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SUPPORT

OTHER FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES

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

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

Report of the Administrator

Summary

In response to the request of the Governing Council at its thirty-first session (decision 84/27), the Administrator is submitting an annual report on the implementation in the Sudano-Sahelian region of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. This report describes the activities carried out by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) to assist the countries of the region in implementing the Plan of Action under a joint venture of UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The report summarizes UNSO's planning, programming and resource mobilization operations, dealing principally with deforestation control, range management, water resources management, soil protection and sand-dune fixation and planning and co-ordination. It also describes the actions taken by the principal and subsidiary organs of the United Nations relating to UNSO's desertification mandate.

INTRODUCTION

1. This annual report is submitted in accordance with UNDP Governing Council decision 84/27 adopted on 29 June 1984 which, inter alia, requested the Administrator to continue to report annually to the Governing Council on the implementation in the Sudano-Sahelian region of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. In that decision, the Governing Council noted the need for the speedy implementation of the Plan of Action as an integral part of the general effort to promote economic and social development in the region on an ecologically sound basis. The Council also noted the crucial role of UNSO in implementing the Plan.

2. The Council stressed that desertification is progressing at an alarming rate throughout the African continent, and endorsed the decision taken at the twelfth session of the Governing Council of UNEP to add Ghana and Togo to the list of countries eligible to receive assistance through UNSO in implementing the Plan of Action. It also urged all Governments, organizations, organs and other bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and private organizations, to intensify their assistance either bilaterally or through UNSO or any other intermediary, in response to the priority requirements of the countries of the region. Finally, it urged all Governments of the affected areas to intensify their co-ordination efforts in combating desertification.

3. There are now 21 countries covered by UNSO's desertification control mandate*, with a total population of 240 million and an area of 12.7 million square kilometres. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the total area of the Sudano-Sahelian region is arid or semi-arid, compared to a world average (excluding Antarctica) of 33 per cent. It is also estimated that over 90 per cent of the rangelands and 85 per cent of the rain-fed crop lands of the Sudano-Sahelian region are affected in various degrees by desertification. The increase in the number of countries eligible to receive assistance through UNSO in combating desertification - from 15 in 1979, the first full year of operation of UNSO's desertification control mandate, to 21 in 1984 - reflects a wider realization of the extent of the problem of desertification in Africa, as well as the persistence and expansion of the drought, which has reached the proportions of what some climatologists consider a continental drought.

* The countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, the Sudan, Togo and Uganda.

4. These developments led the General Assembly to introduce a special item on the agenda of its thirty-ninth session in 1984 entitled "Countries stricken by drought and desertification." In resolution 39/208, adopted on 17 December 1984 following an extensive discussion on this item, the Assembly, inter alia, recognized that particular attention should be given to and special efforts made to assist countries stricken by desertification and drought. It recommended that the international community should continue to provide coherent short-term, medium-term and long-term assistance to those countries in order to support effectively the rehabilitation process, and that, within the framework of bilateral and multilateral aid programmes, the fight against desertification and drought should be granted priority in view of the extent of those problems. It also appealed to all members of the international community to continue to provide full support to the development efforts of countries stricken by desertification and drought.

5. In its resolution 39/168 B of 17 December 1984, on the implementation in the Sudano-Sahelian region of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, the General Assembly also noted with concern that the persistent drought in the Sahel had intensified and spread into other parts of Africa, assuming the "catastrophic proportions of a generalized drought"; that the inadequacy of financial resources continued to place a serious constraint on the fight against desertification; and that the struggle against desertification required financial and human resources beyond the means of the affected countries. The Assembly expressed its appreciation for the progress made by UNSO towards overcoming these obstacles and for the efficient and co-ordinated manner in which the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Director of UNEP has continued to develop the joint venture through UNSO. It requested the Governing Councils of UNDP and UNEP to continue to provide and increase their support to UNSO in order to enable it to respond fully to the urgent needs of the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region.

