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Sustainable development:

**Protection of global climate for present and future generations
of mankind**

**Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat
Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought
and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa**

Convention on Biological Diversity

Implementation of United Nations environmental conventions

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the reports submitted by the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.



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I. Report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the United Nations Climate Change Conference, Bali, 2007, and its follow-up

A. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 62/86, invited the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to report to it at its sixty-third session on the work of the Conference of the Parties. The present report is submitted in response to that invitation.

B. Outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and of the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol

1. Summary

2. The United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Bali, Indonesia, from 3 to 14 December 2007. It included the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.¹ The Bali Conference was the biggest climate change conference ever. It was characterized by a great desire of the parties to make progress, huge public interest and a good sense of common ownership of the outcome. There were nearly 11,000 participants, setting an attendance record, and the unprecedented level of media interest resulted in extensive coverage.

3. The outcomes achieved at Bali resulted from a remarkable year in the field of climate change. The year started off with the release of the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which demonstrated that climate change is unequivocal, that it can be confidently attributed to human activity and that business as usual would set the world on a dangerous course. Taking forward the message that the world needs to step up action, the Secretary-General convened a high-level event on climate change, which, along with other high-profile initiatives, further galvanized the political will of the world's leaders for negotiations on enhanced action on climate change.

4. The Conference achieved a breakthrough by agreeing to the Bali road map as a decisive response from the world's Governments to new scientific evidence. The road map consists of a number of forward-looking decisions that represent various tracks essential to reach a climate-secure future. At its centre is the Bali Action Plan, which establishes the overall framework for a two-year negotiating process to enable fuller implementation of the Convention. The Action Plan reflects a common understanding of the fact that climate change affects all countries and that fighting it requires common efforts, by developed and developing countries alike.

¹ The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has 192 parties and the Kyoto Protocol has 182 parties (as at 13 May 2008).

5. Under the Kyoto Protocol track, the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol established a timetable with detailed steps to be taken to complete negotiations on further emission reduction targets for industrialized countries by 2009.

6. The third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol also launched the Adaptation Fund and established the Adaptation Fund Board. Unique to this Fund is that it capitalizes on the carbon market to provide resources for adaptation.

2. Outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties

7. The 14 formal decisions adopted by the Conference, some of which are noted below, will further advance measures to mitigate climate change and to adapt to its impacts.

8. The Bali Action Plan (decision 1/CP.13) establishes a comprehensive framework to enable fuller implementation of the Convention. Work will be conducted under a newly established subsidiary body known as the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention, which will complete its work in two years time for adoption at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, in Copenhagen. The work will be taken forward in five areas:

- (a) Shared vision for long-term cooperative action;
- (b) Enhanced national and international action on mitigation;
- (c) Enhanced action on adaptation;
- (d) Enhanced action on technology development and transfer to support action on mitigation and adaptation;
- (e) Enhanced action on the provision of financial resources and investment to support action on mitigation and adaptation and technology cooperation.

9. Deforestation is an important component of future action. Reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries was a key issue in Bali. Parties affirmed the urgent need to take further meaningful action to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and adopted a programme of work to further methodological issues related to a range of policy approaches and provide positive incentives. The decision encourages Parties to support capacity-building and to undertake efforts, including demonstration activities, to address the drivers of deforestation.

10. Important progress was made on the issue of technology transfer, one of the key concerns of developing countries, which received renewed momentum. The thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties requested the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to prepare a strategic programme to scale up the level of investment for technology transfer to help developing countries address their needs for environmentally sound technologies and to provide financial support to developing countries for the implementation of the technology transfer framework.

11. Parties also agreed to reconstitute the Expert Group on Technology Transfer for a further five years. The Expert Group has been asked to pay particular attention, as part of its first two-year programme of work, to assessment of gaps in and barriers to the use of, and access to, financial resources. Furthermore, the Expert

Group will start working on developing performance indicators that can be used to regularly monitor and evaluate progress on the development, deployment and transfer of environmentally sound technologies. Thus, the work of the Expert Group constitutes an important input into the discussions on a post-2012 technology transfer mechanism.

12. Finance, along with technology, is a central piece of the Bali road map. A comprehensive financial architecture for the post-2012 period is required to spur resources and technical support from developed countries for sustainable development in developing countries, and a variety of tools will be needed. It is within this context that the fourth review of the financial mechanism launched in Bali is of critical importance. The thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties also initiated work on the assessment of funding necessary to assist developing countries in implementing commitments under the Convention over the next GEF replenishment cycle, along with its continued consideration of the fourth review of the financial mechanism.

13. The implementation of the Convention continues, with 134 developing countries having submitted their initial national communications. Of those countries, more than 120 are currently engaged in the preparation of their second national communications, which will contain information relating to greenhouse gas inventories, vulnerability and adaptation assessments and mitigation measures. Industrialized countries (Annex I parties) were requested to submit their fourth national communications to the secretariat by 1 January 2006. As at 30 July 2008, 40 out of 41 Annex I parties had submitted their fourth national communication.

14. As at 31 July 2008, 38 least developed countries had prepared national adaptation programmes of action identifying priority activities that respond to their urgent and immediate needs with regard to adaptation to climate change.

3. Outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and other activities under the Kyoto Protocol

15. The third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol adopted 11 decisions, strengthening implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and building the basis for future climate change policy.

16. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties agreed on a series of activities that should allow an in-depth consideration of the elements identified within its work programme, thus providing it with a clear basis for completing its work by 2009. In following this work programme, in 2008 the Ad Hoc Working Group will devote its efforts to the means to achieve mitigation objectives of Annex I parties to the Kyoto Protocol. During 2007, the Ad Hoc Working Group made good progress in understanding the mitigation potential of Annex I parties, and in its consideration of ranges of emission reductions it made use of the best scientific knowledge available, notably the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

17. At the third session, parties also decided on the scope and content for the second review of the Kyoto Protocol under its article 9 to be undertaken by the fourth session, in Poznan, Poland, in December 2008. The review will be aimed at enhancing the implementation of the Protocol and elaborating on a number of

elements, particularly adaptation. The decision further put in motion a number of activities to prepare for the second review.

18. The launch of the Adaptation Fund was aimed at addressing the needs of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. To manage the Adaptation Fund, a governance structure has been devised, with the Adaptation Fund Board comprising representatives of parties. The Board will be serviced by a secretariat (the GEF secretariat) and a trustee (the World Bank). The Board, in its capacity as the operating entity of the Adaptation Fund, will supervise and manage the Fund under the authority and guidance of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. The Fund will finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes that are country-driven and are based on the priorities of eligible parties.

19. The third session noted the remarkable progress achieved on the clean development mechanism, the number of activities having more than doubled over the previous year. The clean development mechanism passed the milestone of 1,000 registered projects in April 2008. Its projects have so far generated 135 million certified emission reductions and are anticipated to generate more than 2.7 billion certified emission reductions in the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. In the context of this fast-growing mechanism, emphasis was placed on continually reviewing and improving efficiency, transparency and cost-effectiveness, and on making adjustments as necessary. The Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol also referred to the need to develop standards that promote quality and consistency for designated operational entities in their work. Notable progress was also observed in terms of methodological tools that now cover a wide range of applications. Another priority, for both the clean development mechanism and joint implementation, was to further develop management indicators and to report on this work at the next session.

20. Parties also noted the importance of initiatives undertaken (including the Designated National Authorities Forum, the Nairobi Framework and the Clean Development Mechanism Bazaar) to overcome barriers to equitable regional distribution and contribute to broader participation in the clean development mechanism, especially among least developed countries, African countries and small island developing States. To this end it was decided to abolish fees for clean development mechanism project activities hosted in least developed countries, and Annex I parties were encouraged to consider providing further financial support to initiatives such as the Nairobi Framework. The Nairobi Framework, launched by the Secretary-General at the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, is a joint effort of the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the World Bank and, since the Bali Conference, also the Economic Commission for Africa.

4. High-level segment

21. The joint high-level segment of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties and the third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the States Parties to the Kyoto Protocol was opened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The high-level segment was also addressed by the Prime Minister of Australia, the

President of Palau, the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea and the Prime Minister of Singapore.

22. The presence of a number of Heads of State or Government at the Bali Conference was testament to the seriousness and urgency of climate change, and the sincerity of purpose with which the international community was willing to address it.

23. The Secretary-General committed the United Nations to provide assistance to parties in every way possible and promised to support the parties throughout the negotiating period and to help implement the outcomes. He mentioned that, to this end, the chief executives of the United Nations system had already begun to define a joint United Nations contribution on this issue.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

24. The General Assembly may wish to:

(a) Take note of the report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as transmitted by the Secretary General;

(b) Note the outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and of the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, hosted by the Government of Indonesia from 3 to 14 December 2007;

(c) Pledge its support to the negotiating processes established by the Bali road map;

(d) Invite the Executive Secretary to continue to report to it on the work of the Conference.

II. Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and on the outcome of the observance of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification

A. Introduction

1. In its resolution 62/193, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixty-third session on the implementation of that resolution, including a report on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. The present report constitutes an update to the Assembly on principal activities that have been undertaken since the adoption of the resolution, including on the implementation of the Convention.

B. Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

1. Background

2. In its resolution 62/193, the General Assembly welcomed the adoption by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its eighth session, in its decision 3/COP.8, of the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) and invited all parties, the secretariat of the Convention and other institutions and supporting bodies to cooperate and coordinate their activities for a successful implementation of the strategy. It also invited all parties to report on progress made in the implementation of the strategy. The Assembly further invited developed-country parties to the Convention and other Governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector and other relevant organizations to make resources available to affected developing countries for the implementation of the Convention. Inviting the States parties to the Convention to provide the new Executive Secretary with full support in the fulfilment of his mandate and in promoting the implementation of the Convention, the Assembly noted with appreciation the efforts of the secretariat to continue its administrative renewal and reform and to streamline its functions in order to fully implement the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and bring them into line with the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention.

3. Further, the Assembly invited the Executive Secretary, in coordination with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, to actively prepare for and participate in the sixteenth and the seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development with a view to ensuring that the Convention's core issues, in particular those relating to land degradation, drought and desertification, are duly considered in the context of sustainable development

during the deliberations of the review session, with a view to ensuring a successful outcome of the entire cycle of the Commission.

2. The ten-year strategic plan and its implementation

Context

4. Ten years after coming into force, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is increasingly recognized as an instrument that can make a lasting contribution to the achievement of sustainable development, poverty reduction and the delivery of ecosystem services in the global context of climate change. The Convention operates today in an environment that has evolved considerably since the treaty was first negotiated, presenting different opportunities and constraints. The policy environment has also changed considerably since the Rio Conference as a result of the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, the expectation of increased support for Africa and the least developed countries and a stronger commitment to climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

5. The shrinking availability of arable land for food production, a reduced supply of safe water, a growing number of environmental refugees and migrants, and conflicts induced by scarcity of natural resources or the aggravated impact of national catastrophes are all factors that shed a sharper light on the combined effects of poverty and environmental degradation.

