

JOHANNESBURG: A turning point in the sustainable development process

Emmanuel Seck
Enda-Energy
Energy2@enda.sn

Several years have gone by since the countries got involved in the development and implementation programs of combat against desertification. Although these processes are not yet completed in all the countries, they already confirm the priority given by the convention to the participation of non-governmental actors in general and to the necessity to strengthen partnerships with public authorities.

The level of participation varies from a country to another. One of the main lessons to be retained from these Conventions implementation processes is that the action plans can substantially contribute to the democratisation of the relationships between civil society actors in order to determine sustainable development strategies.

In several countries, NGOs play today the fully role of partners of governments in the determination of national development priorities where as until Rio, i.e. about 10 years ago, these very NGOs had only quite limited relationships with their public authorities .It is thus important for NGOs that this lesson be notified to the international community during the Summit on Sustainable Development of 2002 .

Therefore it would be important to highlight this issue in Johannesburg to succeed in providing the Convention on Desertification all the attention required at the international level.

It will be easier for developed countries to tackle the issue of migrations of populations from arid areas through a better understanding of desertification and its consequences on development and survival of grassroots communities.

Some efforts have indeed been undertaken by the international community in order to support several initiatives attempting at alleviating the drought effects as well as the survival of local communities facing land degradation. However, in several cases, these efforts focused on the elaboration of program documents as well as on the organizations of workshops. They remain insufficient regarding the financial needs for the implementation of sustainable development programs.

The efforts needed are not only financial. They have also to focus on the reinforcement of knowledge of social, political and economic obstacles to sustainable development due to the new globalization trend of ecological problems. Such internationalization enables us to claim the globalization in economic and ecological aspects. The multilateral agreements ensuring the process initiated in Rio, i.e. on desertification, climatic changes and biodiversity are a perfect example of this internationalization of environment problems.

Studies have been carried out on the potential connections between the different topics involved in these agreements. The conclusions of these studies indicate that these topics are intrinsically intertwined and that they should be treated holistically in Rio. Efforts have also been undertaken by the different secretariats towards a better coordination of the action plans. *What approach should thus be adopted?*

In any case, it is necessary to go beyond in the adoption of approaches combining all measures in main environmental conventions within similar ecosystems.

Johannesburg will represent a turning point in the evaluation of the output of actions considered by each of these conventions taken individually and those from the synergies.

It is also necessary for all actors, whether governmental or not, to support the poorest populations living in the arid zones of developing countries where sustaining resources are directly related to natural resources. This support should enable to fight against poverty and marginalization through more equitable governance methods.

The application of these governance methods should take into account gender dimension in the national strategies of combat against poverty. Despite noticeable advances on this front, we have to admit that women still remain excluded from these processes of political decision regarding resources management.

Recent studies further indicate that women and children, in some African regions, produce more than three quarters (80%) of the basic food whereas they only receive 10% of the generated income and control a mere 1% of the land (World Bank,1998). *Isn't such a disparity the perfect example of a lack of equity ? How can one fulfil sustainable development goals if women, i.e. the most concerned actors, are not associated to the decision taking?*