

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



Le transfert de technologie pour lutter contre la désertification

Une expérience au Burkina Faso

Cet article est proposé par M. Michael YANOGO coordonnateur du Centre Ecologique Albert Schweitzer du Burkina Faso (CEAS-BF).

La technologie est indéniablement l'outil avec lequel les nations riches de la planète ont forgé leur supériorité économique et sociale sur celles en voie de développement.

Les ressources naturelles ne font pourtant pas défaut aux pays aujourd'hui économiquement défavorisés....

[p. 2]

The responsibility of businesses in desertification

We have spent days demanding the participation of civil society in the political process, denouncing the inaction of the governments, identifying the problems, attributing responsibilities, and looking for possible solutions. However, nobody has talked about the role of the transnational companies in the problem of desertification. Deforestation, the loss of soil productivity caused by intensive agriculture, the expansion of the biofuels market, the loss of biodiversity, the loss of agricultural diversity and independence and so on are not innocent processes that occur without cause. A hand exists behind executor. In 2005, ten companies controlled the entire world-wide mar-

ket for plant seeds. Seeds are the key to the food chain that feeds the world and are the heart of rural life and agriculture. These companies are gaining more and more power to determine what is being cultivated and where. This privatization of seeds is selling out millions people whose lives depend on their crops. All over the world transnational agriculture companies are displacing small farmers and their traditional techniques and replacing them with intensive agriculture dependant on agrochemicals and devastating for the earth. They abuse water resources and generate great benefits for only a very few.

[p. 2]

IN THIS ISSUE

The responsibility of businesses in desertification	1
Le transfert de technologie pour lutter contre la désertification	2
Genre and Climate Change in the ODS	3
Plant for the Planet	4
NAP: a tool for support to community initiatives	5
Priorities and measures to combat land degradation and desertification in Belarus	6
"It is possible to do things in another way"	7
Environmental policy, one of CONGAD's concerns	8

One of the ten seed companies is Bayer Crop Science. We are among the many who felt surprise and unease at the presence of the company at the COP. It allowed them to sell an image of a company worried about the advance of desertification. But companies like this hold the responsibility, like those involved blocking access to generic medicines, for the clear relation between desertification and poverty.

It is also the transnational companies that are behind the massive expansion in monocultures due to the production of biofuels. This, along with creating a model of agriculture almost designed to lead to desertification, is also happening at the cost of biodiversity of tropical rainforests across the world.

Although it is not within the objectives of this meeting, at some point the international community needs to re-think how it defines the often cited idea of Corporate Social Responsibility. The present criteria are allowing some of the most polluting companies and those responsible for causing devastating social repercussions to be heralded as 'socially responsible'. In any case, the Convention will have to review its organisational policy concerning access for transnational companies to events like the COP if it does not want to see its credibility damaged. □



... Des richesses à l'état brut ne demandent qu'à être exploitées, transformées, valorisées.

Si la menace de la désertification a atteint un niveau particulièrement alarmant pour les pays du continent africain, c'est en raison de leur extrême vulnérabilité économique. Combattre la désertification, c'est aussi poser les bases d'une croissance prenant appui sur les éléments fondamentaux d'un développement durable.

Le Centre Ecologique Albert Schweitzer qui prône " l'alliance de l'écologie et de l'économie " comme philosophie vers ce développement durable, s'y est engagé depuis 1982 au Burkina Faso, en optant pour la stratégie qui passe par la lutte contre la désertification au travers du transfert des techniques et technologies appropriées.

Cette stratégie, qui procède au moyen de la recherche appliquée et le transfert des acquis aux acteurs locaux, a engrangé un capital de " savoir-faire " vulgarisé par les acteurs des secteurs d'activités diverses notamment les artisans les paysans et les transformateurs des productions locales.

Ainsi, plus d'une vingtaine de créations, d'innovations et de techniques de production dans les énergies renouvelables et l'artisanat utilitaire dans l'agro-écologie et l'agro-transformation sont réalisées et diffusées, et plus de trente (30) modules de formation sont planifiés chaque année.

