



Global Environment Facility

Summary of Document GEF/C.27/11

Proposed Contributions of the GEF to the International Year of Deserts and Desertification

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, recognizing that the International Year of Deserts and Desertification in 2006 agreed by the UN General Assembly offers a unique opportunity for the GEF to contribute to raising global awareness of the threats of land degradation and avenues for addressing the challenges of land degradation and sustainable development, approves US\$400,000 as a special initiative to be added to the GEF Secretariat's corporate budget for FY06-FY07 to support the following activities:

- (a) a review of resource mobilization and status of funding for desertification to be prepared jointly by the GEF Secretariat, the Implementing and Executing Agencies, and the Global Mechanism;
- (b) a forum at the GEF Assembly in 2006 on sustainable land management;
- (c) a high-level roundtable to be convened in 2006 on achieving the Millennium Development Goals in drylands;
- (d) a special session on indicators for sustainable land management at the UNESCO international scientific conference on the future of arid lands;
- (e) a technical workshop on the management of groundwater resources to be organized during the World Water Week in August 2006; and
- (f) a contribution to the UNU Algiers final policy conference for the IYYD to facilitate participation of key stakeholders from affected countries.

Summary

1. The GEF Council at its meeting in June 2005, requested the Secretariat, in collaboration with the GEF Implementing and Executing Agencies, to explore ways and means through which the GEF could contribute to the IYDD and prepare a report for consideration at the Council meeting in November 2005. This note is prepared in response to that request and proposes a number of activities through which the GEF could contribute to this international effort.

2. The UN General Assembly at its fifty-eighth ordinary session, adopted resolution A/RES/58/211 which declared 2006 the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD). The resolution aims at raising public awareness of the knowledge and traditions of those communities living in deserts or affected by desertification processes, galvanizing efforts to protect their biological diversity and economic values, and creating a momentum for the implementation of the UNCCD.

3. The International Year of Deserts and Desertification is a significant event that offers a unique opportunity for the GEF to contribute to raising global awareness of the threats of land degradation and avenues for alleviating the problem that the GEF has supported.

4. The celebration of the IYDD is expected to lead to the achievement of a set of concrete and measurable objectives for:

- (a) long-term oriented implementation of the UNCCD through targeted community, national and international events with the aim of enhancing the implementation of the Convention;
- (b) awareness of desertification implications on food security, poverty, migration and conflicts in the context of the MDGs. The specific objective would be to profile desertification as a major threat to vulnerable ecosystems and to mankind, reinforced under the scenarios of climate change and loss of biological diversity;
- (c) networking with all the stakeholders using innovative partnerships with Parties, national and international organizations, civil society, academic institutions and private sector corporations; and
- (d) dissemination of information focusing attention on the causes, nature and consequences of human activities in spreading desertification throughout all regions of the planet.

5. The GEF subscribes to these objectives through its operational program on sustainable land management whose main goal is to catalyze partnerships with other organizations working on land management issues, land users, and other stakeholders at the local, national, regional and global levels to provide coordinated financial and technical support to address land degradation in a way that achieves long term global environmental benefits within the context of sustainable development. The GEF considers the IYDD to be an important opportunity to bring about broad awareness in the international community of environmental issues of global importance such as land degradation, especially desertification and deforestation.

6. In order to establish a common UN strategy, objective and program for the celebration of the IYDD, an inter-agency committee has been established to bring together the main institutions active in the UNCCD implementation process including FAO, IFAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, the World Bank, and the GEF.

7. The paper proposes a set of contributions by the GEF to the IYDD. Most of these suggestions are directly linked to the activities proposed by the inter-agency committee. The proposed activities will allow for the full and most effective GEF involvement. The Council is invited to consider these suggestions with the objective of approving an overall strategy for GEF's involvement in the IYDD and providing the additional resources that would be required.

It is proposed that additional resources be added as a special initiative to the FY06 Corporate Budget of the GEF Secretariat.

8. The Council, recognizing that the International Year of Deserts and Desertification in 2006 agreed by the UN General Assembly offers a unique opportunity for the GEF to contribute to raising global awareness of the threats of land degradation and avenues for addressing the challenges of land degradation and sustainable development, is requested to approve US\$400,000 as a special initiative to be added to the GEF Secretariat's corporate budget for FY06-FY07 to support the following activities:

- (a) a review of resource mobilization and status of funding for desertification to be prepared jointly by the GEF Secretariat, the Implementing and Executing Agencies, and the Global Mechanism (US\$50,000);
- (b) a forum at the GEF Assembly in 2006 on sustainable land management (US\$75,000);
- (c) a high-level roundtable to be convened in 2006 on achieving the Millennium Development Goals in drylands (US\$125,000);
- (d) a special session on indicators for sustainable land management at the UNESCO international scientific conference on the future of arid lands (US\$50,000);
- (e) a technical workshop on the management of groundwater resources to be organized during the World Water Week in August 2006 (US\$50,000); and
- (f) a contribution to the UNU Algiers final policy conference for the IYYD to facilitate participation of key stakeholders from affected countries (US\$50,000).

9. Co-financing in the amount of US\$1mio will be provided by various partners.