



CCD COP-7 HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2005

Delegates to COP-7 met in morning and afternoon sessions and began their deliberations in the seventh session of the Committee for Science and Technology (CST) and the fourth meeting of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC-4). The morning plenary heard statements by Parties, the UN agencies, and observers. The CST met in the afternoon to address the roster of independent experts, the survey and evaluation of existing networks, and the improving of the efficiency and effectiveness of the CST. CRIC-4 also met in an afternoon session to consider implementation of the Convention and the Global Mechanism (GM).

PLENARY

ELECTION OF OTHER OFFICERS: AUSTRALIA requested clarification regarding the pending issue of the election of remaining COP-7 Bureau members. After informal consultations, President Musyoka designated Riccardo Valentini (Italy) as Chair of the Committee of the Whole (COW).

STATEMENTS BY PARTIES, UN AGENCIES, AND OBSERVERS: President Musyoka opened the floor for general statements. Jamaica, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, expressed concern regarding the current lack of support for multilateralism. She supported the Joint Inspection Unit Review's findings, but warned against reopening the "environment versus development" debate. Venezuela, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), emphasized the challenge of meeting the rising demand for food. She called for new and additional resources to facilitate the implementation of the CCD at all levels, highlighted South-South cooperation, and stressed the need for a synergistic approach to fulfill the objectives of multilateral environmental agreements.

Swaziland, on behalf of the African Group, called for financial support to African countries for preparation of national reports to CRIC-5. He complained that resource depletion for Operation Programme (OP) 15 (Sustainable Land Management) of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) reflects the lag in CCD implementation, called for more financial resources to be allocated to this programme, and urged making COP-7 a turning point from words to action. Saudi Arabia, on behalf of the Asian Group, supported the G-77/CHINA, and called for financial resources for the formulation of national reports for CRIC-5.

The UK, on behalf of the EU, highlighted recent actions that could support the CCD, including debt relief and increased aid, and invited efforts to maximize institutional efficiency. He outlined the EU's priorities for COP-7, including: renewing the CCD's vision; clarifying the role of the Secretariat, subsidiary bodies, and civil society; identifying synergies between the

Rio conventions; and budgetary matters. Belarus, on behalf of Central and Eastern Europe, reported on progress made in CCD implementation in the region since COP-6, noting that most countries in the region have developed national action programmes (NAPs). He called for international support, especially in providing financial resources, and appealed for allocating adequate resources to GEF OP 15.

The ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK said that it will mainstream its CCD efforts and mobilize more resources for CCD implementation. He introduced the Bank's initiatives and projects in addressing land degradation in the Asia and Pacific region, including on dust and sand storms in East Asia. FAO emphasized that food security could not be achieved if land degradation is not controlled. He said FAO is committed to sustainable land management, and highlighted the importance of immediate action, financial resources and partnerships. He explained FAO's initiatives for CCD implementation, in particular assisting several countries in formulating their NAPs.

The WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION emphasized the health effects of land degradation, including disease and malnutrition, and said it is committed to forming partnerships with parties and international organizations for CCD implementation. UNESCO introduced its initiatives and projects on education and awareness raising in sustainable land management.

UNEP described the support it has provided to the CCD, including activities designed to ensure that environment and development programmes are mutually beneficial. He highlighted: efforts to create markets for ecosystem services; ecosystem approaches to dryland management; and the need for monitoring, assessment and early warning. The WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION outlined its efforts to link desertification with its underlying causes such as climate change, and the use of new early warning technologies.

Noting that 90% of the Arab world falls within arid and semi-arid lands, the ARAB CENTRE FOR THE STUDIES OF ARID ZONES AND DRY-LANDS highlighted its efforts to address desertification within the region, and requested assistance from developed countries for implementing their NAPs. CLIMATE CHANGE NETWORK AFRICA, on behalf of the NGO community, highlighted the role of civil society in CCD implementation and the need for further funding.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Chair Viorel Blujdea (Romania) opened the seventh session of the CST in the afternoon.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRS: The Committee elected as Vice-Chairs Badraoui Mohamed (Morocco) for the African Group, Chenchu Norbu (Bhutan) for the Asian Group, Lawrence



Townley-Smith (Canada) for the Western European and Others Group, and Nara Vargas (Panama) for the GRULAC, acting also as Rapporteur.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: The Committee adopted the agenda and organization of work (ICCD/COP(7)/CST/1) without amendment.

IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CST: Chair Blujdea introduced the interim report of the Group of Experts (GoE) (ICCD/COP(7)/CST/3, Add.1 and 2). This agenda item follows COP-6's request that the GoE prioritize its work programme, focus on issues emerging from the review of national, subregional and regional programmes, and advise the CRIC, through the CST, on the efficiency of those programmes for implementing the Convention.