Un transfert de technologie, solution économique et environnementale:

L'expérience du CEAS Burkina dans la valorisation de la mangue:

Depuis 1995, le Centre Ecologique Albert Schweitzer du Burkina a mené avec l'aide de ses partenaires suisses des recherches suivies de vulgarisation sur la valorisation des fruits et des légumes. La mangue, dont le paysan burkinabé est un des grands producteurs en Afrique de l'ouest mais est cependant confronté à une réelle difficulté de commercialisation (excès pour la consommation locale, difficulté d'exportation du frais), a

constitué le cas central de cette recherche. Des équipements solaires et mixtes ainsi que des techniques de séchage et autres transformations ont été développés et des acteurs locaux formés. La mangue séchée représente à l'heure actuelle un marché potentiel pour les paysans et les PME burkinabé.

Ces expériences de transfert ont parfaitement réussies et se sont avérées être à la fois un puissant vecteur économique et une stratégie de lutte contre la désertification.

Résultats:

Le chiffre d'affaires des échanges commerciaux à l'exportation de la mangue séchée, pour cette campagne qui s'achève, avoisine le milliard (1000 000 000) de francs CFA, soit l'équivalent de 1 524 490 euros. Les paysans et les unités de séchage s'en tirent à très bon compte. Les jeunes de ces exploitations n'envisagent pas l'immigration, une sortie de pauvreté est bien amorcée.

Les paysans augmentent les superficies de leurs mangerais en réponse à la forte demande de matière première.

De nouveaux paysans (des agro-transformateurs et autres) s'investissent dans le reboisement en manguiers.

En conclusion, le transfert de technologie est un besoin impérieux dans les luttes que mènent les pays défavorisés contre la désertification et la pauvreté. L'expérience montre que, économiquement et écologiquement, le transfert de technologie produit des avancées significatives.

Lutter contre la désertification, c'est avant tout lutter contre la pauvreté. De nouveaux engagements de la COP8 seraient une réponse à l'attente d'un grand nombre de pays menacés par la désertification. □

Michaël YANOGO
CEAS Burkina Faso
Adresse mail: ceas-rb@fasonet.bf
bfmyanogo@gmail.com
Site web: www.ceas-ong.net
Tél. 00226 50 34 30 08

Genre and Climate Change in the ODS

The session began with the conclusions and requests put forward by Dilcia Garcia of ACPA-RIOD-ALC: “We ask that all groups take into consideration the establishment of a network of women researching the management of natural resources within NGOs” as well as integrating women “into every stage of decision making in the conventions on climate change, biodiversity and the fight against the desertification.” Article 3 on empowerment and equality of women was recalled: “we cannot talk about equality without the active and complete participation of half of the world.”

Immediately afterwards the discussion between those present began. We can draw some positive conclusions on what the government delegates said, although talked sometimes rhetorically. The spokeswoman from the Global Mechanism defended the establishment of networks, using an example of African women as one in which people exchange experiences and ensure that women are able to participate in all areas.

The country representatives talked about the necessity of greater incorporation of women and the existence of special plans dedicated to the integration the women.

Finally the speakers voiced their opinions again. Dilcia Garcia argued that the situation needed to move towards “a discourse of action. We think globally but we act locally”. For her part, Jacqueline Nkoyok from the confederation of NGOs d’Environnement et de Développement de l’Afrique Centrale argued that to advance it is necessary to have confidence in women due to their specialised knowledge. We must give them the capacity to develop, which will in turn enable them to contribute to improving the environment.” Finally Yunuen of the Montero of Foundation IPADE intervened: “the NGOs are carrying out projects throughout the world at a local level, but this does not serve for anything if there is no economic and political support”.

