

UNCCD CRIC 7 AND CST S-1: THURSDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2008

CRIC 7 convened in a morning plenary session to discuss the reporting process with several members of the Interagency Task Force. Contact Groups 1 and 2 met at the conclusion of this discussion to continue their consideration of the Convention bodies' work plans and CRIC review process, and indicators and reporting principles, respectively.

COMMITTEE FOR THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

REPORTING PROCESS: CRIC 7 Chair Torres introduced a panel discussion on reporting, facilitated by members of the Interagency Task Force (IATF). The Secretariat pointed out that following decision 8/COP 8, an IATF was established and has provided advice on the issue of reporting principles and guidelines. He said its members have agreed to provide further advice on this issue. He requested the delegates to supply guidance, in relation to reporting, on: the role of the GM and Secretariat; capacity building; the reporting of implementation of NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs; and reporting of relevant agencies.

Anna Rita Gentile (European Environment Agency - EEA), who facilitated the session, explained that capacity building related to reporting leads to the writing of the reports and should be strengthened step-by-step, have flexibility, and meet the needs of countries. She pointed out that capacity building includes: building monitoring and assessment systems based on countries' initiatives; institutional networking; using existing data and experiences of different institutions; and building capacity for the preparation -of the reporting guidelines. She said the new reporting process would start in 2010, and the first reporting cycle would be a pilot phase.

Barbara Ruis, UNEP, said the IATF was established due to the realization that many reporting initiatives existed at the country level. She emphasized that reporting is a means to a goal, not an end, and that the UNCCD has a role in: analyzing reports and synthesizing findings; providing technical assistance for using methodologies; and compiling lessons learned. She highlighted the GM's role in conducting the financial analyses. Reporting on the informal feedback provided by CRIC 7 participants to him on the reporting guidelines, Ola Smith (Global Forum on Agricultural Research), highlighted: prioritizing finances for

capacity building focused on the use of indicators to monitor implementation; and developing budget requirements following a global assessment of parties' needs.

ARGENTINA said building national capacity is a "grey" area, as it may encroach on national responsibilities. Reporting on an exercise to draft an indicators map that was facilitated by the EEA, ALGERIA welcomed a similar initiative on desertification sensitivity.

COLOMBIA noted the role for capacity building at institutional and grassroots levels to adjust reports to the Strategy. TANZANIA said capacity building should be viewed as a process as opposed to a project with a specific lifetime. KYRGYZSTAN noted his regions' efforts to prepare reports for donors on its ten-year programme for land management, and said there is an opportunity for focal points to draft national reports. PAKISTAN complimented the diverse composition of the IATF.

CHAD suggested that all desertification players should be involved in the process of data collection, and focal points should be involved in centralizing these efforts. SAUDI ARABIA said all NAPs and work programmes need to be aligned with the Strategy, and expressed hope that the preparation of national reports will be simplified. CHILE highlighted that, based on his country's experience, it is a major challenge to set up a national information center.

GUINEA-BISSAU noted that there has been no mention of capacity building for post-conflict countries, and said its definition should be different for these countries. MOROCCO suggested that the specialized regional bodies should organize regional capacity-building workshops, and capacity building should have the support of donors, the GM and Secretariat, and involve remote sensing institutions.

EGYPT pointed out that capacity building includes strengthening financial and technical capacities, and that reinforcing financial capacity should precede technical support. PERU stressed the importance of providing national reports, strengthening networks at the regional level and funding.

Gentile stressed the importance for countries to find national partners to strengthen their technical capacity. On the CST's preparation of performance and impact indicators, Smith recalled that parties had agreed on the need for: a minimum core set of indicators focused on the Operational and Strategic Objectives

to be used by parties and UNCCD bodies; and for coherence between performance and impact indicators, and between these and the resource-based management indicators and indicators used by UNCCD-related institutions such as the GEF. He sought feedback on how such coherence could be ensured, and suggested considering the need for flexibility, particularly in reporting to the UNCCD, by UN entities and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). Noting the challenge of providing feedback to the UNCCD on impact, which becomes manifest only after a long duration, GUINEA proposed collaborating with IGOs, such as the Comité Permanent Inter-Etats de lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel, which have experience in collecting impact data. BURUNDI expressed a preference for reporting using results-based indicators, and sought clarity about the apparent overlaps in country-level data gathering by UN entities and IGOs.

