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S U P P O R T

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-second session (decision 85/29), 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 reforestation, deforestation control, energy development, 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 control mandate.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The present report, submitted in accordance with Governing Council decision 85/29 of 28 June 1985, provides an overview of UNSO's programme management in assisting the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region in the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. It covers operational highlights and progress in improving programme quality, relevance, effectiveness and co-ordination, as well as a sectoral breakdown of UNSO's portfolio of assistance. It also describes the financial status of the United Nations Trust Fund for Sudano-Sahelian Activities, including resources mobilized and the needs of the region. The report should be read in conjunction with the annual report of the Administrator (DP/1986/11 and addenda), the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region (A/41/274-E/1986/22), and the other documents concerning UNDP activities in the respective African countries, prepared for the Governing Council.

## I. THE DESERTIFICATION CONTROL PROGRAMME

2. In 1985, UNSO continued its multidisciplinary and integrated approach to combating desertification. With the substantial flow of international emergency assistance to meet the severe economic crisis in Africa, UNSO also focused on the linkages between the conditions of famine and other needs for emergency assistance and UNSO's programme of recovery and development on a sound ecological basis, for among the principal underlying causes of the present crisis are the cumulative effects of desertification and of meteorological and hydrological drought. It is with a focus on these linkages - to alleviate and help to prevent recurrences of future crises - that UNSO carried out its programme of desertification control and the ecologically sound development of arid drought-prone regions. This programme comprised projects for combating deforestation, including forestry and energy-related activities, and for soil protection and sand dune fixation, water resources management, range management, planning, co-ordination and consciousness-raising. UNSO also took an active part in regional activities in Africa aimed at co-operation and an exchange of information and experience in the areas of drought and desertification.

A. Combating deforestation

3. One of the most extensive manifestations of desertification in the region is deforestation, caused mainly by the cutting of trees and woody shrubs for fuelwood and building materials. UNSO is combating this process through afforestation and reforestation and through ecologically sound energy development.

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## 1. Forestry

4. UNSO's major initiatives in forestry were carried out in Ethiopia, which has had a decline in its forest cover in the last 80 years from 40 per cent to 2.7 per cent of its total area. Plans have been made for the reforestation of over 35,000 hectares with UNSO assistance. By the end of 1985, financing had been secured or was in the final stages of negotiation and work was under way for the establishment of fuelwood plantations totaling almost 19,000 hectares in Debre Birhan, Dese and Nazret. Plans were also made for the formulation of further projects and the mobilization of the necessary resources in 1986 in the Blue Nile ecological zone and Harrar. With an earmarked contribution from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) of \$US 2.4 million in 1985, UNSO is expanding a reforestation programme involving 3,600 hectares in the area of Debre Birhan. For Dese, UNSO undertook a joint formulation mission with the Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA) for a phase II project which would expand the total planted area to 7,500 hectares.

5. In addition to providing fuelwood and construction material on a sustained basis, the fuelwood plantations protect the watersheds in which they are located by reducing run-off, erosion, the loss of top soil and other processes that are conducive to declining agricultural productivity and crop failures. The survival rate of the seedlings planted was 75 to 80 per cent during the first two years of recently started fuelwood plantations in Debre Birhan, Nazret and Dese. Original planting targets have also been exceeded. The success of these projects can be attributed to the involvement of the people at the planning and implementation stages, to the use of economic incentives such as food and cash for work, to the application of appropriate technology and to provisions for the basic needs and social customs of the people.

6. UNSO reforestation projects also include extensive village and family woodlots. In Burkina Faso, a project for woodlots in the provinces of Boulkiemde and Sanguié initially financed with an earmarked contribution of SKr.7.7 million (\$US 1,008,239) from the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) is being continued. Over a period of three years, the project has resulted in the establishment of woodlots totalling over 1,200 hectares, providing the people with fuel and construction wood, shelter belts and agro-sylvo-pastoral schemes. Although the project formally ended at the end of 1985, bridging operations are being carried out with savings from phase I, and UNSO is negotiating for an extension of the project with further SIDA financing.

7. In Somalia, UNSO has received a commitment from FINNIDA in the amount of 17.6 million markka (\$US 3.2 million) for a project involving forestry management and inventory, research, species trials, training and community

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forestry. The project will provide a framework for the long-term forestry development of the country. For Mauritania, UNSO obtained an earmarked contribution of \$US 862,000 from DANIDA to finance a project of institutional support to the Department for the Protection of Nature, Ministry of Rural Development. The project will assist the Department in the protection of the country's forest resources as well as of its fauna. In the Niger, the Government of Norway has pledged an earmarked contribution of NKr.3.2 million (\$US 413,133) for a follow-up to a FINNIDA-financed project for the establishment and expansion of green belt plantations around the city of Niamey. The first phase successfully concluded in 1985, having exceeded its original planting targets.

