

**Meeting of the ASPA Committee on Environmental Cooperation, at the Sidelines of the
Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification
(COP 9/UNCCD)**

Buenos Aires, 26 September 2009

The Paragraph 41 of the Final Report of the Fifth ASPA High Officials Meeting establishes the need for holding a meeting, at the technical level, to discuss “Modern techniques and technologies to mitigate the effects of droughts and combat desertification”.

The first Bi-regional coordination meeting held in The League of Arab States LAS headquarters in Cairo, on 21/6/2009, discussed on Paragraph (a) of the Fifth ASPA High Officials Meeting, to hold meeting about Desertification. Accordingly, the ASPA Regional Coordinators (Brazil and the League of Arab States) suggested to the Government of Argentina that it organize a meeting of the ASPA Committee on Environmental Cooperation at the sidelines of the Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification (COP/UNCCD), so as to facilitate the participation of all UNCCD Focal Points of ASPA member-States in the referred bi-regional meeting. The members of ASPA Committee on Environmental Cooperation, at the Sidelines of the COP 9/UNCCD Conference, started their meeting in Buenos Aires, Saturday 26 September 2009.

OPENING SESSION

During the opening session, Mr. KHALED AL SHARAA (The chairperson of the Arab Group), Mr. ABDU AL ASSIRI, (The chairperson for the Arab committee in charge of following up the implementation of the three environmental conventions), Mr CARLOS MOSCARDO (representative of Brazil from the division of Environment Affairs), Dr. JOSE ROBERTO LIMA (Focal point for Brazil in UNCCD, ministry of Environment), Mr OCTAVIO PEREZ PARDO (Argentina, focal point in UNCCD) and Dr. WADID FAWZY ERIAN (Representative of League of Arab States),

All the speakers expressed their appreciation to Argentina for hosting this meeting on the sideline of the (COP/UNCCD), and appreciated the efforts that have been done by Brazil (as the coordinator for the South American Countries) and League of Arab States (as the coordinator for the Arab Countries) in coordinating the preparation of the meeting, and for preparing the proposals

They also expressed the willingness and persistence of all ASPA countries for working together to insure the success of the meeting, in achieving its goals.

MEETING AGENDA

The agenda of the meeting included the following items:

The proposal of "Cooperation Among the Members of the South American-Arab Countries Summit (ASPA) in the field of National Programs to Combat Desertification", which is a framework proposal of cooperation, within which other projects may be implemented, among which, for example:

- a) LAS's proposal of LAMAARSA;
- b) LAS's proposal of cooperation on "Drought Control";
- c) LAS's proposal of cooperation on "Monitoring Sand Movement"

2. Attendance

List of participants is attached

Arab Countries	N°	South American Countries	N°
Algeria	1	Argentina	3
Egypt	1	Bolivia	1
Jordan	1	Brazil	4
Lebanon	1	Chile	2
Libya	1	Colombia	1
Morocco	1	Ecuador	1
Oman	2	Peru	1
Palestine	1	Uruguay	2
Saudi Arabian	7		
Syria	1		
Qatar	1		
Tunisia	2		
Yemen	2		
13 Arab countries with total of 22 participants		8 South American countries with total of 15 participants	
Participants from UNCCD			
Secretariat	1	Global Mechanism	2

MEETING OUTCOMES

FIRST SESSION: DISCUSSION ON THE BRAZILIAN PROPOSAL:

"Framework Proposal for Cooperation Among the South American and Arab Countries in the Field of National Programs to Combat Desertification".

The proposal of "Cooperation Among the Members of the South American-Arab Countries Summit (ASPA) in the field of National Programs to Combat Desertification" was circulated to ASPA member-States at the Fifth High Officials Meeting. It entails that the UNCCD Focal Points of all ASPA member-states cooperate in the implementation of their National Action Plans for combating desertification, as established in the UNCCD. It suggests guidelines for cooperation, allowing member-States to inform their demands and offers of cooperation, within which LAS/ACSAD¹ may participate in projects for implementation.

Commentary of the participants:

The delegates and the focal points of ASPA took note of the presentation made by Brazil, speaking in the quality of Coordinator of the Group, about the Framework Proposal for Cooperation among the South American-Arab Countries in the Field of the National Programs to Combat Desertification. There was complete support to cooperation between the two regions with the objective to combat desertification. Delegates expressed needs to generate a final document for the framework of cooperation among Arab countries and south American Countries.

Delegates and UNCCD representatives congratulated the initiative for cooperation and commented upon national strategies regarding desertification in both regions. The participants expressed interest in the exchange of experiences, be it at scientist and technical level, be it in the

1. Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zone and Dry Lands

field of knowledge generated by UNCCD, and agreed that the proposal for cooperation still lacks complementation as regards information.

SECOND SESSION: PRESENTATION OF LAS/ACSAD PROPOSALS

a) LAS's proposal of LAMAARSA;

- LAS/ACSAD representative gave introductory presentation titled: "ACSAD Role in Assessing the Risk of Land Degradation in the Arab Region", the presentation explained that ACSAD acts as a service-oriented centre of excellence for natural resource management Desertification Risk Reduction within the Arab region and illustrated the different methods and techniques in use for Assessing and Monitoring Land Degradation, drought and actions for rehabilitation.
- Land degradation in the Arab Region and South America is one of the major problems affecting its natural resources, especially land, soil, water as well as agricultural production. This is undermining living conditions of large segments of the community impacting their quality of living and preventing sustainable development. Often, human interferences, i.e. deforestation, agricultural malpractices, bad use of water, chaotic urbanization etc, are among the real causes behind deterioration.

