

Declaration of the Beijing Ministerial Conference on Regional Cooperation to Implement the Convention to Combat Desertification in Asia

13-15 May 1997

Recalling and Affirming Our commitment to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, which entered into force on the 26th December 1996;

Bearing in mind that the commitments taken by the States of the Earth at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 are about to be reviewed by the Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and that an early implementation of the Convention's provisions would be an essential element for the successful follow up of Agenda 21;

Mindful that affected country Parties in the Asian region share common environmental objectives despite the diversity of the region's eco-systems and that both anthropogenic and natural factors causing desertification threaten sustainable development in the Asia region, particularly in the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones;

Welcoming the outcome of the Regional Conference on the Implementation of the Convention in Asia which took place at New Delhi in August 1996 and the preparatory steps taken by the United Nations bodies, governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations in developing a region-wide strategic programme of action;

Having considered that regional and sub-regional cooperation in Asia is necessary to complement progress undertaken at the national and local levels in the framework of the National Action Programme to combat desertification and drought and that international support is required to strengthen regional efforts through various forms of partnership arrangements.

Recognizing the essential role that non-governmental and community based organizations are called upon to play in the implementation of the Convention.

In the traditional regional spirit of cooperation, the participants of the Beijing Ministerial Conference agree and resolve that they shall:

1. Urge All Asian States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention before the 29 June 1997 deadline to become a Party at the first session of the Conference of the Parties to be held in Rome from 29 September to 10 October 1997;
2. Invite all affected countries in Asia to pursue the preparation and/or adjustment of National Action Programme to Combat Desertification and mitigate the effects of drought

paying due attention to the consultative and participatory process advocated by the Convention;

3. Endorse the conclusions of the two sessions of the working group which are annexed to this Declaration;

4. Recommend to strengthen regional cooperation among Asian countries in ensuring the effective launching of activities through a pragmatic approach relying on the establishment of six thematic networks;

5. Further recommend to review the possible development of sub-regional programme initiatives that would foster transboundary cooperation in the sustainable use of natural resources and assist in linking national and regional initiatives.

6. Express their appreciation to the Government of the People's Republic of China for the quality of its hospitality, the excellent arrangements for the Ministerial Conference and the willingness to host the Thematic Network on Assessment and Monitoring of Desertification of the Regional Action Programme to Combat Desertification in Asia.