

Desertification Information System to support National Action Programmes in the Mediterranean (DISMED)

Technical workshop on thematic and sensitivity mapping on desertification and drought : minutes of the meeting

February 27– March 2, 2002, Djerba, Tunisia



UNCCD Secretariat
Bonn, Germany

1. Introduction

The second Technical Workshop of the DISMED project took place in Djerba, Tunisia, from February 27th to March 2nd, 2002.

The list of participants to the Workshop is in Annex 1.

The Workshop agenda is in Annex 2.

The summary of the participants' interventions is in Annex 3.

The Terms of Reference for the Working Group on sensitivity mapping on desertification and drought is in Annex 4.

The Terms of Reference for the Working Group on systems, metadata and content is in Annex 5.

Following the welcoming remarks given by the Director General of the *Institut des Régions Arides* (IRA), by the representatives of the Minister of Environment and UMA and by the representative of UNCCD, European Environment Agency (EEA) and Foundation of Applied Meteorology (FMA), the Governor of Medenine made his official opening speech.

The CCD Secretariat recalled the overall DISMED framework and re-proposed the recommendations resulting from the start-up meeting (Copenhagen, Denmark, September 27-29, 2000) also introducing the objectives as well as the expected results of the Workshop, as they had been identified at the Florence Technical Workshop (June 20-22, 2001). The Secretariat called on the participants to retain the issues regarding the Project self-sustainability, the co-operation mechanism to be established and the commitments of the DISMED partner countries.

Follow-up session of activities

Following the opening session, the Workshop proceeded with the election of the members of the bureau:

- Mr. Mohamed Ismail (Tunisia)
- Mr. Maurizio Sciortino (Italy)
- Mr. Mohamed Wakrim (Morocco)
- Ms Ana Almeida (Portugal)
- Mr. Abdelkader Kelifa (Algeria).

It was agreed that one of the bureau members would be chairman at every half-day session of the Workshop. The bureau members, the CCD Secretariat, the EEA and the FMA were assigned the drafting of the Workshop minutes.

After creating the Workshop bureau, the FMA presented the activities carried out through the DISMED Project after the Florence Workshop. Subsequently the EEA presented the activities connected with the implementation of the preliminary information technology design realised for the system.

The representatives of OACT and OSS made a presentation of their activity. The representatives of OACT, UMA and OSS confirmed their co-operation, commitments and availability.

Country presentation session

The participants subsequently introduced their country presentations made in the following order:

- Tunisian Institutions:
 - National Co-ordination Body (NCB)
 - *Institut des Régions Arides* (IRA)
 - *Centre National de Télédétection* (CNT)
 - *Direction des sols*
 - *Direction Générale des Forêts* (DGF)
- Algeria
- Egypt
- Italy
- Libyan Jamahiriya
- Morocco
- Portugal
- Turkey

The summaries of country presentations are reported in Annex 3.

DISMED Technical Session

After the FMA's presentation of the working document, the round table was opened on the following subjects:

- Mapping objectives and users;
- Mapping scale

The Plenary established the Terms of Reference for a Working Group aiming at the identification of the following elements that are essential to the mapping production:

1. Mapping objectives, users and typology;
2. Common Scales to be considered;

3. Map Legend ;
4. Reference data and parameters;
5. Methodology for the Analysis;
6. Reporting ;
7. Proposal of work programme.

The Working Group presented its report to the Plenary.

After discussion, the document was amended and unanimously approved, thus becoming the Terms of Reference of actions to be carried out by the Working Group on mapping.

The Terms of Reference are reported in Annex 4.

The participants visited the the *Institut des Régions Arides* in Médenine and were informed on the activities implemented by this Institution.

As far as DISMED's support to the Northern African countries is concerned, FMA recalled that the DISMED project budgetary lines established for each one of the four countries (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia) a total of 20000 USD for equipment and 36000 USD for support and services distributed along the three years of the project.

After a round table discussion, the participants agreed on the decision of contributing to the activities related to the setting up of the sensitivity mapping on desertification and drought as well as to the activities of the Working Group.

The Working Group on mapping consists of six experts from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Portugal, Italy, and Turkey. Morocco will be the Working Group co-ordinator, supported by FMA and OSS if necessary.

The Internet will be the group's working instrument.

The Plenary agreed on the decision that the Working Group on mapping has to identify the resources necessary for the good implementation of its work.

