

in projects, programmes, partnerships, and delegations - and additionally engage CSOs in long-term dialogues to enable mutual learning.

We call on each Party to commit to support and welcome participation of CSOs in UNCCD related processes, especially at the national level.

3. Stakeholders' Commitment and Shared Accountability

Concrete commitments from all stakeholders linked to their responsibilities are essential if development is to be reached in dryland areas. Let us recall that the text of the UNCCD calls for the participation of civil society in the operational mechanisms aimed at harmonizing approaches to combat land degradation - the purpose and role of CSOs



in this context deserves to be clarified. CSOs have a responsibility to maintain contact with their UNCCD focal point, keep themselves informed, engage in relevant discussions and negotiations, actively seek partnerships and spread information on local success stories and lessons learned. It should be required that CSOs sponsored by the Secretariat for COP and CRIC participation embrace a proactive approach on all levels. By the same token, Parties to the Convention need to actively connect and improve participation at the international and national level between concerned stakeholders and improve participation at the international and national level, actively encourage CSO involvement in policy discussions and negotiations at the national level, strengthen general national awareness, and concretely commit to the implementation of the UNCCD at the local level. A clear link should be made between funding, commitments and responsibilities of the different stakeholders and donors. It is of critical importance that Parties realize that the success of the UNCCD is dependent on a solid financial instrument dedicated to the objectives of the Convention. The value of this instrument will be increased through bilateral and regional development co-operation. Efforts should be made by Parties to support innovative projects and capacity building activities. The Secretariat should also commit itself to encourage

CSO access and participation in decision making at COPs and CRICs, and to ensure that CSOs are bound to both formal/structural procedures, shared obligations and to a clear and official status. Participation for CSOs at COPs and CRICs should not be hampered by insufficient funds, support, and access to the agenda or topics under negotiation. The Secretariat should strengthen its function as intermediary - improving timely information on relevant national and international processes.

4. High Returns: Investing in Human Resources

Investing in human resources instead of super structures will lead to sustainable development on the ground. The Secretariat should invest in human capital by proactively facilitating networking and sharing of information at the international level. UNCCD information, procedures and the potential of the Convention should be disseminated widely and be accessible for all types of actors. To aid this goal, the Secretariat should increase its information, communication and education capacities, alongside providing timely information on the sessions, participation procedures and documents under negotiation through their website. Acknowledging the valuable experiences that can be gained from human resources, the projects and programs adopted within the framework of the UNCCD should embrace knowledge and expertise generated at local levels. This knowledge and expertise illustrates that bottom-up, locally generated solutions, are often more effective in achieving results than top-down driven designs.

5. Result Oriented and Action Driven Research.

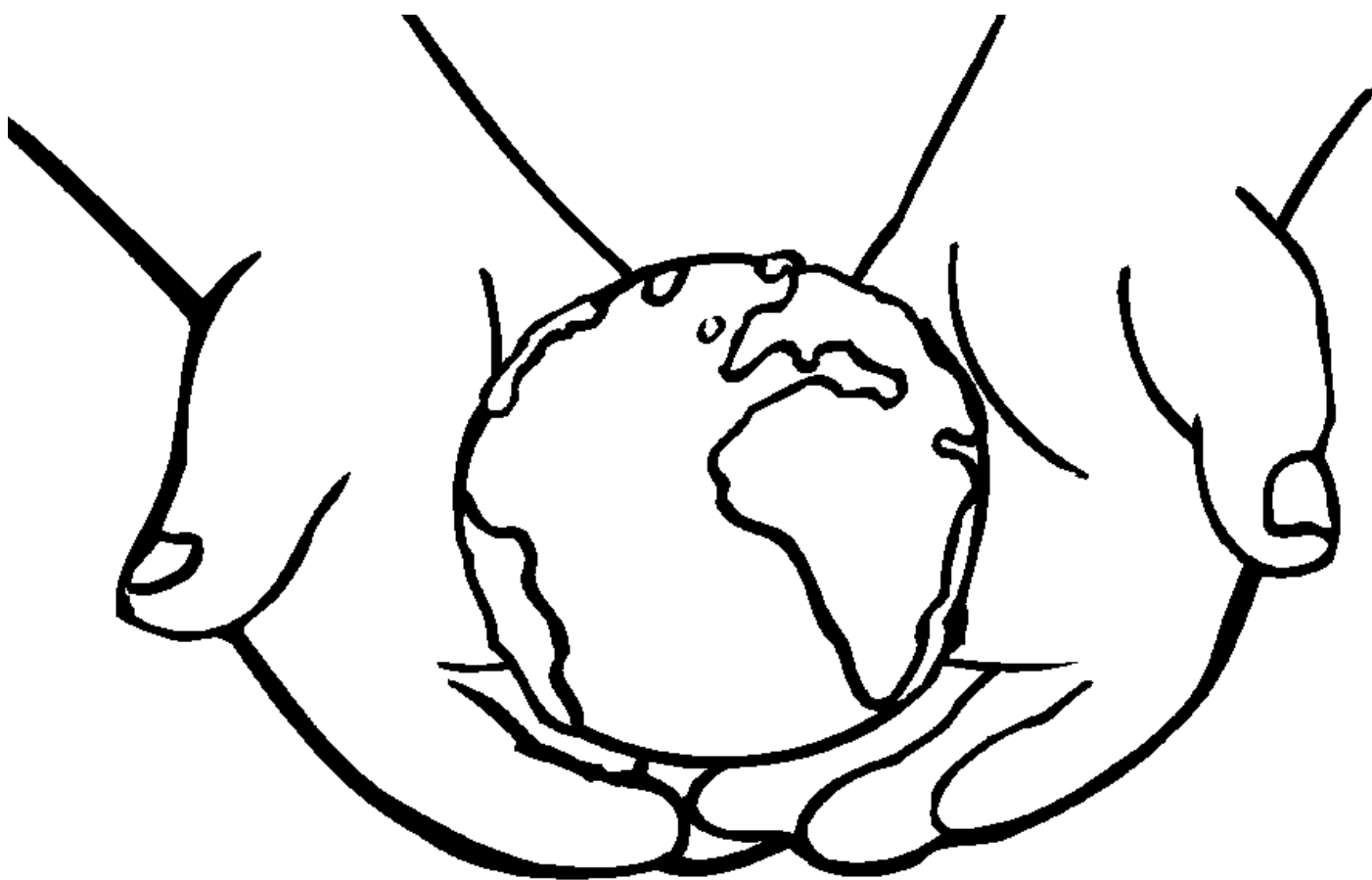
Research must deliver relevant results immediately applicable and useable for actions at the local level, which implies a strong link to the local context and

