



# Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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## SUMMARY OF THE SIXTH SESSION OF THE INC FOR THE ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 9-18 JANUARY 1995

After the fierce pace of negotiations in Paris in June 1994, when the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) was adopted, the sixth session of the International Negotiating Committee to elaborate an international Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa (INCD) seemed to move at a snail's pace. No longer faced with the deadline for adopting the Convention, and satisfied that over 95 countries had signed the Convention and that the first instrument of ratification is expected soon, delegates deliberated carefully on the programme of work for the interim period. Discussions focused largely on the role of the Interim Secretariat and preparation for the first Conference of the Parties. The ten-day meeting was characterized by short Plenary sessions and numerous regional group and negotiating group meetings, which resulted in the adoption of a resolution that establishes two working groups and sets forth the programme of work for future sessions of the INCD.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INCD

Desertification affects about one-sixth of the world's population, 70 percent of all drylands, and one-quarter of the total land area in the world. The most obvious impact of desertification, in addition to widespread poverty, is the degradation of 3.3 billion hectares of the total area of rangeland, decline in soil fertility and soil structure, and the degradation of irrigated cropland.

While the idea of a convention to combat desertification was discussed during the UNCED preparatory process, it was only in Rio where language was adopted requesting the General Assembly to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the purpose of negotiating a convention. The General Assembly, during its 47th session in 1992, adopted resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of the INCD, with the aim of finalizing the Convention by June 1994.

The organizational session of the INCD was held in January 1993. At that meeting, delegates elected Bo Kjellén (Sweden) Chair of the Committee, elected the remaining members of the Bureau, adopted the rules of procedure, set the schedule of meetings and established two working groups.

### FIRST SESSION

The first session of the INCD was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 24 May - 3 June 1993. The first week of the session focused on the sharing of technical information and assessments on various aspects of drought and desertification. Divided into seven sections, the information-sharing segment provided an opportunity for scientists, technical experts, delegates and NGOs to share relevant experiences and learn more about the scourge of desertification and its global dimensions. The second week focused on the structure and elements to be contained in the Convention. Delegates also exchanged ideas about the Convention and its objectives.

Negotiations stalled in Nairobi over the issue of related regional instruments, while still giving priority action to Africa. Kjellén proposed that an instrument on Africa, such as an annex, be negotiated once the main structure of the Convention had been defined, and that similar instruments for other regions be negotiated subsequently. This proposal met with resistance from several countries in regions other than Africa. They felt that their own problems with desertification deserved attention and that similar instruments for their regions should be negotiated simultaneously with the instrument for Africa. The decision was deferred.

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## **SECOND SESSION**

The second session of the INCD met in Geneva from 13-24 September 1993. The Committee considered the compilation text of the Convention prepared by the Secretariat and agreed on the future programme of work of the Committee, including the elaboration of regional instruments for Africa, Asia and Latin America. At the conclusion of the second session, the two working groups completed their discussion of the Secretariat's compilation text and identified areas of convergence and divergence. There appeared to be consensus on the need for implementable commitments that are central to the Convention and articulated at different levels (national, regional and international). Delegates stressed the need for a public awareness strategy, improved education, and increased cooperation and coordination between the North and the South, South and South, and among donors.

## **THIRD SESSION**

The third session of the INCD was held at UN Headquarters in New York from 17-28 January 1994. At this session the two working groups focused on the draft negotiating text of the Convention that was prepared by the Secretariat. By the end of the two-week session, the working groups were able to complete at least one and sometimes two readings of each draft article. Progress was made in shaping the Convention and in identifying the areas of convergence and divergence. The INCD also discussed the regional instrument for Africa for the first time. After an initial discussion of the nature of this instrument and its relationship to the Convention as a whole, delegates requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft text for consideration at the fourth session.

## **FOURTH SESSION**

The fourth session of the INCD was held in Geneva from 21-31 March 1994. The two working groups continued negotiating the draft text of the Convention. By the conclusion of the session the substantive problems that remained included: the need for an article on principles in the text; all matters related to financial resources and mechanisms; categories of countries; subsidiary bodies; reservations or exceptions open to the Parties; and the obligations of a withdrawing Party.

The fourth session was also the first time that delegates formally considered the Regional Implementation Annex for Africa. In general, developed countries thought that the annex was too long and contained a number of articles that were better suited to or already contained in the main Convention. The Africans felt that the level of detail was essential, otherwise the instrument would not achieve its objective of providing priority treatment for Africa. The Asian and Latin American regional groups also produced their own draft regional implementation instruments. Although these annexes were not discussed in detail, initial reaction was positive.

## **FIFTH SESSION**

The fifth session of the INCD was held in Paris from 6-17 June 1994. During this session, delegates worked through many long nights to negotiate the remaining bracketed text in the Convention and to finalize four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Northern Mediterranean. They also adopted resolutions that recommended urgent action for Africa and interim arrangements for the period between adoption of the Convention and its entry into force, which could take at least two years. There were times during this session that delegates thought they would never reach agreement on the financial provisions of the Convention. After three all-night sessions capped by a closing Plenary that did not even begin until 4:00 am, the Convention was finally adopted.

The Convention, which is the first post-Rio sustainable development convention, is notable for its innovative approach in recognizing: the physical, biological and socio-economic aspects of

desertification; the importance of redirecting technology transfer so that it is demand driven; and the involvement of local populations in the development of national action programmes. The core of the Convention is the development of national and subregional/regional action programmes to combat desertification. These action programmes are to be developed by national governments in close cooperation with donors, local populations and NGOs.

## **SIGNING CEREMONY IN PARIS**

The Convention was opened for signature at a ceremony in Paris on 14-15 October 1994. Eighty-five countries and the European Union signed the Convention. A list of signatories can be found on page 11. The Convention remains open for signature at UN Headquarters in New York until 13 October 1995.

## **49TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

General Assembly resolution 49/234, adopted on 23 December 1994, decided that the INCD will continue to function in order to: prepare for the first session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention; facilitate the implementation of the provisions of resolution 5/1 of the INCD on urgent action for Africa, through the exchange of information and the review of progress made thereon; initiate measures relating to the identification of an organization to house the global mechanism to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources, including its operational modalities; elaborate the rules of procedure for the Conference of the Parties; and consider other relevant issues, including measures to ensure the implementation of the Convention and its regional annexes.

The resolution states that the INCD will have a two-week session in Nairobi from 7-18 August 1995, and, "pending the entry into force of the Convention, to hold further necessary sessions in 1996 and 1997, the venue and timing of which shall be recommended by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee."

The resolution also urges countries to sign and ratify the Convention. During the interim period before entry into force, the resolution urges all relevant actors to take actions and measures to implement the resolution on urgent action for Africa. The Secretariat will continue to function and be funded through existing UN budgetary resources and voluntary contributions.

## **REPORT OF THE SIXTH SESSION**

The sixth session of the INCD began on Monday afternoon, 9 January 1995. Delegates first adopted the agenda (A/AC.241/28) and the provisional programme of work for the first week (A/AC.241/28/Add.1).

In his introductory statement, the Chair, Bo Kjellén, said that in this phase of the process, there is less pressure on texts, but it is now more important to translate words into action. He stressed that the participation of NGOs has been essential, as well as the contribution of the Panel of Experts and the scientific community in general, especially the social and economic experts. Kjellén noted that the Committee's main task at this session is to organize its work for the interim period. On substantive issues, the main focus will be the work programme for the interim period and the preparation for the first Conference of the Parties (COP). He asked the delegates to comment on the document with respect to time schedules and organization of work for the interim period, including the possible establishment of sessional working groups. On the resolution on urgent action for Africa, he noted that the statements made by governments at the signing ceremony are contained in documents A/AC.241/30 and Add.1.

