



## THE SECOND CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 30 NOVEMBER - 11 DECEMBER 1998

Delegates to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) will meet in Dakar, Senegal, from 30 November to 11 December 1998 for the Second Conference of the Parties (COP-2). A number of events will take place in addition to meetings of the Plenary and the Committee of the Whole (COW). The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) is tentatively scheduled to meet from 1 to 3 December. Half-day NGO sessions are scheduled for the afternoons of 3 and 10 December. An interparliamentary round table on the contribution parliaments can make to the implementation of the Convention is planned for 7 December. A special segment on Convention implementation is scheduled for 8 and 9 December. The Global Biodiversity Forum will convene on 4-6 December.

Topics to be considered by COP-2 include: outstanding issues in the Rules of Procedure for the COP; approval of arrangements for the institutional linkage between the Secretariat and the UN Secretary-General and the headquarters agreement with the Government of Germany; adjustments to the Convention budget and programme for 1999; review of the implementation of the Convention, including support to regional and subregional programmes and a possible additional regional instrument; the report on the Global Mechanism, including collaborative institutional arrangements; and procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions that may arise with regard to implementation of the CCD. The Committee on Science and Technology will consider agenda items on survey and evaluation, benchmarks and indicators and traditional knowledge, among others.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONVENTION

The Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted on 17 June 1994 and was opened for signature in October 1994 in Paris. Three months following the receipt of its fiftieth ratification, the Convention entered into force on 26 December 1996. As of 22 October 1998, 144 countries had ratified the CCD.

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. 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 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 the Convention.

### 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 elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa (INCD). At the organizational session of the INCD in January 1993, delegates elected 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 on 17 June 1994, 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 CCD's entry into force, the INCD met six times between January 1995 and August 1997 to hear progress reports on urgent action taking place in Africa and interim measures in other regions and to prepare for COP-1. The preparations included discussion of issues such as the Secretariat's programme and budget, the functions of and administrative arrangements for the Global Mechanism, the physical location of the Permanent Secretariat and the establishment of the CST. Although considerable progress was made, especially on scientific and technological cooperation, some important issues remained unresolved at the end of the last session of the INCD. The size and membership of the COP Bureau were left for COP-1 to decide, as were questions about the host institutions and some functions of the Global Mechanism.

### THE FIRST CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

The First Conference of the Parties (COP-1) to the CCD met in Rome, Italy, from 29 September to 10 October 1997. The Committee on Science and Technology held its first session simultaneously on 2 - 3 October. Additional parallel events included an NGO Forum, an international forum for mayors, a seminar for the media and an exhibit of comic strips. One hundred and two States submitted their instruments of ratification by the requisite date and participated as Parties to the Convention. By the first day of COP-1, 113 countries had submitted instruments of ratification.

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The COP-1 and CST-1 agendas contained primarily organizational matters. Delegates selected Bonn, Germany, as the location for the Permanent Secretariat and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) as the organization to administer the Global Mechanism. At the CST's recommendation, the COP established an *ad hoc* panel to oversee the continuation of the process of surveying benchmarks and indicators and decided that CST-2 would consider linkages between traditional knowledge and modern technology. Five Plenary meetings were devoted to a High-Level Segment and one to a dialogue between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and delegates on building partnerships within the CCD. Argentina's proposal that Plenary meetings at future COPs be devoted to similar NGO dialogues was also adopted. While most delegates were pleased with the two-week session, they looked forward to COP-2 where they would delve into more substantive issues related to combating desertification.

### PREPARATIONS FOR COP-2

Several meetings were held earlier this year to prepare for COP-2. They included Latin American and Caribbean, African and Asian regional meetings and an *ad hoc* panel on benchmarks and indicators. Summaries of these three meetings follow. An International Seminar of the CCD Annex 4 countries discussed indicators to assess desertification in the Mediterranean from 18-19 September in Italy.

