



Achieving global sustainability through effective sustainable land management and implementing the UNCCD 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018)

The role of parliamentarians

This document was prepared by Professor Dr. Uwe Holtz for the Ninth Parliamentary Round Table on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to be held in the Republic of Korea in October 2011. The content of the document does not necessarily represent the views of the UNCCD secretariat.

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I. Executive summary

1. Global sustainability is in danger. Environmental damage and climate change, desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD), decreasing resources and population dynamic threaten the processes that sustain the global ecosphere and life on earth.
2. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) refers to sustainable development, climate change, biological diversity, water resources, energy sources, food security, forced migrations and socio-economic factors. The Convention thus contributes to global sustainability. It cannot be viewed in isolation from other efforts to promote sustainable development.
3. The implementation of the UNCCD must be embedded into core development- and environment-policy frameworks defined at the international as well as regional, national and local levels, which should include, but not be limited to, the protection and valuation of global commons, such as soil, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The implementation should be much better interconnected with efforts of the other Rio conventions and the Global Environment Facility.
4. Reversing and preventing desertification, alongside mitigation of the effects of drought, are key inputs to any attempts to reduce poverty and hunger (MDG 1) and improve environmental sustainability (MDG 7), particularly in the drylands, home for 'the forgotten billion' people.
5. Sustainable land management (SLM) is crucial to addressing the UNCCD core mission. SLM sustains the people, preserves the land and impacts vegetation cover and composition, which are globally important for biodiversity and other survival needs; it can contribute to green economy.
6. Supported, encouraged and monitored by parliaments and parliamentarians, Governments should provide an enabling policy framework that facilitates sustainable human development in general and SLM leading to zero net land degradation in particular.
7. The UNCCD 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy) has the long-term vision to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. Parties to the Convention are committed to creating a new, revitalized common ground for all UNCCD stakeholders in order to enhance the implementation of the Convention during its second decade.
8. Parliaments and parliamentarians are asked to support by appropriate efforts the realization of The Strategy. They can help mainstream the national development plans into sustainable development policies, establish integrated investment frameworks for their implementation, and align the UNCCD national action programmes with the strategic and operational objectives of The Strategy.
9. Parliaments and parliamentarians may focus their activities on the following areas: law-making and setting standards; oversight and control; budget allocation; public discourse and awareness-raising; electing competent and committed personalities international cooperation and better use of the parliamentary network on UNCCD.
10. Parliaments and parliamentarians should work for SLM to become an integral part of future climate protection strategies, and all efforts should be made to integrate and prioritize DLDD issues on global, regional and national agendas in the preparation for the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012 (Rio+20).

II. Achieving global sustainability through effective sustainable land management

A. Relevance of the topic

11. Global sustainability is in danger. Environmental degradation and climate change, desertification and soil erosion, decreasing resources and population dynamic threaten the processes that sustain the global ecosphere and life on earth. Productive land is becoming scarce and the pressure on productive land resources is increasing.¹

12. Combating desertification, land degradation and the mitigation of drought (DLDD) has a global dimension and affects all ecosystems (see box 1). This stems from the cross-cutting dimensions of the issues and the strong links between DLDD and challenges such as climate change, biodiversity, poverty eradication and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), food security, peace and security, forced migration, natural disaster reduction, and water management. Labour divisions in rural areas are often gender-sensitive. Investing in opportunities for women has strong multiplier effects across all MDGs.²

13. The relationships between desertification and sustainable land management (SLM) and between soil and climate change are very important. They have transboundary, global impacts and should be better reflected by decision makers and policymakers. SLM is crucial to addressing the UNCCD core mission; it also has an important role in reducing poverty and achieving food security in drylands. SLM and hence land reclamation, as well as preventive action, constitute an absolute must in addressing major global challenges.³ The ultimate aims of SLM are to enhance the economic and social well-being of affected communities, sustain ecosystem services and strengthen adaptive capacity to manage climate change.

14. There are a multitude of reasons to advance the fight against desertification:⁴ Drylands hold the key to future food security. Addressing DLDD contributes to human security and political stability. We cannot adapt to climate change or mitigate its effects without resorting to SLM. It will be impossible to protect the planet against the loss of terrestrial biodiversity without addressing DLDD. We cannot protect our forests without addressing the top driver of deforestation: DLDD. It will be impossible to achieve the MDGs without rescuing one billion people that are the inhabitants of drylands.

15. The United Nations officially recognized the interdependence of climate change, land degradation and biodiversity, and their relevance for sustainable development, in the three Rio conventions: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)⁵, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Addressing DLDD is one of the best ways for meeting the objectives of the UNFCCC and the CBD.

¹ The purpose of the following text is to provide the participants of the Parliamentary Round Table with ideas, information and excerpts from relevant documents relating to the two topics of the Round Table.

² See Note by the United Nations Secretary-General (2011): Report submitted by the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to the High-level meeting on addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication to be held at UNHQ on 20th September 2011 (A/66/50 – advance copy www.un.org/en/ga/president/65/issues/66ga_unccd_hlmtg.pdf, - retrieved on 30 July 2011, like all the other URLs in this paper).

³ Document ICCD/CST(S-2)/2, p.12 (<www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cst-s2/pdf/2eng.pdf>). See also Comprehensive Communication Strategy. Drylands: Global Assets. UNCCD, Bonn, 2010, p. 10 (<www.unccd.int/convention/docs/css%20rev.pdf>).

⁴ As pointed out by the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, Luc Gnacadja, on a Forum on Human Security in Switzerland on 15 July 2011. Cf. Ramesh Jaura: Droughts Do Not Happen Overnight, DN-InDepthNews, 25.7.2011 (www.indepthnews.net/news/news.php?key1=2011-07-25%2000:38:39&key2=1).

⁵ In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly, as requested by the Rio Conference, adopted Resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of a convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. On 17 June 1994, the UNCCD was adopted in Paris. June 17 became the world combat desertification day.

Box 1: Activities to combat desertification

Combating desertification includes activities which are part of the integrated development of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas for sustainable development which are aimed at: (i) prevention and/or reduction of land degradation; (ii) rehabilitation of partly degraded land; and (iii) reclamation of desertified land.

