



STATEMENT BY

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Executive Secretary

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION
TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

On the Occasion of the GEF COUNCIL

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CCD



Mr. Leonard Good, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman,
Co-Chair of GEF Council,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Council Members,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Once again, it is a pleasure to address this Council of the Global Environment Facility and congratulate the newly elected Co-Chair of the Council. Let me also address a word to Chairman Good, how we, in the UNCCD secretariat, feel confident in having you as one of our most important partners. After our conference of the Parties held two months ago in Havana, from the statements made there, it is also clear that Parties to this Convention do trust your leadership and look forward to the strengthening of the relationship between the GEF and the UNCCD.

As the new Chairman of the GEF, your message to COP.6 was very well expected and received. It did inspire confidence and hope in the Parties to the Convention. It did assure affected Parties that the GEF, under the newly strengthened involvement in the implementation of the UNCCD, is coming to them as truly a partner ready to lend a helping hand in their endeavour to implement the UNCCD.

This Council is meeting after the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties. In the light of the important decisions taken by the Conference, there is no question that COP.6 has been the most successful ever held. The participation of the GEF secretariat, at its highest level, as well as its substantive contribution to the debate and to the side events was unprecedented. It illustrated the new level of interest of the Facility in the proceedings of the Convention. In fact, Parties were eager to see the new Chairman. He came and they saw him. They listened to him and discovered a very committed actor to the plight that millions of men and women are facing in dealing with land degradation to its maximum extent, desertification. Parties were also looking forward to decide on the offer made for the Facility to play the role of a financial mechanism of the Convention. As reported to you by the GEF secretariat, the Conference of the Parties made a significant decision, by accepting the offer from the GEF Assembly, and designated GEF as a financing



mechanism for the Convention. This heralds a new beginning for the Parties to the Convention, particularly those among them that are affected by drought and desertification, and need support to effectively address those problems. Aware of the need to enter into an operational phase of this decision, the Conference of the Parties also directed our secretariats to make the appropriate arrangements in this respect. It requested the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, in collaboration with the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism, to consult with the Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the GEF, with a view to preparing and agreeing upon a Memorandum of Understanding to be considered and agreed upon by the GEF Council and the Conference of the Parties. At this point, I am pleased to report to this Council that the required process has been initiated.

Co-Chairs of Council, Members of the Council,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the means identified by this Council to enhance the GEF support for the successful implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification consisted in designating Land Degradation as a new Focal area of the GEF. Since the existing pattern of GEF support to the UNCCD implementation in the framework of the New Delhi Statement had been found inadequate by this very Council, the stand alone new focal area seems to raise all hopes. Since the adoption of land degradation as a new GEF Focal area, the Council of the GEF has been receiving credit and appreciation from a variety of Conferences and Summits, including the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the General Assembly of the UN. The sixth session of the Conference of the Parties has just visited this issue and welcomed the decision of the GEF Council establishing a new operational programme on sustainable land management to deal with land degradation.

As we have already pointed out before this Council, we consider the Operational Programme on Sustainable Land Management as an important tool that will enable the fulfilment of the goal that was spelt out in the decision of the GEF Council in May last year, and that is designating land degradation to be a GEF focal area.



In this regard, as the operationalization of OP.15 gets under way, it is important to point out that Parties, at COP.6, have expressed an eagerness to see Implementing Agencies assist them in preparing suitable projects to enable them to access GEF resources. In the aftermath of COP.6, I had the opportunity to review with relevant Implementing Agencies Authorities on how to respond to Parties requests in a speedy fashion. I would like to sincerely thank the representatives of those three agencies for their readiness prepare for the provision of assistance to countries to implement OP.15. Needless to point out here that capacity strengthening for these country Parties stands out as a critical issue which must be addressed with urgency.

We also pleased to cooperate more closely in the future with the UNFCCC secretariat, the GEF secretariat and all concerned actors so that synergetic programmes for combating desertification and adaptation to climate change in the dry lands deliver early results for affected groups in vulnerable regions. Joint capacity building efforts in this matter are desirable.

Mr. Chairman,

The implementation of the Convention takes place at national, sub-regional and regional levels. Accordingly, affected developing country Parties to the Convention are obligated to elaborate Action Programmes to implement the Convention. National Action Programmes represent the ownership of affected countries. A NAP is the framework for the implementation of the Convention that spells out the measures to be taken at the individual country level. By 2005, as decided by COP.3, all affected countries must have completed their NAPs. For those Parties with the NAPs, COP.6 has invited Parties, with the collaboration of relevant multilateral organizations, including the GEF implementing Agencies to use country-driven consultative mechanisms to identify the best options for mainstreaming the NAPs into national development frameworks and to mobilize the needed financial resources in a more predictable and coordinate manner. This GEF Council may wish to render support towards the fulfilment of this key initial obligation of the Parties to the Convention.

Co-Chair of the Council, Members of the Council



When I addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations last month, I had the opportunity to elaborate on the new role of the GEF in the Convention process following the decision adopted by the COP to have the Facility serve as its financial mechanism. All delegations who took the floor after I introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the matter at hand were unanimous. The implementation of the Convention can now take off: GEF will help to catalyse resources needed. This implies a new and strengthened role of the Council of the GEF for desertification-related projects approval. As I announced earlier, a Memorandum of Understanding between this Council and the Conference of the Parties is under preparation. While the MOU process takes place, there is a need from this Council, to ensure that the Operational Programme of the new GEF focal area is implemented in a timely fashion. This is the wish of affected countries as expressed in Havana at COP.6. This is also the duty of the implementing Agencies to help affected Parties to adapt themselves to this new situation. The Council of the GEF is therefore invited to take up additional responsibilities and to get more involved in the implementation of the Convention.

Thank you Co-Chairs.

Thank you all.