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INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE GLOBAL MECHANISM OF THE UNITED NATIONS
CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES
EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION,
PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In October 1997, on the occasion of the First Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), IFAD was selected as the housing institution of the Global Mechanism of the Convention. Under the authority of the COP, the Global Mechanism's mandate is "to promote actions leading to the mobilisation of substantial financial resources, including for the transfer of technology, on a grant basis, and/or on concessional or other terms, to affected developing country Parties". The Global Mechanism began its operations in 1998, and a report on its initial activities was submitted to the Executive Board of IFAD in December 1998, as well as to IFAD's Governing Council in February 1999.
2. The present progress report is intended as an update, for IFAD's Executive Board, on the evolving operational strategy and activities of the Global Mechanism during 1999.

**II. APPROACH TO THE ACTIVITIES OF THE UNCCD OF THE
GLOBAL MECHANISM**

3. In order to improve the coordination of interventions in support of UNCCD implementation, the Global Mechanism receives support and advice from a Facilitation Committee (FC), a consultative framework that brings together representatives of IFAD, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Secretariat of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Convention Secretariat, and the regional development banks (the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (AsDB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)).



4. The guiding principles of the Global Mechanism operates that underpin the utilization of the catalytic resources available to the Global Mechanism during its first year of operations, are set out in Decision 25/COP.1 along the following lines:

- being responsive to the needs and priorities of the parties;
- ensuring that the Global Mechanism does not duplicate existing mechanisms and facilities, but adds value to them;
- being lean and efficient in this context, drawing on other institutions, including its housing institution, as well as the United Nations system-wide capacities and facilities; and
- ensuring that neutrality and universality form the basis of the Global Mechanism's operations.

5. National, sub-regional and regional action plans provide the framework for Convention implementation. The Convention states that such plans shall be closely linked with other efforts to formulate policies for sustainable development, and that the problem of desertification (defined as "land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climate variations and human activity"), is very closely linked to the development process itself. In this context, special attention is paid under the Convention to all aspects of sustainable rural development and to poverty alleviation, including access to/and control of natural resources, as well as support to alternative rural livelihoods and access to socio-economic infrastructure and services. It is understood that this is the main reason why the Global Mechanism is not a central fund (which would duplicate existing funding sources and mechanisms), but rather a brokering institution that will help rationalize the allocation of resources and mobilize additional financial resources, where necessary.

6. The approach for the Global Mechanism's involvement in Convention implementation during its first year of operations aims to:

- support, on request, the implementation of national action programmes (NAPs);
- assist, upon request, with the formulation or implementation of regional and sub-regional action programmes (RAPs and SRAPs);
- develop innovative approaches to cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and to promote stakeholder mobilization and networking for transfer of technology and information management; and
- launch strategic initiatives to enhance the overall financing opportunities for Convention implementation and to address, at the policy level, the issue of land-degradation control and drought mitigation.

III. SUPPORT TO NATIONAL INITIATIVES

7. As regards national initiatives, the Global Mechanism is working with three countries in West Africa: Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal. Initial discussions were also held with regard to Latin America and the Caribbean Region. Global Mechanism support is intended to provide assistance in developing "local area development programmes"(LADPs), as a framework for implementing NAPs at the local level. In this connection, the Global Mechanism will provide assistance for the establishment of national desertification funds (as foreseen under the UNCCD), as one of many options for channelling financial resources to the local level. Moreover, the Global Mechanism will help identify the interlinkages between NAPs and other relevant initiatives and development programmes supported by bilateral and/or multilateral donors at the national level.



8. A summary description of specific interventions at country level is provided below.

Burkina Faso

9. In Burkina Faso, the Government developed in recent years the NAP, with financial support from bilateral and multilateral donors, including, *inter alia*, The Netherlands and IFAD.

10. The next steps towards implementing NAP in Burkina Faso will involve a multi-track approach, including: the formulation of local area development programmes (LADPs); identification of the interface between NAP activities and relevant ongoing projects and programmes; arrangements for identification and dissemination of best practices in land-degradation control and related support measures; rationalization of the policy framework in respect of direct and indirect incentive systems for land-degradation control; and establishment of a national desertification fund with prospective contributions from the Government, bilateral/multilateral donors and the private sector.

