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INCD HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 1996

Delegates completed discussion of the resolution on urgent action for Africa and interim activities in Asia, and began consideration of the interim action in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Two special presentations were given as a summary of the situation as regards extrabudgetary funds.

PLENARY

URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA: Guinea's and Togo's next steps include awareness raising campaigns, involving translating, summarizing and preparing leaflets on the CCD in local languages. In **Gambia** task forces on the conventions on biological diversity and desertification are jointly involved in elaboration of the National Action Programmes (NAPs) for the CCD.

Portugal, in cooperation with FAO, plans a meeting on desertification on 24-28 June in Lisbon with Cape Verde and Senegal. Conclusions will be transmitted to the International Panel on Forests. **Côte d'Ivoire** aims to: emphasize awareness raising; establish a national committee on desertification; create a national desertification fund; and avoid inappropriate allocation of funds. **Japan** supports a project in the Niger river basin. Many of the conclusions of surveys on desertification control are found among the principles in the CCD.

Burundi said decision-makers have difficulty distinguishing between Desertification, Biological Diversity and Climate Change Conventions. He requested support for awareness raising in countries where desertification is not yet acute. **Rwanda** said although desertification is not yet perceptible in the country, the massacres and resulting movement of refugees has accelerated fuel wood consumption and thus deforestation and soil degradation. **Niger** said its national sustainable development and environment plan includes an NAP for desertification that defines policies, strategies and priorities. A national secretariat plans consciousness raising, a national fund, strategies for NGO participation, and project analysis.

Ghana said the CCD provided the impetus to re-establish a national committee on desertification established for an earlier UNSO project. **Uganda** will set up district-level steering committees with government and NGO focal points and hold several regional and district awareness and consultation workshops and three orientation and planning workshops. The **Central African Republic** said the decision by the National Assembly on ratification will be taken in March. In **Kenya**, a study on institutional arrangements for the CCD has been

undertaken with support from Australia. The national awareness seminar will be in March.

OAU said a regional coordinating unit has been established. Cooperation is planned with IGADD, AMU, CILSS and SADC. On behalf of the **African NGOs**, Jacqueline Nkoyok of CONGAC said that only a small portion of the resources for preventing desertification reaches the grass roots, making it hard for NGOs to fulfill their CCD responsibilities.

INCD Chair, Bo Kjellén, concluded that there is an impressive scope of action involving many stakeholders. Coordination with donors is complicated and continued efforts are needed including additional contacts during INCD-8. Despite positive indicators, the following are needed: improved coordination, cross-fertilization, the inclusion of desertification in World Food Summit preparations, holistic and integrated approaches, and including the role of women.

INTERIM ACTION IN ASIA: **India** said limited resources restrict programmes addressing aspects of desertification to only a small portion of its degraded land. New guidelines give responsibility for formulating and implementing projects to local watershed communities with support from government institutes and NGOs. India offered to host consultations on the Asian regional Annex and is coordinating a concept paper on its implementation.

From its experiences, **China** made three conclusions: governments and decision-makers must attach importance to the desertification issue; success in combating desertification depends on the awareness and commitment of affected populations; and scientific and technological inputs are indispensable. Wang Guoxiang, speaking on behalf of a Chinese Women's NGO, **Desert Reclamation Association**, elaborated on their success in reclaiming previously arid lands over a 10-year period.

Uzbekistan reported the outcome of the UN Conference on the Sustainable Development of the Aral Sea Basin and called on the World Bank, UNDP, EU and donor agencies to provide financial assistance to address these problems. **Turkmenistan** is establishing a centre for scientific information and sustainable development of economies of the Aral Sea basin.

Kazakstan said the change from traditional, pre-socialist nomadic livestock rearing practices and virgin land development led to widespread desertification. Problems include authorities who do not understand the value of international participation and lack of initiative in socialist trained people. The **Russian Federation** suggested establishing a European arid land centre in the Republic of Kalmykia, where sand and degradation threatens other parts of Europe. The centre could develop joint policy on

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desertification and centralize decision-making.

Saudi Arabia, in collaboration with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the INCD Secretariat, organized a conference on the CCD for the GCC countries in November 1995. **Israel** has collaborated on several points with Jordan and the PLO; hosted a seminar with Chinese experts and decision-makers from dryland provinces; cooperated with the Indian state of Gujarat; and plans to establish an international educational institute for desertification. **Nepal** has long involved local user groups in the planning process of conserving natural resources. The CCD is an effective tool to improve conditions in Nepal's fragile ecosystem, but financial resources are needed to implement the NAP.

Armenia gives priority in CCD implementation to create an NAP and staff training. It cooperates with FAO on forests and has an agreement involving US\$480,000 with the World Bank. **Iran** said a strong regional mechanism should be organized, and experience used through enhanced partnerships. **Palestine** said the recently elected legislative council plans to ratify the CCD. Its environmental agency is developing land use policies.

FAO summarized its programmes in drylands, including food security in low income countries, schemes for restoring agricultural land and famine early warning and monitoring efforts. FAO has established five subregional offices and developed new technical support agreements to facilitate expert assistance. **Panama** said despite the warm, humid climate there are areas of major soil degradation requiring increased effort toward a national forest law and environmental protection plan. **Cuba** has set up a national coordinating committee with support from state bodies and other scientific institutions. The GM should not only facilitate and coordinate but also manage and administer its own funds.

Jose Miguel Torrico, on behalf of Latin American members of **RIOD**, highlighted the broad regional participation at an NGO meeting in Ica, Peru and appealed to governments to provide reference points and appoint delegates to attend CCD meetings. The NGO meeting proposed regional action, use of local and national funds, and a participatory approach.

ESCAP said a regional meeting held in Myanmar discussed the region's response to the CCD and prepared an analytical review of the national action programmes and follow-up action for the period 1995-2000. In response to the issues raised on the Aral Sea, **UNDP** said it is ready to collaborate with affected countries to provide technical backstopping and mobilize additional resources that may be needed. Among other planned activities in Asia is a workshop to be jointly organized with UNEP involving the six GCC countries, Jordan, Yemen, Iran, Syria and Lebanon.

Tanveer Arif of **SCOPE**, on behalf of Asian NGOs, said following their regional meeting in Islamabad, NGOs resolved to organize national forums in each country, an electronic mail conference and a resource center on desertification. **INCD Chair Kjellén** summarized the debate noting that: developments in the Middle East region had paved way for cooperation; action is being taken towards early ratification; and the CCD is being utilized to support the on-going activities.

INTERIM ACTION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: **Costa Rica** said the criteria used in the CCD to determine whether a country is susceptible to drought and desertification needs to be reviewed because some countries that should qualify are not included in the list that has been drawn up. Argentina, on behalf of the **Latin American and Caribbean**

Group, reported from its first regional meeting in Buenos Aires 24-26 January. It dealt with guidelines for regional programmes of action; scientific and technical coordination mechanisms, and INCD matters. Established priorities are to: urge ratification; determine national focal points; and enhance regional cooperation.

Spain is working to fit its established cooperation with the Latin American and Caribbean region into the CCD framework. Thematic areas are: conservation of natural resources and sustainable development; integrated land use management, especially water basins; and environmentally safe energy.

Peru: ratified the CCD, is drafting a NAP and a national programme to combat desertification, has held two regional workshops and planned a national workshop this year.

AGENDA ITEM 1: ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The year-long vacant position of Vice-Chair reserved for the WEOG was filled with the unanimous election of Franklin Moore of the US.

AGENDA ITEM 5: SITUATION AS REGARDS EXTRABUDGETARY FUNDS

Executive Secretary Arba Diallo, presented document A/AC.241/52 that reflects contributions received by 30 November. In conformity with paragraph 24, document A/AC.241/52/Add.1 lists countries that have received support to attend INCD-8 and the size of the budget. The staffing situation referred to in paragraph 27 is that of 30 November and not 31 October as stated. Canada, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, IFAD and WMO made contributions to the Trust Fund after 30 November, while UNSO and UNEP opted to co-finance activities with the Secretariat. Austria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Malaysia, Norway and Switzerland contributed to the Special voluntary fund after the November deadline. Voluntary funds were mainly used to support participation of 67 delegations to INCD-8. Discussion on this item will be held Monday.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS: Dr. Gunilla Bjorklund of the **Stockholm Environment Institute** presented the Comprehensive Freshwater Assessment, initiated by the CSD in 1994, for presentation at the special session of the General Assembly in 1997. The assessment will include: a rationale; a description of the availability, quantity, quality and use of the world's water; an investigation of current and future water needs; and an overview of policy options for water resources conservation.

Robert Hamwey of the **International Academy of the Environment** said a workshop on Energy and Desertification recommended development of alternative energy strategies to reduce heavy reliance on fuel wood and associated deforestation. Identification of social needs, followed by selection of optimal energy solutions should be implemented through multisectoral action plans that match actors to appropriate roles, contribute to NAPs and meet social goals.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUP I: Morning and afternoon meetings in room XIX, which are likely to be chaired by the Group's Vice-Chair Erwin Ortiz (Bolivia), will begin at 10:00 am to discuss the Global Mechanism (A/AC.241/43).

WORKING GROUP II: The Group, to be chaired by Takao Shibata (Japan), meets at 10:00 am in Room XX to consider Rules of procedure for the COP (A/AC.241/48) during the morning session and Communication of information and review of implementation (A/AC.241/49) in the afternoon.