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The conceptual matrix of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

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Historical milestones and terms of reference

Desertification touches most gravely the life conditions of rural people in the poorest developing countries, particularly in Africa. Drought causes severe economic and social problems for those whose income and nutrition depends on agricultural gains. Natural, reoccurring drought periods are often aggravated by anthropogenic causes and factors such as deforestation, overgrazing, unsustainable landuse practises, and result in the loss of top soil fertility.¹ Udo E. Simonis states that soils are not only “der Degradation ihrer Qualität ausgesetzt, sondern zusätzlich noch der Gefahr des irreversiblen Verlustes durch Erosion, die bei den fruchtbaren Böden, die als land- und fortwirtschaftliche Produktionsgrundlage die Welternährung sicherstellen sollen, besonders gravierend sein kann.”²

Desertification became an issue on the international agenda in the 1970s only. After a long and devastating drought period in Sub-Saharan Africa, more precisely in the Sahel, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, which caused the death of over 200 million people and several millions of animals, the Inter-State Permanent Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) was established by nine Sahelian countries in September 1973 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, as a first inter-governmental institutional step. CILSS seeked, among others, to enhance awareness among governments world-wide. Subsequently, in August and September 1977, the UN organized the so-called United Nations Conference on Desertification (UNCOD) in Nairobi, Kenya. There, desertification was addressed as a global problem for the first time. UNCOD resulted in the adoption of the first international agreement on the issue, the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (PACD). Among its provisions was a complete stopping of degradation processes of formerly fertile soils until the turn of the century, and, if possible, the reversion of desertified areas into fertile land.

The Sahel drought period of the 1970s is mostly connotated with famine and humanitarian disaster.

- 1 See United Nations [1977]: *Desertification: Its Causes and Consequences*. Oxford etc.
- 2 Simonis, Udo E. [1996]: *Globale Umweltpolitik: Ansätze und Perspektiven*. Mannheim etc., p. 61.

However, it is the corresponding ecological disaster that is, strictly speaking, identified with desertification. This term does not refer to the spreading of natural, existing deserts. It rather points to the conversion of previously ,normal‘ land into desertified areas. The concept ,desertification‘ reverts back to the works of the French researcher Aubreville, who, in 1949, introduced it for the process of loss of vegetation cover. Although quite some research on the ecology and economy of dryland zones had been undertaken by UNESCO, WMO and FAO in the 1960s, the term desertification was first applied politically during the Sahel crisis in the 70s, and mentioned as a terminus technicus in 1974 as part of the UN General Assembly’s resolution 29/337, initiated by Burkina Faso, which called for the convocation of UNCOD.³ The General Assembly mandated UNEP to collect existing knowledge and consult with other UN bodies, so as to come up with proposals for solutions to be tabled at UNCOD. During the preparatory phase for the conference, thorough scientific research on the phenomenon of desertification was undertaken. Distinguished from the natural pulsations of the Sahara and other deserts, and from some popular ideas, profound findings on the causes and effects of drought, land degradation and desertification were collected, and UNCOD was expected to, on the basis of these findings, elaborate solutions.

UNCOD comprised 94 states and 65 NGOs, and was held from 29 August to 9 September 1977. The expected outcome was the elaboration and adoption of the PACD. Extensive background documentation was provided to this end: listings of existing scientific findings, mostly on the impact of climate, as well as on ecological and social change and technology, elaborated by an inter-disciplinary group of international experts. Furthermore, a collection of case studies and a world map on desertification were provided. UNEP tabled some feasibility studies to explore possible intervention means and measures of

- 3 See Ehlers, Maximilian [1996]: *Die Rolle von Wissen in der internationalen Politik*. Magisterarbeit. München, p. 27. Odingo, Richard S. [1990]: *The definition of desertification: Its programmatic consequences for UNEP and the international community*/ In: *Desertification Control Bulletin* Vol. 18, and Spooner, Brian [1989]: *Desertification: The Historical Significance*/ In: Huss-Ashmore, Rebecca/ Katz, Salomon H. (eds.) [1989]: *African Food Systems in Crisis*. New York.

a transnational nature. UNCOD took place upon high scientific input and great contributions from of the epistemic community: it seemed that by far sufficient knowledge was available for successful political deliberations. UNCOD was a case of consensual knowledge, and no major political dispute emerged during the conference.⁴

The documents state:

„Deserts themselves are not the sources from which desertification springs... Desertification breaks out, usually at times of drought stress, in areas of naturally vulnerable land subject to pressures of land use.“⁵

Officially, desertification was defined as follows:

„Desertification is the diminution or destruction of the biological potential of the land, and can lead ultimately to desert-like conditions. It is an aspect of the widespread deterioration of ecosystems, and has diminished or destroyed the biological potential, i.e. plant and animal production, for multiple use purposes at a time when increased productivity is needed to support growing populations in quest of development...“⁶

Yet, no reference to the climatic zones in which desertification occurs was provided. Implicitly, however, the definition referred to desert margins and dryland ecosystems. Desertification was thus officially defined as a loss of biological productivity with socio-economic consequences. The international community's goal was set as to preserve food supply of growing populations and their economic development. In 1977, more than a third of the world's surface was recognized as desertic or semi-arid, while some 9,115,000 sq kilometers were called as desertified due to man-made causes. Some 30 million sq kilometres, or 19 percent of the surface, were said to be at risk - distributed among two thirds of the world's countries. For the first time ever, desertification was thus acknowledged as a global problem.⁷

4 See Ehlers, Maximilian [1996], p. 30-31.

5 United Nations [1977], p. 15.

6 United Nations Conference to Combat Desertification (UNCOD) [1978]: Round-up, plan of action and resolutions. New York, NY. (here: PACD, Part II, Para 7)

7 See Op cit: Part A/ Round-up of the Conference.

The PACD defined as its goal:

„The immediate goal of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification is to prevent and to arrest the advance of desertification and, where possible, to reclaim desertified land for productivity use. The ultimate objective is to sustain and promote, within ecological limits, the productivity of arid, semi-arid, sub-humid and other areas vulnerable to desertification in order to improve the quality of life of their inhabitants.“⁸

Immediate measures were decided upon to be implemented until 1984, while the overall goals were set to be achieved until 2000. All these measures were not legally binding, and no clear consensus on regulatory means was defined. The treaty's 28 recommendations, mostly calling on national measures, included issues such as knowledge bases, capacity building, and national action plans. Little emphasis was laid on the need for international cooperation - only financial and technical support was promised to be provided to affected countries. To this end, a special account at the UN was created, and reference to a desired new international economic order was given in Article 100. Yet no additional means or resources for development cooperation were created. The PACD was a purely declarative paper not only without any legally binding status, but also without benchmarks, indicators or monitoring and evaluation scenarios. It proved to be least effective and finally failed. UNEP, which was mandated to implement the PACD, provided detailed reports on the progress made since UNCOD in 1984 and 1992 respectively, unveiling that desertification and land degradation had worsened rapidly by then - made impressively evident through GPS monitoring systems. Moreover, few countries had ever shown deeper interest to commit themselves to support the implementation process of the PACD.⁹ By the time the convocation of UNCED was decided upon, the PACD was already commonly regarded as an insufficient instrument, and subsequently de facto abandoned. Yet, the issue of desertification, and with it related phenomena such as drought and various forms of land degradation, were still on the top of a number of national governments' agendas, particularly on those of African and other developing countries. During UNCED's PrepComs, the desertification portfolio was

8 PACD, Art. 10.

9 See Ehlers, Maximilian [1996], p. 4.

supposed to be dedicated a chapter in Agenda 21, while negotiations among G 77 countries started aiming at making it even a convention issue. So, UNCCD has its origins in UNCED and, more specifically, in Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 – as the result of tough bargaining efforts of the group of African countries and the G 77.

