



Environment Management Group informal consultation on Land
14 May- Margins of the CSD 17
UNEP NY Office
9:00 am -12:30 pm

EMG/L-M-1/03
28 May 2009
Distribution: EMG members

Report of the meeting

I. Introduction

1. The informal consultative meeting of the EMG on land issues was held on 14 May in UNEP's New York Office, in the margins of the 17th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Philip Dobie (UNDP) and M. Ibrahim Thiaw, (UNEP).
2. The meeting was convened as a follow up to earlier consultations in the framework of EMG, including the EMG Senior Officials meeting in Poznan (October 2008) and the EMG technical meeting of February 2009 (www.unemg.org), to identify the scope, modalities, and deliverables of an EMG process on land, including identification of time-bound issues that require coordinated UN system-wide contribution to the implementation of the UNCCD "10 Year Strategic Plan and Framework 2008-2018."¹
3. The meeting considered issues contained in the agenda (Annex I) based on a background note prepared by the secretariat of the UNCCD and EMG (see www.unemg.org). A core group of agencies (UNEP, UNDP, FAO, UN-HABITAT, IFAD, UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD and EMG) participated in the meeting. The list of participants is contained in Annex II.
4. Opening remarks were made by Mr. Luc Gnacadja, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD who outlined the rationale and strategic objectives behind UNCCD approaching EMG to facilitate enhanced engagement of UN system organization to support accelerated implementation of the strategic objectives of the UNCCD 10YS (The Strategy). He recalled that the vision of The Strategy is "to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability" and then suggested that the four-year work plan of the UNCCD secretariat (2008-2011) and its expected outcomes serve as the framework for engagement of UN agencies in the Strategy. He requested the definition of practical, time bound and deliverable steps that would support achievement of the expected outcomes – the generation of global benefits, improved productivity of affected ecosystems, improved livelihoods of affected populations and mobilization of resources. The UNDP, UNEP and UNCCD cooperation on carbon sequestration and climate change adaptation was mentioned as a successful example of UN system-wide partnership delivering as one.

II. Considerations and Discussion

5. A presentation was made by the EMG Secretariat on the background, possible approaches, modalities and expected outcomes of the informal consultations on UN Land. The co-chairs then invited members to make interventions on agenda items 4 (system-wide support to UNCCD) and 5 (pressing land issues). The members' highlighted substantial issues that would benefit from focused cooperation in the framework of the EMG, taking into account the mandates and work programmes of their respective agencies, joint initiatives, and perceived needs for further cooperation and linkages to the UNCCD Strategy. Participants stressed the need to identify a number of selected intervention areas and implementation issues that provide a coherent basis for agency collaboration and coalition building through existing programmes of work.
6. Member's observations and views included the following key points:
 - Need to identify the problematic of land in the context of the UN and EMG to help achieve clear results. The scope of the EMG's work should be defined around the UNCCD scope which includes land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas.

¹ See ICCD/CRIC(7)/2.

- In specific areas, such as mainstreaming desertification, land degradation and drought, EMG could help in better aligning relevant UN organizations work to the operational objectives and core elements of the UNCCD strategy according to their respective mandates.
- Recognizing areas in which effective and on-going collaboration already exists, identify additional collaborative or knowledge-sharing areas which would derive added-value from being addressed within the EMG (as well as those that can be addressed outside the EMG) to support the objectives of the UNCCD strategy and achieve coherence at the regional level.
- Bilateral or trilateral cooperation on specific land issues exists (e.g. projects under the GEF Focal Area on Land Degradation, LADA, the WB Carbon Finance Unit projects, TerrAfrica)² but the current need is for EMG to go beyond one community and bridge the gap between different UN communities. A consistent response to land issues calls for a managed, coordinated and integrated system-wide approach that bridges the gap between those that perceive land issues from an economic investment standpoint (to support poverty alleviation and social policy) and those that address the environmental dimensions of land. EMG could support bringing together the key players, contribute to knowledge sharing and forge a more effective holistic and coherent approach to UN land issues.
- Ensure that the EMG work on land challenges is aligned to parallel programmes while being supportive to ongoing and emerging political processes, such as strengthening the land issue in climate change process and capacity building initiatives for food security.