Source: UNCCD, article 1 (b) (www.unccd.int/convention/text/pdf/conv-eng.pdf)

16. In the Political Declaration of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002, the Government representatives reaffirmed the Agenda 21 of the Rio Conference in 1992 and the commitments to sustainable development. They pledged to build a humane, equitable and caring global society, united by a common determination to save our planet, promote human development and achieve universal prosperity and peace. They assumed collective responsibility for advancing and strengthening the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection – at local, national, regional and global levels, while remaining committed to the indivisibility of human dignity for all and to democratic systems, while at the same time demanding democratic global governance with more effective and accountable international and multilateral institutions.⁶

17. All these objectives constitute essential elements of the development paradigm of sustainable, human development. The WSSD outcomes as well as the Millennium Declaration from 2000⁷ and the eight MDGs⁸ set out guidelines and concrete targets in the area of global sustainability. They are important reference documents when it comes to the UNCCD vision, too.

18. The interlinked challenges of climate change, poverty and economic crisis lead to the conviction that these challenges require not only immediate actions but also a long-term vision as announced in the Millennium Declaration: a more peaceful, prosperous, just and sustainable world, guided by common values⁹ and by a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. This vision requires the achievement of a ‘zero net global land degradation rate’ through means of prevention as well as land rehabilitation and reclamation,¹⁰ the shift towards green growth and low-carbon societies¹¹ and the promotion of fair, sustainable and innovative economies as global targets for sustainable development.

19. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),¹² Africa is viewed as the most at risk from the adverse effects of climate change. Extreme weather causing flooding, desertification and

⁶ <www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/1009wssd_pol_declaration.doc>.

⁷ <www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>.

⁸ See <<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Attach/Indicators/OfficialList2008.pdf>>.

⁹ Millennium Declaration, paragraph 6: We consider certain fundamental values to be essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. These include freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility.

¹⁰ Cf. Note by the United Nations Secretary-General (2011) (footnote 2), p. 4. The Note indicates that an analysis of 23 years of remote sensing data reveals a declining trend in land productivity across some 24% of the global land surface, at a rate of almost 1% per year; drylands will significantly expand in future. See also UNCCD Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja (https://secure.iofc.org/shop/sites/all/files/Caux2011_CFHS_GnacadjjaSpeech_EN.pdf).

¹¹ As the Africa Progress Report 2011 indicates, given its abundance of renewable resources and the general absence of high-carbon legacy industries, Africa is well placed to embark on low-carbon growth. Partnerships have proven their ability to enhance energy and resource efficiency. Examples include the distribution of more efficient and less polluting cookstoves, increased access to mitigation technology, and support for investment in low-carbon infrastructure and renewable-energy generation. (www.africaprogresspanel.org/files/7713/0441/3939/APP_APR2011_FINAL.pdf - p. 59).

¹² IPCC Working Group II, Fourth Assessment Report, Summary for Policymakers, 6 April 2007; and IPCC Working Group III, Fourth Assessment Report, Summary for Policymakers, 4 May 2007 (www.ipcc.ch).

drought (think of the recent human catastrophe in parts of East Africa) is already apparent. Climate change is projected to impinge on sustainable development in most of the developing countries of Asia as it compounds the pressures on natural resources and the environment associated with rapid urbanization, industrialization and economic development. In the drier areas of Latin America, climate change is expected to lead to salinization and desertification of agricultural land.

20. On 20 July 2011, the United Nations Security Council¹³ expressed for the first time its concern that possible adverse effects of climate change may, in the long run, aggravate certain existing threats to international peace and security.

21. In the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy), adopted at the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8) in 2007,¹⁴ Parties committed to creating a new, revitalized common ground for all UNCCD stakeholders in order to enhance the implementation of the Convention during its second decade.

22. SLM sustains the people, preserves the land and impacts vegetation cover and composition which is globally important for biodiversity. SLM means land-use practices that ensure the land, water, and vegetation adequately support land-based production systems for both current and future generations. It increases crop yields and farmers' income and has a positive impact on economic growth and the eradication of poverty worldwide.

23. Quite apart from sustainably securing rural development and agricultural production, SLM can reduce desertification and soil erosion, and both mitigate climate change and foster adaptation to its inevitable impact. SLM increases the storage of carbon in soils and in vegetation and helps to decrease atmospheric carbon dioxide and global warming. SLM is thus an effective measure of a number of important local, regional and global benefits, and contributes to global sustainability.¹⁵

24. As the only international and legally binding instrument focusing on SLM, the UNCCD plays an important role between dryland and non-dryland countries, by promoting scientific and technological excellence, through raising public awareness and mobilizing resources to prevent, control and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought. In particular, 'the forgotten billion' (mainly poor rural dryland inhabitants) are strongly affected negatively by land degradation and soil erosion. Recognizing where 'the forgotten billion' live is a vital step towards implementing policies that can help to lift them out of poverty.¹⁶

25. The UNCCD/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) document 'The Forgotten Billion' highlights the fact that implementation of the MDGs in the world's drylands faces special challenges.¹⁷ It

¹³ <www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10332.doc.htm>.

¹⁴ Decision 3/COP.8. <www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cop8/pdf/16add1eng.pdf>; for more information about The Strategy see chapter III.a and box 4.

¹⁵ Harald Loßack (2008): The clock is ticking, in: Climate Change Financing – Fresh Resources for Sustainable Land Management or Re-labelling? [Issues for the post-2012 regime Background and account of discussions by an expert panel at a side-event to the 28th session of the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice], Bonn 2008 (<www.desertifikation.de/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/Accessing_climate_change_finance_for_SLM_2009.pdf>, p. 7). Cf. UNCCD (2009): Benefits of Sustainable Land Management, Bern (<www.unccd.int/knowledge/docs/CSD_Benefits_of_Sustainable_Land_Management.pdf>); Len Berry/Elena Abraham/Wafa Essahli (2009): UNCCD Recommended Minimum set of Impact Indicators (<www.unccd.int/regional/rcm/docs/UNCCD%20Min%20Set%20of%20Impact%20Indicators%20Final%20Report%20June%202014.pdf>).

¹⁶ Cf. UNCCD/UNDP (2010): The Forgotten Billion. MDG Achievement in the Drylands, Bonn/New York (<www.unccd.int/media/docs/Forgottenbillion.pdf>).

¹⁷ Very often the following challenges are mentioned: climatic and ecological challenges that limit production; economic challenges

outlines some of the success factors that have helped to accelerate progress towards achieving the MDGs in certain drylands, and which can assist Governments, donors and private investors in achieving more impact through their dryland investments (see box 2). All the success factors¹⁸ can contribute to an integrated dryland strategy, developed through a participatory process, which should achieve three aims: enhancing the economic and social well-being of dryland communities, while enabling them to sustain their ecosystem services, as well as strengthening their adaptive capacity to manage environmental and climate change.

