



HIGHLIGHTS FROM CCD COP-2 MONDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 1998

Delegates to the Second Conference of the Parties (COP-2) to the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) were greeted by the President of Senegal during an opening ceremony. During an afternoon Plenary, they elected the COP-2 President, adopted the agenda, nominated Bureau members and heard introductory statements from the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, the CCD Executive Secretary and several regional and interest groups.

OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony commenced with a cultural performance by a group of Senegalese children. In his opening remarks, Hama Arba Diallo, CCD Executive Secretary, noted that the objectives of the Convention are geared to the fundamental needs of people and especially the poorest. He said the CCD is innovative and aims at breaking the vicious cycle of desertification and impoverishment. He stressed the commitment of all Parties and noted the need to strengthen cooperation between the North and South and to ensure the mobilization of resources.

Speaking on behalf of the UN Secretary-General, Under-Secretary-General Nitin Desai noted the role of African countries in the establishment of the Convention and thus the appropriateness of holding the COP in Dakar. He described the Convention as being focused on development and the importance of the involvement and participation of people.

Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, welcomed participants and thanked them for deciding to convene COP-2 in Senegal, on Sahelian soil, which he said was an honor to Senegal and to Africa. He noted that desertification affects approximately 110 countries and more than 3,600 million hectares of land in arid, semi-arid and sub-tropical zones of the world, and causes approximately 42 billion in economic damage per year. He highlighted the problems desertification poses to Africa, and to Senegal in particular, as well as the actions taken to combat this phenomenon at all levels. He asked the COP, in moving toward its operational phase, to consider: the coordination of activities under the CCD, CBD and UNFCCC; funding action programmes, with particular regard to

the formula for debt conversion against nature conservation; and the precise definition of the role and operational procedures of the Global Mechanism (GM).

OPENING PLENARY

Franchetti Pardo (Italy), for the COP-1 President, opened COP-2 and reviewed work done since COP-1, including three Bureau meetings, negotiations with Germany on host country arrangements, the appointment of Hama Arba Diallo as Executive Secretary and the drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding with IFAD as host of the GM.

Delegates then elected Souty Touré, Senegal's Minister of Environment and Protection of Nature, as COP-2 President. He said the Convention crowns efforts to create awareness of the phenomena and to create solidarity to fight the challenges of desertification. He highlighted the CCD's inauguration of a new approach in its effort to bring participants together to create synergies. He said this meeting should enable participants to have an in-depth exchange of views on implementation and institutional arrangements, among others.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Nitin Desai, on behalf of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, highlighted three dimensions in which the CCD exemplifies and follows-up on Rio. The CCD shows how environmental objectives and development objectives can be served in the same framework. He said Rio was an expression of partnership between developed and developing countries and noted that this aim is also reflected in the CCD, with the GM being a practical expression of this notion. The third point he noted was the recognition given by the CCD and Rio to interaction between sectoral and among cross-sectoral themes. He said the UN will continue to place high priority on this Convention, which is a flagship for sustainable development.

INDONESIA, for the G-77/CHINA, highlighted the CCD as the most valuable instrument of development and said comprehensive implementation will slow the desertification process and lead to the fulfillment of sustainable development objectives. He called for the elaboration of national, regional and sub-regional programmes and stressed that regional coordinating units, as foreseen in the Regional Action Programmes, should be established and operationalized as soon as possible to facilitate implementation of the Convention. He said efforts to combat desertification

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complement those under the CBD and sink-enhancing activities under the UNFCCC. He expressed concern over the lack of enthusiasm of some partners and called on them to provide financial and institutional assistance as in the other Rio conventions. He regretted that the GM did not commence on 1 January 1998 as decided at COP-1. He said he hoped that COP-2 would take decisive action in the establishment of a committee to review the implementation of the Convention by the Parties and the functioning of its institutional arrangements in light of the experience gained at national, sub-regional, regional and international levels.

AUSTRIA, on behalf of the EU, underscored the importance of coordination between donors and affected countries and said a coordination tool that reflects the intentions of all partners will reduce the duplication of work and assure a precise definition of respective tasks. He noted the important relationship and benefits of coordinating efforts between desertification, water, climate change and biodiversity. He called for the further elaboration of the Secretariat's role and said a clear division of labor between the Global Mechanism and the Secretariat is necessary.