David Mouat, Chairperson of the GoE, summarized the analysis of the reports, highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of national reporting, and noted progress made on thematic issues. He presented the outcomes of the third and fourth meetings of the GoE. In the ensuing discussion, delegates commended the work of experts, and made suggestions to their conclusions, stressing in particular the need to: improve scientific input to the CCD; fund the GoE and accord it a higher profile; prioritize themes for its further work; and improve interaction with the experts.

Chair Blujdea suggested that the CST Bureau be involved in the preparation of draft decisions.

SURVEY AND EVALUATION OF EXISTING NETWORKS, INSTITUTIONS, AGENCIES AND BODIES: The Secretariat introduced the document (ICCD/COP(7)/CST/10). Timo Maukonen, UNEP, outlined the interim progress report of the project "Survey and Evaluation of Existing Networks, Institutions, Agencies and Bodies." Noting the absence of funding for the implementation of Phase 2 of the project, he said UNEP has submitted a medium size project proposal entitled "Building Capacity for Networking Among Desertification Institutions in Southern Africa" to GEF for funding. ARGENTINA, MOROCCO, the EU, and FRANCE highlighted the need to link project activities to the work of the GoE. A contact group was established to draft recommendations on issues raised during the discussion.

ROSTER OF INDEPENDENT EXPERTS: In introducing the document on the roster of independent experts (ICCD/COP(7)/10), the Secretariat noted that it has kept the roster up to date including the development of a new data entry system and of a standardized curriculum vitae format, which includes information on NGOs.

Delegates stressed the effectiveness and utility of the roster. The G-77/CHINA suggested including experts on social and economic issues and increasing the participation of experts from developing countries. An NGO suggested creating a list of local experts, especially elders and women who hold rich traditional knowledge. ITALY, supported by BELGIUM, proposed that parties identify national information points for coordinating national experts. Several delegates highlighted the importance of regularly updating the roster. Some speakers said that parties should be invited, but not obliged, to use the national experts, if available and necessary.

A contact group was established to discuss the points raised.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

CRIC-3 Chair Mohammed Mahmud Ould El Ghaouth (Mauritania) opened the session.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: The Committee adopted the agenda and organization of work without amendment. Chair El Ghaouth introduced the CRIC-3 report (ICCD/CRIC(3)/9) containing

draft decisions for consideration at COP-7, and suggested translating them into negotiable texts. The EU emphasized that decision drafting is primarily to be done by the CRIC. The African Group urged that enough time be allowed for discussion. A contact group, chaired by Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria) on the draft decision for the review of the implementation of the Convention submitted by the CRIC Chair (ICCD/COP(7)/L.1) was established.

REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION: Regarding the overall review of the activities of the Secretariat and of progress made by affected country Parties in implementing the Convention (ICCD/CRIC(4)/2), Chair El Ghaouth suggested, and delegates agreed, that the agenda item be deferred to the COW.

On the review of the report on enhanced implementation of the obligations of the Convention (ICCD/CRIC(4)/3), the EU said that there is no legal basis for the Secretariat to draft recommendations for decisions. Many others disagreed and supported the recommendations as contained in the report. Chair El Ghaouth designated Tanzania to consult with other countries to negotiate a draft decision.

GLOBAL MECHANISM: Christian Mersmann, Managing Director, GM, presented the report on activities of the GM (ICCD/CRIC(4)/4). He stressed the need to work within the evolving international framework to mobilize financing, and to recognize that the CCD is in competition for limited resources and must convey its importance. He called on international financing institutions to mainstream funding for CCD-related activities.

Most countries supported the document, although SWAZILAND, with KENYA and SOUTH AFRICA, suggested the GM play a more aggressive role in vying for financing. Several countries noted the GM's role in implementing the Convention in their countries, while others stated that they had yet to benefit from it, and called for greater assistance.

CUBA stressed a lack of progress in conveying the importance of desertification as a global problem. GERMANY gave an overview of increased development funding for Africa, and suggested that affected countries need to present their priorities to development partners.

CONTACT GROUP

The Contact Group on the draft decision for the review of the Convention met in the evening. It was generally felt that the draft should be shortened, and made more clear. One delegate suggested strengthening the capacity building element. It was decided that each regional group should produce a revised draft by noon the next day for discussion.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The second day of the conference has confirmed the fears of many participants that the hitches that emerged on the first day of COP-7 would slow down the COP's progress. Though seemingly organizational in nature, two issues are quickly acquiring political importance. One is the prospective "overrepresentation" of one country, the US, on the Bureau, an unusual situation that clearly calls for guidance from UN legal experts. The other issue – a proposal to devise a procedure for selecting the CCD Executive Secretary – appears to be more substantive. Some delegations believe this would serve as a tool to streamline the process by giving more say to countries in the selection process, making it more transparent. Others, however, tend to see it as a move to downgrade the Secretariat, and even encroach on the Convention's strategic importance and its African focus. Some delegates were heard commenting that the G-77/CHINA firm stand on both questions is a serious factor to be reckoned with by all delegations.