26. In spite of the fact that drylands in poor countries face disadvantage from the environmental challenges of aridity and variability and the socio-economic counterpart of chronic under-investment, they do offer investment opportunities that can be promoted by the United Nations system; the cost of inaction is too high for the international community to fail.¹⁹

Box 2: The UNCCD, a unique Convention

Reversing and preventing desertification, alongside mitigation of the effects of drought, are key inputs to any attempts to reduce poverty and improve environmental sustainability in drylands. Hence, the UNCCD, developed as a result of the 1992 Rio Summit, has a pivotal role to play as the only global treaty focused on developing countries and on improving living conditions. Its dual foci, on both environmental and developmental matters, give it a unique position in facilitating progress towards MDG achievement because numerous tools and policies proven in the dryland context can be translated elsewhere, and many others will be independent of natural environmental conditions.

Partnership lies at the heart of the UNCCD, casting resource users and their communities as central to the solution rather than part of the problem. This approach recognizes the interdependence of drylands and other world systems. The UNCCD secretariat has been designated as the focal point for the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification, the decade 2010–2020.

Source: UNCCD/UNDP (2010): The Forgotten Billion. MDG Achievement in the Drylands, Bonn/New York (<www.unccd.int/media/docs/Forgottenbillion.pdf>, p. 4)

27. Combating desertification/land degradation is closely linked to promoting sustainable development; when people live in poverty they have little choice but to over-exploit the land. This is the circle that the UNCCD seeks to break.

28. The UNCCD refers to sustainable development, climate change, biological diversity, water resources, energy sources, food security and socio-economic factors. It works as a multilateral land and soil framework, which cannot be viewed in isolation from other efforts to promote sustainable

such as low investment, poor infrastructure and limited access to market; policy and institutional challenges involving low national priority, poor land and natural resources governance, limited access to knowledge and information; socio-cultural aspects such as nomadic lifestyles and gender inequalities; demography, and conflicts in some countries. (see, for example, UNDP ‘The Millennium Development Goals in Drylands’ <www.undp.org/drylands/policy-mdg.html>)

¹⁸ The following success factors are given in the document ‘The Forgotten Billion’: Country-led development and effective governance (including representative political structures, accountable institutions and public servants who have adequate incentives); Inclusive and pro-poor economic growth; Public investment in education, health and basic services; Targeted interventions, including social assistance and public employment programmes; Climate adaptation and low-carbon development. And more specific for the drylands: Re-evaluating and sustaining dryland ecosystem services; Promoting public and private investment in drylands; Land rights and their reform, risk and resilience; Upgrading the knowledge base and improving governance.

¹⁹ Cf. the premise of a report under preparation (<www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cric9/pdf/crp1eng.pdf>). The ‘Progress Report. Global drylands: a UN system-wide response’ will be available at the UNCCD COP 10 in Changwon, Republic of Korea, in October 2011.

development.

29. Implementation of the Convention must be embedded into core development policy frameworks defined at the international as well as the regional, national and local levels. These should include, but not be limited to, the protection and valuation of global commons, such as soil, and the MDGs, in particular poverty and hunger eradication (MDG 1) and environmental sustainability (MDG 7). Implementation should be better connected with efforts to target climate objectives, human security, migration and conflict prevention.

30. Climate change can offer new opportunities for productive SLM practices, such as reforestation, improved water management, integrated soil fertility management, conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and improved rangeland management. Many SLM practices can simultaneously achieve both adaptation and mitigation goals.²⁰ SLM represents a preventative approach to climate change that can reduce the need for costly ex post coping measures, such as changing crops and livelihoods, clearing new land for agriculture, and providing for environmental refugees. SLM practices are being adopted on only a small percentage of agricultural land in sub-Saharan Africa so far; degradation of agricultural land and expansion of agriculture into forests, woodlands and bush land are continuing.²¹

31. The Governments of affected countries and those of developed country Parties must take the lead in making The Strategy and SLM effective instruments to the implementation of the UNCCD. Civil society, the public at large, the scientific community and the private sector each have an important role to play in bringing about the desired outcome. For that, broad sectors of Government and administration, the parliament, the public and influential target groups need tailor-made information on land/soils, including the relationship between these aspects and major current and emerging global challenges.²²

32. The very nature of soil conservation makes it hard to present it as an appealing and popular topic. However, land and particularly the topsoil are the skin of planet Earth. The skin is suffering from ‘cancer’ – from land degradation and soil erosion. Because desertification is linked to many other problems such as poverty and hunger, environmental destruction, conflict and migration, greater public awareness and political will are required.

B. Parliamentary commitment for global sustainability and sustainable land management

33. Supported, encouraged and monitored by parliaments, Governments and international entities should provide an enabling national and international policy framework that facilitates sustainable human development in general and SLM leading to zero net global land degradation in particular.

34. International donors have made a series of commitments to Africa and developing countries in other regions, which they need to keep: a supportive role is to be assumed by parliaments and parliamentarians. The same goes for a responsible follow-up to the commitments made at the G-8 summit meeting in L’Aquila in 2009. The declaration adopted then expressed a deep concern about desertification and land

²⁰ Adaptation refers to adjustments in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects in order to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. Various types of adaptation can be distinguished, including anticipatory and reactive adaptation, private and public adaptation, and autonomous and planned adaptation. Mitigation refers to human interventions to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases and to create low-carbon paths of development. For definitions of relevant terms see UNCCD/Global Mechanism (2008): The climate change mitigation and adaptation information kit (<www.globalmechanism.org/dynamic/documents/document_file/ccesinfokit_web-1.pdf>).

²¹ TerrAfrica (2009): The Role of Sustainable Land Management for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Executive Summary, Washington/Midrand (<www.africaclimatesolution.org/features/Land_Climate_Executive_Summary.pdf>).

