

THE UNCCD CSO PANEL, WALKING HAND-IN-HAND INTO THE FUTURE

As a crucial partner of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) can play a leading role in policy process and practice on the ground. In this regard, CSOs are invaluable for partners to amplify the voices of vulnerable populations in policy process and to check its reality, given their understanding of on-the-ground realities.

In order to foster the involvement of the CSOs, the UNCCD has established a new platform designed to magnify the work of the CSOs, build their capacities, enable information exchange, establish new and innovative partnerships and represent the civil society in the UNCCD process. In this respect, the CSO panel was established by the Conference of the Parties.

The CSO panel brings together representatives from different existing networks working on desertification. The main focus during the current biennium is to strengthen the capacity of the network to expand its representativeness at the sub-regional and national level and to become a network of networks that can work with a unified voice in combating desertification.



The CSO panel comprises two representatives from the Secretariat and one representative from CSO, from each of the UN Regional Groups of member states.



The CSO panels with Monique Barbut, the Executive Secretary of UNCCD during its second meeting in Bonn

The Panel members are ;

- **Mr. Emmanuel Seck**, representative of Africa
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- **Mr. Tanveer Arif**, representative of Asia
Society for Conservation and Protection of Environment (SCOPE) scope@scope.org.pk
- **Mr. Juan Luis Merega**, representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, Chair for the UNCCD CSO Panel
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- **Ms. Elmedina Krilasevic**, representative of Eastern European Group
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- **Mr. Patrice Burger**, representative of Western Europe and Others Group
Centre d'actions et de réalisations internationales (CARI) patriceb@cariassociation.org
- **Mr. Richard Byron Cox**, UNCCD secretariat
- **Ms. Anja Thust**, UNCCD secretariat

For more information and updated news of CSO panel, you can visit CSO page in UNCCD website here:

<http://www.unccd.int/en/Stakeholders/civil-society/Pages/default.aspx>

ENHANCING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN DRYLAND MANAGEMENT

Global governance is no longer the sole domain of Governments. The growing participation and influence of non-State actors is enhancing democracy and reshaping multilateralism. All over the world, Civil Society Organizations (CSO) are also the prime movers of some of the most innovative initiatives to deal with emerging global threats and have become more and more involved in the promotion and also in the implementation of specific policies.

In particular, the concern on many environmental issues has been strongly raised by CSO. And they also play a key role in favor of sustainable use of land, in two different ways: working hand in hand in the field with the people, but also carrying their voice in the decision making for a, at local, national and global level.

As an answer to this global trend, in the last years we have seen that civil society increasingly participates in a proactive and engaged way in the work of many UN bodies. CSOs are more and more UN system partners and constitute a valuable link for the UN to civil society and "people out there".

According to this, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) has been, from its inception, particularly committed to a bottom-up approach, encouraging the participation of local people in combating desertification and in promoting the sustainable use of land.

To date, nearly 250 civil society organizations are accredited with observer status to the UNCCD. The participation of these entities in the implementation of the Convention and their contribution to the various meetings is a necessary component of the successful implementation of the Convention through its Ten Year Strategic Plan.

The idea of this newsletter, published by the CSO Panel of the UNCCD is to be a tool to promote and strengthen the participation of CSOs in the UNCCD process.

It is clear that CSOs have much to offer to enhance community participation in drylands management.

However, it is also necessary to give them the political and financial support they deserve.

JUAN LUIS MÉREGA, *FUNDACIÓN DEL SUR (ARGENTINA)*

WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: THE EQUATOR PRIZE FOR SLM IN AFRICA

As a contribution to the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought and the work of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Equator Initiative/UNDP, OSISA and ENDA will host a highlevel event on June 17th 2014 in Nairobi, Kenya, to recognize and celebrate local grassroots organizations that are improving the livelihoods of rural communities in dryland ecosystems in sub-Saharan Africa, through sustainable land management.



The event will have as its centerpiece the Equator Prize for Sustainable Land Management in Sub-Saharan Africa Award Ceremony, and will recognize 10 outstanding community efforts to reduce poverty through sustainable land management in dryland ecosystems in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Equator Prize is part of the project supported by the GEF for sustainable land management (SLM) in Sub-Saharan Africa and implemented by the UNDP Namibia Country Office and the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) in partnership with Equator Initiative/UNDP and ENDA.

The goal of the project is to improve livelihoods of rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa through sustainable land management. The objective is to empower local grassroots organizations in sub-Saharan Africa to participate and influence in the implementation of the ten-year strategy of the UNCCD, TerrAfrica and other SLM processes, programs and policies.

The Equator Prize for Sustainable Land Management in SubSaharan Africa will be awarded for the first time in 2014 to ten (10) initiatives working in dryland ecosystems.

EMMANUEL SECK SOBEL, ENDA-TM (SENEGAL)

LOSING GROUND AND COMMON SENSE?

While land degradation and desertification is a phenomenon that occurs all over the world, there is often a lack of interest of decision makers. In the northern countries it is based on the false assumption that this issue has only to do with the extension of the deserts and the movement of sand dunes.