Edith Kürzinger and Hans-Peter Schipulle name some of the main provisions contained in Chapter 12 of UNCCD:

„Eine breite Palette von Aktivitäten wird darin vorgeschlagen: Sie reichen von der Verbesserung der Daten- und Informationsbasis durch nationale Umweltinformationssysteme über Maßnahmen zur Sicherung der Bodenfruchtbarkeit und des Wasserhaushalts (durch Erhaltung und Wiederherstellung einer schützenden Vegetationsdecke), die Einführung nachhaltiger Landnutzungssysteme, die Erschließung zusätzlicher Einkommensmöglichkeiten außerhalb der Land-, Forst- und Viehwirtschaft ... bis hin zur Schaffung wirksamer Planungs- und Koordinationsstrukturen für die institutionalisierte Beteiligung aller gesellschaftlicher Kräfte an nationalen Aktionsprogrammen.“¹⁰

On the bargaining about UNCCD, Maximilian Ehlers writes:

„Eher überraschend konnten sich ... Entwicklungsländer mit ihrer Forderung nach einer Desertifikationskonvention gegen den Widerstand der Industrieländer durchsetzen. Die Konvention scheint ein diplomatischer Erfolg der ärmsten und schwächsten Staaten der Welt zu sein. Mit ihr wird ein vor allem für die Sahelstaaten Afrikas wichtiges Problem der Schädigung natürlicher Ressourcen internationalisiert, das für sie bedrohlicher und unmittelbarer wirkt als andere, neuere Umweltprobleme wie der anthropogene Klimawandel und die Ausdünnung der Ozonschicht, die von den Industrieländern als internationale Umweltprobleme gesehen werden.“¹¹

10 Kürzinger, Edith/ Schipulle, Hans-Peter [1996]: Desertifikationskonvention – Ein Lehrstück für den Rio-Folgeprozeß?/ In: E+Z Jg. 37 (1). (here p. 8) Another interesting articles that highlights the negotiations and the overall background of UNCCD is Lührs, Georg [1995]: Leben und Überleben in Trockengebieten. Das Übereinkommen der Vereinten Nationen zur Bekämpfung der Wüstenbildung/ In: Vereinte Nationen 43/2 (April).

11 Op. cit., p. 4-5.

He continues:

„Die Desertifikationskonvention wirft für die Theorie der internationalen Beziehungen interessante Fragen auf: Wie kommt es, daß sich ausgerechnet die politisch und wirtschaftlich schwachen afrikanischen Entwicklungsländer mit ihrem Anliegen international durchsetzen konnten?... Für die dominanten Theorien der internationalen Politik, die Macht und nationales Interesse als zentrale Analyseeinheit betrachten, ist die Ausweitung des Völkerrechts auf Initiative schwacher Staaten ... schwer zu erklären.“¹²

The Earth Summit, in Chapter 12 of Agenda 21, called on the UN General Assembly to set up an inter-governmental committee to prepare for a legally binding instrument that addresses the problem of desertification, which was confirmed by the 47th Session of the General Assembly in December 1992 in New York through resolution 47/188. The drafting process of UNCCD was thus part and parcel of UNCED's official follow up process, and was charged to an inter-governmental panel (INCD).

Udo E. Simonis writes in this context:

„Im Dezember 1992 war ein Verhandlungskomitee (International Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification, INCD) eingesetzt worden, zu dem neben Vertretern der beteiligten Staaten auch zahlreiche Nichtregierungsorganisationen (NROs) als Beobachter zugelassen wurden.“¹³

The INCD convened ten times altogether. At session one (INCD-1, 24 May to 3 June 1993, Nairobi) the delegates exchanged existing information and background knowledge on major problems to be tackled by the convention. They also discussed the principal goals of UNCCD, highlighting the particular emphasis on Africa for the first time. The following three sessions were dedicated to the elaboration of a draft convention and regional implementation annexes. An important issue was the partnership between North and South and South and South. At INCD-5, taking place from 6 to 17 June 1994 in Paris, the final draft of UNCCD including four regional implementation annexes passed. Five further INCD

12 Op. cit., p. 5.

13 Simonis, Udo E. [1996], p. 69-70.

sessions were organized to prepare for the first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP).¹⁴

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (UNCCD) was adopted on 17 June 1994 and opened for signature at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France from October 1994 to October 1995, during which period it received 115 signatures. The signature ceremony took place from 14 to 15 October 1994 in Paris, and 85 states signed UNCCD at this occasion, and became the first Parties to the Convention. June 17 became the world day to combat desertification. The UN General Assembly welcomed this new convention and its signatory process through resolution 49/234, adopted on 23 December 1994. UNCCD entered into force on 26 December 1996, 90 days after the 50th instrument of ratification was deposited. For a party acceding the Convention after this date the Convention enters into force 90 days after this party has deposited its instrument of ratification, accession or acceptance. To date, it has been signed and ratified by more than 190 states. Developing countries as well as developed countries, including such countries not affected by drought or desertification are Parties to the Convention. This mode follows the principle of international partnership.

In October 1997, the first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 1) was organized in Rome, Italy. Rules governing the COP and its subsidiary bodies were established, the functions of the Global Mechanism, the financial mechanism of UNCCD, was set forth, and the permanent secretariat of the Convention (UNCCD Secretariat) was designated. COP 2, taking place in December 1998 in Senegal, Dakar, concentrated on medium-term strategies of the secretariat. A declaration on the convocation of the first round table of Members of Parliaments on desertification was decided upon. In January 1999, the Permanent Secretariat of the UNCCD was established in Bonn, Germany – after having served as an interim secretariat based in Geneva. COP 3, which convened in November 1999 in Recife, Brazil, brought forth a first review of policies, operational modalities and activities of the Global Mechanism as finance broking institution. Consultations took place on the "Recife

14 See Op. cit., p. 71, and <www.unccd.int>.

Initiative" to enhance the implementation of the obligations of the Parties to UNCCD.