²² UNCCD (2010): Comprehensive Communication Strategy, p. 13 (<www.unccd.int/convention/docs/css%20rev.pdf>).

degradation in drylands. It announced the will to work with developing country partners to integrate effective SLM into relevant cooperation programmes and assist them in integrating SLM into national development plans and policies as well as national climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.²³

35. During the ninth session of the UNCCD Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), in February 2011, several proposals were put forward which may deserve the support of parliaments and parliamentarians:²⁴

(a) With regard to the quantity of synergistic planning/programming of the three Rio Conventions (UNCCD, CBD, UNFCCC), or mechanisms for joint implementation at all levels, a clear definition of initiatives and programmes to be included in the computation of the indicator needs to be provided in order to produce more coherent information;

(b) Developed country Parties should be invited to increase their support to the establishment of partnership agreements with, and synergistic initiatives in, the three Rio conventions;

(c) Noting that the investments that targeted simultaneously the UNCCD, the CBD and the UNFCCC were not evenly distributed among regions, some Parties recommended that synergistic implementation of the Rio conventions be addressed more systematically in all regions, and that all available financial instruments and opportunities be mobilized accordingly;

(d) The UNCCD secretariat was asked to review the classification of best practices on SLM technologies, including adaptation, with a view to considering additional and integrating existing information, which would facilitate identification and replication of best practices.

36. Desertification and land degradation issues deserve global political attention and the needs of drylands must be fully integrated into any agreement that follows the end of the first commitment period of the UNFCCC -Kyoto Protocol. Soil should be included as a mandatory accounting category.

37. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 (Rio+20) will focus on green economies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and the future institutional framework for sustainable development. The time is right to argue the case for efficient management of natural resources as a central element of a green economy and the battle for poverty eradication and global sustainability. All efforts should be made to integrate and prioritize DLDD issues on global, regional and national agendas for preparing Rio+20 and to provide best practices on how land management can contribute to a green economy.²⁵

38. In the context of global sustainability, parliaments and MPs should work for the achievement of MDG 7 (ensure environmental sustainability). The first target of MDG 7 is explicit on mainstreaming; it requires countries to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

39. Regarding UNCCD, the three main challenges consist in mainstreaming the national action programmes (NAPs) into sustainable development policies and programmes, establishing integrated investment frameworks for the implementation of NAPs, and aligning NAPs with the five operational objectives of The Strategy.²⁶

²³ See the declaration 'Responsible Leadership for a Sustainable Future' - paragraph 79 (www.g8italia2009.it/static/G8_Allegato/G8_Declaration_08_07_09_final.0.pdf).

²⁴ Document ICCD/CRIC(9)/16, paragraphs 32, 38, 68 and 77d (www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cric9/pdf/16eng.pdf).

²⁵ Note by the UN Secretary-General (2011) (footnote 2), paragraphs 17 and 89.

²⁶ See the Concept Note of the UNCCD secretariat (2011): Joint retreat of the Secretariat of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and the Secretariat of the Global Environment Facility, Bonn 4 January 2011, p. 10 (www.unccd.int/publicinfo/gef/docs/GEF%20retreat%20draft%20agenda%20and%20concept%20note%20final%20revision%205).

40. Parliaments and MPs can recommend considering ways and means to broaden the scope of the UNCCD, including the option for a non-legally binding international instrument for the sustainable management of land and soil.

41. SLM practices can be implemented most efficiently if all actors involved (decision makers, farmers and researchers) participate in decision-making processes. Successful implementation of SLM often requires close cooperation between neighbours or members of a village community. Providing information, imparting knowledge, and exchanging experience play a key role in each of these steps.”²⁷

42. Parliaments and MPs must contribute to overcoming the political marginalization of dryland communities.

43. Parliaments and MPs may rely on five conditions for successful policies for SLM acceleration: (i) country-led development and effective governance; (ii) inclusive and pro-poor green/sustainable economic growth with an agricultural productivity focus; (iii) public investment in education, health and basic services; (iv) safety nets (via social assistance and public employment programmes); and (v) integration of SLM, climate adaptation and low-carbon development.²⁸

44. The UNCCD deserves greater visibility and more success for the sake of the people living under desertification stress, by: encouraging governments and parliaments to give more attention to desertification, land degradation and soil erosion issues, raising awareness, sharpening the profile and institutions of the UNCCD, making desertification a cornerstone in the general architecture of global sustainability and environmental governance, making it a priority on the agenda of decision makers, involving all the stakeholders at all levels in the fight against desertification, improving regional cooperation, enhancing institutional and human capacities, pursuing an advocacy and catalytic role in other relevant multilateral processes, and, last but not least, providing the necessary financial means (see box 3).

45. Parliaments and MPs can work for the slowing of the desertification process. One valuable way is to reduce people’s vulnerability by increasing the availability of alternative livelihoods and strengthening their resilience. Another way is mainstreaming SLM, drought-risk management and biodiversity considerations into the design, implementation and monitoring of adaptation action at local, national and regional levels. Climate change adaptation will need to find a concerted way to address poverty reduction and vulnerability to changing conditions.²⁹

46. SLM has considerable potential for adaptation to climate change – not only by afforestation and reducing deforestation. Soil carbon sequestration, by restoring organic soils and improving degraded lands, conservation of agriculture and preservation of grassland as well as integrated water management can contribute significantly to reducing emissions. One concrete way forward could be to expand the coverage of the UNFCCC clean development mechanism to agricultural land use, to include projects focusing on carbon sequestration in soil. SLM offers a cost-efficient contribution to climate protection and is essential to achieve the MDGs and global food security.

pdf>).
²⁷ Cf. UNCCD (2009): Benefits of Sustainable Land Management, Bern, p. 15 (<www.unccd.int/knowledge/docs/CSD_Benefits_of_Sustainable_Land_Management.pdf>).

²⁸ See Note by the United Nations Secretary-General (2011), (footnote 2), paragraphs. 66–80.

²⁹ The UNCCD booklet, published in 2011 cooperation with Zoi Environment Network, ‘Desertification: a visual synthesis’ is intended as a basic information kit that tells the story of desertification, land degradation and drought at the global scale (www.unccd.int/knowledge/docs/Desertification-EN.pdf - p. 20).

**Box 3: The Strategy (2008–2018):
Operational objective 5 (Financing and technology transfer), Outcome 5.3**

Parties increase their efforts to mobilize financial resources from international financial institutions, facilities and funds, including the Global Environment Facility, by promoting the UNCCD/sustainable land management agenda within the governing bodies of these institutions.

Source: Decision 3/COP 8.

47. Parliaments and MPs could be supportive in contributing to the realization of the recommendations which came out of the retreat between the UNCCD secretariat and the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF³⁰), held in Bonn on 4 January 2011. The Joint Action Plan includes a set of recommendations for strengthening collaboration between the UNCCD and GEF secretariats in order to advance the implementation of the Convention and The Strategy.³¹

48. The 2009 report of the Commission on Climate Change and Development (CCCD) also presents some conclusions, relevant for global sustainability and SLM.³² National governments have to deal with multiple assistance agencies, all of which are trying to prove to their constituencies that they are taking effective action. Responding to climate change makes the principles embedded in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action – ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, accountability – even more relevant. Governments should provide an enabling policy framework covering management, planning, and service delivery functions for adaptation that facilitate and support local governments and other actors' efforts. They should ensure that devolved administrative responsibilities are matched by resources and technical capacity.

