



Earth Negotiations Bulletin

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TENTH SESSION OF THE INC FOR THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION: 6-17 JANUARY 1997

The tenth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Convention to Combat Desertification (INCD-10) begins today in New York. This is expected to be the final meeting of the INCD. The Convention entered into force on 26 December 1996, and the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) is scheduled to take place in Rome from 29 September - 10 October 1997.

During INCD-10, delegates will attempt to finalize arrangements for the Global Mechanism for finance, the designation of a Permanent Secretariat, scientific and technical cooperation, rules of procedure for the COP, financial rules, the organization of scientific and technical information and communication of information, among other issues.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INCD

The Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) was formally adopted on 17 June 1994, and opened for signature in Paris on 14-15 October 1994. The Convention takes an innovative approach in recognizing: the physical, biological and socioeconomic 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 is the development of national and subregional/regional action programmes by national governments in cooperation with donors, local populations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION

During its 47th session in 1992, the UN General Assembly, as requested by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), adopted resolution 47/188 calling for the establishment of the INCD. At the organizational session of the INCD in January 1993, delegates elected Bo Kjellén (Sweden) Chair of the Committee. The INCD met five times between May 1993 and June 1994, during which delegates drafted the Convention and four regional implementation annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Northern Mediterranean. The

Convention was adopted on the closing day of INCD-5 in Paris, along with resolutions recommending Urgent Action for Africa and interim arrangements for the period between adoption of the CCD and its entry into force.

POST-AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS

INCD-6 was held in New York from 9-18 January 1995. The Committee reached agreement on its work programme for the interim period and the mandates of the two working groups and the plenary.

Delegates at the seventh session, which took place in Nairobi from 7-17 August 1995, reviewed the status of ratification and implementation of the Resolution on Urgent Action for Africa and Interim Measures. The Committee discussed and provided input on the structure and elements that should be considered in preparation for COP-1.

INCD-8, held from 5-15 February 1996 in Geneva, reviewed the status of ratifications and the implementation of the Resolution on Urgent Action for Africa and Interim Measures. The Committee began negotiations on some of the Secretariat's texts on preparations for COP-1. Delegates requested the Secretariat to prepare new texts for negotiation at INCD-9, based on their discussions on the Committee on Science and Technology, communication and information, draft rules of procedure for the COP, draft financial rules, the Global Mechanism and arrangements to house the Permanent Secretariat, and, for INCD-10, programme and budget. Some delegations revisited the question raised at INCD-7 regarding the need for two-week sessions of the Committee in the future.

INCD-9 was held in New York from 3-13 September 1996. During this session, the working groups continued to prepare for COP-1. Delegates addressed outstanding issues related to arrangements regarding the Global Mechanism for finance, the designation of a Permanent Secretariat, scientific and technical cooperation, rules of procedure, financial rules, and communication of information. Delegates' general impression was that good progress was made, especially concerning scientific and technological cooperation, even though several of the most important, primarily financial, issues remained unresolved.

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51ST SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On Thursday, 24 October 1996, the Second Committee considered Agenda Item 97(a), "Implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the UNCED." This agenda item included discussion of the reports of INCD-8 (A/51/76), INCD-9 (A/51/76/Add.1) and the report on the implementation of resolution 50/112 on measures taken by INCD to prepare for the first Conference of the Parties (COP-1) (A/51/510).

Hama Arba Diallo, Executive Secretary of the CCD, reported on activities of the CCD Secretariat and on the most recent developments in the INCD negotiating process.

In the discussion that followed, the G-77 and CHINA said the problem of desertification needs true political understanding and flexibility at all levels. Long-term implementation efforts should take account of local conditions. She said the key concerns for developing countries were the establishment of a facility to meet the resource needs of affected countries and the selection of the headquarters to host the Secretariat of the Convention.

The EU, on behalf of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Iceland, welcomed the entry into force of the Convention and noted the EU's intent to continue to cooperate with affected countries to combat desertification. He said there was particular need to reach agreement on the functions of the Global Mechanism and the Permanent Secretariat.

BOLIVIA, on behalf of the Rio Group, said the most important pending issue was establishment of the Global Mechanism, which should not act only as a clearing house but should possess its own resources.

