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ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE FOR  
THE ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION  
TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES  
EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR  
DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA  
Seventh session  
Nairobi, 7-18 August 1995  
Agenda item 2

IMPLEMENTATION OF URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA  
AND ACTION IN OTHER REGIONS:  
COMPILATION OF INFORMATION

Contribution from the Government of the United States  
(received on 22 May 1995)

**Report by the US Agency for International Development to the Interim Secretariat on the Convention to Combat Desertification**

**I. Background:**

The environmental convention on desertification that was concluded on June 18, 1994 in Paris and focusses on Africa mandates a process to combat land degradation which draws on lessons learned from past successes and failures. The convention emphasizes local community participation, linkage between good planning and implementation, and (particularly in Africa) a 'new partnership' between donors and recipients to promote joint efforts, avoidance of duplication, and respect for national priorities.

The U.S. Government (USG) in June, 1994, prepared a review of USAID activities pertinent to the convention and estimated that over \$500 million in USAID-funded activities are specifically consistent with the convention objectives. In response to the "urgent action" resolution the USG noted that the OECD/Club du Sahel will assume a leadership role by incorporating urgent action features into its natural resources management program.

**II. Summary of the USAID Field Effort to Date:**

**A. Lead donors:**

The USAID missions in Senegal and Niger have expressed an interest in playing an appropriate leadership role in their respective countries, within the context of the host country-driven nature of this exercise, and existing donor collaborative arrangements in this sector. The next step in this effort is for the USAID missions to review host country reports to determine how various national efforts have been progressing and also to determine how the roles are defined for various donors. The USG awaits these country reports with great interest.

**B. Major interest in regional support:**

One USAID regional office (REDSO/WCA) and the geographic desks here (AFR/WA/REGL) continue to work closely with regional organizations such as OECD/Club du Sahel, UNSO and multinational donors, especially the African Development Bank and the World Bank in the area of institutional strengthening, national planning and technical assistance.

- C. Countries where much is already going forward under national environmental action plans (NEAPS) or similar frameworks relative to desertification:

In Mali, Uganda, Guinea and Namibia, the USAID missions continue to assist host countries to consolidate past experiences--both positive and negative--and to strengthen the foundation needed to foster closer collaboration with other donors and host country elements.

- D. USAID close-out countries or countries with no or reduced bilateral program, but where strong interest exists in desertification:

For example, in Botswana, the Gambia, Mauritania, Chad and Cote d'Ivoire, USG country teams continue to maintain close collaboration with other donors and they continue to work with lead donors, as necessary, to further any measures consistent with the objectives of the convention and to pursue or strengthen, where necessary, such measures where they are already in place. Although USG resources are limited in these countries, USG country teams are continuing to employ and/or encourage action on the part of PVO/NGOs.

- E. USG country teams in all of the countries involved continue to work with host countries to ensure that the national action programs (NAPs) mandated by the Convention to Combat Desertification identify:

a.) the factors contributing to desertification; and b.) practical measures necessary to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. The U.S. is very much involved with other donors in a common effort in Africa to ensure that donors are not led into duplicative efforts during the planning phase. The World Bank has concluded that the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) process has great potential as a vehicle in preparing the NAPs. This could play an important role in mounting "urgent actions". Since several donors (especially the U.S.) already provide considerable support to the NEAP process in Africa, the USG is interested in ensuring that the most efficient use is made of this very versatile planning process.