



Earth Negotiations Bulletin

A Reporting Service for Environment and Development Negotiations

Vol. 4 No. 107 Published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Tuesday, 30 September 1997

THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 29 SEPTEMBER-10 OCTOBER 1997

The First Conference of the Parties (COP-1) to the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) is meeting in Rome, Italy, from 29 September to 10 October 1997. The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) will meet simultaneously on 1 to 2 October. Additional parallel events will include an NGO Forum, an international forum for mayors, a seminar for the media and an exhibit of comic strips addressing the theme of desertification. One-hundred States submitted their instruments of ratification by the requisite date, 30 June 1997, and will participate as Parties to the Convention. As of 25 September 1997, 111 ratifications had been submitted.

The COP agenda includes the selection of the location of the Permanent Secretariat. Three countries, Canada, Germany and Spain, have submitted bids to serve as host. The COP is expected to establish a Committee of the Whole (COW), which will consider the CCD programme and budget, designation of the administrative host for the Global Mechanism and its functions, and rules of procedure. A High-Level Segment will take place from 7 to 9 October for general plenary discussion dealing with implementation of the CCD. The CST is expected to establish a roster of experts, review work on benchmarks and indicators and consider proposals for a survey and evaluation of existing networks. The CST will also consider inventories of research and traditional knowledge, research priorities and the CST work programme.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE INCD

The Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted on 17 June 1994. It was opened for signature in October 1994 in Paris. Three months following the receipt of the fiftieth ratification of the CCD in September 1996, the Convention entered into force on 26 December 1996.

The Convention recognizes: 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 CCD is the development of national and subregional/regional action programmes by national governments in cooperation with donors, local populations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The purpose of using an

innovative "bottom-up" approach, by involving people who are affected by desertification in decision-making, is to facilitate effective implementation of a global environmental agreement such as the CCD.

NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION

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 Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Convention to Combat Desertification (INCD). At the organizational session of the INCD in January 1993, delegates elected Amb. Bo Kjellén (Sweden) as Chair of the Committee. The INCD met five times between May 1993 and June 1994, during which delegates drafted the Convention and four regional Annexes for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Northern Mediterranean. The Convention was adopted along with resolutions recommending urgent action for Africa and interim arrangements for the period between adoption of the CCD and its entry into force.

THE INTERIM PERIOD

Pending the entry into force of the CCD, the INCD met six times between January 1995 and August 1997 to hear progress reports concerning urgent action taking place in Africa and to prepare for the first Conference of the Parties. The preparations included issues such as the programme and budget, the functions of and the arrangements to host the Global Mechanism, the physical location of the Permanent Secretariat and the establishment of the Committee on Science and Technology. Although considerable progress was made, especially regarding scientific and technological cooperation, some of the important financial issues remained unresolved. The size and membership of the COP Bureau was left for COP-1 to decide, as was the function of the Global Mechanism.

RESUMED TENTH SESSION OF THE INCD

The resumed tenth session of the INCD was held in Geneva from 18 to 22 August 1997. The session was convened as the pre-conference consultation for COP-1, but it also addressed substantive matters. Delegates met in brief plenaries, but discussed most issues through regional and informal consultations.

During the opening session, INCD Chair Bo Kjellén reported that delegates to the UN General Assembly Special Session to review implementation of Agenda 21, which met in June 1997, frequently referred to the three Rio Conventions on Biodiversity,

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@iisd.org> is written and edited by Elisabeth Corell <elico@tema.liu.se>, Wagaki Mwangi <wagaki@iconnect.co.ke>, Tiffany Prather J.D. <tprather@iisd.org> and Lynn Wagner <lynn@iisd.org>. The Editor is Pamela Chasek, Ph.D. <pam@iisd.org> and the Managing Editor is Langston James "Kimo" Goree VI <kimo@iisd.org>. The sustaining donors of the *Bulletin* are the Netherlands Ministry for Development Cooperation, the Government of Canada (through CIDA) and the United States of America (through USAID). General support for the *Bulletin* during 1997 is provided by the Department for International Development (DfID) of the United Kingdom, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, the European Community (DG-XI), the German Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, the Ministries of Environment and Foreign Affairs of Austria, the Ministry of Environment of Sweden, the Swiss Federal Office of the Environment and UNDP. Specific funding for coverage of the CCD is provided by German Technical Cooperation (GTZ). Funding for the French version has been provided by ACCT/IEPF, with support from the French Ministry of Cooperation and the Québec Ministry of the Environment and Wildlife. The *Bulletin* can be contacted at tel: +1-212-644-0204; fax: +1-212-644-0206. IISD can be contacted at 161 Portage Avenue East, 6th Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada; tel: +1-204-958-7700; fax: +1-204-958-7710. The opinions expressed in the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and other funders. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in non-commercial publications only and with appropriate academic citation. For permission to use this material in commercial publications, contact the Managing Editor. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are sent to e-mail distribution lists and can be found on the Linkages WWW-server at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/>. The satellite image was taken on 1997/08/24 23:06:49 UTC from 100000 km above Montreal. Copyright © 1997 The Living Earth, Inc. <http://livingearth.com>. For further information on ways to access, support or contact the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, send e-mail to <enb@iisd.org>.



