

## Foreword



Desertification is a global ecological, social and economical problem typical of the arid territories of the world. According to UNEP data, 100 countries, with a population of over 250 million, are experiencing desertification. The General Assembly of the United Nations has considered desertification and drought to be global problems requiring joint endeavours of the international community. In 1995, an International Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted by about 120 countries including Japan.

The Arid Land Research Center (ALRC), which is affiliated to the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture of Japan, with its four divisions of natural sciences is expected to contribute in combating desertification by establishing and introducing new technologies. It is anticipated to become one of the Centers of Excellence (COE) on arid studies, in Asia and the Pacific Region. The construction of the Arid Land Dome has already started in an effort to promote studies to cope with the ongoing desertification under simulated natural conditions.

The scale and acuteness of desertification experienced by separate countries are not identical. However, desertification as a product of complicated interactions of natural, anthropogenic and demographic factors coupled with uncontrolled production and development is capable of undermining the economy and social foundation of any community. The problem is complex with no easy solution. A strategy built on an integrated approach which takes into account social and economic aspects of desertification is urgently needed. This strategy can be achieved by collaboration with the United Nations and International and Regional Research Institutes working on combating desertification. For this purpose, the ALRC calls upon international and Japanese scientists to join it zealous efforts to combat desertification.

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