In December 2000, COP 4 in Bonn, Germany established a fifth implementation annex for Central and Eastern Europe (Annex V), and adopted the "Recife Initiative".¹⁵ An inter-governmental ad-hoc working group (AHWG) started an in-depth review of country reports on the implementation of the Convention in March and April 2001 at an intersessional meeting in Bonn, Germany. A comprehensive report, including conclusions and recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the Convention, was adopted and submitted to COP 5 in October 2001 in Geneva, Switzerland. At COP 5, a Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) was established as a second subsidiary body of the COP. Furthermore, Parties agreed on the reform of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), the scientific and first subsidiary body of the COP, and a Group of Experts was established. In August and September 2002, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) taking place in Johannesburg, South Africa, governments called on the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to become a financial mechanism of the UNCCD. Subsequently, in October 2002 the Second Assembly of the GEF convened in Beijing, China, and adopted a decision to designate land degradation as its fifth focal area, and to establish the GEF as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD.

In November 2002, the first meeting of the Group of Experts to the UNCCD took place in Hamburg, Germany. Also in November 2002, the first session of the newly established CRIC (CRIC 1) was organized in Rome, Italy. Innovative solutions to combat desertification were identified and shared by country Parties and inter-governmental bodies, based on update reports on UNCCD implementation received by countries. A report was adopted and submitted to COP 6, which was organized in September 2003 in Havana, Cuba.

15 More on the Bonn COP can be obtained in Meyer, Reinhold [2001]: *Conférence des Parties à la UNCCD à Bonn/ In: Développement et coopération (mars-avril)*.

On the first session of the Committee to Review the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC), the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* (ENB) writes:

„The first meeting of the CRIC was held at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 11-22 November 2002. The CRIC was established in accordance with decision 1/COP.5 to regularly review the implementation of the CCD, draw conclusions, and propose concrete recommendations to the COP on further implementation steps. CRIC-1 considered presentations from the five CCD regions, addressing the seven thematic issues under review: participatory processes involving civil society, NGOs and community-based organizations; legislative and institutional frameworks or arrangements; linkages and synergies with other environmental conventions and, as appropriate, with national development strategies; measures for the rehabilitation of degraded land, drought and desertification monitoring and assessment; early warning systems for mitigating the effects of drought; access by affected country Parties, particularly affected developing country Parties, to appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how; and resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnership agreements. The meeting also considered information on financial mechanisms in support of the CCD's implementation, advice provided by the CST and the GM, and the Secretariat's report on actions aimed at strengthening the relationships with other relevant conventions and organizations.”¹⁶

On the sixth session of the COP, held in September 2003 in Havana, Cuba, the following valuable assessment has been provided by the ENB:

„The sixth Conference of the Parties (COP-6) marked the transition from awareness raising to implementation... There certainly was scope to scale a critical threshold by finally taking important and overdue steps. These included designating the GEF as a financial mechanism for the CCD and identifying CRIC criteria for the COP-7 review. Two factors served as an additional impetus to making significant progress: the presence of Cuban President Fidel Castro, known for his ability to do “much with very little,” and the first anniversary of the WSSD, which identified combating desertification as a tool for eradicating poverty. The Havana Declaration, which resulted from the two days' discussions among the 13 Heads of State and Government and was appended to the more substantial COP decisions, while falling short of addressing the specific objectives of COP-6, reaffirms a

16 Op. cit.

strong political commitment to combating desertification. Looking at the two weeks of negotiations, several items merit particular attention. Clearly, the most controversial issue was the programme and budget, and little headway was made on the regional coordination units (RCUs). In contrast, the designation of the GEF as the CCD's financial mechanism was the biggest success of COP-6. Progress was also made with regard to synergies with other conventions. With concern being voiced in the corridors, over the lack of transparency, the Secretariat's role must also be examined. Finally, it is important to gauge the impact of the high-level segment on the future operation of the CCD, and the role of emerging regional groups.

Agreement on the GEF's new role was clearly a high point of COP-6, marking the beginning of a new era for the CCD. Although the GEF will make available US\$500 million over three years to land degradation and desertification programmes, much less than for its other four focal areas (climate change, biodiversity, international waters and ozone depletion), this resource will nonetheless make a long-awaited difference for developing country Parties in implementing the CCD... Several agenda items were of direct relevance to speeding up the transition to the implementation phase, including synergies between conventions, the CST's Group of Experts, benchmarks and indicators, the CRIC's new programme of work, and RCUs. With the linkages between climate change, desertification and biodiversity, Parties to the three Rio conventions have been working on developing synergies and drawing on experiences gained in each other's processes, while trying to avoid duplication of work... Discussions on the Group of Experts, benchmarks and indicators, and on the new CRIC programme of work illustrated the negotiators' awareness of inadequacies in institution-building, and their willingness to address them. On the Group of Experts, progress was made towards prioritizing its work to maximize its scientific impact. The CST also made headway in developing benchmarks and indicators, which will lead to translating the abundant existing scientific information into policy-relevant advice...

COP-6 was also noted by the emergence of several regional interest groups that made themselves heard and can be expected to play a growing role in future negotiations. The Annex V (Central and Eastern European) countries are expected to have an impact on CCD implementation but are presently going through a difficult period of adjustment, tinged by a conflict of interests. Several EU- acceding members are driven by divided group loyalties, adding confusion to the process: some countries are donors, some are affected countries, yet others are undecided about their final status.

Their current goal is to set common priorities and elaborate a regional coordination agenda. They are unlikely to compete with the other annexes for funds, requiring some seed money for developing NAPs. They may open new avenues of capacity building and technology transfer, especially on advanced space monitoring...

Apart from the high-level segment, COP-6 will most likely be remembered for finalizing the decision that opened the GEF to funding desertification programmes. This achievement, along with bringing order to the CCD structures can be expected to bring the CCD closer to breaching the implementation gap. On the other hand, the CCD Secretariat faces new challenges, such as a down-sized budget and the need to build credibility. The new focus on implementation, rather than on awareness raising, places a great responsibility on the Secretariat... Despite the COPs' repeated decisions, less than a third of the Parties have submitted their NAPs. If the CCD does not address the new challenges it faces, in particular the reality of reduced financial contributions and wavering political commitment from some donor Parties, the future of the only developing countries' Convention may be bleak indeed.¹⁷

On the socio-economic aspects of desertification: environmental migration and environmental refugees¹⁸

So far, environmental refugees do not belong to the well-defined "refugees" as of the 1951 Geneva Convention. They are a dramatically growing group, mostly migrating from rural areas to cities, which has not been mentioned in UNHCR's statistics so far as they do not belong to the criteria of the convention. Also in the annual World Refugee Survey (USCR) they are not mentioned. They are not officially counted, therefore, only approximate figures are available. But they already have numberwise surpassed all other kinds of refugees and will most probably become the largest group of refugees. There have always been people