11. In this context, and as agreed with the Government of Burkina Faso, the Global Mechanism has undertaken to support the implementation of the NAP in various ways. In recognition of the interlinkages between soil fertility and land degradation, for instance, in September 1999, the Global Mechanism financed the organization of a national harmonization workshop that brought together representatives of the donor community and managers of all relevant field programmes that deal partly or exclusively with natural resources management. The purpose of this workshop was to discuss the modalities of mainstreaming activities into the NAP, previously foreseen under the action plan of the Soil Fertility Initiative spearheaded in sub-Saharan Africa over the past couple of years, by the World Bank, and supported by FAO and other organizations.

12. In addition to a prospective Global Mechanism contribution to the elaboration of LADPs and support to the policy dialogue on incentive systems for natural resources management, the establishment of the national desertification fund in Burkina Faso will also receive support from the Global Mechanism in close consultation with other interested development partners. This will include, *inter alia*, provision for technical support to finalize the related operational modalities, as well as a financial contribution towards the initial capitalization of the Fund.

Mali

13. Through an extensive participatory process at the local, regional and national levels, the Government prepared a framework document, with assistance from various partners including the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and FAO. The document encompasses broad-based strategic thrusts and action areas, thus serving both as a NAP — pursuant to Articles 9 and 10 of the UNCCD — and as a National Environmental Action Programme (NEAP), which is a standard prerequisite for World Bank support. A sectoral round table on environment financing was organized by the Government of Mali in May 1999, with the participation of representatives of the donor community, the UNCCD Secretariat and the Global Mechanism. On this occasion, various donors made statements of interest with respect to the priority action areas under the NAP, covering, *inter alia*, the rational management and conservation of water resources, pasturelands, forest and fauna, and environmental information. The next steps in mobilizing resources — for which the assistance of the Global Mechanism as an “honest broker is anticipated — will involve the identification of the interface between the NAP priority-action areas on the one hand and on the other, the ongoing or planned interventions of various donors and specialized agencies. The funding gaps and the arrangements for mobilization of additional resources will be identified as a result of a participatory and iterative process, in the context of the Government’s decentralization policies. Special attention will also be given to identifying and disseminating best practices and capacity-building at the community level, as well as a coordination and progressive harmonization of the terms and conditions of direct support measures at the field level, for the sake of long-term sustainability.



14. The detailed modalities of this participatory and iterative process are being worked out as a follow-up to recent working sessions between the Global Mechanism and the focal point of the national coordinating body of the NAP in Mali. Meanwhile, discussions have already been initiated with potential partners, including IFAD, the World Bank, FAO and bilateral donors. For instance, it is agreed in principle that the Global Mechanism will finance a national harmonization workshop to mainstream the Soil Fertility Action Plan into the NAP, based on arrangements made in September 1999 for Burkina Faso, as described above. The Global Mechanism also facilitated discussions between IFAD, the World Bank and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) regarding a planned GEF-financed project in the inner Niger Delta. It took into account the potential for combining the resources of IFAD, with its extensive experience of working with small farmers, and those of IUCN, with its expertise in the management of wild natural resources. Both IFAD (in the context of its ongoing cooperation with the World Bank) and IUCN have approached GEF with similar project proposals.

Senegal

15. The Government of Senegal was one of the first to ratify the Convention and to complete its NAP, with support from bilateral and multilateral donors. The Government recently elaborated a medium-term priority programme in close collaboration with NGOs and farmer organizations, including pilot activities to test innovative institutional approaches and cofinancing arrangements. On the occasion of the contacts between the Global Mechanism office and the Senegalese authorities (including the ministries in charge of planning, finance, environment and agriculture and livestock), the Government reiterated its commitment to earmark counterpart funds for the priority programme, in an effort to attract external funding. An iterative and participatory process will be followed, to define the interface and establish operational linkages between the NAP (including the medium-term priority programme) and other relevant projects supported by multilateral and bilateral donors, including IFAD, the World Bank, the AfDB, and the European Union. This systematic approach will also encompass sectoral programmes and policy initiatives at the national and sub-regional levels, as indicated above for Burkina Faso and Mali, including under the SRAP for West and Central Africa. Meanwhile, arrangements are well under way for the organization of a Global Mechanism-funded national harmonization workshop to integrate the Soil Fertility Initiative into the NAP, as was done in Burkina Faso and is foreseen in Mali.

16. On these grounds, and upon a request from the Government, a set of pilot activities under the NAP, to be launched immediately with the Global Mechanism cofinancing, is under consideration. These activities will cover various agro-ecological zones in the country, and especially emphasize mobilizing women and youth.

