

SECTION 6: Conclusion



183. Drought and desertification continue to threaten the livelihoods of millions of people in Africa, increasingly making them unable to edge out of poverty. This trend is set to worsen with the onset of climate change, to which many countries in the region are most vulnerable. As such desertification and drought are at the heart of development challenges in Africa and merit urgent attention in policies and actions at national, regional and global level.

184. Combating desertification in the continent has tremendous benefits in enhancing the continent's progress towards meeting MDGs particularly in terms of poverty reduction, attaining food security, combating diseases and ensuring environmental sustainability. Otherwise current trends in land degradation and high level of vulnerability of the region to the impacts of both drought and desertification will be major impediments to the attainment of the MDGs as well as ensuring security and social stability at all levels in the region and at global level.

185. African countries have responded and made some demonstrated progress towards tackling drought and desertification. The UNCCD has been central and provides vital opportunities for tackling drought and desertification in the region and globally. With support from international partners, many countries are taking some concrete action at various levels to tackle desertification as well as to mitigate the impacts of drought. Notably NAPs, SRAPs, RAPs and other programs in environment and agricultural sectors, have been developed at various levels. Implementation of these plans has commenced and urgently needs to be scaled up with a special emphasis on achieving implementation and impact at local level. In this context mechanisms are needed for providing technical and long-term financial support for combating drought and desertification especially to decentralised local government and communities. Work has commenced, but major effort is needed to strengthen the establishment of systems for drought and desertification monitoring, early warning and drought risk management. In this connection concrete data about rates and extent of desertification needs to be collected and disseminated to inform policy development and implementation.

186. African countries continue to face a number of challenges and constraints that constitute major impediments to and hamper progress in addressing drought and desertification and attaining sustainable development. Notable are the high levels of poverty, weak institutional capacities, challenges in resource mobilisation, weak information base, and inadequate access to affordable appropriate technology. These impediments merit urgent attention if progress is to be accelerated. The review has identified some best practices and success stories and lessons learned that can inform the development and implementation of effective interventions to manage drought impacts and combat land degradation.

187. The main priority approaches and actions proposed to accelerate progress, recognize the need to address the root causes of desertification, respond to the main challenges, tackle constraints, and upscale implementation of existing programs and plans for SLM building on the success stories.

188. In order to succeed and achieve significant progress in combating desertification and mitigating impacts of drought, there is need for enhanced political will and commitment at all levels to address these problems as integral priority element within MDG and poverty reduction based programs and strategies.