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SUPPORT

OTHER FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES

ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUDANO-SAHELIAN OFFICE (UNSO) AND OTHER ASSISTANCE TO DROUGHT-STRICKEN COUNTRIES IN AFRICA

Implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian Region

Report of the Administrator

Summary

In response to the request of the Governing Council at its twenty-eighth session (decision 81/4), the Administrator is submitting an annual report on the implementation in the Sudano-Sahelian region of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. The report describes the further enlargement of the geographical scope of the desertification control mandate of UNSO, the principal thrusts of its project identification, implementation and resource mobilization operations, and the role UNSO has played in co-ordination and interorganizational co-operation in the exercise of its desertification control mandate in 1981.

The Council's attention is drawn to paragraph 37, which recommends continued UNDP support to the joint venture.

INTRODUCTION

- 1. This report is submitted in accordance with paragraph 6 of Governing Council decision 81/4, adopted during its twenty-eighth session on 19 June 1981, which requests the Administrator to continue to report annually to the Governing Council on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region. Following the last session of the Governing Council, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1981/72 adopted on 14 July 1981, inter alia, noted with satisfaction the progress made by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) in assisting the Governments of countries in the region in implementing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and welcomed the decisions of the Governing Councils of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the further continuation of the joint venture of the two programmes aimed at ensuring the timely and effective provision of assistance to the countries of the region.
- 2. Subsequently, the General Assembly, in resolution 36/190 of 17 December 1981, inter alia, took note with satisfaction of the progress made by UNSO in assisting the Governments of the region under a joint venture of UNDP and UNEP in implementing the Plan of Action, commended the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Director of UNEP for the effective and co-ordinated manner in which they have continued to support the joint venture; noted with satisfaction the decisions of the Governing Councils of the two Programmes to expand and strengthen their support to the joint venture and invited them to continue their support so that UNSO might carry out its expanded responsibilities at a level commensurate with the pressing needs of the region; and urged all Governments, organizations of the United Nations system and other organizations to continue to respond favourably, bilaterally or through UNSO or any other intermediary, to requests for assistance from Governments of the region in combating desertification.
- 3. At present, 19 countries of the Sudano-Sahelian and adjacent regions receive assistance through UNSO in implementing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. These are Benin, Cape Verde, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Cameroon and Upper Volta. 1/ The 19 countries now covered by UNSO's desertification control mandate have a population of 212 million and an area of 12.3 million square kilometres, of which close to 80 per cent are arid or semi-arid, compared to 80 per cent for the world as a whole.
- 4. 1981 was a year that witnessed an intensification of UNSO resource mobilization efforts as well as a significant increase in consultations with donor and recipient countries alike. These contacts included the initiation of a number of important joint UNSO/donor fact-finding, programming and project formulation missions to countries suffering from desertification. As a result, UNSO was able, despite the currently difficult world economic climate and the resulting difficulties for multilateral assistance programmes, to maintain and even to increase slightly the degree of donor involvement and the level of resources mobilized for assistance to the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region in combating desertification.

^{1/} See UNEP Governing Council Decisions 6/11 B, 8/17 and 9/22 UNDP Governing Council decisions 25/10, 80/45 and 81/4 and General Assembly resolutions 33/88, 35/72 and 36/190.