49. For CCCD as well, the mobilization of new and additional climate adaptation money is required – but not at the expense of ongoing development programmes; the current proliferation of financing mechanisms for adaptation was found problematic. Additionally, official development assistance (ODA) should constitute at least 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) of the developed countries. Some development agencies and national governments are successfully using social transfers – regular and predictable grants to poor households – as a way to improve access to services and address the underlying causes of inequalities in well-being. They need to be expanded and scaled up as vulnerability increases.

50. Parliaments and MPs would welcome aid for decision makers in setting priorities by getting information on the economic, social and environmental cost of desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD), and the benefits of SLM. The potential role of economic modelling should be explored to develop policy mechanisms that can facilitate sustainable land management decisions.³³

³⁰ The GEF is the only multilateral fund specifically mandated to finance implementation activities elaborated by the affected countries in their NAPs. Also at the disposal of the affected countries is the Global Mechanism, which was established by the UNCCD to promote actions leading to the mobilization of resources.

³¹ The recommendations fall into five categories: (i) actions at advocacy and awareness-raising levels to further enhance recognition of the land agenda by key stakeholders and increase investment in SLM globally, including the effective use of GEF resources; (ii) actions at policy level to facilitate stronger engagement by the GEF in UNCCD processes, as well as in building synergy with the other conventions; (iii) actions at country level to facilitate planning and programming of resources for SLM; (iv) actions at project appraisal level to strengthen the role of the UNCCD secretariat in the GEF project cycle, including more effective monitoring of GEF resource utilization by Parties; (v) actions on monitoring and assessment of implementation to enhance the quality and standards of reporting, including the possibility of linking knowledge management activities between the GEF and UNCCD secretariats. (see <www.unccd.int/publicinfo/gef/retreat.php>)

³² Commission on Climate Change and Development (2009): Closing the gaps. Declaration and executive summary (<www.ccdcommission.org/Filer/report/CCD_DECLARATION_EN.pdf>). The Commission was launched in 2007 by the Government of Sweden.

³³ Cf. Document ICCD/CST(S-2)/2 (footnote 3), p. 13.

51. Useful for Parliaments and MPs activities are the awareness-raising objectives messages and proposals set out in the UNCCD ‘Comprehensive Communication Strategy’. Specific target groups are addressed including ministers, high-ranking government officials and parliamentarians. Objectives are (i) to raise awareness among political decision makers and key civil servants about the potential returns on SLM as well as of the disproportionate cost of business as usual compared to the cost of appropriate action in addressing land degradation and drought, (ii) to promote recognition among political decision-making circles of the whole range of global benefits brought about by land/soils restoration and SLM in the drylands; (iii) to deepen understanding among political decision makers and leaders of how soil restoration and SLM in the drylands can contribute to addressing major global challenges.³⁴

52. The UNCCD booklet ‘Desertification: a visual synthesis’ (2011)³⁵ refers to best practice examples. One is taken from the ‘Integrating environmental protection and natural resource management in Poverty Eradication Action Plan’ (PEAP) in Uganda. Specific strategies identified by the PEAP on SLM initiatives include: developing a sector-wide approach for the environment and natural resources sector; undertaking meaningful land reform by clarifying land rights and strengthening the rights of the poor, especially women; improving land registration in the short term and strengthening the land rights of the poor through systematic demarcation in the long term, including specific initiatives for urban land reform; regulating provision of housing to ensure minimum standards and avoid overcrowding; reducing deforestation caused by increasing demand for fuelwood; encouraging private sector participation in the forestry sector while protecting central forest reserves; providing more support to district and community forests; and establishing beach management units to ensure sustainable management at community level, implementing programmes to protect wetlands and wildlife, and improving the weather-forecasting service to provide farmers with accurate information.

53. Because of some difficulties in defining SLM that, for a particular piece of land, depends on a large number of factors, many of which are dynamic (e.g. climate change, technology and social and political infrastructure), it may be helpful to establish demonstration plots on farmers’ or municipality lands and transferring knowledge and skills to support SLM. Funding of local and regional participatory development projects could help to meet the need to focus more on actions to achieve SLM.³⁶

54. The UNCCD asks for effective participation at the local, national and regional levels of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local populations, both women and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their representative organizations, in policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of NAPs; parliaments and members of parliament are not mentioned. Increasing the role of all the stakeholders in decision-making processes is critical.

55. In order to create some kind of emulation and encouragement, the establishment of SLM global, national and/or regional awards could be envisaged in a prestigious set-up with four levels: political leadership, civil servants, civil society, and the media. The effectiveness of communication strategies will depend on their ability to attract the interest of decision makers on the publication of media articles that portray land/soils issues as significant globally and SLM as a solution to major global challenges. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and NGOs are increasingly drawing on highly regarded public personalities – ‘ambassadors’ or ‘champions’ – to sponsor organizational initiatives as a strategy to draw the interest of decision makers and the media, and for issue advocacy.³⁷

³⁴ UNCCD (2010): Comprehensive Communication Strategy (footnote 22), pp. 18–19. The further target groups are: Civil servants in ministries concerned with desertification/land degradation and drought/sustainable land management; the media; the scientific community, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations; the public at large; the private sector.

³⁵ <www.unccd.int/knowledge/docs/Desertification-EN.pdf>, p. 43.

³⁶ Cf. Document ICCD/CST(S-2)/2 (footnote 3), paragraph 62.

³⁷ UNCCD (2010): Comprehensive Communication Strategy (footnote 22), pp. 40–42.

56. In order to propel principles into action, regular global DLDD/SLM monitoring and assessment and early warning mechanisms should be organized and implemented based on agreed standard protocols and open data access policies, to harmonize with other efforts worldwide and to minimize duplication of effort. It should include the collection of information relating to climate change and biodiversity, and to other land-related issues that are the focus of multilateral environmental agreements.³⁸

57. Underlining the key role played by institutions, the Eighth UNCCD Parliamentary Round Table already asked for better coordination of actions on climate change, development planning and disaster risk reduction – led from the highest political and organizational level. Participatory democracy, functioning institutions and transparency are needed at all levels for effective adaptation and mitigation.³⁹

58. Recognizing that private sector involvement in the implementation of the UNCCD provides opportunities for strengthening the provision of financial and technological resources and capacity-building for sustainable development (including through pro-poor public–private partnerships), parliaments are asked to ensure that private–sector involvement is not abused and misused, and that social and environmental concerns are addressed.