EMG's work serve as a starting point to achieve a better buy-in to the land issues through linking it to the emerging issues, ensuring integration and building on successes of its partners. This is especially appropriate considering EMG's mandate to provide an effective, coordinated and flexible United Nations system response to forge international commitment through an issue management approach. "Emerging" issues mentioned by participants include land and scientific research in relation to carbon sequestration, food security, soil, Water scarcity and drought. A report on land degradation, targeted to have an impact similar to the "Stern Review of the Economics of Climate Change", could strengthen regional commitments by viewing and cross-checking the economic benefits of actions and costs of non-action-investment opportunities

III. Recommendations

7. Under agenda item 6, the participants considered and reflected on options for an EMG process on Land; elaborating on objectives, commitments, implementation modalities and the role of an EMG contribution; as well as the expected outcome.

8. After having considered the outcome of the EMG Technical meeting³ (in February 2009 in Nairobi, and information and proposals contained in the meeting's background document and recognition by members of the various frameworks and policies relating to desertification, land degradation and drought, the meeting recommended the following:

a. There was no current need for establishing a formal 'UN-Land' Network, rather the agencies should continue strengthening engagement and networking around land issues at the working and informal level. Work on land taken forward by the EMG in a time-bound fashion would naturally support the development of such a multi-sectoral land network. The need and usefulness of a 'UN-Land' could be considered at a later date and in light of the experience of similar networks such as UNESCO hosted UN-Water⁴.

b. There is also no need for stocktaking on agencies activities on land as this opportunity will not by itself serve the purpose of the exercise

c. In supporting the implementation of the UNCCD 10-Year Strategy, members acknowledged a need for a common, harmonized system-wide vision on the state of land, challenges and opportunities vis-à-vis the emerging issues/opportunities for investment from a coherent economic, social and environmental perspectives. The common vision will set the agenda for action including a coherent response to the UNCCD strategy.

d. The EMG land work will be time-bound with a two-year time horizon.

e. Responding to the above concerns and with the aim of setting a clear agenda, as well as mainstreaming land degradation for a coherent action, the meeting agreed to work on preparation of an action-oriented/targeted and "rapid

²http://www.gefweb.org/projects/Focal_Areas/land/land.html

<http://www.fao.org/nr/lada/>

<http://wbcarbonfinance.org/>

<http://www.terrafrica.org/>

³ www.unemg.org.

⁴ <http://www.unwater.org/flashindex.html>

response type” report to highlight the importance of drylands as they relate to key emerging issues in global agenda including climate change and food security and the investment opportunities offered.

f. The policy report, would not be prescriptive but be built on the existing knowledge, science and experiences of the member agencies (including actions already being taken) focused on the positive side (economic, social, institutional and environmental) aspects of drylands supported by a strong communication plan (possibly benefiting from marketing advice). The report should be linked but not affected by the political processes, benefiting and building on successes achieved from previous assessment studies and scientific results, such as the Millennium Ecosystem Report in terms of issues and structure but more authoritative and policy orientated,

g. Member agencies will be engaged and responsible for each chapter according to their area of expertise and focus. It would take into account and draw on existing processes including the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES which includes arid lands) and the inter-governmental panel on food security(which also includes dry-lands).

h. Reflecting on these strategic principles, the Report should provide concrete recommendations on opportunities particularly in support of the dry lands for energy production, carbon sequestration and the associated social, institutional and economic innovations, including a economic incentives for land use management (.e.g., sinks, payments for environmental services, etc.).

i. The report should focus on drylands as an economical viable investment opportunity to help mitigate the global impacts of climate change and address increasing demands for alternative energy resources. The report could include the current status of the land droughts, the opportunities for investment (including scenario analysis – visions of what will happen if investments in land are made), and brings the science and policy together