17 Op. cit.

18 This sub-chapter is based upon Rechkemmer, Andreas [2000]: Environmental refugees and environmental migration. The very special case of desertification/ In: Gate 3/2000, and Rechkemmer, Andreas [1997]: Social Impacts of desertification: migration, urbanization and conflict. Geneva. Further references are given therein. A standard reference is also Myers, Norman [1993]: Ultimate Security – the environmental basis of political stability. New York, NY.

migrating from natural changes or catastrophes. But yet the group of environmental refugees is a completely new phenomenon. It is hardly older than 20 years, since degradation of natural resources has dramatically increased. During the last decades, overexploitation of natural resources like land and fresh waters has exponentially shifted to a severe problem in a totally unknown rate of expansion. These circumstances created a new kind of migration: the environmentally induced migration. The causes for this kind of migration are mostly anthropogenic: transformations like degradation of soil or vegetation, fresh waters and fresh air.

As far as land degradation and desertification are concerned, there are about four groups of different kinds of countries where we experience different causes but similar results: the very heterogeneous group of the developing countries with their fast overexploitation of land because of growing populations and international trade patterns without chances for coping mechanisms; the group of industrializing countries in Asia and South America with their strong extension of food production and population growth, foremost in urban areas; the group of fuel exporting countries like OPEC with their own kind of overexploitation and desertification phenomena; and east-european countries with their chemically and agriculturally induced land degradation. They all have to face similar results as loss of ground, desertification and its impacts.

Environmental migration is, however, happening chiefly in developing countries. In northern countries, it is analytically not separated from "normal" movements to cities and industrial complexes (although there have been cases like the Dust Bowl in the US in the 80s when people had to move because of desertification). But surely it becomes a problem also of developed countries as migrating poor people from the South are pushing toward the North, and there mostly to the cities. The reasons that force human beings to leave their land are diverse; mostly there is a combination of interacting factors which lead to migration. But, in many cases, desertification plays a strong role: rapid population growth rates stress traditional land use and coping mechanisms and lead to overexploitation and land degradation in dryland areas; modern ways of land use including new technologies to exploit the land often lead to a rapid exploitation. It leaves back a totally exhausted land,

which is expected to desertify within a short time. The people who have lost not only their traditional occupations as farmers but also the land itself are now forced to move, mostly to more or less industrialized cities; increasing use of fresh water supplies does the rest... Depletion of vegetal cover, water and erosion of farm- and grazing-land is today in fact creating the majority of the environmental refugees.

In extreme situations, land degradation can remove the economic foundation of a community or society. To survive, they must move. Others move before the situation gives them no other choice. Refugees are often treated without respect, have often to face a hopeless situation and do not have the chance to prepare themselves much for a new life. For refugees and migrants alike, often, cultural alienation follows. Experience from recent decades has been interpreted as showing that land degradation and desertification have been a major driving force behind the displacement of people. In this century, Africa has witnessed a whole set of drought-driven migrations to neighboring countries. As shown in a recent study in Niger, land degradation due to population-driven reduction of fallow periods, not compensated by additional nutrient input to the soil, tends to be one clear component of such migration. In a long term perspective, the intercontinental migration, that has already started from North Africa to Europe, can be expected to escalate dramatically as a result of rapidly growing water scarcity. Reinhard Lohrmann established a typology of international migration and mentioned pull factors as well as push factors that cause migration. The pull factors are permanent settler movement, temporary worker migration, professional transient movements, refugee migration including asylum-seeking, student migration and cultural exchanges and irregular or clandestine migration. This kind of classification looks on migration from the receiving end. But migration today is more and more caused by the push factors as there are: survival migrants, mobility migrants, refugees including asylum seekers and environmental migrants.

Desertification appears most severely in the Sub-Saharan Africa, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, where already we have to face by far the largest number of environmental refugees. It has already triggered some of the most broadscale migrations in recent decades. The author Norman Myers mentions

the number of at least 10 million people who had become environmental refugees in semi-arid lands and expects a by far greater number for the time ahead as regarding the one billion people at risk and their population growing rate of sometimes about three percent per year. A special problem of desertification or land degradation is increasing landlessness in overpopulated areas, where the productive value of scarce land resources is diminished because of the often enormous population pressure. Therefore, people are increasingly forced to abandon their homelands.

Another cause for desertification is deforestation in combination with soil erosion, which caused already largescale involuntary migrations. But also soil erosion itself - 500 billion tons of topsoil have been eroded away during the past 20 years -, salinization and water deficits are accelerating desertification patterns and do their own to create mass migration. Desertification reduces the land's resilience to natural climatic variations and thus undermines food production, contributes to famine and affects obviously the local socio-economic conditions. It thereby triggers a vicious circle of poverty, ecological degradation, migration and conflict. Desertification-induced migration and urbanization may worsen foreign living conditions by overcrowding, unemployment, environmental pollution and overstressing of natural and infrastructural resources, and by social tension, conflicts and vices such as crime and prostitution in the destination centres. These adverse effects are increasing owing, in no small measure, to environmental degradation. One of the tragedies of desertification is that it affects mainly those who can least afford it: people living in low-income developing countries, particularly in areas that are already climatically and economically disadvantaged. Because agriculture in these countries is the main source of jobs, income and GNP, the effects of desertification are often disastrous, leading to famine and political turmoil. As result of the early 1970's drought, governments fell in the affected Sahel countries.

Those affected are mainly the rural poor. With small income, little or no land and scant political power, survival depends on the success of a few crops or the sale of a few animals. As desertification increases, productivity falls: crops fail, domestic animals die, water sources dry up and fuelwood becomes difficult to obtain: the prospects for survival dwindle. At least,

drought and land degradation finally trigger a crisis that has already occurred in areas suffering from poverty, starvation, civil unrest or war. Then the first steps of migration start: farmers are forced to move first to areas previously considered too infertile for cultivation. They soon become infertile, too: this is the way the wasteland spreads. Normally, dryland's people are used to hardship: they have evolved traditional coping mechanisms. But when overcultivation and overgrazing lead to permanent and increasing losses in yield, the traditional means of dealing with crisis fail. Then, the typical chain starts: crop yields fall rapidly and animals die from lack of fodder. Industries based on crop and animal products fail, unemployment rises and people get poorer or even reach the state of severe famine. When food production falls, food imports often rise, and economic chaos ensues so that governments even may fall. For those people affected, there is in the end only one choice: to move.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) stressed in its preamble the significant affectation of sustainable development through desertification-induced displacement and migration. At the "International Symposium on environmentally induced population displacements and environmental impacts resulting from mass migration", organized by IOM, RPG and UNHCR from April 22-24 1996 in Switzerland, it was estimated that more than 135 million people are at risk of being displaced mostly as a consequence of severe desertification. Migration to cities and other countries is a common result of desertification. The number of those who have already had to leave runs into millions and continues to increase by about 3 million each year. In total, the livelihoods of more than a billion people now risk to be degraded because of desertification. For example, one-sixth of the population of Mali and Burkina Faso has already been uprooted. This makes urban slums swelling.