- 5. Concurrently with its resource mobilization efforts, UNSO expanded its activities in the countries of the region. Thus, in addition to the various ongoing projects it had been supporting, 35 new desertification control activities were funded during 1981, 2/ as a result of financial commitments by various donors to the United Nations Trust Fund for Sudano-Sahelian Activities (hereafter referred to as the Trust Fund). The total earmarking for these desertification control activities amounted to \$7.6 million.
- 6. Following the addition of new countries eligible for UNSO support in implementing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, UNSO also fielded, in 1981, planning and programming missions, namely to Benin, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. A similar mission also went to Uganda. These missions, which included representatives of the agencies concerned of the United Nations system, worked closely with the Governments, assessed the problem of desertification in the countries, reviewed relevant ongoing activities, and discussed the preparation of national strategies including, as appropriate, the establishment or strengthening of institutional machinery for combating desertification. They identified and formulated with the Governments a total of 43 priority projects, requiring \$44.2 million in external assistance. With the planning and programming mission reports fully endorsed by the Governments concerned, UNSO has started its resource mobilization efforts for the new desertification control programmes formulated in these four countries. Special efforts will be made to meet rapidly the more acute needs for anti-desertification assistance that exist in these countries.
- 7. With the completion of the planning and programming missions to the above-noted countries, only one of the 19 countries covered by the UNSO desertification control mandate, i.e., Chad, has not yet been visited by an UNSO planning and programming mission. Consultations are taking place regarding the possible timing of a mission to that country.

I. MAIN FEATURES OF DESERTIFICATION CONTROL PROGRAMME OPERATIONS IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION

- 8. The principal thrusts of UNSO desertification control operations during the past year have been in combating deforestation, in range management, water resources management, sand-dune fixation, and planning and co-ordination. These activities focus on the main causes and manifestations of desertification in the region and respond to the priorities set by the Governments and their specific requests for UNSO assistance.
- 9. It should be kept in mind, when reviewing the activities summarized below, that in carrying out its mandates, UNSO takes fully into consideration the substantive lessons to be drawn from past and ongoing related undertakings being carried out under UNDP and other auspices. In extending its support to the

^{2/}These included 7 large-scale projects (over \$400,000 each), 16 small-scale projects, 4 planning and programming missions and 8 project development missions.

Governments of the Sudano-Sahelian region for the purpose of formulating and implementing their priority projects, UNSO draws fully on the UNDP resident representative for both programme and administrative backstopping, so as to make sure that UNSO-supported activities have proper linkages with other undertakings being implemented in the same sectors or subsectors. UNDP The representatives are thus of particular importance to UNSO; their participation in the formulation and implementation of UNSO-supported projects, as well as their supervisory, monitoring and evaluation functions in respect of UNSO-sponsored activities are essential for the effective discharge of UNSO mandates in the Sahel. As in the past, effective working relationships have continued between UNSO and the UNDP Regional Bureaux for Africa and for Arab States on all relevant programme and operational matters; the Bureaux and UNSO closely co-operate and mutually relate their respective responsibilities at all stages of programme and project formulation and implementation, thus ensuring direct complementarity of all their activities. Regular and productive contacts also exist between UNSO and other substantive sections and services of UNDP.

A. Combating deforestation

10. One of the primary concerns of the Governments of the region, as was highlighted at the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy held in Nairobi from 10 to 21 August 1981, is the widespread cutting of trees and woody shrubs for fuel, construction and general utility purposes — a practice that is one of the major causes of desertification. Practically all of the Sudano-Sahelian countries rely on fuelwood for 80 to 90 per cent of their energy requirements. For this reason, UNSO has been supporting their efforts in the development of wood resources for fuel and other purposes, in the development of renewable substitutes for fuelwood, and in the production of fuel—efficient stoves to conserve energy.

Forestry

UNSO assistance to countries in afforestation expansion of reforestation is reflected in a number of new projects. In Upper Volta, UNSO assisted in the development of three new forestry projects. These include a project for the reforestation and development of the classified Tiogo forest, in the west-central part of the country; a similar project in the department of Sahel in the north, which provides for the planting of the gum arabic producing Acacia senegal and thus can serve the multiple purposes of soil stabilization, the development of a cash crop and the production of fodder and fuelwood; and a village reforestation project in Koudougou, the principal city of the west-central department of the country. In addition to funds available under the UNDP/UNEP joint venture, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) is providing \$96,000 for the preparatory phase of this last project, through an earmarked contribution of \$2 million, which will be reviewed for formal approval in early 1982. In Mali, UNSO is supporting a programme for the establishment of village and industrial forest plantations in Gao. The total cost of the project, which is being executed by the Government, is \$830,000, \$300,000 of which is being provided by UNSO and \$530,000 by the Government. In Niger, UNSO has expanded a project for the development of the green belt around Niamey with a contribution of \$562,000, \$500,000 of which was provided by the Government of Finland through the Trust Fund. UNSO has also agreed to support a new project in the department of Dosso which aims, over a period of 5 years and with full popular participation, at the protection and natural regeneration of gao trees (Acacia albida) over an area of