## 2. Ecologically sound energy development

8. To reduce the demand for fuelwood, the cutting of which is one of the principal causes of desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region, UNSO has been working on the development of alternative sources of energy on an ecologically sound basis. Ongoing projects for which financing was previously obtained include projects for the utilization of wind energy in Cape Verde and another in Somalia that started in July 1985, both with financing from earmarked contributions by DANIDA in 1984. In Cape Verde, UNSO is carrying out investigations of project possibilities using wind energy on a more extensive scale with prospective Danish follow-up investment. A study is also being made for the possible use of wave energy, in which the Norwegian Agency for Development (NORAD) has indicated an interest.

9. In Senegal, a project was started in October 1985 with an earmarked contribution of \$US 864,165 from DANIDA in 1984 for the development of peat, which is a natural resource in plentiful supply. The project would involve the carbonization of peat for use as household fuel briquettes, as a substitute for fuelwood, together with the wider introduction of improved metal cooking stoves.

10. Another means of reducing the demand for wood as a source of energy is the promotion of the use of fuel-efficient wood-burning stoves. In the Gambia, phase II of a programme for the production and promotion of improved wood-burning stoves in rural as well as urban areas started in 1985 with an earmarked contribution of \$US 638,200 from DANIDA, which also financed the first phase which had concentrated on metal stoves for urban areas. UNSO also initiated extensive negotiations in 1985 with SIDA and NORAD for the financing of improved wood-burning stove projects in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger.

## B. Soil protection and sand dune fixation

11. In the more arid and degraded regions of the Sudano-Sahelian region, the soils have deteriorated to a state where they have become unstable and have

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formed moving sand dunes, which encroach upon productive lands, towns, roads, oases and even rivers. To help to combat this problem, UNSO is carrying out sand dune fixation projects using vegetative methods, which are the most effective and economically affordable for the region. There are three ongoing projects in Somalia: in the Adale area, which began in May 1985 with an earmarked contribution of \$US 400,000 from the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) committed in 1984; in the Brava area, where a project started in 1984 with a DANIDA contribution of \$US 1,116,000 was expanded in October 1985 to include research components using remote sensing to monitor sand movements and vegetative changes; and in the Shallambot area where financing amounting to \$US 730,000 has been provided by the Italian Government since 1981. In Senegal, a project was started in July 1985 with an earmarked contribution of Nkr.6.8 million (\$US 861,508) from NORAD for sand dune stabilization. In Mauritania, a \$US 4 million project for extensive sand dune fixation is under implementation jointly with UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as executing agency. DANIDA is helping to finance the project with an earmarked contribution of \$US 1.9 million. The training component of the project is supported by the Government of Algeria.

12. In Cape Verde, phase II of a project for combating desertification in the Sao Joao Baptista valley on the island of Santiago started in January 1985 with an earmarked contribution of Nkr.4.9 million (\$US 586,937) from NORAD. The project will involve soil protection and conservation, groundwater development and a master plan as well as a consciousness-raising programme. Since this should be a sustained, long-term undertaking, there are active negotiations taking place with NORAD for an additional contribution of \$US 400,000 expected in the spring of 1986.

#### C. Water resources development, management and conservation

13. Because of the paucity of water resources and low, erratic rainfall, UNSO is supporting various ongoing projects involving small earthen dams, groundwater development and other conventional projects of water resources development for irrigation, household use and watering projects for livestock. Recently, UNSO has been engaged in projects involving other manifestations of hydrological problems in the Sudano-Sahelian region.

14. For the Gambia, a project document with a detailed plan of operation was signed in September 1985 involving an earmarked contribution of \$US 471,515 previously received from Australia to assist in the construction of a dam and irrigation scheme to increase and sustain the productivity of agricultural lands inter alia by reducing salt-water intrusion, which has become more pronounced as a result of the prolonged African drought.

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15. In Cape Verde, UNSO was instrumental in the preparation of projects for the establishment of a desalination plant in Boa Vista, at a cost of \$US 360,000, together with a project for the provision of spare parts to the Ministry of Rural Development, at a cost of \$US 390,000. These projects are funded directly from resources of the United Nations Emergency Operations Trust Fund (UNEOTF).

16. In Guinea-Bissau, a joint UNSO/DANIDA exploratory mission visited the Bafata-Gabu region, one of the driest areas of the country, in early 1985. Following further reviews of the most effective ways of managing the water resources of the region, UNSO and DANIDA have made arrangements to send a formulation mission in early 1986 to look into a series of water resources conservation, harvesting and development schemes for agricultural, livestock and domestic uses on an ecologically sound basis.