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

6. The year 1984 saw a severe intensification of the Sudano-Sahelian drought, now 17 years old, causing extensive hardship in various countries, including famine in Ethiopia, the Sudan, Chad, the Niger, Mali and Mauritania, and severe food shortages in the other countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region. These events painfully illustrated the fragility of the Sudano-Sahelian ecosystem and its vulnerability to drought and desertification. Parallel with ongoing emergency relief operations, UNSO helped carry out rehabilitation and medium- to long-term programmes aimed, inter alia, at mitigating the effect of

the drought and at preventing similar disasters in the future. It also intensified its desertification control activities, in view of a tendency during periods of drought for desertification to accelerate since dryland farming, overgrazing and tree-cutting do not benefit from the restorative action of the normal rains. UNSO's drought-related and desertification control activities thus complement the emergency operations now under way to deal with the critical economic situation in the Sudano-Saharan countries of Africa. They provide a bridge to and constitute an integral part of the development that is necessary to resolve the crisis on a sustained, long-term basis.

7. Project commitments amounting to \$17.8 million were made in the form of cost-sharing and project-specific trust funds in 1984 for desertification control activities through the United Nations Trust Fund for Sudano-Saharan Activities. While this level surpasses the level mobilized in 1983, the lack of sufficient financing continues to be one of the principal constraints on the effective implementation of the Plan of Action in the region, and a considerable number of projects identified and formulated by the respective Governments, with the support of UNSO, await financing.

8. Pledges to UNSO's general resources amounted to about \$580,000 in 1984. In assisting the countries of the Sudano-Saharan region, in dealing with the consequences of drought and in combating desertification, UNSO relies to a great extent on cost-sharing and trust fund contributions, under which donor Governments and organizations make contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Sudano-Saharan Activities earmarked for specific projects. Unlike projects financed from indicative planning figure (IPF) resources, which involve the identification and formulation of projects within the framework of country programmes and given financing figures, the UNSO project cycle involves, in addition to project identification and formulation, extensive discussions and negotiations with recipient Governments and with the donor community, and the conclusion of individual trust-fund agreements and cost-sharing arrangements. Contributions from UNDP and UNEP for programme support under the joint venture are used almost exclusively for financing project formulation and as seed money to attract other and additional financing.

9. The main thrust of UNSO's anti-desertification operations continued to be in the areas of deforestation control, range management, water resources management, soil protection and sand-dune fixation, and planning and co-ordination, with emphasis on government execution and popular participation.

Combating deforestation

10. To combat deforestation, UNSO-supported activities in reforestation, the development of alternative sources of energy to fuelwood and the promotion of fuel-efficient stoves. As part of its reforestation programme, UNSO obtained the commitment of the Netherlands to finance the second phase of a highly successful project for restocking the gum belt in the Kordofan region of the Sudan, which involves farmer-level afforestation of degraded land with drought-resistant Acacia senegal, the source of gum arabic. The second phase of the project will extend through 1989, at a cost of \$2 million (f. 7.2 million). The Arab Gulf Fund (AGFUND) made a cost-sharing contribution of \$400,000 for Acacia senegal afforestation in the Darfur region of the Sudan, and further complementary financing is expected from UNDP and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Other activities involving Acacia senegal included a national seminar on gum arabic in Mali, in early 1984, followed by a project formulation mission in November 1984.

11. A joint mission of UNSO and the Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA) visited Somalia in November and December 1984 and formulated a forestry project involving community forestry in 10 villages in the Lower Shabelli region; silvicultural and species trials and the expansion of training facilities at Agfoi Centre; and a forest inventory and the formulation of a national forestry policy programme and management plan for the Lower Shabelli region. It is expected that part of the project is to be channelled by FINNIDA through UNSO and part through direct bilateral arrangements. In Burkina Faso, UNSO sent a formulation mission in connection with the growing of Acacia albida which, with its long tap root, is drought-resistant, does not compete with food crops, contributes to the fertility of the soil with its nitrogen-fixing capabilities and provides fodder and shade for livestock. UNSO is actively negotiating the financing of the project with a potential donor. In Kenya, the Government and UNSO formulated a series of interrelated projects for agro-forestry development in the Kerio Valley.

