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REPORT

9TH CONFERENCE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL SOIL CONSERVATION ORGANISATION (ISCO)
Bonn, Germany 26 - 30 August 1996

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE LAND USE **Furthering Co-operation Between People and Institutions**

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1. Background

The 9th Conference of the International Soil Conservation Organisation (ISCO) took place in Bonn, Germany on 26-30 August 1996. The meeting was attended by over 800 people from 120 countries. Over 450 papers and posters were presented in 50-60 workshops and parallel sessions. The overall theme of the conference was: **Towards Sustainable Land Use - Furthering Co-operation Between People and Institutions**. The objectives of the conference are summarised in the following excerpt from the Introduction to the programme:

Rapid depletion of soil fertility and non-sustainable land use particularly in developing countries is both the cause and the consequence of the widespread poverty. The challenging question is how to improve self-help capacities for natural resource management in order to solve these problems. Sustainable land use is based on ecological and social sustainability as well as on economic viability of a given land use activity in a given context. Particular emphasis will be placed on the ecological dimension of sustainable land management and on ways of achieving it.

2. The Namibian Contributions

The Namibian contribution from the two authors of this report was varied. Working with Dr Helmut Woehl, GTZ advisor to the NAPCOD programme, a booth was prepared for the 'Dare to Share Fair'. This included five posters presenting the environmental situation in arid Namibia and the several programmes addressing sustainable use of this environment. The posters highlight the activities of SARDEP (Sustainable Animal and Range Development Programme) and NAPCOD (Namibia's Programme to Combat Desertification) and presented the Integrated Natural Resource Management Forum wherein these two programmes have joined together with the CAWS (Communal Area Water Supply) and CBNRM (Community Based Natural Resource Management) programmes to address the overall objective of sustainable resource management. The booth included a display of pamphlets and books from the participating organisations and the screening of several videos concerning desertification, training to combat desertification and the Namibian environment.

In addition, Bertus Kruger contributed a poster paper entitled '**Closing the Gap Between Farmers and Support Organisations in Namibia**' to the session addressing Institutional and Organisational Capacity Building. Kahepako Uariua-Kakujaha and Mary Seely presented an oral paper entitled '**Raising Awareness about Desertification within Namibia's Rural Population**' to the session addressing Principles and Strategies of Participation and Co-operation. Abstracts of both papers have been published in the proceedings and full papers have been submitted.

3. The Benefits

Attending the 9th ISCO conference provided many benefits to the authors of this report:

- First, it gave them a chance to present their work and to discuss it and receive comment from a variety of other delegates. This is always useful when a project is working in a new and innovative framework. From discussions, from hearing and viewing other delegates contributions and from participating in a variety of activities, it is clear that Namibia is heading in an appropriate direction to address sustainable resource management. Overall, a number of interesting contacts have been renewed and others made.
- A second benefit was the opportunity to assess the amount of support being given in the international arena to the Convention to Combat Desertification. Judging from the presentations of various Ministers of the German Government, persons from a number of international organisations as well as scientists from many countries, the Convention to Combat Desertification appears to be recognised as an important step in support of Agenda 21 and sustainable use of natural resources. Namibia has signed but not yet ratified this Convention; nevertheless a number of programmes are addressing its basic tenants within the country.
- This visit to Bonn also provided the opportunity to visit with development partners in the Ministry of Co-operation and Development, the source of funding for both the SARDEP and NAPCOD programmes.

4. Acknowledgements

Bertus Kruger thanks the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development and GTZ for providing funding to attend the meeting. Dr Mary Seely thanks the Organising Committee of the 9th ISCO Conference and the German Soil Science Society for funding in Bonn. Kahepako Uariua-Kakujaha of the NAPCOD programme and the DRFN enjoyed funding from the Organising Committee of 9th ISCO Conference and the German Soil Science Society for travel and his stay in Bonn.

5. References

- Kruger, Albertus S. 1996. Closing the gap between farmers and support organisations in Namibia. In: Towards Sustainable Land Use, 9th ISCO Conference, Bonn. Abstract, p. 367.
- Uariua-Kakujaha, K and Seely, M. 1996. Raising awareness about desertification within Namibia's rural population. In: Towards Sustainable Land Use, 9th ISCO Conference, Bonn. Abstract, p. 344.

6. Recommendations

Upon arrival at the ISCO meeting it came to our attention that a total of six persons from Namibia were attending the meeting. While four of us had designed and presented a co-ordinated contribution to the Dare to Share Fair and other sessions, two individuals were unaware of the participation of other Namibians - and vice versa. All persons attending the meeting had made their applications through the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Rural Development or the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia. **In the future it is suggested that better co-ordination be arranged among the participants, particularly through the Ministry.**

In particular, it is important that persons attending such large, international meetings for the first time be provided with advice and the opportunity **to practice their presentations among their peers while still in Namibia.** This approach could help assure that presentations from Namibia are of a high quality and that the participants are briefed on what can be expected at such a meeting.

Note: A complete list of participants, with contact addresses, is available upon request.

Annex: Abstracts of presentations