After considering the subject in general let us move on to discuss the relationship between climate change and desertification. On this issue some representatives from NGOs have talked about the refugee problem. Sina Maiga Damba of the AFAD-RIOD-AFRICA asked the following question: “How is it possible that governments try to stop the mobility of human beings when capital is being allowed to move freely?” Emmanuel Seck of ENDA offered real examples of work being done to stop the advance of desertification and to turn barren land into areas of sustainable agriculture; it is fundamental that these examples are taken into account, as they can show other governments how things can be done differently and that government incompetence can be replaced by effective actions from civil society. Can you imagine the day when politicians understood that they must work with and for the people? Silvia Picchioni of ASPA-RIOD-ALC argued that “traditional knowledge can and must contribute solutions. Large investments are needed to provide adequate education standards.”

We have heard the opinion of the Senegalese Shepherd’s Cooperative. They argued that their method of land use was sustainable: “Our way of grazing is very well adapted, but less and less valued. It is vital to guarantee the right of indigenous and traditional groups to use their lands in their own



Dilcia Garcia

ways, as it forms a part of their cultural identity”. We can cover little more of all of the statements made by the delegations, but the powerful words of the Cuban delegate deserve a special mention. They drew applause from all attending NGO representatives; “The world is falling apart and being destroyed and we do nothing. We must make sacrifices and we must ensure that the rich countries do not continue with their pattern of consumption.” Discussing the existence of not one but several agreements, he affirmed that “we are dividing the global vision of the problem” and added that we must spread solidarity because “the most threatened species is humankind.”

Representatives of civil society spoke, contributed solutions, proposed changes and concrete actions for the governments to take note. □



Plant for the Planet

“Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign,” is a worldwide campaign launched by the United Nations Environment Programme that encourages several organizations, people, communities and governments to commit themselves to planting at least one billion trees worldwide during 2007.

The campaign has a web site (www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign) that shows news, the commitments, a photo gallery, and other information about the campaign.

The campaign, inspired by Professor Wangari Maathai Nobel Peace Prize laureate for 2004 and founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement, aimed to replace the huge amount of trees deforested and burnt down in forest fires.

In Cuba an organizations, foundations and associations network has committed itself to planting 135 million trees, that will cover 12.6% of the world's overall goal, and they have already complied with a part of this commitment.

In Spain the NGO Ecologistas en Acción pledged to plant 110000 trees with the help of their nearly 300 ecologist local groups supported by neighbours, trade unions, schools and citizens spread about the country. They have already started to reforest and 124650 trees and bushes of indigenous species have already been planted since the beginning of the year, what means that they have honoured amply

their pledge.

The Peninsula is mainly affected by forest fires, uncontrolled urban development, new transport infrastructures, and the ploughing up of mountainous forest areas to grow fruit and olive trees. These are responsible for deforestation and degradation of natural ecosystems, resulting in a more desert-like landscape, drier wetlands, loss of biodiversity and climate change.

In Spain the forested area has decreased by 250783 hectares in the last decade, and forest fires are a very worrying issue, since more than 1 million hectares have been burnt down in the last 7 years.

One of the main causes of desertification in the world is deforestation, that continues at an alarming rate, about 13 million hectares per year (an area the

size of Greece or Nicaragua). Africa and South America have the largest net loss of forests. This is due to the unsustainable forestry to obtain wood for timber and fuel, the conversion of forests to agricultural land, and forest fires started by men to grow agro-industry crops, such as, soya or oil palm, forest crops of exotic fast-growing species that deplete the soil and drastically reduce biodiversity (the so called “green deserts”).

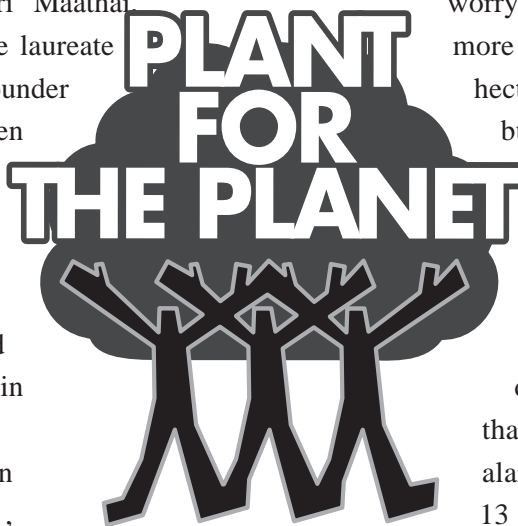
The campaign will continue till the end of the year, since planting conditions are different depending on the region. □