DISMED System

The European Environment Agency (EEA) presented to the participants a system that would be a useful model for DISMED. The presentation of the Working Group Terms of Reference on information systems, metadatabases and contents was examined and adopted by the participants.

The meeting established a Working Group for information systems, metadatabases and contents formed by six experts from Tunisia, Morocco , Algeria, Italy, Portugal, Turkey and a *Rapporteur*. Portugal is the Group coordinator and OSS (to be confirmed) is the *Rapporteur*.

Planning for the next DISMED Workshop

The next Workshop should take place in September 2002, on that occasion the two Working Groups will report on their activities.

It was agreed that benchmarks and indicators together with circulation of information are the subjects to be taken into consideration at the next Workshop.

The Terms of Reference for this Workshop will be distributed in June 2002.

The participants accepted and appreciated the generous offer made by the representative of Algeria, to host the September Workshop (venue and date to be confirmed).

Conclusions

Moreover the participants expressed their gratitude to the Ministry of Environment and Land Management of Tunisia, to the Governor of Medenine, to the hosting Institution, *Institut des Régions Arides* (IRA), and to the Co-ordination Committee (UNCCD, EEA, FMA) for the excellent organisation and services made available for this Workshop.

The Workshop documents and the relevant Final Report are available at the following websites :

DISMED Interest Group:

<http://eea.eionet.eu.int:8980/Members/irc/eionet-circle/Home/main>

DISMED Inter-regional Portal:

<http://p-case.iata.fi.cnr.it/dis-med/index.htm>

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Workshop Agenda

Wednesday, 27 February 2002

9.00 – 9.30 Participants registration

Opening Session

- 9.30 - 10.15
- Welcome addresses – Houcine Katteli, DG de l'IRA
 - Welcome addresses of the Ministry of Environment of Tunisia represented by Mr. M. Ismail
 - UNCCD, introduction to the workshop
 - FMA
 - EEA

Official opening speech of the Governor of Medenine

10.15 – 10.45 Coffee break

Follow-up session

- 10.45 – 11.30
- Constitution of the bureau of the workshop
 - FMA follow-up of Florence workshop
 - EEA
 - UMA
 - OSS

Countries presentations session (Tunisia)

- 11.30 – 12.30 Country technical presentations on thematic and sensitivity mapping on desertification and drought:
- NCB
 - IRA
 - CNT (Centre National de Télédétection)
 - Direction des sols
 - Direction Général des forets

12.30 – 14.00 Lunch

Countries presentations session (continue)

- 14.00 - 15.30 Country technical presentations on thematic and sensitivity mapping on desertification and drought:
- Algeria
 - Egypt
 - France
 - Italy

15.30 - 15.45 Coffee break

Countries presentations session (continue)

- 15.45 - 17.15 Country technical presentations on thematic and sensitivity mapping on desertification and drought:
- Libya
 - Morocco
 - Portugal
 - Turkey

Thursday, 28 February 2002**DISMED technical session (part 1)**

- 8.30 - 13.00 - Round table for the definition of objectives and end-users of the cartography on desertification and drought
- 10.30 - 10.45 Coffee break
- Round table for the definition of mapping products and scale for the cartography
- 13.00 – 14.00 Lunch

DISMED technical session (part 2)

- 14.00 – 18.00 Working group on sensitivity mapping on desertification and drought (working group on cartography)
- 14.00 – 18.00 Visit to the Arid Regions Institute of Medenine

Friday, 1 March 2002**DISMED technical session (part 3)**

- 9.00 - 10.30 discussion of report prepared by the working group on cartography
- 10.30 - 10.45 Coffee break
- 10.45 - 12.30 Adoption of report prepared by the working group on cartography
- 12.30 – 14.00 Lunch

DISMED mapping development session

- 14.00 - 15.30 Engagements of participants in mapping implementation activities and establishment of working group
- 15.30 - 15.45 Coffee break

DISMED Florence workshop follow-up

- 15.45 - 17.15
- Establishment of working group on information system, metadatabase and content
 - Planning of future activities
 - Program for DISMED 4th workshop

Saturday, 2 March 2002

- 9.00 - 10.30 Preparation of workshop minutes by drafting group
- 10.30 - 10.45 Coffee break
- 10.45 - 12.15 Adoption of conclusions and of country engagements
- 12.15 – 12.30 Closing session

Summaries of the interventions made by the participants

Summary of the presentation made by UMA

They expressed full satisfaction as regards the involvement of all the UMA countries of the Mediterranean coasts in this DISMED project, which represents a priority for PASR. Furthermore they emphasized the need to:

- Capitalize the efforts undertaken by the region's countries and institutions as regards the mapping on desertification.
- Strengthen the know-how and capacities of the Southern Mediterranean countries in this field.

