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INCD-10 HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 15 JANUARY 1996

Delegates met in Plenary all day to hear statements on urgent action for Africa and interim measures in Asia, Latin America and the Northern Mediterranean. Informal consultations continued on the administrative arrangements for the Permanent Secretariat, the rules of procedure and the Global Mechanism.

PLENARY

ACCREDITATION OF NGOS: INCD Chair Kjellén introduced documents A/AC.241/9/Add.13 and Corr.1, lists of NGOs recommended for accreditation, which were approved. Following adoption, OMAN, on behalf of the Arab countries and supported by Syria and Iran, expressed their reservation on the decision to accredit EcoPeace because it has activities in Arab countries under occupation.

URGENT ACTION FOR AFRICA: Executive Secretary Diallo called delegates' attention to an overview he had prepared that takes stock of actions taken. Many delegates called on partners to provide financial assistance and coordination of their NAPs.

EGYPT said projects related to the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), including better water harvesting and irrigation techniques, will increase the country's inhabited area from five to twenty-five percent by 2025. MOROCCO is setting up a National Action Programme (NAP) and partnerships between the state and groups of villages.

ALGERIA has carried out research on desertification trends using satellite imagery, held a national awareness workshop and plans to develop government-NGO partnerships. The GAMBIA has conducted public awareness campaigns, zonal and divisional level consultations for the NAP, and has revised national forest policy to enable community forest management.

GHANA has established a national committee on desertification and held sensitization workshops and awareness seminars. TOGO has launched a national information and sensitization programme, but said the NAP is still stuck in the identification phase. NIGER's CCD-related activities include holding workshops, the establishment of regional structures and an environmental fund, and the adoption of a national plan on the environment.

MAURITANIA brought together fifteen African focal points in a workshop to exchange lessons learned and is refining its NAP

with input from donor round tables. SENEGAL has created a National Environmental Fund, a desertification information system on the Internet, and an "advisory think tank group" to monitor progress. DENMARK and BURKINA FASO presented their joint Burkinabe Sahel project to promote grassroots development in support of food security and environmental restoration at the local level. DENMARK said the project gives high priority to the participation of communities and uses an integrated approach.

CILSS noted activities to: devise a sub-regional action programme and NAPs; consider a methodology for organizing transborder village projects; and contribute to work on benchmarks and indicators. ETHIOPIA's activities include a national workshop on awareness creation and a review of all policies and strategies by the Environmental Protection Authority. ERITREA's national activities have included decentralization and further democratization of the political system. Participation of all is taken as a corner stone by the Government. A student campaign included the planting of millions of trees.

UGANDA reported on its awareness raising activities, called for support for the development of its National Desertification Fund (NDF) and said it would soon ratify the CCD. KENYA spoke about awareness-building activities during World Desertification Day, the preparation of the NAP, and the establishment of an NDF. BURUNDI sees close connections between biodiversity, climate change and desertification and has coordinated the implementation of the three conventions into a national strategy.

The Netherlands, on behalf of the EU, encouraged African countries preparing NAPs to explore the advantages of the "chef-de-file" concept. CANADA noted the examples of NDFs in Uganda and Mali and said it is a donor country's responsibility to play the role of *chef-de-file* at both technical and political levels. GERMANY noted the growing willingness of donors to become genuine partners and regretted that official bilateral and multilateral negotiations on development cooperation often do not properly refer to the Convention.

BOTSWANA said its NAP process will culminate in a national forum process to discuss arrangements for its implementation. SOUTH AFRICA is creating capacity to plan and monitor its NAP and is committed to work closely with development partners on implementation. ZAMBIA has a public awareness programme and noted the Zambia Forests Action programme. He said efforts have been difficult due to a lack of resources.

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CAMEROON's national activities include the organization of national awareness days and the drafting of a national environment plan. He paid tribute to Cameroon's NGOs who are young but full of energy. The OAU noted that participants in sub-regional meetings appreciated the value of the exchange of experiences. He said the Pan-African Conference on the Environment will allow for proper preparation for COP-1 and the UNGA Special Session. IGAD held a Summit to create a partnership forum, completed a media study and journalist training, and is planning two subregional workshops on science and technology and regional prioritization.

NORWAY is funding UNSO, the ILO and LDCs, especially in Africa, on desertification initiatives linked to poverty reduction, food security, and the participation of women, indigenous peoples, and grassroots organizations. FRANCE is supporting regional scientific cooperation in West Africa and NAPs in Burkina Faso, Senegal, Cape Verde, Mauritania and Chad, with co-financing from the French Global Environmental Facility. JAPAN is developing desertification control technologies appropriate for local communities, such as underground dams, in Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali. SWITZERLAND highlighted difficulties in operationalizing the progressive approach of the Convention and suggested a greater role for universities, scientists and NGOs.