Poverty reduction is today the primary focus of policy initiation in most of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Most SSA countries have defined the issues of poverty reduction in their various development policy papers and documents after realizing that, significant poverty reduction will be achieved only by putting in place policies and institutions that are conducive to economic growth. There is a growing consensus all over the world that development must meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own needs. This has come out very clearly in the past three World Summits on sustainable development; ie. Stockholm (1972) to Rio (1992) and Johannesburg (2002).

However, endemic poverty, unsustainable life-styles and environmental degradation continue to hinder the efforts of economic growth. SSA countries continue to be threatened by decreased forest cover, loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, drought, desertification, pollution and migration just to mention a few.

Various efforts have been put in place by SSA countries and other global community to address the issues mentioned with little achievement due to low levels of community involvement in project implementation. The Governments have now recognized the roles of communities in achieving sustainability in economic growth.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) entered into force on 26th December 1996 and many SSA countries have already ratified it. The main objective of the UNCCD is to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and / or desertification particularly in Africa. The UNCCD, although a global agreement, is essentially an African initiative whose activities and



NAP: a tool for support to community initiatives

programmes emphasize people's participation in programme and project formulation and implementation to combat desertification.

The National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (NAP):

The UNCCD calls for implementation of activities aimed at preventing and / or reducing land degradation, rehabilitating partly degraded lands and reclaiming of degraded lands through National Action Programmes (NAPs).

One of main obligation of the parties to the Convention was to develop National Action Programmes (NAPs) which serve as guiding frameworks for the implementation of the Convention. In most of the party countries, the process of formulating the NAP involved the participation of a wide range of stakeholders through consultative workshops conducted at local and national levels for stakeholders to deliberate and make recommendations on the NAP process. Most countries carried out wide stakeholder sensitization and consultations in a participatory manner and communities gave their views on issues they perceived critical in combating land degradation and addressing food security.

The National Action Programme also seeks for the establishment of a mechanism to facilitate effective involvement of local communities in policy and decision making processes. The mechanism may be achieved by encouraging communities to participate in activities which reduce poverty or by supporting community investments in alternative forms of livelihoods.

The status of NAP Implementation:

Significant external resources have

been committed for the purpose of addressing sustainable development in drylands of the world but the bulk of such development assistance has gone to meet emergency/humanitarian relief triggered by drought and other environmental shocks. Interventions in dry land areas have often targeted large scale projects such as irrigation works, mining activities and other such initiatives that hardly benefit local people. Rural dry land populations are dependent on the environment and natural resource base for food, water and fuel. Degradation of these assets makes it increasingly difficult for populations to obtain their basic needs.

Realizing this scenario, most developing country parties are in the different stages of mainstreaming NAPs in their development programmes and projects with a view to ensuring that the issues are within the policy documents like Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP).

Despite the governments putting in place all the strategic plans in place, it has been noted that many communities still do not have sufficient information on causes and implications of desertification and drought. They also lack information on the requirements and provision of the UNCCD. As a result of this, communities at the local level have initiated projects, which could act as very effective tools to combat desertification and drought. Nevertheless, it has been noted that they require more capacity to increase their ability to handle desertification issues. The communities require capacity-building participatory planning approaches and direct support

to their identified initiatives in combating desertification.

Partnership-Building

To further enhance partnership building and to add value to initiatives already established, the following strategies are proposed:

1. Inventorying potential partners and establishing networks
2. Creating partnership fora
3. Providing opportunities for partners to support community initiatives on a sustainable basis

Resource Mobilisation

Desertification being a major challenge to the national economy and to the well being of a large population of the poor needs serious attention. It is necessary to source for funds to ensure sustainability of initiatives geared towards combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought at community level.