From Habitat II we know that urbanization will be one of the most severe challenges for sustainable development in the new millennium. Desertification populates the cities. For example, there is a long-term flow from Sahelian regions to coastal cities, as we now learn from several studies. Urban population would there reach 271 million people in 2020, which is 3.5 times the present numbers. Also it is estimated that about 60 million people from desertified areas will push into North African countries and to European

shores. As another example, the victims of desertification in Central America fill the cities of the United States; in India, they swell the already teeming cities of the Punjab; and in Brazil, where in the north-east of the country desertification threatens an area the size of Western Europe, they flock to already overcrowded cities such as Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Between 1965 and 1988, the proportion of Mauritania's people living in Nouakchott, the capital, rose from 9 percent to 41 percent, while the proportion of nomads fell from 73 to 7 percent.

Areas and countries far distant are affected by migrating people from desertified areas. For example, desertification is at least one of the factors pushing Mexican immigrants over the border into the US; about 40 percent of the people of the upper and middle regions of the Senegal Valley have already emigrated: there are more people from the Bakel region now living in France than there are in the villages they left behind. Thus, the poverty of developing countries can impact the social stability of developed countries, chiefly by shifting into their cities.

Desertification exacerbates political instability. As it contributes to internal displacement, migration and social breakdown, it is a recipe for political instability, for tensions between neighbouring countries, and even for armed conflict. Studies presented at the Almeria Symposium on Desertification and Migrations, organized by the Government of Spain and the CCD Secretariat in 1994, found dryland-environmental causal factors in almost half of the about 50 armed conflicts at that time. Specially in African countries, marginalized arid areas are highly prone to conflict and develop severe security challenges for the central governments.¹⁹

Another impact of desertification is food insecurity. As Jacques Diouf, former secretary general of FAO says, "world food production will have to increase by more than 75 percent over the next 30 years to keep pace with population growth. We must prepare now to feed about 9 billion people by 2030". In a recent study on population change-environment linkages in the Arab

19 See also Oberthür, Sebastian [1998]: Prävention umweltinduzierter Konflikte durch Entwicklungspolitik und internationale Umweltpolitik/ In: Carius, Alexander/ Lietzmann, Kurt M. (eds.) [1998]: Umwelt und Sicherheit. Herausforderungen für die internationale Politik. Berlin.

States region, FAO considers population growth to play an unquestionable role in land degradation's impact on food insecurity: "land degradation ... has much to do with accelerated agricultural intensification and the pressure of an increasing population combined with the scarcity of cultivable land, leading farmers to ask more of the land than it can yield. And the pressure increases all the more rapidly as the spatial growth of human settlements, especially cities, takes a direct toll on the surrounding land resources."

UNCCD as a tool for sustainable development

Sustainable development is about improving the quality of life for all of the Earth's citizens without increasing the use of natural resources and sinks beyond the capacity of the environment to supply them indefinitely. It underlies an understanding that action has consequences and that humanity must find innovative ways to change institutional structures and influence individual behaviour. It is about taking action, changing policy and practice at all levels, from the individual to the general or collective. Sustainable development is not a new idea. Many cultures over the course of human history have recognized the need for harmony between the environment, society and economy. What is new is an articulation of these ideas in the context of a global industrial and information society. The Brundtland definition also implies a very important shift from an idea of sustainability, as primarily ecological, to a framework that also emphasizes the economic and social context of development.

In this regard, since UNCED, more responsibilities have been placed on states and civil society to protect local, national, subregional, regional and global environment, especially those shared by whole communities such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, land degradation, desertification and deforestation. In other words, there was conceptualization of a need for more effective implementation of conventions on environment and development, through an integration with domestic law and policy. A number of examples clearly point out the human concerns and need for meaningful incentives for communities and individuals to achieve sustainable development, including in the framework of UNCCD, sustainable land use. It is commonly recognized that global environmental threats such as climate change and

global warming are mainly produced in developed countries, and are thus part of the epiphenomena of globalization, but have significant and often disastrous impact on developing countries. Loss of biodiversity, deforestation and desertification are among the most prominent ones, since rainfall patterns change significantly in arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid areas. But this is not yet the end of the story. Desertification itself is a driving force for further downstream problems of severe magnitude, such as marginalization of rural areas, economic disaster and poverty, migration, urbanization, and social conflict, just to name some. There is, as has been mentioned above, a clear link between sustainable development, and more particular, environmental issues, and globalization. It has thus been important to study and understand the multiple effects of economic globalization in relation with global development, environment and questions of participation of people. The term 'sustainable development' itself implies an explicit normative call to balance the effects of globalization in a way that environmental and socio-economic disasters in developing countries are addressed, managed and sustainably mitigated and prevented by the global community. The UNCCD aims to play a significant role in this context. It further aims to contribute concepts and activities which are expected to revitalize local economies and communities, and ensure long term ecological stability. The items were foreseen by the INCD deliberations.

The UNCCD logic of intervention thus contains typical elements of sustainable development principles: enhanced productivity of the agricultural sector instead of one-sided industrialization, resolution of unjust land tenure structures, the role of education of rural people and appropriate technology- traditional as well as modern-, selected moderate measures of subvention and protection, enhanced participation of grassroot people.²⁰ Desertification has its greatest impact in Africa because two thirds of the continent are deserts or drylands, which are concentrated in the Sahelian region, the Horn of Africa and the Kalahari in the south. Not only is the region afflicted by frequent and severe droughts, but many African countries are

20 See Senghaas, Dieter [2001]: *Wider den entwicklungstheoretischen Gedächtniswund/ In: Thiel, Reinhold E. (ed.) [2001]: Neue Ansätze zur Entwicklungstheorie. 2. Auflage. Bonn.*

land-locked, have widespread poverty and depend heavily on natural resources for subsistence. Their difficult socio-economic conditions, insufficient institutional and legal frameworks, incomplete infrastructure and weak scientific, technical, and educational capacities have bred the conditions for deforestation and overexploitation of land that lead to land degradation, loss of fertile soil and desertification as a result. When people live in poverty they have little choice but to overexploit the land. There is a high correlation between poverty and environmental degradation as a result of poor people's dependence on exploitation of the environment for survival.²¹

