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We need to get measurable objectives out of this COP

On Tuesday 4th September the discussions started over the important document of this COP, “Marco and Plan Decennial Estretegico” (The Ten Year Framework Strategy Plan). Positions are divergent with debates over whether the document should be considered as a whole, without entering into negotiations paragraph by paragraph (the USA, Norway, Kenya, Japan, Australia) or whether modifications can be included and kept in sequence to create established concrete and quantifiable goals (Chinese, Morocco, South Africa, Chile and Iran). Mexico has proposed that the goal for the decade should be an annual reduction of 10% in the amount of land suffering desertification.

Of course it is debatable whether a Strategic Plan should contain explicit quantified goals in real numbers. But what is beyond all doubt is that measurable commitments and goals must be established, and if it is necessary to do so in an Implementation Plan, then this is what must be approved here at the COP8. We cannot run the risk that after approval of the “Marco y Plan Decennial Estretegico” (The Ten Year Framework Strategy Plan) things carry on just as they have in the previous decade. The populations affected by desertification would never forgive us.

As far as the structure of the subsidiary bodies of the CLD, there is no agree-

ment over whether bodies for regional coordination should be implemented or not. Nevertheless the creation of a Contact Group has been approved. It will, among other things, work to reconcile the positions of those who are convinced that formal regional coordination is a necessity (Latin America, Asia and Africa) with those who doubt its utility (the USA and Japan, among others).

Luckily there is consensus on the importance of reformulating the roles of the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism. They are seen to be out of touch because of their distance – and not only geographic – and hold an unacceptable superposition in terms of their actions and budgets. It is both urgent and indispensable that the bodies fulfil their mandate and work together. This Plan directs the CLD, so it must demand facilitacion for the effective participation of civil society and the financial support that this will require. Anything less will reduce this mandate to a joke.

As for the Committee of Science and Technology, it is evident that it needs to get closer to the communities, especially to farmers and cattle herders in the affected zones. It should recover their knowledge and help them to contribute concrete solutions. Research is important, but if it remains solely in the academic field it cannot help in the fight against desertification..□

Une lutte de femmes

Je quitte un peu de temps à Noura Fatchima, Boubacan Zalia et Djingarey Haoua. Elles sont la représentation des femmes nigériennes dans cette COP8 qui luttent contre la désertification.

Mais ce n'est pas seulement la désertification ou elles luttent, c'est une lutte contre la pauvreté, c'est une lutte de femmes.

Pour Mme Haoua, c'est la deuxième COP qu'elle assiste. Elle a aussi assisté à la COP 7.

Que cherchez vous dans cette COP? – je lui demande

- On cherche des partenaires- elle me dit-. Des partenaires qui puissent nous aider à faire possible nos projets. Surtout à niveau financier.

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- Niger est un pays de femmes-continue-t-elle. Plus d'un 50 % de la population sont des femmes. Et c'est aussi un pays désertique, un pays qui connaît le mot désertification, 3/4 du pays est aujourd'hui un désert. Donc, la lutte pour éviter la perte de terre est une lutte constante, et surtout une lutte de femmes et de jeunes.

Pour finir avec ces problèmes, associations comme FEMJES ou ANSEN se concentrent sur l'éducation à tous les niveaux des femmes. Des programmes de sensibilisation, d'alphabétisation, d'apprentissage, d'éducation de l'environnement.

- Ici, les femmes ne laissent pas de couper les bois- continue Haoua- car c'est un ressource économique pour elles. Et chaque fois on a moins de bois, c'est une chaîne, moins de bois, plus de pauvreté. c'est évidemment un problème très grave, car on a chaque fois moins de ressources naturels, donc pour arrêter ce problème il faut

d'autres ressources économiques. C'est ce que nous essayons de faire: sensibiliser, alphabétiser la femme.

Le problème de l'alphabétisation est sérieux à Niger. Plus d'un 50% de la population, la plupart des femmes ne savent ni lire ni écrire.

Un autre problème qui frappe le Niger est la santé avec un taux élevé de paludisme, Sida, et d'autres maladies.

Pour Haoua, il y a une connexion entre santé, pauvreté et désertification: c'est le même problème - ajout-elle.

Je lui demande qu'elles me racontent un projet qu'elles ont mis en place.

- Le projet KEITA, village nigérien- répond Noura- C'est un projet fait par des femmes. Car il n'y a pas d'hommes à Keita, ils sont partis, l'exode, - nous explique- t- elle. C'est un bon projet, financier avec coopération italienne. Il s'agit de récupérer les terres dégradées. Nous sommes

un pays agricole, un 85% de la terre. On cultive le maïs, le seigle, mais les terres sont très dégradées. Le projet Keita a eu un très bon succès et on cherche maintenant à cette COP8 de trouver des partenaires pour continuer ce succès dans d'autres villages- conclut Noura.