59. The cause of desertification and soil erosion needs an intergovernmental panel on soil to assess and review trends in soil and land degradation and rehabilitation of degraded land.⁴⁰

60. A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) could strengthen the effectiveness, transparency, representativeness, plurality and legitimacy of the work of the institutions that compose the United Nations system. The establishment of a UNPA could also be a centrepiece for parliamentary supervision of the renewed system of international financial, economic and environmental governance.⁴¹

61. The following key questions arise for parliamentary deliberation on areas for strategic action, based on experiences, success stories and failures:

(a) Through which activities can parliaments and parliamentarians bring SLM and the need for zero net global land degradation to the political agenda and what are effective approaches to align SLM with relevant national policy areas taking into account human, institutional and financial requirements?;

(b) How can awareness be raised among which target groups (decision makers, the large public including the business sector, NGOs, media, academia, artists, etc.) for global sustainability and SLM?;

(c) How can international cooperation be organized to ensure better consideration of land and soil issues in development and environment policies of developed countries and international financial institutions?

³⁸ UNCCD (2010): Comprehensive Communication Strategy (footnote 22), pp. 14, 17.

³⁹ Declaration by Members of Parliament (2009) (footnote 25), paragraph 15.

⁴⁰ The 8th Parliamentary Round Table already asked for the establishment of an ‘International Panel of Desertification’. In the opinion of the UNCCD Executive Secretary the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is proof of the advantage of such a solution. The advantages are: independence, more public attention, focus on the specific issues of land and soil, even if there is some overlapping with already existing institutions (<https://secure.iofc.org/shop/sites/all/files/Caux2011_CFHS_GnacadjiaSpeech_EN.pdf>). See also: Document ICCD/CST(S-2)/2 (footnote 3), where it was widely regarded as very important to have a rigorous scientific framework for monitoring and assessment, which has heretofore been lacking.

⁴¹ Declaration by Members of Parliament (2009) (footnote 25), paragraph 32.

III. Implementation of The Strategy

A. Motivation and content

62. The UNCCD is a unique instrument in that it focuses attention not only on land degradation but also on the economic, social and environmental problems it causes. This Convention is increasingly being recognized as an important instrument in global, regional, national and local efforts to achieve sustainable human development and poverty reduction and to contribute to global sustainability.

63. A positive resolve to stimulate implementation of the Convention was expressed at COP 8 when Parties adopted The Strategy.

64. The Strategy has the long-term vision to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability. It provides a framework that captures the long-term vision of the Parties, reflecting consensus on the success factors (finance, policy, capacity development, advocacy and a sound scientific basis) for achieving the targets of the Convention.

65. The Strategy provides a unique opportunity to address some of the key challenges of the Convention, to capitalize on its strengths, to seize opportunities provided by the new policy and financing environment, and to create a new and revitalized common ground for all UNCCD stakeholders. It supports the development and implementation of national and regional policies, programmes and measures to prevent, control and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought through scientific and technological excellence, raising public awareness, standard setting, advocacy and resource mobilization.

66. To achieve this long-term vision, four strategic objectives will guide the action of UNCCD stakeholders and partners in the period 2008–2018. The Strategy also identifies five operational objectives to guide short and medium term (3–5 year) actions that aim to achieve the strategic objectives.

67. The Strategy targets the use of effective and practical approaches to SLM with synergy as a systemic approach. It has four strategic objectives (see box 4) that guide the actions of all UNCCD stakeholders and partners, including raising political will. The ‘expected impacts’ are the long-term effects intended by the strategic objectives. The impact indicators are performance benchmarks and important tools for measuring change on the ground, revealing if progress is made and whether the intended goal is reached.

Box 4: Strategic objectives, expected impacts and indicators

Objective 1: To improve the living conditions of affected populations

Expected impact 1.1. People living in areas affected by desertification/land degradation and drought to have an improved and more diversified livelihood base and to benefit from income generated from sustainable land management.

Expected impact 1.2. Affected populations’ socio-economic and environmental vulnerability to climate change, climate variability and drought is reduced.

Indicator S-1: Decrease in numbers of people negatively impacted by the processes of desertification/land degradation and drought.

Indicator S-2: Increase in the proportion of households living above the poverty line in affected areas.

Indicator S-3: Reduction in the proportion of the population below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption in affected areas.

Objective 2: To improve the condition of affected ecosystems

Expected impact 2.1. Land productivity and other ecosystem goods and services in affected areas are enhanced in a sustainable manner contributing to improved livelihoods.

Expected impact 2.2. The vulnerability of affected ecosystems to climate change, climate variability and drought is reduced.

Indicator S-4: Reduction in the total area affected by desertification/land degradation and drought.

Indicator S-5: Increase in net primary productivity in affected areas.

Objective 3: To generate global benefits through effective implementation of the UNCCD

Expected impact 3.1. Sustainable land management and combating desertification/land degradation contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the mitigation of climate change.

Indicator S-6: Increase in carbon stocks (soil and plant biomass) in affected areas.

Indicator S-7: Areas of forest, agricultural and aquaculture ecosystems under sustainable management.

Objective 4: To mobilize resources to support implementation of the Convention through building effective partnerships between national and international actors

Expected impact 4.1. Increased financial, technical and technological resources are made available to affected developing country Parties, and where appropriate Central and Eastern European countries, to implement the Convention.

Expected impact 4.2. Enabling policy environments are improved for UNCCD implementation at all levels.

Indicator S-8: Increase in the level and diversity of available funding for combating desertification/land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought.

Indicator S-9: Development policies and measures address desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought.

Source: Decision 3/COP.8, annex (<www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cop8/pdf/16add1eng.pdf>, pp. 16–17.

68. The strategy has five operational objectives to guide the actions of all UNCCD stakeholders and partners in the short and medium term (3–5 years) (see box 5).

Box 5: The Five Operational Objectives of The Strategy

- Operational objective 1: **Advocacy, awareness raising and education**

To actively influence relevant international, national and local processes and actors in adequately addressing desertification/land degradation and drought-related issues.

- Operational objective 2: **Policy framework**

To support the creation of enabling environments for promoting solutions to combat desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought.

- Operational objective 3: **Science, technology and knowledge**

To become a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought.

