



Apresentação

Foreword

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ICID 2010 – the Second International Conference on Climate, Sustainability and Development was held in Fortaleza, Brazil, from the 16th to the 20th of August, 2010. Its main objective was to call attention of decision makers of the world to the special conditions that characterize the planet's dry lands, particularly those located in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where most of the world's poverty is concentrated.

In fact, dry lands cover 40% of the planet's land area and are home to 30% of the global population. These areas are presently the most degraded. Human pressures have been contributing for centuries to deplete natural resources and reduce their ability to support life. Climate change will have its most serious adverse impacts in the lands. At the same time, these areas have weak political power and consequently scant capacity to influence decisions that are important for their future.

ICID 2010 convened more than 2,300 specialists and policymakers from more than 70 countries from all continents and from all major international and bilateral organizations, like the World Bank, UNEP, UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNCCD, FAO and WMO. Also present were important bilateral institutions like the French IRD – International Research Institute, and the English DfID - Department for International Development. Policymakers from developing countries, at the ministerial and other high echelons, also attended the conference. All participants, guided by the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, Luc Gnacadja, launched the United Nations 2011-2020 Decade on Deserts and Combating Desertification.

Since the first ICID that was held in 1992, also in Fortaleza, as a contribution to the Rio 92 Summit on Environment and Development, it has been recommended that sustainable development must be pursued as the only possible alternative to meet the needs of the people living in the impoverished dry lands of the world. As most of the countries located in the dry lands are poor, it should be a responsibility of the world, especially of the developed countries and the international institutions, to help those poor countries rise above poverty and achieve sustainable development. Otherwise, there will be no stability in the world.

Since 1992, significant progress has been achieved in the institutional arena. In countries like Brazil, an initiative like the Aridas Project, an outcome of the ICID 92 conference, created a methodology that has influenced local development planning at the subnational level in the semi-arid region. Internationally, the creation of the UNCCD – the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Mitigate the Impacts of Droughts, a product of the Rio 92 summit, also influen-

ced by ICID 92, was a concrete advancement. The UNCCD is now working and has been ratified by 193 countries. Each country with dry lands now has the obligation to prepare and implement a Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. However, this is not enough, and it is not a surprise that the UNCCD is the United Nations' convention that attracts the least support worldwide and is constantly struggling to survive with a scant budget.

Concretely, however, problems derived from degradation and desertification continue in the rise. Those who live in the dry lands located in poor countries continue suffering from climate variation and poverty and will suffer even more with the impacts of climate change, according to the IPCC report published in 2007. These regions may be seen many times only as “problem regions”, when in fact they represent important opportunities that could generate positive results for the world and particularly for their populations.

In order to profit from the opportunities existing in the dry lands, first it is necessary to stop the environmental degradation and desertification and bring an end to the situation of poverty that causes so much human suffering. There is plenty of opportunity to reforest many areas, particularly around rivers and water sources, and to promote sustainable land use. The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel is a good example of an initiative that may render enormous benefits for the peoples of the eleven countries involved from East to West Africa. There are numerous opportunities to create jobs and productive occupation and at the same time improve the management of land resources. Mostly, increasing human capability through a massive educational effort directed at girls and boys who will be the future of these regions should be a high priority. As emphasized above, this should not be the responsibility only of the affected countries, but of the whole world, especially developed countries, including emerging, middle-income countries like Brazil. It is no wonder that one of the important discussions held during the ICID 2010, by Brazilians and others, was on how to enhance South-South cooperation in order to promote sustainable development in the poorer countries.

The participants of ICID 2010 produced and adopted the *Declaration of Fortaleza*, published in full in this issue of *Sustainability in Debate*. The document is an attempt to call for the responsibility of those persons, institutions and governments in the world that have some power to do whatever is possible to improve the conditions of the poor people living in the dry lands. I invite each reader of this issue of *Sustainability in Debate* to study and discuss the Declaration of Fortaleza and to engage actively in favor of the case of the peoples living in the dry lands, especially those in the poorest countries.

ICID 2010 will generate a series of publications. In this issue of *Sustainability in Debate*, readers will find a representative sample of papers presented and discussed at the Conference. ICID 2010 was supported by an international Scientific Committee that helped in the selection of the papers. Of the nine selected papers, five refer to issues of climate, vulnerability, adaptation and sustainable development in Africa. The idea of the editors was to stress the special challenges faced by the African continent, focusing on themes of adaptation and sustainable development in pastoralist and non-pastoralist systems. Other papers focused on dry lands of Mexico, Brazil, China and the Mediterranean, again on themes of adaptation and strategies for sustainable development.

I hope that reading these papers and the Declaration of Fortaleza will contribute to strengthen readers' commitment to remain engaged in the struggle for better conditions for supporting life in the dry lands.