6. The scientific environment has benefited from the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and of the millennium ecosystem assessment, which have contributed to an improved understanding of the biophysical and socio-economic trends relating to land degradation in drylands and their impact on human and ecosystem well-being.

7. The financing environment has also evolved in the past decade, with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) becoming a financial mechanism of the Convention and official development assistance flows increasing again after a decade of stagnation, while resources for rural development and agriculture continue to decline. Pursuant to the Paris Declaration, donors have refocused their financing strategies to support country-driven priorities, based on poverty reduction strategy papers and other country-led development planning instruments. Lastly, various innovative financing instruments have emerged, including payments for global public goods, ecological services and carbon finance.

8. Against this background, the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in September 2007 in Madrid, adopted the ten-year strategic plan and framework (2008-2018), which is aimed at addressing the Convention's key challenges at all levels, capitalizing on its strengths, seizing opportunities provided by the new policy and financing environment and offering a revitalized common ground for all Convention stakeholders.

The strategy

9. The ten-year strategic plan and framework (the strategy) was introduced to the Assembly by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on 29 October 2007 in document A/C.2/62/7. The strategy has defined a mission and a vision of the Convention for the future. The vision of the strategy "is to forge a global partnership

to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability” (A/C.2/62/7, annex, para. 8). Its mission is “to provide a global framework to support 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, thereby contributing to poverty reduction” (para. 10). Further, the strategy contains four strategic objectives, namely, to improve the living conditions of affected populations; to improve the condition of affected ecosystems; to generate global benefits through effective implementation of the Convention; and to mobilize resources to support implementation of the Convention through the building of effective partnerships between national and international actors.

10. With a view to supporting the attainment of the strategic objectives, the strategy also contains five operational objectives that would guide the actions of all Convention stakeholders and partners in the short and medium term (3-5 years). Those objectives focus on advocacy, awareness-raising and education; policy framework; science, technology and knowledge; and capacity-building, financing and technology transfer.

11. While parties bear the main responsibility in implementing the strategy, the Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies have been requested to revise their functioning and engage in strategic planning exercises aimed at optimizing their contribution to advancing the strategy. In this context, the two subsidiary bodies, the Committee on Science and Technology and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, as well as the secretariat and the global mechanism, are each requested to prepare four-year strategic workplans, which are complemented by two-year operational work programmes. In addition, the secretariat and the global mechanism have been requested to prepare two-year joint work programmes. Furthermore, the workplans and programmes are requested to follow a results-based management approach.

Early stage of implementation

12. In order to operationalize the strategy, the Executive Secretary implemented a number of actions, as directed by the Conference of the Parties. He undertook a corporate review of the secretariat and, in collaboration with the global mechanism, prepared a joint work programme in line with the strategy. As directed by the Conference of the Parties, the Executive Secretary organized policy dialogue on the strategy to foster awareness of and buy-in to the strategy among relevant policy decision makers. The Executive Secretary further initiated partnership agreements with relevant stakeholders within the United Nations system, starting with the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding between the Convention secretariat and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Corporate review process of the secretariat

13. In line with the strategy, the secretariat started the preparation of its draft multi-year strategic workplan and a costed biennial work programme, following a results-based management approach, in October 2007. Key elements of this process

have included secretariat-wide consultations and training and the adoption of a new organizational structure.

14. The documentary outputs of this process are the draft four-year strategic plan, which embodies the policy orientation of the secretariat, and the draft two-year operational plan, which presents in more detail the work of the secretariat. With regard to policy orientation, the secretariat seeks to enhance its responsiveness to needs of the parties. This will come about first and foremost through enhanced substantive services to the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies. The secretariat will upgrade its analytical and knowledge-brokering functions. It will encourage coalition-building and system-wide cooperation to deliver the objectives of the strategy and enhance political support at all levels. It will further facilitate the treatment of emerging issues, new mechanisms and legislative tools to support sustainable land management.

15. To demonstrate the new orientation, below are examples of key issues and areas that the secretariat will pursue in the coming years:

- (a) Raising the profile of land and land-based ecosystem services, notably in drylands, in the context of adaptation to and mitigation of climate change;
- (b) Increasing the importance of Committee on Science and Technology as a forum for scientific exchanges relating to land and soil conservation;
- (c) Establishment of a baseline for desertification monitoring;
- (d) Promotion of synergies, notably through the establishment of a United Nations system inter-agency cooperation network for land and soil;
- (e) Development and implementation of the comprehensive Convention communication strategy;
- (f) Assistance to affected country parties through advocacy and consultative processes.

16. At the extraordinary session of the Conference of the Parties in November 2007, at United Nations Headquarters, the Executive Secretary was authorized to realign, as needed, the programmes and staffing structure of the secretariat in order to facilitate the implementation of the strategy. Accordingly, four substantive units have been established, for knowledge management, science and technology; awareness-raising, communication and education; policy advocacy and global issues; and the facilitation of coordination and monitoring of implementation. These substantive units are coordinated by the executive direction and management unit and are supported by conference and administrative services.

17. As next steps in the secretariat's corporate review, the four-year and two-year documents will be submitted for the consideration of parties at the seventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, in November 2008. After that session, following the adjustment of the draft plans of the secretariat to respond to the comments made by parties, a desk-to-desk workload analysis will be carried out. This analysis is based on a recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit, and it will be instrumental in ensuring that the structure of the secretariat and the allocation of tasks to each staff member enable the provision of its services in the most effective manner.