- Operational objective 4: **Capacity-building**

To identify and address capacity-building needs to prevent and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought.

- Operational objective 5: **Financing and technology transfer**

To mobilize and improve the targeting and coordination of national, bilateral and multilateral financial and technological resources in order to increase their impact and effectiveness.

Source: Decision 3/COP.8, annex (<www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cop8/pdf/16add1eng.pdf>, pp. 18–20.

69. By adopting The Strategy, Parties placed a demand on the UNCCD secretariat to move towards a results-based management approach including indicators to assess what is done.⁴² The reforms induced by The Strategy are radical, as they apply to all the Convention's institutions – the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), the Global Mechanism and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) – as well as to countries. Developing countries that are affected by desertification, land degradation and drought and the non-affected developed countries are supposed to align their activities with The Strategy (see box 6).

B. Mobilizing parliamentary support for The Strategy

70. Although there are some encouraging examples where parliaments and parliamentarians played a positive role in promoting the UNCCD implementation process, their role has generally been rather weak so far.⁴³

71. Parliaments and MPs must do their utmost to strengthen the political will that is essential for the successful implementation of the UNCCD and The Strategy. They can push the boundaries of what can be achieved politically, and also develop new ideas without the constraints of formal government negotiating positions. The specific commitments made by the parliamentarians of the previous Parliamentary Round Tables deserve further follow-up.

72. To make the UNCCD more effective, it has to be 'domesticated' by national law. Parliaments are the institutions that domesticate the law and approve the budgets. They have to make the trade-offs on how and where they allocate the resources. And parliaments are the institutions with oversight and supervision responsibility.

73. In the context of the political and institutional environment that upholds democracy, human rights and the rule of law, parliaments should fulfil six key functions and powers ('parliamentary hexagon': law making, allocating financial resources, oversight and control, elective power, power of discourse, influencing foreign policy⁴⁴). These main functions are also critical to the success of the UNCCD and The Strategy, their implementation and monitoring/evaluation.

74. Parliaments may be strong or weak in accomplishing the parliamentary hexagon. Policymaking is a result of complicated political, social and institutional processes. A strong

⁴² As stated by the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, Luc Gnacadja (see UNCCD Update No. 1 (May, 2010): Ten-Year Strategy Shows Early Results. (<www.unccd.int/secretariat/docs/UNCCDLetterNo.1.pdf>).

⁴³ U. Holtz: Implementing the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification from a parliamentary point of view - Critical assessment and challenges ahead, Bonn, 2007 (<www.unccd.int/parliament/docs/parliamentariansforum.pdf und www.unccd.int/cop/cop8/docs/parl-disc.pdf>), pp. 24–26.

⁴⁴ Described by U. Holtz (2005): Important Outcomes of the Previous Five Round Tables of Members of Parliament on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Bonn (<www.unccd.int/cop/cop7/docs/report5parl-eng.pdf>), p. 22).

parliamentary involvement in public affairs may issue from the main functions and tasks of democratically elected and functioning – often bicameral – parliaments as described and analysed in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) ‘Universal Declaration on Democracy’ of 1997.⁴⁵

75. If we take the parliamentary hexagon and relate it to the UNCCD and its Strategy, several areas can be discerned in which Parliaments as a whole and parliamentarians in their individual capacity can support the implementation of the Strategy.⁴⁶

Box 6: The Strategy – Implementation and alignment

Decision 3/COP.8 contains also the following paragraphs:

4. Requests Parties to put into operation the implementation of The Strategy, in accordance with their national priorities, in a spirit of international solidarity and partnership;
5. Urges affected developing country Parties, and any other affected country Party within the framework of its Regional Implementation Annex, to align their action programmes and other relevant implementation activities relating to the Convention with The Strategy by, inter alia, addressing the outcomes under the five operational objectives;

Source: Decision 3/COP 8 (<www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cop8/pdf/16add1eng.pdf>).

76. Parliaments and MPs can enact enabling legislation and standards – a key tool for combating desertification, its harmonization with the provisions of The Strategy, and the alignment of their countries’ NAPs and other relevant implementation activities relating to the Convention with the five operational objectives of The Strategy.⁴⁷ They can promote corresponding laws, ordinances and rules of land tenure regimes and international land deals. For instance, the 2nd operational objective of The Strategy is to support the creation of enabling environments for promoting solutions to combat desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought.⁴⁸

77. Parliaments and MPs can ensure that adequate financial resources are allocated to the sectors of relevance to The Strategy, in particular to the four strategic objectives; the creation of specific budget lines may be envisaged. They can make sure that Official Development Assistance and other sources of foreign aid are brought on budget (as direct budget support or as an attachment to the budget document) and are

⁴⁵ The Declaration was adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council at its 161st session, Cairo, 16 September 1997 (<www.ipu.org/cnl-e/161-dem.htm>).

⁴⁶ In the following, the author relies on and quotes from relevant background documents and outcomes of the UNCCD Parliamentary Round Tables in Nairobi (2005), Madrid (2007) and Buenos Aires (2009). The valuable publication from IPU/UN-OHRLLS (2009): Mobilizing parliamentary support for the Brussels Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries (A Guide to Parliamentary Practice), Geneva (<www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/LDC09_en.pdf>) was adapted to UNCCD needs.

⁴⁷ During the ninth session of the CRIC, in February 2011, a large number of affected country Parties stated that the alignment of the NAPs with The Strategy has not yet started due to limitations in terms of non-availability of adequate financial and technical support. Questions were also raised as to how to mainstream NAPs into national socio-economic planning and budgetary processes. See document ICCD/CRIC(9)/16, paragraphs 30, 31 (<www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cric9/pdf/16eng.pdf>).

⁴⁸ As stated in the Concept Note of the UNCCD secretariat (2011): Joint retreat of the Secretariat of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and the Secretariat of the Global Environment Facility, p. 10: The alignment of action programmes with the five operational objectives of the Strategy has been identified as one of the key areas that need immediate attention by affected country Parties to the UNCCD, in order to ensure appropriate action at national, subregional/regional, and global level. Findings from the preliminary analysis prepared on NAP alignment show that progress with respect to the alignment process is very slow and that reaching the globally agreed target is seriously under threat. (<www.unccd.int/publicinfo/gef/docs/GEF%20retreat%20draft%20agenda%20and%20concept%20note%20final%20revision%205.pdf>).

integrated into the country's own development plans. They can ask for the development of integrated investment frameworks – for leveraging national, bilateral and multilateral resources with a view to increasing the effectiveness and impact of interventions (see outcome 5.1 of operational objective 5 of The Strategy).