17. In terms of NAP financing, the need for and exact amount of additional resources will be determined in light of the iterative process noted above. However, among the possible channels for NAP funding, the establishment of National Desertification Fund has already been subject of extensive discussions between the Government and civil-society organizations; the Global Mechanism is prepared to provide technical and financial assistance to move this process forward. Another significant (but not exclusive) financing option will be the reconversion of external public debt, in support to implementation of the NAP as a broad-based, poverty-oriented framework that encompasses not only support to agricultural production and resource-conservation activities, but also provides for socio-economic infrastructure and services as incentives for natural resource management. The Government has nearly completed the drafting of a national framework for debt conversion, and the Global Mechanism has undertaken to assist in establishing necessary linkages with the NAP implementation.



Cuba and Haiti

18. In Latin American and the Caribbean, initial Global Mechanism interventions will focus on Cuba, Haiti, and Peru for support at the national level. Other countries in the region will be considered in due course for Global Mechanism support, upon receipt of specific requests, and subject to the availability of resources. The Global Mechanism will capitalize on efforts already made, including support from IFAD, through inter-agency collaboration involving FAO and the CCD Secretariat, in the development of the NAP for Cuba. This involves the implementation of pilot activities within a LADP in the Cauto River Basin. At the same time, the Global Mechanism is also considering supporting Cuba in the finalization and implementation of the NAP.

19. In the framework of its cooperation with the Government of Haiti, IFAD provided assistance to the Ministry of the Environment in participatory methodology for the preparation of the Haitian NAP. The Global Mechanism will contribute to ensuring full integration of the NAP and consider different options for the channelling of resources for financing planning and implementation of activities, such as rural development and community funds. The Global Mechanism will also contribute to the design of strategies and programmes supported by IFAD and other donors.

IV. REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL INITIATIVES

20. The aims of the Global Mechanism in relation to RAPs and SRAPs under the UNCCD are to:

- help define the orientation and content of SRAPs at the inception/formulation stage of the consultation process, and support the process of designing and/or validating SRAPs;
- support SRAP focal institutions in defining the interlinkages between the SRAPs and the NAPs concerned, and rendering operational the interface between them;
- encourage the formation of strategic alliances between sub-regional bodies whose mandates are relevant to SRAP objectives, with a special emphasis on organizations with a proven capacity or potential to contribute as cofinanciers to SRAP implementation; and
- seek methods and opportunities to foster the relationship between the UNCCD with other conventions, as foreseen under Article 8 of the UNCCD, with special reference to the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. To this effect, the Global Mechanism will assist in rendering operational the interface between SRAPs and the four focal areas of the GEF, as they relate to land degradation.

21. In this context, the Global Mechanism has initiated support to the development of activities in the (sub) regions as follows.

Latin America

22. On the basis of a proposal from the Latin America and the Caribbean Division of IFAD, the Global Mechanism, through the electronic network, FIDAMERICA, is supporting a regionally based conference involving IFAD as well as non-IFAD projects on the theme of land degradation and desertification. The objective of this initiative is to facilitate communication between actors on the ground in the various countries of the region, through electronic communication rather than organizing high-level conferences for this purpose. In order to ensure that the electronic debate is progressing effectively, a moderator for the electronic forum was designated. The outcome of the electronic debate will be presented to the third COP in Brazil in November 1999. It is anticipated that this conference will provide indications of how the Global Mechanism may support the UNCCD Committee on Science and Technology, and how traditional knowledge may be effectively collected and circulated.



23. Following the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting held in Lima, Peru in August 1999, the Global Mechanism expressed an interest in supporting an initiative that aims at reviewing selected national policy frameworks. The objective is to identify a limited number of policies that hamper development and implementation of CCD objectives, and seek their revision. The initiative is already underway in Mexico and modalities for further expansion in the region will be examined in due course. The IDB is also interested in supporting the initiative. If successful, it will be pursued in other regions and become part of the Global Mechanism's portfolio of enabling activities aimed at improving the policy environment of UNCCD implementation. In this context, the Global Mechanism will capitalize on the achievements of the collaborative action-research programme on incentives systems for sustainable natural resources management, as spearheaded by IFAD in West and Central Africa over the past couple of years.

