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### **Global Interactive Dialogue (GID) at the Third Session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 3)**

Report by Hans Günter Brauch (Moderator),  
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#### **Background**

The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention was established by decision 1/COP.5 and mandated to undertake an extensive review of progress made in the implementation of the UNCCD. The CRIC convenes both intersessionally and in conjunction with the Conference of the Parties. During CRIC 1 (Nov. 2002), the programme of work included the convening of a Global Interactive Dialogue (GID). A similar format occurred during the session of CRIC 3, held on 10 May 2005.

#### **Land degradation/desertification and their impact on migration and conflicts:**

Despite the lack of international recognition, the notion and the very existence of environmental migrants with their in and ex situ impact on national/regional/global economies, the environment, security, and socio-political problems have become an agenda item for international conferences and organizations dealing with migration flows.

CRIC 3, through the GID, aimed at raising awareness with regard to the existing linkages between land degradation/desertification and the complex mechanisms causing internal and external migration. The GID has followed an International Symposium on Desertification & Migrations in February 1994 in Almería (Spain), and a workshop on Desertification in the Mediterranean Region. A Security Issue in December 2005 in Valencia (Spain).

The GID on land degradation/desertification and their impact on migration and conflicts was moderated by Hans Günter Brauch (FU Berlin and AFES-PRESS, Germany), and conducted with participation of the following panellists: Úrsula Oswald (Mexico), José L. Rubio (Spain), Janos Bogardi (UNU-EHS), Sisir Kumar Ratho (India), Issa Martin Bikienga (Burkina Faso), Deputy Executive Secretary of the permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and Marc Baltes (OSCE).

In his opening remarks Hans Günter Brauch pointed to the Almería Statement of 11 February 1994 that called for “a holistic approach to local development, empowering the local population and protecting the environment within the context of a poverty-reduction scenario, should be combined with more effective migration policies in such areas.” Eleven years later it is time to review both the socio-economic dimension and the policy and action priorities that have been adopted in Almería (1994) and that were addressed in Valencia (2003)

Úrsula Oswald, a former minister of environment in Morelos (Mexico), and a professor at UNAM/CRIM in Cuernavaca, presented a paper prepared jointly with the moderator that reviewed research on environmental security stressing the following points:

- Evidence is emerging for a correlation between poverty, desertification and conflicts of various kinds in arid and semi-arid areas but the relationship between environmental degradation and migration is complex and still little understood.
- Desertification is a contributor to environmental degradation, scarcity and stress that may trigger, contribute or intensify natural and human-induced hazards, migration, crises and

in the worst case conflicts; drought is a cause of famine, migration, hunger revolts, domestic crises and violent conflicts.

- Due to climate change most deserts are likely to become more extreme. Human-induced desertification may counteract any ameliorating effect of climate change on most deserts unless appropriate management actions are taken. Human factors (population growth, urbanisation and agriculture) contribute to processes of soil erosion and desertification.
- Shortcomings of environmental security research are the prevailing narrow disciplinary focus in the social and in the natural sciences. Understanding the linkages requires close cooperation among soil, water specialists with the social and political sciences (international relations, disaster studies and peace research).
- Understanding the complex causal relationship between environmental degradation, migration and conflicts remains a task for theory-oriented and empirical research that at some stage may offer lessons for preventive policy action.
- While detailed knowledge exists on drought, migration, crises, and conflicts, there remains a lack of knowledge on linkages among drought, famine and migration, conflicts and migration, on societal consequences for crises and conflicts, and on environmentally or war-induced migration as a cause or consequence of crises and conflicts.

In a case study, Ursula Oswald pointed to the evolution of poverty in Latin America and in Mexico, illustrated the complex linkages between annual aridity, precipitation, the number of dry months and evaporation and the impact of soil erosion and desertification on migration within Mexico and especially the rapid increase of illegal migration to the USA.