For example, in Mali, as in other countries in the Sahel such as Niger and Chad that suffer from persistent severe droughts, not only are unfavourable climatic conditions propelling the process of desertification, but the heavy dependence on land for their subsistence. 80% of the 9 million people in Mali, one of the poorest countries in the world, are agro-pastoralists. They produce 40% of the GNP and three quarters of the country's exports, inducing farmers to overexploit the land, accelerating land degradation and desertification. In Zambia, where the percentage of households living below the poverty line rose from 68% in 1991 to 78% in 1996, 72% of energy sources come from wood fuel. In 1998, it was reported that households consumed 88% of firewood and 96% of charcoal, with 85% of urban households using charcoal for cooking and heating. Consequently, 250,000 to 300,000 ha of land per annum are deforested on the average and cultivable land dropped by 30% from 1,004,300 ha in 1989-90 to 701,500 in 1997/98. The demographic and livestock stress on the land have ruptured the environmental equilibrium. This is true not only of the drylands in the Sahel and Kalahari, but of the greener countries such as Ghana, Cameroon, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, which are as threatened by desertification. Overgrazing and deforestation, which exacerbate land degradation and soil erosion, plague these countries. In Uganda, for instance, where 90% of the population lives in rural areas and directly depends on land for cultivation and grazing, forestland shrank from 45% of the country's surface area to 21% between 1890 and 2000. As a result of overgrazing in its drylands known as the "cattle corridor," soil compac-

21 According to UNDP's Zambia Human Development Report, 1998.

tion, erosion and the emergence of low-value grass species and vegetation have subdued the land's productive capacity, leading to desertification. Inappropriate farming systems further aggravate the process.

The majority of farmers are not knowledgeable or exposed to improved farming methods such as crop rotation. In Ghana, where the population density has reached 77 persons per km², 70% of the firewood and charcoal needed for domestic purposes comes from the savannah zones, destroying 20,000 ha of woodland per annum. About 40% of Ghana's land mass is subject to desertification, which further exacerbates poverty. Many African countries are afflicted by a vicious cycle between poverty and desertification.²² It was of utmost importance at UNCED to understand what are the linkages, underlying forces, causes and effects between globalization and natural disasters, or, in other words, to find an answer to the question: how can sustainable development (and in this context: combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought) be obtained in the age of globalization? And how can the structures, trends and effects of a globalizing world be utilized to serve the needs of those affected by environmental and socio-economic disaster such as desertification? The answer identified in Rio lies in the principle of collective action.

22 Information taken from national reports submitted to the UNCCD Secretariat. They are featured at the Secretariat's website <www.unccd.int>. An interesting country study on desertification and CCD implementation, highlighting its difficulties, in Namibia is Böhm, Nicole [2002]: *Desertifikation: Zu den Schwierigkeiten der Implementation der UN-Konvention. Fallstudie Namibia*. WZB Studie. Berlin. Another study on Namibia, focusing on the bottom-up approach and the role of CBOs is Brandt, Hartmut [2001]: *Role and potential of community based organisations in the implementation of the national programme to combat desertification in Namibia*. Berlin. A similar study for Kenya, focusing on NGO participation, is Kamps, Ortrud [2000]: *Die Rolle von NGOs in der Entwicklungspolitik. Am Beispiel der Desertifikationsbekämpfung in Kenia*. Münster. On geographic studies see also Babaev, Agadžan G. (ed.) [1999]: *Desert problems and desertification in Central Asia*. Berlin. More in Toulmin, Camilla [2001]: *La Convention sur la lutte contre la désertification. Un code de bonnes pratiques/ In: Développement et coopération (mars-avril)*.

The bottom-up approach as UNCCD's post-Westphalian threshold

The Convention defines desertification as „land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities“. It states that combating desertification includes activities aimed at the prevention and/or reduction of land degradation, the rehabilitation of partly degraded land, and the reclamation of desertified land. Drought in terms of UNCCD means the „naturally occurring phenomenon that exists when precipitation has been significantly below normal recorded levels, causing serious hydrological imbalances that adversely affect land resource production systems“.²³

In particular, Article 2, UNCCD, states:

„1. The objective of this Convention is to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, through effective action at all levels, supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements, in the framework of an integrated approach which is consistent with Agenda 21, with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in affected areas.

2. Achieving this objective will involve long-term integrated strategies that focus simultaneously, in affected areas, on improved productivity of land, and the rehabilitation, conservation and sustainable management of land and water resources, leading to improved living conditions, in particular at the community level.²⁴

23 Definitions taken from the Convention, Art.1 (UN Doc. A/AC.241/27). See further details in Lean, Geoffrey [1998]: Down to earth. A simplified guide to the Convention to Combat Desertification. Bonn.

24 Op. cit.

The socio-economic aspects of desertification²⁵ have found a strong base within the provisional outlines of UNCCD, together with its ecological implications. For a number of reasons, UNCCD is thus often regarded more as a developmental treaty than an environmental one. But such a kind of distinction would not exactly reflect the nature of this Convention, since its origins are truly cross-sectoral and within the framework of sustainable development policies. Yet, while the Climate Change Convention and the Biodiversity Convention mostly aim to protect the natural environment from economic impacts, UNCCD aims at addressing the socio-economic conditions of rural developing country people. However, desertification has to be seen as both cause as well as result of socio-economic disorder. We have learnt further above that the Convention is a case of postmodern conceptualization of IR. UNCCD can easily be identified as a process of regime building, and its legally binding nature matches with the legal criteria provided.²⁶

Also, the role of knowledge, can be traced and made evident easily since the political aspirations for this new agreement as well as the drafting process thoroughly took into consideration the history of the PACD, and subsequently subscribed to an approach of 'lessons learnt'. Following the example of the IPCC, UNCCD has furthermore as its first subsidiary body, the Committee on Science and Technology (CST), whose experts provided a substantive and knowledge-reflecting base for the content-driven interventions under this Convention.

One of the chief drafters of UNCCD, Ambassador Robert Ryan, on the scientific context of UNCCD, but also revealing other crucial aspects, stated:

„Ambassador Bo Kjellén well describes the important role that the international scientific community played in the

25 The aforementioned phenomena of migration, urbanization and conflict may serve as examples in this context. Further socio-economic aspects of desertification are poverty, income generation loss or health issues. In this context refer also to Katyal, Jagdish/Vlek, Paul [2000]: Desertification - causes and amelioration. Bonn, Reynolds, James F. (ed.) [2002]: Global desertification. Do humans cause deserts? Report of the 88th Dahlem Workshop, 2001. Berlin, and Mainguet, Monique [1991]: Desertification. Natural background and human mismanagement. Berlin.