- 4,000 to 6,000 hectares as well as the establishment of 600 hectares of new plantations. The gao tree is leguminous and drought resistant, contributes to the fertility of the soil, produces fodder for livestock and will also be used to create shelter-belts. SIDA has already contributed \$80,000 to the Trust Fund for the technical assistance component of the project and has agreed, subject to finalization of project details, to finance the external costs of the other components, which are costed at \$1.1 million.
- 12. On a regional basis, UNSO assisted, in co-operation with the Regional Bureau for Arab States, in the preparation of a seminar on the cultivation of jojoba, which was held in early 1982 at Khartoum under the joint auspices of the Government of Sudan, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States and UNSO. The seminar, which included participants from the Sudano-Sahelian region and that of the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA), examined ways by which jojoba, a drought-resistant shrub that produces an oil with extensive industrial, pharmaceutical and other properties, could be planted and grown in desert-prone regions as a cover to inhibit the process of desertification and provide an alternative or supplementary source of income to villagers.

Development of renewable alternatives to fuelwood

- 13. To help reduce the demand for fuelwood and the concomitant cutting of trees and woody shrubs, UNSO is assisting the Sudano-Sahelian countries in developing alternative, renewable sources of energy. In the Gambia and Senegal, feasibility studies are being undertaken for the identification and possible development for fuel of other agricultural waste products, such as ground-nut shells, peat and elephant grass. The study in Senegal is part of a major project for the promotion and use of renewable sources of energy. The project, which will examine, interalia, the possibilities of producing fuel briquettes from agricultural waste as well as peat, is being funded through a contribution of \$625,000 by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) to the Trust Fund.
- 14. Other alternative energy sources which are being explored are wind and solar energy. UNSO recently undertook to support a four-year project involving the installation of wind turbines in urban, village and sparsely populated rural areas of Cape Verde, which has prevailing winds of an intensity and regularity that are favourable for harnessing through windmills. The project, which will be executed by UNDP/Office of Project Execution (OPE) has an estimated cost of \$1,744,000, which will include a Government contribution in kind of \$248,000, \$40,000 from UNSO to finance pre-project activities and an earmarked contribution of \$1,456,000 by DANIDA to the Trust Fund. In Mali, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), as executing agency, is carrying out, under financing from UNSO, a feasibility study for the establishment of a plant for the production of solar energy equipment and materials, including pumps, cooking stoves and solar heaters. This follows a pre-feasibility study carried out in 1980 which showed promising results and used existing knowledge and experience in this field.

Design, development and production of fuel-efficient cooking stoves

15. UNSO is also supporting a regional project of the States members of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), involving the evaluation, testing and pilot production of different kinds of cooking stoves, including clay and sand, cement and metal stoves. SIDA has already contributed to

the financing of the regional team responsible for the co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of this project and has indicated strong interest in participating in the financing of the national projects, under this regional aegis, which will follow in Mali, Niger and Upper Volta. UNSO is also assisting the Gambia, with a \$398,000 contribution from DANIDA, in the production of improved stoves for use in rural areas. The widespread use of these energy efficient stoves is expected to reduce substantially the use of ligneous resources for fuel.