MONGOLIA hoped that INCD-10 would take a decision on resource mobilization. BENIN expressed concern that the developed and developing countries had not agreed on the Global Mechanism. He said the "door to the GEF had been closed" to the Convention.

NIGER stressed the importance of the Global Mechanism and proposed the development of an environmental solidarity tax that would contribute to environmental protection. NIGERIA emphasized preventative measures, including integrated development programmes to eradicate poverty. EGYPT said the CCD should be put on an equal footing with the other environment-related legal instruments and its financing should be given priority.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) described several IFAD projects to support the Convention, such as those designed to provide the micro-economic environment for farmers to help themselves. He said the Global Mechanism should actively solicit and facilitate participation of financing institutions and the private sector. ALGERIA said desertification must be accorded the attention it deserves from the UN and added that developed countries do not appear sufficiently interested in the CCD as they are in other conventions. ISRAEL noted that expertise in his country had transformed the desert into a habitable, food-producing environment, as well as an industrial and tourism center. Israel has shared its experience with countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

SWEDEN said the Convention is not sufficiently well-known and more work is needed before it can have a real impact on development cooperation practices. He noted that both the World Bank and the GEF are taking decisive steps to support implementation of the Convention. There is a need for continued negotiation on the Global Mechanism.

KAZAKSTAN called for promoting cooperation in a number of areas, such as protection of the territory near the Aral Sea, realization of effective technology measures to rehabilitate desert pastures, forest reclamation and the rehabilitation of ecological zones in the drought-affected areas.

IRAN stressed that the Global Mechanism should serve as an engine for mobilizing and channeling resources to affected developing countries. ZAMBIA asked whether there was a plan to "water down" the final outcome of the negotiations and noted there was a tendency to relegate the CCD to second-rate status compared to other environmental treaties. UNDP said there was now a need for an impetus at the country level and stressed that the actions of international agencies alone would not be enough.

On Thursday, 31 October 1996, COSTA RICA, on behalf of the G-77 and CHINA, and COLOMBIA, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, introduced a draft resolution, Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/C.2/51/L.10). After informal consultations on this resolution, a revised draft resolution (A/C.2/51/L.39) was introduced on 2 December 1996, along with a statement on programme budget implications (A/C.2/51/L.48). The resolution was then adopted by the Second Committee and submitted to the General Assembly Plenary for final adoption.

On 16 December 1996, the General Assembly adopted the resolution, which is now resolution 51/180. The General Assembly welcomes the fact that the Convention to Combat Desertification enters into force on 26 December 1996, and calls upon countries to take appropriate action for the ratification, acceptance, approval or accession to the Convention. The General Assembly urges INCD-10 to aim at finalizing all outstanding negotiating issues prior to COP-1. The General Assembly also takes note of paragraph 3 of INCD decision 9/5, which authorizes the Chair of the Committee to organize such consultations in the period after INCD-10, as he deems necessary for the appropriate preparation for COP-1.

The resolution decides that COP-1 shall be held from 29 September to 10 October 1997 and accepts with deep appreciation the offer of the Government of Italy to host COP-1 in Rome at FAO Headquarters. The General Assembly also urges all States, the UN system and all relevant organizations and actors to take concrete actions and measures for the full and effective implementation of the provision of INCD resolution 5/1 on urgent action for Africa. Governments, regional economic integration organizations and other interested organizations are requested to continue to make contributions to the Trust Fund and the Special Voluntary Fund, as well as to relevant United Nations bodies, in order to strengthen their capacity to support activities under the Convention. Finally, the Interim Secretariat will continue to operate and be funded until the Permanent Secretariat begins operating, which should not be later than 31 December 1998.

This resolution can be found on-line at:

[gopher://gopher.un.org/00/ga/docs/51/plenary/A51-605.EN1](http://gopher.un.org/00/ga/docs/51/plenary/A51-605.EN1).

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

INCD Chair Bo Kjellén will open the session at approximately 10:00 am. This brief opening session will be immediately followed by meetings of regional groups. The regional groups will continue to meet in the afternoon, as well as the morning of Tuesday, 7 January. The Plenary is scheduled to resume at 3:00 pm on Tuesday.

Editors' Note: The next issue of the Earth Negotiations Bulletin will be published on Wednesday, 8 January 1997.