As regards the issues related to this section of the sensitivity mapping on desertification, they stressed that it will be necessary to harmonize and standardize any approach and method as well as to standardize all scales and legends on the basis of reliable tools (aerial photography, satellite images, etc).

They also suggested to set up a number of thematic focal points (cartography) to act as national counterparts in this project, ready to work in close collaboration with the National Co-ordination Body (NCB) focal points of the different countries.

Summary of the presentation made by the NCB Tunisia

The first session of presentation of regional reports was reserved to the Tunisian delegation.

Five interventions were presented during this special session on Tunisia:

- 1 – The UNCCD focal point, presenting the report of the National Co-ordination Body (NCB), stressed on the regional activities concerning the subjects of sensitivity mapping on desertification.
- 2 – The following Tunisian institutions presented their contributions as regards the subject of this Workshop, in particular:
 - The Integrated Observatory of Arid and Desert Lands' activities carried out by the *Institut des Régions Arides de Médenine* (Institute of Arid Lands) (Cf. summary here below).
 - The *Centre National de Télédétection's* (National Remote Sensing Centre) activities on the desertification satellite alert (Cf. summary here below).
 - The Ministry of Agriculture's (Lands Directorate) work, started since 1970, which has enabled the production of quite a number of maps and thematic studies (Cf. summary here below).
 - The *Direction Générale des Forêts* (General Directorate of Forests) presented the programme for the Tunisian forest and pastoral inventory produced in 1988 and under implementation since 1998.

The Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS) and the *Organisation Africaine de Cartographie et de Télédétection* (OACT) presented two communications, summarised herewith.

Summary presentation made by the *Institut des Régions Arides de Médenine* - Tunisia

The presentation made by the *Institut des Régions Arides de Médenine* stressed on the role played by geographic information vis-à-vis decision-making - that is after the '70s - in particular as regards the issuing of sensitivity maps on desertification.

At present, the "*Observation Intégrée des Zones Arides et Désertiques*" is carrying out the production of maps, but also a reflection on those issues that are poorly known or explored.

The "*Observatoire*" distributes its maps to the bodies involved in development. It is also carrying out in favour of the actors of development the training activities aiming at desertification inventory and monitoring techniques at the level of both the Maghreb and the Arab world.

The "*Observatoire*" programme is also carrying out a range of co-operation actions with the centres of both the Maghreb region and the northern Mediterranean area (Italy, France, Germany, Spain...).

In favour of future generations (primary school, high school), an environmental education programme is making it possible to initiate young people to the mapping techniques.

This initiative is actually very successful at both the regional and the international level and it deserves the support of UNCCD and DISMED, in view of bringing it into widespread use.

Summary of presentation made by the *Centre National de Télédétection (CNT)* - Tunisia

Since 1990, the *Centre National de Télédétection* has implemented a sequence of three projects focused on the study of desertification in Southern Tunisia.

The first project, "*Etude de la désertification dans la région de Menzel Habib*" (Study on desertification in the *Menzel Habib* Region) aimed at characterizing the dynamics of the state of surface of soils by producing a map of soil degradation (1976 and 1990), a map of **vegetation sequences** and a map of the impact of the works carried out for development and combat to desertification between 1988 and 1991.

The second project "*veille satellitaire de la désertification en Tunisie Méridionale*" (desertification satellite **alert** in South Tunisia), concerned the setting up of a methodology, based on remote sensing and on the Geographic Information Systems, focusing on the surveillance of Tunisia arid zones. The study, made on the Menzel Habib, Nefzaoua and d'El Ouara sites, enabled the creation of a base of spectral data, the mapping of three indicators between 1976 and 1996 as well as the soil degradation diagnostic.

The third project, "CAMELEO", aimed at developing an overall desertification monitoring method for the southern area of the Mediterranean. Four study sites were selected, in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. This study permitted to determine the ecological evolution occurred in the latest 20 years based on spatial indicators, to set up a forecast experimental model and to outline a chain of processing actions for the (**monitoring**) managers.