Constraints in achieving NAPs objectives:

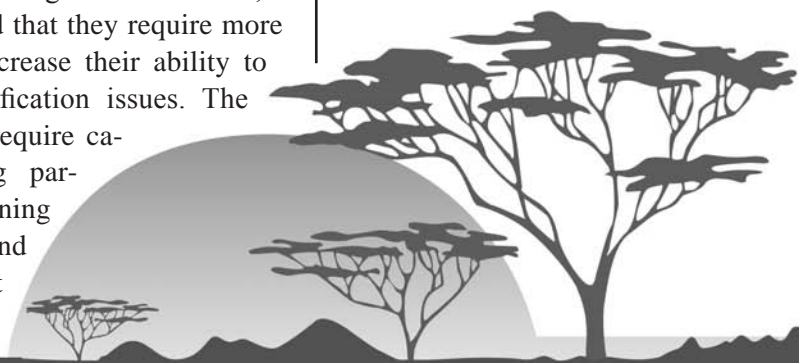
Inadequate resources and capacity, uncoordinated approach and duplication, inadequate monitoring processes are some of the key challenges to the implementation of the NAPs despite that most of the NAPs emphasize documentation, information sharing and replication of lessons learned as key in achieving sustainable development. □

Frank Msafiri

Char, National NGOs/CBOs

Coordinating Committee on

Desertification in Kenya (NCCD-K)



Priorities and measures to combat land degradation and desertification in Belarus

Belarus, country of Central and Eastern Europe, became a full party to the UNCCD on 17 November 2001. Land degradation is one of the “hottest” environmental issues in Belarus, and is one of the constraints that are believed to hamper its social and economic development. The roots of land degradation in its various forms lie in the current practices of land use, failure to meet standards and rules of wise use and protection of land resources.

For last decade, land degradation processes have shown a tendency to grow and this is believed to be linked with climate change, an increased number of droughts, frosts, thaws, rainstorms and other extreme climatic events. For the period from 1989 to 2006 there were 14 years with dry weather conditions.

Bearing in mind both natural processes and land use practices, land degradation is known to be in following main forms:

- Water and wind erosion of soils;
- Chemical, including radioactive contamination of lands;
- Degradation of and/or reducing quality of soils, especially this is true for peat soils, through use in agriculture;
- Land degradation as a result of the excavation of peat, construction materials, carrying out of road and other construction works, as well as in areas flooded by man intentionally or accidentally;
- Degradation of drained peat soils affected by fires;
- Degradation of forested land as a result of unwise forest management and forest fires;
- Land degradation caused by excessive pressure incidental to recreation and other human activities;

Land degradation and peat extraction for fuel are the two by far largest contributing factors to degradation of peat-rich wetlands. They consist above 14% of country's total area. At present around 1,4 million ha of peaty soils have been drained specifically for agricultural purposes. The rate of depletion of the peat layer in drained peaty soils ranges between 1 to 12 cm for year, or 3 to 20 ton per year and more. As a result of this are about 190 thousand ha peat soils with no peat layer left, while on another 18,2 thousand ha the sand has cropped out.

The most dangerous kind of soil contamination known in Belarus is that by radionuclides, in consequence of the Chernobyl disaster. A similar scale of radioactive soil contamination is to be found now nowhere else in the world. The affected area covers 21% of the territory of Belarus, including 1,4 million ha of agricultural and 1,6 million ha of forest lands.

One of the priority policies in preventing land degradation is to increase the efficiency of land use. The efficiency here is understood as achieving a useful result economically, environmentally, socially etc. Measures taken in this area should be based on the following key principles:

- Priority of optimum land use;
- The integrated character of spatial development;
- Concordance of private and public interests;
- Land and agrarian reforms being entwined;
- Setting up a system of incentives for various categories of land users to promote wise use of land and taking anti-land degradation measures;
- Involving public society in the im-



plementation of combating land degradation.

Preventing processes that lead to their degradation are included in priority policies the Belarus government pursues, with assistance from the public, to make our environment a better place to live in, for the benefit of generation to come.