B. Range management

- 16. Rangeland degradation is one of the principal manifestations of desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region. There is a need to protect, as well as to ensure optimum socio-economic returns from the range ecosystem, which provides a livelihood for the major part of the population in the region's northern reaches.
- 17. New projects supported by UNSO include a project in the Sahelian region of Upper Volta, designed to achieve ecologically sound range management. UNSO is contributing an initial \$104,000 to this project, which will be expanded in the future. In mid-1981, UNSO carried out an extended mission to the Sudan, which included representatives of SIDA to look into some of the problems of livestock sector in the north central and western parts of the country. This was followed by a joint UNSO/SIDA project formulation mission in November and December 1981. As a result, agreement has been reached on a project of assistance to the Government of the Sudan in the management of grazing resources around permanent water supplies, for which SIDA has agreed to make a contribution of \$910,000 to the Trust Fund.
- 18. On a regional basis, UNSO is supporting, in an amount of \$267,300 from the Trust Fund, the continuation of a successful post-graduate training programme in pastoral management for nationals of States members of CILSS and of Guinea. With the co-operation of the Institute of the Sahel and of the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as executing agency, training is provided at the Ecole Tropicale Supériere de Médecine Vétérinaire in Dakar, Senegal.

C. Water resources management

19. Because of the paucity and crucial importance of water resources in the Sudano-Sahelian region, UNSO has been increasing assistance to projects involving ground-water development and the optimum utilization, conservation and harvesting of surface-water resources. During the past year, UNSO has continued to support a major project for surface-water and ground-water exploration and utilization in Cape Verde. The project, which is being executed by the Government, is financed in part by a \$770,000 contribution from the Government of Italy to the Trust Fund. UNSO has also expanded a previously approved feasibility study for the operation and management of 36 borehole wells in Mauritania, which were drilled and equipped through a contribution of the African Development Bank (AfDB). The expanded project will involve the protection and development of the areas surrounding the wells through the establishment of small irrigated agricultural schemes and the proper management of the water provided through these wells. The project complements another project being supported by UNSO with contributions from the Government, UNSO, UNDP, the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the United Nations Emergency Operation (UNEO) for the collection, conservation and

optimum utilization of surface water through the construction and rehabilitation of small earthen dams. UNSO is also assisting the Government of Niger in the formulation of a major anti-erosion programme in the upper basin of the Maggia River. A programme for the construction of small dams, for irrigation and saline water intrusion control purposes, is also under elaboration in the Gambia. A similar mission is being organized to look into the possibilities of providing additional support to the Government of Upper Volta for the construction of small earth dams in a selected region of the country. The project will include a technical co-operation component to help the user communities make an optimal, ecologically sound use of the water and maintain the dams properly.

20. In 1981, UNSO continued to support a joint effort of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNESCO and UNSO for the restoration and integrated biological development of the Fouta Djallon massif in Guinea. UNSO provided the services of an agronomist and a hydrologist for a mission that visited Guinea in May to gather additional information concerning the causes of the degradation of the massif and its effects on the major rivers of western Africa which originate in the Fouta Djallon. Pursuant to this effort, UNSO and UNDP subsequently participated actively in the formulation of a pilot project for the restoration and integrated development of the massif. The pilot project, which has an over-all estimated cost of over \$2.4 million, will be presented for approval at the next meeting, in March 1982, of the Standing Committee on Drought, Desertification and Natural Disasters of the OAU Council of Ministers.

D. Sand-dune fixation

- 21. The continuous and increasing destruction of vegetative cover along the northern isohyets of the Sudano-Sahelian region has been contributing to the building up of sand-dunes, which have been encroaching on exploitable lands to the south. The nature and severity of the problems warrant a review of existing techniques for sand-dune fixation, for arresting the formation of dunes of different types as well as other sand movements and for the adaptation and application of these techniques in the most threatened areas of the Sudano-Sahelian region.
- 22. In Mauritania, the research phase of a medium— and long-term programme for sand—dune fixation has been completed. It contains an analysis of the nature and extent of sand movements in the country and provides an operational approach for the stabilization of the different kinds of moving sand—dunes. As a follow—up, UNSO has formulated an operational programme to control sand movements in critically affected areas of Mauritania. It is also examining, with other Governments of the region, specific sand stabilization projects which could apply some of the findings and recommendations emerging from the research phase of this programme. In Somalia, an ongoing UNSO—assisted project for the stabilization of coastal sand—dunes has been further expanded with a contribution of \$730,000 from the Government of Italy and an additional contribution of \$114,000 by Australia to the Trust Fund, bringing total external financing available for the project to \$1,144,000. This amount is complemented by the contribution of the Government of Somalia of \$1 million. Following the joint mission to the Sudan, UNSO and SIDA, in close collaboration with the Government, have jointly formulated a major project for sand—dune stabilization with an estimated external financial requirement of