close collaboration with and involvement of local actors. We are concerned that the absence of a credible timeframe puts at risk the realization of specific goals and the alienation of impatient stakeholders. The sound implementation of the UNCCD requires effective processes at both international and national levels. In light of this concern, CRIC needs to become a valuable evaluation tool. The set-up of CRIC needs to include a space for lessons learned with clear and applicable recommendations and a scientific review on global developments with respect to desertification, which can be presented at the beginning of each CRIC session. In this respect, CSOs can fulfil a valuable watchdog function, providing feedback on implementation, and if necessary, early warning bells. CSOs and NGOs can also feed into CRIC with useful successful local examples contributing to the diversity of approaches available for countering land degradation – from which best practices can be distilled.

In 2006 we celebrated the ten year anniversary of the UNCCD. Though much has happened, and the attention has been focused on drylands on many important occasions, the current situation has not improved as much as we would like. We fear that if this COP8 session does not take the necessary decisions on reforms and changes needed, there is a real risk that many Parties and other stakeholders will loose even more interest in the UNCCD because of its lack of functionality as a useful tool to combat land degradation and improve sustainable land management in drylands. COP8 requires bold and daring decisions that are far reaching, that will bring about real changes and real improvements, and help realize the full potential of the Convention.

We therefore urge the Parties at COP8 to take action and make change happen before it is too late! □

From EniD and Drynet networks



Il faut revoir la Convention

[p. 1]

...de terre fertile augmente chaque an. Il faut refaire, revoir la convention, que la convention soit vraiment efficace surtout pour les pays africain, ajoute-t-il.

Pour Thierno, le problème de la désertification est un problème de base, un problème social, de population. Les propositions des NGO ne sont celles des Etats. Il n'a pas eu de proximité dans ces années entre les Etats et les NGOs. Il faut un rapprochement des NGO- Etats, donner un virage à la Convention.

Quand on lui demande sur les propositions réelles pour éviter la désertification des pays africains, Thierno nous parle du cas sénégalais,

- Au Senegal, on a un système de production agricole durable, où se mélange la tradition, l'environnement, la population. Un système qui s'occupe de l'environnement mais aussi de l'aspect social. Et ça fonctionne. On a convenu le gouvernement,

et maintenant il s'applique à tout le Sénégal.- D'autres pays limitrophes comme Mali o Ghana vont appliquer ce système.

Ajouter que ce système agricole a été visité dans la 2eme conférence à Dakar et par plusieurs membres de la ONU et la Banque mondiale. Ce système n'est pas connu dans d'autres pays africains, ce qui pourrait être un modèle de système agricole pour d'autres pays.

On lui demande quelles sont les causes de la désertification.

