

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

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This GID followed a Symposium on Desertification and Migrations in 1994 in Almería, and a workshop on Desertification in the Mediterranean Region in 2005 in Valencia. The GID was moderated by Hans Günter Brauch (FU Berlin and AFES-PRESS, Germany), and conducted with the following panellists: Úrsula Oswald (Mexico), José L. Rubio (Spain), Janos Bogardi (UNU-EHS), Sisir Kumar Ratho (India), Issa Martin Bikienga (Burkina Faso), and Marc Baltes (OSCE). The moderator reviewed policy and action priorities adopted in Almería (1994) and addressed in Valencia (2003).

Úrsula Oswald, a former minister of environment in Morelos (Mexico), and a professor at UNAM/CRIM in Cuernavaca, stressed 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 or intensify hazards, migration, crises and 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.
- Understanding the linkages requires close cooperation among soil, water specialists with the social and political sciences (international relations, disaster and peace research).
- Understanding the complex causal relationship between environmental degradation, migration and conflicts remains a task for theory-oriented and empirical research that may offer lessons for preventive policy action.
- There is 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.

Ms. Oswald pointed to the poverty in Latin America and in Mexico, illustrated the complex linkages between aridity, the impact of soil erosion and desertification on migration within Mexico and the increase of illegal migration to the USA. Desertification, drought, famine and hunger riots must be analysed as part of global environmental change and extreme outcomes. They cause environmental and societal vulnerabilities and may trigger violent consequences: strikes and hunger revolts. Both require a long-term, pro-active local capacity-building and cooperation among scientists and policy-makers using traditional and advanced technological knowledge. Avoiding violent conflicts has become a task of international institutions for hydro-diplomacy that requires pro-active policies by states and international organisations.

Jose Luis Rubio pointed to differences in the relationship between desertification and migration in North Africa and Southern Europe. He pleaded for closer North-South cooperation, improved awareness programmes and for a more active and innovative role of the European Union. Janos Bogardi argued that migration is often part of a coping strategy. 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 noted that in India most migration occurs in the agricultural sector and in rural areas and is often triggered by land degradation. The government has reacted to these challenges with manifold legislative and political measures, including housing and social security. Issa Martin Bikienga (Burkina Faso) said that land degradation is the greatest threat to the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa, which contributed to poverty. CILSS is to invest in issues of food security, to work against drought and desertification and for a new ecological balance. Marc Baltes (ODCE) pointed to the environmental security initiative of OSCE, UNEP, UNDP and NATO.

The following delegations took part in the discussion: 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 and the Drylands Coordination Group Sudan.

France pointed to the high costs of doing nothing, while Niger mentioned the associated costs of migration. Bosnia and Herzegovina emphasized the impact of the war on the environment. Algeria and Cuba stressed the historical and political dimensions and causes of migration due to the overexploitation of resources by former colonial powers. Guinea pointed to the human and environmental security impacts for host countries of conflicts that produced refugees. Somalia stressed the links between deforestation, desertification and military security as a result of the trading charcoals for arms by warlords. Guinea-Bissau asked what strategy should be developed to deal with transboundary water problems. The Drylands Coordination Group Sudan pointed to the relationship between drought and war, and conflicts between settled population and nomad farmers. Israel mentioned the reduction of land productivity as a cause of migration. 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 Bogardi pleaded for alternative forms of sustainable agricultural development, Rubio pointed to negative impacts of migration and political instability, Oswald recommended the use of natural processes and traditional knowledge, Bikienga pointed to the pastoralism in the Sahel in harmony with the environment, Ratho mentioned the silent and invisible migration, while Baltes called for a participatory approach noting also the difficulties when several ministries have to cooperate. In conclusion, Brauch pointed to a lack of scientific knowledge on the linkages between natural factors (desertification, drought, famine) and societal, socio-economic and political consequences (forced migration, crises, low level violence, mass protests, hunger riots below war level). Statistical data are lacking on environmentally-induced, desertification, drought and hunger-triggered migration as are systematic statistics on the socio-political impacts of these events. Brauch called for multidisciplinary approaches of natural and social scientists for the development

of policy-oriented integrated strategies for early warning of hazards triggering forced migration.