The Overall Objective of LAMAARSA is to develop a process for the assessment and monitoring of land degradation to support policy options and initiatives for sustainable land management. The work plan of the project will follow five overlapping phases, which will go in parallel with marked milestones and accompanying work packages in which different methodologies will be applied to deliver the expected outputs of the project.

Suggestions:

1. Brazil, in collaboration with Argentina, will present a description on Desertification in South America, not more than 25 pages, and send it to Dr .Wadid Erian wadiderian@yahoo.com (up until the end of November 2009).
2. All participant countries expressed the importance of the project, and the need for such activity in the two-regions.
3. During the meeting All participants from the Arab countries expressed their initial interests for participating to the project, also Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay expressed their interest in participating to the project activities.
4. All Countries interested in taking a role in LAMAARSA project should send a letter of interest to LAS, to Mrs Fatma elmallah, f_elmallah@hotmail.com, and/or Mr. Ibrahim Moheildeen, ifm58@yahoo.com and/or Dr .Wadid Erian wadiderian@yahoo.com.

b) LAS's proposal of cooperation on "Drought Control";

- Droughts occur very frequently in Arab region, with severe economic and social consequences also connected to the vulnerability of the water supply systems, the agricultural systems and of society in general. Such vulnerability is due to situations of permanent water scarcity, quality deterioration and increasing water demands impacted by population growth, tourist development and irrigation needs.
- ACSAD would like to make use of the transferred experience from IRI /Columbia University to Chili, in terms of monitoring vegetation and rainfall based on remotely-sensed images (data on vegetation, bare soil and water bodies at 250m spatial resolution

from MODIS and rainfall estimates derived from CMORPH products are already available for the countries of interest through the data library Map room under Food Security ,and Developing indices to monitor drought (expertise developed by Bradfield Lyon within projects in Mexico, Chile and USA).

- ACSAD also would like to apply and harmonize these efforts by engaging the use of the transferred experience from the MEDROPLAN Project. MEDROPLAN Guidelines are the result of a project funded through the Euro-Mediterranean Regional Program for Local Water Management (MEDA Water) of the European Commission with the collaboration of scientists and stakeholders from Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Spain and Tunisia.

The Overall Objective is to provide a framework for an effective approach to prevent and minimize the impacts of drought on people

Suggestions:

1. LAS/ACSAD will represent the two regions and cooperate with UNISDR regional office in Cairo to submit the project document to the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, GFDRR.
2. All participant countries expressed the importance of the project, and the need for such activity in the two-regions.
3. During the meeting All participants from the Arab countries expressed their initial interests for participating to the project, also from south, America Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay expressed their interest in participating in the project activities.
5. All Countries interested in taking a role in the drought control project should fill out the forms (those forms are available with Dr .Wadid Erian wadiderian@yahoo.com), and send it to LAS, to Mrs Fatma elmallah, f_ellallah@hotmail.com, and/or Mr. Ibrahim Moheildeen, ifm58@yahoo.com and/or Dr .Wadid Erian wadiderian@yahoo.com.
- 4.

c) LAS's proposal of cooperation on "Monitoring Sand Movement"

- Land degradation by wind action is an important process in drier environment. Wind action in erosion, transport and subsequent deposition of fine particles has been recognized as an important environmental problem
- In drier regions of the world this has been major environmental issue. Wind action not only affects erosion and deposition of soil particles but the atmospheric dust also causes environmental pollution. The role of fine dust particles in the atmosphere in climate change cannot be underestimated.
- Sand encroachment, due to wind action, is dominantly in the form of dunes, though other forms occur as well.
- For monitoring wind erosion it is necessary to assess current status of the problem and assess risk which may occur in future.
- To predict a potential situation that may occur in future a risk assessment can be made. Risk assessment is generally made based on modelling. For mapping purposes various techniques can be applied such as the use of remote sensing techniques and the use of models.

- The cooperation in this area will consist on regular workshops whose outcome will be the publication of reports which may contain suggestions presented by Arab and South American countries.

The Overall Objective is to provide monitoring assessing and control of sand movement approach to prevent and minimize of Land degradation caused by wind erosion and sand encroachment

Suggestions:

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3. During the meeting All participants from the Arab countries expressed their initial interests for participating to the project, also from south, America Brazil and Chile expressed their interest in participating in the project activities.
4. All Countries interested in taking a role in the drought control project should fill out the forms (those forms are available with Dr .Wadid Erian wadiderian@yahoo.com), and send it to LAS, Mrs Fatma elmallah, f_elmallah@hotmail.com, and/or Mr. Ibrahim Moheildeen, ifm58@yahoo.com and/or Dr .Wadid Erian wadiderian@yahoo.com.

Final note:

To better prepare the cooperation of the two regions, the South American countries will organize a meeting of coordination with the support of the Global Mechanism.