West Africa

24. The UNCCD sub-regional action programme for West and Central Africa was approved at the expert and ministerial levels in Lomé in May 1999, on occasion of a meeting funded, *inter alia*, by IFAD and the Global Mechanism. Several themes were identified under the SRAP, which related to the following: management of shared water resources; sustainable agriculture and rangelands management; renewable energy; migratory pest control; early warning systems; sub-regional integration; and infrastructure and communication, etc. Among the organizations designated as thematic leaders was a NGO network, as well as intergovernmental bodies, sub-regional economic integration organizations, and specialized regional technical agencies. The SRAP is to be adopted by the Heads of State in the near future under the aegis of the sub-regional liaison centres, namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). Meanwhile, both liaison centres organized a follow-up seminar, with funding from the Global Mechanism. It brought together the eight thematic focal points to take stock of progress made and agreed on a common approach to implementation of the SRAP. This was followed by a meeting on shared water resources in which intergovernmental bodies involved in management of shared river basins and lakes in the west and central Africa sub-region participated. They presented their respective mandates and activities, and the prospects for creating synergies between their respective interventions and the relevant initiatives at the national and sub-regional levels.

25. The case of the shared river valleys between Nigeria and Niger (i.e. the Maggia Lamido, the Goulbi Maradi and the El Fadama and the Komadougou Yobe) provides a typical illustration of the role that the Global Mechanism could play in addressing the negative externalities that stem from unconcerted utilization of common water resources. Over the past two decades, the combined effects of the construction of dams, inefficient irrigation systems, land degradation, erratic rainfall and high evapotranspiration, have jeopardized the financial viability and the environmental sustainability of investment projects sponsored by the private and public sectors. Previous attempts to implement the 1990 Maiduguri Agreement on equitable management and utilization of shared water resources have fallen short of their objectives, for want of a comprehensive strategic framework and effective linkages with field operations. Against this background, the Global Mechanism recently took the lead, upon request from the World Bank and in collaboration with FAO, in facilitating the elaboration of a strategic plan for implementation of the Maiduguri Agreement. This new initiative has good chances for success, as it takes place within the context of the SRAP West and Central Africa under the CCD. It also takes into account that negative externalities are reciprocal and that the two Governments are determined to find a solution acceptable for both parties. To this effect, the FAO/IC prepared an issues and options paper, while UNEP drafted a concept note as a basis for entry in the pipeline of a proposal for a GEF planning grant. A stakeholders workshop is scheduled (with Global Mechanism funding) for the first quarter of 2000, under the aegis of ECOWAS, CILSS, and the Niger/Nigeria Joint Cooperation Commission (NNJCC), to review and endorse the strategic plan for implementation of the Maiduguri Agreement. The plan will include cross-border activities under the auspices of the NNJCC, as well as local level activities, which will be covered as part of ongoing or planned donor-



funded programmes at the field level. A similar approach will be adopted with respect to other themes identified under the West and Central Africa SRAP, upon receipt of the anticipated request from the concerned intergovernmental organizations. At the same time, initial discussions are already under way with the designated GEF-implementing agencies to identify project ideas that could be eligible for prospective GEF funding, e.g. renewable energy and agricultural biodiversity. Finally, the interlinkages between the NAP action areas and the strategic thrusts of the SRAP for West and Central Africa will also be carefully defined and operationalized; this will avoid duplicating the efforts of national institutions involved under the NAP, and the numerous intergovernmental or NGO networks acting as thematic leaders under the SRAP. Special reference will be made to the management of shared water resources (e.g. Senegal and Niger Rivers), cross-border rangelands management, migratory pest control, renewable energy and early warning systems, etc.

West Asia

26. Upon the establishment of the Global Mechanism, representatives from the region and the Secretariat called upon the Global Mechanism to support the finalization of the SRAP (Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen), and to secure its financing. The managing director visited the region in March 1999, and a draft proposal was subsequently designed. Two senior consultants from the region were engaged to visit the countries concerned and the three regional and international institutions involved (the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and the Centre for Environment and Development in the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE)). Once the consultants have fully discussed the content of the programme with all parties, the text will be revised in the light of these discussions. A conference to which representatives of the countries and donor institutions will be invited, will be held for the final endorsement of the action programme in early 2000.

27. As part of their brief, the consultants will be contacting potential donor institutions within the region, including the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), to ensure that these institutions are fully involved in the process. The IsDB already contributed financially to the development of the programme and continues to support its development by allocating funds to the Global Mechanism to this end.

V. STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND ENABLING ACTIVITIES

28. The purpose of engaging the Global Mechanism in strategic initiatives and enabling activities is two-fold: first, to explore the extent to which new and additional funding can be obtained through innovative approaches to financing the Convention (strategic initiatives); and the second, to develop initiatives of relevance to more than one region, which address the problem of desertification and land degradation at the policy level (enabling activities). In this context, four initiatives are being developed:

Carbon Sequestration

29. This initiative is linked to fostering synergy between the UNCCD and the International Framework Convention on Climate Change (IFCCC). One of the objectives of the IFCCC is to reduce the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, in order to mitigate the greenhouse effect. This objective may be achieved in one of two ways: by reducing CO₂ emissions, or absorbing the CO₂ already in the atmosphere into bio-mass.

30. For developed countries, the cost of reducing emissions is often higher than that of absorbing CO₂ through reforestation and land improvement initiatives in the developing world. Therefore, there are potentially large financial resources available for land-improvement projects. That said, in order to be able to benefit from this potential, it must be possible to verify that carbon once absorbed in bio-



mass is retained and not re-emitted into the atmosphere. In cooperation with IFAD, FAO and the Convention Secretariat, the Global Mechanism began looking into the field aspect of the carbon-sequestration process, given that organic matter in soil, particularly in dryland areas, is closely related to the productivity of the soil itself. Much time may be needed for this initiative to result in flows of funds, but given the potential, it is important for the Global Mechanism to become involved in the debate and process.

Debt Relief Initiative

31. Recognizing that indebtedness of developing countries may hamper their capacity to invest in land degradation control (Article 4), the Parties to the UNCCD have agreed to “explore innovative methods and incentives for mobilising and channelling resources, including debt swaps and other innovative means” (Article 20).

32. Following the Debt Relief Initiative of the G-8 in Cologne in June 1999, and a request by the COP’s Chairman, the Global Mechanism began exploring how the Convention can benefit from this initiative, which aims at reducing the debt stock of low-income countries to a sustainable level in terms of debt servicing. This Global Mechanism initiative should not to be misconstrued as introducing additional conditionalities that would hinder ongoing efforts to extend and accelerate the process of debt relief in favour of poor countries. Instead, the prospective linkages between the Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative (HIPC DI) and UNCCD implementation could have several advantages:

- by directing part of government resources freed-up under the HIPC DI towards activities aimed at reversing or preventing the degradation of productive land, the governments concerned will create conditions for environmentally sustainable economic growth. This, in turn, will enhance the capacity of these governments to honour their future obligations in terms of debt servicing;
- the UNCCD is a poverty-oriented, multisectoral framework that encompasses production, resource conservation, as well as socio-economic services and infrastructure. Therefore, linking debt relief and UNCCD implementation may offer an opportunity to reconcile the concerns of the apparently competitive interests of the constituencies favouring investment in the “environment” and “social sectors”; and
- under the Cologne Initiative, the scope and pace of debt relief will ultimately be determined on the basis of specific arrangements between each debtor country and its creditors. However, the consultative mechanisms and strategic frameworks established under the UNCCD at the sub-regional, regional and global levels, will offer useful fora for the exchange of experiences in combating land degradation, through the combination of external and domestic resources, including those freed up through debt relief.

33. A dialogue between the Global Mechanism and other development partners engaged in the debt relief agenda, will involve collaboration with the NGO community in recognition of the critical effect their advocacy role has in the context of the debate on debt relief. It will take into account the emphasis the UNCCD places on NGO involvement in Convention implementation. To this end, the Global Mechanism has held initial discussions with Washington-based NGOs and some African NGOs.

34. Beyond the HIPC Initiative, and at a time when complete debt cancellation is being advocated in certain quarters, the prospects for debt conversion in the context of the UNCCD (for HIPC countries and other developing countries) deserves special attention as a possible alternative. The UNCCD has a significant comparative advantage as a multisectoral framework for the implementation of debt-conversion measures, due to the fact it could effectively monitor the allocation of resources to affected areas (to finance multisectoral activities initiated by civil-society



organizations, and the provision of counterpart funds for donor-supported projects), and the socio-economic and environmental impact on the local communities concerned. To this end, strategic alliances will be established with the development partners (most of whom are already members of the Global Mechanism's FC) that have the experience and the capacity to define monitorable indicators, in relation to Government allocation of financial resources and public-sector reviews, as well as biophysical and socio-economic impact assessment.