Climate Change and Desertification, which demonstrated their equality. He expressed hope that the resumed session would accelerate agreement on outstanding issues but not open discussion on issues that were transmitted to the COP during the January INCD-10 session.

Executive Secretary Arba Diallo reported on the parallel events that will take place in Rome: an international forum for mayors; a seminar for the media; an exhibit of comics addressing the theme of desertification; and an NGO forum.

Delegates reported on the achievements since the adoption of the CCD in June 1994, within the context of the Resolution on Urgent Action for Africa and Interim measures. In his concluding statement, INCD Chair Kjellén said it was encouraging that action had taken place all around the world and added that the regional reports would be distributed at COP-1.

PREPARATIONS FOR COP-1

Executive Secretary Diallo reported that the FAO working hours, 9:00-12:00 noon and 2:00-5:00 pm, would be followed. No more than two sessions would be held simultaneously and no provision has been made for evening or weekend sessions. He also reported on the proposed working modalities for the Committee of the Whole, the Plenary and the Committee on Science and Technology.

AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The main discussion under this agenda item related to the Programme and Budget of the Secretariat. The EU suggested that delegates make preliminary statements regarding the proposed programme of work for the period 1999, as contained in ICCD/COP(1)/3. The G-77 and China objected because the item was not to be substantively discussed by the resumed session. The Group also said they would submit draft decisions on the establishment of a committee on the review and implementation of the Convention; hosting of the Global Mechanism; and collaboration between the Permanent Secretariat of the CCD and its Rio sister conventions.

DESIGNATION OF A PERMANENT SECRETARIAT AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR ITS FUNCTIONING: PHYSICAL LOCATION

Discussion on this issue was conducted in a contact group comprised of representatives from the three countries that have offered to host the secretariat, Canada, Germany and Spain, and the Bureau. Chair Kjellén reported that the group reached agreement on the procedure to be followed to select the host country (A/AC.241/L.40). The selection date was set for Friday, 3 October 1997.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Delegates agreed that the CST meeting should be held for two days in conjunction with the COP. A proposed roster of experts was distributed as ICCD/COP(1)/6/Add.1. Executive Secretary noted that the roster of experts contained candidates who were proposed by their governments.

GLOBAL MECHANISM

The main discussion at the resumed session centered around two areas: the administrative arrangements for and functions of the Global Mechanism. Discussion on the administrative arrangements were conducted in formal sessions. The World Bank expressed an interest in co-hosting the Global Mechanism with IFAD and UNDP. It was agreed that IFAD, UNDP and the World Bank should present to COP-1 a proposal for a co-hosting arrangement. The informal discussion on the functions of the Global Mechanism, facilitated by Canada's Pierre-Marc Johnson, focused on the fourth function of the Global Mechanism, to mobilize and channel resources, specifically, subparagraph 4(e). Delegates agreed on a new paragraph that could replace the two options discussed at the January session.

NGO PARTICIPATION

Some delegates also expressed concern about the access NGOs would have to delegates and the level of formal interaction between the NGOs and the delegates at COP-1. Chair Kjellén said he expected the COP arrangements to be as flexible as they had been during the INCD sessions. Executive Secretary Diallo stressed the growing importance of civil society and NGOs, and asked delegates to demonstrate flexibility from COP-1 onwards, to leave UN rules behind and to face new partnerships. In this regard, delegates agreed to have one formal session with NGOs on partnerships and a day for delegates to interact with NGOs at the NGO Forum.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary is expected to meet during morning and afternoon sessions. CCD Executive Secretary Diallo is expected to open the Conference, after which the President of the COP will be elected. Statements by Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Nitin Desai, and INCD Chair Bo Kjellén are expected. Delegates will also hear statements from the heads of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Meteorological Organization and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Statements on behalf of the heads of the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme are also expected. Delegates are then expected to: adopt the agenda, the rules of procedure and the terms of reference of the Committee on Science and Technology; elect officers, including the Chairperson of the CST; establish a Committee of the Whole; and admit observers and accredit NGOs and IGOs.

The candidate countries to host the Permanent Secretariat, Canada, Spain and Germany, will make presentations in the afternoon. Statements by the Vice-President of Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and Parties and Observers are also expected in the afternoon.