Summary of the presentation made by the *Direction des Sols* - Tunisia

The preservation of natural resources and the protection of public infrastructures are the best means to combat desertification. The efforts made by the *Direction des Sols* (Ministry of Agriculture) were based on the inventory of resources and on the research activity carried out on both preservation and on the mapping of the desertification processes.

This is the framework in which several projects started off, in particular :

- Land resources and their sensitivity to desertification in southern Tunisia.
- Monitoring of the desertification "satellite **alert**".

These projects, also reinforced by specific programmes at the regional level, enabled to build up, within several institutions, a number of geographic information systems which will be useful for both monitoring and managing the **sensitive** areas.

Summary of the presentation made by OACT

OACT which had not been invited to participate in the Marrakech, Copenhagen and Florence Workshops, was definitely informed on the occasion of the Geneva "Side Event" during which I expressed our organisation's **interest** in DISMED, in accordance with its prerogatives in Africa and its role as Focal Point Institutions as regards mapping of natural resources, remote sensing, ecological monitoring and early warning in the PAR.

OACT is conducting a co-operation relationship with UMA (water resources charts of the UMA region) and has established a partnership relations with OSS.

In accordance with its prerogatives, OACT is ready and willing to play its role for the preparation of the Metadata legend, technical specifications, setting up, maintenance and updating, as well as to work to make available to the member states of the Mediterranean southern coast, the necessary tools, that is software, equipment and working and training methodology in favour of the staff of the member states.

Summary of the presentation made by OSS

The OSS representative briefly reminded the OSS activity related to the realisation of the recommendations resulting from the Florence Workshop.

This activity mostly focused on the following subjects :

- 1 smoothing the UMA and Egypt participation in the DISMED project - thanks to the contacts supported by its institutional and scientific focal points in these countries - and the DISMED scientific co-ordinator's missions to Tunisia and Algeria.
- 2 involve OACT in CRTEAN.
- 3 the improved conditions brought to the Tunisia and Morocco SID-SISEI by finally integrating a library, a virtual archive of maps and a database on impact indicators of PAN/LCD.

OSS has carried out a study on sensitivity mapping on desertification concerning the UMA countries and Egypt. A first methodological step of this work was submitted to the Workshop and presented in the form of a working document.

Based on the "Digital Chart of the World" geo-referenced database, a cartographic apportionment 1/1M and 1/2M was also executed. OSS was able to supply every country with the appropriate data necessary for the updating and to create the reference topographic **fund** of the sensitivity map on desertification.

Summary of the presentation made by France

France shares UNCCD's participation objectives. Therefore, as regards Annex IV, this country has an observer status. In fact, France considers that the desertification processes in this area are minor ones and they do not justify any specific NAP adoption. Nevertheless a series of factors producing some very serious desertification phenomena do exist, however, their consequences are often different ones:

- As regards agriculture, PAC produces either land **abandonment**, which often leads to spontaneous or voluntary reforestation – with no **overgrazing** phenomenon, or to intensive agriculture, on the contrary.
- This phenomenon may bring with it abusive utilisation of water resources, in particular as far as ground water is concerned. This situation is even more serious during the

tourism high season, when rainfall reaches its highest peak the two sectors are in competition, thus increasing their water demand. On the coastal area this may cause the intrusion of salty water in aquifers, and therefore soil salinity. Some nitrates pollution phenomena also exist.

- The rainfall ratio which is often marked by scattered and heavy showers, produces the erosion of the most fragile soils. In particular, this may be the case occasionally occurring after forest fires, which denude soils that sometime consist of thin layers on calcareous substrata.

Beside IGN, for the production of base mapping, the main mapping and thematic information sources are:

- IFN for forest inventory (delivered every 10 years)
- Ministry of Agriculture and the SCEES for information on agriculture (in particular as regards yearly inventories)
- Ministry of Environment and IFEN (EEA focal point) for different environment information.
- A number of research labs, in particular the CEFE and the remote sensing community of Montpellier.

