

## **TUNISIA: Mainstreaming the UNCCD into National Planning Processes**

Tunisia is at the forefront in undertaking and promoting efforts to combat desertification nationally and internationally. Institutional mechanisms were swiftly put in place after UNCCD ratification and the NAP was finalized in 1998. It took time, however, to operationalize and implement the NAP mechanisms, due to the lack of a participatory, integrated approach to the process, resulting in scarce ownership, co-ordination and information exchange between key stakeholders.

The Government of Tunisia requested support from the GM, the UNCCD Secretariat, GTZ and UNDP in 2000. The GM brought together the partners to pursue a common strategy to promote the NAP as a framework for orienting national and development partners' efforts to enhance national policies and strategies for sustainable resource

### **Key dates**

UNCCD ratified – **1995**

NCB established – **1996**

NAP validated – **1998**

NCB Steering Committee established – **2001**

NCB Secretariat established – **2003**

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management. The GM, in collaboration with its partners, worked to create an enabling environment for UNCCD implementation and to broaden stakeholder participation in resource mobilization by facilitating cross-sector dialogue and building consensus on NAP priorities. This process began while the 10<sup>th</sup> Socio-Economic Development Plan was being formulated, thus providing the GM with an excellent opportunity to advocate mainstreaming the UNCCD into the national planning process.

The GM provided support to the Ministry of Environment in 2001 to undertake preparatory activities and organize a Country Financing Partnership Forum. A three-pronged strategy was adopted to:

- elaborate a set of eligibility criteria to guide NAP project and programme development and allow for monitoring and evaluation of NAP implementation;
- operationalize the NAP by developing a portfolio of 15 NAP priority projects in line with the eligibility criteria for inclusion in the 10<sup>th</sup> Socio-Economic Development Plan; and
- advocate and lobby with development partners for the financing projects of common interest.

GM support also contributed to strengthening the National Coordinating Body (NCB) and to the establishment of a steering committee comprising technical and non-technical ministries, NGOs and donors for promoting overall coordination and much needed awareness-raising. A partnership-building workshop was organised in 2002 to further refine the strategic orientation for NAP implementation and strengthen partners' commitment to mainstream the NAP into the 10<sup>th</sup> Socio-Economic Development Plan.

The outcome of this concerted action by all partners led to the adoption of the NAP as the core strategic framework for addressing land degradation issues in the 10<sup>th</sup> Socio-Economic Development Plan (2002-2006). The UNCCD was assigned high priority by the Government through the inclusion of a chapter on sustainable natural resource management and anti-desertification efforts, as well as a commitment for national co-financing of the 15 NAP priority projects. A Country Financing Partnership (CFP) Forum was organised shortly after to present the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan to potential financing partners to leverage co-financing for the projects. Approximately 20 development agencies participated in the Forum and expressed interest in financing one or more of the 15 priority projects. Accordingly, a preliminary Financing Plan for NAP implementation was formulated on the basis of Government and external partners' commitments.

In 2005, the GM provided additional support to consolidate the implementation of the Financing Plan by mainstreaming the NAP into the strategic development frameworks at the "sub-national" level. Together with UNDP and GTZ the GM supported the elaboration of twelve Sub-national Action Programmes to combat desertification which were mainstreamed into the respective Sub-national Development Plans, thereby facilitating sustained financing in the medium to long-term. Considering that the sub national development plans will be part of the forthcoming 11<sup>th</sup> Socio-Economic Development Plan (2007-2011), the ongoing process is a guarantee that, at last, land degradation issues will be fully mainstreamed into the next Five Year development Plan.

Achievements in Tunisia can be expressed in quantitative terms. In the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan, USD 18.6 million in domestic resources were secured to finance the 15 NAP priority projects. Furthermore, there was an overall 23%, or USD 400 million, increase in national budgetary allocations for combating desertification, completed to the 9<sup>th</sup> Plan. Through partnership building and improved coordination, greater transparency was achieved in terms of monitoring financing flows for UNCCD implementation. This has led to the formulation of a comprehensive financing matrix by Government, which in February 2005, indicated that approximately USD 14 million was mobilised in grant financing from development cooperation agencies.

Achievements can also be expressed in qualitative terms. As a result of the efforts cited above, implementation of the UNCCD has become a national development priority. Critically, this ensures continuity of financing for land degradation related activities regardless of institutional reorganisation. In addition, the need to adopt a multidisciplinary and integrated approach to combating desertification is increasingly acknowledged and the UNCCD is gaining greater visibility within development cooperation partners' programming processes, including those of Italy, GTZ, France, IFAD and UNDP. Though much work remains to be done to consolidate the process, the above achievements constitute solid foundations for the sustainable implementation of UNCCD and the NAP in Tunisia.