



CCD COP-7 HIGHLIGHTS THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2005

The plenary met in the morning to discuss inclusion of NGO activities within the official programme of work of the COP. Delegates to the Committee of the Whole (COW) considered: rule 47 of the rules of procedures; the interim report on the status of preparation of the 2006 International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD); the report on relations between the Secretariat and its host country; and the programme of work for COP-8. The fourth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC-4) met to adopt the draft decisions prepared by the contact group on draft decisions on the review of the implementation of the Convention, and to elect officers other than the chairperson of the Committee. Contact groups continued discussions on: the programme and budget and the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU).

PLENARY

OPEN DIALOGUE SESSION ON NGOS: The Secretariat delivered a message from CCD Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo, which stressed the need to grant NGOs open access to decision making in CCD implementation.

Moderator Octavio Perez Pardo (Argentina) introduced the theme of the dialogue "Facilitators and Obstacles on CCD Implementation," highlighting the need to identify difficulties in the implementation of the Convention and how to work more efficiently. In introducing the panelists and their presentations, Cecilia Leal, Fundación Oasis de Vida, Colombia, emphasized the aim of this dialogue is to share experiences.

Jackeline Nkoyok, Confederation des ONGs d'environnement et de développement de l'Afrique Centrale, Cameroon, made a presentation on the economic dimension of the environmental protection in Africa with a view to facilitate CCD implementation. Stressing that Africa is under economic development pressure, she urged donor countries to fulfill their commitment to contribute 0.7% of their total GNP as official development assistance.

Tanveer Arif, Society for Conservation and Protection of Environment (SCOPE), Pakistan, spoke about removing barriers at the grassroots level for CCD implementation. In order to remove political, social, organizational, research, economic, and technologic barriers, he stressed: promoting education in rural areas, especially for women; empowering local farmers to participate in decision making; providing accessible loans to farmers; subsidizing technology transfer; and promoting equitable benefit sharing and dissemination of research results.

Khadija Razavi, Centre for Sustainable Development Studies and Application (CENESTA), Iran, made a presentation on mobile pastoralism as a practice for sustainable nature conservation and rangeland management. She stressed the importance of: recognizing pastoralism as a sustainable way of life; respecting and protecting pastoralists' right to land, resources and decision making; and recognizing the economic role of pastoralism.

Juan Luis Mérega, Fundación Del Sur, Argentina, introduced activities of a Clean Development Mechanism afforestation and reforestation project, highlighting that the project offers broad participation of both local and international stakeholders. He noted that the expected outcomes of the project include: reforestation of 3000 hectares of land; job creation and income generation; improvement of local and global environmental conditions; and promotion of sustainable dryland management.

In the ensuing discussion, participants stressed the need to: promote traditional knowledge; empower pastoralists and develop and implement a programme of work on sustainable pastoralism; facilitate access to research results and sharing of experiences; recognize farmers' central role in combating desertification and provide direct financial and technical support to them; and promote awareness of on-going World Trade Organization discussions on agricultural goods that will have long term socioeconomic impacts.

Many participants suggested that the open dialogue session be restructured for greater involvement of government delegates. Several participants commented on the role of government, stressing that NGO participation is no substitute for government commitment and involvement.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair Ricardo Valentini (Italy) opened the session.

CONSIDERATION OF RULE 47 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE: The Secretariat introduced document ICCD/COP(7)/8 on rule 47 for the majority of vote required in order for decisions taken by the COP to be adopted, and presented proposals for alternative solutions.

SYRIA suggested that parties submit their views on the item. Chair Valentini proposed that the COP Bureau collect views of parties, explore possible solutions, and refer recommendations to COP-8. The US, supported by CANADA, cautioned against overburdening the work of the Bureau and additional cost implications, and suggested adopting a decision requesting the Secretariat to include this item in the agenda of COP-8. The EU suggested noting in the decision the status of decision making procedures in other conventions. JAMAICA requested the Secretariat to provide information on the impact of this



outstanding item on the work of other conventions. In light of some delegations' concern about overburdening the Bureau work, Chair Valentini withdrew his proposal.

Delegates agreed that the Secretariat will collect information regarding the same issue in other Conventions, and refer the item to COP-8.

PREPARATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF DESERTS AND DESERTIFICATION: The Secretariat noted the UN General Assembly's designation of 2006 as the IYDD in view of the exacerbation of desertification, and introduced documents containing an interim report on the status of the preparation of IYDD (ICCD/COP(7)/13 and Add.1).