18. At the beginning of 2009, the secretariat will start the drafting of a results-based budget framework for 2010-2011, in accordance with United Nations standards, for submission to the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties, in autumn 2009. This will complete the preparations for the move to a results-based management system.

Joint work programme between the global mechanism and the secretariat

19. In line with the strategy, the secretariat and the global mechanism have prepared a draft joint work programme, with the aim of ensuring consistency and complementarity in the delivery of services and strengthening coordination and cooperation from headquarters to the country level.

20. Since October 2007, several meetings have been held between the management of the global mechanism and the secretariat, in which the orientation and main features of collaboration were discussed. These management-level consultations provided the basis and guidance for the work of a joint global mechanism-secretariat task force, which was established in November 2007 with the purpose of supporting and coordinating the preparation of the joint work programme.

21. The draft 2008-2009 joint work programme has now been completed and will be submitted to the seventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention. It complements the individual work programmes of the global mechanism and the secretariat. Its focus is on undertaking joint activities that support parties in advancing the implementation of the strategy, including collaboration in the development of new reporting guidelines and consideration of mechanisms for regional coordination, and improved cooperation between the global mechanism and the secretariat.

High-level policy dialogue

22. The eighth session of the Conference of the Parties, in its decision 3/COP.8 adopting the ten-year strategic plan, called on the Executive Secretary "to consider engaging in policy dialogue on the strategy to foster awareness of and buy-in to the strategy among relevant policy decision makers, making use, inter alia, of the opportunities provided by the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development" (para. 22). Heeding the call, the Convention secretariat, in cooperation with the Government of Germany, organized in Bonn the high-level policy dialogue under the theme "Coping with today's global challenges in the context of the strategy of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification", under the chairmanship of Karin Kortmann, Parliamentary State Secretary, Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany.

23. Attended by over 100 ministers, ambassadors and heads of delegations from various regions, as well as representatives of United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, the meeting identified conditions required and political commitment necessary for the implementation of the strategy in the context of emerging global challenges, including the linkages between desertification/land degradation and the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change; the need for robust investments in sustainable land management in the drylands; and the need to promote knowledge management, science and technology for enhanced implementation of the Convention.

24. Participants in the high-level policy dialogue noted that far-reaching environmental change was indisputable and that the related loss of ecosystem services had a direct impact on human well-being, development and security. They agreed to consider the looming threat of natural-resource scarcity in the emerging global context of climate change, reduced access to water and food shortages, and underlined the urgency of the situation, greater today than ever before. The meeting expressed concern over increased food prices, which could undermine the progress achieved towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals, before noting that most countries facing or at risk of facing a food crisis today were those facing land degradation problems.

25. In view of this situation where climate change could affect the drylands most, with an expected 30 per cent decline in rainfall, participants in the dialogue concluded that securing the productivity of drylands and the rehabilitation of degraded land and enhancing tenure regimes, as requested under the Convention, were indispensable parts of the toolbox for preventing future structural food crises. They agreed that the Convention must play its part in securing some essential conditions for rural development, agricultural productivity and food security while bringing about measures for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change for the benefit of the land.

26. The meeting was divided into three segments: on policy development, on mobilizing for a forward-looking strategy and on the parties' views on responses to emerging challenges.

27. Regarding policy development, participants reviewed various challenges and noted the importance of the implementation of the Convention in addressing them, particularly those related to climate change, land degradation and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals; the protection and preservation of biodiversity, forests and land degradation; water and food security and rural development; and human rights and gender. They noted that the Convention has adjusted to meet the challenge of bringing the focus of the global community to the land and that, under current reforms, the establishment of baselines and indicators through the Committee on Science and Technology and the benefits of assessment and lessons learned through the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, services are expected to be better delivered to parties. In this respect, the role of the secretariat in strengthening dialogue and consultation at the global and regional levels was recognized.

28. With respect to the dialogue on mobilizing for a forward-looking strategy, participants underlined the role played by the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties in securing a consensus among all parties on the strategy and, emphasizing more synergistic action, global benefits and coalition-building, endorsed the Convention reform agenda. They recognized that such an agenda did not belong to the States only but must involve civil society and, moreover, mobilize private/public partnerships. They invited GEF to simplify its procedures and respond specifically to the strategy through robust funding to address land degradation and proposed to focus on the potential of the vast space of the drylands to host sites for a second generation of agro-fuel production with the help of new technologies. The dialogue underlined the fact that sustainable agriculture in this context must be promoted through best practices and new conservation-oriented technologies, including mitigation through carbon sequestration and adaptation.

29. The third segment discussed the role of the Convention in addressing emerging challenges. Participants deemed that critical action must be taken on consensus-building to reorient the Convention on the path of concrete action benefiting affected countries and linked to the generation of global benefits. The high-level policy dialogue spelled out policy orientation with a view to giving impetus to the thematic and substantive discussions at the seventh session of the Committee to Review the Implementation of the Convention and assisting in shaping the agenda of the discussions at the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties when considering the priority fields of application of the strategy.

