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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN TO ENHANCE GEF SUPPORT FOR LAND DEGRADATION

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The GEF Council approved the Action Plan to Enhance GEF Support for Land Degradation Prevention and Control in December 1999 and requested the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Implementing Agencies (IAs), to report regularly on the implementation of the action plan at each meeting. This report, the second since the action plan was approved, covers the three main elements of the plan:

- (a) Operationalizing the linkages between land degradation and the GEF focal areas through practical activities on the ground;
- (b) Strengthening public policy and enabling environment for addressing land degradation, including promoting integrated approaches to natural resources management; and
- (c) Engaging key stakeholders and mobilizing resources to develop measures to prevent and control land degradation.

II. SUMMARY OF IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

2. The GEF, UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank continue to take positive steps to increase GEF support for land degradation activities as they relate to the focal areas (see Annex A for details). UNDP has developed five new projects for GEF pipeline entry, and UNEP has developed three new projects for the GEF pipeline. The World Bank has in its own pipeline 28 projects, 15 of which are medium-sized projects.

3. The GEF Capacity Development Initiative is helping to raise greater awareness about land degradation. It is aimed at examining the capacity development needs with respect to biodiversity, climate change, and land degradation. The GEF Country Dialogue Workshop is also helping to raise awareness about land degradation. UNDP has taken the lead in developing a land degradation module for the workshops.

4. A major challenge that has emerged from the implementation of the action plan is the operational classification of projects with land degradation components. To ensure consistency, an inter-agency working group, led by the GEF Secretariat, is developing standardized criteria and operational guidelines for the classification and development of GEF-eligible projects with land degradation components.

5. The Africa Land and Water Initiative is also providing opportunities to further develop projects that include land degradation prevention and control elements. Led by the Africa Region of the World Bank, the GEF, UNDP, UNEP, UNCCD Secretariat, Global Mechanism of

the UNCCD, IFAD, African Development Bank, and other partners are working together to develop a coordinated action program to address land and water management issues in Africa in an integrated way. The next step is the identification of pilot sites for implementation of the Initiative in collaboration with other organizations in Africa.

6. To incorporate local knowledge into integrated land and water management, the GEF Secretariat, in collaboration with the IAs and NGOs, is undertaking a study to compile, synthesize, and disseminate information on good practices in community-based approaches to integrated land and water management.

ANNEX A

REPORTS BY THE GEF SECRETARIAT AND THE IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

A. ACTIONS BY THE GEF SECRETARIAT

7. In support of the implementation of the Action Plan to Enhance GEF Support for Land Degradation Prevention and Control as well as the implementation of the Operational Program on Integrated Ecosystem Management (OP#12), the GEF Secretariat has initiated a study on good practices in community-based approaches. The objective of the study, which is being undertaken in collaboration with the IAs, STAP and NGOs, is to compile, synthesize and disseminate good practices in community-based approaches to integrated land and water management, including traditional systems. The output of the study is expected to facilitate the development of projects with land degradation prevention and control components.
8. The completion of the GEF Operational Program on Agricultural Biodiversity, to be finalized by the end of 2000 by the GEF Secretariat, will provide additional opportunities for the development of activities related to land degradation.

B. ACTIONS BY THE WORLD BANK

I. OPERATIONALIZING LINKAGES BETWEEN LAND DEGRADATION AND THE GEF'S FOCAL AREAS AND STRENGTHENING PUBLIC POLICY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

9. The Bank has continued action on client dialogue and programming related to land degradation. For example, the East Asia and Pacific Region of the Bank has discussed potential opportunities for World Bank/GEF assistance for land degradation-oriented activities with government officials and other stakeholders, including NGOs, from China and Vietnam.
10. In China, Bank staff participated in a major national meeting to discuss the strategy for environmentally sustainable development in the western provinces, an area with widespread poverty and severe land degradation.
11. In Vietnam, Bank staff facilitated the preparation of a national GEF strategy and assistance program, under the direction of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment. One of the World Bank/GEF assistance options that was identified as a national priority and as potentially eligible for GEF support under OP12 is the government's "Five Million Hectare Program." This program is a national effort to address land degradation, particularly in forest and mountain ecosystems.

