

UNCCD CRIC 7 AND CST S-1: FRIDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2008

The seventh session of the UNCCD Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 7) opened on Friday, 7 November 2008. Delegates participated in a general discussion on the implementation of the Strategy before and after an interactive dialogue on UNCCD strategic orientations.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

CRIC Chair Israel Torres (Panama) opened CRIC 7 and urged participants to provide financial, technical and policy contributions to achieve the UNCCD's objectives.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: The Secretariat introduced the provisional agenda (ICCD/CRIC(7)/1) and proposed moving the discussion of the two-year work programmes of the CST and CRIC from the afternoon of Monday, 10 November, to the afternoon of Friday, 7 November, in order to address the work plans and programmes of all Convention bodies together. In response to ALGERIA's concern regarding time constraints, the Secretariat said discussion could continue on 10 November, if necessary. The CRIC adopted the agenda, and the organization of work in Annex II of the provisional agenda, as orally revised. The CRIC appointed Vice Chair Hussein Nasrallah (Lebanon) as Rapporteur for CRIC 7.

THE TEN-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN AND FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION: Luc Gnacadja, UNCCD Executive Secretary, presented the report on the implementation of the Strategy and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (ICCD/CRIC(7)/2). He invited the CRIC's recommendations on the Secretariat's organizational reforms and operationalization of the Strategy and expressed interest in holding a discussion before COP 9 on Strategic Objective 4 (mobilizing resources).

The Chair invited regional groups that did not speak at the joint opening session on Monday, 3 November, to make comments. Chile, on behalf of GRULAC, said the GM's and Secretariat's efforts to coordinate are laudable, and should continue. He lamented that a regional meeting was not convened and that resources for the Latin America and Caribbean's regional office are lacking. Chad, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, made recommendations regarding the implementation

of the Strategy, including: creating clear links between the Secretariat and GM; strengthening resource mobilization efforts; reinforcing the Regional Coordination Units (RCUs); supporting and enhancing implementation of national action plans; and strengthening cooperation and coordination among countries and regions. Myanmar, on behalf of the ASIA GROUP, called attention to the 6 October meeting of Regional Implementation Annex (RIA) representatives on a mechanism to facilitate regional coordination of UNCCD implementation, which developed guidelines to facilitate the RIAs' task in proposing regional coordination mechanisms.

Delegates then offered general comments on the CRIC's agenda, with some speaking during the morning, and others after the interactive dialogue concluded in the afternoon.

ALGERIA stressed the need for clearly defined roles for each subsidiary body, and said the GM is the only body that has produced tangible results. Turkey, on behalf of the NORTHERN MEDITERRANEAN countries, highlighted linkages between soil, water and carbon sequestration, and supported strengthening regional coordination. PAKISTAN stressed the importance of the communication strategy and learning lessons from other instruments.

NIGERIA stated that the Strategy does not specify the means to operationalize its objectives, and that the GM, while it has performed well, was never intended to facilitate effective resource mobilization. He said the presumption of a Joint Work Programme (JWP) is flawed because the GM is guided by donor priorities and not decisions by parties, and the extent of the GM's independence from the Secretariat requires discussion. ECUADOR said the Secretariat and GM must coordinate their efforts to secure funds for their region. SAUDI ARABIA highlighted that parties require support to harmonize regional and sub-regional efforts with the Strategy.

CHINA stressed the need to: mobilize "political resources and attention" to UNCCD implementation; further clarify the Strategic Objectives; reinforce coordination at global, regional and national levels; strengthen the UNCCD institutions; make the decision-making process more transparent; and strengthen the GM for mobilizing financial resources, especially for supporting the implementation of NAPs. Regarding the proposed plan for the Secretariat's restructuring, he said such a plan, if implemented, will further weaken its ability to coordinate and service the UNCCD's implementation and to meet parties' needs.

The US highlighted that, *inter alia*: there are overlaps in the functions of the Secretariat, GM and parties, and parties must take responsibility for their own functions; currently many

performance indicators are outputs, not results, although he said they should evolve over time; and consensus over indicators must be attained at COP 9.

SUDAN proposed that the GM be made an integral part of the Secretariat. The CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC called for resources to align NAPs with the Strategy, said the lack of active collaboration between the GM and Secretariat is a threat to the UNCCD, and explained the need for RCUs. The GAMBIA urged aligning NAPs with the Strategy, ensuring regional representation in the UNCCD's role as a global authority in scientific knowledge, and conducting a Stern-type study on the economics of desertification.

PROTERRA (Peru) said that CSOs play an important role in implementing the Strategy, and indicators should be established to monitor their contribution. SOUTH AFRICA highlighted regional coordination and the importance of strengthening UNCCD institutions, especially the GM, in mobilizing resources. TUNISIA noted that limited financial resources constrain the implementation of the Strategy. He stressed the role of national actions, links and cooperation between the Secretariat and GM, appropriate institutional structures, indicators for monitoring progress and funding of NGOs.

