



## II INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON DESERTIFICATION AND MIGRATIONS

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### CONCLUSSIONS

#### Introduction

Desertification and migrations are closely related to poverty. Poverty, however, is not a technical problem, but an environmental and social one. In fact, half of the world's people are poor and vulnerable to be caught in these processes. But desertification is not a neutral phenomenon thus extreme poverty or even "wicked" poverty is its most violent manifestation.

Desertification is brought about by the lack of human capacity to manage the distribution of the planet's population. Poverty, desertification and migration greatly impact on women and youth. To this end, we must foster the strategies that will strengthen these social groups and make them less vulnerable.

The first action to be undertaken is to bring down poverty levels by stimulating local communities. But despite this, desertification is a must if farmers continue living in poverty. International cooperation is essential in order to reduce poverty and have an impact on the desertification. Actually, this is included in the Spanish cooperation policy and in numerous international cooperation initiatives.

#### Desertification and migration interplaying by case study.

1. Emigration is the consequence of an intricate interplay of social, environmental, political, personal and ethnical factors. Generally, it is found in deprived social strata and in Medium Human Development Index, with hardly any cultural tradition and where unsuitable political situations and institutions have led to tougher living conditions and lowed the trend in youth aspiration upon depletion and contamination of natural resources.
2. On the other hand, desertification is caused by applying the wrong policies by the developed countries, which have got even worse due to a set of internal and elitist policies that threaten not only the environment sustainability, but also living conditions of the majorities. Furthermore, some practice hardly sustainable, such as over cattle grazing, over cropping, agrochemical pollution, bad management of fragile soils and non-sustainable exploitation policies have speed up the process. In addition, natural phenomena affected by anthropogenic causes, such as global and climatic warming, hydric and wind erosion, lost of soil fertility, dune expansion and over-use of irrigation water have dried up the Aral Sea and led to a heavy salinized soils and aquiferous. Consequently, this has changed humidity patterns, cold days and obviously living conditions due to reduced crop yields and less accessible drinking water. Likewise, such phenomena have speed up and

- increased the desertification process in Mongolia and other areas. In fact, it now occupies 27.5% of Chinese territory. For this purpose, an increased number of inhabitants have been forced to emigrate to nearby medium and large cities located in other country's areas.
3. In Mexico impoverished soil occupies 45% of total area, a process that has accelerated two types of migration: one that is internal in nature and heads for medium cities and megalopolis and the external, where Mexico sends almost half million of immigrants to the United States and in turn the former received over 20 million dollars remittance.
  4. Immigration is a stressful process that uproots emigrants from their surroundings, being subject to personal and cultural pressure which not always leads to improved socioeconomic conditions. Usually, broad family networks are used to smooth the process of emigration and integration into the new place. Government schemes should devise suitable policies in order to favour immigration in those areas with good potential development but at the same time attempt to prevent the inflow in fragile, dangerous or overpopulated areas.
  5. Fight against desertification is rooted in additional activities such as reforestation, birth control, sustainable agricultural-livestock practice as well as vertically and horizontally-integrated processes designed to create decent employment in emigration source areas. The green houses of Almeria are an example of alternative production methods that together with job creation in deprived areas are based on technological advances. These advances are focused on a efficient use of water, enhanced genetics, biological control, organic agriculture, economy of scale, adjustment of supply in the face of an European market with a known and stable demand, as well as the integration of market mechanisms that allow an optimized production and commercialization process thanks to traceability and phytosanitary guarantees, along with computing processes. All of these activities combined have transformed the production processes, revenues, migration patterns and production structures of family companies into medium and large agro-enterprises, with wedged employees. Also, in line, a number of complementary companies and services have been created which help to keep up the expansion and sustainable process. The said activities have been carried out without subsidies or aids. Production and commercialization process are more efficient thanks to several experimental and scientific research mechanisms as well as an in-depth knowledge of market and production process instruments.