- Evidemment, la pauvreté – nous répond-il. Les revenus de la population doivent augmenter. Il faut commercialiser l'agriculture dans un cadre d'environnement. Il faut créer un système de production agricole qui donne emploi, évite l'exode rural et la migration.

Sur l'efficacité de COP8 et la Convention, Thierno a une position claire

- Beaucoup de pays pensent que ça ne sert à rien- dit-il. La terre conti-

nue à se dégrader. On pense donc que la Convention devrait se revoir et réviser, adapter la Convention à la réalité.

Quand au financement, la Convention de changement climatique ou celle de biodiversité reçoivent beaucoup plus d'argent que celle de désertification, ce qui suppose un désavantage pour les pays africains.

Pour cette NGO, ces trois problèmes, changement climatique, biodiversité et désertification sont le même problème, ils ont un lien entre eux. Donc selon Thierno, on ne peut pas isoler le problème de la désertification, c'est un problème lié aux autres.

Finalement quand on lui demande sur la participation des NGO à la COP 8, Thierno Bal nous confirme la diminution de participation.

- C'est normal- il nous dit- Il a un vrai problème de budget, surtout pour les pays africains. Donc, il y a moins de NGO participantes. □

It is urgent to take measures in order to combat desertification

In Ecologistas en Acción's view, the main concern about desertification in Spain is the fertile ground loss, which constitutes a high-valuable non-renewable natural resource, on account of ground damage which is provoked by built-up areas and infrastructures construction and is occupying irreversibly fluvial valleys, traditional irrigated crops and others kinds of high valuable farming ground. In 1992, Spain was the most affected European country by the irreversible loss of fertile ground due to built-up areas and since then, this building-up tendency has been increasing and even spreading to the best land.

Nowadays, this worrying process is seriously accelerating, helped by a generalized town-planning speculation, which is destroying irreversibly the most fertile and best quality farming ground. It is very curious and contradictory, the apparent preoccupation with the possible erosion in low quality farming areas, like natural areas with marl, when the really fertile ground from agricultural valleys are disappearing irreversibly and exponentially because of the soil classification fever, the town-planning –tourist speculation, built-up areas and resort construction, and the highways and infrastructures proliferation, which doesn't attract a so especial preoccupation.

Desertification in Spain is not mainly due to environmental erosion problems. Moreover, when we identify aridity with desertification we reinforce the erroneous perception of naming natural thicket (steppes, salt-affected soils in alluvial plains – called saladares-, etc.) 'deteriorated areas', which makes even more difficult its conservation (e.g. turning them into industrial estates, rubbish tips or any kind of infrastructures), which leads to an alarming landscape quality and environmental loss. On the other hand, this false image has justified

a terrible forest policy, full of inadequate reforestation processes, which damaged habitats of Communitarian concern and communities with high ecological and natural value, and it also damaged their biodiversity value.

Ecologistas en Acción believes that the main desertification problems in Spain are caused by different erosion processes, such as the unsustainable water use and the fertile ground irreversible loss by building-up and construction of infrastructures. Regarding the water use, the enormous increase of irrigated crops and more recently the accelerated town-planning –tourist expansion have provoked and unsustainable water use and a serious overexploitation of aquifers, provoking wetlands destruction and irreversible natural productivity loss of these high valuable landscapes linked to water, irreversible loss that leads to an important desertification process, which is not considered as it should really be by the public authorities.

Therefore, in order to stop the desertification process in Spain, Ecologistas en Acción urges the implementation of policies to obtain:

- Regional land laws that guarantee its conservation and make difficult the soil classification as building land.

- A water policy based on managing its demand and not on increasing its supply. That is to say, treating water as the scarce good it is; a good that must be highly protected.

- Changing the Spanish economic model based on environment destruction, in which construction and mass tourism (both very linked to desertification) are essential keys for the GDP. In the building policy terms, this is translated into compact towns of medium size. In hydroelectric energy terms, into a kind of respectful agriculture with the surrounding climatic conditions. □

Side Events:

- *NGOs concentration on Monday the 3rd September from 14:00 to 15:00 h. due to the inauguration of the COP 8.*

- *The 3rd September at 18:00 the event: "Desertification in Spain"*

The NGOs are meeting every day at 8:00 in the NGOs room (G035)



ECO is produced daily by
Ecologistas en Acción

The editorial team welcomes concise articles for publication in ECO.

Please give your articles to
eco@ecologistasenaccion.org

Funding for the production of ECO has been provided by the UNCCD Secretariat.

The editorial team reserves the right to edit articles for clarity and length.

We would like to thank all the journalists, the translators and the association De Amicitia for their collaboration in this bulletin.

ECOLOGISTAS
en acción