



Montpellier, 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2009

Dear colleagues of EDN network,

UNCCD adopted a 10-year strategic plan and framework during the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8) in Madrid (September 2007). Many of the decisions made during COP 8 refer to indicators that should be developed to enable: (i) decision makers to assess the implementation of this strategy and progress achieved on its operational objectives, (ii) drawing up of national and regional reports, and (iii) estimation of soil degradation and desertification trends, progress achieved through local projects, the impact of public policies, etc., at various scales.

The scientific community was asked to underpin the work of CST to help it draw up proposals that will be put forward at COP9 in 2009. Prior to this, an intersessional CST meeting and a CRIC session were held in November 2008 at Istanbul. Regional scientific meetings will also be held during 2009. CST9 will be held (probably in October 2009 in Geneva) in the form of an international scientific conference that will rule on proposals from the scientific community. This conference will be organized by a selected consortium (DSD, Dryland Science for Development) of which European DeserNet is part of. In addition, the CST Bureau should undertake the selection of a minimum set of indicators for the COP9 in 2009. The final goal is to produce a really simple output in order to reach an agreement between Parties. This has to be ready in July 2009.

Within this framework, the French Scientific Committee on Desertification (CSFD) is currently working on a first proposal of indicators at various levels. The spirit of this work is not strictly scientific since it targets decision makers. The messages should be simple and the results useful.

After three working meetings of the CSFD in 2008, a first working list has been established taking into account the main existing indicators from literature (see literature references listed in appendix) as well as statistics and databases on international organization websites. In addition, members of the CSFD Working Group made several conclusions leading our current work (see in appendix 1).

The final output should be a list of indicators with, as far as possible, the following information: definition, units, spatial and temporal scales of validity, UNCCD strategic objective, main users, methodology, cost, interpretation (thresholds, benchmarks, contextualization...), data availability and references.

In that context, the CSFD has proposed four lists of indicators complemented with some of the above information:

- **National data for country characterization.** These data are available in any national statistic agencies.
- **National or sub-regional indicators** classified according to the UNCCD objectives<sup>1</sup> (Type 1 [S1 to S9] and Type 4) and by main items.
- **Local indicators** that are relevant to assess local situations and are based mainly on field works.

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<sup>1</sup> Type 1 (S1 to S9): Indicators for global assessment of the fulfilment of strategic objectives; Type 4: Indicators that can be used by decision makers to estimate trends at different scales.

- ***Significant trend indexes gathering indicators.*** These indexes are complex and are meant to assess situations and trends.

During the CST intersessional session held in Istanbul in November 2008, the CSFD President and several members of EDN advisory board agreed upon a possible cooperation on that matter. This cooperation has been approved in late November upon an email exchange between CSFD and EDN steering Committee.

***On behalf of CSFD, as the President, I think these first working lists of indicators would greatly benefit from the advices of EDN members.*** This work could lead to a common output of the European Region that could feed the UNCCD process. ***As we are also member of the DSD consortium, I think that it is very important that we create solid input of our work into the DSD process.*** This would underline our major aim to create synergies and not redundancies in action.

In that context, the CSFD Working Group is pleased to share with you its current indicators' working lists for acknowledgment, proposal and input. These working lists are presently downloadable from EDN website.

After having received and integrated your comments on the attached lists, we will organize a common CSFD/EDN meeting in order to synthesize your comments (probably mid March 2009, location TBA). We will also provide this synthesis to the coordinator of the DSD consortium, Mark Winslow. It has been clearly stated by CST that the DSD has to interact with regional meetings. As members of all processes I can guarantee a stable interaction between EDN, DSD and the CST Bureau.

The roadmap for EDN cooperation and the inflow of information into the DSD consortium and the CST Bureau is the following:

1. EDN Bureau sends the working list of indicators complemented with the ToRs to EDN members for advices (January 2009);
2. EDN/CSFD working group analyses and synthesizes comments from EDN members (March 2009);
3. The final output will be a consolidated list of indicators:
  - 3.1. This list will be proposed to the CST bureau through the WEOG CST Vice-President (Richard Escadafal) (End of March 2009)
  - 3.2. This list will also be proposed to the DSD Consortium for the preparation of the scientific style conference of the CST 2009 (End of March 2009).

On behalf of the CSFD and of EDN, I would greatly appreciate your active collaboration on that important matter.