II. ENGAGING KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND ENHANCING GEF'S CATALYSTIC ROLE IN MOBILIZING RESOURCES TO ADDRESS LAND DEGRADATION

12. *Collaboration with the Global Mechanism:* The Global Mechanism (GM) of the CCD was established to assist efforts of the country parties to mobilize and rationalize financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention. The GM is housed in IFAD (Rome) and UNDP and the World Bank are major partners of the GM through the Facilitation Committee (FC). The FC has been expanded to include the African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, GEF Secretariat, UNEP, FAO and the CCD Secretariat.

13. A Development Grant Facility of \$2.5 million from the World Bank to the Global Mechanism was approved by the Board in July 2000. This grant will be used to establish a favorable environment for participation of civil society and the private sector in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, and to help mobilize additional resources to implement the CCD. In addition, the grant will be supporting activities to be developed by the World Bank, UNDP, UNEP, and NGOs to “unlock” significant investment opportunities through establishing synergies and win-win situations.

14. *Outreach and Dissemination of Lessons Learned:* The Bank is preparing a paper that summarizes its experience conserving and managing biodiversity in dryland ecosystems as a contribution to the ongoing review of the Bank's biodiversity portfolio--covering Bank mainstream operations and GEF projects. The paper will seek to stimulate further analysis, discussion and follow-up actions within the Bank and with its partners. In particular, this is part of a larger effort by the Bank to find ways to promote development that encourages both biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation by documenting and disseminating information on alternative livelihoods consistent with conservation objectives; community efforts at conservation and sustainable use to meet rural health needs; and projects that address soil erosion, deforestation, and loss of biodiversity while working to improve environmental and social conditions.

C. ACTIONS BY UNDP

I. OPERATIONALIZING LINKAGES BETWEEN GEF FOCAL AREAS AND LAND DEGRADATION

15. Discussions have continued within UNDP (particularly UNSO, UNCDF, UNDP/GEF) on ways to mainstream the Action Plan to Enhance GEF Support for Land Degradation Prevention and Control in order to achieve a larger portfolio of projects and meet the growing needs of countries affected by land degradation. In particular, UNSO's role in assisting countries to identify land degradation-related GEF activities based on the Sub-Regional Action Plans (SRAPs) and National Action Plans (NAPs) of the UNCCD is being strengthened.

16. Newly approved projects with land degradation-related activities in other parts of the world include: An international waters project entitled "Preparation and Preliminary Implementation of a SAP for the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem;" and biodiversity projects in the Philippines: "Samar Island Biodiversity Project," "Iran" Conservation of the Asiatic

Cheetah and Associated Biota in its Natural Habitat" and China: "Multi-Agency and Local Participatory Cooperation in Biodiversity Conservation in Yunnan's Upland Ecosystems."

17. An exciting new concept is being developed around the notion of "agricultural world heritage sites," in collaboration with FAO, UNESCO, and the UN Foundation. Linkages to land degradation will be established in cases where indigenous agricultural systems are threatened by land degradation. UNDP/GEF is also contributing to the development of the new Operational Programme 13 (Agrobiodiversity), which has elements relevant to land degradation.

18. UNDP/GEF's database is now up and running. There are a total of 209 pipelined and ongoing projects all over the world that have some relevance to land degradation. This represents almost 30% of the entire UNDP/GEF portfolio. These projects have been able to leverage a total of US\$1.12 billion, of which GEF has provided 55% of the funds.

19. UNDP/GEF is an active partner in the restructuring of the Land and Water Task Force within GEF, which is expected to include an inter-agency working group on land degradation. This working group will be instrumental in clarifying operational guidelines for GEF incremental activities in land degradation.

20. UNDP launched the new Strategic Initiative for Africa at the UNCCD COP 3 in Brazil. This initiative builds upon UNSO's technical support projects in Kenya and Burkina. In addition, UNDP/UNSO has launched its West Asia program, which provides support to seven countries for the implementation of the UNCCD (Algeria, Morocco, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Jordan and Palestinian Authority) with funding support from Finland and Japan. A technical coordination unit will be established in Beirut, which will work closely with the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD to support the development of the SRAP.