12. Another means of combating deforestation that UNSO has been pursuing is the design, development and production of fuel-efficient cooking stoves to help reduce the demand for fuelwood. In Mali and the Niger in the western Sahel, UNSO assisted seminars on the evaluation of different types of improved stoves and the selection of prototypes. In eastern Africa, UNSO completed the formulation of a regional programme of stove development and production in Kenya, Somalia and the Sudan. The programme, with an estimated cost of \$2.4 million, will be presented for financing to the fifth meeting of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control which will be held at Geneva in July 1985.

13. For Somalia, the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) agreed to provide \$2.8 million as a project trust fund for the installation of wind turbines to provide electricity in Mogadiscio and in rural areas. For the Sudan, DANIDA agreed to contribute \$695,790 as a project trust fund for the establishment of pilot fuel briquette production plants and the promotion of improved cooking stoves. Over a 40-month period, the project will establish a pilot plant to manufacture groundnut-shell briquettes, determine the feasibility of using cotton stalks as a household fuel and, if feasible, also establish a plant for the production of cotton-stalk briquettes. These projects, by decreasing the demand for wood-based fuels, should help to reduce wood-cutting and the consequent deforestation and desertification of the countryside. Finally, for Senegal, DANIDA approved a contribution of \$800,000 which, by means of a project trust fund, will provide financial resources for the exploitation and use of peat as fuel.

Range management

14. In the field of range management, active discussions between UNSO and DANIDA are being held with a view to supporting a Centre for Ecological Monitoring in Senegal. The Centre monitors livestock activities and desertification processes with a view to developing more effective anti-desertification programmes. In the Sudan, UNSO launched a major programming mission to investigate the possibilities of increasing agropastoral production in three different locations of Darfur. UNDP is expected to finance directly the recommended work in range management and production in the Wadi Abu Sunt area, at an estimated cost of approximately \$2.4 million over a three-year period.

Water resources management

15. In the area of water resources management, UNSO obtained the agreement of the Government of Norway to contribute a total of \$879,745 (Nkr 7.8 million) to extend a programme for the rehabilitation and construction of earthen dams to supplement - or substitute for - rainfall in various agricultural areas in Mauritania. The Italian Government has committed \$2.6 million for a project in the northern part of Cameroon. The project is designed to establish a general programme of protection for the region; to reinforce the regional planning entity in charge of environmental issues; to institute a programme of reforestation; and to develop and manage a water catchment basin in an integrated manner, with a view to demonstrating desertification control techniques. Project activities are scheduled to commence in 1985. The Italian Government has also made a commitment of \$5.9 million for a project for the construction of small earthen dams in Guinea.

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16. As a follow-up to an UNSO-led planning and programming mission that visited Benin in May 1984, UNSO fielded a formulation mission in October 1984 to complete a project proposal for small earthen dams and hydrogeological studies. In the Niger, a formulation mission prepared a similar project for the construction of small earthen dams.

Soil protection and sand dune fixation

17. In the field of soil protection and sand dune fixation, UNSO received approximately \$1.3 million (Nkr 10.5 million) through a cost-sharing contribution from the Government of Norway for stopping sand encroachment in the Bilma region of the Niger. A start-up mission was fielded in July and August 1984 to launch the project. For Cape Verde, UNSO obtained a cost-sharing contribution from Norway of \$549,718 (Nkr 4.9 million) to continue desertification control activities in the Sao Jao Baptista valley involving reforestation, erosion control and water management works. The Government of Norway also contributed \$768,119 (Nkr 6.8 million) in cost-sharing for a sand dune stabilization project in Senegal. For Somalia, UNSO obtained a contribution of \$400,000 from AGFUND to expand ongoing sand dune fixation activities to include the town and surrounding vicinity of Adale, to the north of Mogadiscio.