Several delegates announced that a wide variety of events will be organized in commemorating the IYDD. In response to CHINA's suggestion regarding the coordination of events, the Secretariat announced the establishment of a website dedicated to IYDD (<http://www.iydd.org>). ITALY highlighted its support to countries for organizing events on the occasion of IYDD, and GERMANY said that it will be launching an internet platform on IYDD events. ALGERIA, announcing that it will be hosting a high-level conference "The Protection of Deserts and the Combat against Desertification," bringing together Heads of State, called for drawing the attention of the international community to the event. WORLD YOUTH ALLIANCE requested the Secretariat to come up with ways to involve young people in celebrating the IYDD.

The Committee took note of the need for coordination of events that will be organized at both international and national levels, and for updating the website regularly.

REPORT ON RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SECRETARIAT AND ITS HOST COUNTRY: The Secretariat introduced the report (ICCD/COP(7)/14), and noted the on-going relocation of all UN bodies in Bonn to a new UN campus and its associated costs. GERMANY reported the progress of the relocation. JAMAICA, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, expressed concern about the costs associated with the relocation and called for increased contributions.

THE COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

CRIC-4 Chair Mohamed Mahmoud Ould El Ghaouth opened the meeting.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE: Ositadinma Anaedu (Nigeria), Chair of the contact group on draft decisions for the implementation of the Convention, presented draft decisions developed by the group for consideration by the Committee.

He reported that consensus had been reached on draft decisions on strengthening Convention implementation in Africa (ICCD/COP(7)/L.1/Rev.1) and consideration of necessary adjustments to the elaboration process (ICCD/COP(7)/L.2/Rev.1). These draft decisions were adopted without amendments.

Draft decisions on improving communication and reporting procedures (ICCD/COP(7)/L.3/Rev.1) and on mobilization of resources for implementation (ICCD/COP(7)/L.4/Rev.1) were adopted with minor amendments.

Regarding a draft decision on collaboration with the GEF (ICCD/COP(7)/L.5/Rev.1), Chair El Ghaouth urged the adoption of compromise text, inviting the GEF to take "duly" (instead of fully) into account relevant decisions taken by the COP when financing activities, and qualifying the invitation to donors to strive for a successful GEF replenishment with "where possible". Despite an appeal for stronger language from the G-77/CHINA, the draft decision was adopted.

The Committee also adopted a draft decision on the programme of work for CRIC-5 (ICCD/COP(7)/L.16/Rev.1) without amendment.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS OTHER THAN THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE: Nominations for Vice-Chairs of the CRIC were received from the African Group (Bongani Masuku, Swaziland), the Asian Group (Bulat Bekniyazov, Kazakhstan), the Central and Eastern Europe Region (Evgeny Gorshkov, the Russian Federation); and GRULAC (Giselle Beja, Uruguay). The nominated delegates were elected by acclamation.

AD HOC GROUP OF EXPERTS

The group discussed procedures and institutional mechanisms for the resolution of questions on implementation, and annexes containing arbitration and conciliation procedures (ICCD/COP(7)/9). A draft decision was tabled by the Secretariat and discussed among parties. The group decided to reconvene during COP-8 to further examine these issues, and requested the Secretariat to prepare new working documents on the above issues based on submissions made by parties.

CONTACT GROUPS

PROGRAMME AND BUDGET: The contact group continued to discuss the draft decision on programme and budget for the biennium 2006-2007. Budget tables on resource requirements were circulated using both the US dollar and the Euro to simulate five scenarios with 0 to 25% increase based on the 2004-2005 biennium budget. The group also discussed the audit report and the financial aspects of the JIU report. Consensus was reached on: implementation of the auditors' recommendations on financial rules on procurement, travel, daily subsistence allowances and consultant costs; report on the action taken and further actions necessary to implement the audit report; the report on result-based planning, and programming and budgeting.

REPORT OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT: The group continued to meet to discuss the draft decision on the JIU report. Parties agreed on the establishment of an inter-governmental inter-sessional working group with the mandate to review the JIU report in full, and to develop a draft strategic plan and a framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention, addressing, *inter alia*, the recommendations of the JIU report. The inter-sessional working group will include the COP-7 President, Chairpersons of CST and CRIC, and two members nominated by each of the five regional groups. A group of developed countries suggested giving the strategic plan a timeframe of ten years, which was opposed by a group of developing countries. Delegates could not agree on whether the working group should address all the relevant recommendations of the JIU report or just those of strategic importance.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Many participants in the morning's Open Dialogue Session on NGO involvement were heard lamenting its poor attendance by government delegates. However, it was also noted that even NGOs were not well represented. It was suggested that in the future the structure of the dialogue should be changed to encourage attendance and thus avoid "preaching in the desert".

The rate at which CRIC decisions were gavelled through to be forwarded to the COP caught several G-77/CHINA members off guard, having expressed their concern with the weakness of the language on several important issues, including collaboration with the GEF. These decisions join many others to be put before the COP for adoption on what is shaping up to be a very busy final day.