21. As part of UNDP's new orientation, UNDP/UNSO will be relocating its core functions to Nairobi, Kenya. This change will favor increased collaboration between UNDP and UNEP in supporting dryland management.

II. STRENGTHENING PUBLIC POLICY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR ADDRESSING LAND DEGRADATION

22. Many of the new proposals emerging from countries for additional funding to the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) process include assessment of capacity needs to prioritize strategic actions that address the causes of land degradation.

23. Almost all projects currently being designed in the cross-cutting theme of land degradation address the fundamental issues of policy and legal constraints. Actions at the local level in mitigating land degradation cannot be sustainable in the future if these upstream constraints are not addressed.

III. ENGAGING KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND ENHANCING GEF'S CATALYTIC ROLE IN MOBILIZING RESOURCES TO ADDRESS LAND DEGRADATION

24. UNDP has initiated collaborative arrangements with the GM of the UNCCD for implementation of the NAPs in a few priority countries in Africa (particularly Zimbabwe and Uganda). A collaborative framework is also being initiated between UNSO/UNDP/GEF and bilateral donors and key international NGOs to focus on global dryland issues.

D. ACTIONS BY UNEP

25. Below follows a summary of UNEP's actions to implement the Action Plan for Enhancing GEF Support to Land Degradation Prevention and Control (GEF/C.14/4) undertaken since the last progress report (GEF/C.13/4) of May 2000.

I. OPERATIONALIZING THE LINKAGES BETWEEN LAND DEGRADATION AND THE GEF FOCAL AREAS

26. UNEP has developed a total of 29 activities, ranging from full projects to PDF Bs and PDF-As, that address land degradation in relation to biodiversity and international waters focal areas. Issues addressed include rehabilitation, sustainable use and conservation of degraded arid and semi-arid ecosystems (OP1); integrated watershed management to reduce soil erosion and pollution caused by poor agricultural practices (OP8 & 9); conservation and sustainable use of freshwater ecosystems (OP2); and three PDF-Bs in the new multifocal program (OP12), all of them addressing land degradation in the Africa region. UNEP also has six activities to address chemical pollution of water bodies (OP10) that could provide marginal benefits in the cross-cutting area of land degradation.

II. STRENGTHENING PUBLIC POLICY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR ADDRESSING LAND DEGRADATION

27. All of UNEP's planned interventions involve activities designed to strengthen the policy environment for sound decision making in addressing land degradation issues; particularly in the area of integrated land and watershed management.

E. AFRICA LAND AND WATER INITIATIVE

28. The Africa Land and Water Initiative which was launched by the GEF and its Implementing Agencies in March 1999 provides an opportunity to address land degradation issues as they relate to the focal areas. The initiative is aimed at developing a coordinated program for integrated land and water management. The Initiative is a collaborative effort involving the GEF, World Bank, UNDP, UNEP, FAO, IFAD, UNCCD's Global Mechanism, African Development Bank, and other regional bodies in Africa.

29. The implementation of the Initiative has now moved to a phase where an inter-agency working group, led by the World Bank's Africa Region and supported by a UNEP-developed web site, is assisting the participating agencies and African organizations to review their current

portfolio of activities related to land and water management. As a result, a number of country-driven river-basin management activities have been identified for possible collaboration among UNDP, UNEP, and the World Bank, with GEF support where appropriate. Parallel actions are being taken to secure needed financial resources and to support country/regional ownership and leadership for the Initiative.

30. Activities undertaken to facilitate the development of the Initiative include a series of meetings (Recife, Brazil, November 1999 on the margin of the CCD COP; World Bank, Washington, DC, January 2000; Nairobi, Kenya, May 2000) involving the GEF, UNDP, UNEP and other UN agencies (UNESCO, UNCCD Secretariat, Global Mechanism, FAO, IFAD, WMO) and a number of African national, and sub-regional and regional political, technical and financial institutions. These meetings have helped to clarify and develop a consensus on the objectives of the Initiative as well as its governance and managerial structures and processes. The next steps include the selection of two to five sites to develop and implement activities on integrated land and water management.