

**PRESENTATION OF
THE GLOBAL MECHANISM AT THE CGIAR MEETING
DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA
MAY 2001**

I my presentation I will explain what the GM and the UNCCD are and how the CGIAR and National Research Centres can contribute even more than you do already to the implementation of the Convention.

First of all, however, I want to thank the Chairman of the CGIAR Mr. Ian Johnson for inviting me to this conference and give me and the GM the opportunity to address you all.

The GM is an institution of the UNCCD and reports to the Conference of the Parties. The office of the GM is housed (as the terminology goes) with IFAD in Rome. It has a so-called Facilitation Committee that consists of IFAD, The World Bank, UNDP, the Regional Development Banks, UNEP, FAO, the GEF Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Convention. At the last meeting of the FC, also the CGIAR system was represented through ICARDA. This was very much on the initiative of Mr. Ian Johnson and is a reflection of his own personal and the World Banks commitment to support the implementation of the UNCCD.

The GM is the Financial Mechanism of the Desertification Convention. It is, however, not a central fund like the GEF. Instead, the principle task of the GM is, as set out in article 21 of the Convention, “--- to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of existing financial mechanisms, --- and to promote actions leading to the mobilisation and channelling of substantial financial resources, ---, ---, ---, to effected developing country parties.”

The reason why the GM is not a fund but rather a partnership builder or brokering institution, is that the problem of land degradation and desertification, as clearly stated in the Convention, is very closely linked to the development process itself, and in particular to all aspects of rural development, to agricultural development, to poverty eradication and really to all we today call sustainable development.

For all these purposes there are already exist financial mechanisms (bilateral and multilateral development cooperation programmes as well as private funding sources) and the argument therefore is that the financial mechanisms already available to address all these problems must first and foremost be used more efficiently and effectively. And for this purpose the Global Mechanism was established.

I have chosen to describe the GM with three concepts:

- Mainstreaming
- Partnership Building and
- Multiplier Effect

Mainstreaming means that the issue of desertification/Land Degradation must become a political priority both on the part of the Effected Country Parties to the Convention and on the part of the Development Cooperation Agencies of the Developed Country Parties.

We all know that funds are allocated to issues that are given high political priority and since the UNCCD to a large extent depends on existing financial resources being allocated more effectively and efficiently to addressing land degradation, this will only happen if the appropriate political commitment is there. And this goes for allocation within national budgets as well as for allocation of development cooperation funds.

Partnership Building means that governments and development cooperation partners come together on the basis of a common understanding to invest in addressing the land degradation problem. The discussions in this process really mean that the investment needs are identified and compared with donors' priorities and programming processes. This process of analysing demands with potential resource available should, of course, result in contracts being signed between the government and donors for investment programmes and projects. This is what we call the partnership building process.

The Multiplier Effect refers to the fact that the Global Mechanism invests its own resources in bringing these processes forward; the mainstreaming and the partnership building processes. The large funds agreed upon to be invested in projects and programmes do not need to go through the GM but will go directly from the donor to the government. The GM, however, will accompany the process and assist in moving it forward. We then say that the funds we invest in bringing the process forward will result in these agreements and we have then got a considerable multiplier effect on the funds invested.

Over the couple of years of experience that the Global Mechanism now has, we have learned that in order to really get the convention and the issue of desertification and land degradation mainstreamed, or given high political priority, it is very important that the issue of land degradation becomes a concern of all parts of government. Not only the focal point ministry, which is normally the ministry of environment, must be convinced about the necessity to address the problem. Also other technical ministries, and in particular the ministry of agriculture, must be involved in planning and subsequent implementation of plans.

Since funds need to be allocated from national budgets as well as funds made available by the donor community, the ministries of finance and planning are also very important to involve in the process. These are the ministries that are responsible for fund allocation and negotiations with donors. If they are not involved and convinced of the technical and political wisdom of doing something serious about the land degradation problem, we will not reach our objectives.