\$900,000. A project for the protection of oases against sand encroachment in the Bilma region of Niger is also under preparation following the fielding of a formulation mission in December 1981.

E. Planning, co-ordination and monitoring

- 23. As noted previously, UNSO sent planning and programming missions to Benin, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Uganda in 1981. The missions assisted the Governments in preparing initial plans and programmes for combating desertification. These plans, which include specific project proposals for combating desertification, also emphasize the need for the co-ordination of relevant Government activities, the monitoring of the execution of projects and their results, and the carrying out of desertification control planning and programming on a continuous basis.
- 24. As a result, in part, of the UNSO interagency planning and programming missions and of the specific desertification control planning projects carried out thus far, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of national planning and co-ordination for combating desertification in the development plans and machinery of the Governments of the region. Sudan has the oldest and most elaborate national plan as well as machinery for combating desertification and was assisted by UNSO in this area as early as 1979. Mauritania, which was assisted by UNSO in formulating a national plan of action to combat desertification in 1980, has now adopted and is implementing it as part of its over-all development plan. Kenya, which received institutional support from UNSO in 1980 for its National Environmental Secretariat, has incorporated this body into a national ministry responsible, inter alia, for desertification control co-ordination. The Five Year Development Plan of Kenya explicitly recognizes the importance of sustaining the productivity of the country's semi-arid lands. In 1980, Somalia and Ethiopia also received through UNSO desertification control planning assistance which is being incorporated into their national development plans.
- 25. In addition to the above, the Governments of the Gambia and Upper Volta will be formulating, with UNSO assistance, national plans for combating desertification in early 1982. These Governments' recognition of the importance of including serious consideration of desertification control activities in their development plans and machinery is another encouraging sign of the progress that is being achieved in the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region.

F. National involvement, popular participation and training

- 26. In the development of project proposals, UNSO places particular emphasis on the optimal utilization and further training of existing national cadres, before looking to the needs of such projects for external expertise. Thus, the assistance provided by UNSO through these projects is often designed to equip and support the efforts of Government services in doing the work for which they have been established but are not fully able to accomplish because of a lack of resources or first-hand experience with new problems.
- 27. Another important element which UNSO attempts to build into and emphasize in the design and monitoring of projects it assists is the provision for popular participation and training. This entails the full involvement of the people affected by bringing in village leaders, school teachers, co-operative leaders and

others, as appropriate, in the critical stages of project preparation and ensuring their continuous participation during project implementation. It also involves the use of information programmes and socio-economic incentive schemes such as food-for-work. A training component is included in practically all projects through on-the-job training supplemented, where needed, by fellowships and observation tours of desertification control activities in other countries.

II. PROGRAMMING AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

- 28. As noted in the introduction, UNSO in 1981 intensified its resource mobilization efforts and related programme activities. This has included the fielding of joint missions with representatives of donor Governments for the identification and formulation of projects. There were six main missions of this kind during the reporting period with participation by representatives of the Governments of Finland, Italy, Sweden, Yugoslavia as well as of DANIDA, FINNIDA and SIDA.
- 29. As part of its resource mobilization efforts, UNSO submitted six projects to the third meeting of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control (DESCON), which was convened by the Executive Director of UNEP in Geneva in August 1981 with the co-sponsorship of UNDP and other bodies of the United Nations system. UNSO participation in DESCON III is but one aspect of its continuous resource mobilization efforts.
- 30. At the time of the preparation of this report, UNSO had identified with the Governments of the region a total of 231 priority projects requiring an investment of \$693 million, of which a total of over 350 million has been committed from bilateral, multilateral and other sources. This leaves a total of over \$343 million in external resources required to finance the priority anti-desertication projects for which the Governments of the region have requested assistance. Thus, despite the volume of funding that has already been provided, there is still a need for considerably higher levels of assistance to the Sudano-Sahelian region to help combat desertification, which can be mobilized only by a concerted effort on the part of the donor community.