## Proposals

### *1. International and Interdisciplinary Research*

Currently, international and multidisciplinary institutions on the interrelation between desertification and migration are inexistent. These studies should include an analysis of socioenvironmental conditions where emigration and immigration take place to better understand how the adjustment measures can lessen negative effects and reverse in a medium term the desertification processes, with a major emphasis on youth and female employment. Likewise, a more in-dept analysis of causes and consequences for migration is needed along with improved existing statistics and a conceptual framework for desertification and migrations. Case studies are to provide international, national and local

policies that will take into account both challenges and supported by an interdisciplinary expert network.

The international organizations and specially those within the United Nations system, such as the UNCCD, the affected countries and civil society should be active stakeholders when it comes to promote scientific and technological development that will enhance property and service delivery and economic activities in the arid areas.

## 2. *International initiatives to fight against desertification and migration*

Migration is not only to be deemed as a negative phenomenon. In fact, the right to migrate, seen as people's eagerness to improve their living conditions, should be addressed from a solidarity perspective and international cooperation. Pro-active strategies for adjustment and mitigation will bring together desertification challenges and its impact on migration. The *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* (2005) puts forward regional and global scenarios as the most successful pro-active policy.

We should promote the International Expert Panel to Fight against Desertification in order to acquire existing global knowledge and design self-managing strategies, governmental policies, measures and good practice to lessen desertification effects and migration. The funds that industrialized countries allocate to avoid migration could be invested in emigration areas as a preventive measure and then be used in combination with those allocated to fight desertification. These measures will contribute to improve living standards for affected inhabitants.

The European Union countries should engage in launching technological proposals to overcome the process that sharpen the 21<sup>st</sup>-century desertification and migration phenomena. To this end, they may put the stress in renewable energies to eradicate the causes for anthropogenic climatic change. Hyper-arid, arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas are hugely potential in sustainable energies development.

## 3. *Spain and Almeria as the Coordination Centre*

Desertification and, currently, migration have had its greatest impact in Spain, compared to other European Union countries. The latter is brought about, among other reasons, by socioenvironmental deterioration in Africa. Spain should be the advocate of this double challenge in the agenda of the European Union, OSCE, OECD and COP-8 during the Convention to be held in Madrid, in 2007.

Based on the urgent need to face the challenge, Spain should develop a research body to create policies on desertification and migration interrelation. Andalusia and the University of Almería may become the focus of this international and multidisciplinary research. Furthermore, this body may become also a relevant partner of the UNCCD Secretariat and of the United Nations University system. It may empirically and theoretically contribute to enhance the knowledge about interrelations and early learning. It may be financed with the OP-7 International Cooperation Programme support (*7th framework programme of the EU 2007-2013*).

In Spain, we could make investments and create new industries to develop renewable energies. These measures would reduce the desertification processes made by Market powers and create employment alternatives. The research centre, *Solar Plant in Almeria* is a leading centre for the development of solar energy in Europe. This multidisciplinary

research centre is able to train experts from other affected regions in order to make surveys and draw conclusions and solutions as well transfer knowledge and proposals. Nowadays, the invested resources could find the solution to the desertification and migration problem and cut down the huge costs of reactive policies.

A three-way initiative, between Spain, México and Germany, to cooperate in research on climatic change, desertification, migration and potential renewable energies, may be reflected in the OECD framework. The *UNESCO initiative on the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* (2005-2014) is a political framework to reduce desertification and migration.

The **closing lecture** succinctly summarised the importance of the discussions of the past three days and underscores the importance of:

- understanding the linkages of poverty desertification and migration.
- overcoming the barriers to inter agency and governmental policy development in affected countries.
- prioritize foreign aid and multi lateral negotiations.

We must ensure that our efforts reduce land degradation and poverty and that affected people enjoy a more productive livelihood, enjoy food security and remain in their homeland which is their right and which they choose.