Je suis sûre qu'elles y trouveront. □

Mme Noura Fatchima est géographe, coordinatrice de ANSEN (association nigérienne des Scouts de l'environnement).

Mme Djingarey Haoua Diop est Commissaire Nationale aux Droits de l'homme, Présidente de la Sous- Commission Droits de la Femme et de l'enfant.

Coordinatrice de l'association FEMJES (Femmes, jeunesse, environnement, santé).

Mme Boubacan Zalia, du Conseil National de l'environnement pour un développement durable.

Réflexions de la COP8

La 8^a Conférence des Parties de la convention de Désertification, plus connu entre tous comme COP8 vient de démarrer.

Dans cette nouvelle rencontre il y a des bonnes intentions des Parties participantes, mais il y a un mécontentement généralisé des ONGs.

La preuve est la diminution d'ONGs participantes à cette COP. Si nous demandons leur la raison, leurs réponses est claire- il manque des ressources économiques.

Il est évident qu'être 15 jours dans une autre ville, un autre pays, ça coûte cher, vraiment cher. C'est aussi une autre critique, la durée de la Conférence, une semaine ça suffirait. Réduire ces Conférences à la moitié de temps.

Le fait est que les ONG de-

mandent de l'action de façon urgente. Que les Etats agissent. Projets concrets, priorités précises, activités réelles.

Quelques participants des ONGs participantes à la COP pensent que jusqu'à présent cette Convention ne sert à rien, surtout pour les pays africains. La perte de sol continue à augmenter, la désertification ne diminue pas.

Ou on vire de 180° et les Parties s'implique, et s'occupent surtout de l'Afrique, ou cette Convention sera un échec

Nous avons ces prochains jours pour voir ce qu'il se passera dans ces deux prochaines années. Nous y verrons. □

Sonia Ortiga

Ecologistas en Acción

Desertification for water over-exploitation

The process of over-exploitation of the aquifers of the high basin of the Guadiana is producing the drying of the national park of the Stage of Daimiel and other wetlands of La Mancha, constituting the process of desertification of major relevance and extension in Spain. To stop this situation the environmental NGOs, Ecologistas en Acción, Greenpeace, SEO/BirdLife and WWF/Adena, will announce diverse measures of performance, being one of them the request to the UNESCO to retreat the qualification of reservation of the biosphere of the humid spot that possess the set formed by Las Tablas de Daimiel and the wetlands. Equally, they will explain the

defeat that supposes the special plan of the high place Guadiana, promoted by the department of environment and the hydrographic confederacy of the Guadiana, in its attempt to recover the aquifers on exploited areas and the wetlands linked to them. That is on the verge of being approved. Ecologistas en Acción considers that it is time for the desertification in La Mancha Wetlands to be brought up to the international panorama. For the ecologists it is a painful but necessary measure to withdraw the qualification of reservations of the biosphere of La Mancha Wetlands so that the agricultural and hydrologic policies are reconsidered for the region. □

Georgia is in Europe!

Interview to Nino Sulkhaniashvili, representing the Georgian NGO Union of Sustainable Development, ECOVISION at COP 8; Nino is geographer and expert in GIS

Two fellow citizens from Georgia are attending the Conference from their own position and assuming the responsibility for their task: one of them is the official, or governmental representation and, the other is Nino, representing the NGO. Besides their main different points of view, both of them, have the same aim: attending this Conference, they can be heard, and can gather information from this international event in Madrid, COP 8.

Union of Sustainable development - EcoVision - NGO - was found in 2001 in order to show, to expose, and to focus the processes of the sustainable development, to contribute to the sensibilization for life quality, and to find a way for the application of the legislation for an environment policy requirement looking for an environmental protection, the biodiversity, and the conservation of a socio-cultural legacy, with respect to main values, always taking account to scientific knowledge, and popular knowledge.

Among its main national projects, there is the edition of a handbook of environment, and its integration into some academic activities; this manual is free and it is distributed in Georgia universities. An important project too is the publication of a newspaper Littoral Newspaper, issued every four months, distributed free in universities together with a yearly special number about degradation. EcoVision works in a local, regional and national field in Caucasus region.

Georgia is a Eurasian country in the Caucasus at the east coast of the Black Sea. It is bordered on the north by Russia, on the south by Turkey and Armenia, and on the east by Azerbaijan. Its capital is Tiflis. It is a small country of about 70,000 square kilometres, with one of the most dominant geographical features, and different topography of the old Soviet Republics.

The Greater Caucasus Mountain Range separates Georgia from the North Caucasian Republics of Russia. The southern portion of the country is bound-

ed by the Lesser Caucasus Mountains. The Greater Caucasus Mountain Range is much higher in elevation than the Lesser Caucasus Mountains (with the highest peaks rising more than 5,000 meters (16,400ft.) above sea level: this geography and the climate have contributed to the isolation of many people concentrated in small and big villages.