IV. Agreed follow-up actions and schedule

9. In conclusion of its discussions, and to follow up on the recommendations made , the members agreed on follow-up actions and a mid-term schedule for future work of the EMG on land as follows:

- 1) Report of the meeting to be circulated to the core group as well as to the EMG focal points for their information by the end of May 2009.
- 2) The core group should continue addressing this issue in its current informal manner until the next EMG Senior officials meeting in September 2009. The EMG meeting may decide to establish an Issue Management Group on land to follow up on the actions and a long-term schedule suggested by the core group.
- 3) UNCCD Secretariat is to prepare a draft concept paper and Terms of Reference for the report in cooperation with the EMG Secretariat (May-June 09)
- 4) UNCCD and the EMG Secretariat to share and discuss the concept with the UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology to advance the concept principles and criteria through the structure of the CST, as well as, promote the integration of the report as part of the scientific preparation of UNCCD COP-9 (Buenos Aires September 2009).
- 5) EMG Secretariat to facilitate a follow-up teleconference of the informal core Group to: a) discuss the progress made; b) agree on the concept and TOR for preparation of the report’s outline; c) agree on the basic messages that the report should convey; d) discuss preparation for the next EMG Senior Officials meeting and a side-event in the margins of the UNCCD COP-9; and e) funding of the report. (Mid-July 2009)
- 6) UNCCD and the EMG Secretariat in consultation with the core group should work on a communication strategy to attract partnership within and outside the UN system (May-September 09).
- 7) UNCCD and EMG Secretariats to prepare organizational arrangements for a side-event in the margins of the 9th CCD COP in Buenos Aires in September 2009, as part of the COP agenda, inviting agencies, partners from private sector and other scientific and political personalities to kick off the report’s outline (September 09)
- 8) The EMG Secretariat in consultation with the UNCCD Secretariat and the core group to prepare a report on the results of the consultations on land for the next EMG Senior Officials meeting in September 2009. The report would include; the progress and results of the consultation on land, preparations for the UNCCD COP-9 and the establishment of an Issue Management Group on land to follow up the work of the core group (July-August 2009).

Annex I

Provisional Agenda

1. Opening remarks by Executive Secretary of the UNCCD Mr. Luc Gnacadja and members of the UNCCD COP Bureau
2. Introductory remarks by the Co-chairs (Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, Director, UNEP Division on Policy Implementation and Law and Mr. Philip Dobie, Director, UNDP Drylands Development Centre
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. UN system-wide support to the Implementation of the UNCCD 10 Year Strategy –
 - a. Agencies overall views on this exercise, joint initiatives and needs for further cooperation
 - b. Areas of agencies work on land use and linkages to the CCD strategy
5. Key pressing land issues that would benefit from an issue-based and focused cooperation in the framework of the EMG. *Issues could be selected around the operational objectives of the CCD strategy. Such issues may include dryland management as it relates to carbon sequestration, climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation and its interface with, human settlements and poverty alleviation.*
6. Possible options for an EMG process on land; Objectives and modalities for an EMG contribution and expected outcomes
7. Any other Business
8. Closure of the meeting

Annex II
List of participants

1. CBD

Ms. Nandini Chrishna

2. UNCCD

Mr. Luc Gnacadja
Mr. Sergio Zelaya

3. FAO

Mr. Alemneh Dejene

4. IFAD

Ms. Xenia von Lilien

5. UNDP

Mr. Eric Patrick
Mr. Philip Dobie

6. UNFCCC

M. Florian Vladu

7. UNEP

M. Ibrahim Thiaw
M. Stephen Twomlow
Ms. Maaïke Jansen

8. UN-HABITAT

Ms. Axumite Gebre-Egziabher
Mr. Remy Sietchiping

9. EMG Secretariat

Mr. Hossein Fadaei