Summary of the presentation made by Italy

The aim of the existing sensitivity maps in Italy is to support local decision makers in understanding ongoing processes, planning interventions of mitigation and in the monitoring of their effectiveness. The existing maps of sensitivity to desertification refer to local actions to combat desertification, as stated in the Italian NAP that was based on a preliminary map. These maps are promoted by local authorities with the support of some research institutions and utilised various sources of data such as soil maps, pedo-climatic maps, soil availability water capacity (AWC), soil erodibility index, climatological data (rainfall, temperature, aridity index, drought index), vegetation maps, NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index), land use maps, geomorphological characteristics (slope, aspect, side shape, Digital Elevation Model), demographic and economic aspects maps, protected areas maps. The sensitivity maps, at different spatial scale, refers to Sardinia Region, Sicily Region, Puglia Region, Basilicata Region, Magra River Basin Authority, Sarno River Basin Authority, Left Sele River Basin Authority, Right Sele River Basin Authority.

The adopted methodologies are based on the application of indicators, spatially located, able to express physical and socio-economic processes related to the environmental degradation and desertification. The sensitivity to desertification is evaluated in qualitative and quantitative terms. The evaluation of the sensitivity is parametric and classes of growing sensitivity are defined. The allocation of an area in a sensitivity class is determined by the sum or the geometric average of the scores calculated for each index. This methodology reduces the subjectivity in the estimate, taking into account that the parameters weight attribution is the result of the professional competences integration involved in the study.

Existing models dealing with physical, ecological and socio-economic aspects of land degradation need to be reviewed in view of their integration into a multi-scale, multi-temporal dynamic modeling framework and decision support instruments. These models need to take into account *end-use, scientific and technical* aspects of the integration.

In order to maximise the diffusion of knowledge, and easy access to information about the land degradation, desertification and drought issues, countries of Annex IV of United Nation Convention to Combat Desertification have promoted the CLEMDES project (Clearing House Mechanism on Desertification for the Northern Mediterranean Region), that has been favourably evaluated by the European Commission on January 2002. The CLEMDES project aims to promote the development of a network with a broad social participation through the implementation of an internet based tool called "Clearing House Mechanism" (CHM).

Summary of the presentation made by Morocco

As regards thematic mapping in respect of degradation of natural resources and desertification, the Morocco document mostly consists of the following studies and inventories:

1. Base **pedologic** studies at different scales
2. Pastoral inventories scale 1 / 2,000,000
3. Forest inventories scale 1 / 100.000
4. Agro-ecological mapping scale 1 / 2,000,000
5. Atlas of Morocco agriculture, consisting of 11 thematic maps and 34 statistical charts
6. SOTER Project: database on soils and relief (scale 1 / 5,000,000)
7. Soil erosion mapping in Morocco through remote sensing and SIG.

Concerned Institutions and monitoring systems:

1. System for the circulation of information on desertification (SCID).
2. Desertification monitoring Indicators.
3. Institutions producing information.

In particular, as far as desertification monitoring indicators are concerned, four pilot sites have been selected so as, on the one hand, they represent the most serious desertification forms existing in Morocco, and for which, on the other hand, combat programmes have been implemented or are currently under implementation.

These sites concern (i) an area interested by route development , (ii) an area interested by forest development, (iii) a water supply area manifesting salinity presence and (iv) an area for the observation of the dynamics of the pre-Saharan ecosystem. All the data and information collected will be examined and evaluated in order to come to a final list of desertification monitoring indicators

Furthermore, a device carrying out short term monitoring and long-term desertification surveillance is in place and must be reinforced: this is the ecological surveillance network (ROSELT) developed by OSS.

In consideration of the diversity of ecosystems existing in this country, 11 potential territories have been identified and three of them, as it happens, Issouqui-Fezouata and Oued Mird are labelled by ROSELT.

Summary of the presentation made by Portugal

The NAP was based on the scientific and technical information given by different organisations and with the support of the civil society. In this process participated 21 Services of 8 Ministers, NGOs, Schools and Research Institutions. Specific thematic products have been identified according with the condition that the information should be reported to the county level (NUT IV).

The geographic information system supporting the Portuguese NAP is described in the work of Pimenta, Santos & Rodrigues (1997) – A proposal of indices to identify desertification prone areas, presented in the “*Jornadas de reflexión sobre el Anexo IV de aplicación para el Mediterráneo Norte – Convenio de Lucha contra la Desertificación*”, Murcia (22–23 May), annexed to this report. The work of development of these indicators, carried out by the DISMED Portuguese Group, is conducted along main lines:

- The present information system will be used till a new one is made available;
- Any new information system aimed at supporting the NAP in future must be able to include all the results produced by the research made during the different activities currently in progress;

- All the technical work developed by the Portuguese DISMED is referred to the group of indicators and indexes proposed by the ANPA – Enne & Zucca (2000) – Desertification indicators for the European Mediterranean Region – Stat of the art and possible methodological approaches, Ed. ANPA, Roma -, which already includes the indicators and indexes used by the Portuguese system.