#### D. Rangeland management

17. The degradation of rangelands is another widespread form of desertification, which UNSO is trying to arrest through the careful monitoring and management of the range ecosystem, where the carrying capacity of the land is under severe strain.

18. UNSO obtained an earmarked contribution of \$US 2,149,370 from DANIDA for a project in Senegal to establish an ecological centre for the monitoring of pastoral ecosystems. Project operations started in November 1985. The project involves aerial photography and reconnaissance, analysis of remote sensing data, ground truth and extension and consciousness-raising for pastoral communities.

19. In the Gambia, a project financed with an earmarked contribution of \$US 399,945 pledged in 1983 through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) by AGFUND, as well as additional inputs from UNEP and UNSO general resources, started in February 1985 for ecologically sound rangeland development and protection. The project aims at improving and sustaining the productivity of rangelands around livestock watering points, where concentrations of livestock often have damaging effects on the environment and accelerate desertification.

20. In Mali, considerable progress was made in the integrated, sylvopastoral development of the Niger river flood plains (Zone lacustre). The project has succeeded in regenerating the bourgou pastures of the region, bourgou (*Echinochloa stagnina*) being the principal source of forage for the livestock of the region. By the end of 1985, 1,270 hectares of bourgou had been restored and combined with village woodlots. Active negotiations were also being held with NORAD for further assistance expected in early 1986.

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E. Planning and programming

21. With their inclusion in the list of countries eligible for assistance through UNSO, planning and programming missions to Ghana and Togo were fielded by UNSO in early 1985. In addition to assisting the Governments in initiating national strategies for combating desertification, UNSO helped to formulate specific project proposals, for which it is seeking necessary financial resources. UNSO supported and participated in national seminars on desertification in Benin, Burkina Faso and Senegal. The seminars, which included representatives of various technical and planning ministries of Government, were useful in the preparation of national strategies and approaches for combating desertification.

22. In October 1985, UNSO sponsored a symposium on drought and desertification in Washington, D.C. that brought together American journalists, educators, members of the United States Congressional Black Caucus and representatives of various agencies and institutions dealing with issues of drought, desertification and development, with a view to creating a greater awareness in the United States of the ecological and development problems of Africa as well as of the present emergency. The President of Senegal and current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Abdou Diouf, personally attended and addressed the meeting.

F. Action taken by principal and subsidiary organs of the United Nations

23. In its decision 13/30 of 23 May 1985, the Governing Council of UNEP decided to add the United Republic of Tanzania to the list of countries eligible for assistance through UNSO on behalf of UNEP. The list now stands at 22. It also requested the Executive Director to consider the possibility of the inclusion of the States Members of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) in the list of countries eligible for assistance from UNSO on behalf of UNEP, in implementing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. The addition of the United Republic of Tanzania to UNSO's desertification control mandate was endorsed by the UNDP Governing Council in its decision 85/29 of 28 June 1985 and by the General Assembly in its resolution 40/175 of 17 December 1985. UNSO initiated contacts with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and has made arrangements for fielding a planning and programming mission to that country in the first half of 1986.

24. In connection with the decision of the Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda to establish the Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development (IGADD), the General Assembly, in its resolution 40/221 of 17 December 1985, requested the Administrator of UNDP "to make the necessary arrangements to render operational, as soon as possible,

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the unit within the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office entrusted with the responsibility of assisting the countries members of the Intergovernmental Authority and to pay special attention to the unit so as to ensure that its responsibilities are discharged effectively."

## II. FINANCIAL STATUS

25. In 1985, UNSO continued its resource mobilization activities and raised almost \$US 13 million in the form of new financial pledges for general and earmarked contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Sudano-Sahelian Activities. This figure does not include contributions of UNDP and UNEP to the joint venture. During the year, over \$US 12 million was allocated for new and ongoing projects aimed at combating desertification.

26. The level of resources mobilized by UNSO fell far short of the needs of the region. This reflects the fact that 1985 was again a year of severe crises in Africa, with widespread drought, famine and untold human suffering, and that most of the international assistance was of an emergency nature. UNSO co-operated closely in this endeavour, focusing its attention on the linkages between the emergency assistance and the medium- and long-term measures to deal with the crisis.

27. It should be noted that emergency assistance is only a stopgap. It cannot solve the problems posed by desertification and chronic, recurrent drought in the Sudano-Sahelian region. To do so, substantial resources and determined systematic long-term efforts for the ecologically sound development of the arid regions of Africa are needed. If the spread of desertification is left unchecked, crises such as the present one will recur and will do so with increased severity. The Administrator therefore strongly recommends to the Governing Council that it take vigorous action to help increase the resources of UNSO for assisting the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region in combating the twin scourges of desertification and drought.

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