On behalf of the G-77 and China, José Lino B. Guerrero (Philippines) said that subregional, regional and international collaboration is critical to arrest the causes of desertification and drought and to rectify their effects. Proof of international commitment to combat desertification and drought may be

expressed in terms of contributions to the Voluntary Fund and the Trust Fund and the mobilization of financial resources.

On behalf of the 15 States of the European Union, Anne de Lattre (France) observed that the large number of signatories to the Convention in Paris attests to the importance of the CCD. For this Convention to be effective, affected countries should take the initiative and establish medium- and long-term plans of action that involve local populations. She further noted that donors must act as true partners of affected countries. The EU believes that the role of the interim Secretariat should be facilitative and not operative, as some of the documents suggest. The EU does not support the increased funding requirements for the interim period, which assume that the Secretariat will be playing an operative role.

In other introductory remarks, Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development Nitin Desai noted that the successful conclusion of the Convention should not cause a loss of momentum, and reminded the Committee that the transition from policy development to policy implementation demands political commitment. Anatole Tiendrebeogo, Minister for Environment and Tourism of Burkina Faso and current head of the AMCEN, lamented that there seems to be a "backsliding" by affected countries, other Parties and the international community at a time when the issue of ratification is being raised. The Minister for Environment of Mongolia, Dr. Batjargal, stated that adopting this Convention is moving one step towards the implementation of Chapter 12 of Agenda 21.

On behalf of the NGOs, Heinz Greijn (ELCI) reported that in November some 50 NGOs from around the world met in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to establish a global network on desertification called RIOD (Réseau International d'ONG sur la Désertification) and to develop an action plan for the implementation of the Convention.

### **WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE INTERIM PERIOD AND PREPARATION FOR THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES**

**PLENARY DISCUSSION:** The Committee began its consideration of the work programme for the interim period and preparation for the first Conference of the Parties on Tuesday morning, 10 January 1995. During the debate, many delegates, including members of the G-77 and China, and the Russian Federation, expressed fear that the CCD had a lower status than the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Kjellén, the UK, the US and Japan assured them that this was not the case.

Most delegates agreed on the need to establish two working groups. They also agreed that discussion of the implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa should take place in Plenary, since no resolutions or decisions would have to be negotiated on this matter. Yet, it soon became clear that there was disagreement on the role of the Interim Secretariat and the need for scientific and technical activities during the interim period.

The Group of 77 and China supported an active and operational role for the Interim Secretariat. They asserted that the most important functions of the Interim Secretariat's mandate should be: pursuit of urgent action for Africa; groundwork-laying for developing countries to elaborate action plans; awareness-raising, capacity-building and transfer of technology; preparation for the first COP; and response to emergency requests from affected countries. Benin, Burkina Faso and Mauritania supported these views. Senegal thought that the Secretariat should play a mediative role in the preparation of national action programmes and facilitating scientific training in developing countries. Morocco, Ghana, Uzbekistan and Bolivia added that the Secretariat should play a role in information dissemination and public awareness.

The UK pointed out that the problem was in the proposed operational role of the Secretariat, which could amount to a

duplication of activities already undertaken by other agencies. The UK also thought that some of the proposals by the G-77 and China, such as responding to emergency relief and capacity building, were outside its mandate. The US shared these concerns. Canada did not think that the Secretariat should be involved in public awareness and capacity building since this should be done bilaterally. Norway thought that the Secretariat should: draft the rules of procedure; prepare the background documents on financial arrangements for the COP, subsidiary bodies, and communication of information; and prepare a paper providing a legal analysis of the options and modalities of using existing organizations. Switzerland reiterated the fact that the Secretariat should play a facilitative and coordination role, rather than an operative one.

Another contentious issue was the need for scientific and technology activities during the interim period. Australia called for a small working group to plan science and technology activities during the interim period. The US did not think there was a need for a scientific body at this point. Canada thought that the INCD should work on the terms of reference for the Committee on Science and Technology, since it will "hit the ground running" at the first COP. Ghana thought that a scientific working group, composed of scientists from developing and developed countries, should be convened to discuss problems as they arise.

**INFORMAL NEGOTIATIONS:** The Plenary discussion on the work programme for the interim period concluded on Wednesday morning, 11 January 1995. On Friday evening, 13 January 1995, the Chair convened a small negotiating group consisting of the heads of regional and interest groups, to formulate a draft resolution on the work programme for the interim period. The first draft, which was prepared by the Chair on the basis of Friday evening's discussion, was distributed to the small group on the following Monday afternoon. Two working groups were proposed, but OECD member countries were not entirely supportive of having one working group discussing financial matters and another addressing institutional matters. There was also discussion about whether the Secretariat should prepare documentation on scientific and technical cooperation. Members of the OECD group proposed, instead, that the Chair should make proposals to the Committee, at the seventh session, on the organization of scientific and technological cooperation. G-77 members did not think that this was the role of the Chair and proposed that the Secretariat should make these proposals.

A new draft was circulated to the regional groups on Tuesday morning. The small negotiating group reconvened in the afternoon and reached agreement on the mandates of the two working groups. With regard to the chairmanship of the working groups, the G-77 and China asked that one of its members chair the working group that would be dealing with financial matters. After some discussion, delegates agreed and decided to nominate Mourad Ahmia (Algeria) as the Chair of Working Group I and Takao Shibata (Japan) as the Chair of Working Group II. This, however, led to another problem. Since delegates agreed that each working group would have one Chair and two Vice Chairs (two from Africa and one from each of the other four UN regional groups), was Japan considered a member of the Asian Group in the INCD? Since Japan is geographically in Asia, but politically part of the OECD group, delegates decided that they would have three Vice Chairs in one working group to allow for two Africans, one from each of the other four regional groups and Japan.

With regard to the preparation of reports on scientific and technological cooperation, delegates agreed that the Secretariat, not the Chair, should be asked to prepare the relevant report. Delegates were not able to agree on the venue and timing of INCD meetings in 1996 and 1997.

On Wednesday morning, 18 January, the regional groups endorsed the draft resolution and on Wednesday afternoon, the Plenary adopted the resolution, as contained in document A/AC.241/L.24.



**SUMMARY OF THE RESOLUTION:** Among the provisions in the resolution, the Committee decides to establish two working groups with the following mandates:

Working Group I is responsible for the following issues: to initiate measures relating to the identification of an organization to house the Global Mechanism to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources, including its operational modalities; to make recommendations for the designation by the Conference of the Parties of a Permanent Secretariat and arrangements for its functioning; financial rules, programme and budget.

Working Group II is responsible for the following issues: organization of scientific and technological cooperation, in particular the terms of reference for the Committee on Science and Technology, the establishment and maintenance of a roster of independent experts, and the terms of reference and modalities of work of any *ad hoc* panels that the Conference of the Parties may decide to appoint; rules of procedure of the Conference of the Parties; procedures on questions of implementation; procedures for conciliation and arbitration; and procedures for communication of information for the review of implementation of the Convention and its institutional arrangements.