Partnership agreements

30. Since its inception, the Convention has been built on the basis of partnerships. The ten-year strategic plan confirmed that policy choice through its fourth strategic objective, which is to mobilize resources to support the implementation of the Convention by building effective partnerships between national and international actors. In this respect, and at this early stage of the implementation of the strategy, the secretariat of the Convention and that of the ECA concluded a memorandum of understanding on several areas of cooperation. The memorandum of understanding was signed in Addis Ababa on 7 March 2008 by Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of ECA and Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

31. The two authorities agreed to cooperate in integrating the objectives of the Convention and the ten-year strategic plan to enhance implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) into relevant African regional activities and processes and to further involve African ministers of finance, planning and economic development in mainstreaming issues of land degradation, desertification and drought in national sustainable development strategies and poverty reduction strategy papers as well as in assessing the cost of action versus the cost of inaction in addressing those issues.

32. The Executive Secretaries also agreed to develop approaches to promote and facilitate the integration of desertification, drought and land degradation concerns into existing sectoral and cross-sectoral policies and programmes, making use, as appropriate, of relevant tools and guidelines developed under the Convention. Under the memorandum of understanding, both secretariats agreed to assess the emerging issues related to the interface between desertification/land degradation and adaptation, mitigation and enhancing resilience to climate change and ensuring that in the context of climate change, the Convention serves as a platform for addressing adaptation, mitigation and strengthening the resilience of African countries in withstanding adverse impacts of climate change. It was also agreed to assist parties in jointly undertaking regional and subregional responses to the goals and mandates of the Convention. It was further agreed to facilitate regional and subregional cooperation to assist African parties in improving institutional, scientific and human capacity for the effective implementation of the Convention and to assist in the preparation and implementation of programmes in the context of cooperation within Africa, at the subregional and national levels. The secretariat of the Convention is also exploring the possibility of entering into partnership with the Africa Centre for Climate Change, which is hosted by ECA.

3. Synergies between the three Rio Conventions

33. The governing bodies of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, as well as the General Assembly, have been consistently calling for cooperation among the three Rio Conventions in order to promote complementarities in the work of the secretariats and related processes. Over the past few years, there has been increased awareness that in order to address current global challenges, more synergies are needed among the Rio Conventions, given the intricate interrelationships among climate change, biological diversity, land degradation, drought and desertification.

34. The recent millennium ecosystem assessment observed that drought and desertification caused degradation to ecosystems, affected sustainable livelihoods of vulnerable populations and tended to reduce their capacity for resilience. Desertification and drought account for most of the biodiversity loss in dry and subhumid ecosystems, and such losses can possibly lead to the extinction of otherwise resistant and resilient species that until now have survived and adapted to previous processes of climate change.

35. Coordinated and collaborative action has already been taken at the level of the secretariats and at the level of countries. The policy objective is to utilize the ecosystem approach and services provided by the secretariats in the planning and implementation of policies, plans and programmes that address the provisions of all three Conventions. The three secretariats have been implementing, according to their mandates, several coordinated actions aimed at the delivery of the joint strategic objectives of raising public awareness, creation of capacities, contribution to the improvement of the global environment and fostering strong scientific backing for sustainable policies derived from the implementation of the Conventions. Concrete steps have been taken to strengthen the collaboration among the three secretariats, in forms such as periodic statements by the Executive Secretaries articulating the common issues of the three Conventions; joint exhibitions at their Conferences of the Parties; joint publications on forests and on adaptation; and the identification of new and additional opportunities for inter-agency collaboration. In the near future, the development and operation of a common web page is envisaged. At the national level, the three Conventions have much to gain from a synergistic implementation of their programming and reporting tools, for instance, by tapping into the synergy between the national action programmes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the national adaptation programmes of action of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

36. With respect to the collaboration between the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity, their secretariats are moving forward on strategies for implementation of the decision on dryland biodiversity adopted during the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties, held in Bonn, Germany, in May 2008, based on the guidelines provided by the ten-year strategic plan and the outcomes of that ninth session. The actions to be undertaken to implement that decision could jointly address defined common thematic implementation areas and other challenging areas envisaged in the decision, according to their respective mandates and programmes of work.

4. Outcome of the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development as it relates to the Convention

37. The sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development was held in New York from 5 to 16 May 2008, with the participation of a number of ministers from Member States at a high-level segment. The session reviewed six themes on its agenda, namely, agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. It identified obstacles and constraints, lessons learned and best practices, means of implementation, interlinkages and all cross-cutting issues, as well as challenges. All six topics were relevant to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Three of them, land, drought and desertification, were at its core.

38. Under the land theme, the Commission focused on sustainable land management, including ecosystem functions that land provides, as well as land use and tenures. For drought, the high-level segment advocated for a proactive and risk-based approach in its management; technology; adapted crop patterns; know-how sharing; public awareness; early warning systems; and access to accurate and timely climatic and meteorological information. With respect to desertification, the ministers attending the session supported the full implementation and adequate funding of the Convention. Equally important was the recognition by the ministers that the Convention was the only legally binding agreement on land issues that systematically addresses land degradation and desertification. This constitutes an important step in the process leading to the secretariat's expected accomplishment under the strategy whose performance indicator will be the decision by the Conference of Parties that the Convention is a legal reference for global soil protection. Earlier on in the session, the Commission had established the need to scale up the allocation of financial resources to the GEF focal area on land degradation in the next replenishment cycle.

39. Several side events took place during the session. The Convention secretariat, in collaboration with key partners, organized three major side events. The first of these was organized in collaboration with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction on the theme "Building partnerships to reduce risk of drought and desertification", the objective of which was to draw international attention to the devastating impacts, particularly in Africa, of drought and desertification, where prolonged drought can have dire effects involving millions of people.

