

# **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)**

## **Background to the (Convention/Protocol):**

Desertification has been a subject of global concern since long. It is estimated that over 250 million peoples are affected directly and with over one billion people are at a risk. Desertification results from complex interactions among physical, chemical, biological, socio-economic and political problems that were local, national and global in nature. Realizing this, the international community recognized it as a major economic, social and environmental problem.

The formal expression of global concern on desertification starts in late seventies. Initially in 1977, a United Nations Conference on Desertification (UNCOD) was convened in Nairobi, Kenya which came up with the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (PACD). However, the implementation of PACD is far from satisfactory. But UNCOD was an outcome of extensive studies and consultations undertaken at the global , regional and local level involving scientist, policy and decision makers and experts from R&D institutions and other organizations from all over the world (UNEP, 1991). Assessment made by UNEP indicate that desertification continued to spread. Also the UN Commission observed (Sustainable Development Report 1988) that desertification had become one of the most serious environmental and socio - economic problems of the world. The World Atlas also indicates that Desertification / the problem of land degradation had continued over the preceding 20 years. The UN Conference on Environment and Development also highlighted the problems of desertification and recommended that United Nations General Assembly should establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INCD) to prepare a Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and / or desertification, particularly in Africa.

As a result, the question of how to tackle desertification which was a major concern for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (NUCED), and it was held in Rio de Janeiro. As a follow up action, a committee was established in early 1993 and developed the text of the Convention. The UNCCD was adopted in Paris on 17 June 1994 and opened for signature on 14-15 October 1994. Over 100 countries have signed the Convention so far . The UNCCD entered into force on 26 December 1996, 90 days after the fiftieth instrument of Ratification or Accession was deposited. Over 191 countries were Parties as at September 2004. The conference of the parties (COP) is the supreme governing body of the convention .Currently 193 countries are parties to UNCCD.

**Name of the Convention/Protocol:** The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

**Date of Signature:** The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) signed the convention (UNCCD) in 1994.

**Ratification or Accession:** The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) ratified in January 1996.

**Name of the Competent Authority:** Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF).

**Name of National Focal Point:** Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests.

**Obligations (if any):** There are four principal categories of obligation under the terms of the UNCCD and its regional implementation :

- 1.The common obligation of all parties, including those unaffected by desertification, are spelled out mainly in articles 3,4,12,14,16, 17, 18, 19 and 20. They relate principally to international cooperation in implement of the CCD at all levels, particularly in the areas of the collection, analysis and exchange of information, research, technology transfer, capacity building and awareness building, the promotion of an integrated approach in developing national strategies to combat desertification, and assistance in

ensuring that adequate financial resources are available for programmers to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.

2. Country Parties affected by desertification in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Northern Mediterranean undertake to prepare national action programmes and to cooperate at the regional and sub-regional levels.

3. Part II- Article 5 of the UNCCD: obligations of the affected Developing Country Parties;

- Give due priority to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought.
- Establish strategies and priorities within the framework of sustainable development.
- Address underlying causes of desertification and particularly to the socio-economic factors contributing to the desertification process.
- Promote awareness and facilitate the participation of the local populations, particularly the women and youth, non-governmental organizations, in efforts to combat desertification and mitigating the effects of drought.
- Provide an enabling environment by strengthening the relevant existing legislation, enacting new laws, where they do not exist, and establish long term policies and action programmes.

#### **4. Part III Section 1, Article 9 & 10 National Action Programmes**

- All affected developing country Parties shall prepare a National Action Programmes (NAP), utilizing and building to the extent possible, on existing relevant plans and programmes and sub-regional and regional action programmes, as the central element of the strategy to combat desertification and drought. Bangladesh already prepared NAP in 2005.
- As per Article 26 Parties are obliged to report on measures they have taken to implement the Convention. *Parties that have prepared National Action Programmes are obliged (article 10) to provide regular progress reports on their implementation.*

**Opportunities:** Assessment of state of desertification in Bangladesh, Updating NAP, Development of Strategies for combating desertification, R&D, Awareness building, Establish poverty alleviation strategies on priority base to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought etc.

**Linkages/Conflict with other MEAs:** There are close linkage with UNFCCC, UNCBD etc.

**No. of Report/Documents Prepared:** As part of obligation of the UNCCD, Bangladesh prepared First National report of NAP and Bangladesh also submitted 3rd National Report.

#### **Ongoing activities/initiatives:**

1. Organized meeting with relevant GO, NGOs.
2. Established Focal Points in the relevant organizations.
3. Submitted a project titled " Assessment of the State of Desertification in Bangladesh " for GEF funding.
4. Taken initiatives for 4th Reporting.