

Statement by

**Mr. Luc Gnacadja**

**Executive Secretary**

**United Nations Convention to Combat  
Desertification**

*On the Occasion of the*

**GEF COUNCIL**

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Co-Président,

Mesdames Messieurs membres du Conseil d'Administration du FEM

Mesdames Messieurs, Chers Collègues,

Je voudrais tout d'abord saluer Mme Monique Barbut. Je salue en vous le symbole de la renaissance de cette institution que vous dirigez de main de maître, et je voudrais vous dire combien les réformes que vous avez entreprises depuis votre arrivée à la tête du FEM sont hautement appréciées chez nous à la CCD, en particulier celles destinées à utiliser les ressources financières disponibles selon une approche stratégique. Ce faisant, vous avez contribué à tourner la page d'une approche hétéroclite et sectaire de l'environnement global.

L'humanité puise sa subsistance dans la terre qui porte aussi l'eau si indispensable à la vie. Et fort heureusement, la dégradation des terres, composante par conséquent essentielle de la problématique de l'environnement global, est devenue il y a peu un domaine prioritaire spécifique dans les programmes du FEM.

La communauté scientifique a en effet établi qu'il est impossible de protéger la diversité biologique, de s'adapter aux changements climatiques et de renforcer la résilience des écosystèmes sans passer par la gestion durable des terres, autrement dit sans une mise en œuvre effective de la Convention des Nations Unies sur la Lutte Contre la Désertification.

Mais cette évidence scientifique n'a pas encore franchie de façon manifeste et substantielle la barrière des discours politiques pour être effective et à une échelle pertinente dans les initiatives et actions de développement.

Le mérite de la nouvelle approche que vous avez initiée au FEM, Mme la Présidente, consiste à traiter cette question de façon stratégique en démontrant que par effet d'entraînement, les investissements dans la gestion durable des terres, contribuent à l'amélioration de l'environnement global, au mieux-être des populations et à la revitalisation de leurs écosystèmes.

**Co-Chairs, Members of the Council,**

Six weeks ago, upon my appointment by the UN Secretary General, I took the helm of the UNCCD Secretariat, the driving seat of a universal instrument with a large constituency of 192 parties. Thanks to all the craftsmen, especially to

Ambassador. Arba Diallo, who contributed to build such structure to service the most vulnerable populations and ecosystems in more than 100 countries affected by desertification.

Today's UNCCD major challenges are two-fold:

- ↓ On one hand, we have to make the Convention a systemic and worldwide response to global environmental issues affecting land and its ecosystems including the linkages with the sister Rio conventions;
- ↓ On the other hand, there is an urgent need to translate political commitments into concrete and substantial actions where desertification is putting at risk 1.2 billion people.

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

Yes, a bit more than a decade after the coming into force of the Convention, the world has changed and not slightly, and has made UNCCD even more relevant to tackle today's environmental challenges such as land degradation and other related issues, and I am here to express my commitment for a coherent & cohesive partnership with the GEF.

In conformity with the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding between the GEF and the UNCCD, I have sent to the CEO of the GEF the report of COP.8 as it related to the collaboration between the two processes. For those who were in Madrid, COP.8 was a historical one on many aspects. After a decade of consolidation and broadening of its political basis, Parties recognized in Madrid that limiting factors had prevented optimal deployment of the Convention, such as insufficient financing compared to its two Rio sister conventions, a weak scientific basis, insufficient advocacy and awareness among various constituencies, institutional weaknesses and difficulties in reaching consensus among Parties.

So they adopted a Ten-year strategic plan as a blue print for the next decade to guide the implementation of the Convention. It has been seen by the COP as an instrument to prevent, control and reverse desertification/land degradation and also to contribute to the reduction of poverty while promoting sustainable development. The Strategy is a reference document with its 4 strategic objectives and 7 expected impacts that will guide the actions of all UNCCD stakeholders and partners in the next decade. The Plan has also 5 operational objectives and 21 expected outcomes. In that Plan, the GEF is called to play a crucial role.

By decision 3/COP.8, the very one which adopted the Ten-year Strategic Plan, the Conference of the Parties invited the GEF to facilitate access by affected country Parties, particularly those in Africa, to the full range of GEF funds available for the implementation of projects and programmes relating to land degradation and desertification. Recognizing that the implementation of the 10-year strategic plan requires mobilization of adequate, predictable and timely financial resources at both the national and the international levels for its effective implementation, the COP invited the GEF to consider simplifying its funding procedures in order to ease developing countries' access to GEF financial resources. The COP also invited the GEF to continue to assist affected country Parties under the next reporting cycle as provided for by the Council decision adopted in May 2003 which recognized that the elaboration of national, subregional or regional action programmes or national reports is considered to be a component in the framework of capacity-building projects, and thus eligible for funding.

The COP carefully reviewed the report on GEF activities in support of the convention since the adoption of the GEF Focal Area on Land Degradation and the new GEF Operational Program on Sustainable Land Management. Further to that report, the COP adopted an important decision on its collaboration with the GEF. The COP welcomed the streamlining of the project cycle to accelerate availability of resources to countries as well as the adoption of a revised Focal Area Strategy on Land Degradation for the fourth replenishment of the GEF (GEF 4). I would not elaborate further on that decision which can be consulted in this Council's official documents.

**Co-chairs, Council members,**

There is a new momentum generated by current discussion on climate change which implies that adaptation to its shocks, mitigation of its effects and the strengthening of affected countries resilience, pass by a successful implementation of the only international treaty dealing with the issue of land cover. The next two sessions of the Commission on Sustainable development, CSD.16 and 17 will bring a new impetus to the core addressed by the Convention.

I count on this Council for a close partnership between the GEF and the UNCCD. We can't afford to do business as usual. I am a reformer as you are, dear Monique. So let's work together to ensure that land degradation and desertification are given due and better attention in the years to come.

I thank you.