#### FOURTH REGIONAL MEETING OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

The CCD Secretariat, in collaboration with the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, convened a Workshop for Focal Points on the Convention from Latin America and the Caribbean on 27 and 28 April 1998 and the Fourth Regional Meeting from 29 April to 1 May 1998. Representatives of 28 countries in the region and of 22 international, regional and subregional agencies, nongovernmental organizations and of other sectors attended the meeting.

Decisions taken included agreement to establish an information network and a regional system for investment management. Delegates called for support for Haiti and for development of a subregional programme of action for the small island developing states (SIDS) and a regional project for the recovery and assessment of traditional knowledge and technologies. They also proposed local, national and regional action for education to combat desertification and requested international agencies, donor countries and organizations of the United Nations system to support the financing of the approved projects. Delegates adopted the proposed programme of permanent horizontal cooperation to combat desertification and agreed to make explicit incorporation of gender perspectives in the implementation of programmes. They proposed that a country from their region should offer to host the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and transmitted to UNDP and IFAD their interest in nominating and supporting the selection of a candidate from the region to be the Director of the Global Mechanism. Additional decisions addressed national, subregional and regional action programmes and technical focal points, the Constitution of the Regional Executive Committee, the periodicity of regional meetings, the Regional Coordinating Unit, indicators and parameters, the El Niño phenomenon and its relation to land degradation and drought, a project for training activities to combat desertification and a programme for the harmonization of public policies.

#### AD HOC PANEL ON BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS

The *ad hoc* panel met in Beijing, China, from 20-22 May 1998 and subsequently, with the involvement of participants in the informal process referred to in CCD decision 22/COP.1, in Geneva

from 1-3 September 1998 to review the methodology for impact indicators and determine its implementation and possible recommendations to the COP. Both meetings were chaired by Ju Hongbo (China). In its recommendations (ICCD/COP(2)/CST/3/Add.1), the *ad hoc* panel called on the COP to: mobilize resources to support the capacities of governments and relevant organizations to report on the utility of indicators and practicality of using them; undertake catalytic activities to test and refine the methodological framework and implementation process; and assist affected country Parties in implementing the methodology for the application of the proposed impact indicators.

#### AFRICAN REGIONAL PREPARATORY CONFERENCE

Seventy delegates participated in the African regional meeting that took place in Tunisia from 2-5 November 1998. Delegates' recommendations included that African countries should maintain their level of involvement in the preparation of their National Action Plans. They suggested that particular attention be given to coordination between national focal points and other actors. They recommended that the role of women be reinforced, including in decision-making positions. They also reiterated the importance of cooperation between subregional groups.

#### INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS GROUP MEETING ON THE PREPARATION OF THE REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME (RAP) FOR COMBATING DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT IN ASIA

The International Expert Group meeting was held in Thailand from 10-13 November 1998. The groups' conclusions included calls to: build up regional cooperation in Asia; develop three thematic programme networks on the establishment of the Regional Desertification Monitoring and Assessment Network, Agroforestry and Soil Conservation, and Rangeland Management; form an open-ended Regional Committee to oversee the implementation of the RAP, a Regional Backup Facility as a regional CCD coordination unit and a regional support group to strengthen RAP implementation through its initial phase; and mobilize resources for the RAP.

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**OPENING CEREMONY:** An opening ceremony is scheduled to commence at 10:30 am in the Salle de Plenaire. The President of Senegal is expected to speak.

**INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS:** There will be informal consultations by the regional and interest groups during the morning.

**OPENING PLENARY:** The CCD Executive Secretary is expected to open COP-2 during an afternoon Plenary. Following the election of the President of the COP, statements by several heads of UN agencies or programmes are expected, including Under-Secretary-General Nitin Desai on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Chief Executive Officer of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Organizational matters expected to be addressed include: the adoption of the agenda; election of other officers, including the Chairperson of the CST; adoption of the organization of work and establishment of the COW; and admission of observers and accreditation of non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations.