

« **Desertification and Civil Society** » Forum, **21-23 September 2006**

As, Civil Society representatives, Associates, Scientific bodies, local elected and private companies, coming from 60 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America, who met at the “Desertification and Civil Society Forum” (Montpellier, 21-23 September), on 22 September 2006 we hereby write

The Montpellier's Appeal to Combat Desertification

- Noting that dry lands shelter more than 2 billion persons and extend over 40% of the landmass of our planet,
- Noting that the major part of these persons depend on natural resources and on agricultural, pastoral and forest activities,
- Noting that rangeland is an essential element of sustainable management of arid lands,
- Noting the central and multiple role of agricultural organizations to develop economic potentials of arid lands and to guarantee decent incomes to farmers,
- Noting that desertification is a global phenomenon related to the global economic and social system,

- Noting that developing and developed countries are equally responsible for the growth impacts of desertification,
- Considering that these resources are being degraded because of inappropriate methods of exploitation, because of climatic crisis, and repeated droughts,
- Considering that this degradation leads to instability, poverty, and to increasing marginalization, heightening migrations, political instability and economic losses,
- Noting a high deficit of information from general public and decision makers on desertification problems and its consequences,
- Deploring the « wait-and-see » policy of international community decision makers,
- Taking into account that many techniques of fight and adaptation have been successfully developed, but their diffusion remains limited,
- Taking into account that the potential of arid zones and their populations has been poorly developed, and that systematic investments are needed to help develop them,
- Taking into account that the resulting revenues from these investments must return to the most vulnerable inhabitants of arid zones,

WE AFFIRM THAT DESERTIFICATION ISN'T INEVITABLE,

THAT IT CAN AND MUST BE FOUGHT,

AND THAT DETERMINED ACTIONS ARE REQUIRED!

WE, CIVIL SOCIETY, ENGAGE

- To seek information, to disseminate it and to make it largely available,
- To broaden our plea in order to raise awareness within civil society and its elected persons,
- To build the capacity of all the involved stakeholders, particularly women and youth,
- To diversify and develop non-agricultural activities and local transformation of products in order to generate alternative livelihood strategies, complementary revenues and to reduce the pressure on natural resources,
- To develop communication policies to improve the visibility of Arid zone products; and to inform consumers and industry of the specificity of local goods from arid zones, in particular by developing an « Arid zones goods » label,
- To set up a viable system in order to increase and reinforce the active contribution of Civil Society to reduce the impacts related to desertification,

WE, CIVIL SOCIETY, ASK GOVERNMENTS,

- To set up coherent policies regarding international trade at the level of World Trade Organization (WTO) and of Trade Regional Agreements, in order to allow equitable access of arid zones to the markets,
- To determine through the UNCCD Convention clear, quantifiable and periodic objectives,
- To introduce more substance to CoPs and CRIC of the Convention,

- To ensure that the functioning of the Committee of Science and Technology is re-examined to increase its efficiency,
- To raise the National Action Plans to Combat Desertification (NAP/CD) to a strategic framework level and to mainstream this into advanced efforts relating to desertification,
- To create incentives and a regulatory framework to favour the emergence of local stakeholder groups, such as professional organizations of farmers and pastoralists,
- To facilitate the effective participation of agricultural representatives, as well as populations of arid zones in the formulation of public policies concerning them,

WE, CIVIL SOCIETY, ASK MOREOVER,

- **To the UNCCD** and to parties countries, to strengthen the effective integration of local traditional knowledge within modern scientific approaches aimed at combating desertification,
- **To the Research Community**,
 - to familiarise users to the objective of research programmes and to make research findings accessible, understandable and usable
 - to set up procedures to allow the needs of local actors to be taken into account and to involve them in the creation and the validation of knowledge and its subsequent diffusion,
- **To Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its entities**, to increase funding to Combat Desertification, to make it more accessible and to increase the budget specifically devoted to small projects,
- **To State beneficiaries of international aid for Combating Desertification**, to vigorously coordinate the actions of funders in relation to Civil Society.