Community-Based Exchange and Training Programmes

35. While a number of donor-funded projects make arrangements for community exchange and training, the scope of such exchanges is usually limited to the concerned donors portfolio of projects. At the same time, there is no systematic mechanism for bringing communities "into the loop": they have traditional knowledge to share, but are left out of the development programmes.

36. In recognition of the priority accorded capacity-building under the UNCCD, and the need to lay the groundwork for future investments, the purpose of the proposed community exchange and training programme is to encourage the establishment of systematic dialogue and the exchange of experiences between natural resource users as a basis for building a partnership between local communities, the (central or local) government and other partners, including donors and NGOs. To this end, and as a follow-up to consultations with the RIOD Network (International NGO Network on Desertification and Drought), the CCD focal points at country level and specialized institutions, the community-based exchange and training programme is being considered for support by the Global Mechanism and its partners. The Global Mechanism intends to contribute catalytic resources (in financial and conceptual terms), to facilitate the development and implementation of the programme. It is conceived as a grass-roots capacity-building initiative, and is expected to enhance the absorptive capacity at the local level. It will lay the groundwork for further investment of domestic and external donor resources in support of NAP objectives.

37. The programme will be implemented in a decentralized manner, while providing an overall framework for cross-fertilization between projects and programmes executed by NGOs or governmental institutions. Provision will also be made for inclusion of areas that are currently left out of development programmes. Finally, collaborative arrangements will be made in relation to knowledge management and broad-based dissemination of best practices through partnership agreements between existing and future knowledge networks.

38. As noted above, the Global Mechanism-supported initiative in Latin America offers a model for developing initial contacts and knowledge-sharing between projects. Therefore, it may well be appropriate for RIOD to take the responsibility for operating a network similar to that in Latin America, to build on this network and expand it, under the umbrella of the community-based exchange and training programme.

39. Following successive discussions with representatives of the NGO RIOD network, national coordinating bodies and donors, a framework paper along the above lines was recently drafted for further consideration at the forthcoming COP. On the basis of the initial concept note, a number of governments and development partners, including the World Bank, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the Free University of Amsterdam indicated their interest in collaborating with this initiative.

Desertification Monitoring

40. Although desertification has been a cover-page issue for almost three decades, there is still no universally agreed upon method of measuring and assessing the desertification and land-degradation process. Yet in the final analysis, the success of Convention implementation can only be measured through such calculations. In this context, one region and two sub-regions (Asia, West Africa and



North Africa) have approached the Global Mechanism concerning the development of desertification-monitoring systems. Therefore, an opportunity exists for merging these interests and addressing the issue on a global scale. Discussions to this effect are just beginning. However, the Global Mechanism expects that several institutions will become involved in this initiative, including the World Health Organization (WHO), UNEP, the Convention Secretariat, FAO, the Saharan-Sahelian Observatory (OSS), AGRHYMET (a CILSS Member Institution), and the emerging Asia Network on Desertification Monitoring, to name but a few.

41. It is also anticipated that desertification-monitoring indicators will be used as part of the biophysical impact assessment, and in the context of the ongoing or planned initiatives to allocate for UNCCD implementation all or part of the financial resources generated through debt relief and/or conversion.

Activities Related to the Establishment of the Global Mechanism Database

42. Since beginning, on 1 September 1999, the Information Systems Manager/Financial Analyst of the Global Mechanism has been working on a preliminary analysis of the structure of the Global Mechanism database. This has involved some documentary research and a number of visits to the members of the FC. Initial consultations have so far taken place with the following: IFAD, FAO, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO)/UNDP, the UNCCD Secretariat, the World Bank, the IDB, and the Secretariat of the GEF. While in Bonn, discussions were also held with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate and Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat.

43. The objectives of the initial consultations were the following: to become more familiar with the structure of these organizations and to contact those in charge or their respective information systems; to collect and share information relevant to the establishment of the Global Mechanism database; and to establish a basis for collaboration.

