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HIGHLIGHTS OF CCD COP-1 WEDNESDAY, 1 OCTOBER 1997

Delegates to the first COP for the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) considered outstanding issues regarding the Rules of Procedure during a morning meeting of the Committee of the Whole (COW). In the afternoon, the COW considered two draft decisions regarding the review of implementation and collaboration with other Conventions. Informal consultations on the Bureau, Global Mechanism, and scientific and technological issues also took place.

Three conference room papers on the housing of the Global Mechanism were circulated: the co-hosting proposal by IFAD, UNDP and the World Bank (ICCD/COP(1)/CRP.1); the revised offer of UNDP (ICCD/COP(1)/CRP.2); and IFAD's modifications to its revised submission (ICCD/COP(1)/CRP.3).

PLENARY

Luxembourg, on behalf of the EU, noted that the CCD has been ratified by all EU member countries. The EU welcomed the involvement of IFAD, UNDP and the World Bank in seeking to provide an appropriate institutional setting for the Global Mechanism. He said that the Global Mechanism should be housed in one organization. The Mechanism can facilitate the mobilization of resources. He did not support giving the Global Mechanism control over either resources or operational means for the implementation of the Convention. The EU reiterated its position from INCD-10 and its resumed session that the proposal on the Secretariat's budget and work programme should be re-examined, using as a guide the administrative budgets of the CBD and the Montreal Protocol.

The COW quickly agreed to transmit three recommendations of the INCD, contained in ICCD/COP(1)/2 and ICCD/COP(1)/2/Corr.1, to the Plenary for adoption: decision 10/5, concerning the financial rules of the COP, its subsidiary bodies and the Permanent Secretariat; decision 10/2, concerning the designation of a Permanent Secretariat and arrangements for its functioning: administrative and support arrangements; and decision 9/9, concerning procedures for the communication of information and review of implementation. The COW also agreed to transmit to the Plenary decision 10/17, concerning the procedure for selection of the city to host the Permanent Secretariat.

RULES OF PROCEDURE: In its discussion of the Rules of Procedure, ICCD/COP(1)/2 and ICCD/COP(1)/2/Corr.1, the COW discussed the rules that contained bracketed text. In Rule 6 (participation of the UN and specialized agencies), the COW agreed to refer to the "organization housing the Global Mechanism" instead of "organizations." In Rule 22 (election of officers), the COW agreed to "nine" Vice-Presidents on the Bureau and agreed that they should be selected "in a manner that every geographical region shall be represented by at least two members." Concerning the third set of brackets, "in the regions referred to in the implementation annexes of the Convention," SPAIN stressed that the proposed language was not an attempt to exclude Parties, nor to reserve posts, and requested that the text remain as it supports the principal premise of equitable geographic distribution. The G-77 and China said the text regarding representation of the regions referred to in the implementation annexes should be deleted. PORTUGAL and MEXICO supported Spain. ITALY, supported by GREECE, proposed discussing the Spanish proposal in an informal group. The text remained bracketed. SENEGAL, on behalf of the African Group, said that the reference in Rule 22 to "equitable geographical distribution" does not necessarily mean arithmetic equality.

On Rule 31 (election of officers of subsidiary bodies), delegates agreed there would be "four" Vice-Chairpersons for subsidiary bodies. They retained the brackets around the reference to "regions referred to in the implementation annexes of the Convention."

On Rule 47 (majority required), the UK expressed uneasiness about applying a two-thirds majority vote for decisions taken under Article 21 of the Convention (financial mechanisms) and said those decisions should be agreed upon by consensus. The US agreed. SENEGAL and the G-77 and CHINA supported the reference to two-thirds majority when no agreement is reached. Chair El Ghaouth proposed that the brackets around the entire Rule be removed and placed around the reference to "a two-thirds majority vote of the Parties present and voting" and "except for decisions taken under Article 21 of the Convention which shall be agreed upon by consensus." Delegates were to consider this proposal in their groups.

DRAFT DECISIONS: During the afternoon, delegates discussed the draft decisions submitted by the G-77 and China calling for the establishment of a "Committee on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC)" (A/AC.241/L.42) and

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) and FAO. 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>.



"designation of a permanent secretariat and arrangements for its functioning: collaboration with other Conventions" (A/AC.241/L.43). The G-77 and CHINA noted that they would be discussed for the first time at the COP, and said they did not contain controversial issues.

