



CCD COP-4 HIGHLIGHTS

TUESDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2000

Delegates convened in a morning Plenary to consider organizational matters and hear statements from various UN bodies and related organizations and NGOs. A Committee of the Whole (COW) was established and met in an afternoon session. The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) convened in an afternoon session to consider its organization of work and begin discussion on scientific and technical information used to measure progress.

PLENARY

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Delegates adopted the provisional agenda (ICCD/COP(4)/1), which also contains the provisional agenda of the CST. They also decided to admit as observers two intergovernmental organizations and 30 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The COP decided to establish the COW to consider outstanding issues. Switzerland's suggestion to start discussing the declaration of the commitments during the first week rather than the second was deferred to the COW.

The officers elected to act as Vice Presidents on the Bureau are: Abdallah Ghebalou (Algeria), Jiri Hlavacek (Czech Republic), Carlos Humberto Salazar (El Salvador), Ketevan Tsereteli (Georgia), Philbert Brown (Jamaica), Maïga Hamadou (Mali), Farouk Adli (Syrian Arab Republic), Lennart Bondesson (Sweden) and Theresia Adam (Switzerland). They elected Olarewanju Smith (Canada) to serve as Chair of the CST. Kabelo Mafura (Lesotho) was designated Chair of the COW.

The COP also adopted Syria's proposal to suspend the meetings for half an hour daily from 4:30 p.m. to allow the Muslim delegates to break the Ramadan fast.

STATEMENTS: CCD Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo summarized the activities undertaken at the national, subregional and regional levels, and reported that a Round Table of Parliamentarians will be held between 12 and 13 December, in parallel with the COP sessions.

The WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION invited the COP to give special attention to, *inter alia*: developing and enhancing proactive drought early warning systems; determining vulnerability profiles and comprehensive assessment of social, economic and environmental impacts, based on indicators that can be monitored as drought develops; and providing technical and financial resources to the most vulnerable countries.

Noting a steep increase in the number of requests for the Global Mechanism's (GM) services, the INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (IFAD) said bilateral support to the GM has been sporadic and insufficient. He urged the

COP to reaffirm its commitments to support the GM and ensure it is allocated the necessary resources to perform its duties effectively. The CONVENTION ON MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS (CMS) called for synergies at all levels, including national levels, between the CCD and CMS.

The FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION highlighted the need to strengthen efforts to identify and disseminate simple and effective agricultural practices that simultaneously enhance resource and biodiversity conservation, food security, social stability and improve incomes, and undertake and implement institutional reforms to strengthen local populations' access to, *inter alia*, micro-credit and agricultural markets to ensure food security. UNESCO outlined its initiatives to produce educational materials on combating desertification and its planned scientific studies, including on traditional knowledge.

NIGERIA, on behalf of the G-77/China, called for the enhancement of the GM to enable it to fulfil its mandate; establishment of an institutional structure to monitor CCD implementation; and formulation of a declaration with a time frame and measurable results.

FRANCE, speaking for the EU, noted some shortcomings in the function of the CST, which results in delays in effective CCD implementation, and called on the CST to reorganize its procedures for consistency with its mandate.

CHILE, on behalf of the Latin America and Caribbean Region, underscored the need for: financial and technical support to prepare the national action programmes (NAPs); a COP-4 decision to support the regional coordination units from the Secretariat's budget; and specific initiatives undertaken in collaboration with other UN agencies, the GEF and donor countries to finance regional and sub-regional action programmes.

BENIN, speaking for the African Group, called on COP-4 to ensure: that the *ad hoc* working group established by COP-3 remains open-ended and that its existence should not hinder negotiations to create a committee to review CCD implementation; that work continues in the intersessional period; and that conclusions and recommendations from the various Parties and the *ad-hoc* working group are part of a COP-5 decision. He supported the G-77/CHINA call to assign the GEF as the temporary financial mechanism of the Convention. SYRIA, on behalf of the Asian Group, underscored the need to combat desertification at the international level to foster development.

The GERMAN WORKING GROUP ON DESERTIFICATION, speaking for the NGOs, expressed concern, *inter alia*, over the lack of civil society participation in the NAP process and called for indicators on the same, and lack of priority accorded to desertification by some affected and partner States.

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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (COW)

The COW began, but failed to conclude consideration of Agenda Item 7, on Implementation of the Convention. Executive Secretary Diallo presented the documents to be considered (ICCD/COP(4)/3/Add 7 and Add 7(A)) noting that COP-4 could only consider 33 reports. The rest would be deferred to two intersessional meetings in March and April 2001. He noted that two criteria were used to identify the reports for presentation at COP-4: countries known to have approved NAPs and when a country ratified the CCD.

ALGERIA called for a flexible review approach, based on pre-determined criteria and indicators. The EU, suggested focusing on: synergies with other relevant conventions; the main obstacles and successes; and adherence to the principle of participation. He expressed reservation on the proposed intersessional meetings and suggested establishing a contact group to discuss the issue.