44. These introductory meetings will be followed up with more extensive discussions in order to:

- learn from the experience of the members of the FC in implementing similar projects (and, in particular, gather indications on the approach, resources and technology used);
- replicate successful partnership agreements or frameworks between the members of the FC and other UN agencies, international organizations, bilateral donors and the private sector;
- develop a network of working relationships with FC members and other external partners and/or collaborators;
- explore all available information and technology available with FC institutions, the UN system and the broader community;
- apply new or existing and well-established data collection and management processes; and
- adopt all necessary measures for the Global Mechanism database to become fully operational.

45. The final outcome of the preliminary analyses and consultations will be the detailed identification of key challenges and issues. This will allow for the preparation of a detailed programme of work that will specify guidelines, tasks and resource needs for the next phases of the establishment of the Global Mechanism database.



46. Some progress was already made on these issues such as distinctions to be made between the main database component and “accessory” data elements and features that could be added to the Global Mechanism’s information platform at a later stage. A preliminary database implementation approach was also drafted. The approach will ideally represent a framework for interpreting, planning and deciding upon any future activity related to the implementation and deployment of the Global Mechanism database.

47. Each of the tasks or subprojects will present its own challenges and issues, requiring appropriate resources and actions. In particular, specific analysis, consultations and agreements must be undertaken with the participation of all the parties that may be actively involved in the implementation process or in database operations.

48. Given its guiding principles, which call for a flexible, lean and efficient structure, the Global Mechanism needs to develop a broad partnership with all interested parties in order to produce an information platform capable of responding fully to its mandate. This applies especially to the members of the FC, since it responds to the need to define collaborative institutional arrangements between those institutions having relevant experience in one or more areas relevant to the CCD.

Development of the Office of the Global Mechanism

49. The 1999 Budget of the Global Mechanism provided for the recruitment of three Professional and three General Service staff. The positions of senior programme manager and information systems manager/financial analyst have been filled. Three more professional posts will be filled in 2000.

50. **The Global Mechanism’s Accounts and Financial Reporting.** The Global Mechanism operates three accounts, as defined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the COP and IFAD. In order to render these accounts fully operational, legal interpretation and precise definition of the purposes for which they may be used were required. This process was completed in cooperation with the Office of the General Counsel of IFAD and the advice of those specialized in such issues within the Global Mechanism’s Housing Institution.

51. In accordance with its commitment in its submission to house the Global Mechanism, IFAD generously contributed an initial USD 2.5 million to the Special Resources for CCD Finance Account (SRCF).

VI. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION: DONOR COUNTRIES AND INSTITUTIONS

52. In its first year, the Global Mechanism gave priority to establishing relations with developing countries and sub-regions, seeking to establish a mode of cooperation with them and to demonstrate the ways in which the Global Mechanism can contribute to the development of action programmes and related initiatives. It is anticipated that a well-developed approach to Convention implementation will help forge strong relations with the donor community, and thus generate the resources needed for Convention implementation.

53. This approach has been possible thanks to the voluntary contributions from Germany, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland, donated in connection with the creation of the Global Mechanism. The subsequent generous contribution from IFAD will allow for this approach to be pursued. In addition, the support of the IsDB for the SRAP in West Asia, channelled through the Global Mechanism, is indicative of the *modus operandi* that the Global Mechanism wishes to pursue with other donors and a selected number of foundations that give priority to land degradation as related to poverty alleviation and biodiversity issues.



54. It is on this basis that cooperation with the institutions of the FC are being consolidated, since they are the first obvious financing partners of the Global Mechanism. In addition to the financial contributions received from IFAD and IsDB, it is highly encouraging to see in the correspondence between the President of IFAD and the President of the World Bank that the Bank is prepared to consider contributing to the Global Mechanism's SRCF Account.

55. In addition to the donor countries and institutions already mentioned, the Global Mechanism has begun developing a working relationship with Italy, the host country of the Global Mechanism, the European Commission and Finland.

The Memorandum of Understanding

56. In accordance with Decision 19/COP.2, the Executive Board of IFAD at its Sixty-sixth Session on 28 and 29 April 1999, considered the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), containing the revisions proposed by the Second Session of the COP, and approved the text of the MoU. IFAD returned the revised MoU to the Secretariat of the CCD by letter of 13 July 1999.

Arrangements for Cooperation between the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism

57. By Decision 18/COP.2, the Global Mechanism and the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention were requested to cooperate in order to avoid duplication and to enhance the effectiveness of Convention implementation, in accordance with their respective roles, as contained in the MoU. In order to formalize this request, the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism have prepared and signed an arrangement for cooperation between the two entities.