Preface

Desertification is a detrimental process that brings about a gradual and an unnoticed reduction in the productive capacity of land over a period of years. The end point of the process would be the formation of a complete wasteland incapable of producing anything useful. Desertification is a problem of global magnitude with major environmental and socio-economic consequences. It is a complex issue, arises not from a single, identifiable cause, but from complex interactions among physical, biological, political, social, cultural and economic factors. The countries most seriously affected by desertification usually are developing countries which do not have the adequate means of coping with a problem of such magnitude.

Administrative approach will be used to study the efforts made to combat desertification. It will analyse the structure and functioning of administrative institutions and organisations at national and international levels, which are involved in formulating and implementing desertification-related programmes. The administrative system of a nation plays a great role in combating desertification by formulating and implementing desertification-related programmes within the framework of Global Environmental Governance (GEG). The purpose of using administrative approach is to mainly focus on the administrative and legislative issues involved in addressing desertification rather than scientific and technical aspects.

Due to globalisation the conditions for governance changed. The traditional models of administration failed to address many global problems. In the emerging web of transnational links, old forms of collective decision-making are weakened and new forms become possible. Governance, broader than government is a new process of governing or the new method by which society is governed. It consists of formal institutions and informal arrangements. As a comprehensive and inclusive concept, governance is an all- encompassing, highly participatory, dynamic and engaging process. It seeks solutions to problems through dialogue and communicative action.

Today the policy formulation and implementation processes are made up of these diverse, overlapping and integrated networks which comprise varying relational geometries of States, markets and associational sectors. These actors bring their own specific sets of powers, roles and responsibilities as determined by values, skills and organisational resources into the network arena.
Global environmental governance is the establishment and operation of a set of rules of conduct that define practice, assign roles and guide interaction so as to enable State and non-State actors to address environmental problems across national boundaries. Growing recognition of the complexity, pervasiveness, and mutual interdependence of environmental problems reshaped environmental regulation and natural resource management.

Global Environmental Governance emerged in a significant way, however, only in the late 1960s and 1970s, as part of a growing concern about environmental problems. The Stockholm Conference in 1972 launched global efforts to protect, preserve and enhance the environment. International environmental accords- treaties and agreements were central components of these collective efforts. These global environmental instruments, collectively known as Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) are the legal framework for international environmental governance.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the newest link in the evolving international system for environmental governance. In linking a serious environmental concern with development issues, this Convention can be viewed as an important step towards building a multilateral framework for sustainable development. The Convention recognises desertification primarily as a problem of sustainable development, poverty and human well-being, and environmental preservation. Therefore it is a much more comprehensive treaty than earlier efforts to combat desertification.

Standing at the intersection between domestic, international, and global pressures, the State is the preeminent institution with requisite political authority and steering capacity to tackle ecological problems through MEAs and domestic regulations of natural resources management. Over the past few decades governments adopted a large number of MEAs. With intensified use of international treatises as a means to address global environmental problems, concerns expressed are being regarding the compliance of States with commitments to which they agreed.

Basically the global environmental agreements are only as effective as the parties make them. Effectiveness is the result not only of how the government implements accords (the formal legislation or regulations that countries adopt) but also of compliance (the observance of these regulations and commitments contained in the international instruments). In other words compliance goes beyond
implementation. However, implementation is generally considered as an essential predicate for compliance. This study analyses the implementation of UNCCD in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and their compliance with the same.

The GCC countries are situated in extremely arid zones. The source, nature and intensity of environmental degradation differentiate this region from the rest of the world. This is not because of the interaction between man-made and natural environmental problems but because of the magnitude and speed with which this interaction takes place. The unprecedented levels of industrialisation, inefficient use of limited resources, unplanned urbanisation, large-scale consumption, higher population growth and lack of regulatory mechanisms produced a critical environmental situation in the GCC countries.

The scarcity of water and land resources is the most pressing. Deterioration of the marine and coastal environment, loss of biodiversity, increasing industrial pollution and poor management of hazardous wastes also threaten the sustainable development of this region. Most land is either desertified or vulnerable to desertification. These serious environmental problems including desertification must be addressed immediately because failure to act now will greatly compound the cost and complexity of later remedial efforts.