This is not only far from the truth, but also a very romantic perception of the drylands. Also the nexus with the loss of fertility, the erosion by wind and water on kunstrasen land, and in general the diminishing of the services provided by the ecosystems, are rarely perceived. As well as their negative effects of the livelihoods of a serious part of the world population. On the CSOs side, the small number of northern CSOs accredited to the United Nation Convention to combat desertification, reflects this lack of interest while the biodiversity and the climate change issues are focusing all the attention. and facing this challenge without any ideology. Land is life.

Unfortunately no long term solution can be found without on the two later without taking land issues simultaneously as part of the problems AND the solutions. As 2015 will be the year of soils, of the adoption of the sustainable goals for development and of the adoption of the post 2015 agenda for climate change, time is limited for changing this attitude.

PATRICE BURGER, CARI (FRANCE)

DESERTIFICATION IN ASIA AND ROLE OF CSOs

Asian region is one of the most populous regions in the world. Besides all sorts of environmental problems, it is also facing the crisis of land degradation and desertification. Desertification in the Asian region is caused by both natural and human induced factors such as un sustainable agricultural, overgrazing of the rangelands, water erosion of cultivated lands, and salinization and waterlogging on a large scale. Mining is another factor which has caused severe land damage wherever it is carried on.

According to a 1994 UN report land degradation/ desertification caused a loss of US \$10 billion annually to South Asia alone, which is equivalent to 2% of the region's GDP. The study highlighted that 140 million hectares, or 43% of the region's total agricultural land, is affected by land degradation. Out of this 31 million hectares were highly degraded and 63 million hectares moderately degraded. The worst country affected were Iran, with 94% of agricultural land degraded, followed by Bangladesh (75%), Pakistan (61%), Sri Lanka (44%), Afghanistan (33%), Nepal (26%), India (25%) and Bhutan (10%). One can imagine the heavy cost of rehabilitate these degraded lands, as billions of dollars will be required every year to restore these lands.

Climate change has further aggregated the problem and resulting in extreme events, such as cyclones, flash floods, sand storms and prolonged droughts. This alarming situation requires a rapid action on the part of states, the UN and the civil society. Desertification, being a silent disaster never got enough attention of media and public.

However dry lands offer an opportunity of sequestering atmospheric carbon as they are largely unutilized and large scale agro-forestry and forest conservation programmes can be funded by green carbon funds.

Civil society is considered most important stakeholders as, as its bridges science and technology innovations to the community at ground level. The participation of community is proven to be cost effective in the form of contribution of labour, cash and kind. UNCCD gives great value to civil society participation in the fight against desertification.

TANVEER ARIF, SCOPE (PAKISTAN)

SUSTAINING LAND_ LESSONS FROM CEE

In the last decade, we are witnessing a shift in priorities of UNCCD that will shape this facility as into a true global land convention. Although UNCCD is still essential for preserving drylands, its role in sustaining land resources and elevating land degradation as a global environment challenge has proven to be its true imperative mandate.

Either as a root environmental problem, or as an outcome of other pertinent environmental problems (such as climate change and biodiversity conservation), land degradation cannot be overlooked in Central and Eastern Europe any longer. It demands dedicated joint action of all stakeholders in the region to work towards protecting this uniquely valuable, non-renewable, and truly limited resource on which the whole life on Earth is based.

Catastrophic natural disasters aggravated by extreme weather, such as droughts, floods and fire, are occurring more frequently in Central and Eastern Europe, while in some areas they almost seem like a regular phenomenon. The floods which occurred in May 2014, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, is a great example of man and climate made disasters.

In these floods, more than one million people were displaced from their homes. Losses to economy, especially from agriculture and farming sector were devastating, and are still being assessed. In addition, landslides stimulated by high precipitation (highest ever recorded by weather measuring stations), swallowed houses, roads and entire villages in a matter of minutes or even seconds. Landslides of these proportions are caused to a great extent by deforestation and poor physical planning.

The challenge of our century is to create and maintain vigorous and productive human societies resilient to climate and other environmental challenges, while maintaining healthy land - our most scarce resource and most basic for life.

Faced with such disasters, not even strong governments or vibrant economies can make a difference alone. We can take the lessons learned from the Balkan floods how civil society are important partners and in many cases even leaders in reaching out to other partners, finding practical solutions, saving lives and helping those who need it most even before the governments are able to issue a response. However, such contribution made by civil society should not be only designated to emergency situations, and not only limited to responding to the consequences. Only by employing a holistic approach, and including all stakeholders within all stages of policy dialogue and response, we can have a fighting chance to deal with the global challenges that surpass capacities of individual nations, governments or sectors.

International environmental conventions, including UNCCD, provide us a chance to participate in the processes of the convention. CSOs, and other stakeholders, can raise their voices and give their contributions through already established processes and platforms. The first step for CSOs to participate in the process is to get accredited by the Convention.

ELMEDINA KRILASEVIC, fea. (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA)

The UNCCD Capacity Building Marketplace

This is the central point of exchange for all knowledge, resources and activities related to capacity building in the UNCCD framework.

<http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Capacity-building/CBW/Pages/default.aspx>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS(JULY)

- 8 - 11 July_ [Journées climat et développement de Coordination SUD](#)(France)
- 14 - 17 July_ Second meeting of the IWG (China)
- 22 July_ 5th Meeting of the UNCCD CSO panel (teleconference)