40. The second side event was organized on the theme "The right to food and water implies the duty to conserve the land", in collaboration with the office of the former Special Rapporteur on the right to food and the Italian Government. Against the backdrop of rising food prices, food scarcity and the focus of the sixteenth session on, inter alia, agriculture, this side event attracted considerable attention. It served to highlight that, at a time when the international community was facing rising food prices, food riots and decreasing availability of new arable land to meet the needs of growing populations, the time had come to recognize the urgent need to reverse land degradation and reclaim degraded and desertified land. Participants called for a renewed international commitment to create the necessary conducive environment, including by according high priority to investment in sustainable land management and reversing land degradation, which would go a long way towards

ensuring the realization of the right to food and water, integral elements of the right to development.

41. The third side event was organized with the International Federation of Agricultural Producers and the International Council for Science on the theme “Enhancing the economic value of dryland areas through sustainable agricultural practices: an efficient way to fight desertification”. The side event highlighted the concerns of rural communities and farmers in arid and semi-arid areas and flagged the central role that they play in the fight against desertification, not only because they are the most vulnerable, but, more importantly, because farmers are agents of change and part of the solution. A large number of delegations participated in the interactive discussions that followed each of the side events, which served to enhance awareness about the Convention and land degradation/desertification issues.

5. Observance of 2008 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

42. In its resolution 49/115, the General Assembly proclaimed 17 June World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. It invited all States to devote the World Day to promoting public awareness to combat desertification and the effects of drought and the implementation of the provisions of the Convention.

43. The theme of the World Day in 2008 was “Combating land degradation for sustainable agriculture”, selected in the light of the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which focused on the issues of agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. The high visibility of the theme was also due in part to the prevailing concern among the international community about food security.

44. The 2008 observance marked the first major opportunity to implement the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) in the areas of advocacy, awareness-raising and education, which constitute one of the five operational objectives of the strategy. Parties to the Convention, non-governmental organizations and international agencies were encouraged to observe the World Day by organizing various awareness-raising activities. Subsequently, a number of them reported on their events and activities, which were introduced through a special page on the Convention website for the World Day observance. In general, those reports indicated strong interest among various stakeholders in the linkages between land degradation and sustainable agriculture. The activities also helped raise public awareness on issues surrounding desertification, land degradation and drought at the local and national levels. A variety of awareness-raising activities at the United Nations campus in Bonn, Germany, including exhibitions and film viewings, came about through inter-agency cooperation.

45. On the occasion of the World Day observance, a special message was issued by the Secretary-General. It stated that the Convention, serving as the nexus between poverty reduction and ecosystem protection in the drylands, constituted the sole international legal framework to reclaim dry and degraded land and that it could offer a long-term solution for producing more food for more people, while such unused lands could also serve for biofuel production and thus offer new benefits. The Executive Secretary of the Convention also published a special

message underlining that the Convention had a role in sustainable agriculture by improving the livelihoods of affected populations and ecosystems.

6. Status of preparation of the next Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies

46. By its decision 28/COP.8, the Conference of the Parties decided that its ninth session would be held in Bonn, Germany, the site of the Convention secretariat in autumn 2009, in the event that no party made an offer to host that session and meet the additional costs. The Conference of the Parties invited the Executive Secretary to accommodate, in consultation with its Bureau, any offer from a party to host the ninth session.

47. Pursuant to that decision, the secretariat of the Convention received a written notification from the office of the national focal point of Brazil for the Convention, informing it of the interest of his country in hosting the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties. Since then, additional exchanges have taken place and a meeting was organized on the sidelines of the high-level policy dialogue, in Bonn on 28 May, to follow up on the specifics of that generous offer. The secretariat is expected to receive soon from the Government of Brazil a formal notification in this respect, through the established channels, in order to allow for the launching of the formal consultation process.

48. With regard to the meetings of the subsidiary bodies, the Assembly, in its resolution 62/193, had already welcomed the offer made by the Government of Turkey to host the seventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention in conjunction with the special intersessional session of the Committee on Science and Technology, to be held in November 2008 in Istanbul.

49. Further to consultations with the Government of Turkey, final dates for the session have been agreed upon. The meeting will be held in Istanbul from 3 to 14 November 2008. Turkey has already established a national coordination committee to deal with all organizational arrangements related to both gatherings. A host country agreement between the Convention secretariat and the Government of Turkey is to be signed in coming months.

III. Observations and recommendations

50. The implementation of resolution 62/193 took place in an international context marked by several crises and challenges that could be addressed through effective implementation of the Convention. The sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development also provided an intergovernmental tribunal to review main issues at the core of the Convention and to prepare for the policy decisions on those topics. The high-level policy dialogue contributed to rallying support for the Convention and its ten-year strategic plan and to positioning the Convention as one of the strategic responses to current global challenges and crises. In this respect, the Assembly may wish to underline the importance of the Convention when addressing climate change concerns. Accordingly, the Assembly may wish to envisage that the post-Kyoto arrangement duly takes into account the potential of land not only as a carbon storage reservoir, and also that the sustainable management of

land contributes to adaptation to climate change, the mitigation of its effects and the strengthening of the resilience of affected developing countries. Further, the Assembly could advocate for the Convention as a long-term instrument that the international community could use to produce more food for more people by reclaiming dry and degraded land, thus offering new opportunities for impoverished populations living in such areas.