In addition to the supervision of the two Working Groups, the Plenary is responsible for the following issues: facilitating the implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa through the exchange of information, and the review of progress made thereon; the promotion of action in other regions; the agenda for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties; coordination with other conventions; cooperation with relevant bodies or agencies; and public awareness activities.

The Committee also requests the Secretariat to prepare documentation, including, *inter alia*, compilation of information and Governments' views, in order to facilitate the deliberations of the Committee at the seventh session on the following issues: identification of an organization to house the Global Mechanism; financial rules; programme and budget; designation of a Permanent Secretariat and arrangements for its functioning; scientific and technological cooperation; draft rules of procedure of the Conference of the Parties; procedures for communication of information and review of implementation, as well as measures taken by Member States and relevant organizations.

The Secretariat is also requested, subject to review at the seventh session, to prepare documentation on the following issues with a view to facilitating the deliberations of the Committee at the eighth session: procedures to resolve questions on implementation and draft annexes on conciliation and arbitration.

INCD members, UN programmes and agencies as well as relevant intergovernmental organizations are invited to submit to the Secretariat updated reports on measures taken or planned for the implementation of the urgent action for Africa and action in other regions. The Secretariat is also requested to prepare a compilation of such reports for the seventh session.

The resolution also calls for two sessions of up to two weeks each in 1996 and in 1997, the venue and timing of which will be decided by the General Assembly on recommendation of the Committee at the seventh session.

### **URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA AND INTERIM ACTION IN OTHER REGIONS**

The aim of the discussion was to show what activities have been initiated in response to the June 1994 resolution on urgent action for Africa, as well as interim activities in other regions. Delegates went further and presented their views on what activities the Interim Secretariat should be involved in, in this respect. India stated that with regard to the sensitivities in the compilation of information and implementation of the resolution, five aspects should be considered: public awareness campaigns; training;

capacity building; technology transfer; and people's empowerment. Kazakhstan noted that although it is natural to give priority to Africa, progress in other regions is also needed.

From the reports, the activities already undertaken or planned can be broadly categorized into: establishing coordinating mechanisms; seminars, forums, workshops and conferences; public awareness raising and document preparation; training and research; preparation and implementation of national action programmes; the role of the Interim Secretariat; and resource mobilization.

**ESTABLISHING COORDINATING MECHANISMS:** Most of the international, regional and subregional activity has centered on establishing national structures for coordination, consultative processes or partnership arrangements aimed at resource mobilization.

In Africa, subregional structures have been established. Algeria reported that the Maghreb Union has developed cooperative relationships with other African countries and subregional organizations and began to work on an inter-Mediterranean framework for the implementation of the Convention. IGADD is reviewing existing institutional arrangements and is making an effort to work with developed countries. The OECD reported that it has designated the Club du Sahel as the institution's focal point on the Convention. In February, the CILSS and the Club du Sahel will meet with donors to refine their joint programme of work, and the implementation of the resolution is expected to be the subject of their next annual meeting in Canada. France stated that it had started consultative processes aimed at developing national action programmes and has participated in relevant meetings including those of the Club du Sahel and CILSS/ACCT.

The Central Asian states have set up a council and a fund on the Aral Sea, to undertake several programmes related to regional water management, including hydro-meteorological monitoring and restoration of land productivity. The Russian Federation and Kazakhstan have signed a treaty on the use of jointly-shared water resources. Kazakhstan has entered into bilateral agreements with other countries to solve desertification problems. Israel reported that it is undertaking a joint project with the Palestinian Authority and Jordan to survey the risks of desertification in the Rift Valley.

The Northern Mediterranean countries are planning the next steps in implementing their regional annex, including contacts with countries in the Maghreb and the Middle East. Spain is also supporting projects in the Canary Islands, Mauritania, Mozambique, Tunisia, Syria, Brazil, Peru, Dominican Republic, Mexico and the Philippines.

At the national level, two types of coordinating bodies have been established: purely governmental and those that include other sectors, mainly NGOs and academia. Senegal has established a national sustainable development commission. Lesotho has set up a national environment Secretariat in the Prime Minister's office and, through this Secretariat, a broadbased committee to deal with the Convention. Kenya has established a subcommittee of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Environment, which includes governments, NGOs and other bodies. A similar subcommittee has also been set up to ensure coordination between environmental conventions. In Mauritania, an Inter-Ministerial Committee to oversee the coordination of activities has been established. Ghana has created a national desertification agency, as well as a committee on drought and desertification comprising the government, NGOs, scientists and local populations. In Botswana, a national conservation strategy has been developed, with the help of ministries and NGOs. A national committee has been set up in Morocco, and Portugal is in the process of doing the same.

**SEMINARS, FORUMS, WORKSHOPS AND CONFERENCES:** A number of governments and organizations have held meetings to discuss technical issues related to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. The Maghreb Union has held meetings on desertification, drought and food

security. Japan, in cooperation with Indonesia and some UN agencies and the Global Coalition for Africa, had held an Asia-Africa Forum aimed at promoting South-South cooperation. Israel held a workshop and seminar related to plant and land sustainability in dryland areas and is planning to hold a seminar on water management. The Russian Federation has planned an international seminar, in September, on combating desertification.

Zambia aims at developing new programmes on range and livestock management and improving the living standards of the local people. In this regard, a workshop involving local communities has been held in one of the target rural communities.

**PUBLIC AWARENESS RAISING AND DOCUMENT PREPARATION:** IFAD said that the lack of awareness about the Convention may be the single-most serious obstacle to its implementation. A few countries have initiated awareness raising activities, aimed at their governments and the general public, on the Convention. Senegal has held national seminars and forums aimed at improving the understanding of the problems of desertification.

Mali has initiated measures to establish decentralized structures, and is establishing a new code on collectives and a new law on the taxation of collectives. Denmark has started to provide information about the objectives of the Convention to its embassies. In addition to its national awareness programmes, Lesotho has planned seminars for politicians and policy makers on the implementation of the Convention.

Various forms of awareness campaigns, some involving the media, have been initiated in Mali, Tunisia, Mauritania, the IGADD region, Iran and Armenia. Canada is also supporting anti-desertification and public awareness campaigns in the Sahel. The Philippines stated that awareness raising should be done within the UN system as well.

**TRAINING AND RESEARCH:** Few governments have initiated activities in this area. Finland's planned activities include a scientist assistance programme, with particular emphasis on building forest research capacities of young forestry scientists in developing countries. The Russian Federation, with assistance from UNEP, has started training specialists in the area of space monitoring of desertification. Sudan has undertaken a GIS survey in the affected areas and is hoping to start a scientific survey.

**PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES:** IFAD stated that the preparation of national action programmes (NAPs) cannot be hurried. NAPs must be dynamic and evolve as experience is gained. Egypt cautioned delegates that, from its experience, desertification projects are usually expensive and may need to be implemented at the regional and subregional levels.

Algeria, on behalf of the Maghreb Union, reported that its subregional action programme should be finalized soon. Burkina Faso called attention to its emergency plan and national plan of action. Botswana is working on a national action plan and a state of the environment review, while Pakistan, with the assistance of UNEP, has developed a national plan to combat desertification. Spain has drafted three desertification-related national plans. In March, Japan will send a mission to Senegal to discuss the development of a concrete pilot project that could be adapted for other affected African countries. CILSS is holding consultations aimed at developing a subregional programme of action and the IGADD is also focusing on action programmes at the national and subregional levels.