Terms of Reference of the Working Group on sensitivity mapping on desertification and drought

The members of the Working Group were in charge of examining and defining the following issues:

1. Mapping objectives, users and typology;
2. Common Scales to be considered;
3. Map Legend ;
4. Reference data;
5. Methodology for the Analysis;
6. Reporting ;
7. Proposal of work programme.

1. Mapping objectives, users and typology

The Working Group agreed upon the overall objective being "The representation of actual status and dynamics of desertification and drought as related to bio-physics and socio-economic systems".

The proposals indicated on line 4 of Table 1 of the "Working document", presented by the DISMED co-ordination board, were unanimously accepted as follows:

- Users: responsible of NAP and PASR implementation;
- Objective : monitoring of the desertification phenomena at the regional and inter-régional level;
- Typology of map: monitoring of the inter-regional dynamics of the phenomena examined in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

2. Common Scales to be considered

The discussions aimed at considering that the problems of desertification and the impact of this plague concern the countries of both the Mediterranean coasts. That is why it is necessary to adopt both a common approach to and a shared scale to combat this phenomenon.

The proposed scale is the one accepted on the occasion of the Workshop Plenary, that is 1/1,000,000.

3. Map legend

The Working Group, given the operations implemented at both the regional and international level, proposes to adopt a quality-type legend in five classes, in accordance with the legend utilised by UNEP/ISRIC in 1990.

4. Reference Data

The preparation of the “map” must take into consideration the data made available - easy to be produced - and the reference parameters - which are related to the bio-physic and socio-economic aspects – as well as their dynamics.

The dynamic view of the desertification process is important for the identification of the areas already affected as well as of those which are at risk in the future. This difference is particularly important for the planning of interventions, also considering the difference in necessary resources (human and/or financial ones) that must be applied.

For information only, the reference subjects with respect to desertification could be the following ones :

- Geomorphology,
- Pedology,
- Topography,
- Climatology,
- Vegetation cover,
- Soil occupation,
- Production System,
- Demography and employment,
- Animal pressure on the area,
- Hydrogeology,
- Any other subject on the different manifestations of desertification (sand accumulation ...).

5. Methodology for the analysis

The utilisation of simplified models of the desertification process is the analysis approach proposed.

Models will be mainly based on the combination of the synthesis parameters relevant to:

- soil
- vegetation
- climate
- management of the territory and of its resources

6. Reporting

The group recommends that, in general, the action be based more on the reporting than on the mere production of thematic maps.

In this framework, reporting means : to make available to partners any information on the situation and trends of desertification in the Mediterranean region.

This includes : information on the most important results of the analysis; maps, graphs and tables useful to describe the evaluation; metadata and information on the quality of data, results, etc..

7. Work programme

It is proposed that a Working Group is formed, which includes all the countries and regional institutions concerned. The Working Group will have to submit to the DISMED next meeting, scheduled for September 2002, a detailed report on the following subjects:

- Operational Methodology
- Cartographic Projection
- GIS and satellite image processing Software, together with transfer gateway
- Cartographic production systems and methods
- Layers format with documentation sheet
- Data accessibility
- Time schedule of activities

In order to execute its task the Group is invited to examine the main cartography products prepared by both the concerned countries and the regional and international organisations.

OSS commits itself in making available the topographic base (DCW) to the UMA countries and Egypt.

EEA commits itself in making available for the concerned countries both the data regarding the Mediterranean area, loading them in the « regional data repository », and the model-sheet developed by EEA for DISMED for the circulation of information.

Desertification Information System to support National Action Programmes in the Mediterranean (DIS/MED)

Working group on information system, metadatabase and content: Terms of Reference



UNCCD Secretariat
Bonn, Germany

Background

The DIS-MED partners agreed at the Florence workshop (Technical workshop on NAP Information needs, 20-22 June 2001) that the **plan of action (working programme) for** the forthcoming six-month period would focus on the following areas:

- A. Thematic and sensitivity mapping on desertification and drought;
- B. Establishment of a meta-database on desertification and drought connecting the country partners of DIS-MED;
- C. Access to existing documentation;
- D. Access to results from research and development (R&D) projects operating in the Mediterranean area.