26 Refer to the historical milestones and terms of reference sub-chapter.

negotiation of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD). In this connection, two points bear repeating here as background to discussing scientific challenges in CCD implementation. At its first substantive session in 1993, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for Desertification (INCD) spent a week exchanging scientific information. This was crucial to developing a broad consensus on the integrated, bottom-up approach that the CCD would take to sustainable development in drylands. The International Panel of Experts on Desertification (IPED), which had broad geographic and disciplinary representation, directly assisted the Secretariat and potential parties in fleshing out this overall approach throughout the CCD and its regional implementation annexes. The IPED's imprint is particularly evident in the definitions in article 1 and in the articles on information collection, analysis and exchange; on research and development; on transfer, acquisition, adaptation and development of technology; and on capacity building.

The CCD's integrated, bottom-up approach has two basic facets:

It clearly recognizes that economic and social factors cause desertification as much as physical factors. One condition for combating land degradation ... is, therefore, reversing the vicious circle of poverty in which most dryland communities of developing nations, particularly those in Africa, find themselves. It centers attention on participatory, community action as the basis for combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. Merely consulting local people is not enough. Real participation means empowering them to decide for themselves how to use their resources and how to protect the fragile environment in which they live. The same overall approach pervades the scientific provisions of the CCD. In essence, the Convention challenges the scientific community – social scientists as much as physical scientists – to put itself at the service of dryland communities.

“Demand-driven” science is a daunting challenge requiring a change in mindset. A new philosophy of technology cooperation needs to replace the traditional top-down paradigm of technology transfer, which is increasingly seen as the main reason why past efforts at desertification control did not get the job done. The scientific provisions of the CCD are broad and detailed. The following, in no particular order, are just some of the key tasks in crafting a truly demand-driven scientific agenda...:

- To develop benchmarks and indicators of progress in combating desertification that encompass both traditional physical variables and measures of success at the community level;
- To encourage information-exchange networks that include

not only governments and intergovernmental organizations but also non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local communities and scientific institutions;

- To inventory and disseminate local technology, knowledge and know-how and integrate them with modern technology;
- To ensure that collection and analysis of scientific information address the needs of local communities with a view to resolving specific problems and that local communities are involved in those activities;
- To support research activities that respond to well defined objectives, meet the needs of local populations and lead to improved living standards for people in affected areas;
- To develop and strengthen local, national, subregional and regional research capacities in developing countries affected by desertification;
- To extend technology cooperation among affected developing countries, particularly in sectors that foster alternative livelihoods for dryland communities; and
- To reorient extension services in affected developing countries toward participatory approaches for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources at the community level.

Structuring and carrying out a sound scientific agenda will make a major contribution to the success of ... action programs that are the centerpieces of CCD implementation. It is important to recognize, however, as the CCD makes clear, that these action programs should be closely linked to other efforts aimed at sustainable development, particularly to implementation of related environmental conventions. Article 8 of the CCD specifically encourages joint programs with related conventions, notably the Climate Change and Biodiversity Conventions, in the fields of research, training and systematic observation, as well as information collection and exchange. The Conference of the Parties and the Permanent Secretariat have already moved strongly to develop such coordination. One of the main prerequisites for successful coordination with sister conventions is a deeper understanding of the scientific factors that link desertification and drought to climate change and loss of biodiversity. Special working groups of the IPED concentrated on refining knowledge of these linkages. The World Bank, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other organizations have also done considerable work on the subject. Given the importance of the linkages, there is room for more extensive and more systematic research about them, particularly regarding the positive effects of desertification control on the mitigation of climate change and on the conservation of biodiversity.

*On the climate side, among other things, desertification control involves reduction of slash-and-burn agriculture and of the use of wood for fuel, both of which contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions. Also dryland soils may be significant carbon sinks and dryland reforestation, if widespread enough, can increase carbon sequestration. Reducing land degradation, by definition, conserves important dryland habitats for large mammals, migratory birds, key races of domestic crops and plant sources of commercial and industrial products. Land degradation is also associated with pollution of fresh water ecosystems and with land-based pollution of the oceans. Greater understanding of such phenomena will have an important side effect in building public and political support for the CCD, which currently receives less attention than its sister conventions. Science can thus play both a direct and indirect role in the Convention's successful implementation.*²⁷

The semantics of sustainability, and further semantic epiphenomena such as the sustainability triangle/square and other concepts, have, according to the above-mentioned notions of UNCCD as a technical means of sustainable development policy, strongly influenced its outlines, and are replicated in its holistic, integrated approach as a cross-sectoral, multi-level framework of comprehension. Furthermore, the Convention's conceptual matrix contains cross-sectoral strategic/ structural reform, global governance orientation and post-Westphalian tools. Yet, UNCCD's very treshold lies in the so-called **bottom-up approach**, which combines all of these phenomena in itself. The Convention foresees that affected countries, i.e. developing countries, some developed countries, Central and Eastern Europe, some Central Asian countries, give a commitment to prioritize combatting desertification as a national policy and as a part of their national strategies for sustainable development. This process is called **mainstreaming**, and corresponds with the postmodern principle of cross-sectoral strategy orientation. Developed countries through their signature bind themselves to support these measures through substantial financial resources

27 Ambassador Robert J. Ryan is an international consultant based in Rome. After his retirement from the Foreign Service, he served from 1993 to 1997 as Special Adviser in the Interim Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification and concurrently as Chairman of the International Panel of Experts on Desertification. His full statement can be found at <www.earthinstitute.columbia.edu>.

within existing cooperation frameworks of a bilateral as well as multilateral nature. At the outset, UNCCD achieved no multilateral financial mechanism, but the **Global Mechanism (GM)**, which is understood as a broker or clearing house body, and also acts as consultancy and training providing entity.

UNCCD's main target area are the African drylands with some 40 priority countries. The Convention's main policy instrument are **National Action Programmes (NAPs)**, delivering frameworks for all activities undertaken in affected countries for its implementation, such as measures for improving the economic circumstances, of poverty alleviation, protection of natural resources, capacity building, empowerment of locals and women, or on awareness raising. NAPs work according to a cross- or inter-sectoral scheme. These NAPs are, as the prime product of mainstreaming efforts, supposed to integrate all previously sectoral target efforts.

A key mechanism of the Convention's implementation process are the **partnership agreements**. Bilateral and multilateral donors present in affected developing countries are, according to this approach, supposed to bundle themselves and their engagements, and thus become integral part in the implementation of NAPs through their consultative, technical and financial assistance, always corresponding to a country-driven process. However, achieving sustainable development without seriously involving the civil society at all stages and levels, particularly at national and local levels, is impossible and probably doomed to fail. The drafters of UNCCD took this insight into account and tried to declinate it through the Convention's text to a maximum. They had recognized that development is made sustainable through the participation of those concerned. It is exactly at this level, where globalization and its epiphenomena need to be met. Creating a global village cannot be only left with corporations and shareholders nor with politicians. It is the primordial role of the global civil society to counterbalance and complement, through their voice and effort, the trends and tendencies currently underway. This normative understanding of global governance has underpinned the drafting process of the Convention.