In addition, concrete projects are already being implemented. Belgium is supporting reforestation programmes in Benin, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. Morocco is focusing on reforestation, soil and water conservation, mobilization of water resources, irrigation, dune stabilization and development of pasture areas, and has begun to work on its national action programme. Iran is, likewise, involved in dune stabilization and degraded land restoration.

Switzerland drew attention to the fact that some activities being outlined under the resolution on urgent action for Africa were prepared before the completion of the Convention and wondered whether new funds were required.

**THE ROLE OF THE INTERIM SECRETARIAT:** The Philippines, on behalf of the G-77 and China, said that with respect to urgent action for Africa, the Interim Secretariat should focus on capacity building, training and promotion and elaboration of national, subregional and regional programmes. The Interim Secretariat should also: collate relevant information from affected African countries; make the necessary contacts with UN field agencies, multilateral organizations, local communities, the donor community and NGOs, to help implement this resolution; and should also raise public awareness.

Niger requested that the activities should be coordinated by the Interim Secretariat, while IFAD suggested a small, dynamic and versatile, but strengthened, Secretariat. Bolivia said that reports on urgent action for Africa must be more specific. The IS should compile and analyze this information and list institutions that are already working on desertification and how assistance is being channelled to Africa. CILSS requested the IS to prepare a simplified version of the Convention to facilitate public awareness.

**RESOURCE MOBILIZATION:** Several developed countries reported on funding structures or resources that they have established to facilitate the implementation of the resolution. France has authorized its missions to be attentive to national requests and will continue to support the OSS. In addition, the European Community will continue to fund desertification activities in Africa, especially in line with the 1989 Lomé IV Convention. The US said that although the budget climate in Washington is uncertain at the moment, it is still committed to providing US\$500 million in current or planned projects to support the Convention and the urgent action phase. The US has instructed its embassies in Africa to support urgent action through dialogue with African governments, donors and international organizations.

Germany said that since October 1994, DM3 million has been given to support the elaboration of national action programmes, coordination and capacity building in Africa. A three-year grant of DM2 million has been given to support the development of a national action plan in Mali and DM5 million is supporting the Namibian Government's elaboration and early implementation of the national action plan. Kenya said that in spite of financial constraints, it will provide seed money to the Interim Secretariat to assist in work related to the action programmes. Switzerland has released SFR1 million for relevant NGO activities. IFAD will assist in resource mobilization and the co-financing of programmes linked to food security.

The Executive Secretary, Arba Diallo, pointed out that the Secretariat does not want to take the place of States and organizations, but in some cases States need support and perhaps the Secretariat could step in and identify the assistance needed.

In his summary, Kjellén said that the discussion shows that there is an impressive amount of activity in Africa and other regions. Nevertheless, there should be no complacency since the situation in the drylands of Africa continues to be a cause for concern.

## **REPORTS TO THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

According to its multi-year thematic programme of work, the Commission on Sustainable Development's (CSD) third session in April 1995, will review the implementation of all the Agenda 21 chapters that address land management. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the task manager for Chapter 12 (desertification) and has prepared a provisional version of its report to the CSD. Franklin Cardy of UNEP introduced this report and noted that it was prepared jointly with all relevant UN organizations, NGOs and some government representatives. He

invited delegates to comment on the report and inform UNEP if there were any factual mistakes. All written and verbal comments were then included and the report was submitted on Monday, 16 January, to the CSD.

The Chair will also be presenting a report from the INCD to the CSD in April. It will cover how desertification relates to land degradation, Agenda 21 Chapters 10-15, as well as other elements of Agenda 21 in which such links can be made. He noted that this Convention supports Principle 1 of the Rio Declaration, which says people are at the center of development, since the Convention concerns over 900 million people and is based on a bottom-up approach and partnerships. He also noted the efforts to improve coordination of international assistance, and the integration and participation of NGOs in the process. Elements of the Convention that fit into the CSD's consideration of other chapters of Agenda 21 include: food security; land use; the use of plant genetic resources; dryland forestry; water resources; and energy. He noted that when the Convention is examined in a broader framework, it has more stature and substance at the global level.

During the Plenary discussion, one delegate noted that the Chair's report should also draw the linkages between this Convention, and the Climate Change and Biodiversity Conventions and the Statement on Forest Principles. Another delegate called for the inclusion of the links to international trade, since obstacles to market access to affected countries will hinder their efforts to combat desertification. Patterns of production and consumption should also be mentioned. The G-77 and China added that priority should be given to: the prevention of land degradation in vulnerable areas and the containment of degradation where it has already taken place; the fact that desertification and drought are global problems, not local problems; links between land degradation and climate change and biodiversity; and links to the mobilization of financial resources, transfer of environmentally sound technologies; and capacity building. Kjellén concluded that the reports by UNEP and the INCD to the CSD will supplement each other.

### **SITUATION AS REGARDS EXTRABUDGETARY FUNDS**

The aim of the discussion was to present a report on how funds have been spent, and to provide a projection on the funds required for the activities to be undertaken by the Interim Secretariat during the interim period.

The Executive Secretary, Arba Diallo, presented the review as contained in document A/AC.241/31. He said the report covered the activities recommended by the INCD for the interim period, and examines the status of the pledges and contributions to the Voluntary and Trust Funds. The first part looks at the Trust Fund through which the Secretariat's expenses are met. The second part is on the Voluntary Fund to support the participation of the developing countries.

As of 31 December 1994, the Trust Fund had received US\$1,958,297, of which the US\$200,000 for staff expenses is almost exhausted. The Swiss Government has granted an additional US\$500,000 to cover information activities, NGO participation and one staff member. The WHO and FAO have supported a consultant and specialist, respectively. The Secretariat has 16 officials, seven of whom are funded through extrabudgetary funds. Diallo said the staff is needed during the interim period in view of the increased responsibilities given to the Secretariat. This will require US\$1,720,000.

During the INCD sessions, the Secretariat will require consultants and may also need to compile and communicate reports on measures adopted by members during the interim period. This activity is without precedent in other Conventions. Diallo noted that in line with the 49th General Assembly's programme budget implications (PBI) document, the cost of financing consultations will be revised downwards from US\$417,000 to US\$70,000.

He stated that the Secretariat, in collaboration with NGOs, will undertake public awareness programmes that target both policy-makers and the general public in order to ensure a better understanding of the Convention. In order to play a catalytic role, the Secretariat may, on request, facilitate the implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa by providing various forms of assistance at the regional, subregional and national levels.

There is a balance of US\$500,000 from the US\$2,169,859 contributed to the Voluntary Fund. While US\$900,000 is required to finance 70 developing country participants, or US\$550,000 for a participant from each of the least developed countries, the fund only has US\$330,000, for this purpose.

Most of the developing countries endorsed the activities and budget proposed by the Executive Secretary. Philippines, on behalf of the G-77 and China, said that the Secretariat's proposals were realistic given the activities assigned to it for the interim period. These tasks require a corresponding financial contribution. Algeria maintained that there is no intention of expanding the Secretariat's mandate, but the INCD should not lose sight of the future role of the Secretariat in assisting affected countries and playing the role of facilitator. The Secretariat should use NGOs and others to facilitate information sharing. Mauritania sought an explanation on how the estimated US\$1.389 million needed for urgent action for Africa was defined. His government has estimated that US\$450,000 is needed in Mauritania alone. Bolivia asserted that given that 900 million people are affected by desertification, the Secretariat is bending over backwards to get the job done with limited funds.