51. The Assembly may also wish to call on the international community to lend full support to the ten-year strategic plan and to prioritize investment in land and sustainable land management, which are necessary to prevent and reverse land degradation and desertification and thus contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Given the importance of land, which constitutes a cross-sectoral issue, the Assembly may wish to invite United Nations agencies to form a coalition in the framework of the Convention to support an effective response to land degradation, led by the vision and objectives of the strategy adopted by the Conference of the Parties last year in Madrid.

III. Report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

A. Introduction

1. In its resolution 62/194, the General Assembly invited the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity to report on the work of the Conference of the Parties. The present report is submitted in response to that invitation.

B. Overview of major developments

1. Outcome of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

Summary

2. The ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held in Bonn, Germany, from 19 to 30 May 2008, with over 5,000 participants representing 191 parties and their partners. Some 240 side events were organized, including 82 by the representatives of the business community. A total of 864 journalists attended, and the meeting was webcast live for the first time. Recordings of the webcasts will be available for viewing until December 2008 through the website of the secretariat (www.cbd.int).

3. The high-level segment of the meeting was held from 28 to 30 May 2008, with a record participation of 117 ministers and vice-ministers. It was inaugurated by the Federal Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, and closed by the President of Germany, Horst Köhler. For the first time, a component for Heads of State or Government was convened, with the participation of the Prime Minister of Canada, the President of Palau, the President of the European Commission and the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations. A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations was delivered to the participants, and the Deputy Secretary-General sent a special message to the first-ever meeting of the network of women environment ministers, also a first, held on 28 May 2008.

4. The Federal Chancellor of Germany announced a contribution of €500 million for biodiversity for the period 2009-2012.

5. “The green wave”, a multi-year biodiversity education campaign aimed at children and youth, was launched in partnership with the host country on 22 May, the International Day for Biological Diversity. The initiative is intended to engage schoolchildren and youth in the global biodiversity agenda and will include coordinated tree-planting events in or near schoolyards throughout the world on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity.

6. For the first time, a meeting on cities and biodiversity was convened, in Erfurt, Germany, from 21 to 26 May 2008, in conjunction with a meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Some 150 representatives attended the event on the theme “Local action for biodiversity” and 250 participants attended the event on “Urban biodiversity and design: implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity in towns and cities”. The results were submitted to and discussed at the high-level

segment. As a result, the parties adopted, for the first time, a decision on cities and biodiversity with a view to preparing a work programme to be adopted in 2010.

7. A meeting on the theme "Parliamentarians and biodiversity" was convened on 27 May in collaboration with the German Bundestag Committee on Nature Conservation, and an initiative to involve parliamentarians in the conservation of biodiversity was launched in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Global Legislators for Environment. An initiative on biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation was also launched, in collaboration with Germany and France.

8. The Convention on Biological Diversity moved closer to universal participation, as Brunei Darussalam, one of the most biodiversity-rich countries in the world, became its 191st party and participated in the meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Iraq also announced that it was in the process of completing its accession procedures.

2. Overview of the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties

9. Thirty-five decisions were adopted, aimed at initiating a new era of enhanced commitment to and implementation of the Convention, meeting the 2010 target of reducing biodiversity loss and furthering the fulfilment of the three objectives of the Convention by agreeing on a number of measures that support conservation measures, ways to ensure sustainable use and a set of rules to ensure that benefits from the use of genetic resources are shared equitably. The key elements of some of those decisions of immediate relevance to the General Assembly are highlighted below.

10. A major breakthrough was the agreement on a firm process towards the finalization at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their use. The meeting produced a plan for the negotiations that sets out not only a clear road map leading to 2010, but also the nature, scope and means of implementation of the regime.

11. Countries also agreed to move towards the development of a global network of protected areas that would ensure the conservation of biodiversity. Delegates agreed to a framework of research, identification and financing that would allow the existing protected areas on land and sea not only to expand, but also to cover all the most significant ecosystems of the world. Among the outcomes of the meeting was the establishment of a major financing mechanism for protected areas. The Life Web initiative, proposed by Germany in collaboration with the Convention, will provide significant resources to ensure the implementation of the programme of work on protected areas around the world. The purpose of the initiative is to match voluntary commitments for the designation of new protected areas and improved management of existing areas with commitments for the dedicated financing of those areas. Germany announced an initial contribution of €40 million. More than 60 parties have committed themselves to supporting the initiative either financially or by extending protected-area coverage. The network of protected areas is one of the central instruments for halting the dramatic global loss of species and habitats and for providing a solid basis for the conservation of natural resources. Intact habitats such as forests, wetlands and coral reefs are also important sinks for greenhouse gases and play a fundamental role in the natural regulation of the climate.

12. On the issue of biofuels, which was considered against the backdrop of a global food crisis triggered by rising commodity prices, while parties agreed that the sustainable production and use of biofuels could have many positive contributions, its success depended on the methods of production, the feedstocks and the agricultural practices involved. They therefore called for the development of sound policy frameworks on biofuels, drawing upon the existing tools under the Convention (decision IX/2).

13. In recognition of the important role of women as stakeholders in the process of biodiversity conservation, a Gender Plan of Action (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/INF/12/Rev.1) was adopted — the first by any multilateral environmental agreement (decision IX/24).

14. The parties acknowledged the importance of South-South cooperation in promoting biodiversity conservation and sustainable use and adopted a decision on a multi-year programme of work on South-South cooperation to be prepared in partnership with the Group of 77 and China (decision IX/25).

15. As a contribution to ongoing important processes in the United Nations, the parties adopted a message on biological diversity and finance to the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (decision IX/11 C, annex).