78. In several African countries, individual parliamentarians receive an allocation that they can use to carry out development projects in their constituencies; they can thus be encouraged to invest a substantial portion of these resources in specific sectors (e.g. good practice examples of desertification control).

79. Developed country Parties, parliaments and MPs are asked to provide substantial, adequate, timely and predictable financial resources to support domestic initiatives to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought, including the adequate financial allocation for the activities of the UNCCD bodies, the Global Mechanism and the secretariat.

80. Parliaments and MPs can monitor executive actions and control whether The Strategy is on a good road of implementation, for example, by putting questions and interpellations to the Executive, setting up special commissions, holding regular hearings and organizing field visits. Parliaments in developing countries have a special responsibility to look after full accountability and transparency of aid according of the principles established by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and other such commitments.

81. The UNCCD and The Strategy require the pertinent authorities to fulfil reporting obligations. Parliaments and MPs can participate in preparing such reports; they can bring pressure to bear on the Executive to make sure that they take appropriate action to comply with the State's obligation under The Strategy. They can ask for the submission of regular 'green accounting' reports on the state of combating poverty, on SLM and natural resource protection and on the progress achieved, thus providing citizens with the information needed to hold Governments accountable and ensuring an effective process within parliaments for reviewing progress with regard to the economic, social, environmental and political aspects of sustainable development at the national level, but also in order to monitor the international agenda for sustainable development.

82. Parliaments and MPs can elect competent and committed personalities for parliamentary leadership, relevant committees and rapporteur roles. They may think of appointing a Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations (with a specific focus on sustainable development requirements) and of encouraging women's parliamentary caucuses. In every parliament a national network of MPs and a focal point on UNCCD issues should be established.

83. Parliaments and MPs make use of the power of discourse.⁴⁹ As representatives of the people who have elected the MPs they are very often development agents, opinion leaders and also good disseminators of information within society. They can serve as channels for conveying vision of The Strategy and its strategic objectives to the public and grassroots communities. They should ensure that their political parties include the implementation of The Strategy in their manifestos and other policy documents as a matter of priority.

84. Parliaments and MPs can, in line with operational objective 1 of The Strategy (Advocacy, awareness and education) – mobilize public opinion and raise awareness on sustainable human development and desertification issues through campaigns (using also new information technologies and social networks, such as YouTube or facebook), annual events (World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought on 17 June),

⁴⁹ Cf. also UNCCD (2010): Comprehensive Communication Strategy (footnote 25) (<www.unccd.int/convention/docs/css%20rev.pdf>).

special parliamentary debates, commemorative postage stamps, radio and television debates, prize-award ceremonies, environmental education, the involvement of local authorities and populations, women and youth, the business sector, NGOs and community-based organizations, schools, academics and artists, and last but not least, journalists.

85. Parliaments and MPs in developed and developing countries⁵⁰ can step up their efforts to raise awareness on DLDD and its synergy with climate change and biodiversity and on communication and educational issues, in order to increase the level of understanding, and consequently of support, needed to implement the UNCCD effectively. Additionally the visibility of the Convention may be raised through practical means such as parliamentary websites.⁵¹

86. Parliaments and MPs can participate in pertinent international cooperation and endeavours. They can undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility and encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

87. With regard to values and objectives, MPs are recommended to rely on the ‘Millennium Declaration’, adopted in 2000 by the United Nations General Assembly and reaffirmed by the summits of 2005 and 2010. Several inter-parliamentary organizations have been created to channel parliaments’ inputs into international affairs. The main objectives of these organizations are to foster the participation of parliaments in the management of global issues; to make sure that interests of the people occupy centre stage at the international level; and to make the functioning of international organizations more transparent and accountable in order to build an atmosphere conducive to human development.

88. Since 1998, date of the first Round Table, a parliamentary dimension has been added to the UNCCD process and the work of the COP. Because of the high political relevance of land degradation, soil erosion and desertification issues, there is a need for higher parliamentarian involvement in the implementation of the UNCCD and The Strategy at the national, (sub-)regional and international levels. In 2003, the Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD (PNoUNCCD) was created (<www.unccd.int/parliament/menu.php>); it must be better used. The Steering Committee should show more guidance in strengthening the PNoUNCCD and look for better follow-up of the declarations of the Round Tables.⁵²

89. Parliaments and MPs can promote forms of international, regional and subregional cooperation favourable to improving relations among themselves and between the relevant IGOs and NGOs and actors, including, if necessary, parliamentary diplomatic activities. Parliamentary oversight mechanisms could be created (vis-à-vis the GEF and regional development banks). Parliaments and MPs are encouraged to coordinate more with relevant (sub-)regional or continental organizations in an effort to promote alignment and implementation of regional action programmes (RAPs) and subregional action programmes (SRAPs). Considering the vision of The Strategy (‘to forge a global partnership’) and the relatively low level of partnerships on UNCCD issues, all parliaments are invited to increase their support to the establishment of partnership agreements with, and synergistic initiatives in the Rio conventions.

90. The following key questions arise for parliamentary deliberation on areas for strategic action, based

⁵⁰ Cf. document ICCD/CRIC(9)/16, paragraphs 25, 26 (<www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cric9/pdf/16eng.pdf>).

⁵¹ It is possible to find contact information for each parliament from the PARLINE database on the website of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (<www.ipu.org>).

⁵² Cf. Eighth Session of the UNCCD Round Table for Parliamentarians: Commitments and future actions of Parliamentarians, adopted by parliamentarians on the occasion of their Eighth Session held on 24–25 September 2009, in Buenos Aires, Argentina (<www.unccd.int/parliament/docs/Buenos_A_-_Declaration_2009-09-25_final_version.pdf>).

on experiences, success stories and failures:

- (a) Through which activities and measures can parliaments and parliamentarians raise political will and actively influence the implementation of the The Strategy at country level?
- (b) In which way may effective partnership-building enhance implementation of The Strategy?
- (c) What are the best ways to raise awareness of the decision makers so as to position DLDD among the priorities of the relevant national policy areas?

IV. Conclusion

91. For all those interested in combating desertification and land degradation, the promotion of global sustainability through SLM and the implementation of the The Strategy is high on the agenda. Parliamentarians that will attend the meeting in Changwon, Republic of Korea in October 2011 in parallel with COP 10 are invited to discuss the questions raised above and to define avenues for appropriate political activities.