Oswald and Brauch argued that desertification, drought, famine and hunger riots must be analysed as part of global environmental change and extreme outcomes. While desertification and drought pose no hard security threats, as emerging soft security challenges they cause environmental and societal vulnerabilities and may trigger violent societal consequences: e.g. general strikes and hunger revolts that may challenge regime stability and the survival of governments. Both require a long-term, pro-active local capacity-building and cooperation among scientists and policy-makers using traditional and advanced technological knowledge. Ms. Oswald concluded the joint presentation arguing that combating desertification and drought has become a human, environmental, food, health, livelihood and gender security task for social, agricultural and environment policy at the national level and for the UN. Avoiding violent conflicts has become a task of international institutions for hydro-diplomacy that requires pro-active policies by states and international organisations on causes of desertification, of population growth (South), market forces (North) and climate change impacts.

In conclusion Ms. Oswald pointed to two publications of UNU-EHS by Vlek who proposed an International Panel on Land Degradation (IPLD) analogue to the IPCC: „to assess on a comprehensive, objective, open and transparent basis the scientific, technical and socio-econ. information relevant to understanding the scientific basis of risk of human-induced land degradation, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation“, and by Brauch: who suggested that a fourth phase of environmental security research should move to a synthesis and reconceptualisation combining structural factors from the natural and human dimensions of GEC based on expertise from the natural and social sciences, including the social science research on extreme outcomes: hazards, migration, crises and conflict constellations.

Jose Luis Rubio (Spain), president of the European Society for Soil Conservation, pointed to the differences in the relationship between desertification and migration in North Africa and in Southern Europe. While in the South desertification and drought has contributed to food insecurity that forced people to leave across the Mediterranean, in the North the agricultural sector has absorbed many undocumented immigrants. He noted that the policies to slow

immigration has failed and that Spain has recently legalised the status of undocumented immigrants. He pleaded for closer North-South cooperation, improved awareness programmes and for a more active and innovative role of the European Union.

Janos Bogardi (Germany), director of the Environment and Human Security (EHS) Institute of UNU in Bonn, argued that migration is a permanent feature of mankind that should be recognised both as a right but also as an accelerating process that is often part of a coping strategy. Migrants, as people on the move, are inherently vulnerable because they often migrate to left-over places and often results in fast and unprepared urbanisation processes. He argued that land degradation does not affect crop production but leads to erosion, loss of storage space of water reservoirs and to a deterioration of crucial resources. He called for an International Panel on Land Degradation (IPLD) to enhance political awareness of the creeping disaster of land degradation.

Mr. S.K. Ratho (India), assistant inspector general of forests and national focal point for UNCCD implementation, noted that in India 67.2% (700 million) live in rural area and 58% depend on agriculture. Most migration occurs in the agricultural sector, and in rural areas there are 10 million seasonal and 4.5 million inter-state migrants. Migration is often triggered by land degradation. Landless labourers migrate to work in textile factories and in coal and ore mines. Traditional shepherds and pastoralists have been unable to change their traditional practices. The depletion of natural resources in Himalayan states has forced many young people into the cities. Rural emigration has resulted in material and psychological insecurities and to societal strains in the affected villages and often led to the collapse of the rural economy. They are confronted with a survival dilemma: "If they stay back in the village they have no livelihood options but if they choose to out migrate then the quality of their personal life and socio-cultural fabric is in danger" The government has reacted to these challenges with manifold legislative and political measures, including housing and social security.

Issa Martin Bikienga (Burkina Faso), a former minister of agriculture and Deputy Executive Secretary of the permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), said that land degradation is the greatest threat to the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa, which contributed to poverty. Demographic pressures, environmental and food needs have contributed to social and environmental instability, political crises and conflicts in the region. CILSS is to invest in issues of food security, to work against drought and desertification and for a new ecological balance. He suggested several measures to solve the problem: promoting human resource training for managing land degradation; conducting dialogues to harmonise efforts at sub-regional levels; and managing transboundary resources.