Regarding the CRIC, the EU said it was too early to make a decision about such a committee and suggested that it should be considered at COP-3. Following consultations between the G-77 and China, the EU, the US, Australia and other interested delegations, the Chair announced the agreement that the G-77 and China would consider its proposal in light of the COW discussion.

Regarding the draft decision on collaboration with other Conventions, SWITZERLAND supported the initiative and proposed several additions. In the first preambular paragraph, she added references to Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 and decision 19/9(c) of the Governing Council of UNEP, which she said confirms UNEP's role as coordinator of the conventions. ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA suggested that language adopted at the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) to review implementation of Agenda 21 would provide a more appropriate reference. The G-77 and CHINA, supported by SENEGAL, preferred to review decision 19/9(c) in their Group. BENIN said the Governing Council decision concerns administrative guidance of UNEP and not the CCD or Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA noted that the Governing Council decision was taken in January 1997 and the UNGASS decision in June 1997. The EU supported SWITZERLAND. SWITZERLAND also proposed UNGASS text stating that "the role of UNEP in the development of coherent interlinkages among relevant environmental conventions in cooperation with their respective COPs or governing bodies should be strengthened." BENIN asked if conventions have governing councils. ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA objected to including only one part of the UNGASS paragraph.

No comments were made concerning operative paragraph 1 (which notes the recommendations of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly) and paragraph 3 (which requests the head of the interim Secretariat to report to its next session on the implementation of the decision). Concerning operative paragraph 2 (head of the interim Secretariat to strengthen collaboration with other relevant conventions, in particular the Convention on Biological Diversity, FCCC and the Ramsar Convention), SWITZERLAND, supported by the G-77 and CHINA, suggested adding "particularly through the UNEP coordination meetings." SENEGAL said it was wary of the implications of singling out UNEP and giving it special status, particularly since a number of Secretariats spoke at the opening session on Tuesday. The Chair said that a draft with the amendments will be circulated.

IN THE CORRIDORS I

An informal contact group on the Global Mechanism met Tuesday evening, 30 September, to discuss sub-paragraph 4(e) on the fourth function of the Mechanism. The group was co-chaired by Pierre-Marc Johnson (Canada) and John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda). Following discussion, the co-chairs prepared a text that some delegates said seems acceptable to many. The informal text contains two sub-paragraphs authorizing the Mechanism to guide

and direct, as requested and as appropriate, the channelling and allocation of resources mobilized from bilateral and multilateral resources. It also authorizes it to use trust funds made available through the host organization. However, some delegates expressed concern that the trust funds referred to are not qualified as "voluntary."

IN THE CORRIDORS II

The non-election of the Bureau paralysed progress on substantive issues at the COP on Wednesday, 1 October. The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) failed to commence due to disagreement on the composition of the Bureau, including the CST Chair. Although there are three different problems, the main concern is whether Africa will have three seats on the Bureau, in the light of the emphasis accorded the Region in the Convention. The Bureau can only accommodate ten members representing five regional interest groups plus the Chair of the CST. The region that provides the CST Chair, therefore, would have three Bureau members. The CST Chair who has been proposed informally is not from Africa. Second, one of the Bureau seats for the countries in transition is vacant because only one country from that region has ratified the Convention. A proposal to allow the vacant seat to be filled by another region is reported to be problematic because it would set a precedent both for this Convention and other UN processes. A third issue is the suggestion that all regional implementation annex countries should be represented on the Bureau. This was reported to be unacceptable because non-EU WEOG countries would all have to share the other seat.

IN THE CORRIDORS III

As frustrations increased among participants due to the continued postponement of the CST meetings, an informal dialogue between OECD technical experts, the NGO community, IGOs and G-77 and China representatives took place on Wednesday morning. Participants agreed on the need for the CST to have dynamic discussions about the contents of the Convention and not to deal solely with administrative issues at its first meeting. The main issues for the CST were discussed: benchmarks and indicators; the survey and evaluation of existing networks; and the inventory of research and traditional knowledge. Views were also exchanged on how to transmit existing knowledge. Some said, for example, that NGO knowledge about implementation at the local level should be available to scientific institutions. It was proposed that the CST could establish an *ad hoc* panel on local knowledge. Participants also discussed how to continue the CST work until its meeting next year.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary is expected to meet at 9:00 a.m. in the Plenary Hall to elect Bureau members.

COW: The meeting of the COW is expected to commence at 10:00 a.m. in the Plenary Hall. Negotiations will commence with a discussion of the Global Mechanism.

CST: The CST is expected to meet at 10:00 a.m. in the Red Room, pending the successful conclusion of Bureau elections.