

# **DRAFT**

## **Discussion Paper on the**

### **Clearing House Mechanism to Combat Desertification (CHMCD)**

#### **Motivation and scope**

Diffusion of knowledge and dissemination of information play a central role in achieving the ultimate objectives of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCDD). Even if Article 16 and Article 19 of the Convention specifically address the issues of collection of information, analysis and exchange, education and public awareness, very poor attention and resources have been devoted to these kind of activities up to now.

A wider dissemination of proper and easily accessible information and scientific knowledge will also contribute to attain capacity building and training goals, especially in the poorer region, where desertification impacts are more severe.

UNCCD official reports, such as national communications to COP, and scientific documentation are not specifically meant for a wide public. The users of official papers and documentation are mainly members of the expert community.

An initiative involving all the Parties of the Convention aimed at filling this gap is deemed opportune. At this regards, a Clearing House Mechanism to Combat Desertification (CHMCD), that is a network for diffusion of information about the status and the progress in combating desertification in the affected countries could represent an important tool to increase public awareness and acceptance of measures against desertification process. In this network, information and metadata will be available in a standardized format and accessible to a broader public.

The basic idea of the CHMCD network is to establish international (in English and/or French) and national CHMCDs (in national language) internet sites to collect and organize the available information on drought and desertification. The CHMCD will also promote cooperation among the UNCCD Parties, training and capacity building activities.

#### **General organisation of the CHMCD**

Each national node could be managed by a focal point to be selected by the National Coordination Body within the national implementing agencies of UNCCD. The CHMCD focal points should be responsible for collection and organization of national information and data.

The global CHMCD network should be coordinated by a board whose members should represent the regional annexes of the Convention.

The CHMCD Board will coordinate the activities and propose standards to be adopted by the national nodes.

### **Integration with other projects and activities**

The CHMCD will have to benefit from other existing projects on the diffusion of information at national and international level and especially with the Network of Bodies and Institutions, such as:

- Clearing House Mechanisms on Biodiversity
- TC-CCD Network Newsletter managed by prof. Willem Van Cottem
- CLEMDES project funded by the EU

Working in collaboration with related initiatives, the CHMCD will also link and synergize their contributions and help consolidate and influence the development of the global and local initiatives to combat desertification.

### **GOALS TO BE ACHIEVED:**

The CHMCD has three main goals:

1. Network Development of the CHMCD Focal Points and their partners
2. Information Exchange – the development of a global mechanism for exchanging and integrating information on desertification.
3. Cooperation – the promotion and facilitation of scientific and technical cooperation

### **1. NETWORK DEVELOPMENT**

Creating a network of national and/or regional networks, identifying national responsible for the organisation and managing of the nodes. National focal points first task is to set up: contents, aims and implementation modalities of CHMCD. As a network of networks, CHMCD will need a support to ensure that countries and regions are assisted in the start up phase in the identification and overcome of national, regional and international obstacles to the establishment and full development of CHMCD Focal Points, maintaining Local Ownership of Information, promote use of CHMCD.

### **2. INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

On the basis of existing Clearing Houses Mechanism such as those of the Convention of Biodiversity and of the Northern Mediterranean CHM on desertification, hereunder is an example of information suitable for the CHMCD.

Each national node of the CHM should include:

- A) **Newsletter:** Publish and distribute newsletters on desertification in general at regional level.
- B) **Links to other related sites:** links to websites and web resources that are relevant to implementation of the UNCCD;

- C) Experts and Institutions (including NGOs):** this section will include a database on experts (name, affiliation, expertise, address, etc) and a database on national institutions dealing with desertification.
- D) Events:** This section will contain information (date, place, title, contact details, etc.) about related events and meetings at national and global level.
- E) Press reviews:** Press highlights concerning the desertification topics.
- F) National background information:** Description of the relevance of the phenomenon for each country including bio-physical and socio-economic information useful to the understanding the ongoing processes. Background information should include maps and data illustrating to the general public the following elements:
- geography (latitude and longitude, size of the country)
  - climate (aridity and drought, dryland categories and their spatial extent)
  - land use/cover, their spatial extent (where and how much land)
  - demography (population size, current and dynamics)
  - pressures (socio-economic sectors - e.g. urban/rural, land tenure etc.)
  - desertification impacts
  - responses and institutional framework
- The background information must be provided for each country according to agreed terms of reference.
- G) Funding opportunities:** A section of the CHM should contain the information about:
- List of national and international funding institutions
  - Funding opportunities programmes
  - Partner search
- H) Mailing lists:** A listserver could allow distribution of information and discussion on issues relevant to desertification.  
User should subscribe or unsubscribe, using an opt-in feature.
- I) Official / Scientific documents:** Each focal point will collect information (title; author(s); abstract (in English); institution; etc.) for retrieving through the a portal search engine official and scientific documents
- J) News:** This service can contain quick news on desertification (i.e. articles, events, publications)., The main page can contain the titles of the last news included in the database and a link to read a page containing the full text.
- K) Metadatabases:** This metadatabase should hold information on data sources on desertification and related topics.
- L) Projects:** In this part useful information (project name; research programme; thematic priorities; coordinator(s); English abstract; keywords; objectives; etc.) about both scientific and implementation projects are inserted

**M) Best practices** and successfully stories to combat drought and desertification in particular addressing the local ambit .

### **Promotion of CHMCD at national level:**

**National events** – National meetings should be organised by the CHMCD focal points in order to:

- promote the CHMCD project;
- present and identify the national views and priorities on the information about desertification;
- establish contacts among within the national experts community and other stakeholders on information communication;
- collect information on experts, projects and activities dealing with desertification at national level;
- prepare an inventory of existing activities, databases to be included in the meta data base of the CHMCD;
- Involve the following stakeholders (also as speakers) and collect their views and needs:
  - NGOs
  - Researchers
  - Governmental institutions
  - Focal points of other UN environmental Conventions
  - Authorities (local and national level)
  - Private sector (industry and others)
  - International organisations
  - Media representatives
  - Farmers' organisations (owners and workers)

### **Education activities**

Training courses could be organised on data input and the utilisation of the internet portal tool to improve the ability of all partners to manage their own database.

## **3. COOPERATION**

Exchange of data and information, a more precise knowledge of the desertification matters at local level, together with a facilitate data access are the premises to identify cooperation actions between developed and developing countries and launch ad hoc initiatives, keeping into account specific needs CHMCD will put forwards.

## **TIME AND STEPS TO UNDERTAKE TO LAUNCH THE INITIATIVE**

1. Discussion of this paper in the GoE meeting and drawing out a Working Plan to be submitted to CST (2-7 June 2003)
2. Submission and discussion of the Working Plan to CST (25-30 August 2003)

3. Submission of the Working Plan to COP6, and mandate of COP to GOE to work out a project for the launching of CHMCD (September 2003)
4. Drawing up of CHMCD project document and submission to the Funding Agencies (GEF, UE) for its funding (within the first semester of 2004). At this aim, CST and GoE members should promote the CHMCD launching initiative. They should organise regional meetings to discuss and reach an agreement among countries in order to build a system of international and national CHM strictly interconnected and finding out the financial resources. The GoE should act as a technical coordinator presenting the existing relevant experiences in this field and in other areas of interest.

The GoE will play a coordinating role of the initiative, proposing a detailed rationale and terms of reference for the creation of the CHMCD to be submitted to CST and activate the involvement of relevant institutions on the preparation of such activity.