III. CO-ORDINATION AND INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL CO-OPERATION

- 31. UNSO has continued to maintain close working relationships with regional and other bodies, both within and outside the United Nations system. It has participated, in this connection, in various meetings having a bearing on he process of desertification in the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region.
- 32. After active participation in preparatory interagency and cluster meetings, UNSO attended the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which was held in Paris from 1 to 14 September 1981. The Conference was of particular interest to UNSO since 13 of the 19 countries falling within the desertification control mandate of UNSO have been classified as least developed countries (LDCs) by the General Assembly and two have been given LDC status by the

UNDP Governing Council for assistance purposes for the duration of the drought 3/. Anti-desertification projects and strategies, formulated in part with UNSO support, were included in the submissions and presentations to the Conference by Sudano-Sahelian countries.

- 33. On a subregional level, UNSO has continued to work closely with CILSS. It attended, in this connection, the technical meetings of CILSS, and reported to the Council of Ministers meetings in January and June 1981 on various UNSO activities. UNSO also attended the meeting of the West African Economic Community (CEAO) in December 1981.
- 34. During the reporting period, UNSO participated actively in the third meeting of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control (DESCON) as noted in paragraph 29 above.
- 35. Within UNDP itself, UNSO, in carrying out its desertification control mandate, has been working closely with the Regional Bureaux for Africa and for the Arab States. These close working relationships have been intensified within the context of the preparation of regional and national third cycle programmes, especially in respect of their desertification control components. In March 1981, UNSO participated in an interagency meeting in Nairobi jointly sponsored by UNEP and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa on action against desertification and measures to be taken for the protection of the African environment. The meeting considered, inter alia, how UNDP resources might best be used for combating desertification in Africa, including the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region. UNSO has also been working closely with UNCDF, which has agreed to support with capital inputs a number of desertification control projects identified by the UNSO planning and programming missions with the Governments. In addition, as noted in paragraph 9 above, UNSO programming activities and day-to-day operations benefit from and are closely associated with the facilities and regular operations of UNDP.
- 36. Finally, from 25 September to 24 October 1981, UNSO participated, on its own behalf and that of UNEP, in a multi-agency drought mission which was sent by the Secretary-General, pursuant to relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, inter alia, to assess the medium and long-term needs of Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda for their drought-afflicted populations as well as the emergency needs of Kenya. The mission reports 4 on the five drought-stricken countries of East Africa, which were presented to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session, noted, among other things, the close relationship between drought and desertification. UNSO will continue to work closely, on behalf of UNEP, with regional and other bodies whose activities have a a bearing on the problem of desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region.

^{3/}Of the 19 countries covered by the desertification mandate of UNSO, Benin, Cape Verde, Chad, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bessau, Mali, Niger, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Upper Volta have been classified as least developed among developing countries (LDCs) by the General Assembly; Mauritania and Senegal have been given LDC status by the UNDP Governing Council for assistance purposes for the duration of the drought.

 $[\]frac{4}{\text{See}}$ A/36/274, A/36/275, A/36/276, A/36/277 and A/36/712

37. It is evident from this report that the institutional arrangements for implementing the Plan of Action in the Sudano-Sahelian region, desertification is very acute, have proved effective. Through close working relationships with the Sudano-Sahelian countries and the international donor community, UNSO has been able to expedite the flow of financial resources in support of specific desertification control projects in the countries and to assist them in their planning, programming and project implementation activities. A continuation of the special arrangements for the region, which involve a joint venture of UNEP and UNDP, is therefore indicated.