However, one should not forget that there is also a process of globalization of NGOs going on, with a tendency to strengthen those of the North, and

weakening their 'sister' organizations in developing countries. In other words: Is it really fair to equate the emergence of an international civil society with the advancement of democracy? The emergence of an international civil society does not really modify the global balance of power - it merely expresses it differently. The influential "civil societies" and thus NGOs are almost necessarily those of the most powerful countries. Thus, it is the civil societies and the NGOs from the rich, media-driven countries that usually exercise influence in the world. They are the ones with the means to communicate - and thus the power to impose their views. It is developed countries influence, not that of Niger, Bolivia, or Bangladesh. It is not Nigerian NGOs that are going to intervene in Northern Ireland or demonstrate in Seattle, it is European and American NGOs most likely.

The former French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hubert Vétrine, said:

"Democracy is not like instant coffee, where you can just add water and stir. It doesn't result from a conversion, but from a process. The development of civil society is a fact. We should make it more responsible and support its most useful aspects, but for states to abdicate their roles would mean progress neither for democracy nor for what we in French call the management of globalization."²⁸

When speaking about partnership, we must as well refer to partnership within the network of NGOs, and examine, if it is the civil society of *developing* countries whose voice is heard, and whose efforts are meaningful. Exactly this normative goal was implied by the drafters of UNCCD. Probably the most interesting point according to the notions of post-Westphalian governance are UNCCD's guiding principles and normative provisions on participation, making it a piece of inscribed global governance, since the Convention is legally binding and thus international law: UNCCD foresees throughout participation of concerned populations at all levels in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Convention. The latter is also understood as mobilizing subsidiarity, utilizing existing knowledge and technology including traditional knowledge where appropriate, local experience and best practises.

28 Internet source, unknown.

This concept is called the *bottom-up approach*, and follows the idea of *participatory eco-development* as a process of decentral decision making. It finds its complement in the above-described partnership principle: developing as well developed countries, affected and non-affected countries are supposed to jointly implement UNCCD, including all intra-state levels of administration and decision making, and also including various actors of civil society: NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), associations, rural people, especially women, business, and the scientific community.²⁹

„Die Untersuchung der Desertifikationskonvention zeigt..., daß Desertifikationsbekämpfung in ihr anders als im Rahmen des Bemühungen der 70er Jahre als Ziel in der Hintergrund tritt. Vielmehr dient die Konvention in erster Linie dazu, die Bedingungen erfolgreicher nationaler und internationaler Entwicklungsbemühungen für alle Parteien verbindlich festzuschreiben: Die Konvention soll zur nachhaltigen Bodennutzung in Trockengebieten beitragen, indem betroffene Staaten ebenso wie Geberländer auf einen neuartigen „Bottom-up“-Ansatz verpflichtet werden, der der lokalen Bevölkerung und Nichtregierungsorganisationen (NGOs) eine zentrale Rolle bei der Desertifikationsbekämpfung zuweist.“³⁰

In 2002, the Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) states:

„Bei der Desertifikationsbekämpfung geht es dabei auf der lokalen Ebene um die partizipative Entwicklung und Anwendung von Methoden zur Stabilisierung, Wiederherstellung und Verbesserung der Bodenqualität, z. B. durch Erosionsschutz und Aufforstung... Im Politikdialog mit den Partnerländern setzt sich die deutsche Entwicklungszusammenarbeit für eine Verbesserung der nationalen Rahmenbedingungen für einen wirksamen Bodenschutz ein. Im internationalen Raum unterstützt sie die Umsetzung der internationalen Konvention zur Bekämpfung der Desertifikation (CCD). Dabei spielt die Politik- und Prozessberatung eine immer größere Rolle. Neben der Unterstützung zahlreicher Länder bei der Erstellung sogenannter Nationaler Aktionspro-

29 The concept of participatory eco-development is thoroughly developed and described in Lazarev, Grigori [1994]. More on NGO influence of the outline of UNCCD is found in Carr, Susan/ Mpande, Roger [1996]: Does the definition of the issue matter? NGO influence and the International Convention to Combat Desertification in Africa/ In: The Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 34/ 1.

30 Ehlers, Maximilian [1996], p. 7.

*gramme zur Desertifikationsbekämpfung (NAP) werden Länder, die von grenzüberschreitenden Desertifikationsproblemen betroffen sind, bei der Erarbeitung und Umsetzung subregionaler und regionaler Aktionsprogramme zur Desertifikationsbekämpfung beraten.*³¹

The bottom-up approach is a new concept of policy implementation, which reverses the traditional logic of intervention, the declination of hierarchically generated policy formulation and decision making results to the 'lower levels' of intra-state societal order, i.e. the so-called top-down approach. This conceptual change, brought up as a discussion base by the United Nations themselves, and transformed into international law by state delegates during the INCD sessions, may have been motivated and triggered by the impression of growing erosion tendencies of nation-state capabilities, particularly in the fields of environment and development politics in developing countries. I doubt that the bottom-up approach is truly of an abstract normative nature, i.e. yielding the empowerment of people just for the sake of democracy. I think that this new and radically altered methodology was expected to render the implementation process of the Convention way more effective than any other previous attempt. As such, we can speak of a case of learning institutions: the failure of the PACD certainly influenced the drafting process of UNCCD. Enhanced effectivity of the new instrument was thus supposed to be provided by meaningful participation of non-state actors, of local and regional structures, by a more holistic perception of international relations as a complex of global governance, and enhanced synergies between existing conventions, regimes and national policies. The bottom-up approach is one of the most radical conceptual results of post-Westphalian politics and as such a phenomenon of the postmodern paradigm.

UNCCD features the strongest focus on postmodern governance concepts among the Rio treaties, since bottom-up is, conceptually, nowhere else so strongly implied. The bottom-up approach is linked with the epiphenomena or sub-concepts of participatory eco-development and partnership agreements within given multi-actor-networks, as described above. One of

the key questions that the drafting fathers of the Convention undertook to reflect upon was: How can UN agencies link up with civil society? The background for this both conceptual and strategic scenario was evident, i.e. the ongoing crisis of multilateral organizations backed from the functionalist matrix of post-World War II politics. Looking at the major significance of development issues for the desired success of UNCCD, it had seemed before Rio that the new generation of OECD representatives was not any more interested in North-South solidarity, as a consequence of which lack of political will, interest and funding had to be admitted.

In the light of the aforementioned, the designers of UNCCD, encouraged through the wave of new world order and global governance concepts emerging by the time of Rio, and the strong focus on civil sector engagement during UNCED, chose a participatory approach for their conceptual framework, linking the logic of intervention directly with the local level and civil society.

31 Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) [2002]: Von Rio nach Johannesburg. BMZ Spezial Nr. 54. Bonn., p. 43.