Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1090 (1996)[1]

Problem of desertification in the Mediterranean basin

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly is concerned at the scale of the deterioration of the environment in the countries of the Mediterranean basin and, in particular, the adverse effects of the process of desertification in this region.

2. It is alarmed at the reduction in biodiversity and the depletion of the biomass owing to this process and at the deterioration and disappearance of farmland, which may lead to economic instability and undermine the sustainable development of the Mediterranean region. The combination of these phenomena with climatic changes, the latter's evolution being worrying, is likely to lend desertification dramatic proportions.

3. It also fears that the phenomenon of desertification will help to create or worsen major social problems such as poverty and inadequate food security, which would be added to those caused by migration and population growth. Political instability would be further increased by the major disparities between the different countries of the Mediterranean basin.

4. The Assembly regards the Mediterranean basin as a region of crucial importance for Europe and wishes to contribute to the political stability of the area so that all countries there can enjoy sustainable development without any damage being caused to the Mediterranean environment.

5. The Assembly therefore gives its full support to the co-operation plan drawn up by the Euro-Mediterranean Conference (Barcelona, 27-28 November 1995).

6. It welcomes the initiative taken by the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development of organising, in co-operation with the Mediterranean Committee of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), the 2nd Mediterranean Agricultural Forum in Jerusalem (Israel) on 12 and 13 December 1994 to discuss strategies to be implemented to combat desertification and ensure food security and sustainable economic development throughout the region.

7. It also draws attention to its Resolution 792 (1983) on Mediterranean agriculture - problems and prospects, Resolution 961 (1991) on food aid and food security policies and Resolution 1051 (1994) on food and agricultural development in the Mediterranean basin, and calls on the governments of member states, in particular those of Mediterranean countries, to take appropriate measures to combat desertification for the sake of present and future generations:

7.1. by supporting the peace process in the Middle East and the Mediterranean as peaceful co-existence is an essential basis for solving the problems of the region;

7.2. by fostering co-operation between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean and between the various countries of North Africa and the Middle East so that the region may enjoy sustainable democratic, social and economic development which is compatible with respect for the environment;

7.3. by taking urgent measures to reduce pressure on natural non-renewable resources such as soil and water (including the sea) through rational and integrated management designed to protect the soil and the sea more effectively, maintain vegetation cover and make optimum and sparing use of water resources, taking account of possible negative effects on the ecosystem;

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1. See Doc. 7503, report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, rapporteur: Lord Mackie of Benshie Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 29 May 1996.

7.4. by fostering the use of biotechnology, having the utmost regard for long-term human health and consumer information; by fostering the use of natural species and renewable energy forms in order to optimise agricultural production systems and make them sustainable;

7.5. by supporting population policies aimed at controlling population growth and restoring the balance between population levels and the carrying capacities of the natural environment;

7.6. by attaching particular importance to the development of human resources and facilitating access for all, particularly women, to education and information, increasing public awareness of the gravity of the problem of desertification and actively involving farmers in the formulation and implementation of policies designed to combat it so as to encourage sustainable use of natural resources;

7.7. by expanding research resources and improving the systems for gathering data needed for analysing the state of desertification in order to determine priority areas of action, it being important, in this connection, to support the activities of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (ICAMAS), which should ultimately be joined by all Mediterranean basin countries;

7.8. by offering the Mediterranean Committee of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) active participation in defining and implementing priority projects designed to combat desertification.