Earthquakes, and landslides in these areas are common, and they determine the style of life (1989, in Ajaria, hundreds of people were displaced to the southwest of Georgia, and two in 1991 in the center and the north of the country besides Osetia). The topography and the climate bring a fluvial network defined by two main rivers plains the Mtkvari and Alazani that have been deforested for agricultural purposes. Rioni river, the longest from the west of the country, flowing down the The Greater Caucasus Mountain Range into the Black Sea at Poti.

Throughout Georgia's modern history agriculture and tourism have been principal economic sectors, due to the country's climate and topography: Black Sea Coasts, agriculture citrus, tea and grapes, wine; but also mining, extraction of minerals as manganese, copper, together with a small industrial sector that produces metals, machinery, chemicals and textiles. Most of its energy needed is imported, including natural gas and petroleum. Its main energy sources comes from hydrolic power.

"About 40% of the territory of the country is covered by forests, and about 95% of Georgia's forests are located in mountain inclines and serve as a soil protection and water regulation forests as well as forests against erosion." (from Nino Sulkhaniashvili's presentation) Since the 19th century, the area covered by forests has considerably diminished.

"In 1994 Georgia signed the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. In 1999 the Parliament of Georgia ratified the Con-



vention and on 21 October 1999 Georgia became the Party to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification." (from Nino Sulkhaniashvili's presentation) And, nothing practical has been done since then: the two main priorities for the Government of Georgia are politics and economy, desertification is not at all included in any program, nor as a perspective, though it is to hope that the new government will pay more attention to this problem.

About Nino's main opinion about COP 8, two sides of the same coin:

The positive one: it is a very special and important event that contributes give and get information about other countries, to exchange ideas, proposals, not only from the meeting and agenda, which brings the opportunity to diversify the possibilities of communication, and the best, to understand how other countries have found solutions to the problems related to desertification, and then compare with similar situations in our respective country.

The negative one: following the Statement of NGOs Present in the UNCCP COP8, Nino has felt disappointed with the small participation shown but the assistants: no questions, no comments, ..., may be because that was at the end of the day of yesterday... but not the end of the problem. □

Project Drynet: an initiative giving future to the dry zones

Drynet is a network of fourteen public organisations which work in four areas of the world which are at risk of desertification (Europe, Africa, South America and Africa).

This network works with the immediate goal of including the civil society in actions against desertification in their regions and facilitating their participation in NAPs (National Action Programmes to combat desertification). Despite not having sufficient academic knowledge, civil society groups have practical knowledge which in some cases is thousands of years old and of great worth. This knowledge gives civil society a great capacity to adapt to new crisis situations and since it is civil society that will be applying the measures taken in these programmes, it must have an equal voice in the development of these programmes.

Drynet tries to include civil society in the development of policies on fight against desertification, since they are sometimes avoided or not integrated into the programme or not given priority.

Drynet looks to create unity between different organisations that work at a local level as they can be NGOs and different organisations from the civil society. These organisations are closer to understanding the real needs of the population, while the different scientific communities see the theoretical necessities from a distance and

can work in a same region covering different subjects like climate change or biodiversity.

Another point of work is to improve the accessibility to the available resources at international level for people in the zones at risk of desertification. There is a great deal of ignorance especially on the access to development funding available to developed countries to initiate programmes in areas which are susceptible to desertification

An inventory of all the different organizations which work in each zone is being compiled which will serve as a way of diffusing this information.

One of the activities that is being carried out by Drynet is to present different experiences of successful initiatives at local, national and international levels and from diverse forums which will support the exchange of experiences. Thus, it is hoped that soon we will be able to see this information on the web page (www.dry-net.org) including 100 different success stories that are being carried out around the world.

At an international level, Drynet participates in different discussion forums like COP, which aim to give civil society living in areas of high risk of desertification a voice and raising awareness of some of the main problems in these regions, like migration or climate change.

One of the next activities is the publication of a small newsletter about the different activities that are being carried out which will enable the diffusion of some of those experiences of success and will also include an agenda with activities at international level. □

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

SIDE EVENTS

6 September

13:00 h. *Presentation of the I World gathering of nomadic and transhumant pastoralists*

13:00 h. *Biofuels Development in Drylands-Panacea or Empty Promise? Standpoint and role of UNCCD Actors*

18:00 h. *Cambio climático, deuda ecológica, desertificación y refugiados ambientales. Organize: Ecologistas en Acción*

18:00 h. *Experimenting a fund for the Social Society to combat desertification in the Sahel: lessons learnt from the IREMLCD program. Organize: CILSS*



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The editorial team welcomes concise articles for publication in ECO.

Please give your articles to eco@ecologistasenaccion.org

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