The developed countries were more cautious about the role of the Interim Secretariat, especially regarding activities that other institutions are currently undertaking or that can be adequately undertaken by other institutions. On behalf of the EU, France made five comments on the document. 1) The INCD sessions should be financed from the regular UN budget and the Secretariat cannot allocate money to a scientific group before the Committee has agreed on whether there should be one. 2) The Secretariat should play a substantive role in public awareness, but funds are already available elsewhere. 3) Regarding the implementation of urgent action for Africa, funds are also available from bilateral donors. UNDP could also support the Secretariat in the role that General Assembly resolution 49/234 has assigned to it. 4) Case studies should not be funded, since there is no longer any need for them. 5) With regard to personnel, it would be useful to give specific details on the staff funds required, what the donors have specified and the type of staff that are currently available.

The US noted that when considering the budget: 1) due to the resource situation, the Committee should be cautious about duplicating efforts; 2) activities related to this Convention should be based in the field as much as possible; 3) caution should also be exercised when comparing this Convention to others, since this Convention has a bottom-up philosophy; and 4) the more resources that are devoted to the center (i.e., the Secretariat), the less money is in the field. Regarding the scientific group, a decision is needed before allocating money.

Canada reiterated that budget estimates should correspond to the tasks given to the Secretariat. This Convention is different from others since it emphasizes decentralized activities. Canada will fund the Secretariat and countries for appropriate activities, and provide support for the legal adviser. He pointed out that NGO support should be accounted for under the Voluntary Fund, and not the Trust Fund. Burkina Faso said that just because the Convention has a bottom-up approach does not imply that the Secretariat should not have any money. Decentralization does not mean that all action should happen in the field while the Secretariat does nothing. Diallo pointed out that support funds for NGOs cannot be placed under the Voluntary Fund since the General Assembly resolution says that this fund is to support developing country delegates only.



Japan stated that the most important decision is that on the interim role of the Secretariat and the budget should be a reflection of that decision. He feared a "Catch 22" situation. Some of the proposed activities can be implemented by bilateral or multilateral organizations. He asked for an explanation regarding the discrepancies between the INCD budget adopted by the General Assembly in December and A/AC.241/31, which was prepared in November. Australia supported the US and, like Japan, requested that the linkage between A/AC.241/31 and the regular budget of the UN be shown and that there be some coordinated information on the contributions from other agencies. Diallo responded that the proposals for the regular budget are in accordance with the General Assembly resolution of 23 December 1994, and added that services budgeted for in the regular UN budget will not be covered by the Voluntary Fund.

Diallo stated that the Secretariat had hoped that, upon request, it could provide funds to affected country Parties, however, they can direct them to the various donors. Tunisia stated that funding should not only be provided on a bilateral basis and urged the developed country partners to show renewed commitment to the implementation of the Convention during this interim phase. Benin expressed surprise at the apparent suggestions to renegotiate a Convention in which multilateral agreements were already covered. Niger proposed that there should be a special support fund for urgent action for Africa, which could help NGOs and others. This could be a flexible fund so that support could be requested when urgent action was needed and the Secretariat could assist. The Secretariat personnel should not be reduced. Uganda expressed the hope that the pre-Convention political goodwill would prevail and that additional support would be provided from the regular UN budget, to enable affected countries to live up to their expectations.

The Republic of Korea noted that the proposed budget corresponds to the tasks given to the Secretariat and said that his country would be increasing its contribution.

Kjellén then summarized the discussion. 1) There was general appreciation of the work of the Secretariat. 2) The purpose of the discussion was not to agree on the budget, since these are voluntary funds. 3) This is an important period in the Convention and sufficient funds must be available. 4) While affected countries have indicated the action needed, there are budgetary constraints. 5) It is necessary to determine a logical distribution of work to be done efficiently and specify who would do it. 6) Although the Convention calls for decentralization, activities may need to be more centralized during the interim period. 7) There are divergent views on the document, but additional information would be provided on the funds, since there have also been indications elsewhere of the amounts. 8) The question of methodology in presenting the report may also require consideration, an issue that can be also be raised at the next session of the General Assembly.

Kjellén also noted that although delegates were not being asked to pledge funds, the discussion was complex due to the fact that: the Secretariat document was prepared before the conclusion of the General Assembly's discussions last December; the delegates to the INCD and General Assembly were different; the decision makers on financial matters were in the capitals; the UN system has inherent weaknesses; and other UN agencies had made financial contributions during the negotiating process, but the situation on further funding was still unclear.

### **AWARENESS BUILDING**

During discussions in the Plenary, delegates described activities launched in their respective countries related to public awareness. In awareness building, it seemed important to consider three questions: what information should be provided; to whom; and by whom. The audiences will be found at the village level in affected developing countries; within the governments of both the North and the South; and in the general public in the North. There are

variations in approach depending on the target group. More efforts should be made to show that desertification is a global problem. The important role of NGOs in awareness raising was emphasized by a proposal to organize a global NGO meeting before INCD-7, but the Chair did not think that there would be sufficient time to prepare for such a meeting before August.

There appeared to be consensus on the fundamental need to raise the public's awareness on the Convention in both developed and developing countries, as well as on the type of activities that need to be undertaken. Some had already been initiated, such as the preparation and dissemination of documents, but new ideas also came up during the discussion, including: the commemoration of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought on 17 June; the awarding of a Desertification Prize; the creation of a central information service to collect and disseminate information; issuing information bulletins and magazines; holding seminars for decision-makers, technicians, NGOs, local populations and bilateral cooperation agencies; and the involvement of other sectors of society, such as university institutions and intellectuals.

Developing countries wanted the Secretariat to have a strong active role in order to catalyze action, especially in the least developing countries, without expropriating the roles of other groups. Developed countries preferred that national governments and other sectors play the key role, while a small Secretariat plays a limited role of compiling and disseminating the available documents to the Parties and granting advice upon request. NGOs and specialized agencies should be involved in information dissemination. Given these proposals, the function of the Interim Secretariat would: supplement those of other institutions; involve mobilizing resources on behalf of countries that may not find assistance elsewhere; prepare reports, upon request, on the activities it has undertaken, in order to ensure transparency; and set up a partnership to meet the proposed needs, for which the Secretariat is awaiting guidelines from the INCD at the next session.

### **SIGNATURE AND RATIFICATION UPDATE**

On Monday, 9 January 1995, the Executive Secretary of the Interim Secretariat, Arba Diallo, reported that 85 countries and the European Union had signed the Convention in Paris on 14-15 October 1994. Ten more countries signed the Convention over the past three months. These countries are: Namibia (24/10/94), Nigeria (31/10/94), Sierra Leone (11/11/94), Nicaragua (21/11/94), Uganda (21/11/94), Paraguay (1/12/94), Uzbekistan (7/12/94), Philippines (8/12/94), Micronesia (12/12/94) and South Africa (9/1/95).

Diallo appealed to those who have not yet been able to sign the Convention to do so as soon as circumstances permit. Kjellén joined in this appeal and expressed hope that the Convention would have 100 signatories by the conclusion of this session. Although this goal was not attained by the conclusion of INCD-6, Malawi became the 97th country to sign the Convention on Tuesday, 17 January 1995, and Ecuador was expected to sign the Convention on Thursday, 19 January 1995. For a complete list of signatories to the Convention, see page 11.

As of Wednesday, 18 January 1995, no country had submitted its instrument of ratification to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the depositary for the Convention. However, according to an informal survey of delegations during INCD-6, it appears as though the first instrument of ratification could be deposited as early as February 1995.