16. At the Bonn meeting, for the first time, a decision on cities and biodiversity was adopted, with a view to preparing a work programme to be adopted in 2010.

17. The parties also adopted a comprehensive decision on measures to mark the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010, including a draft resolution for the consideration of the General Assembly (decision IX/33, annex). Among other things, they recommended the convening of a one-day high-level meeting of the General Assembly, which would coincide with the observance of the International Year of Biodiversity proclaimed by the Assembly.

18. The International Day for Biological Diversity was observed during the meeting of the Conference of the Parties on 22 May with a special focus on agricultural biodiversity. Agricultural biodiversity was also one of the themes for in-depth review by the parties at the meeting.

19. A number of other major issues were considered, including how to tackle the problem of invasive alien species, loss of rainforest biodiversity, degradation of marine ecosystems and genetically modified trees.

20. The parties welcomed emerging efforts towards reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as a potential way to reduce the current rate of loss of forest biodiversity. They called on parties, other Governments and international organizations to ensure that efforts to reduce such emissions do not run counter to the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, but support the implementation of its relevant provisions, including with respect to the rights of indigenous and local communities.

21. The parties also adopted decisions recognizing and strengthening the links between the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. They also called for additional technical and scientific work on the links between biodiversity and climate change mitigation and

adaptation, including through the convening of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change.

22. The meeting of the Conference of the Parties was also notable for the enhanced synergies among the three Rio Conventions, including through the active participation of the Executive Secretaries of the other two Rio Conventions, joint staff meetings and the hosting of a joint information kiosk aimed at enhancing awareness of relevant activities. The sixth meeting of the Biodiversity Liaison Group and the second meeting of the chairs of the scientific bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions were also convened in conjunction with the meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

23. The Parties welcomed the offer of the city of Nagoya, Japan, to host the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in October 2010 and to convene from 27 to 29 October 2010 a high-level segment with the participation of Heads of State or Government.

3. Outcome of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

24. The fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was held in Bonn, Germany, from 12 to 16 May 2008, with more than 2,000 participants representing 143 parties and their partners. The meeting adopted 18 decisions aimed at strengthening implementation and compliance and completing the institutional legal architecture envisaged in the Protocol.

25. A major breakthrough at the meeting, following four years of intensive negotiations, was the agreement by the participants to work on elaborating legally binding rules and procedures for liability and redress in the event of damage that could be caused by the transboundary movements of living modified organisms, commonly referred to as genetically modified organisms, thereby fulfilling a legally binding requirement of the Protocol. The Parties agreed to a timetable and a framework for the negotiation of rules and procedures, which will be discussed at two intersessional meetings so that the liability and redress instrument can be finalized in time for the next meeting of the parties, in Nagoya, Japan, in 2010.

26. The issues of capacity-building, risk assessment and risk management, information-sharing and improved access to and use of the Biosafety Clearing House, which are central to the effective implementation of the Protocol, were also addressed. The parties decided to establish an ad hoc technical group on risk assessment and risk management and an open-ended online forum through the Biosafety Clearing House to address, inter alia, the need for further guidance on specific aspects of risk assessment. There was agreement on funding capacity-building initiatives and on a revised set of indicators for monitoring the updated Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol. Measures to further strengthen and improve ease of access to the Biosafety Clearing House were also adopted. While the new outreach strategy for the Protocol was widely appreciated, it was also decided to develop a programme of work on public awareness, education and participation on the issue of the safe transfer and handling of living modified organisms. On the issue of modalities for developing standards for handling, transport, packaging and identification, the parties decided

to implement the detailed requirements that had been adopted at their previous meeting and review their implementation at their sixth meeting.

III. Recommendations

27. The General Assembly may, at its sixty-third session, wish to:

(a) Welcome the outcomes of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its fourth meeting serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety;

(b) Express its deep appreciation to the Government of Germany for successfully hosting the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and its fourth meeting serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol;

(c) Express its deep appreciation to the Government of Japan for its offer to host, in 2010, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and its fifth meeting serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol;

(d) Endorse the draft resolution submitted by the Conference of the Parties (decision IX/33, annex) and convene a special high-level event on the eve of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, with the participation of Heads of State or Government, to mark the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010 and renew their commitment to reducing biodiversity loss;

(e) Call on all United Nations departments, agencies, funds and programmes and regional commissions to fully support and participate in the activities being envisaged for the observance of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, under the auspices of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(f) Call on all major organs of the United Nations, including functional commissions, as well as all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and regional commissions, to consider a special event or special focus on the linkages between biodiversity, poverty alleviation and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in their major meetings in 2010;

(g) Invite the Secretary-General, in accordance with established practice, to designate honorary representatives for the International Year of Biodiversity in order to generate awareness of the importance of biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation and achieving the Millennium Development Goals;

(h) Urge all Member States to observe the International Year of Biodiversity and establish, as soon as possible, national committees with the active participation of the focal points of the three Rio Conventions;

(i) Call on donors to finance the implementation of decisions adopted at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and at its fourth meeting serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol;

(j) Welcome the adoption of a South-South initiative for achieving the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention;

- (k) **Welcome the adoption of the Cities and Biodiversity initiative;**
 - (l) **Welcome the adoption of a Gender Plan of Action and call on donors to provide financial assistance for the implementation of its recommendations;**
 - (m) **Urge States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention and thereby make participation universal;**
 - (n) **Urge Parties to the Convention that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Cartagena Protocol as soon as possible.**
-