



The World Bank

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EIGHTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD COP 8)

STATEMENT BY

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

I. The President of Spanish Parliament, Madame President, Mr. Executive Secretary, Madame Chair, Honorable Parliamentarians, Distinguished Delegates, Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is an honor and pleasure for me, on behalf of the World Bank, to address this Eighth Session of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification here in Madrid.

The recently concluded Millennium Ecosystem Assessment confirmed that the issue of desertification and land degradation is potentially the most threatening ecosystem change impacting livelihoods of the poor. Land degradation and desertification undermines the long-term development of many nations. Improved management of productive rural landscapes is critical for low-income or least developed countries. The scale of the land degradation challenge calls for sustained and collective action by the international community. But for these efforts to bear sustainable results, the implementation of the UNCCD must be guided and defined at the country level. The Convention places primary responsibility for action with affected country governments themselves.

II. Continuing World Bank support to UNCCD Implementation via Tangible Land Management investments at country level

Madam President, the Millennium Assessment noted that while desertification must be fought at all levels, it is clear that the battle must ultimately be won at the local level. And there is clear evidence that with sustained local commitment, success is possible. For this reason, the World Bank views sustainable land management as a high priority poverty reduction and development instrument at local, national, regional, and global levels.

The World Bank continues to be an active partner in implementing the UNCCD through direct support to UNCCD processes and organs. For example we participate in and support the CRIC processes, and for the last two years, the World Bank has been Chair of the Facilitation Committee of the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD. The World Bank is working closely and actively with the Global Mechanism in implementing the objectives of the UNCCD. The World Bank looks forward to a strengthened joint work with the Global Mechanism within the context of the Draft 10-Year Strategy Plan and Framework (presented to this COP for adoption), in particular under Strategic Objective 4 of mobilizing resources to support implementation of the Convention. As member of the Facilitation Committee, we are also working closely to align our activities with the UNCCD 10-Year Strategic Plan.

More importantly, Madame President, the World Bank has been involved in projects in numerous countries with a focus on poverty reduction and combating desertification and land degradation and managing the effects of drought. Between fiscal years 2001 and 2006, the Bank committed US \$1.4 billion for projects in natural resources management, with US \$701 million specifically aimed at sustainable land management (SLM). Within the same period of

time, the World Bank implemented Global Environment Facility (GEF) SLM projects amounting to US \$202 million, which represents a leveraging ratio of 1:4 (for every \$1 GEF invested, the World Bank co-financed by a factor of \$4). While official development assistance (ODA) is crucial, we believe that the UNCCD is a sustainable development instrument that is best implemented through utilization of resources (financial, capacity, institutional, etc.) from national and local levels. The role of parliamentarians in mobilizing these resources is crucial.

III. Mainstreaming the dialogue and action on desertification is vital

Beyond such specific investments, the Bank believes this can best be done via country **strategies and development frameworks** (CASs, PRSCs, CDD, PRSPs, etc.) to ensure that combating desertification and promoting sustainable land management are mainstreamed and handled as on-going development issues rather than as stand-alone activities. These frameworks provide an opportunity for the various national government agencies, community organizations and funding agencies to work together. Many Parties face the challenge of multiple donors and agencies attempting to reduce desertification and land degradation. Coordination of these efforts, agencies, and organizations is important for effective and efficient use of financial and environmental resources, strengthening of institutional capacity and delivering long-term socioeconomic and environmental benefits. And parliamentarians are critical in steering these national development processes.

IV. Emerging and Niche areas present new opportunities to address desertification

We are also calling upon and helping member countries to expand into niche areas that can benefit the implementation of the UNCCD.