The public administration in the GCC countries, which is expected to carry out the developmental objectives, goals and values, faces a tough challenge. The administrative system in these countries, although simple until recently, is being steadily inflated due to an unclear vision of future objectives and the abundance of financial resources. It suffers from structural and behavioural defects of both external and internal origin.

Even though all the GCC countries signed the UNCCD and initiated several measures to implement the same, their compliance with this important global treaty is poor and inadequate. The efforts made by the GCC countries to implement the Convention are analysed within the framework of Global Environmental Governance. This study begins with the following hypotheses:

1. The large-scale socio-economic developmental activities and the harsh climatic conditions accelerated the intensity and magnitude of desertification in the GCC countries.

2. Political and economic issues remain top on the agenda of the governments rather than environmental issues.
3. Administrative machineries are not adequately equipped to tackle environmental problems in general and desertification in particular.

4. Only limited provisions of the Convention (1994) have been implemented in these countries.

5. Lack of effective mechanism for people’s participation is a major constraint in addressing the desertification problem in the GCC countries.

6. In the GCC countries radical reform measures are required in the areas of recruitment, training and administrative procedures.

The important objectives of this work include: to identify the major causes and consequences of desertification in the GCC countries, to study the responses of the administrative system to environmental problems in general and desertification in particular, to analyse the institutional mechanism for environmental policy-making as well as its implementation with emphasis on desertification and to review the various measures taken by the GCC countries for combating desertification in accordance with Plan of Action (PoA) of the United Nations Conference on Desertification (UNCOD) and the provisions of the UNCCD. Besides these, this thesis aims at analysing the mechanisms which are available for people’s participation in addressing desertification problem in the GCC countries. The methodologies used in this work are historical and analytical. The relevant documents of the governments and other international, regional and national specialised agencies were consulted besides books, articles and working papers concerned with this subject.

This study consists of seven chapters. The first chapter analyses the concept of desertification and the controversies related with its definition. It examines the global status of desertification and its far-reaching consequences on climate change and food security. It traces the emergence of global environmental governance as a tool to address the complex nature of contemporary environmental problems. The place of UNCCD within the framework of GEG is briefly explained.

The second chapter examines the causes and consequences of environmental problems in GCC Countries. It also analyses the various dimensions of desertification in the GCC Countries. Besides these, this chapter also explores the linkages between desertification and other developmental issues such as agriculture, water resources, urbanisation, population growth, deforestation and industrialisation.
The third chapter examines the role of the State in environmental protection and sustainable development. It analyses the administrative system in the GCC Countries with emphasis on its rapid expansion and functions. It also traces the evolution of environmental administration in the GCC countries and its relationships with regional and international environmental institutional arrangements.

The efforts of international community to protect environment especially since the Stockholm Conference are examined in the fourth chapter. This chapter also reviews the emergence of MEAs as a mechanism to address global environmental problems. It further explores the evolution of UNCCD with emphasis on the outcome of Nairobi Conference the 1977, Rio Summit 1992 and the deliberations of Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee on Desertification (INCD). It finally analyses the structure of UNCCD including its administrative and financial aspects.

The fifth chapter analyses the various measures taken by the GCC Countries to combat desertification including the implementation of Plan of Action (PoA) of Nairobi conference, 1977. This chapter in detail studies the initiatives undertaken by the GCC Countries under UNCCD and surveys the implementation of West Asia Subregional Action Programme and its pilot projects. It also investigates the role of GCC Countries in executing UNCCD at the regional level.

The sixth chapter underlines the importance of compliance with an international treaty, besides elucidating the difference between implementation and compliance with respect to MEAs. The efforts of GCC Countries to comply with the provisions of UNCCD are critically analysed in this chapter. It examines the various indicators used to measure the effective compliance with UNCCD with reference to GCC Countries. The seventh chapter concludes with important findings.

While it is observed that most States comply with most international treaties most of the time, there are reasons to believe that national implementation of and compliance with international accords is not only imperfect but often inadequate. However there are only a few systematic studies of factors affecting compliance with international environmental accords into which countries are already entered. Among them, there are even fewer studies that focus on factors at the national level that affect compliance. In this background this work analyses the implementation of the UNCCD in the GCC countries and its compliance. Therefore this study shall fill this knowledge gap.