Marc Baltes (Luxembourg), a deputy OSCE coordinator for economic and environmental activities, argued for a widening of security, including non-traditional security challenges. He said that environmental change, especially land degradation, directly links to conflict. He pointed to the joint environmental security initiative where OSCE, UNEP, UNDP and NATO closely cooperate, to enhance cooperation and to provide coherence for environment and security issues in Central Asia, the Caucasus and in Southeastern Europe. The EnvSec Initiative offers a vulnerability assessment and aims at improving capacity building. In 2005, the Economic Forum in Prague will address both environmentally induced migration and the impact of migration on the environment with the goal to raise awareness on the links between resource competition and migratory pressures.

In the interactive discussion the following delegations took part: France, Niger, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Algeria, Cuba, Uzbekistan, Guinea, Somalia, Guinea-Bissau, Israel, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Tajikistan, Botswana and Columbia. In addition the following non-governmental organisations made contributions: the International Central Asian Biodiversity Institute (ECOCENTER/BIOSTAN-RIOD) and the Drylands Coordination Group Sudan.

In the discussion, the delegate of France pointed to the high costs of doing nothing, while the representative of Niger pointed to migration and the associated costs from the Sahel to Ghana, the Ivory Coast and the present migration from the coast to the North to Algeria and Libya. Bosnia and Herzegovina pointed to the impact of the war on the environment, of the contamination by depleted uranium ammunitions and minefields that forced people to leave. Algeria and Cuba stressed the historical and political dimensions and causes of migration due to the overexploitation of resources by former colonial powers. On the links between climate change and desertification, Uzbekistan mentioned both positive and negative impacts on land productivity. Guinea pointed to the human and environmental security impacts for host countries of conflicts that produced refugees. The representative of Somalia pointed to links between deforestation, desertification and military security as a result of the trading charcoals for arms by warlords. Both human-induced land degradation and natural hazards (droughts) exacerbate land erosion. The representative of Guinea-Bissau asked what strategy should be developed to deal with transboundary water problems.

The International Central Asian Biodiversity Institute called for increased attention for dealing with illegal migration in transit migration countries, while the Drylands Coordination Group Sudan pointed to the relationship between drought and war, in particular conflicts between settled population and nomad farmers. Israel pointed to the reduction of land productivity as a cause of migration and asked for the reasons why people are leaving. Syria asked whether measures, or a resolution, on migration and displacement could be adopted. Iran argued that UNCCD should stress the root causes of conflicts, while Botswana asked where the migrations come from and Colombia pointed to the ongoing conflict and to the role of land degradation.

In their replies the panellists responded to selected questions and made recommendations. Bogardi (Germany) pleaded for alternative forms of sustainable agricultural development. Rubio (Spain) pointed to negative impacts of migration, to family dramas, abuse of employment and political instability. Oswald (Mexico) recommended the use of natural processes and traditional knowledge rather than chemical fertilizers in land rehabilitation. Bikenga (Burkina Faso) pointed to the pastoralism in the Sahel in harmony with the environment that does not contribute to soil erosion. Ratho (India) mentioned the silent and invisible migration, while Baltes (OSCE) called for a participatory approach noting also the difficulties when several ministries have to cooperate.

In conclusion, the moderator Hans Günter Brauch (Germany) pointed to lack of empirically sound scientific knowledge on the linkages between natural factors (desertification, drought, famine hazards) and societal, socio-economic and political consequences (forced migration, crises, low level violence, mass protests and strikes, hunger riots below the level of wars. There is still a lack of statistical data both in available national census data and in the migration statistics that do not differentiate environmentally-induced, desertification, drought and hunger-triggered migration. Systematic statistics on the socio-political impacts of these events and on the extreme and fatal outcomes are also lacking. Since the Almería symposium 1994, within the second and third phase of environmental security studies little systematic research on the linkages between desertification, drought and famine on the one hand and forced migration and conflicts has occurred.

The moderator called for a wider conceptualization of security that includes environmental, human, water and food security concerns. This requires multidisciplinary approaches where natural and social scientists cooperate that must be of relevance for the development of policy-oriented integrated strategies for early warning of hazards (drought) triggering internal displacements and forced migration. UNU-EHS as well as the UNISDR Platform on Early Warning in Bonn could be important partners for initiating multidisciplinary policy-relevant research, and for preparing capacity building measures for education, societal stakeholders and for the policy sector at the national, regional and global levels.