

Statement by  
**Ambassador Hama Arba Diallo**  
**Executive Secretary**  
**United Nations Convention to Combat**  
**Desertification**

*On the Occasion of the*

**GEF COUNCIL**

Washington DC  
6 June 2005

Mr Leonard Good, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman,  
Co-Chair of GEF Council,  
Council Members,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address this Council today. Allow me at the outset to congratulate the Co-Chair Ms. Querejazu.

From the UNCCD perspective, I would like to make a few remarks within the time suggested by the CEO in his invitation to me.

*A. Need for Strengthened Partnerships*

The relation between the GEF and the UNCCD has been growing from strength to strength as evidenced by the progress made so far and the deliberations of the Council. A few weeks after CRIC.3 held in Bonn last May one may also recall how the role of the GEF was consistently referred to by all Parties attending the meeting, mostly to express expectations, but also to request more information about the operations of the Facility which, for most UNCCD national focal points, is still considered as a remote neighbour.

When the Parties and indeed the international community decided to have the GEF as a financial mechanism of the Convention, their expectations were to have a partner who would complement the efforts of the affected eligible country Parties and respond to their financial needs for an effective implementation of the Convention.

The UNCCD, having been established on the premises of partnerships and synergies with other relevant initiatives, instruments and frameworks involved in sustainable development, both at the international and country levels, the Parties do regard the new role that the GEF plays as a pivotal one in galvanising action in this respect.

The revised document on scope and coherence has the merit of building on this pattern of partnership. In this respect, Parties have called for greater support coming to the UNCCD programming, implementing and monitoring activities. We all recognise that the UNCCD brings into the GEF family these realities, for land degradation is closely inter-linked with peoples' livelihoods, in that GEF funded projects in this area will decisively contribute to achieving all sustainable development objectives.

*B. The MOU between the GEF and UNCCD*

As requested by the COP and this Council, both secretariats have prepared the draft MOU between the GEF and UNCCD, which is before you for consideration. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my partner Len

Good for his understanding for it was not easy to come up with a text covering all aspects of our concerns. Of course, we are at the service of Member States, Parties to the Convention and members of this Council, who constitute the ultimate decision makers with regard to the draft MOU before you. It is even worth to note that all the members of this Council are also Parties to the UNCCD. We shall submit the same MOU to the UNCCD COP at its seventh session to be held in Nairobi in October this year.

### *C. Programming of GEF4 resources*

We are following closely the process of negotiations for the next GEF Replenishment. Preliminary talks bore a promising omen as to the need to increase the level of resources allocated to Land degradation focal area. But we are very concerned that as we advance in the process, the proposals already put forward for the allocation to the Land Degradation Focal area do not seem to reflect the reality on the ground with regard to this global problem. As you know from information provided by the GEF Secretariat and the IAs, the envelope for GEF-3 was over subscribed at a very early stage, demonstrating that the allocation of US\$250m was not commensurate with the requirements of countries concerned. We feel that was a lesson for all, and GEF-4 should reflect this reality. A robust replenishment of resources allocated to the focal area of land degradation was called for by CRIC.3.

### *D. Reflections by CRIC 3 on the GEF*

The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) during its third session last month in Bonn:

- considered the GEF Country Pilot Partnership as a welcome development geared to delivering the needed change in the financing of the UNCCD implementation. The CRIC3 observed that the CPPs need to be supported through co-financing arrangements.
- The GEF national focal points were called upon to more actively foster synergies with the key players at the country level, (including Implementing and Executing Agencies, Rio Convention Focal Points, etc) to ensure NAP-related projects are developed and funded by the GEF.
- Several affected countries observed that project preparation under OP15 should be more simplified in terms of procedure, and resources allocated should also serve primarily the objective to enhance the implementation of the Convention. In this regard the national focal points of the Convention should be more closely involved in the formulation of the projects.

- With regard to the preparations for the CRIC, the GEF is invited to consider providing timely financial support in the next phase of the CRIC reporting cycle for country Parties of the regional implementation annexes other than Africa, which will present their national reports at CRIC5.
- The CRIC3 called for a significant increase in the replenishment of the GEF4 resources during the ongoing negotiations, in order to *inter alia* ensure adequate support for the land degradation focal area.
- The World Bank led TerrAfrica initiative should be closely associated to the Convention implementation process, in order to be harmonised with countries' national development strategies.

*E. COP7 in Nairobi*

On a different note, I would like to take this opportunity to inform the GEF Council that the Seventh Session of the UNCCD Conference of the Parties will take place in Nairobi, at the kind invitation of the Government of Kenya, from 17 to 28 October this year, and extend an invitation to you to attend.

*F. The International Year on Deserts and Desertification (IYDD)*

As you all know, the UN General Assembly has designated 2006 the International Year on Deserts and Desertification.

I wish to take this opportunity to invite the GEF secretariat to join us, and the secretariat of the UNCCD would be happy to consider ways and means of cooperating with the GEF secretariat in the context of the celebration of the IYDD.

I wish this Council fruitful deliberations and thank you for your kind attention.