SUDAN asked what kind of support would be available for reporting on indicators, and when it would be available. PAKISTAN questioned the effectiveness of existing indicators, noting that many have not been validated or tested, and lack a baseline year. CHILE stressed that the CST should select one indicator per objective from validated indicators. THAILAND said the CST must recognize that staff require capacity building to properly compile, assess, develop and manage data. He proposed that the CST draw on different groups, including social scientists, in developing indicators for the Strategic Objectives. BURKINA FASO suggested that country teams, not consultants, be involved in reporting on indicators. CIVIL SOCIETY encouraged the inclusion of CSO reports in country reports.

Smith noted that capacity building is an ongoing process and regional networks can be tapped into in this regard. He observed that the GEF has done work on indicators that is relevant to the UNCCD. In her summary, Gentile highlighted delegates' emphasis on: the importance of harmonization and prioritization of indicators; the need for training and methodological guidance; and the benefits from using all existing reports and databases.

CONTACT GROUP 1

The Contact Group on the CRIC 7 report on the work plans of the UNCCD's bodies convened at noon and concluded its work at approximately 2:30 pm. Chaired by Maria Mbengashe (South Africa), the Group considered revised text regarding reports on the CRIC review process and the programmatic framework of the Convention's institutions and subsidiary bodies. The Group focused on paragraphs that were revised during their previous meetings, and reached agreement on all of them.

On the programmatic framework, delegates held an extensive discussion on issues concerning: the scope of the UNCCD's attention to land degradation and soil conservation in ecosystems outside its legal mandate; and a recommendation that would involve the Executive Secretary in the preparation of the CRIC work plan for 2010-2013, to be submitted to COP 9.

On the report on CRIC reform, discussion focused on the structure of the CRIC interactive dialogue, with proposals highlighting that it should focus on a small number of "key elements of the Strategic Plan" and "key, politically important topics, *inter alia*, climate change mitigation and adaptation and food security." Proposals further said the interactive dialogue should not jeopardize and "impinge upon" the intergovernmental nature of the review process and "affect the time necessary for party deliberations."

The revised reports will be included in the draft CRIC 7 report to be considered for adoption by plenary on Friday.

CONTACT GROUP 2

The Contact Group on indicators and reporting principles met in the morning following the plenary session, and continued in the afternoon. The Group discussed a draft report on these two issues, which was prepared by the Secretariat on the basis of the deliberations by parties in the CRIC 7 plenary, and which will become part of the CRIC 7 report. The draft report contained four sections: general information; specific recommendations relating to reporting entities, including affected and developed country parties, the GEF, Secretariat and GM, and reports on the implementation of RAPs and SRAPs; performance indicators for the review of the Strategy; and impact indicators for the review of the implementation of the Convention.

Participants discussed the draft report paragraph-by-paragraph, and made some amendments and additions. They expressed general agreement on the proposed reporting principles, as they related to the content of reporting, its format and the reporting process. Parties shared the view that: the new reporting should be based on simple, quantitative and measurable indicators; information systems should be established and/or improved at the national, subregional, regional and global levels; and a global assessment on capacity needs is necessary. The report was not intended to be a negotiated consensus document, and delegates did not enter into major debate.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Contact Group 1's discussion on the Programmatic Framework during the last two days has heard a level of discontent with the Secretariat's new structure, particularly in regard to its communications with regional annexes, surprising many participants. Delegates indicate that, as a result, some participants have begun to take an interest in the background discussions on regional coordination mechanisms that have taken place throughout CRIC 7 in the confines of Regional Annex group meetings. Also, while many participants expect that the issue will still be highly contested at COP 9, some past opponents of regional coordination units have suggested that they might be more open to mechanisms that are region-driven. Conversations in the corridors suggest that while some Regional Groups are at an advanced stage in devising what their regional mechanism might look like, others have not yet reached agreement on the terms of reference that will guide their formulation.

Meanwhile, in spite of the short time allocated to the agenda items on indicators and reporting principles, delegates reported that they were generally satisfied with the results of the discussion on these two items. Participants assert that discussion on these two issues has progressed in a cooperative spirit, and no major issues cropped up. They noted that parties have agreed on the reporting principles, on the basis of which the reporting guidelines will be produced. On the issue of indicators, the CST Bureau is preparing a questionnaire to solicit information and data for the preparation of such indicators.

ENB SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS: The *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* summary and analysis of CRIC 7 and CST S-1 will be available on Monday, 17 November 2008, online at: <http://www.iisd.ca/desert/cric7/>