BANGLADESH proposed that UNCCD resource allocation be based on the severity of the problem. Comparing the number of annual meetings held by each of the Rio convention bodies and the earlier emergence of desertification as an international environmental problem, she said the UNCCD is weak and should be strengthened.

SWAZILAND said the Strategy's implementation is still focused on the global level and stressed the importance of the JIU evaluation in harmonizing and aligning the work of the GM and Secretariat. MALI expressed concern about the collaboration between the GM and Secretariat and explained the utility of RCUs.

MOROCCO said funding should be directed to activities that include reforestation. HAITI called on the Secretariat and GM to support countries most affected by desertification, including through technology transfer. PERU noted an opportunity to obtain funds from reducing emissions from deforestation. ARGENTINA said the UNCCD must receive funds dedicated specifically for the Convention and urged involvement of civil society, regional banks and the private sector.

Executive Secretary Gnacadja stressed that the Secretariat is seeking: parties' guidance on work programmes, indicators and the future format of CRIC; and views on existing regional coordination mechanisms. He said the Secretariat believes NAPs should be considered under the JWP.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE ON UNCCD STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS: In his introductory remarks, Modou Diagne Fada (Senegal), Chair of the Interactive Dialogue, proposed seven questions to focus the discussion, including: priorities to implement the Strategy; views on the budget and financial resources; partnerships and synergies; and support expected from CSD-17. Moderator Philbert Brown (Jamaica) said the session would facilitate an exchange of views among the parties on their expectations of the CRIC and on the incentive mechanisms. The Dialogue began with six presentations.

Godert van Lynden (World Soil Information) presented on the Global Assessment of Land Productivity (GLADA), an innovative initiative that uses biomass change as a proxy indicator for land productivity. Sem Shikongo (Namibia) outlined ways that parties can use a results-based management approach to ensure the successful implementation of the Strategy.

Luca Montanarella (European Commission) pointed out that desertification leads to substantial losses of terrestrial carbon to the atmosphere and recommended developing strong synergies among the Rio conventions to improve soil protection. Mika Castro Lucic (University of Chile) presented on food security

and indigenous people, noting that the UNCCD provides the best instrument to recognize indigenous people's rights in the fights against hunger, poverty and environmental degradation.

Cristina Manzano (International Federation of Agricultural Producers) presented on ways to enhance food security under the Strategy and stressed that farmers must be better integrated into the UNCCD. Christophe Crepin (World Bank) outlined the importance of cooperation frameworks for achieving the Strategy, noting their importance to improve mobilization of resources.

NIGERIA stated that in addition to partnership and better management, financial resources are most important, and that the GM lacks capacity to carry out its responsibilities. PAKISTAN said the role of soil organic carbon in developing synergies among the UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD needs to be further elaborated. CHILE noted that there is a broad range of synergies among the Rio conventions, and expressed concern about the lack of financial resources for UNCCD implementation. ISRAEL suggested mapping social and political changes using the same time series that was used to map biophysical variables in the GLADA study, with the objective of correlating the changes in order to find the drivers of change in land productivity.

In response to parties' statements, Shikongo highlighted the role of the JIU evaluation in ensuring that the Convention bodies are aligned to implement the Strategy. Crepin said there is a clear financing gap, as well as a need for efficiency and for partnerships.

GRENADA asked what strategies should be employed to develop partnerships. The GAMBIA said the World Bank should fund the NAPs to alleviate poverty and incorporate environmental concerns into their projects. TURKEY suggested further attention to sustainable land and water management. COLOMBIA emphasized the need to work with indigenous peoples.

BURKINA FASO encouraged the mobilization of additional resources, particularly for investment in arid areas. BENIN said legislation should be developed that prioritizes arid areas. SAINT LUCIA asked how the UNCCD could encourage partnerships to combat poverty and achieve food security. ALGERIA emphasized the importance of rural development in combating desertification, and called for reinforcing the GM and drawing funds from the GEF.

In their concluding responses, the panelists highlighted: an apparent lack of political will by developed countries to provide resources; the importance of the JIU evaluation in addressing resource issues; the challenges of preparing a map on the socioeconomic factors; and the need for technology exchanges. Chair Fada stressed the responsibilities of the GEF and all parties in resource mobilization.

IN THE CORRIDORS

The close of the first day of CRIC 7 found participants expressing mixed reviews, with a majority stating satisfaction with the substance, but many articulating frustration with the process. While a number of participants welcomed the knowledge they gained from the Dialogue, they urged a rethinking of its structure, citing, for example, a reduction of the panel size to allow more discussion and providing for a thematic focus. Discussion on the Strategy was reported to have frustrated many. Some expressed concern that the session may find it difficult to generate something substantive for COP 9 and said the discussion was a restatement of "the same arguments we have heard before," while others expressed more substantive concerns that the Secretariat's work plan does not distinguish between the Secretariat's and other stakeholders' responsibilities. The more optimistic remarked that participants were more candid than ever before, and that the meeting was clearing "a path through the thicket" of issues.