In our discussions with governments and donors alike over the last couple of years there are a couple of things that have become more prominent. The first one is that the top development priority that the international community has agreed upon is to reduce the level of poverty. This is a particular concern in Sub-Saharan Africa, which lags behind other parts of the developing world in this respect. Land degradation and poverty goes very much hand in hand however, and we therefore see the fight against desertification and land degradation as very much part of the fight against poverty.

A second issue that is often brought forward is that it is not enough to develop and implement technical solutions to the dryland management problems but it is equally important to address what is many times called the root causes of land degradation in order to secure good results of investments in projects and programmes. It is important that what we call the enabling environment, such things as policy issues, institutional factors and legal frameworks, are

favourable to investing in land degradation. If these types of underlying factors are not encouraging people to better manage their lands, if they do not secure that investments are worthwhile, there is a big risk that money will be invested in vain.

The CGIAR System has developed and continues to develop a tremendous amount of knowledge about both technical and policy factors relevant to development in drylands. It is this knowledge that I believe must become much better known and utilized.

I will give three examples of what I mean.

I believe that the research community much come out with a loud and clear message that it makes good economic sense to invest in development in drylands; it makes good socio-economic sense. In a recent meeting we had with the Facilitation Committee of the GM that I mentioned in the beginning, a representative from IFRPI (Peter Hazell) presented a paper on a study from India making it clear that this is the case. This type of message must come out to politicians who, as I said before, are the ones deciding on where to invest scarce resources.

The second issue on which I believe the research community has a very important role to play is to make it clear that drylands must be allowed to be treated and managed as just drylands. We hear a lot these days, and more and more frequently, that droughts have again damaged the crops and that drought emergency measures will have to be set in to save people and animals from starvation. When these messages become too frequent the time has come to ask whether we are in fact dealing with droughts and not with a new reality. A reality that the climate is actually dryer than we want to accept. If this is the case, and I believe it is when so called droughts become the norm, because a drought by definition is water availability below a given average. A more or less permanent drought is therefore almost a contradiction in terms. The message that needs to get out to the politicians is that production systems in drylands must be adapted to drylands.

The CGIAR centres and the NARCs with whom you work have done a lot of work on what crops and techniques are best suited to dryland conditions. It needs to be made known that there are alternatives that are economically and technically already available and possible. Not being an expert on this subject I believe however that a wider use of tree-crops for example would lead to more stable conditions. After all, the traditional rural economies in the Mediterranean countries are very much based on Olive trees and Citrus fruits and not so dependent on annual crops.

These leads me to my third point and that is related to the enabling environment I mentioned earlier. Again in a study that IFRPRI and ICARDA has made for the West Asia and North Africa Region, it has become clear that vast amounts of money are invested in supporting non-sustainable production systems and in supporting people and animal when crops fail. This money could instead be used to support the development of production systems better adapted to prevailing conditions. Money serving as a disincentive for a better management of drylands could be utilized to set up a positive incentive system.

The study also showed that rangelands are often mismanaged because they are no longer managed through some form of systematic management regime. They are suffering from the Tragedy of the Commons problem. Again, in both these cases, and in order to improve the situation politicians will have to be made aware of the problem and the options there are for

solving them. And again, I believe that the research community has a very important role to play in this regard.

To sum up Mr. Chairman, I would like to urge the CGIAR system with its national partners to send out a message that it is indeed possible and it is indeed good politics to invest in the development of drylands. This message should be sent to those who make the decisions, to politicians and decision makers, in developing and developed countries alike. I would like to invite the CGIAR system to join us in our effort to mainstream the issue of desertification and land degradation.

I also very much support what Mr. Ian Johnson said yesterday that we should use the Rio+10 meeting for this purpose. The desertification convention is the one of the three Rio conventions that primarily emanates from the developing countries. It was not in the limelight in Rio nine years ago. It can be at Rio+10 in Johannesburg if we all decide to work for that and I would say that the problem that the Convention addresses merits such an effort, especially since the UNCCD has a special focus on Africa.

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Global Mechanism of the UNCCD
Durban, 21 May 2001