CANADA, on behalf of JUSCANZ, promised its support and cooperation at COP-2. Masse Lo (ENDA), on behalf of the NGO community, said the adoption of Decision 27/COP.1, which provides for two half-days of dialogue between NGOs and the COP as part of the official programme of work, is a sign of the Parties' commitment to partnership and a new challenge for NGOs. He expressed concern with the delays in implementation of COP-1 decisions relating to the GM, noting that its location has been resolved but its shape and activities have not. He stressed that the GM is too important to be the subject of endless debate and procedure. He asked participants to consider opportunities presented by the GEF, particularly since the GM isn't fully operational. He noted and called for support for an upcoming workshop on the GEF and the interface between the UNFCCC and CCD. He said civil society, and particularly women, can play an important role in the creation and implementation of National Action Programmes at all levels. He also welcomed the establishment of an NGO office within the Convention Secretariat to assist in the preparation of NGOs' contributions at future COPs.

ECUADOR, on behalf of GRULAC, said more than ninety percent of GRULAC's members have ratified the CCD. He highlighted its Regional Action Programme, which has led to the establishment of a regional coordination unit and a regional information network. Other features include the establishment of indicators and parameters, the promotion of traditional knowledge and the inclusion of a gender perspective in activities. He expressed concern over the imbalance in budget distribution among the regions and representation on the Secretariat. He called for a clear definition of the direction COP-2 should give to the GM. He also expressed hope that a GRULAC country would host COP-3.

Executive Secretary Diallo introduced the documents prepared for COP-2 and reported on recent meetings and workshops, including an interregional forum. He noted that a number of countries have formulated their National Action Programmes. He stressed the importance of focal points and national coordinating bodies, noting that recent reports indicate that the weakness of focal points is a reason for delay in implementation. He highlighted

the roles of NGOs in the CCD and of support from development partners. He emphasized that the Secretariat would continue to work with Parties during the implementation phase.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: The COP President introduced the provisional agenda (ICCD/COP(2)/1) for adoption. The EU proposed adding reference to an "exchange of views" in connection with the review of CCD implementation. BENIN, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, noted that a special segment was scheduled to discuss implementation and asked for clarification of the proposal. Following consultations, delegates agreed to discuss the issue twice, once at an expert level and then at the special segment. Delegates agreed the Bureau could decide how to implement the decision and adopted the agenda.

The regional groups then nominated officers for the Bureau. The African Group nominated Tunisia and Chad and said Senegal has a double role on the Bureau, as President of the COP and as a Bureau member. The Asian Group nominated Saudi Arabia and Jordan. The Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG) nominated Belgium and Canada. The East European Group noted that only two members of the Group were present, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and thus they would represent the Group. The Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) nominated Antigua and Barbuda and said they would announce another nomination at the next Plenary session. Mohammad Reza Jabbari (Iran) was elected to chair the CST. Concerning the establishment of the COW, the President recalled that a COW was established at COP-1. BENIN noted that the COW, if established, would be *ad hoc* until a decision was taken to form a subsidiary body of the COP on matters relating to implementation of the Convention.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The first day of COP-2 showed early indications of the reemergence of some unresolved issues as well as potential tensions. The distribution of seats on the Bureau was highlighted as one issue that may be revisited. One delegate expressed concern over the possible delay that attempts to resolve the issue may cause at the expense of more important and substantive issues. He noted, however, that Africa's call for three seats would secure the majority vote in the Bureau and ensure that the interests of the most affected countries remain in the spotlight. Another unresolved issue, membership of the Asian Group, reappeared as an obstacle in their attempt to convene a meeting, while the appearance of the ambassador of Taiwan to Senegal caused a stir in the corridors.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary will meet at 9:30 am in the Salle Plénière to consider, among other things, establishing a Committee of the Whole and selecting a Chairperson of the COW and rapporteur for the Bureau.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: Pending the Plenary's decision to establish a COW, this body COW may convene Tuesday.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: The CST is scheduled to convene at 9:30 am. Check the Journal to confirm time and place. The agenda calls for the CST to begin with consideration of outstanding items and establishment of a roster of experts.