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## Appendix 1 - Summary of the main conclusions of CSFD working group on indicators

Members of the CSFD Working Group noted that:

- **The indicators are not just ‘raw’ figures.** They are involved in environmental, historical and institutional settings. **The indicators thus have spatiotemporal validity limits, so their significance is not necessarily universal.** Universal signs and symbols of land degradation and successes of the desertification combat might not exist.
- Because of the previous point, **the list of indicators is not definitively set** and could change with time.
- **The indicators are aimed at measuring changes** such as improvements (or not) in conditions for local inhabitants. Two steps are required when defining an indicator: **(i) to define the individual and combined variables considered** in order to obtain an all-encompassing indicator of an important factor (e.g. level of well-being of inhabitants) at a given time (status indicator), and in a given area (e.g. village area), and **(ii) to measure and interpret changes in indicator values.** This involves the interval between measurements, the significance of observed variations, trend analysis and finally diagnosis.
- **The indicators should be implemented with caution** because there is a risk of completely contradictory interpretations (e.g. an increase in the number of motor-driven pumps could be interpreted as a sign of development or, conversely, as a desertification factor).
- Statistics are available in all international and national data repositories that could be considered as ‘indicators’, especially when long-term patterns are considered; however, the ways these statistical data have been collected are often questionable. **The Working Group will put forward proposals on these statistics.**
- Indicators obtained from ‘physical’ measurements are more objective than those developed from socioeconomic surveys. There are still methodological difficulties to overcome with respect to cross-tabulating remote-sensing data with data concerning people and societies.
- Many themes have received less research attention than the biophysical aspects (e.g. soils). Further research would thus be required (biodiversity, poverty indicators, etc.).
- Training on the use of the indicators should be considered.

The Working Group reviewed existing or on going indicators from development or research programs (research institutions, international organizations, United Nations, ...) as well as statistics and databases on international organization websites (FAO, UNEP, UNDP, WB, etc.).

The working group has proposed a minimum set of national statistics, national or regional indicators clustered within several themes, local indicators essentially collected from field surveys as well as significant trend indexes gathering indicators.

Concerning the current work output:

- The indicators should be **‘contextualized’** from a spatial, temporal (historical) and institutional standpoint.
- They should be presented with their validity limits, a method, feasibility and cost.
- It would also be interesting to develop indicators on decentralization within countries.

## **Appendix 2 - Terms of Reference**

### **EDN/CSFD contribution to a European proposal of a minimum set of indicators for the UNCCD 10 year Strategy**

UNCCD adopted a 10-year strategic plan and framework during the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8) in Madrid (September 2007). Many of the decisions made during COP 8 refer to indicators that should be developed. The scientific community was asked to underpin the work of CST to help it draw up proposals that will be put forward at COP9 in 2009. Regional scientific meetings will also be held during 2009. CST9 will be held in the form of an international scientific conference that will rule on proposals from the scientific community.

Within this framework, the French Scientific Committee on Desertification (CSFD) has started to work on a first proposal of indicators at various levels. A first working list has been established by the CSFD at the end of 2008 taking into account the main existing indicators found in the literature and the main international organizations websites. This list is divided into four sub-lists as follows:

- ***National data for country characterization.*** These data are available in any national statistic agencies.
- ***National or sub-regional indicators*** classified according to the UNCCD objectives<sup>2</sup> (Type 1 [S1 to S9] and Type 4) and by main items.
- ***Local indicators*** that are relevant to assess local situations and are based mainly on field works.
- ***Significant trend indexes gathering indicators.*** These indexes are complex and are meant to assess situations and trends.

In this scope, starting from the four current CSFD lists of indicators available on EDN website, **it is asked to each EDN member to:**

1. Review these initial lists
2. Validate (or not) each of these proposed indicators
3. Prioritize those indicators
4. Complement these lists with missing relevant indicators
5. Complement the literature references with relevant missing ones

This preliminary work will lead to a common EDN/CSFD working group. The final outcome will be a consolidated list of indicators as a contribution to the CST Scientific Conference and CST9. This list of indicators will be complemented as far as possible with the following information: definition, units, spatial and temporal scales of validity, UNCCD strategic objective, main users, methodology, cost, interpretation (thresholds, benchmarks, contextualization...), data availability and references.

CSFD will carry out responses' gathering and moderate EDN/CSFD specific working group set up for this duty.

**Dead line: 27th of February 2009**

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<sup>2</sup> Type 1 (S1 to S9): Indicators for global assessment of the fulfilment of strategic objectives; Type 4: Indicators that can be used by decision makers to estimate trends at different scales.

### **Appendix 3 - The different types of indicator according to UNCCD**

#### **T1: Type 1 - Global indicators for assessment of the implementation of strategic objectives**

*Strategic objective 1: to improve the living conditions of affected populations*

- S1: decrease in numbers of people impacted by desertification/land degradation and droughts
- S2: increase in numbers of people living above poverty line
- S3: decrease in numbers of people below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption in affected areas

*Strategic objective 2: to improve the condition of affected ecosystems*

- S4: decrease in affected areas
- S5: increase in net primary productivity

*Strategic objective 3: to generate global benefits through UNCCD*

- S6: increase in carbon stocks in affected areas
- S7: areas of forest, agricultural and aquaculture under sustainable management

*Strategic objective 4: to increase available funds for combating desertification and drought adaptation*

- S8: increase in available funds
- S9: development of policies addressing desertification

#### **T4: Type 4 - Indicators for decision-makers, enabling the assessment of trends, success and failures at different scales**

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