SWEDEN said the commitments made at the World Food Summit relate to desertification problems and how to solve them. He also said the concept of environmental refugees has become more crucial and that the Convention has a role to play. The EUROPEAN COMMUNITY (EC) said the Commission is undertaking a qualitative and quantitative review of the various Community CCD-related policies.

RUSSIA noted national discussions on ratification of the CCD and efforts of the Arid Lands Centre. She stated that desertification is taking place in Europe and called for an Annex on European countries.

NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION: PORTUGAL, on behalf of Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey and France, described coordination of activities under Annex IV in the region. A meeting will be held in 1997 on benchmarks and indicators. SPAIN is preparing a NAP and is committed to the CCD process.

LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN REGION: HAITI has taken a comprehensive approach to sustainable development, after ratifying the biodiversity, climate change and desertification conventions. It cooperates with Mexico, Cuba, Argentina and neighboring Dominican Republic. BRAZIL highlighted efforts to elaborate a National Plan to Combat Desertification and to establish a National Network on Desertification. Brazil has been active in fostering technical cooperation with other affected countries. ARGENTINA organized the first conference for combatting desertification in Latin America. National activities have included bringing together NGOs involved with desertification and developing an advisory group in the area of science and technology. MEXICO's national efforts include the adoption of a new environmental law, the drafting of a forest law and a technical assistance agreement. A committee to combat desertification has been established, coordinated by an NGO. BOLIVIA's national actions include: ratification of the Convention; establishment of a NAP; work to mitigate poverty; and organization of awareness campaigns.

ASIAN REGION: KAZAKSTAN called attention to reports on national preparatory activities to combat desertification and the international conference to combat desertification in countries with economies in transition. ISRAEL noted national, sub-regional, regional and international activities, including the development of orchards that will be irrigated by waste water, the organization of

an experts meeting on synergies on implementing the CCD, CBD, FCCC, and the Rio Forest Principles, and an international school for desert studies. CHINA has reviewed its projects to combat desertification, which resulted in increased funding for those projects that performed well. She said a lack of funds is the major difficulty they have experienced. Individuals are permitted to gain long-term contracts on sandy areas. SYRIA's ratification instrument will be deposited in the near future. National activities include a greenbelt and an afforestation project.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND NGOS:

UNDP stressed the importance of ensuring coordination, capacity building and local participation. With the financial assistance of Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, France, Australia, Sweden, the Netherlands and Switzerland, UNDP is facilitating projects in Africa, Latin America and Asia, including: small grants for local community and public education initiatives; twenty NAPs; and eighteen NDFs, mainly in Africa. UNEP supports the CCD process, particularly in Africa, and will continue to facilitate national and regional initiatives, including the African Deserts and Arid Lands Committee. A revised second edition of the Desertification Assessment will be presented at the COP. The Nigeria Environmental Study Team, on behalf of RIOD (NGO Action Network on Desertification), called on Governments of affected developing countries to allow NGO participation in the NAP process and of developed country partners to provide a flow of funds.

IN THE CORRIDORS I

Delegates continued informal consultations on the implications of a Permanent Secretariat whose programme and management structure is not fully integrated into the host institution. Some delegates intimated that the compromise text prepared may suggest that the Secretary-General, after consultation with the COP through its Bureau, will appoint the Executive Secretary. They also anticipate that the proposal would still provide for the Permanent Secretariat to not be fully integrated into the programme and management structure of any particular department or programme of the host institution, in order to ensure that it has the necessary administrative and financial autonomy to enable it to service the CCD efficiently.

IN THE CORRIDORS II

At this stage in the second week of INCD-10, there is speculation on whether it will be possible to resolve outstanding issues by its close on Friday. Some delegates say a document containing suggestions for the extended Bureau to meet either immediately before COP-1 in Rome in September, or earlier, is under preparation. Some suggested that extended Bureau meetings may be held during the Commission on Sustainable Development in April in New York, during the General Assembly's Special Session in New York in June, and/or during ECOSOC in Geneva this summer. Some argued that remaining issues would require a larger meeting to be properly addressed.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUPS: Both Working Groups are expected to meet at 10:00 am to adopt their reports and draft decisions.

ACCT MEETING: A meeting for the countries having in common the French language will take place from 1:30 to 3:00 pm at the ACCT Office, Suite 605, 801 2nd Avenue.