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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Performance of the programme of work and budget,
including implementation of the resolutions of the
Environment Assembly**

**Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/24 on combating
desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting
sustainable pastoralism and rangelands**

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report provides an update on the progress made in the implementation of resolution 2/24 on combating desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands. In resolution 2/24, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme called on **the United Nations Environment Programme** to raise global awareness of sustainable rangelands and pastoralism and requested the Executive Director to report to the United Nations Environment Assembly on progress in the implementation of the resolution.

The report includes the progress made regarding the request by the United Nations Environment Assembly to the United Nations Environment Programme to explore whether there are gaps in the current provision of technical support and in the environmental data and socioeconomic assessments.

The Environment Programme is responding to the resolution mainly through collaboration with national and international institutions organizing side events at high-level meetings and by launching new projects on sustainable land management. The projects contribute to achieving the expected accomplishments of the environmental governance and ecosystems management subprogrammes of the programmes of work for the bienniums 2016–2017 and 2018–2019.

* UNEP/EA.3/1.

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides information on the implementation of resolution 2/24 on combating desertification, land degradation and drought and promoting sustainable pastoralism and rangelands, together with recommendations and suggested action.

II. Progress in the implementation of resolution 2/24

2. The United Nations Environment Programme has begun to conduct a gap analysis on existing data and information on assessments of rangelands and pastoralism, pursuant to paragraph 9 of resolution 2/24. The gap analysis will identify information and gaps by comparing available and accessible information about rangelands and pastoralists with the information on the needs in relation to promoting sustainable pastoralism and the protection of rangelands. The methodology and a web tool for collecting and storing metadata have been developed and tested in a pilot study exploring the availability of information on rangelands and pastoralism in international environmental databases. Preliminary analysis shows that, while there is rich information on habitats, ecosystems and livestock production, among others, there is a general lack of information disaggregated at a level relevant for informing decision-making on rangelands and pastoralism. Seed funds have been mobilized by the Environment Programme to launch the gap analysis and GRID-Arendal has been contracted to assist in the implementation of the study.

3. Project proposals with a focus on sustainable pastoralism and rangelands are being developed by the Environment Programme to be submitted to be considered for funding from the Global Conservation Fund, in relation to paragraphs 3, 4 and 6 of the resolution. Those project proposals comply with the recommendations made in the resolution and the programme of work of the Ecosystems Division.

4. During the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Cancun, Mexico, in December 2016, the Environment Programme, jointly with the Instituto Potosino de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica, Conservation International, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Society for Range Management, the International Land Coalition, the International Livestock Research Institute, the International Rangeland Congress, the International Grassland Congress, the Coalition of European Lobbies for Eastern African Pastoralism, Yolda Initiative, and DiversEarth, organized a side event entitled “World’s grasslands and rangelands at risk: the role of pastoralists and livestock to conserve global biodiversity”. During this event, 28 countries and 46 organizations endorsed a statement that declares that, globally, natural grasslands and rangelands are critically endangered and urges action to protect and maintain the services that these ecosystems provide to sustain human life. This action responds to paragraphs 11, 12 and 13 of the resolution.

5. In September 2016, the Environment Programme, jointly with the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, co-hosted a side event at the International Union for Conservation of Nature World Congress in Hawaii, United States of America. This action responds to paragraphs 11, 12 and 13 of the resolution.

6. Also in September 2016, the Environment Programme participated in the consultation workshop for stakeholders in the East and Southern Africa region, held in Nairobi, with the objective to brief civil society from the region on resolution 2/24 and discuss the plans for its implementation at the country level, in relation to paragraph 5 of the resolution.

7. The Environment Programme has joined a steering committee working towards designating an international year on rangelands and pastoralists. Other members include the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the International Rangeland Congress, the International Livestock Research Institute and the International Land Coalition.

8. At its sixteenth session, held in Libreville, the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment recognized the importance of resolution 2/24 and called for its further implementation in Africa. In addition, it fully supported the submission to the General Assembly of a draft resolution designating 2020 as the international year of rangelands and pastoralism. This action responds to paragraphs 3 and 5 of the resolution.

9. During the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa held in Ordos, China, in September 2017, the Environment Programme, jointly with the Governments of China, Kenya, Mongolia and South Africa, the Food and

Agriculture Organization and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, organized a side event on the nexus between land and wildlife.

III. Recommendations and suggested action

10. A report based on the gap analysis of existing data and information on assessments of rangelands and pastoralism will be submitted to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session and the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification at its fourteenth session. It will include recommendations for action that could contribute to raising global awareness of rangelands and pastoralism, as well as enhancing sustainable pastoralism and protection of rangelands, while taking into consideration local and indigenous knowledge and technologies.

11. The United Nations Environment Assembly may wish to consider the establishment of a (or strengthening an existing) multisectoral platform to facilitate the interaction between ministries of the environment and other relevant ministries (i.e., those of agriculture, livestock or land-use planning), indigenous peoples and civil society organizations, to foster integrated rangeland management and sustainable pastoralism as a key means to contribute to the achievement of multiple Sustainable Development Goals .

12. The Environment Programme will continue to support the ongoing joint effort of countries, United Nations entities and civil society to designate an international year of rangelands and pastoralists, which will increase worldwide understanding of the importance of rangelands and pastoralism for, inter alia, global food security, promote sustainable pastoralism and rangeland management and enlighten policies in both developed and developing countries.