During the Workshop the importance of a more direct involvement of the country partners in the development of the DIS/MED Information System was also stressed, through the establishment of working groups, focused on the development of specific products. In particular, priority was given to the establishment of an “Internet-based Working Group on the existing approaches / models of meta-data on drought and desertification” (ref. minutes of the Workshop), from now on referred to as “DIS-MED Working Group on information system, metadatabase and content”.

During the latest co-ordination meeting (Rome, January 4, 2002) it was agreed that EEA and FMA hold a technical meeting in order to define future actions to be taken for the implementation of the tools necessary to proceed as regards points B, C and D, and propose the ToR for the Working Group. The ToR will be discussed and adopted at the Tunisian Technical Workshop (Djerba, 27 February-2 March 2002).

The EEA-FMA technical meeting was held in Copenhagen on 5-6 February 2002. During the meeting the development of a prototype of the DIS-MED information system was discussed. The

meeting produced a better definition and further qualifications of the DIS-MED operational context and the draft ToR for the Working Group. The minutes of the meeting are provided in a separate document.

The proposed Terms of Reference for the Working Group are provided in this document.

Operational context

As identified in the preliminary design, the DISMED information system is:

- an inter-regional gateway;
- a national gateway for each participating country;
- facilities and tools for information methodologies and data sharing and retrieval,
- a repository for project documents, data and methodologies (final products at the Mediterranean level).

A participatory approach is proposed for the development of the information system, based on three main groups:

- a *coordination board* responsible for co-ordination and development:
 - o UNCCD Secretariat
 - o EEA and FMA;
- the *plenary* formed by the representatives nominated by UNCCD national focal points of the countries participating in the project, the co-ordination board and other facilitating institutions (OSS, UMA, etc.);
- a *task force for implementation* formed by the project team and the representatives of those countries that are ready to take an active part in the work of implementation of the project. The task force will operate through specific working groups, each one with its own terms of reference.

Objectives of the working group

The overall objective of the Working Group is to promote with the participating countries a sense of ownership of the information system.

Responsibilities

- Participate with the project team in the development process of the Information System prototype:
 - o Agree on the information system terminology.
 - o Provide and insert a selection of national test data and metadata
 - o Test the functionality of the information system;
- Evaluate the prototype of the information system at agreed milestones;
- Make recommendations for endorsement of the information system and report to the Plenary;
- Collect and collate the reactions of the Plenary and make recommendations to the project team for the further implementation of the information system;
- Identify a group of countries volunteering to populate the information system and make it operational;
- Setting up of the interest groups as identified in the Florence Workshop (“Interest group for access to existing documentation” and “Interest group for access to results of R&D projects operating in the Mediterranean area”);
- Identification and definition of ToR for other working groups as necessary (follow-up of the task force for implementation).

Expected results

The Working Group will submit to the Plenary DISMED session a report on the information system prototype and make a presentation at the validation workshop (Copenhagen, June 2002, date and venue to be confirmed). Other expected products are:

- Information system Prototype with test data (with the project team);
- Recommendations for the follow-up of the Working Group.

Time schedule

The Working Group will be established at the Tunisian Workshop and will start operations in the first week of March. The report should be delivered by June 2002. Intermediate milestones will be agreed with the project team. At the validation workshop decisions should be taken on the follow-up of the Working Group and on the task force for implementation.

The operational phase with volunteer countries will begin after June 2002.

Working procedures

The work will be based on the use of Internet tools. The participants, under the guidance of a coordinator, will exchange e-mails and use the EEA/CIRCLE Interest Group facilities to share documents and access to the online prototype of the information system. A pre-meeting of the Working Group could be held before the validation workshop if necessary.

The co-ordinator will organise the contribution of the Working Group (in particular the evaluation sessions at agreed milestones), the delivery of products and the liaison with the project team. He/she will act as animator/moderator of the CIRCLE Interest Group. The group will identify a *Rapporteur* who will be in charge of presenting the results of the work to the Plenary.

Composition of the Working Group

The Working Group will consist of a core of 6 active experts, who are able and willing to dedicate at least 5 working days to this task in the March-June 2002 period. A further group made of a maximum of 10 people in total, could participate in the Working Group as observers,. The Working Group should be nominated by UNCCD National Co-ordination Bodies. The co-ordinator and the *Rapporteur* should ensure at least 10 working days each during the period of activity.