

COMBATING DESERTIFICATION IN MONGOLIA

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Desertification is defined in the UN Convention on Combatting Desertification as the degradation of land caused by human activities and by different factors like climate change in dry and arid zones. Mongolia is counted as desertification threatened country as its located in arid climate and most of territory belongs to dry steppe, semi-desert and desert area. There are estimates that 90 % of Mongolians territory is vulnerable to desertification.

Natural causes include droughts with frequency of 2-3 years, natural drying, deficit in soil moisture, very thin layer of fertile soil, specifics of mechanical composition of soils, strong wind and dust storms in spring and autumn season. During the last 40-50 years human activities have significantly contributed to land degradation. Various human activities influence on nature negatively such as overgrazing of pastureland, degradation of agricultural soil, overuse of bush and Saxaul for fuel, digging land for mining purpose. Unfortunately there is no detailed research is carried out to assess desertification impact on nature, economy and people.

Desertification is characterized by degradation of vegetation cover (i), desiccation of wetland ecosystems (ii) and increase of sand area (iii). As of today, 126.5 million ha or over 70% of total pastureland areas have been degraded. Vegetation growth rate has already decreased by 5 times and the number of plant species has reduced up to 6 times. Pasture land near the water points, settlements, lakes and along livestock driving roads has severely degraded.

Water resource has decreased and rivers and springs are drying due to aridity, overgrazing and centralization of settlements. A decrease by 25-33% of the discharge of such rivers as Baidrag, Taats, Tui and Ongi, and over 80 small rivers and streams, flowing from the north to the south in the Gobi is recorded.

The size of area covered by sand in Mongolia has increased rapidly. /D.Dash,2000/ The size of area covered by sand in Mongolia has increased with 38.000 hectares during the last 40 years. 3360 km² of it occurs in Gobi (88%) and 460 km² in Khangai region. (12%).

The main objective of the state policy on combating desertification is to protect natural resource which is a base for sustainable development of the country, stop negative impact to ecosystem caused by desertification, renovate ecosystem, eliminate causes of desertification and finally improve people's living condition. We have to follow a principle that ecologically sustainable and economically profitable in order to achieve concrete results on combating desertification in Mongolia.

We should carry out the following measures in order to achieve a new step for implementation Convention to Combat Desertification and National Action Program (NAPCD) :

- Developing regional, aimak and soum level Action Programmes to combat desertification and strengthen institutional capability at different level;
- Conduct research on assessment of desertification process and establish monitoring network
- Establish economic and legal mechanism to combat desertification;
- Transfer to sustainable land management system ;
- Increase participation of NGOs, private sectors, scientific branches in combating desertification activities ;
- Integrate projects on combating desertification s with other projects on socio-economical development
- Mobilizing domestic and foreign financial resource and establishing I fund for combating desertification.

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