18. For the Niger, UNSO obtained a \$1.8 million (f. 6.2 million) cost sharing contribution from the Government of the Netherlands to the trust fund for a project on research, production and training for the utilization of appropriate agricultural equipment under Sahelian conditions. The project aims at improving agricultural techniques, especially in small irrigated and low-lying areas that act as water catchments, in the Department of Tahoua. For Mali, UNSO obtained a contribution of \$120,000 as a project trust fund from the Government of Italy for the installation of 150 manual pumps on existing wells. An UNSO consultant also prepared a preliminary feasibility study for the rehabilitation of the hydroelectric system and fight against sand encroachment of Lake Faguibine. Finally, in the Sudan, UNDP is planning to finance UNSO-formulated projects for the establishment of shelter belts for the protection of irrigated lands in the northern region and for the improvement and utilization of hard Gardfud soils, which would relieve the pressure on less fertile lands.

Planning and co-ordination

19. In the area of planning and co-ordination, UNSO supported a national debate on combating desertification in the Niger to serve as a framework of a national Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. An UNSO/FAO mission

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visited Benin to initiate preparations for a seminar to formulate a national Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. In the Sudan, UNSO agreed to support an extension and reorganization of an ongoing project of assistance to the National Desertification Control Co-ordination Unit. The Unit has been given an additional drought-related mandate in view of the severe drought that has stricken the Sudan, and will be reorganized and strengthened. It has prepared and is expanding a draft national Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, with UNSO assistance.

20. On a regional level, UNSO assisted, at the invitation of the Government of Senegal, in the preparation of a regional conference on desertification which was held at Dakar in July 1984. The conference was attended at the ministerial level by representatives of 22 African countries, both north and south of the Sahara, as well as by various donors, United Nations and other international organizations, including UNDP, UNEP, FAO, the World Bank and the European Economic Community (EEC). Among the recommendations of the conference was the initiative to include a special item entitled "Countries stricken by drought and desertification", on the agenda of the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly. During the discussion in the General Assembly, a number of delegations expressed their profound concern over the problems of drought and desertification; in resolution 39/208, adopted by consensus on 17 December 1984, the General Assembly called for various actions by the international community and the United Nations family to assist in the fight against desertification and drought.

21. With the addition of Ghana and Togo to UNSO's desertification control mandate, a preliminary mission was sent to Ghana in November 1984 to formulate a project for the development of agro-forestry, including the large-scale growing of Acacia albida in the northern part of the country. Arrangements were made for the fielding of planning and programming missions to Ghana and Togo in early 1985 during the dry season when the manifestations of desertification are most evident.

22. UNSO also participated in a UNDP project identification mission that visited Ethiopia in December 1984 to start the design of a programme for rehabilitation and coping with future droughts as a complementary measure to the current emergency assistance activities in that country. The programme is being financed bilaterally by a special contribution from the Government of Italy of from \$25 to \$27 million (50 billion lire).

II. ACTION REQUESTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

23. Following the recommendations of resolution 496 (XIX) of 26 May 1984 of the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa and resolution 1984/72 of 27 July 1984 of the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly, in paragraph 9 of resolution 39/168 A of 17 December 1984, requested the Governing Council of the UNEP to examine, at its thirteenth session, the possibility of:

"(a)The inclusion of reference to the United Republic of Tanzania in the terms of reference of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, in order to enable that country to receive assistance in the implementation of programmes for combating desertification;

"(b)The expansion of the scope of the work of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office so as to enable it to assist the States members of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference [SADCC] in implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Environment Programme on combating desertification and drought, in the same way as the Office is currently assisting the States members of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel."

24. This request is scheduled to be presented to the Governing Council of UNEP for consideration at its thirteenth session to be held at Nairobi from 14 to 24 May 1985. The States members of SADCC are Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. If the Governing Council of UNEP decides to add the States members of SADCC to UNSO's desertification control mandate, this would increase the workload of UNSO considerably and would have financial implications for UNDP as well as UNEP. The Administrator will present updated information on the issue to the Governing Council following the adjournment of the Governing Council of UNEP.

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