Land resources are our national asset, valued natural and cultural heritage, and the way we use and protect them will have a lot to do with our future well-being and that of our environment, and, for this reason, our common and successful effort at addressing land degradation is in fact something we owe to the future generations. □

Valentin Yatsukno
Vice-President of the NGO
“Belarusian Geographical Society”,
representative of NGOs in the COP 8

“It is civil society that identifies the problem and proposes the improvements to the politicians”

“It is possible to do things in another way”

As far as Dai Guangcui is concerned, who is an advisory member of China Society of Forest Economics, one of the main problems in China is that civil society is not represented, as NGOs do not have influence or the possibility of making the politicians listen. The voice of civil society is often represented through intellectuals and academic institutions, but this reflects the breach that exists between the government and citizens. Despite this, Dai Guangcui believes that efforts are being made to integrate civil society into the decision making process. She thinks that it is not possible to fight desertification without considering all the actors. “All parts of society must be involved. It is the government that formulates the policies, but it is civil society that identifies the problem and proposes the improvements to the politicians” she affirms.

The NGOs demand is that there is a move from theory to action. They argue that it is fundamental that each government assumes its responsibility and develops concrete policies adapted to the various situations. Dai Guangcui believes that we need to provide poor countries with financial and technological capacity, so that they can develop social policies. Nevertheless, she believes that what China needs is not international plans but individual politicians that will work to involve local governors. “In an international sense what we must do is share the experiences we have to provide political solutions” she explains. We must integrate our different experiences and apply them to other situations where they are applicable.

Clearly education is one of the determining factors in the fight against desertification; the development of educational programs that contribute to create a consciousness of co-existence with earth and that facilitate the use of non-aggressive techniques with the en-

vironment. “We must show people that it is possible to do things in another way. We have the technology and we have the energy. Let us contribute what we can so that the local governments adapt the solutions to each situation” she concludes.

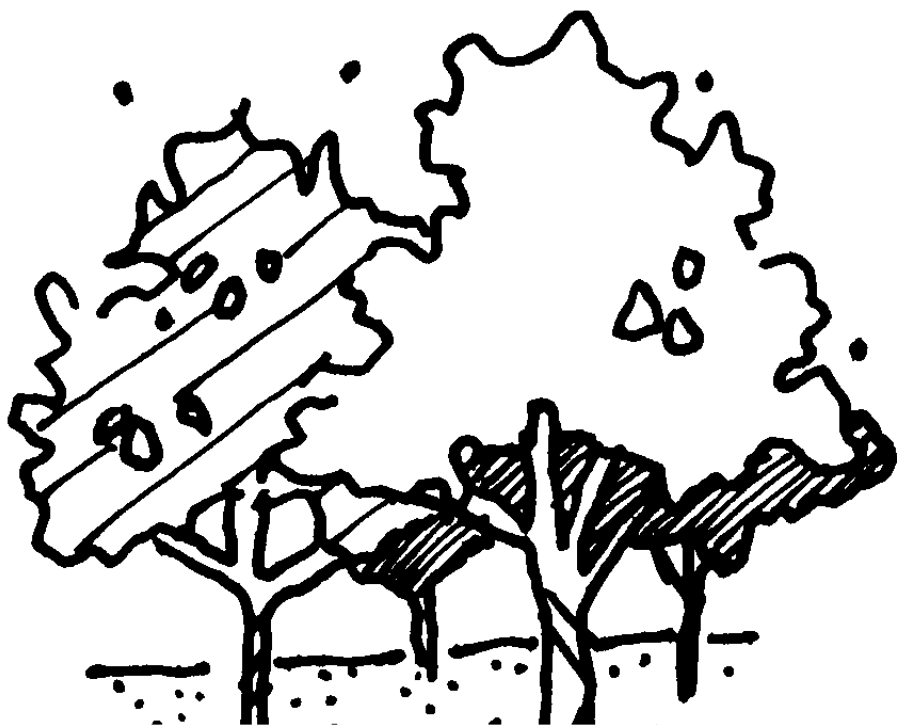
In China the area most affected by desertification is located in the north. According to Dai Guangcui the degradation is mainly due to human activity as a direct consequence of increasing economic development. In order to restrain this process programmes of reforestation and soil binding with vegetation have been implemented. Due to the previous lack of investment, these measures are only now being initiated to counteract the problems. However at the moment they are being developed in an acceptable way.