### **CLOSING PLENARY — PART I**

On Wednesday afternoon, 18 January 1995, the Plenary met briefly at 4:00 pm to adopt the resolution on the work programme for the interim period (A/AC.241/L.24) and elect the Chairs of the two Working Groups. The Chair proposed that according to paragraph 3(a) of the decision, it would be desirable to underline

the importance of Africa and have Africans on the bureaus of both Working Groups. Thus, Working Group I will have three Vice Chairs and Working Group II will have two Vice Chairs. The Committee accepted this proposal and then elected Mourad Ahmia (Algeria) as the Chair of Working Group I and Takao Shibata (Japan) as the Chair of Working Group II.

Delegates then adopted the provisional agenda for INCD-7, which includes: adoption of the agenda and organization of work; preparation for the Conference of the Parties; urgent action for Africa and interim action taken in other regions; status of signature and ratification of the Convention; review of the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds; adoption of the provisional agenda for the eighth session; and adoption of the report of the Committee on its seventh session. The Plenary then adjourned so that the Working Groups could hold brief organizational sessions.

### **FIRST MEETINGS OF THE WORKING GROUPS**

**WORKING GROUP I:** Mourad Ahmia called to order the first meeting of Working Group I and thanked all the members for the confidence vested in him and his country, Algeria. The Working Group then proceeded to elect two of its Vice Chairs: Erwin Ortiz (Bolivia) and Mohammad R.H.K. Jabbari (Iran). In the absence of a nomination from the Western Europe and Others Group, the election of the third Vice Chair was postponed until INCD-7.

The Chair then read out the list of issues to be considered by Working Group I, which include: initiating measures relating to the identification of an organization to house the Global Mechanism; making recommendations for the designation by the Conference of the Parties of a Permanent Secretariat and arrangements for its functioning; and financial rules, programme and budget. After the Philippines, on behalf of the G-77 and China, congratulated the Bureau on its election, the meeting was adjourned.

**WORKING GROUP II:** Takao Shibata called to order the first meeting of Working Group II and expressed his deep honor and appreciation for the trust and confidence bestowed upon him to chair this working group. The Working Group then elected David Etuket (Uganda) and Dr. Anatoly Ovchinnikov (Uzbekistan) as Vice Chairs. The Chair then read out the list of issues to be considered by Working Group II, including: organization of scientific and technological cooperation; rules of procedure for the Conference of the Parties; procedures on questions of implementation; procedures for conciliation and arbitration; and procedures for communication of information for the review of implementation of the Convention. After the Philippines, on behalf of the G-77 and China, congratulated the Bureau on its election, the meeting was adjourned.

### **CLOSING PLENARY — PART II**

At 5:30 pm the Plenary reconvened to take care of organizational matters and adopt its report. The Chair announced that during the intersessional period he would direct a letter to a number of international organizations that might be able to provide a home for the Global Mechanism and ask them to express their observations. These letters will be sent to UNDP, UNEP, the World Bank, GEF and IFAD. He hopes to have the observations of these organizations in time for INCD-7.

The Committee then adopted a draft resolution entitled, "Promotion of Public Awareness: Observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought" (A/AC.241/L.26). This resolution, which was negotiated on Wednesday morning in a small group, recalls General Assembly resolution 49/115 of 19 December 1994, proclaiming 17 June as the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. The resolution: requests the Interim Secretariat, within its mandate and taking due account of existing activities by other United Nations bodies, to promote public awareness of the Convention with a view to ensuring the success of the observance of the World Day; invites the Chair of the INCD to

report to the next session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the arrangements envisaged by the Interim Secretariat; and invites the Executive Secretary to report to the next session of the INCD on the relevant arrangements.

The Committee then adopted its report (A/AC.241/L.25). The Chair noted that his conclusions on urgent action for Africa and interim action in other regions (A/AC.241/CRP.13) and the review of the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds (A/AC.241/CRP.14) would be appended to the report.

In his closing remarks, the Chair expressed satisfaction that the Committee was able to conclude its work two days ahead of schedule. He thanked everyone for their spirit of compromise and noted that the Convention has had a number of additional signatures in New York and a number of countries have started ratification procedures. Kjellén expressed some of his own dreams about what this Convention should be, particularly that the problems of the drylands should be recognized as global problems and that there will soon be new possibilities for financing that will facilitate implementation. He hopes that the Convention will be a demonstration that the world can have a decentralized system incorporating local systems and traditional knowledge, based on well-functioning governments and regional cooperation. He also hopes that there will be technological developments on water harvesting and genetic research, as well as the full participation of women in the implementation of the Convention.

After closing statements by the Philippines (on behalf of the G-77 and China), Australia (on behalf of the OECD member States), India (on behalf of the Asian Group), Kenya (on behalf of the African Group) and Bolivia (on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group), the meeting was adjourned.

### **A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF INCD-6**

This session marked the beginning of a new phase in the INCD negotiating process. The first five sessions of the INCD, which met between May 1993 and June 1994, focused on the negotiation of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD). Now that the Convention has been adopted, it is time to turn to implementation. This new phase of the negotiating process is often referred to as "post-agreement negotiations." The purpose of post-agreement negotiations is to continue the dialogue to push forward the development of the Convention and its implementation. These additional negotiations are often aimed at settling disputes, handling misunderstandings, dealing with future adjustments to the Convention and the management of the day-to-day governance of the Convention among the signatories. The objective of these negotiations is to ensure that the negotiated outcome is well implemented.

While INCD-6 was more of an organizational session than anything else, it served two very important purposes. First, the Committee reached agreement on the mandates of the two working groups and the Plenary, which will carry out the post-agreement negotiations. Second, it has alerted delegates, the Bureau and the Interim Secretariat to some of the challenges that lie ahead. These challenges include: reaffirming the equal status of the CCD with other environmental conventions; implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa; awareness raising; popular participation; preparation for the first Conference of the Parties; scientific and technical cooperation during the interim period; and funding. While there is no denial that these challenges exist, INCD-6 also indicated some of the forces that may facilitate or hinder the process — the Interim Secretariat, NGOs and governments.

### **CHALLENGES FOR THE INTERIM PERIOD**

**STATUS OF THE CONVENTION:** One issue that was raised during INCD-6 was the status of the Convention. Since the EU and other developed countries were stressing that the role of the



Secretariat should be restricted to a facilitative one, the G-77 and China were concerned that the OECD countries were trying to downgrade the Convention to a lower status than the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Developing countries feared that conditionalities were being stressed beyond the spirit and provisions of the Convention and its regional annexes and, therefore, stressed that the Interim Secretariat should play an activist role in ensuring the status of the Convention. Developed countries responded that the CCD has the same status as other environmental conventions and one delegate expressed the view that, in fact, the CCD was superior to the others because of its bottom-up approach.

**URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA:** The reports on the activities undertaken in response to the implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa show that a vast amount of work has already been initiated in different countries. Both affected developing countries and donor countries have taken action that indicate positive attempts to ensure that target communities are involved in the preparation of national action plans. Yet, during the course of INCD-6 a number of non-African developing countries expressed concern that the implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa has shifted donor focus away from their regions. Without the support of donors (agencies, banks and developed countries), delegates from these countries are afraid that they will have difficulty convincing their governments to sign and/or ratify the Convention. The challenge for the interim period is to implement the resolution on urgent action for Africa, while at the same time ensuring that the affected countries of Asia and Latin America are not forgotten.