Tapping the Carbon Market: Land rehabilitation measures can contribute to climate change management while tapping the carbon market. The Bank's Carbon Finance Program has demonstrated the potential of market-based public/private initiatives to invest significantly in sustainable land management interventions that provide measurable local and global benefits. Indeed the current portfolio has projects that respond directly to the challenge of UNCCD implementation in countries such as the Moldova Soil Conservation project; the Watershed Rehabilitation project in the Philippines; the Romania Afforestation project; and the Assisted Natural Regeneration project in Albania.

Adaptation to climate variability and change provides an opportunity to reduce land degradation. Climate variability and change can and does exacerbate land degradation. Many countries, especially in Africa, and particularly the poorest communities living in coastal areas and drylands are most vulnerable to extreme weather events such as droughts, sea level rise, floods, and heat waves. The risks to development are greater in these poorer countries and the ability to adapt smaller. While the effects of droughts are exacerbated by

armed conflicts and the pre-existence of major diseases, increased water stress will put further pressure on these triggers.

The Bank is actively implementing and advocating a risk management approach with an initial emphasis on minimising the risk to development and human livelihood posed by present climatic extremes. The current global focus on climate change and the availability of additional funds for adaptation thus provide an opportunity to improve the strategies and action plans for more coordinated effort at the national level on sustainable development and reduction in desertification/land degradation. The World Bank is calling on partner countries to embrace this opportunity.

V. Challenges and Action Areas

Madame President, a lot has changed for the better in the way we approach environment since the world community came together at Rio to lay the foundation of Agenda 21. But there is much to be done in helping affected countries to reach the objectives of the UNCCD in a sustainable manner.

1. **Droughts, floods, and other weather-related disasters projected to increase due to climate change.** While much work on climate change has focused on mitigation, there is an urgent need to balance the approach with a strong focus on adaptation. Therefore, a broader approach is needed to tackle the challenges linked to climate change, through a country-responsive strategy that prioritizes adaptation via mainstreaming **low-carbon growth** development programs in land management, agriculture, energy, water management, forestry, etc.
2. **We must build the knowledge base and capacity to analyze sustainable land management-growth linkages on one hand, and climate change-development linkages on the other.** Knowledge gaps include scoping the range of adaptation options, assessing potential country-level climate damages, and developing fine-scale climate change scenarios to aid the design of adaptation strategies (and their costing). It is crucial to support countries in accessing climate data and investing in transfer of technologies for SLM and adaptation in key sectors.
3. **Raising additional resources for SLM and climate change adaptation is crucial.** There is a current financing gap that needs to be closed to enable affected countries to respond to the effects of desertification and climate change so as to be able to systematically integrate adaptation issues into their policies and development programs. The World Bank's Clean Energy Investment Framework (CEIF) seeks to accelerate access to reliable energy services, promote low-carbon growth, and implement concrete measures to adapt to climate change and strengthen climate risk management capacities. This framework provides an entry point to scale up financial support and, in collaboration with private sector financing (through the CDM, etc), for

the development and sharing of low carbon technology and energy efficiency in affected countries.

4. **Gender mainstreaming in land administration and management is critical.** Meeting world food needs in the future will depend increasingly on addressing issues related to gender and on strengthening the capabilities and resources of women. Approximately 98 percent of rural women classified as economically active are engaged in agriculture and are the primary food producers in many parts of the world. Women make up 60 percent of the world's 1.2 billion poor. The percentage of women below the poverty line has increased by half since the 1970s. These realities need to be reflected in our sustainable land management investments at all levels. It is crucial that we strengthen awareness and support with respect to women and vulnerable groups in land management activities.
5. **The need to demonstrate results and improve the quality and impact of dryland investments is crucial:** Madame President, results are what matters, not process. In order to maintain a strong level of assistance in those areas, another challenge would be to demonstrate the returns/outcomes of investing in drylands.
6. **Knowledge and information on land management is essential:** Understanding the significance of land degradation is constrained by many uncertainties. It would be critical for all of us to deepen, better coordinate and integrate ongoing efforts aimed at gathering policy relevant and action-oriented data on various aspects of land management.

Thank you