The migration caused by desertification is one of the most concerning consequences. In China the government has taken charge of organising the migration flows in an attempt to provide farmers with new land. “This, as a part of a larger centralised government program of reforestation, ensures sustainable land for animal grazing

and controls some of the migration” she asserts. Another of the measures is to support farmers to use new alternative energy sources and educate them to consider their land as a long term resource and not only think about immediate economic gains.

One of the priorities for this COP must be to find successful processes [to fight desertification]. We do not have time to continue waiting for and delaying measures. “More action is necessary to fight desertification; more policies, more money, greater involvement” she concludes. He added that an example to follow could be the one of the Society of Environmental Businesses. It is an NGO financed by large companies that fights against desertification.

Finally Dai Guangcui shared her thoughts on the state of civil society in China. At the moment the role of NGOs in the country is quite small and they are not well represented. Despite this, she considers that some advances have taken place and that in the future more possibilities will exist. China’s economic development will bring with it progress in civil liberties. □



Environmental policy, one of CONGAD's concerns

VORÉ GANA SECK is the Director of Green Senegal and President of CONGAD (Conseil des Organisations Non Gouvernementales d'Appui au Développement). Created in 1982, CONGAD is a coalition of 8 national platforms from West and Central Africa (Mali, Senegal, Burkina, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Guinea, and Chad) whose aim is to develop expertise within the civil society and harmonise their position on development issues. It also seeks to develop a dialogue for an exchange of information and ideas in order to promote solidarity in the work of supporting grassroots-based development initiatives to disadvantaged communities. "CONGAD has met the World Social Forum to work together in the pursuit of a stronger voice in development issues", explains Voré. Also part of REPAOC (Network of West and Central African NGO platforms), their common objectives are to create a new partnership for the development of Africa, to reinforce the capacities of national platforms in matters of advocacy, services and communication, and to ensure greater representation for West and Central African NGOs at regional and international level platforms, both governmental and non-governmental. In addition, Voré, explains, other of their concerns are wars and circulation of weapons, WTO and agricultural trade, debt and development, economic partnership agreements, environment protection, biodiversity, and desertification. In relation to the last issues mentioned,



Voré explains that wrong environmental practises have a very negative impact of food security and social structures, and "are pushing young people to leave the country".

The United Nation Democracy Fund has awarded a grant totalling 250.500 \$ to help to lay the foundations of network structures, attend international conferences, and lobby and advocate for a better livelihood in Africa.

In 2003, CONGAD began a partnership with VANI (India) to form a coalition of national network NGOs throughout the world to address the concerns that NGOs face on an international level especially in regards to matters of funding and policy formation by multilateral agencies such as

the World Bank, the United Nations, and the World Trade Organization. This partnership is in coordination with the national NGO networks ABONG from Brazil, Coordination SUD from France, Concord from Europe, and Acción from Chile. "We want to extend to all African countries so we are looking for a big African network. We believe that, without a good environmental policy, the development of Africa will not be possible." □



ECO is the voice of all the civil society representatives participating in COP8 in Madrid. They thank Ecologistas en Acción for the daily production of this bulletin.

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.

Members of the Editorial Board:

Teresita Tellería – Pronaturaleza, Cuba

Emmanuel Seck – ENDA- TM, Senegal

Khadija Razavi – CENESTA, Iran

Daniëlle de Man – ENID

Eva Izquierdo- Ecologistas en Acción

Samuel Martín-Sosa – Ecologistas en Acción



ecologistasenaccion.org/desertificacion

ECOLOGISTAS
en acción