BENIN, on behalf of the G-77/China, proposed a section-by-section discussion of the document and a country-by-country examination of the reports. With SYRIA, IRAN, EGYPT, TUNISIA and UZBEKISTAN, he supported a five-member bureau. TUNISIA preferred a standing, not short-term, short-lived *ad-hoc* committee. MAURITANIA supported an open-ended *ad hoc* working group that could hold intersessional meetings, but does not substitute for the committee to review the national reports. MOROCCO suggested updating reports. CANADA proposed NGOs involvement in the *ad-hoc* working group.

The COW adopted the document *ad referendum*, but failed to reach consensus on the number of bureau members and intersessional meetings. Executive Secretary Diallo suggested that, as a subsidiary body of the COP, the costs of servicing the meetings of the *ad hoc* working group would be covered under the UN General Assembly's provisions for subsidiary body meetings.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: On the CST agenda, delegates agreed to an EU proposal to discuss how to enhance the effectiveness of the CST in order to submit concrete proposals for COP consideration. They then elected two Vice Chairs from Eritrea and Mexico, representing the African and the Latin America and Caribbean groups respectively. The Asian Group and the Eastern European Group will present their nominations at the next CST meeting.

CST Chair Olarewanju Smith then presented the report of the CST-3 Bureau meeting held in October 2000.

BENCHMARKS AND INDICATORS: In presenting the synthesis on scientific and technical information on benchmarks and indicators contained in the country reports (INCCD/COP(4)/CST/5), the Secretariat noted that African countries have practically no information, benchmarks or indicators for desertification at the national level. He said little information is provided in the reports on the use of implementation indicators identified, and that work on indicators was conducted in the framework of other environmental initiatives and international conventions. The reports also lack information on the testing of impact indicators. Regarding developed country reports, he said it was difficult to ascertain what scientific activities were being developed in developing countries and noted that funding is usually targeted to national environmental plans or general natural resource management and not specifically at desertification.

Delegates discussed how the CST can input into the work of the *ad hoc* working group, why the indicators were not used in affected countries, whether the indicators should be local, regional or global, and why cases where they were used are not highlighted in the synthesis report.

SENEGAL, supported by UGANDA, said the synthesis report did not accurately reflect the situation in Africa, noting that some countries are already testing process indicators.

The EU raised a number of issues including the value added by the CST compared to other bodies and whether more emphasis should be placed on regional programmes or on institutions in the broader sense. He said a new format for reporting should be completed before COP-5.

GAMBIA proposed networking with other agencies to avoid duplication of efforts. MAURITANIA said the use of benchmarks and indicators was a dynamic developing exercise.

The PERMANENT INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THE SAHEL (CILSS) suggested setting the benchmarks in a more global framework and proposed identifying institutions and bodies to facilitate the work on indicators. NORWAY proposed elaborating indicators on local participation in NAPs.

ISRAEL said impact indicators should be indicative, sensitive, and easily measurable. The SAHARA-SAHEL OBSERVATORY (OSS) stressed the need for country-level testing of indicators, which should be tools to enable NAPs monitoring.

On the CST inputs to the *ad hoc* group's work, MEXICO proposed evaluating the experiences where the greatest number of achievements have been registered. The US suggested identifying difficulties in the use of indicators in order to identify the problems faced by some countries in CCD implementation.

EGYPT stressed that previous CST work should be reflected in the report to the *ad hoc* working group and that shortcomings should be stated as issues to be addressed in the near future.

During the break, an informal group, constituting Egypt, Germany, France, CILSS, OSS, Japan, Argentina and Israel, convened to discuss how to input the discussions to the work of the *ad hoc* group. When the CST reconvened, Chair Smith reported that the group had raised the need to: modify the reporting structure to highlight ongoing work in the countries; examine why indicators were not being used; and assess whether to follow up on countries where there is ongoing work, and the mechanisms for such a follow up. The informal group will continue its deliberations and report back to the CST at the start of its next meeting.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: Plenary will convene in the Plenary Hall at 3:00 to 4:00 p.m.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (COW): The COW is scheduled to meet at 10:00 a.m. and again at 4:00 p.m. in the Plenary Hall to complete consideration of the pending issues.

AD HOC WORKING GROUP: This group will meet after the COW's adjournment to begin examining reports on the Implementation of the Convention.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (CST): The CST will convene in the Committee Hall at 10:00 a.m. to hear a report of the informal group that was considering input to the work of the *ad hoc* working group.

SPECIAL EVENTS: A side event on "Process monitoring, impact indicators and Monitoring: evaluation for Action Programmes to Combat Desertification" organized by the GTZ, OSS and CCD Secretariat will take place in the press briefing room at 6:00 pm.

The Board of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment will sponsor a workshop at 1:00 p.m. on "Designing the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment to meet the needs of the CCD." Consult the notice board for the venue.