**AWARENESS RAISING:** During INCD-6, delegates stressed the need to raise awareness about the Convention in both affected developing countries and developed countries. However, it is important to recognize that awareness raising may only result in public knowledge of the existence of the Convention and may not generate the expected action. As such, the challenge for both governments and the Committee is to not only raise awareness, but raise the consciousness of the target communities as well as policymakers and NGOs in developed countries.

For example, a number of organizations, in addition to the CCD Interim Secretariat, are publishing popularized versions of the Convention. Camilla Toulmin of the London-based International Institute for Environment and Development, and a former member of the International Panel of Experts on Desertification, has written a user's guide to the Convention. The Swiss Government is funding the Geneva-based Centre for Our Common Future to publish its own "easy-to-read" version of the Convention. In Nairobi, Eonews Africa and ELCI are producing a guide to provide an entry point into the Convention by NGOs and community workers in the field. However, even if these efforts at spreading an understandable version of the Convention seem to be overlapping, they are an important part of the much needed awareness raising on this issue. The fact that several publications are being produced provides the opportunity to reach different audiences on different levels. In this respect, it is important to recognize the need to distinguish between materials for raising general awareness on the Convention and those aimed at consciousness raising.

**POPULAR PARTICIPATION:** Governments have also been involved in setting up structures at the national level that may facilitate the participation of the affected populations and provide expertise from different sectors. The creation of these nationally-recognizable structures is useful in that they draw the attention of the public to the Convention and also raise the political profile of the Convention at the national level. Yet to ensure real participation from the local populations in the preparation of the national action plans, further decentralization of these structures is needed. This process may require not only the creation of decentralized structures, but the establishment of legal mechanisms to support these structures, as is the case in Mali.

In spite of the progress that has been made, there is still cause for concern. Several countries have already prepared their national action programmes, while others expect to complete them soon. Notwithstanding the need to take urgent measures, the preparation of practical programmes that will make a positive impact cannot be hurried. In such cases, target communities may not have been adequately consulted or properly informed.

Another concern is the tendency to superimpose old structures on a Convention that proposes a different approach, both among the developed countries and in affected developing countries. In some instances, affected developing countries have simply gone ahead and implemented the programmes they had prepared prior to the adoption of the Convention, while using the provisions of the Convention to solicit funds. Although previously prepared programmes could be implemented, it is likely that most of them require modification, especially with regard to cooperation with the local communities.

**PREPARATION FOR THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES:** During this session, the Committee identified the issues that must be discussed in order to ensure a productive first meeting of the Conference of the Parties. If these preliminary discussions are any indication, several of these issues will pose a challenge during the upcoming negotiations.

Agreement on the operational modalities for the Global Mechanism may be the greatest challenge. Except for the agreement that a Global Mechanism is to be established, it is still undefined. Such an institution has no precedent in other conventions. The developed countries seem to view the institution as a coordinating facility, while the developing countries still hope that it can be a multilateral funding mechanism. During the interim period, it will be necessary for delegates to clearly determine what role the mechanism will play and what organization could house it.

Another challenge is to reach agreement on the location and function of the Permanent Secretariat. The developing countries would prefer to have a new institution established for the Convention, as is the case for the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. However, in the case of desertification existing institutions, such as UNSO and UNEP's DC/PAC, have previously been involved in activities to combat desertification. The fact that UNSO's scope has just been expanded beyond the Sudano-Sahelian region to include all countries affected by desertification may also have an impact on this decision. Under the circumstances, it is crucial that negotiations be focused not only on the need to conserve resources, but on how each potential institution will address the needs of those in the field in order to attain the objectives of the Convention.

**SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION:** Since the mandate of the Panel of Experts has expired and the Convention provides for a Committee on Science and Technology (Article 24), the INCD has to deal with how to prepare for the establishment of such a body. The resolution adopted at INCD-6 calls on the Secretariat to suggest to the INCD how it thinks that the interim work on scientific and technological issues should be conducted. The newly established Working Group II has the mandate to deal with: "organization of scientific and technological cooperation, in particular the terms of reference of the Committee on Science and Technology, the establishment and maintenance of a roster of independent experts, and the terms of reference and modalities of work of any *ad hoc* panels that the Conference of the Parties may decide to appoint." Nevertheless, there is still the question of the need for scientific and technical advice during the interim period. Some developed countries seem to be opposed to the establishment of an interim scientific and technological body. While there is precedent for such an interim body (the Interim Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (ISTAC), which held one meeting in support of the Biodiversity Convention), some believe that given the nature of the desertification and drought, such an interim body may not be necessary. Furthermore, given

financial constraints, the question of the value of a scientific and technological body during this phase of negotiations must also be justified.

**FUNDING:** Although the INCD's discussion on financial issues was aimed at giving an indication of how much funding was needed by the Secretariat during the interim period, problems that arose point to issues both governments and the Secretariat will have to address.

Prior to the negotiation of the Convention, little, if any, funding was provided for consultation with local communities. On the other hand, while donor countries have successfully argued for the need to use existing funding structures, some of these structures have not been reformed to correspond with the provisions of the Convention. This means that although the affected developing countries may have the goodwill to prepare programmes that conform to the requirements of the Convention, their efforts may be frustrated if the funding structures themselves are not reorganized to meet the requirements of the Convention.

The main challenge will be in the implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa and activities in other regions. The Convention provides clear guidelines, up to the completion of the national action programmes, on the process that governments should follow. However, since the multilateral funding processes may not be fully resolved until, at least, the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, some affected countries may find themselves short of resources. Bilateral funding is likely to dominate during this period, but such funding mechanisms are often bureaucratic and entail requests for huge budgets. Awareness raising programmes in target communities, however, require small amounts of quickly accessible funding. This necessitates that bilateral funders must establish mechanisms, in particular for the implementation of the resolution on urgent action for Africa, through which such funds could be made available to both NGOs and governments. Any delay in accessing funds may cause affected countries to cut short on processes that are crucial to implementation of the Convention.

### **FORCES INFLUENCING THE INTERIM PERIOD**

**ROLE OF THE INTERIM SECRETARIAT:** The interim period will be strongly affected by both the role of the Interim Secretariat and debates between developed and developing countries on what this role should be. Developing countries, which support an active Secretariat, expressed concern that the restrictive attitude of developed countries would deprive them of a much needed coordinator for desertification activities and disseminator of information. Developed countries, for their part, seemed to emphasize that the Secretariat should play a facilitative role, fearing that the Interim Secretariat might become the big, central machinery that the Convention is trying to avoid in the promotion of a bottom-up approach. The question of the role of the Secretariat has a direct bearing on the provisions of extrabudgetary funds. As long as developed countries are not satisfied with the role of the Secretariat, they may withhold contributions to the Secretariat Trust Fund. This could have a two-fold effect. First, it could reduce the effectiveness of the Secretariat in even the most basic tasks as its numbers diminish. Second, it could lead to prolonged discussions during every future session of the INCD, as developing countries plead for more money for the Secretariat and developed countries defend their positions.

**ROLE OF THE NGO NETWORK:** In November, some 50 NGOs met in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, to establish a global network on desertification called RIOD (Réseau International d'ONGs sur la Désertification) and to develop an action plan for the implementation of the Convention. Governments and UN agencies have reacted favorably to the establishment of RIOD and the fact that NGOs are already taking positive action to implement the Convention. During INCD-6, NGOs had daily meetings with representatives from donor governments and UN agencies to

discuss the mechanisms for getting funding for implementation of the NGO action programme, specifically for public awareness activities and the involvement of NGOs and community-based organizations in the implementation of the Convention. The establishment of this NGO network, and the interest of donors in supporting its work, is an indication of the effectiveness of the bottom-up approach.

**ROLE OF GOVERNMENTS:** Finally, unless both developed and developing country governments demonstrate the necessary political will, the challenges of the interim period will not be met. All governments must endeavor to sign the Convention, if they have not already done so, and begin the necessary ratification processes so that the Convention will quickly enter into force. The average length of time between the date a convention is adopted and when it enters into force is 32 months. For example, the 1973 CITES Convention took 28 months to enter into force, the 1979 Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution took 40 months and the 1989 Basel Convention took 38 months. However, the ratification of the two most recent environmental conventions on climate change and biological diversity took only 22 months and 19 months, respectively. If there is sufficient political will, and given the urgency of the matter, particularly in Africa, the Convention to Combat Desertification could enter into force before June 1996 and continue this trend.

Affected country governments can also demonstrate their political will by beginning the process of developing national action programmes with the participation of community-based organizations and NGOs. Government assistance in raising public awareness about the causes and effects of desertification is also important in both affected and non-affected countries. People in the cities, as well as those in remote villages, must learn about desertification and how to combat it. Donor countries can also show their political will by providing resources to affected developing countries and NGOs for activities such as public awareness raising and the preparation and implementation of national action programmes.

At the INCD, governments must demonstrate that they can continue to work together effectively to ensure that the interim period is a productive one. After all, the purpose of this Convention and the INCD is not to provide a forum for procedural wrangling and prolonged arguments over words. The Committee should be a place to demonstrate commitment and action to improve the situation of the nearly one billion people who live in the drylands.

### **THINGS TO LOOK FOR DURING THE INTERSESSIONAL PERIOD**

**COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** At its second session, the CSD agreed to continue the work of the *ad hoc* open-ended intersessional working group on finance and established a new working group to address the sectoral issues that will be examined by the CSD in 1995 (land management, forests, desertification and biodiversity). The *Ad Hoc* Working Group on the Sectoral Themes will meet from 27 February - 3 March 1995. The *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Finance will meet from 6-10 March 1995. Both meetings will be in New York.

The third session of the CSD will meet from 11-28 April 1995, at UN Headquarters in New York. Focus will be on the following cross-sectoral chapters of Agenda 21: poverty; demographics; integrating environment and development in decision-making; biotechnology; major groups; and information. Financial resources and mechanisms and the chapters on transfer of environmentally sound technology, cooperation and capacity building, science and education will also be discussed. The sectoral cluster for this session includes the chapters on land management, forests, desertification and drought, mountains, sustainable agriculture, biological diversity and the Forest Principles.

**GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY:** The Council of the Global Environment Facility will meet three times during the INCD intersessional period: 30 January - 2 February 1995, 3-5 May 1995, and 18-21 July 1995. All of these meetings will be held in Washington, DC.

**UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL:** The UNEP Governing Council will meet from 18-26 May 1995, in Nairobi.

**SECRETARIAT ACTIVITIES:** In May 1995, the Secretariat will hold consultations on awareness raising in Dakar, Senegal. There will also be awareness meetings in ten developing countries between February and August 1995. The Secretariat is also expected to publish a simplified version of the Convention.

**SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Various organizations and groups have activities planned for the intersessional period. The CILSS will hold information meetings at the national level about the Convention in each of its member countries. There will also be a regional meeting with all West African member countries in May 1995. At the end of January or beginning of February 1995, there will be a meeting between the CILSS and the OECD on their joint programme of work. The OECD is also arranging meetings in cooperation with Club du Sahel with the national leadership of select countries. Club du Sahel's 1995 annual meeting will focus on the Convention.

The Arab-Mahgreb Union will hold a three-day consultative conference for its member States on the Convention and national action programmes at the end of April 1995, and will invite representatives from governments, NGOs, media, regional organizations and international institutions.

The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) will host a subregional meeting for East and Southern Africa to discuss all subregional, regional, international and other Conventions of relevance to Africa. The meeting will assess the political, legal and financial implications and benefits for African countries. The provisional dates are 8-10 March 1995, in Nairobi.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) will host two meetings in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where the CCD is expected to be discussed. The Council of African Foreign Ministers will meet from 23-25 January 1995 and the African Heads of State are expected to meet in June or July.

IGADD will host the Second Subregional High-Level Policy and Decision-Makers Workshop, which will address the state of ratification of the CCD. The workshop is expected to take place in April 1995. IGADD will also organize a subregional workshop in collaboration with NGO country representatives. The workshop, which will take place in June or July, will address several issues including awareness raising and information dissemination.

The Asian Group is applying for funds from ESCAP to hold a meeting on the exchange of information and technical and scientific cooperation, during which centers of excellence in Asia will be established.

**NGO ACTIVITIES:** The NGOs are currently planning a meeting of Asian NGOs in Karachi, Pakistan, from 17-20 June 1995. This meeting is aimed at organizing NGOs and raising awareness about the RIOD Network and Action Plan. NGOs hope to organize a similar meeting in Peru in July 1995. US NGOs will meet on 6 April 1995 in Washington, DC, to organize their own awareness-raising campaign. The organization Solidarité Canada-Sahel is also planning to hold a subregional meeting in Western Africa.

EarthAction is developing a public awareness campaign in affected countries. This will include: action alerts for citizen groups to help them get involved in desertification programme activities; media alerts to assist journalists in producing good news stories and feature articles on desertification activities; and parliamentary alerts to raise issues related to the implementation of the Convention in national legislatures worldwide.

A number of organizations are publishing guides to the Convention, including the Centre for Our Common Future, the International Institute for Environment and Development, and Econews Africa/ELCI.

**INCD-7:** The seventh session of the INCD will take place at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 7-18 August 1995. The two working groups will begin their substantive work in preparation for the first Conference of the Parties and are expected to meet through most of the proposed two-week session.

## SIGNATORIES TO THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (as of 18 January 1995)

Algeria	Comoros	Guinea	Mauritania	Seychelles
Angola	Congo	Guinea Bissau	Mexico	Sierra Leone
Argentina	Costa Rica	Haiti	Micronesia	South Africa
Armenia	Côte d'Ivoire	India	Mongolia	Spain
Australia	Croatia	Indonesia	Morocco	Sudan
Bangladesh	Cuba	Iran	Namibia	Sweden
Benin	Denmark	Ireland	Netherlands	Switzerland
Bolivia	Djibouti	Israel	Nicaragua	Syria
Brazil	Egypt	Italy	Niger	Tanzania
Burkina Faso	Equatorial Guinea	Japan	Nigeria	Togo
Burundi	Eritrea	Kazakhstan	Norway	Tunisia
Cambodia	Ethiopia	Kenya	Pakistan	Turkey
Cameroon	European Union	Lebanon	Paraguay	Uganda
Canada	Finland	Lesotho	Peru	United Kingdom
Cape Verde	France	Libya	Philippines	United States
Central African Republic	Gambia	Luxembourg	Portugal	Uzbekistan
Chad	Georgia	Madagascar	Republic of Korea	Zaire
China	Germany	Malawi	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Zambia
Colombia	Ghana	Mali	Senegal	Zimbabwe
	Greece	Malta		